

# Mahayana Buddhism

The religion of  
the Buddha goes  
not, comes nor, loves nor, hates, nor.  
Like a shadow it follows in silence.  
Its influence lies in the mind only.  
How great its power! Such was the master  
Sodang: a man who cost the world aside  
that he might give his whole soul to the  
onward march of the Buddha.

Memorial inscription  
ro Korean great priest Sodong'  
(784 A.D.)

### I. DISTINCTIVE MAHAYANA PRINCIPLES

#### Absolute Mind

IN HIS experience of enlightenment, Prince Siddhartha of Nepal became the Buddha. Henceforth, his path of liberation from the wheel of karma would be followed by millions. In India, however, his success as an Indian guru produced two distinct groups of followers. In the south a Buddhist group called the Theravada spread the message of the "noble fourfold truth" to Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma and Cambodia. In the north a group called the Mahayana—"Big Vehicle"—took Buddhism to Tibet, China, Korea and Japan. In our study of Far Eastern religion Mahayana is the form of Buddhism which we must consider. For although the Chinese studied Theravada scriptures, it was the distinctive features of the Mahayana philosophy which commanded their loyalty.'

In a world of ceaseless change, decay, and suffering, Mahayana Buddhism seeks the unchanging Absolute. In one of the famous Mahayana scriptures<sup>2</sup>, the permanent factor in and behind our universe is the absolute Mind. In that scripture the story is told of a maharajah, who, listening to the Buddha teach, asked for more information about the "imperishable principle"—the mind—since in his own experience he could find nothing that was not subject to decay and destruction.

Buddha asked the maharajah, "How old were you when you first saw the Ganges River?"

The king said, "When I was but three, my mother led me by the hand to pay my devotions by the river."

"Was the river different when you were thirteen?"

"No, just the same as when I was three; and now that I am sixty-two there is still no change in its appearance."

Buddha said, "Now that you are aged, white-haired and

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The Theravada school and the basic teachings of Buddha are discussed in volume II. Surangama Sutra, for selections see E.A. Bunt, Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha, Mentor Book, N.Y., 1955, pp. 181-194.

wrinkled, has the sight which enabled you to see the Ganges in former years become also wrinkled?"

"No."

"Maharajah, although your face has aged, your power of sight has not altered its essential nature. That which becomes old and decrepit is by nature changeable and that which does not is unchangeable. Hence, that which changes is subject to destruction, but that which changes not must be from its origin incapable of either birth or death."

On the basis of simple illustrations such as this, which point to evidence that both outside man and within him there are signs of permanence, Buddha taught that each one's mind is coextensive with the universe, and that all things in the universe are merely the primeval mind of Bodhi ("Enlightenment").<sup>3</sup> This Mind is universally diffused and comprehends all things. Mind is present in every minute hair, while including infinite worlds in its embrace.<sup>4</sup>

Mahayana Buddhists speak of this transcendent unchangeable reality as "absolute *Suchness*." Free from all modes of limitation and conditionality, it is beyond our ordinary logical comprehension. Everything we say about it therefore would be an attempt to limit it, and so all our descriptions must be in negative terms. The Absolute is not "this" or "that," because *Suchness* is by nature all-inclusive and transcendent. It is beyond tangible categories or rational classification. As the Indian Mahayana philosopher Nagarjuna wrote,

Between thinness and thatness,  
Between being and non-being,  
Who discriminates,  
The truth of Buddhism he perceives not.<sup>3</sup>

Reality, as we know it through sensory experience, is quite unlike the Absolute, "the Void," "the Emptiness of Emptiness,"

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<sup>3</sup> Bodhi is sometimes translated "awakening", meaning the act of total awareness.

<sup>4</sup> Burt, *Ibid*, pp. 191-192, 194 (abridged).

<sup>5</sup> On this important metaphysician, see K. Venkata Ramanan, *Nagarjuna's Philosophy*, C.E. Tuttle, Rutland, Vt., 1966.

to use Buddhist terminology. When the "Unconditioned" which is beyond our five senses appears to us as a panorama of diversity and individuality, *Suchness* becomes *Thisness*. When the work and existence of *Suchness* are manifested in mathematical, chemical and biological forms, the unconditioned Absolute is seen as *conditioned Suchness*. Thus, Buddhism delivers us from the world of ceaseless change and awakens us to the inexhaustible, indescribable reality of *Suchness* itself. <sup>8</sup>

Is *Suchness* another name for God? According to Mahayana-ists, there is present in our world a reality which transcends the limitations of phenomena, immanent everywhere and manifesting its full glory all about us. In that reality we live and move and have our being. Buddhists use various words—*Dharmakaya*, *Amitabha-Buddha*, etc. for this reality. *Dharmakaya* denotes a living, willing, knowing being—a vital spirit manifesting itself in nature and our thought. As absolute perfect intelligence, this reality is a fountainhead of love and compassion.' It is forever serene and eternal, comes from nowhere and goes nowhere, illuminates all creation, is free of all opposites yet works in all things to lead them to Nirvana.

However, besides being an all-powerful will and intelligence, the *Dharmakaya* is described as all-embracing love. Possibly in reply to Christian missionaries, contemporary Buddhists stress the loving heart of *Dharmakaya*. They insist that the Absolute is an incarnation of mercy: its hands direct our lives toward the actualization of supreme goodness. <sup>8</sup> They quote a Mahayana text:

With one great loving heart  
The thirsty desires of all beings he quenches  
with coolness.. .  
With a great heart compassionate and loving,

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DI Suzuki, *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism*, Luzac and Co., London, 1907 (1963 reprint), chapters V and IX. Noting the similarity to Vedanta, this scholar sharply contradicts western scholars who interpret Buddhism as a nihilistic philosophy. But Mahayana doctrine so greatly resembles Hindu monism that many fail to see why Gautama was condemned by Indians as a skeptic and nihilist.

<sup>7</sup> *Avatamsaka Sutra*, quoted in Suzuki, *Ibid*, pp. 223-224.

<sup>8</sup> Suzuki, *Ibid*, pp. 232-233.

All sentient beings by him are embraced;  
 With means which are pure, free from stain,  
 and all excellent,  
 He doth save and deliver all creatures innumerable.<sup>9</sup>

Are there then no differences between the Mahayana *Dharmakaya* and the Christian concept of God? Professor D.T. Suzuki believes that there are. He states that the *Dharmakaya* is not a creator who produced the world out of nothing, caused the fall of man, and touched by remorse, sent down his only son to save the depraved.<sup>10</sup>

### The Three Buddha Bodies

Buddhists derive their concept of the Ultimate from their reflection on the life of Buddha. As Christian theology grows out of Christology, so the *Dharmakaya* is derived from Buddhology." The Nepalese prince who left his palace and family to bring men the bliss of enlightenment provides the clue to the mystery of the cosmic order. Buddhists hence developed a theory of the three bodies of Buddha.

First is the *Nirmanakaya* (Body of Transformation) or the historical and human Gautama. Then there is the *Sambhogakaya* (Body of Bliss) or transfigured, celestial Buddha, the glorified Blessed One. Above these and far superior to them is the *Dharmakaya* (Law Body), the formless cosmic Buddha, the Absolute. According to a Japanese Buddhist scholar, Christians can understand the doctrine of the three bodies if they compare the *Dharmakaya* to the supreme Godhead, the *Sambhogakaya* to the transfigured, resurrected Christ and the *Nirmanakaya* to Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Avatamsaka Sutra*.

<sup>10</sup> Suzuki, *Ibid.* p. 219. Many Christian theologians, however, would claim that this description of the Christian God is vastly oversimplified and to some degree misleading.

" For the gradual development of Indian Buddhology over five centuries, see S. Dutt, *The Buddha and Five After Centuries*, Luzac and Co., London, 1957.

<sup>12</sup> D.T. Suzuki, *Outlines in Mahayana Buddhism*. p. 256. For a modern interpretation of the Three Body doctrine and how it arose, see Suzuki, "The Doctrine of Trikaya", *Ibid.* chap X.

Of the three bodies, the Body of Bliss (*Sambhogakaya*) is the most difficult to explain. According to the first century Mahayana philosopher Asvaghosha, Buddha's Bliss Body possesses infinite forms, has infinite attributes, exhibits infinite kinds of excellence and is bestowed with infinite merits. It comes directly from *Dharmakaya*, can manifest itself anywhere and is boundless in its perfection. The Bliss Body also serves as a bridge which spans the wide gap between the human Sakyamuni and the Absolute."

Buddhists have long held a variety of views about the nature of Buddha. Some would affirm the importance of two Buddhas—the cosmic Buddha (*Dharmakaya* or *Amitabha*) and the historic Gautama. Others say that Gautama was only the most recent of four or eight or one of innumerable Buddhas. A third group, especially in Tibet and China, believe that every age has a "living Buddha" (the Dalai Lama, for example) or more than one. Among contemporary Mahayana Buddhists there are also those who say that Sakyamuni was the revelation of the *Dharmakaya* to Indians and Jesus Christ was the same *Dharmakaya* for Semites.

According to Dr. Suzuki, the *Dharmakaya* is the archetype of all the Buddhas and all beings—that which is immortal in everything which lives. Because this reality seems too abstract to command the loyalty of ordinary men, the human Sakyamuni was idealized as a personification of the Absolute. This idealized Buddha and personified *Dharmakaya* was called the Body of Bliss. As for the earthly Gautama, he represents the Body of Transformation. <sup>4</sup>

Buddha provides the model for each man; thus each individual possesses these same three bodies, though in our ignorance we are often only aware of the first.' <sup>5</sup> In fact all existence is divided into three worlds—the sensual, the world of form, and the Formless—though we usually live only at the lowest level, limiting our existence to the enjoyment of physical pleasures. If,

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<sup>15</sup> Theravada Buddhists would generally agree with the Mahayana concept of the *Dharmakaya* and *Nirmanakaya*. For them, however, the *Sambhogakaya* refers to Gautama's supernatural ability to appear in two places at once.

Ibid., p. 273.

<sup>15</sup> John Blofeld, *The Jewel in the Lotus*, Buddhist Society, London, 1948, p. 42.

however, we discover the spiritual pleasures of contemplation, we become aware of the second dimension of existence. But to enter the highest realm, we must, in the Dalai Lama's words, have *"only a bare mind, void of distraction,"* dwelling entirely *"in a state of equanimity."*<sup>16</sup>

Thus Buddha, knowing that these three worlds exist and that man was unaware of the way to reach the third world of pure spirit, felt pity, as stated in a Mahayana poem:

Because he saw mankind drowning in the great sea of  
birth, death and sorrow.. .

Because he saw that men wallowed in the mire of  
lust.. .

Because he saw them fettered to their wealth, their  
wives and their children.. .

Because he saw them consumed by fires of pain and  
sorrow, yet not knowing where to seek the still  
waters of contemplation.. .

Because he saw them living in a time of war, killing and  
wounding one another, and knew that because of  
riotous hatred flourishing in their hearts they would  
be doomed to pay an endless retribution.. .

Because he saw worldly men plowing their fields, sow-  
ing seed, trafficking, buying and selling yet in the  
end winning nothing but bitterness,

For this Buddha was moved to pity."

## Ethics and Enlightenment

Gautama Buddha's life becomes for the Mahayana school an authoritative norm for the life of goodness: because he achieved Nirvana, by following in his footsteps so can any man. When one

<sup>16</sup> Dalai Lama, *My Land and My People*, McGraw Hill, N.Y., 1962, p. 242.

<sup>17</sup> Abridged and adapted from C. Humphreys, *The Wisdom of Buddhism*, Harper and Row, N.Y., 1960, pp. 36-37; also E. A. Burn, *Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha*, pp. 240-241.

applies the moral commandments of the eightfold path, he can be liberated from the wheel of rebirth and fully realize his own Buddha-nature. As Shen-hsiu wrote in the seventh century,

The body is the tree of enlightenment,  
And the mind is like a bright mirror stand,  
Always cleanse them diligently,  
And not let dust fall on them."

What did Chinese Buddhists mean by not letting dust fall on the mirror of the mind? Buddhism was designed for monks who completely renounced the ways of the world. Nothing is to disturb their peace. In China this involved cutting oneself off from secular pursuits, abandoning one's home and family, not paying taxes or serving as a soldier, no longer participating in Confucian ancestor worship, and taking a new name. Nothing less would enable one to achieve Nirvana in this lifetime.

Yet, besides the strict Buddhism of the monks, Mahayana sects recognized an easier Buddhism for the layman. While no one could possibly attain Nirvana apart from the strict regimen of a monastery, the pious layman could make this life preparation for the next—in which he would be able to endure the austerities of a monk. Hsi Ch'ao (336-377 A.D.) composed a manual for such lay persons who had become Buddhists: *Feng-Fa Yao* (Essentials of Religion).<sup>19</sup>

In this manual, Hsi Ch'ao defines the Buddhist faith. First, faith implies surrender and full devotion to these three jewels: taking refuge in the Buddhas of the past, present and future; accepting the authority of the Buddhist scriptures; and participating in the life of the Buddhist community. And in all this, the devotee must cherish thoughts of tenderness towards all living creatures and wish that they might attain emancipation.

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<sup>18</sup> Quoted in K. Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*, Princeton Univ. Press, Princeton, 1964, p. 355.

<sup>19</sup> Full text in E. Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1959, pp. 164-176.

Second, Hsi Ch'ao lists five basic rules for the Buddhist layman: not to kill, not to rob, not to commit acts of unchastity, not to lie, and not to drink wine. For him, the virtue of equanimity is the greatest. Nothing is quite equal to patience or the ability to endure humiliation. If a Buddhist is scolded or abused, he will remain silent. If he is punched or beaten he will not complain. If he meets with anger and hatred, he will face his opponent with tenderness. In this way an evil man—if his heart be not made of wood or stone—will be moved by actions of goodness and truth.

Having practiced such virtues, the Buddhist can look forward to attaining Nirvana. Since this goal is often defined in negative terms like "the Void" or the "Emptiness," Hsi Ch'ao attempts to be more explicit about what it means "to practice Emptiness within Emptiness." Belonging to an enormously wealthy family famed for its patronage of Taoism, and being himself an eminent scholar in the Confucian classics as well as a prominent statesman, he was aware of the criticisms made against Buddhism. The Chinese protested its anti-social behavior, its ascetic philosophy of world negation, and its mystical nihilism. In such an atmosphere, Hsi Ch'ao's interpretation of Nirvana reconciles Buddhism and the traditional Chinese ethic. He said that those who practice the Way must keep their foothold in this world; that Buddhism does not deny the value of secular concerns—all it does is warn against attachment to them. If a man rids himself of anxiety about worldly success, he can safely participate in secular activities. Then, when no longer blinded by the allure of this world, a man can be said to practice Emptiness within the realm of Emptiness. For Hsi Ch'ao, Nirvana seems to refer to the achievement of spiritual tranquillity in this life or elsewhere: the true Buddhist is in the world but not of it.

However, for laymen no less than monks the path to Nirvana represents a long, arduous climb upward. But for Mahayana Buddhists at least, we can be helped by the Bodhisattvas.

### **The Bodhisattvas and the Spirit World**

In Far Eastern Buddhism, the faithful are promised a variety

of celestial helpers. Within a Chinese temple, one sees many statues; while none of these figures represents a god in the ordinary sense, all are superterrestrial beings to whom the pious should pay respect and from whom they can expect aid in reaching Nirvana.<sup>20</sup> These are the Bodhisattvas.

This Mahayana belief is in direct opposition to the doctrine of Theravada monks. The latter believe that each Buddhist must work out his own salvation, however many lives may be used up in the process. Upon abandoning the world, the monks vow: "One single self we shall tame, one single self we shall pacify, one single self we shall lead to final Nirvana."<sup>21</sup>—their own. Though Buddha pointed the way and proved that enlightenment is possible, each Buddhist must rely on his own power to reach that goal.

Mahayana Buddhism in China must however be understood in the light of its birth and centuries of development in north India, where popular Hinduism was polytheistic and sectarian Hinduism believed that the saving gods Vishnu and Siva became incarnate whenever necessary. Buddhism of course differs from Hinduism in its denial of creating and saving gods. Gautama was a man and so are the Bodhisattvas—at least in theory. A Bodhisattva is not a god who descends to earth, but a human who has prepared himself for Nirvana, yet prefers to help others reach this blissful state. While his wisdom entitles him to Nirvana, his compassion impels him to forego final enlightenment on behalf of the salvation of all creatures. Unable to enjoy perfect peace while a single living being struggles and suffers, the Bodhisattva vows:

However innumerable beings are, I vow to save them.

However inexhaustible the defilements are, I vow to extinguish them.

However immeasurable the dharmas (requirements)

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<sup>20</sup> J. Blofeld, *The Jewel in the Lotus*, pp. 170-175. For a description of the statues in a Japanese Buddhist temple, see D.T. Suzuki, *Manual of Zen Buddhism*. Grove Press, N.Y., 1960, pp. 153-186 (with illustrations). For Korean Buddhist iconography, see C.A. Clark, *Religions of Old Korea*, Christian Literature Society, Seoul, 1961 reprint, pp. 46-64.

<sup>21</sup> From a Buddhist text, C. Humphreys, *Ibid.*, p. 146.

are, I vow to master them.  
 However incomparable enlightenment is, I vow  
 to attain it.<sup>22</sup>

For Mahayanists, the Theravada ideal—in which very few souls could ever reach Buddhahood, and those could only liberate themselves—was cold, and hard-hearted. How could the solitary monk so calmly ignore the suffering masses? Hence Mahayana sages pleaded, "Let's abandon the thought of entering Nirvana by ourselves. Such a concept of Nirvana extinguishes the fire of the heart, leaving only the cold ashes of the intellect. Rather, as Bodhisattvas, let's be filled with compassion for all creatures and turn over all our merits, great or small, to their benefit."

This Mahayana doctrine led to a redefinition of man's original nature. The essence of man is *Bodhicitta*, "Intelligence-heart." The human heart is a reflection of the Absolute heart, just as the moon is reflected in the water of a lake on a clear night. If one understands his Buddha-nature, he sees everything with a loving heart, for love is the essence of this nature. *Bodhicitta* is the highest value, the deepest revelation of the Absolute. All Bodhisattvas find their purpose for existence in this cosmic loving heart.<sup>23</sup>

Not only humans but all sentient beings possess this "Intelligence-heart" to some degree. In the Buddhas it is fully awakened; in ordinary mortals it is dormant, blinded by the world of sensuality. The silver light of the moon is reflected—as surely in muddy pools as in every dew drop. Regardless of how lost in illusion men are, there flows a constant stream of compassion from the "lake of the Intelligence-heart" through the Bodhisattvas.

*Ti-t sang*, a Bodhisattva for the underworld of the dead, was a Korean prince named Chiao Kioh who became a monk during the Tang dynasty (circa 754 A.D.), and as the story goes, he wandered

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<sup>22</sup> Quoted in C. Humphreys, *Wisdom of Buddhism*, p. 143. For two rather different evaluations of the Bodhisattva ideal, contrast H. Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, Meridian Book, N.Y., 1951, pp. 534-551 and D.T. Suzuki, *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism*, pp. 277-330. These two equally eminent scholars may differ because one looks at Buddhism from an Indian perspective while the other views it in its Japanese form.

<sup>23</sup> Suzuki, *Ibid.* p. 298.

about with his faithful white dog until he came to China. Impressed by the beauty of the "nine flowery mountains" overlooking the Yangtze valley, the monk made them his home. For seventy years he sat in the same spot, meditating, teaching disciples, blessing pilgrims and seeking enlightenment. At last, when he was ninety-nine, Chiao Kioh attained the great illumination. Nevertheless, as a devout exemplar of Mahayanism he refused the opportunity to enjoy Nirvana's bliss, preferring to continue assisting suffering men as a Bodhisattva.

When it came time for Prince Chiao to depart from this earth he slowly sank into one of the clefts in the mountain where for so long he had meditated. A shrine has since been erected there and the mountain was covered with monasteries, temples and pagodas. In hell, Ti-tsang continues his preaching, protecting the dead from the merciless demonic torturers and comforting their victims with hope for their final release. With the aid of pious Buddhist laymen on earth (who remember the fate of the damned), and priests (who perform rites for the dead), Ti-tsang implants a root of goodness in the heart of the sinner so he can be released from hell. In temples dedicated to this Korean savior, a great bronze bell is rung regularly, carrying a message of sympathy to the land of the shadows.<sup>24</sup>

Fear of hell is a prominent aspect of Chinese Buddhism. However, belief in the spirit world long antedated the appearance of Buddhism in China. Some scholars, taking Confucian humanism as the norm for interpreting the Chinese mind, believe that the Han civilization was largely agnostic in regard to the spirit world and almost exclusively this-worldly. This is not true. Buddhism came to a nation already committed to the veneration of ancestral spirits, practicing divination and astrology, and believing in the existence of numerous demons who needed to be exorcised—as well as plentiful beneficent supernatural beings, residing on mountaintops, in rivers and at secluded woodland holy places. From the oracle bones of the primitive Shang period to the poetic mysticism

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<sup>24</sup> K. Reichelt, *Religion in Chinese Garment*, Philosophical Library, N.Y., 1951, pp. 139-141. Also see Francis C.M. Wei, *The Spirit of Chinese Culture*, Charles Scribner's Sons, N.Y., 1947, p. 117.

of the Taoists, pre-Buddhist China provides abundant evidence of the people's faith in a spiritual realm.<sup>25</sup>

But Buddhism did add considerably to the Chinese conception of man's nature and destiny, mainly through its promulgation of Indian metaphysics. The monks introduced concepts like karma, reincarnation and Nirvana, as well as the Hindu doctrines of heaven and hell. Chinese Buddhism eventually became a creative cultural synthesis of these borrowed Indian beliefs, Taoist philosophy, Confucian ancestor worship and ancient folk piety.

Though the concept of a region of punishment for evil men is found in Indian Buddhism, the Chinese seemed to have placed more emphasis upon it because of their preoccupation with correct social behavior. According to Buddhist cosmology there are eighteen great hells and two supernatural judges who supervise the tortures of the sinful. However there are also a multitude of smaller hells and devils to torment the sinners. Nevertheless, hell is only a place of temporary punishment to purify the depraved; once this cleansing process is completed, the individual is released to continue his journey from life to life until he attains Nirvana.

Chinese Buddhists believe that spirits have been assigned to record every good or evil deed. The world is divided into separate parcels of land, each of which is watched over by an earth god. Above these local guardian spirits are the city gods and the rural locality gods. Thus a spiritual hierarchy exists to report to heaven, just as imperial China had an elaborate bureaucracy which reported regularly to the emperor." Traditionally, the Chinese believed that from the spirit world one could get specific advice about daily life and that one's prayers or rites would have an effect on the spirits. Buddhism offered new ways by which ancestral spirits could be released from hell or be given additional blessings in heaven.

Just as the Buddhist believes in many regions in hell, so he believes in twenty-eight different heavens, providing a hierarchy

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Reichelt. *Ibid.* pp. 9-33. The / Ching, considered so valuable that even the agnostic Confucius made it part of his canon, rests on the belief in the existence and power of the spiritual world.

<sup>26</sup> Reichelt, *Ibid.*, pp. 108-109.

of states of bliss, increasing in value as one approaches the ultimate goal of Nirvana. Yet no one—not even the gods—lives in heaven forever. After an appropriate length of time when the virtues of a particular soul have been rewarded, it returns to the earth in a new body, befitting its status. When an individual has been born and reborn sufficiently, he becomes mature enough spiritually to attain Nirvana or take the vows of a Bodhisattva.

The most beloved of the Chinese Bodhisattvas is *Kuan-yin*, the Buddhist Madonna. No one has a sharper eye, a more open ear, or a warmer heart for people in trouble. She is the personification of womanly charity and tenderness. Because she is always able to help, she is said to possess a thousand arms and a thousand legs. Concerning the origin of this goddess of mercy there are many stories; the following account is but one. At a time when Buddha was establishing cloisters for nuns, an Indian princess named Miao-suan longed to join the Buddhist sisterhood. Knowing that her father opposed her desire, she secretly entered a convent. Her father traced her whereabouts and sent out soldiers to bring her home. They caught her, then burned down the convent, killing all of the nuns. But as punishment for such a terrible deed, Miao-suan's father was suddenly struck blind. Miao-suan, however, realized that her father acted out of misguided love and prayed that his sight might be restored. She was then told that he could recover the use of his eyes only if she was willing to become blind for his sake. This she agreed to do, and spent the rest of her life sightless. Because she dared to disobey her father in order to become a nun and because she voluntarily sacrificed her own eyes on behalf of the very one who had caused her so much suffering, she became the Bodhisattva *Kuan-yin*. In light of such a story it is no wonder that numerous temples have been dedicated to her and her birthday is celebrated by million of Buddhists. <sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Reichelt, *Ibid*, pp. 146-148.

## II. BUDDHISM IN CHINESE HISTORY

### **From the Han to Manchu Dynasty**

One night in a dream Emperor Ming (reigned 58-75 A.D.) of the Han dynasty saw a golden god flying around in front of his palace. Rather curious about the meaning of this night visitor, the ruler consulted his experts in such matters. One of the seers explained that he had heard rumors of an Indian who had become a god named Buddha, that this man possessed the supernatural ability to fly and that his body was of a golden hue. Naturally, the emperor sent envoys to India to learn more about Buddha. When the delegation returned, they brought to Ming the famous Buddhist text *The Sutra in Forty-two Sections*. Greatly impressed, the emperor took the images of Buddha the envoys had obtained, images identical to the figure in his dream, and built a temple for them outside the walls of the capital city.'

However, our earliest description of a Chinese Buddhist temple comes a century later. In the last decade of the second century, an imperial official, Chai Jung, built a large temple in which he placed a huge bronze statue of Buddha, coated with gold leaf. Soon, from five to ten thousand Buddhists were gathering regularly to hear the chanting of *sutras* and lectures on the *dharma*. This is the oldest extant account of the religion's attraction for the masses.'

Buddhism probably first arrived in China when Indian (or other) traders entered the country along the overland route in the northwest or by ships docking at southeastern ports. At least initially it was a foreign faith practiced only by visiting or resident aliens. According to the imperial annals, there were no Chinese monks until the fourth century. By then, for about two hundred years Mahayana texts had been translated and were widely circulated among the literati.

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<sup>1</sup> See K. Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*, pp. 29-31 for a critical analysis of Ming's dream.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40-42. Other early references to Buddhism are found in a poem by Chang Heng (78-139 A.D.) and Buddhist observances by Ying, Prince of Ch'u, in 65 A.D. On the basis of such evidence modern historians conjecture that Buddhism entered China very early in the first century A.D.

Why did Buddhism take root in China? After three hundred years of relative peace and prosperity, the Chinese empire created by the Han dynasty had been shaken to its foundations. The once powerful emperor became a puppet of rival factions. Violent hatreds and vendettas divided the upper classes. Oppressed and abused without restraint, the peasant masses waited for the moment to rise in rebellion.

The empire simply exploded. In 184 and 189 A.D. the Yellow Turban Taoist revolts broke out, resulting in millions of deaths. Then came a bloody attack on the palace eunuchs and their friends by a temporary alliance of nobles and literati. Finally appeared the war lords, ruthless military adventurers leading armed mobs of vagabonds, ex-convicts, landless peasants and amoral mercenaries.<sup>3</sup> Into such a world came the message of the all-compassionate Buddha who could show men the peace of Nirvana.

In 311 A.D., the invading Huns captured the Chinese capital at Loyang—a disaster as shocking as the fall of Rome to the Goths in 410 A.D.—and the emperor who boasted of being the Son of Heaven had to flee for his life. Within a few years the whole of North China, the heartland of Han civilization, was in alien hands. For the next three centuries, the Chinese tried to preserve some slight remnant of their former brilliance at the new capital of Nanking while barbarians ruled much of the old empire.

Refugee courtiers and intellectuals dominated the culture replanted in the Yangtze river valley. No longer committed to Confucianism because it seemed outmoded in an age of troubles and fully aware of the way Taoist nihilism and permissiveness had weakened the moral fibre of Han civilization, many literati and gentry converted to Buddhism. One such notable was Hui-yuan (334-416), a Confucian teacher who had become attracted to Taoism. He attended a lecture given by a Buddhist monk, recognized the metaphysical superiority of Mahayanism, entered a monastery and spent his talents reconciling the teachings of Lao-tzu and Buddha. Like others of his class, he used Taoist concepts to

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<sup>3</sup> A.F. Wright, *Buddhism in Chinese History*, Stanford Univ. Press, Stanford, Calif., 1959, pp. 23, 25, 27.

explain Buddhism and used Buddhist ideas to solve some of the intellectual problems raised by Taoists. Locating his monastery in a mountain area of great scenic beauty, Hui-yuan extolled the saving grace of Amitabha Buddha and prepared the foundations for the Pure Land sect.

Emperor Wu (ruled 502-549) illustrates the appeal Buddhism made to the ruling class. At a Buddha Birthday celebration Wu ordered his whole court to forsake Taoism for the Middle Path. To demonstrate his personal faith, the emperor more than once literally gave himself to a Buddhist temple and made his officials donate vast sums to the monks to buy him back. In 517 A.D. he even more vigorously aided the Buddhist cause by destroying all Taoist temples and requiring their clergy to become laymen. To symbolize his role as a religious monarch Wu accepted the new title "Emperor Bodhisattva."

During this period Chinese monks in the south designed a new concept of holy vocation. As calligraphers, book collectors, philosophers, painters and poets, they interpreted Buddhism to mean a life of withdrawal and speculation. Henceforth, they pursued their scholarship and serene devotion at some temple set in the midst of lovely scenery—far removed from the troubles of the palace or nation. That ideal, one of tranquil detachment, proved to be very attractive right down to the collapse of the Chinese empire in the 20th century.

In the north, conditions were far less pleasant. A succession of barbarian rulers became infamous for their tyranny. However, the Hun warrior Lo who captured the Chinese capital of Loyang was so impressed with the magical powers of a Buddhist missionary that he became a patron of the religion. Fo-t'u-teng, who arrived while the capital city was still being burned, appeared before the Hun, filled his begging bowl with water, burned incense and chanted a holy spell; after which—to everyone's amazement—a blue lotus appeared in the bowl, its bright flowers dazzling the conqueror's eyes. In such a manner Buddhists won over the invaders. Instead of relying on the intellectual subtleties of Mahayana philosophy or the moral excellence of the Middle Path,

Buddhists claimed to possess occult powers. At will they could bring rain, win wars, relieve sickness and astound the credulous.

Several more important factors led to Buddhist success in north China. Unlike the Confucian scholars, Buddhists were not completely identified with the fallen Han empire. They could be trusted as advisors and public servants by the Huns. Because Buddhist monks had no families and had severed their connections to their relatives, they were completely dependent on the ruler's favor and therefore served him faithfully. Also, since Buddhism was a foreign religion and the new rulers were also aliens, there was common opposition to traditional Chinese racism and isolationism. Finally, Buddhism proclaimed a universalistic ethic which would help to heal the divisions between Han and Hun, Chinese and alien, ruled and ruler, for centuries to come.

With the support of the autocratic rulers, Buddhism permeated society. The emperors and rich aristocrats gave lavish presents of cash and land to the monks, erected costly pagodas, and encouraged such artistic masterpieces as the cave temples of Yunkang and Lung-men. Under such conditions the peasants embraced Buddhism en masse. For emperor and serf the preferred form of Buddhism was faith in Amitabha, the Bodhisattva of compassionate grace, who promises his devotees rebirth in the Pure Land paradise. Only a small minority of intellectuals and deeply spiritual men were practitioners of Ch'an mysticism.

Shrewd north Chinese emperors quickly recognized the need to keep Buddhism from getting out of control. Once the monastic community became large and wealthy, the secular rulers put it under the direct control of the government. Repeated attempts were also made to restrict the number of monks, confiscate excessive temple wealth and limit future building activities. While anti-Buddhist emperors learned that they could not simply outlaw the faith by imperial edict—a method tried more than once—they could at least exercise a large measure of government control over religious activities.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For greater detail see A.F. Wright, *Buddhism in Chinese History*, pp. 42-64.

In 589 the Sui dynasty reunited China after more than three centuries of political division. The Sui emperors and their successors, the T'ang, made it imperial policy to patronize the Buddhist faith on a lavish scale while recognizing Taoism and making the Confucian classics official textbooks for government examinations. This tolerance for all three religions henceforth became more or less normative. From 590-906 A.D. Sui and T'ang emperors ruled China, greatly expanding the size of the empire, stimulating an intellectual and artistic renaissance and creating a civilization comparable to that of Europe's High Middle Ages.

Yang Chien (541-604) founded the Sui dynasty and exemplifies its aggressive spirit. As an ambitious official in the weak Chou court of north China, he successfully deposed the boy emperor, slew fifty-nine princes, dethroned the emperor of south China at Nanking, and then proceeded to subjugate neighboring territories.<sup>5</sup> The interesting thing is that whereas emperor Asoka of India gave up his military activities when he converted to Buddhism, Yang Chien used Buddhism to defend his martial exploits: "With a hundred victories in a hundred battles, we promote the practice of the ten Buddhist virtues. Therefore we regard the weapons of war as having become like the offerings of incense and flowers presented to Buddha, and the fields of this world as becoming forever identical with the Buddha-land."<sup>6</sup>

Although the Sui and T'ang dynasties revived the Confucian concept that the emperor was the Son of Heaven, they often employed Buddhist ideology and institutions to make him the pivot of a reunited empire. Great festivals and impressive rites were developed for the accession of a new ruler, the birth of an imperial prince and commemorative services for the emperor's ancestors. Naturally, the reigning monarchs rewarded such examples of Buddhist enthusiasm. For example, Emperor Wen of the Sui dynasty once donated to a single temple fourteen thousand pieces of satin, two hundred pieces of the finest silk, as well as cash,

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<sup>5</sup> L. Carrington Goodrich, *Short History of the Chinese People*, Harper and Brothers, N.Y., 1959, p. 115.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted by A.F. Wright, *Ibid*, p. 67.

cereal and one thousand balls of silk floss.'

Warfare often resulted in the wounding and mutilation of the participants. Chinese had a horror of a disfiguring death in battle or a burial far from home. By emphasizing the negligible importance of the physical body, Buddhism removed one of the drawbacks to a soldier's life. Then too, the pro-Buddhist Sui and T'ang emperors built commemorative temples on the battlefields at which perpetual prayers were conducted for the spirits of the war dead. If a soldier sacrificed his life for the sake of the Middle Kingdom and the Son of Heaven, he would demonstrate his devotion to something nobler than mere personal safety, like the Bodhisattva who gave up the bliss of Nirvana to help men. If he died a hero he would be assured of an imperial shrine and a nation's prayers forever. What could be more comforting or more inspiring in an age of conflict?

Summing up this period of Chinese history, a scholar writes: ". . . Buddhism flourished as never before. Supported by the lavish donations of the devout, guided by leaders of true piety and brilliance, graced by the most gifted artists and architects of the age, Buddhism was woven into the very texture of Chinese life and thought. These centuries were the golden age of an independent and creative Chinese Buddhism."

Fa-tsang (643-712) illustrates the philosophical subtleties of Sui and T'ang dynasty Buddhism. Puzzled (understandably so) by Buddhist metaphysics, Empress Wu asked Fa-tsang to clear up her doubts. He did so, we are told, by pointing to the golden lion guarding the palace hall as a concrete example of the way the universal and particulars are related: the animal figure (a tangible object) is only a specific manifestation of the more substantial gold which symbolizes the Absolute."

Fa-tsang's pupils were still baffled. The Buddhist sage explained his position with an ingenious device. To illustrate how the

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<sup>†</sup> K. Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*, p. 276.

A.F.Wright, *Ibid*, p. 70.

<sup>9</sup> Fung Yu-Lan, *History of Chinese Philosophy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1953, volume II, pp. 340-359.

Buddha-nature or Absolute is related to existing phenomena, he took ten mirrors and arranged them with one at each of the eight compass points, one above and one below. Each was placed ten feet apart, yet all faced one another. He then placed a statue of Buddha in the center so that its image was reflected from one mirror to another. Each mirror reflected the image of the other mirrors plus all of the images reflected in each of the mirrors. In this way, the doubling and redoubling of reflections continues without end. Similarly, the Absolute is reflected in each existing particular and the eternal Buddha in each living thing.

Armed with such sophisticated logic and technique, Buddhism was fully and triumphantly established in China by the eighth century. Then disaster after disaster struck the faith. From the late ninth century onward, decline set in. When the T'ang empire was weakened by civil war and foreign assaults, the ruling classes became fearful of any potential sources of social discontent. Since the Buddhist self-governing monasteries appeared to be an empire within the empire, the imperial bureaucracy decided to suppress them. Declaring that the clergy had become corrupt, that the temples had amassed an excessive amount of wealth and that the monks were idlers, the emperor in 845 A.D. confiscated all Buddhist property throughout China. A later edict ordered the destruction of 4600 temples, the secularization of 260,500 monks and nuns, the demolishing of 40,000 shrines, the confiscation of millions of acres of Buddhist-owned land and the liberation of 150,000 slaves held by the temples. Never again would Buddhism be the preferred religion of China."

When the T'ang dynasty collapsed, political chaos followed. Chinese historians speak of the next period as "the five dynasties and the ten independent states." Buddhism again suffered. In 955 A.D., 30,336 monasteries were destroyed by imperial edict, leaving only 2,694." Then came the Sung dynasty (960-1279), an age which saw the Muslim conquest of India—with its widespread suppression of Buddhism—and the rise of neo-Confucianism as

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" L.C. Goodrich, *Ibid.*, pp. 129-131.

" *Ibid.*, p. 146.

the official Chinese ideology. Chinese civilization of the eleventh and twelfth centuries probably outdistanced that of the rest of the world. But Buddhism had lost its hold on the governing class, its appeal for the scholars and its charm for the artists. The golden age had vanished.

Nevertheless, the next seven centuries were not totally hostile to the Buddhist cause. While the Sung emperors ruled part of China, three non-Han dynasties exercised considerable power elsewhere from 907-1368. The Liao emperors of Mongol background made Buddha's birthday a national holiday—though not that of Confucius. They also printed a fine edition of the Chinese *Tripitaka*, the basic Buddhist scriptures, a set of which was presented to the Koreans. The Chin dynasty gave imperial support to Buddhism: the first emperor provided an annual feast for over ten thousand monks and nuns; and during the reign of the second emperor over a million monks were ordained. In the Yuan dynasty, Genghis Khan was favorably impressed by Buddhist monks and Kublai Khan had a Buddhist ex-monk as his closest advisor. The latter emperor even made Lamaist Buddhism the national religion of the Mongol people.

When the Mongol dynasty was overthrown, the new Ming emperor had been a Buddhist monk and after assuming imperial office he often convened assemblies of monks to which he would personally give lectures on the *sutras*. After about three hundred years of Ming rule, the Manchu dynasty called Ch'ing seized control of the empire. Naturally, the Manchus who came from the north favored Lamaist Buddhism. In fact, since "living Buddhas" were a normal part of Tibetan faith, the founder of the Ch'ing dynasty claimed to be an incarnation of the Bodhisattva Manjusri, the lord of wisdom. While the Manchu capital at Peking was famous for its distinctive Tibetan architecture and the Ch'ing emperors used their nominal patronage of Tantric Buddhism as a convenient means for displaying their legitimate rule over Mongolia, Manchuria and Tibet, on the whole Buddhism continued to stagnate. The one favorable omen was the appearance of prominent laymen who were dedicated to the reform and revival of

### Buddhism.'

It would be a gross exaggeration to say that the last thousand years have witnessed the steady decline of Chinese Buddhism. In spite of numerous reverses, Buddhism remained one of China's three historic faiths. Yuan-hsien (1578-1657) proposed that Confucius and Buddha were sages whose teachings complemented each other, the former with his this-worldly practicality, the latter with his other-worldly spirituality.<sup>12</sup> Yet even such a useful synthesis gradually lost its original meaning when most Chinese became preoccupied with practical affairs. For the upper classes brief visits to a Buddhist monastery provided a relaxing pause in their busy schedules while for the peasants Buddhist priests were convenient to have around if one was sick, deeply troubled or desirous of an abundant harvest and a male heir. Neither of these utilitarian purposes, however, expresses the deepest intent of Buddhist devotion.

### Attacks on Buddhism

As long as Buddhism was primarily the faith of a few resident foreigners, the Confucian intellectuals and the Chinese government could (and did) tolerate or ignore it. However, once it had become a rather widespread religion, making an appeal to the masses and at times winning imperial favor, the situation changed. Confucian criticism in particular became fierce and dangerous, as the Confucian scholars and statesmen were the defenders of the traditional Chinese ideology.

From one standpoint, the attack that was launched against the Buddhist monks could be viewed as a conflict between the spiritual ideals of a religious community and the cynical materialism of Confucian bureaucrats, politicians and warlords. However, from another standpoint, the conflict could be seen as the collision of two differing religious cosmologies, as the traditional Chinese worldview, which the Confucianists represented, contained a considerable religious element. Society was seen as a divinely-

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<sup>12</sup> See pp. 44-46.

<sup>13</sup> K. Ch'en, *Ibid*, p. 439.

constituted part of the total universe. The state, which was personified in the emperor, possessed to a great extent a religious aura. As a Chinese general and spokesman for the imperial court explained, "To sustain one's father and to serve the ruler—these are indeed the most perfect of the natural relationships." <sup>14</sup> The emperor, in the eyes of the Confucian, makes life possible for all his subjects. He personifies the creative powers of nature. His rule then, reflects the mandate of Heaven; his success or failure could even have repercussions in the processes of nature. To question his authority is to violate the preordained harmony of heaven and earth. However, the Buddhist monk denied the importance of the family and considered himself free from the duties of a subject: in effect he rebelled against the emperor. Thus the Buddhist was guilty of anti-social, illegal and blasphemous behavior.

The economic aspects of popular Buddhism also caused a critical reaction on the part of Confucian statesmen and courtiers. Since the monasteries were autonomous, self-governing units free from government supervision, officials suspected they were hiding places for all sorts of undesirable people—lazy vagrants, bandits who evaded arrest by seeking monastic refuge, and potential or actual political dissidents. Worse, the privileges which monks expect—freedom from taxes, exemption from military service, not being required to labor on government projects—naturally encouraged men to abandon their civic responsibilities for the leisurely life of the monastery. This complaint was not altogether unjustified: the central government was struggling against an ever-increasing mass evasion of taxes and forced labor. According to one high official of the fourth century, tax-evaders filled the monasteries, and those escaping labor service would gather from a hundred miles around in the Buddhist temples. For him, the "extravagance of the monks" was exhausting the imperial treasury. <sup>15</sup>

Naturally, from a Confucian perspective, Buddhist other-

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<sup>14</sup> Huan Ch'en (402 A.D.), quoted in E. Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, vol. I, p. 232.

<sup>15</sup> Huan Hsuan (circa 400 A.D.), quoted in Zürcher, *Ibid.*, p. 260.

worldliness was a waste of time, talent and money. What concrete, visible benefits did it give to the nation? As one Chinese official asked, Have the monks added a single year to the life of the emperor? Have they made crops more abundant or the people richer? Can they prevent natural disorders like floods or eliminate epidemics? For the Chinese, a philosophy was expected to improve conditions in this world. Although the Buddhists had collected vast sums of money, built highly ornamented pagodas and established numerous monasteries, there was no evidence whatsoever that they had harmonized yin and yang in the natural world or in society.

Nirvana specifically posed a problem for the Confucianist. For him, the Buddhists should teach men to conform to righteousness instead of making people "hanker after Paradise." Or, rather than trying to "frighten them with Hell," monks should urge men to rectify their lives with reason. By extolling the bliss of Nirvana, Buddhism makes men lax in their practical duties. How can one be truly good if he acts merely in order to achieve a hundredfold reward in heaven? No temporal social benefits could be expected from a religion which concerns itself with the afterlife.

The followers of Buddha also had to contend with the charge that theirs was a primitive philosophy taught by an Indian, and while it might be suitable for barbarians, it was completely unfit for the far superior Chinese. Popular thought had it that China was located at the exact center of the earth in order to manifest its cultural superiority and to enlighten the ignorant barbarians dwelling beyond its boundaries. Hence Buddhism was at best an inferior faith. Confucian scholars insisted that if Buddha's path had merit, it would have been mentioned in the Chinese classics and historical annals. As a fourth century writer declared, "things from abroad should not be studied by Chinese." ' 6

According to some Confucians, Chinese and non-Chinese were completely different in natural constitution. The barbarian foreigner is created with a hard, obstinate nature; from birth he is

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<sup>6</sup> Ho Ch'eng-t'ien (370-447 A.D.), quoted in Zurcher, *Ibid*, p. 265.

filled with evil desires and an inclination towards hatred and violence. By contrast, the Chinese inborn nature is pure, altruistic, harmonious. Every Chinese is gifted with a love for righteousness. The fact that barbarians were obstinate and arrogant by nature thus explained why Buddha taught such a mess of supernatural and otherworldly theories: he had to awe them into submission in order to make them obey the rules of ordinary decency.

Taoists had their version of the racist doctrine too. According to their anti-Buddhist writings, true Chinese mysticism (i.e. Lao-tzu's) corresponds to the element of wood and the principle *yang*, whereas Buddhism is an inferior religion corresponding to the element of metal and the feminine principle *yin*. Thus Buddhism is effeminate compared to the healthy masculinity of Taoism. In addition, the alien Indian faith is preoccupied with death rather than life. Monks fast because they really want to die. In fact, some Taoists asserted that Buddha taught the Indians to be ascetics and celibates in order to wipe out the uncivilized barbarian races."

Taoists and Confucianists both were simply astounded by the Buddhist disregard for the family—the base of ancient Chinese society and the cornerstone of collective morality. For the Chinese, filial piety was paramount; each individual without exception was expected to subordinate his personal happiness to the well-being of the family. Marriage, of course, was indispensable to ensure the continuation of the paternal lineage. Thus the Buddhist—who severs family ties, vows celibacy, and withdraws from the household estate to become a monk—unashamedly violates all of the moral axioms.

Buddhism not only denies the central importance of the family, it advertises its defiance with outward signs. The monk shaves his head, wears strange clothing, and abandons his family name for a religious one. Confucian ethics taught that one must honor his hair as a gift from his parents; it is not surprising then that the monk's tonsure was highly offensive to the Chinese public. Worse, it was a standard practice for the Chinese to punish criminals by

shaving their heads, yet the Buddhists treated the shaved head as a mark of piety.

Though Indians accepted physical mortification as a normal method of attaining spirituality, the Chinese were shocked by any mistreatment of the body. Following Indian precedents some Buddhists practiced mutilation and a few even resorted to the final "sacrifice of the body" in religious suicides. Several cases are recorded of pious monks who wrapped themselves in oil-soaked bandages and burned themselves in the presence of a crowd of spectators.<sup>18</sup> Despite the fact that Buddha himself opposed the extreme ascetic practices of Hinduism and espoused a middle path between self-indulgence and self-negation, it is easy to understand how the Buddhist escape to Nirvana could be interpreted by overzealous monks as an excuse for self-immolation.

Even without such rare cases of voluntary martyrdom, Buddhism appeared disgustingly immoral to the traditional Chinese moralist. As Confucian critics charged, the Buddhist monk forsakes those who gave him birth. He rejects his kinfolk and prefers the company of strangers. He disfigures his natural appearance by cutting off his beard and shaving his head. When his parents are still alive, the monk does not support them. When they are dead he does not perform the traditional rites of ancestor worship. In sum, in a tight-knit, family-oriented society, the Buddhist treats his relatives no better than strangers. "There is no greater disregard of right principles and violation of human feelings than this!"<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, Buddhism continued to attract converts. Despite angry protests and occasional outbursts of government persecution, the once-foreign religion became so thoroughly a part of Chinese civilization that it was repeatedly described as one of the three legs of imperial culture, the others being Confucianism and Taoism. In fact, Buddhism survived the empire and was experiencing a remarkable revival when the Communists seized the Chinese mainland.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p. 282.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Ibid, p. 283.

### Three Buddhist Sects

In India Buddhists rather quickly broke up into rival schools; the same sort of division occurred in China. Three of these Buddhist denominations were particularly important: the T'ien-t'ai, the Pure Land and the Ch'an.<sup>20</sup>

Chih-i (538-597 A.D.) established the T'ien-t'ai school. He became a monk after witnessing the ransacking and burning of a library by pillaging soldiers; on that occasion he realized that man's uncontrollable passions are the cause of all sorrow. After studying for a time under a famous Buddhist teacher from north China, he went to Mt. T'ien-t'ai and made his home there. In a short time he began to attract large numbers of pupils. When he was thirty-nine his fame had already become so great that the emperor ordered all revenue from the district around the mountain to be reserved for his monastery.

As a devout Buddhist, Chih-i opposed the killing of any creature. He soon was even able to persuade his neighbors to give up fishing. Emperors continued to be impressed by Chih-i. One invited him to preach in the capital city regularly, and another bestowed upon him the admiring title "Man of Wisdom."

Chih-i attempted to harmonize Theravada and Mahayana scriptures. In doing so, he systematized and classified Buddhist sacred writings. He taught his followers that Buddha's original doctrine was the mystical monism of the Mahayana *Lotus Sutra*, but, because few could understand its profundity, Buddha was forced to resort to a simpler message. This was the Theravada doctrine of the four truths and the eightfold path. After winning large numbers of converts to this basic message, Buddha spent the next eight years trying to educate his followers to go beyond the elementary Theravada gospel. For twenty years after that he taught about the nature of the Absolute, and in his last eight years he explained that it was his mission to save all creatures. With such a chronology, Chih-i succeeded in recognizing just about every form of Buddhism. But more than that, his scheme gave each kind a proper place, with the *Lotus Sutra* taught by Buddha at both the

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<sup>20</sup> John Blofeld, *The Jewel in the Lotus*, pp. 121-125.

beginning and the end of his mission. Most Chinese consequently came to see that the *Lotus Sutra* contained the essence of Buddhism, and interpreted all other scriptures from its perspective.

Chih-i and his T'ien-t'ai school emphasized the idea of an ultimate mystical totality in which all contrasts become unified: if one can only break through the barrier of subjective illusions, the all-embracing absolute Mind can be recognized. As the T'ien-t'ai Buddhists put it, the whole and its parts are really identical: the entire universe and all of the Buddhas may be present in one grain of sand or the tip of a single hair. Imagine a single hair pore and then imagine a large city—the small and the great are equally manifestations of the mind that is all-inclusive.

How then can one explain the fact of individual differences? If the absolute Mind embraces everything, and all things in our world depend on this mind for their existence, what divides the absolute into the particulars we see and touch? The T'ien-t'ai Buddhists say that the absolute Mind contains two natures, the pure and impure. The pure nature allows us to see the eternal Buddhahood, and the impure, the myriad objects in the phenomenal world. In essence the absolute Mind is one, undivided; however, in its functions and activities it is diverse, producing endless variety.

Our blindness to the reality of absolute Mind can only be removed by concentration (*chih*) and insight (*kuan*). Through concentration, the Buddhist carefully analyzes a particular object until he realizes that it is made up of a series of illusions. A flow of invisible, intangible, completely non-sensory energy-events have taken a visible, tangible form in the object. However, though it is necessary to realize by concentration the reality behind any object, it is also necessary to realize that there is a purpose for the illusions created by the mind, and therefore man must act *as though* he exists in a world of physical objects.<sup>21</sup>

Inevitably, one sect of monks in this school identified the absolute Mind doctrine with pantheism and acted accordingly.

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<sup>21</sup> K. Ch'en, *Mid*, pp. 303-313.

Since all life is a manifestation of the absolute Mind, then what is the special value of monasteries? Monks who thought that way soon began sleeping in courtyards and spending their days mingling with the crowds in the marketplace. They further asked if all is a revelation of absolute Mind, why worry about reading sacred scriptures or bowing in front of statues? This sect as a consequence began to speak contemptuously of book learning and temple worship. Because the Buddha-nature pervades everything, they thought that all people—whatever their station in life—should be treated like potential Buddhas. Monks would suddenly prostrate themselves before passing strangers in public and hail them as Buddhas—in complete disregard of conventional Chinese etiquette. They even went so far as to shock crowds by bowing down in front of dogs—for each dog is a future Buddha. Strangely enough, such bizarre behavior attracted attention to the basic beliefs of the sect. In fact, because the devotion of the monks was so apparent, people were often moved to give alms. Hence, their temple at the capital city became known as the Inexhaustible Treasury, so great were its financial resources. <sup>22</sup>

Though the T'ien-t'ai school flourished, a sect which was far more popular, making up 60-70% of the Buddhists before World War II, was the Pure Land School. Based on the teachings of the *Pure Land Sutra*, this sect offered China a religion of free grace. According to the sutra, long before the birth of Gautama, a monk was granted his wish to become Buddha Amitabha—the Lord of infinite light and immortal life who presides over the ideal Buddha-land known as the Western Paradise. There is a lake whose bottom is covered with pure gold sand, and whose waters hold miraculous power. Lotus bloom there with flowers as big as cartwheels. Surrounding the lake are towering palaces. Cranes, peacocks and swan sing there day and night, proclaiming Buddhist teachings. It is populated by countless persons who have been brought to the realm through the merit and grace of Amitabha Buddha. He has vowed, so believers hold, that anyone who calls

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*"Ibid.*, pp. 297-300.

upon him sincerely will be reborn in the Pure Land. Working beside Amitabha is the ever-present Avaloketsvara (*Kuan-yin*), the always compassionate Bodhisattva who will go anywhere and do anything to lead the faithful to the land of perpetual bliss.

While the original faith of the Pure Land school came from India, and their sacred sutras were composed in Sanskrit, Chinese Buddhists accommodated the teachings to the new cultural environment, sometimes quite drastically.<sup>23</sup> The worship of Kuan-yin illustrates the radical nature of this adaptation. Avaloketsvara was a male Bodhisattva, whose portraits often showed him with a mustache. But sometime in the eighth century, as we noted earlier, during the T'ang dynasty, Tantric Buddhists in China introduced a female version of Kuan-yin—using the same name—who was clad in white and could give children to any woman who prayed to her. The mustached male gradually fades into the background, giving way to the female Kuan-yin, who becomes in popular Chinese religion a Madonna-like figure, the "goddess of infinite compassion."

Besides offering the masses an easy path to celestial happiness through the simple recitation of the name of Amitabha, Pure Land Buddhism won converts by its vivid portrayal of the hell that awaited unbelievers. Some became scared enough to give support to the Buddhist cause. At its best, Pure Land Buddhism encouraged men and women to experience a deep religious life based on faith, devotion and practical holiness. At its worst, it degenerated into meaningless repetition of the holy name.

The Ch'an school of Buddhism is popularly known by its Japanese name, *Zen*. Ch'an refers to a practical religious discipline aimed at tranquilizing the mind. Through such an effort, the monk is able to preserve a serenity of spirit and cheerfulness of disposition even in a turbulent world. Ch'an techniques were imported from India, but soon became thoroughly Chinese. Bodhidharma, an Indian missionary, brought Ch'an methods to China about 526 A.D. At one point in his career, he was said to have faced a blank

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 338-350. On Tantric Buddhism see J. Blofeld, *Ibid*, pp. 149-158.

wall for nine years. So engrossed did he become in his meditation that he refused to take notice of those who came to learn from him. That is, until one would-be disciple cut off his arm to prove his sincerity.

Ch'an Buddhism exhorts one to rid the mind of all conscious thoughts in order to attain enlightenment. Since the Void (*Sunya-ta*) is the goal of meditation, there is no value in reciting sacred scriptures, meditating before statues of Buddha or performing the traditional ceremonies in the pagoda. Neither is there any value in following the teachings of the eightfold path. All of these practices keep the ego at work, begetting karma and reinforcing attachment to external objects.

The true monk should allow his mind to operate freely, spontaneously, naturally. Bodhidharma himself described Ch'an as: "A special transmission outside the scriptures; no dependence upon words and letters; direct pointing to the soul of man; seeing into one's own nature."<sup>24</sup> Bodhidharma's purpose was "to make short work of the prevailing speculative thought and its companion, salvation by faith."<sup>25</sup>

Ch'an Buddhism was at the same time an affirmation of the original spirit of Buddha and a vigorous protest against popular Buddhism. As Buddha criticized the authority of the *Vedas*, Ch'an devotees opposed reliance on the Buddhist sutras. As Buddha had discouraged his disciples from debating the ontological theories of Vedanta, followers of Ch'an disregarded Mahayana metaphysics. Ch'an also pushed aside devotion to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, much as Gautama Buddha had condemned reliance on the gods and goddesses of Hinduism. In protest against both the Pure Land's promise of a Western Paradise and popular Buddhism's veneration of sacred relics—such as Buddha's tooth, hair or collarbone—Ch'an emphasized the personal quest for enlightenment, the "direct pointing to the soul of man."

The difference between folk Buddhism and Ch'an is superbly illustrated by the Chinese emperor's interview with the Zen patri-

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<sup>24</sup> C. Humphreys, *Buddhism*, Pelican Book, Harmondsworth, England, 1969, p. 67.

<sup>25</sup> /*ibid.*, p. 67.

arch. The ruler asked the patriarch what merit he could expect to receive from his building of temples and monasteries, from his promotion of Buddhist scriptures and his support of a multitude of monks and nuns. The patriarch replied, "None whatever, your Majesty!" Shocked by the Ch'an master's disregard for his pious work, the emperor then asked the monk, "Well, what *is* the first principle of Buddhism?" The patriarch responded, "Absolutely nothing." Exasperated, the monarch said, "And who are you?" "I have no idea," said the master. While the Ch'an patriarch was quite serious, the Chinese emperor was not converted to such a strange form of Buddhism.<sup>26</sup>

Among the masters of Ch'an Buddhism was the eighth century monk Hui Hai, commonly known as "The Great Pearl." Like all the Ch'an, he minimized the importance of scripture. Once one awakens to reality by achieving enlightenment, the Buddhist can forget about formal doctrine; for when a fisherman catches his fish, he has no more need for a net.<sup>27</sup> "Walking, standing, sitting, lying—all are the functioning of your nature," said Hui Hai. "In what (way) are you out of accord with it? Just go now and take a rest (i.e., set your mind at rest) for a while. As long as you are not carried away by external winds, your nature will remain like water for ever still and clear. Let nothing matter. Take good care of yourselves!"<sup>28</sup>

If one is not bothered by external matters, he does not get upset over religious differences. In Hui Hai's time, many were debating the respective virtues of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. The Ch'an master refused to get involved in such sectarian disputes. This monk said that when employed by men of great capacity, Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism are the same. All of them spring from the functioning of a single self-nature. They differ when they are understood by men of limited intellect. Whether an individual remains deluded or not is solely dependent upon his own will—not upon differences in doctrine."

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p. 181.

<sup>27</sup> J. Blofeld, trans., *The Zen Teaching of Hui Hai*, Rider & Co., London, 1462, p. 123.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, p. 128.

<sup>29</sup> */bid*, p. 103.

Ch'an Buddhism had three advantages over other Buddhist sects when persecution broke out in China. Because it did not depend on scriptures, statues or pagodas, it could function even when the Taoists and Confucianists had the emperors suppress Buddhism. Unlike other Buddhist sects, Ch'an could not be accused of being a social parasite, as all Ch'an monks were required to perform some useful labor instead of begging. In addition, the similarities between Ch'an and Taoism were so apparent that inter-religious hostility was kept at a minimum. However, by its very nature, Ch'an had a limited appeal and could never become as popular as Pure Land Buddhism.

### **Milo Fo, the Chinese Messiah**

Maitreya, the "coming Buddha" of Indian religion, was called Milo Fo<sup>30</sup> when Buddhism was brought to China. According to the Buddhist sutras, he waits in the highest heaven for the time when he will be most needed. At that point he will descend to earth—to save mankind. As with Christian messianism, ardent longing for the advent of Milo Fo coincided with periods of political disaster and social upheaval. During the Northern Wei period, a time of widespread turmoil, the statues of Sakyamuni and Milo Fo were most popular. However, in the more peaceful T'ang period primary attention was focused on Amitabha, the loving Buddha of the Pure Land Sect.<sup>31</sup>

Tao-an (312-385), the leading monk of his time, was an ardent believer in the imminent coming of Buddha. A noted translator of Sanskrit texts and an imperial advisor, he organized a cult centered on Milo Fo, conceiving of his own mission as preparation for the messiah's advent.<sup>32</sup> His teaching and views became widespread, explaining in part the large numbers of Milo Fo images that appeared in the next few centuries. Privileged classes and the masses alike awaited the appearance of Milo Fo, who would bring blessings to the earth, and by making use of the emperor, unify all of mankind.

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<sup>30</sup>. Sometimes spelled "Mi-le-fo".

<sup>31</sup> K. Ch'en, *Ibid.* p. 172.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 100, 178.

In the tenth century a curious transformation of the Buddha-to-come concept occurred.<sup>33</sup> It began with a certain fat, jovial and eccentric monk, whose name is unknown, who began to attract public notice. At first his fame spread because of his uncanny ability to predict the weather. When men saw him wearing wet sandals they could expect a storm; when they saw him squatting on a bridge sleeping contentedly, they could look forward to good weather. The monk was also known for always carrying a hemp bag. Whenever curious children would ask what the bag contained, he would empty the contents one by one, then methodically place them back in the bag. To inquisitive adults who asked him to explain the significance of the bag, like a Ch'an mystic, he would simply reply that it was as old as space. Another story is told of someone who had seen him bathing at the river; the observer noticed that the strange pot-bellied man had a third eye—a sign of occult wisdom—on his back. Henceforth, the villagers suspected that he might be the future Buddha in the flesh.

Long after the monk's death, stories and poems still circulated about how Milo Fo had appeared on the earth disguised as a fool, his fat belly uncovered and a big smile on his face.<sup>34</sup> Artists in particular became enchanted with the idea that a pot-bellied monk with a hemp bag symbolized the Maitreya ideal. Porcelain images of the Laughing Buddha soon appeared and were exported throughout the Far East.

Although Milo Fo resembles the European Santa Claus, behind his joviality is expressed a deep-seated longing for the kingdom of God to be established on the earth. Chinese foresaw and spoke of a new world to come, ruled under "the Mandate of Heaven." Therefore, like the Christian and Jewish messianic hope, the Maitreya cult was often used as justification for political or social revolt. As a result emperors and bureaucrats looked upon devotees of Milo Fo with suspicion.

Though most of the time Buddhists were inoffensive monks

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<sup>33</sup> K. Chen. *Ibid.* pp. 405-408.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. the Russian Orthodox concept of "Christ the fool", by Dostoevski in his novel *The Idiot*.

cultivating detachment and quiet meditation, they could—and did—turn into social critics and political rebels: sometimes by acclaiming a charismatic figure as the long-awaited Maitreya, sometimes by identifying a specific social protest as preparation for the advent of the Buddhist Messiah. In 613 A.D. two different monks claimed to be the expected Milo Fo; one of them even set himself up as the legitimate emperor for the new age of prosperity and peace. Both of them, however, were promptly arrested and beheaded. A more successful messianic pretender followed about a century later; she was the Empress Wu who rebelled against the T'ang emperor on the grounds that she was an incarnation of Maitreya, and as such was better qualified for the throne. Though she won a throne she brought no stability to China.

In the subsequent Sung Dynasty, Maitreya societies again caused trouble. The societies of the Hopei province (where Peking is located) united under the leadership of an army officer named Wang Tse in rebellion against the imperial government. When Wang Tse had left his home to join the army, his mother tattooed the word "fu" on his back, which meant "blessedness," undoubtedly as a good luck charm. But for the Maitreya cult members in rebellion the tattoo was considered a supernatural omen. Therefore, for them, Wang Tse was either the Messiah himself or the divinely appointed earthly ruler who would set the stage for Milo Fo's appearance. Unfortunately for the rebels, imperial troops quickly marched on their stronghold in Hopei and suppressed the revolt (circa 1047). All Maitreya societies were immediately outlawed.

Next to make trouble was the White Lotus Society. Formed about 1128 to promote Buddhist devotions, it soon ran afoul of the authorities. Because men and women met together, the group was accused of debauchery. Because it was a secret society, members were suspected to be demon-worshippers. And because they adopted white as their color they were also suspect, as white was associated with the outlawed Maitreya cult. For two centuries the organization was banned. Yet imperial disapproval forced the White Lotus Society to go underground. It provided a meeting

place for all sorts of people from bandits to freedom-fighters. Rebellions were often plotted there to drive the usurpers out of the country.

In 1337 another revolt took place, this time led by one Pang Hu, who claimed that he was preparing the way for the imminent advent of Maitreya. A generation later the "Red Kerchief Bandits" appeared. Their leader, Han Shan-t'ung, gathered an army, preaching that "the country is in great confusion, and Maitreya is coming down to be reborn." Enthusiasts traced their leader's ancestry back to a former emperor, and the revolt was expected to herald the restoration of the Sung dynasty. As an emblem of their cause they wore red kerchiefs and as a mark of their devotion they burned incense to Milo Fo.

Though Han Shan-t'ung and his insurrectionists fell to the Mongols in 1362 after gaining control of a sizable part of north China, their cause persisted. A red kerchief rebel monk named Chu Yang-Chang (1328-1398) finally drove the Mongols out of China and founded the Ming Dynasty which ruled from 1368-1644. As soon as he became emperor, he quickly suppressed all secret societies like the one which had made his own rule possible. Every political dissident was executed. As a result, many Chinese Buddhists prefer to forget the White Lotus Society.<sup>33</sup>

Though several messianic revolts occurred during the last imperial dynasty, Buddhists were not among the revolutionary forces. The Taiping rebellion against the Manchus (1850-1865) was led by a Christian psychic who claimed to be the younger brother of Jesus. His commission was to bring the kingdom of heaven to earth. Four other revolts were carried out by Muslims who resented the second class status forced on the minorities in the empire.<sup>36</sup> The Boxer rebellion (1900) was a futile effort of political reactionaries, ultra-traditionalist Confucians and anti-Christian mobs to rid China of the European imperialists. As for Sun Yat-sen's republicanism, Chiang Kai-shek's nationalism and Mao's communism, these revolutionary movements were all western-

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<sup>35</sup> K. Ch'en, *Ibid.* pp. 429-431.

<sup>36</sup> Goodrich, *Ibid.* p. 225.

oriented, anti-Confucian and anti-Buddhist as well, to varying extents. At any rate, Milo Fo had lost his appeal for the Chinese in modern times.

### III. THE MODERN PERIOD: FROM THE MANCHUS TO MAO

During the Ch'ing dynasty which survived almost to World War I, China confronted the West. Opening the door of China against her will became the avowed policy of Christian missionaries, European diplomats, and western generals. China's response to the West, both positive and negative, provides the clue to an understanding of her turbulent history for the past two centuries. As one of the three major religions of the empire, Buddhism faced a challenge of unparalleled magnitude. That it survived at all is one of the wonders of modern history.

#### Neo-Buddhist Leaders

Yang Wen-Hui (1837-1911) was the first great apostle of modern Chinese Buddhism. Born two years before the Opium War in which Great Britain attacked China and dying two days before the establishment of the republic, Yang lived through the first chapter of his nation's tragic encounter with the West. Although the political disasters of the time surely proved Gautama's fourfold truth that man's suffering results from his worldly craving, Yang's Buddhism resulted from more personal trials. When he was three years old, he was engaged to a girl of nine who later caught smallpox and became badly disfigured. Yang gallantly refused to break off the engagement and married her. Later, he found a girl whom he wished to take as a second wife. However, his first wife had just given birth to a son and refused to share her husband. Yang became depressed and it was in such a state that he found a book of Buddhist scriptures. Henceforth nothing else seemed important.

Because of his duty to support his family, Yang remained a layman. Yet his devotion to Buddhism persisted. With the help of

friends he set up a printing press for the publication of Buddhist scriptures, many copies of which had been destroyed during the Taiping rebellion.' He also obtained Buddhist books from Japan which he reprinted and distributed. While this literary revival in no way compared to the mass of Christian books published by missionaries, at least it was a start in counteracting the ignorance and bigotry with which Protestants and Catholics treated China's religious heritage.<sup>2</sup>

When Dharmapala, the Ceylonese Buddhist renovator, came back from the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893, he met Yang in Shanghai, kindling in him hope for a world-wide Buddhist mission. By 1908 Yang had prepared a textbook for monks and begun a missionary training school in his mansion. When that failed he started a Buddhist research institute which sponsored weekly lectures on the sutras for laymen. In three ways Yang was the father of the Buddhist revival: 1) by encouraging the publication and distribution of religious literature, 2) by promoting the creation of modern Buddhist seminaries, and 3) by stimulating an international outlook among Chinese Buddhists.<sup>3</sup>

T'ai-hsu (1890-1947) was Yang's well-known and active disciple. Ordained a monk at the age of fourteen, when he was seventeen he underwent an experience of spiritual enlightenment comparable to a Christian conversion experience. By reading books on political and social reform by Chinese intellectuals, he became an enthusiastic radical. Associating with anarchists and socialists. T'ai-hsu even attended secret meetings of revolutionaries and studied the writing of Marx, Kropotkin and other anti-capitalist agitators.

After Sun Yat-sen became provisional president of the new Chinese republic, T'ai-hsu organized the Association for the Ad-

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Cf. Amaury de Riencourt, *The Soul of China*, Coward-McCann, N.Y., 1958, pp. 150-152.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Holmes Welch, "Christian Stereotypes and Buddhist Realities", *The Buddhist Revival in China*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1968, pp. 222-253. Unwittingly the missionary attacks on Confucianism and Buddhism provided ammunition for the later Maoist assault on all religions.

<sup>3</sup> For details, see Welch, *Ibid.* pp. 2-10.

vancement of Buddhism with government approval. With the help of socialist laymen he next tried unsuccessfully to take over China's most famous monastery—Chin Shan located on the Yangtze river. His intention was to turn it into a modern school for monks committed to "a new Buddhism in a new China." Outraged, the conservatives organized the Chinese General Buddhist Association to protect the monasteries from radical reformers or government leaders who wished to seize Buddhist buildings for secular use. Repeatedly T'ai-hsu tried to gain control of this organization. Not until 1945 could he accomplish this ambition; but three months before the first national conference opened at Nanking in 1947, T'ai-hsu died of a stroke. At the time of the Communist usurpation of power on the mainland, the Chinese Buddhist Association claimed 4,620,000 members.

T'ai-hsu's activities on behalf of organizational unity were a small part of his contribution to Chinese Buddhism. He published a Buddhist magazine, opened a seminary and from 1923 on started ecumenical conferences for Buddhists. After conventions held in China and Japan, the monk persuaded Chiang Kai-shek to pay for him to make a tour of Europe and America on behalf of the Buddhist cause. In 1939 the Nationalist government sponsored another world lecture tour for him. While in Ceylon, T'ai-hsu encouraged Dr. Malalasekera to found the World Fellowship of Buddhists, which he did in 1950. <sup>4</sup> Despite almost insuperable obstacles and numerous setbacks the Chinese monk had sown seeds which could have produced a rebirth of Buddhism on the mainland.

There were several other leaders of the neo-Buddhist movement but these two at least reveal the direction it would have taken, if political conditions had been more favorable. While missionaries, foreign visitors and a variety of Chinese reformers reported that Buddhism rapidly declined during the Ch'ing dynasty and was in a state of decay when China became a republic, such analyses are highly suspect. It was not true that the Buddhist

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See Welch, *Ibid*, pp. 15-18, 28-33, 41-71.

monastic community had dwindled. In 1667 China had 110,000 monks, in 1930 there were 500,000.<sup>5</sup> Rather than declining, Buddhism was in the midst of a renaissance when China became a republic.

### **Buddhism in the Chinese Republic**

Most monks took no part in the stormy events which toppled the Ch'ing dynasty and created a republic. But the majority of Confucian scholars, Taoist priests and Christian clergymen were not directly involved either. However, there were some ardent champions for national reconstruction. Tsung-yang, a well-known monk, painter and poet, met Sun Yat-sen in Japan and raised funds for his revolutionary activities.<sup>6</sup> T'an Ssu-t'ung, executed by the Dowager Empress for his part in an abortive Chinese reform movement, was a student of the neo-Buddhist group. Monks at the Jade Buddha monastery in Shanghai actually organized a brigade to fight in the 1911 rebellion. In another area the abbot used monastery supplies to aid the republican troops.

When the republic was born, the Buddhists represented by far the largest organized religious group in China. While many of the successful revolutionists were indifferent to religion and a sizeable number were hostile, Buddhists still played a significant role in the leadership of post-Ch'ing China. Two Buddhist laymen served as heads of state, four as prime ministers, one as minister of agriculture, two ministers of communications, one minister of finance, one president of the supreme court and eighteen provincial governors.<sup>7</sup>

**The** political misfortunes of the republic had repercussions in the area of religion. Sun Yat-sen personally admired the American form of government but by necessity during his early years had to accept support from anyone who offered it: anarchists, ambitious politicians out of power, Marxists, impractical idealists, even a variety of foreign agents. Without the resourcefulness and deter-

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<sup>5</sup> / *ibid.*, pp. 227-237.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> Names given in Welch, *ibid.*, pp. 330-331.

mination of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, the government would have collapsed long before 1949. From 1911 on, the republic faced assaults from regional warlords, Communists and Japanese invaders.

Under the Ch'ing emperors rigid laws had been passed to restrict the expansion of Buddhist monasticism yet protect its existing institutions and properties. In many cases the Sun Yat-sen Government tried to curb Buddhism and in more cases could not protect its property. For a century, the monks had faced enemies like the Confucian literati, the Christian missionaries, the Chinese modernizers, predatory officials and bandits. The situation worsened after 1911. The republic tolerated the widespread destruction of monasteries and the ruthless expulsion of monks in many provinces. On one pretext or another, monasteries were expropriated for public schools, administrative offices, hospitals, barracks, orphanages and homes for the aged. <sup>8</sup>

Except for hastily-organized committees of monks, few raised their voices against what took place. Followers of John Dewey and Bertrand Russell, the two most popular western philosophers in republican China, encouraged campaigns against religion and/or superstition. Missionaries were delighted to see the eradication of rivals, especially as the Christians could rely on powerful foreign governments for their own protection. Modernizers, like the eminent Hu Shih <sup>9</sup>, believed a new China could only be built after the old China was reduced to rubble. As for the Communists, they looked upon the destruction of Buddhism as preparation for a later elimination of all religion.

In 1911 a Cantonese mob seized Buddhist statues from the temples and dumped them into the river. In 1929 Kwangsi province prohibited the burning of incense and candles. In 1931-32 General Feng's troops in Honan province systematically pillaged Buddhist temples, breaking off the stone heads of the statues and using the wooden ones for firewood—a policy recommended by his Chris-

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<sup>8</sup> Welch, *Mid*, pp. 25-26, 132-159.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Jerome B. Grieder, *Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1970, pp. 163-164.

tian advisers." In 1935 Yunnan province made it illegal to make obeisance to an image of the Buddha. Yet no prohibition of religious practice was ever incorporated into national law.

In defense of President Chiang, it should be said that he rather quickly recognized the danger of Marxist subversion, allied himself with responsible businessmen and political moderates, and purged his government of Communist agitators. At the same time he tried to stabilize the parts of China under his control, imposing restraints on mob violence and providing greater protection for Buddhist institutions. There was never general or official persecution of Buddhism during his regime. Although there was considerable encroachment on monastic property, and their farmlands were subject to taxation, monastic premises remained tax-exempt. Monks were not required to serve as soldiers if they preferred to enlist on first-aid teams. Most important, the government at no time tried to turn the monastic community into propaganda agents for the ruling Kuomintang party. After examining all the available evidence, a scholar concludes, "monks appear to have fared as well as the rest of the population, if not better."<sup>3</sup>

Then came Mao and the Peoples Republic, by every standard—political, moral, philosophic, artistic, and religious—the worst scourge a long-suffering China has experienced in four thousand years.

### Persecution by Mao

Because of the West's preoccupation with the tragic suppression of the Christian churches by the Maoist dictatorship, little publicity has been given to the Red Chinese persecution of Buddhists. More recently, since efforts have been made to normalize

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<sup>3</sup> Welch, *Ibid*, p. 148. Missionaries frequently praised Feng as "the Christian general".

<sup>4</sup> Welch, *Ibid*, pp. 155-156. For a detailed report on what it was like to be a monk in 20th century China, see the biography of Abbot Miao-Chi (1895-1930) written by his friend, the Norwegian Lutheran missionary K. L. Reichelt: *The Transformed Abbot*, Lutterworth Press, London, 1954. Miao-Chi, a disciple of T'ai-Hsu, was one of the leaders of neo-Buddhism on Japanese-occupied Formosa, turning Christian two years before his death. Missionary bias is minimal until the final chapters of the book.

relations between the United States and the People's Republic, the brutal aspects of Mao's regime have been carefully hidden. For example, a popular handbook on China states that as for religion, there have been no conflicts of major consequence. Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism are not organized religions, we are told, so they have no politically conscious theology that would clash with government ideology. Nor do they possess any entrenched power by which to resist the implementation of state socialism. Therefore the handbook reports that the Communists experienced little difficulty in confiscating Buddhist monastic lands or expropriating temples for use as offices and schools. Buddhist monks "accepted" government orders to abandon their profession and took up productive jobs like any lay citizens. The People's Republic allows certain harmless ceremonies to continue among the older folk but it knows that religion lacks appeal to youngsters and will die out.<sup>12</sup> Although this picture of contemporary China has become the fashionable one in colleges and among "progressive" historians, it ignores half the facts, completely distorting the situation as we shall show.

Once Maoist armies had successfully subjugated the Chinese mainland, the Communists launched a savage attack upon Buddhism. According to a Japanese Buddhist magazine, using information obtained at the third World Buddhist Conference at Rangoon, prior to 1949 there had been 130,000 temples in China; by 1955 less than a hundred had survived. In Peking, long famed for its magnificent temples, only three still remained even physically intact, two of these having been converted into factories while the third served as a concentration camp for monks. Shanghai, Nanking and Hangchow, formerly filled with hundreds of temples, were reduced to one each. Large numbers of priests, monks and nuns had been murdered when the Communists came to power; many committed suicide in despair, died in jail or were executed as enemies of the regime. By 1955, not more than 2500 Buddhist monks and nuns remained alive in Red China. Fortunately,

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<sup>12</sup> Ping-Chai Kuo, *China*, Oxford University Press, London, 1963, p. 109.

a considerable number had escaped to Taiwan where they could be protected by the Chiang Kai-shek Nationalists.

The destruction of Buddhist property by the Marxists was appalling. Many Buddha images of artistic value or historical significance were transferred to the Soviet Union in exchange for military supplies. Others were simply smashed by Maoist soldiers or revolutionary mobs. Buddhist scriptures in the temples, many of which were priceless antiques, were burned. Laymen were ordered to surrender their religious books to local Red authorities who promptly destroyed them. Again, however, some rare books and precious religious art were carried to safety by the Nationalists.

Such acts of brutal suppression and pillage were in accord with the dialectical materialist ideology of the usurpers. While some looting and vandalism were to be expected in a period of national turmoil, when Maoist authority was imposed on the populace, Red officials legalized the closing or destruction of most Buddhist temples and monasteries. A German theologian who made a careful examination of the available data concluded that the Buddhist priesthood and the monastic communities were decimated.<sup>13</sup>

By brutally liquidating the Buddhist leadership and virtually eliminating Buddhism as a religious, educational or cultural force in China, Mao was simply following the Stalinist party line. According to the Great Soviet Encyclopedia (1938 edition), Buddhists are guilty of suppressing workers' protests against feudal exploitation because of their exhortations to be peaceful, compassionate and humble, making no resistance to evil. In Marxist opinion, monasteries provide strongholds of the counter-revolution and seedbeds for imperialistic espionage. Yet there were a half dozen factors in the Chinese situation which made the classic hostility of Russian Marxism to the Orthodox Church

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<sup>13</sup> Ernst Benz, *Buddhism or Communism*, Doubleday and Co., N.Y., 1965, p. 178. Legal measures enacted against Chinese Buddhism took several forms: government seizure of all lands owned by monasteries and temples, condemnation of the religious leaders as reactionary landlords, classification of monks as social parasites and execution of some priests and abbots as enemies of the people (K. Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*, pp. 462-463).

inapplicable to Buddhism: 1) Chinese Buddhism was neither the state religion nor the representative of pre-Communist national ideology; 2) Buddhism had already suffered greatly as the result of the West's impact on 19th and 20th century China; 3) Christian missionary schools and publications had long condemned Buddhism as an old-fashioned and backward faith unsuitable to the new China; 4) Communists could treat Buddhism as the basis for an ancient Asian culture which was non-Western yet international so potentially useful; 5) Buddhism was far less a political or ideological threat than Christianity; and finally, 6) from Sun Yat-sen's time on, some form of state socialism was advocated by most of the architects of China's republican ideology, including the Buddhist intelligentsia.<sup>14</sup>

Hence, in the light of this situation, once the Maoists had stripped Buddhism of its wealth, lands and leadership, they could transform it into "a kind of religious museum under state supervision." Although there could be no real place for a living Buddhism in Maoist China, the dead Buddhism of the past nineteen centuries could be praised as a precious cultural heritage. Historic temples and pagodas were restored as national monuments. Government archaeologists began excavating ancient ruins. Buddhist art masterpieces received government protection. Scholars were encouraged to write articles for the great encyclopedia of Buddhism being produced in Sri Lanka and did so. In 1956 the Chinese Buddhist Academy was opened to study the Buddhist heritage in Chinese literature and to correspond regularly with Buddhist scholars in other countries. Classic scriptural texts and commentaries have since been translated into Chinese and published in attractive editions.

When non-Marxist Japanese delegations were at last allowed to visit Red China, they saw Buddhist temples being restored, young monks studying at the Buddhist University in Peking and many active Buddhist societies in China's large cities. Chinese representatives at the Rangoon ecumenical conference claimed

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" Benz. *Ibid.* pp. 179-182.

*Ibid.*, p. 183.

that the Communist-authorized Buddhist Association of China had 263,125 charter members, represented 4,500,000 Buddhists, administered eleven colleges and eleven other schools, supervised six libraries, ran three publishing houses and published eight magazines. Representatives from the Buddhist Association took part in conferences held in Rangoon, Colombo (Sri Lanka), Tokyo, Kyoto, and Cambodia."

In the opinion of Maoist theoreticians, Chinese Buddhism could serve two useful purposes: be a reminder of China's cultural superiority by contrast with the "decadent West"; and also, provide a convenient propaganda agency in promoting friendly relations with neighboring Buddhist nations of Asia. Both as a means for reinforcing China's pride and as a convenient tool of Maoist foreign policy, Buddhism could and has been helpful."

From the Chinese Communist standpoint, the People's Republic was virtually encircled by enemies: a reconstructed Japan, democratic India, American-supported Korea, the Nationalist stronghold of Taiwan protected by the U.S. fleet, and a Soviet Union which too often meddled in the internal affairs of the Chinese nation. By creating the image of being a friend of Asian self-determination and a patron of international Buddhism, Red China resolved to gradually influence her neighbors, producing a ring of nations sympathetic to her cause. Promoting Buddhism was one technique employed by the Maoist foreign ministry in pursuit of its long-range goal to dominate the Far East.

When the Chinese invaded and conquered Tibet, mercilessly massacring large numbers of lamas, ruthlessly destroying most of the Buddhist institutions and causing the Dalai Lama to seek asylum in India, what had happened to Buddhism in China was repeated on a smaller scale, though with far greater savagery. While the International Commission of Jurists condemned the Maoist subjugation of Tibet as "genocide," Chinese Buddhist

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According to their magazine *Modern Buddhism*, the Chinese Buddhist Association in 1960 represented 500,000 monks and 100,000,000 Buddhist laymen. K. Ch'en believes these figures are just guesses. (*Buddhism in China*. pp. 464. 465).

<sup>17</sup> Benz, *Ibid*, pp. 188-189.

spokesmen defended their government's foreign policy. To the sixth Buddhist ecumenical conference meeting in Cambodia in 1961, the Chinese delegation explained that the Dalai Lama and his fellow refugees were reactionaries from the Tibetan upper classes who had imposed feudalistic slavery on the masses. Maoist intervention had cleansed Buddhist monasteries so they could recover their original usefulness. Destruction in Tibet was caused not by the Chinese liberators but by reactionary Tibetans who had fomented an unsuccessful rebellion against the masses. China has rebuilt the monasteries and was helping the lamas restore the pure doctrine of Buddha, it was said."

However, according to the Dalai Lama, the former chief executive of the Tibetan government and the highest authority in Tantric Buddhism, the Maoist occupation army indulged in a mad orgy of destruction and massacre.'<sup>9</sup> Tens of thousands of Tibetans were summarily executed without trial on suspicion of being anti-communist, hoarding money or belonging to the upper classes, but mainly because they would not renounce their religion. Lamas were especially persecuted on charges that they were unproductive parasites living off the earnings of the masses. "The Chinese tried to humiliate them, especially the elderly and most respected, before they tortured them, by harnessing them to ploughs, riding them like horses, whipping and beating them, and other methods too evil to mention. And while they were slowly putting them to death, they taunted them with their religion, calling on them to perform miracles to save themselves from pain and death."<sup>2</sup>

When the West did nothing and the United Nations passed useless resolutions, the Dalai Lama declared:

"We should not seek revenge on those who have committed crimes against us, or reply to their crimes with other crimes. We

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. pp. 196-200.

-- Cf. "The Question of Tibet and the Rule of Law" and "Tibet and the Chinese People's Republic" (International Commission of Jurists, Geneva, 1959, 1960) for confirmation of the Maoist atrocities. The International Commission is an independent association of lawyers from fifty nations.

20 The Dalai Lama, *My Land and My People*, p. 222.

should reflect that by the law of Karma, they are in danger of lowly and miserable lives to come, and that our duty to them, as to every being, is to help them to rise toward Nirvana, rather than let them sink to lower levels of rebirth. . . . My hope rests in the courage of Tibetans, and the love of truth and justice which is still in the heart of the human race; and my faith is in the compassion of Lord Buddha."

### **New Buddhism for a New China**

In the opening decade of the present century, Chinese intellectuals busied themselves with plans for a national reawakening. While some tried to turn their back on the present, notably the Dowager Empress Tz'u Hsi, and some were ardent Westernizers, a few maintained that Confucius was the true guardian spirit of the Han civilization and his teachings should become the official state religion for the new China. Liang Ch'i-ch'ao (1873-1929), a brilliant political philosopher whose knowledge of western thought matched his reformist enthusiasm, looked instead to Mahayana Buddhism for guidance in reconstructing his nation.<sup>22</sup>

For Liang, religion was to be judged by its ability to motivate men for moral and political action. A vital religion should give men hope, inspiring them to better themselves and society. Because believers are sure of the existence of the soul and an afterlife, they never despair. Secondly, religious faith should encourage people to transcend worldly satisfactions and entanglements, keeping them resolute in their devotion to righteousness. Thirdly, the devout should overcome the natural fear of death and become a fountainhead of courageous spirit." On the basis of this psychological and sociological definition of religion, Liang felt justified in commending Buddhism as the best faith for the new China.

Rejecting Confucianism because it was not really a religion,

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<sup>21</sup> Ibiti, p. 234.

<sup>22</sup> Hao Chang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China, 1890-1907*, Rainbow-Bridge Book Co., Taipei, 1971.

<sup>23</sup> Chang, *ibid.*, p. 231. Liang used as historical examples Oliver Cromwell. Prime Minister Gladstone, Lincoln and Japanese Zen Buddhists.

he also pointed out the superiority of Buddhism to its Chinese rivals, Taoism and Christianity. Instead of playing upon men's addiction to superstition, Buddhism generates faith in philosophical enlightenment which has transforming power. As the Mahayana sacred writings teach, men attain Buddhahood when they cultivate compassion and wisdom. There can be no incompatibility between reason and religion, as Hu Shih and other secularists alleged, when both extol the quest for enlightenment.

Liang commended Buddhism over other religions because it, more than the rest, sought universal rather than merely individual perfection. As the Bodhisattva vows to labor for the sake of others, Buddhists in the new China would selflessly devote themselves to the nation and its welfare. In Liang's mind the Bodhisattva could provide a model for the patriot, citizen and public servant. The basic Mahayana spirit of sacrificial service could save China and restore the whole world. According to the sutras, Buddha should descend into hell and stay to make hell perfect.<sup>24</sup>

For Liang, another mark of Buddhism's superiority is its teaching that all men are equal because all can become Buddhas. Other faiths ask men to bow—Confucianists to the Son of Heaven, Christians to God the Father. For Buddhists, the same Buddha-nature exists in every human mind. Buddhism recognizes no unbridgeable gap between Buddha and the ordinary man.

Also, Buddhism teaches that one can be saved only through his own efforts. The law of karma means a man is rewarded or punished on the basis of his deeds alone. In the Buddhist philosophy, the new citizen of China can find inspiration for both voluntarism and activism. Of course, in describing Mahayana in such terms—as a call to energetic self-reliance and strenuous public-spiritedness—Liang ignores both the monastic side of Buddhism and the popular Pure Land cult of the saving Amitabha.

History, however, never gave Liang's neo-Buddhism an opportunity to be tested, except to a limited degree at Hong Kong and on Taiwan. In neither case has Buddhism been a government-sup-

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<sup>24</sup> Chang, *!bid*, p. 235.

ported faith but only one of many contesting ideologies. Still unknown then are the effects of a "new Buddhism in a new China".

## IV. KOREAN BUDDHISM

### Early Buddhism

Buddhism was brought to Korea in the middle of the nine-hundred-year Three Kingdom Period—when Korea was composed of three kingdoms: Koguryo, Paekche and Silla. It was the first of the world religions to be imported to that country. A king from north China sent the monk Sundo with copies of the scriptures and a statue of Buddha to the Koguryo court of King Sosoorim in 372 A.D. Two years later the monk Ado arrived and the next year two temples were erected, showing how quickly Buddhism took root.<sup>1</sup> Chinese Buddhism emphasized the value of *one* vehicle by which all men attain Nirvana and therefore was a faith which embraced both Theravada's "little" vehicle and Mahayana's "big" one. It was this teaching which was introduced into Korea. Koguryo Buddhism was derived from Nagajuna's interpretation of the Middle Path and represented a pioneering effort of the *Sun* (Ch'an) school.

The kingdom of Paekche received Buddhism in 384. A monk named Marananda came from India by way of China as its first missionary. In Paekche Buddhism prospered and from there were sent the earliest missionaries to Japan (545 A. D.).<sup>2</sup> Unlike the *Sun* Buddhism of Koguryo, that in Paekche emphasized dharma—the law, doctrine, scriptural study—so was called *Kvo* ("dogmatic") Buddhism.<sup>3</sup>

A little later Buddhism from Koguryo was brought to the Silla kingdom by the monk Ado during the reign of King Nulji (417-

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<sup>1</sup> Ilyon, Sanzjuk Yusa, Tae-Hung Ha and G.K. Mintz translation, Yonsei University Press, Seoul, 1972, Book III, chapter lix, p. 177.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 178.

<sup>3</sup> Tong Sik Yu, Korean Religions and Christianity, Seoul, 1973, pp. 40-67 (in Korean).

458). However, it encountered much resistance—Silla had a strong sense of cultural self-identity and naturally objected to the spread of an alien faith. But once the foreign religion won acceptance it experienced healthy growth. Because of Silla's vitality and confidence, it was here that Buddhism reached new heights.

According to modern historians <sup>4</sup>, Korean Buddhism was like a child during the Three Kingdom period and experienced its youth during the subsequent five centuries of the unified Silla period. The five-hundred-year rule of the succeeding Koryo dynasty should be thought of as the adult period (935-1392), and its successor the Yi dynasty, 1392-1910, represents an age of rapid decline, when most of the time Confucianism was the favored state ideology and Buddhist monks retreated to secluded mountain monasteries to live as hermits.

As mentioned above, unlike Koguryo and Paekche which eagerly welcomed the new religion from T'ang China, Silla had to experience labor pains in order for Buddhism to appear. Because Silla had a strong indigenous faith and philosophy, numerous obstacles were placed in the path of the Buddhist missionaries for about a century. Until the courtier Ech'adon showed that Buddhism was worth dying for, the faith was strongly opposed and its adherents treated with scorn.

### **Ech'adon the Martyr**

In 527 A.D., during the reign of King Pophung, a minor court official named Ech'adon, only twenty-five years old, realized that the monarch longed to build a temple and spread Buddhism in his nation so that all the people might receive eternal blessings. However, the royal desire had been thwarted because of opposition from courtiers who felt that temple-building was a wasteful extravagance for a small and poor country. Convinced that the king's wish represented the divine will, Ech'adon went ahead and ordered that trees be cut down to erect the sanctuary. In fact, he told the workmen that his orders had come from the king. He deliberately

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<sup>4</sup> Hong 11 Sik, *Yukdang Studies*, II Sin Sa, Seoul, 1959; also Tongsik Ryu, *Christian Faith Encounters the Religions of Korea*, Christian Literature Society, Seoul, 1965.

lied, knowing that he would be killed for issuing orders without proper authorization, because he believed his nation would accept Buddhism only if he offered his own life as a sacrifice. When the shocked and angry courtiers accused Ech'adon of acting illegally, the king had no alternative but to execute the young man, even though he recognized his noble intentions.

Summoned before the court and threatened with death, Ech'adon replied, "One man's earthly life is precious, but the eternal lives of many people are far more valuable. If I vanish with the morning dew today, the life-giving Buddhist faith will arise with the blazing sun tomorrow."<sup>5</sup>

According to the *Samguk Yusa*, when the executioner's sword came down on the young official's neck, the spouting blood turned as white as milk and the head flew up into the air and dropped far away on Diamond Mountain at the outskirts of the capital. Suddenly dark clouds covered the sky, followed by thunder, lightning and wild rain. It seemed as if heaven and earth had turned upside down, reported the chronicler.<sup>6</sup>

King and courtiers were astounded. They immediately recognized that the execution should never have taken place and were terrified by the anger of heaven. In the presence of the now-repentant nobles, the monarch solemnly announced that they should all resolve to devote their lives to Buddha and commanded that the whole nation would henceforth follow Buddhist teachings. Although the details of this story may be questioned, there is no reason to reject its substance. Through Ech'adon's martyrdom, Silla Buddhism underwent rapid development and expansion.

### The Hwarang Do

When Chinhung ascended the Silla throne in 540 A.D. he devoted himself to the spread of Buddhism. According to the *Samguk Yusa*, he founded the military order of *Hwarang Do* ("Flower Youth"), a chivalrous band roughly comparable to King Arthur's knights of the Round Table. Believing he could enhance

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*Samguk Yusa*, bk. III, lxii.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 186-189.

his rule by training an elite corps, the monarch gathered together youths from good families who were physically attractive and morally pure. These men were taught the five cardinal principles of human relationships—kindness, courtesy, justice, wisdom and trustworthiness—as well as being instructed in the arts of archery, horsemanship, calligraphy, mathematics and court etiquette.'

Religious dedication also played an important part in the *Hwarang Do*. To be initiated into the Order of the Flower, the youthful candidates would make a trip deep into the Korean mountains where they would engage in special exercises of self-discipline and pray for the gift of mystical power. At the conclusion of their devotions they communed with the mountain god, asking him to consecrate them and bless their swords. Later, whenever a national emergency arose, the *Hwarang* would return to the mountain for solemn prayers, before going to war.

The *hwarang* spirit soon became the foundation of the Silla national morality. Basing their lives as warriors and courtiers on a five point moral code, the flower knights 1) served their king with unquestioning loyalty, 2) honored their parents with filial piety, 3) treated friends with sincerity, 4) fought bravely and 5) killed living things mercifully.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the *Hwarang Do* produced loyal officials, dutiful sons, brave generals and dedicated soldiers willing to live and die for the nation.

Silla Buddhism was characterized by an affirmation of the oneness of the sacred and the secular. Primitive Buddhism required that one leave his family and abandon the householder's life so that through meditation and monastic discipline he could achieve enlightenment and enter Nirvana. By contrast, Mahayana Buddhism is less concerned about the mode of achieving tranquillity of spirit—whether by leaving one's home or remaining a householder—but rather stresses the ultimate goal of attaining enlightenment for oneself and others through inspiration derived from the Bodhisattva ideal. Whereas Theravadins aim for personal perfec-

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Han Woo-keun, *History of Korea*, Eul-You Pub., Seoul, 1970, pp. 61, 80, 107.

<sup>8</sup> "Five Commandments of Hwarang". a moral code worked out by the 6th century Buddhist monk Won-gwang Daesa.

tion by becoming Buddhas, Mahayanists work for the perfection of the nation and all society through compassionate devotion to the welfare of the multitudes. According to the Silla Buddhists, both individual and social perfection are needed. Hence, *Tongbulgyo*—the unique creation of Korean Buddhists—went beyond both Indian Theravada and Mahayana teaching. It surpassed also the Chinese combination of the two classical schools. Silla monks sought the one, all-embracing truth which reconciles and sublates the sacred and the secular. This higher synthesis was called Tong Buddhism.

### Wonhyo

At the heart of Silla Buddhism was the thought of Wonhyo (617-686). His teaching represents not just the core of Silla Buddhism but also the apex of Buddhist philosophy in Korean history. According to some modern scholars, Indian Buddhism was introductory and Chinese Buddhism was sectarian but Korea established "conclusive Buddhism." Or to express it in another way, "the Bodhi tree had its roots in India, branched and blossomed in China and bore fruit in Korea."<sup>9</sup> If this claim be true, it was due to Wonhyo's contribution to Buddhist philosophy.

In fact, of all the Buddhist intellectuals from Korea he is unquestionably the most important. Even though he did not enter the monastic order until he was twenty-nine, he rather quickly attained fame as a speaker and author, abbot and royal advisor. An amazingly productive writer, Wonhyo prepared more than 240 volumes. Often the king and nobles asked him to preach, so that he had enormous influence as a public leader and became the chief spokesman for Korean unity. As a Confucian scholar and Buddhist philosopher, Wonhyo won praise from Chinese monks and was also highly esteemed in Japan.

Living at the time when the Silla kingdom subjugated its traditional rivals, Paekche and Koguryo, Wonhyo sought an ideology which could unify Korea. But first of all, he had to unify the

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<sup>9</sup> Chong Ik Gi, *Life and Thought of Wonhyo* (in Korean).

Buddhists. A unified Buddhism was necessary for a united nation.<sup>10</sup>

At age thirty-four Wonhyo achieved enlightenment. While on his way to T'ang China for further study, he accidentally fell asleep between two graves. Awaking late at night, he felt thirsty and began searching for something to drink. In the darkness he found some water in a container and drank it. Next morning, much to his horror he found he had drunk from a human skull. Yet at that moment, Wonhyo attained enlightenment. Suddenly he realized that one's attitude determines the worth and even the existence of things. As he put it, when the heart is dead, there is nothing left but an empty skull. What we call the three worlds are merely mind; all objects are nothing but data of consciousness.

Once he had achieved enlightenment, there was no longer any reason for studying abroad. While his fellow-monk continued his trip to China, Wonhyo returned home and turned his house into a training center for monks.

Henceforth Wonhyo taught that everything originates in the human heart. This idea was the basic concept of the Flower Garland sect which originated in China and was based on the *Avatamsaka Sutra*.<sup>11</sup> However, for Wonhyo its truth was a matter of personal experience and direct insight. "Oneness of heart" was the meaning of his enlightenment. He realized that there is nothing but consciousness: feelings of impermanence and suffering are only subjective. They appear and disappear within the mind and have no external reality. Individual objects likewise only appear to stand over against each other. In the state of enlightenment, an individual recognizes how everything interpenetrates everything else; the real world is "Boundless," in which all are one and one is all. Differences vanish: substance and phenomena are alike; contrast is sameness; being is the Void.

For Wonhyo, because reality is boundless, life and death are one. Suffering and emancipation cannot be separated. Buddha and

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le Hong Jung-Shik, "Thought and Life of Wonhyo" in Chun Shin-Yong, ed., *Buddhist Culture in Korea*, International Cultural Foundation, Seoul, 1974, pp. 15-30.

<sup>11</sup> Called the *Hwaom sect* (Korean) or *Kegon* and *Hosso* sects (Japanese).

the ordinary masses of people have a common origin, common nature and common destiny. Upon this fundamental *Hwajiang* concept, Wonhyo based his entire philosophy." His thought and his life exemplified the sole reality of the Boundless.

Applying the *Hwajiang* idea to the religious situation, Wonhyo created *Tongbulgyo*, all-encompassing Buddhism. In China Buddhism had split into thirteen rival sects; in Korea in the 7th century there were five sects and nine schools, each with a shrine on nine different holy mountains. Wonhyo's Tong Buddhism was designed to harmonize conflicting interpretations and unify the competing sects.

According to Wonhyo, all the sutras were parts of scripture, just as a single great river might have ten thousand tributaries. By becoming attached to one text or one school, Buddhists ignore the Boundless. Therefore, by ridding themselves of attachments and becoming disinterested or detached, as Gautama taught, Buddhists would once again recognize the harmony and vitality of their faith. Truth can be found in each of a hundred theories, because when an individual looks at them without prejudice, all are one and one is all.

Wonhyo also applied the *Hwajiang* ideal to the alleged contrast between the sacred and the secular. In the light of the Boundless, how can there be a difference between this world and Nirvana? What substantially differentiates the layman from the monk? According to Wonhyo, since there are no real barriers which separate ordinary people from the Buddha, all men therefore possess the Buddha-nature. Throughout his life, Wonhyo desired to evangelize the whole world by awakening every individual to his true status as a Buddha. In the spirit of a Bodhisattva, he roamed the streets, dressed in secular garb and lived outside the monastery. Like a wandering minstrel, he sang, danced and beat on a gourd, spreading Buddhism among the masses. Sometimes he

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. the similar teachings of contemporary Won Buddhism called "Everytime Zen, Everywhere Zen": "Creation is the incarnation of Buddha-nature, therefore even a blade of grass, a tree, a bird or beast is none other than Buddha." *Manual of Won Buddhism*, Ifi City, Korea, 1974, p. 7.

dressed like a beggar and at other times he wore the robes of an abbot to preach in a temple. Refusing to be restricted by laws, tradition or formality, he was the Bodhisattva of emancipation. Wonhyo was never tied down, and even went so far as to break the vow of celibacy, producing a son." Because he believed in the Boundless, he was both the great abbot and an unfrocked monk. In his eyes, since all is the Void, nothing separates the robed priest chanting holy sutras at a shrine from the common laborer drinking and singing in a pub. The secular was sacred and religion was daily life. For the chief philosopher of Silla Buddhism, the ideals of universalism, harmony and practicality were essential for a perfect faith.

### **Koryo Buddhism**

Although the Silla period is customarily described as an age of youthful vitality, the Koryo period which followed did not produce a fully mature Buddhism. Only the first hundred years (935-1035) were something Buddhists could be proud of, but even that time represented external expansion and the opportunity to exercise temporal power rather than an enrichment of the content of the religion. At best Koryo Buddhism merely utilized the faith inherited from the Silla age. Furthermore, after a brief period of visible prosperity, Buddhism declined in spiritual power during the Koryo dynasty and ultimately caused the kingdom to decline as well.<sup>14</sup>

Buddhism's alliance with the throne was a major factor in its outward growth, but also its most serious weakness. Wang-kun, who founded the Koryo dynasty, believed that his ascent to the throne was due to Buddha's help and therefore he made Dosun, his favorite monk, the royal priest and proceeded to erect 3800 temples. In addition he gave vast farmlands to the monasteries and proclaimed that two Buddhist festivals were henceforth to be celebrated as national holidays.

During the Koryo period, monks became directly aligned

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<sup>13</sup> *Saniguk Yusa*, CIII.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Allen D. Clark, *Religions of Old Korea*, Seoul, 1961, pp. 11-90.

with the secular power structure." But expanding power and wealth for the monks inevitably led to abuses and corruption. Gradually the average man became disenchanted by what he saw going on in the temples. In addition, Confucian scholars at court voiced strong opposition to Buddhism. There was widespread hostility to the excesses of monks; especially toward those like Sin Ton, who virtually ruled the palace in the final years of the Koryo dynasty."

Buddhism has always found it easy to absorb the beliefs and practices of the indigenous folk religions. This syncretism also greatly damaged Koryo Buddhism. Numerous shamanistic elements became attached to the faith. Divination based on the yin-yang theory was almost universally practiced; and in some cases the fortune teller guided every action of the king. Buddhism soon lost its original identity: believers treated it as a magical way to avert disaster, bring worldly blessings and assure physical happiness.

Finally, at a time when the government had depleted its wealth in expensive shrines and elaborate Buddhist festivals, opposition at every level—from the court, the scholars and the masses—greatly increased. Efforts were made to reduce the number of monasteries, expropriate temple lands, discourage candidates for the priesthood and suppress the immorality of monks and nuns. Confucianism was extolled as a superior philosophy. Weddings and funerals were conducted according to Confucian rather than Buddhist rites in order to cut down the usefulness of the priestly class. Thus, even in the Koryo period, preparation was taking place for the official repudiation of Buddhism by the dynasty to follow.

In spite of the merely external splendor of Koryo Buddhism and the superstitions of the masses, the age did produce a few great abbots. The most famous was Uichun, a king's son who became a

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<sup>15</sup> Tae Hung Ha, *Korea—Forty Three Centuries*, Yonsei University Press, Seoul, 1962, pp. 50, 65-69.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. R. Rutt, *History of the Korean People*, Royal Asiatic Society, Seoul, 1972, pp. 213-216.

monk. He studied both Buddhism and Confucianism, completing his education with a trip to Sung China. Recognizing the greatness of Wonhyo, he attempted to carry out the One Mind and *Hwajiang* concepts by unifying the two rival Buddhist sects of Sun and Kyo. Also worthy of mention is Ilyon (1206-1289), author of *theSamguk Yusa* (Memoirs of the Three Kingdoms).

### **The Yi Dynasty and Afterward**

For a thousand years Buddhism in Korea enjoyed unhindered growth and for most of the time it benefitted from unlimited state patronage. Yet repeatedly the monks abused this freedom and their privileged position. As historians point out, Korean Buddhism gradually became so decadent that it almost invited supervision from the government, and at the end of the Koryo dynasty nearly everybody was calling for reform. As a result, the new Yi dynasty initiated what was to become a long period of persecution. From 1392-1910 Yi kings conducted their campaign of oppression, although the intensity of the persecution varied greatly and occasionally a ruler favored the Buddhist cause.

Under the first Yi monarch, opposition to Buddhism became government policy. Temple lands were seized by the state. Monks and nuns were encouraged and sometimes forced to become laymen. Buddhist holidays were abolished, temple treasures were taken by the government. No longer were Buddhist prayers recited in the palace; and for a time, no monk was allowed to set foot in the capital city.

After the most extreme measures were carried out, a reaction took place, giving Buddhism a temporary revival. Great abbots like Sosan Daesa and Samyungdang emerged. When the Japanese invaded Korea in the sixteenth century, these men organized and led armies of monks against the enemy. Consequently, for a brief period Buddhism rewon popular support and official favor.

On the whole, however, the many centuries of Yi rule were disastrous for Buddhism. From the 16th century on, it looked as though the religion would be reduced to the point of extinction. Later, the situation did not improve when in addition to the enmity

of Confucian scholars, the Buddhists faced both Christian missionaries from the West and a popular new indigenous religion, *Chondogyo*.

After the Japanese annexation of Korea, Buddhist conditions improved somewhat. Besides having its own historic interest in the Buddhist cause, Japan began to promote the religion as a tool of its imperialistic ambitions in the Far East. With its social position made more favorable, Korean Buddhism began to see light again. The monks and nuns were never pro-Japanese but they welcomed the removal of the Yi dynasty oppression."

Independence came to Korea at the end of World War II; Buddhism then experienced an even greater revival. Whereas in 1920 the census takers found 150,000 Buddhists, by 1974 the number had risen to more than eight million. is

Looking back over fifteen hundred years of Korean Buddhism, one can see that it has been predominated by Wonhyo's emphasis on oneness. In addition to Wonhyo's *Tong bulgyo*<sup>9</sup> of his own time, Uicheon of the Koryo period borrowed Wonhyo's ideas when he tried to unify the two sects and nine schools which divided Buddhism in his day. Then, in the Yi dynasty, Great Abbot Sosan Daesa was also a disciple of Wonhyo, urging monks to study both Sun and Kyo. According to his plan, Sun monks should be trained in Kyo doctrine and practices as a preliminary to their use of Sun meditation. He insisted that chanting and Zen are both necessary if Buddhists wish to be successful in mass evangelism. As the founder of the Chogyo-jong sect, his whole life was dedicated to the ideal of religious harmony. In every period of Korean history, the noblest monks were spokesmen for the unifying spirit.

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<sup>9</sup> Among the most famous Buddhist monks was Han Yong-woon (1879-1944): signer of the 1919 Declaration of Independence, novelist, poet and religious reformer. Cf. Yom Mu-Woong, "Life and Thought of Han Yong-woon" in Chun, ed., *Buddhist Culture in Korea*, pp. 97ff.

<sup>10</sup> According to the Korean Overseas Information Service, in 1975 there were an estimated 7,986,000 Buddhists.

## V. JAPANESE BUDDHISM

### Gift from Korea

Buddhism was introduced to Japan from Korea with gifts of books, statues and sacred banners from the king of Kudara (Paekche) to the emperor in the year 545 A.D. Later the Korean monarch sent to the Japanese court a Buddhist priest, a nun, an ascetic, an image-maker and a professional chanter of the sutras. Although the new faith was opposed by traditionalists who warned that the Shinto gods would get angry if an alien faith were allowed, in time Buddhism won the allegiance of powerful courtiers and the favor of the emperor.

Particularly valuable was the support of Crown Prince Shotoku (574-621). During the thirty-five year reign of his imperial aunt, he controlled the administration of the government and served as a patron for the Buddhist religion. Korean priests became his spiritual tutors and through them Chinese culture was spread widely throughout the empire. Besides commissioning the erection of Buddhist statues and encouraging the public celebration of Buddhist festivals, Prince Shotoku welcomed the introduction of the Chinese lunar calendar, the yin-yang philosophy, paper making, the use of India ink and the science of astrological astronomy. As a result of his religious zeal, the crown prince has been called the Constantine of Japanese Buddhism. <sup>1</sup>

Shotoku was attracted to the imported faith because of his own belief in the teachings of the Mahayana *Lotus Sutra* and also because of the usefulness of Buddhism as a symbol of the advanced Chinese civilization. While recognizing Buddhism as the religion of the throne and empire, Shotoku continued to respect the Shinto shrines and promoted the social ethic of Confucianism. According to him, Shinto explains Japan's divine beginnings, Confucian morality guides man's present life, while Buddhism reveals the nature of the afterlife. <sup>2</sup>

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Hajime Nakamura, *History of the Development of Japanese Thought*, Japan Cultural Society, Tokyo, 1969, vol. I, pp. 1 - 38.

<sup>2</sup> Robert C. Armstrong, *An Introduction to Japanese Buddhist Sects*, Hunter Rose Co., Canada (privately printed), 1950, p. 7.

## Eminent Monks and Buddhist Teachers

Japanese Buddhism was shaped by a succession of remarkable monks who combined the talents of the scholar, administrator and sectarian leader.

1. Kobo Daishi (774-835 A.D.) showed how Shinto and Buddhism could be reconciled. The universe, he said, is made up of two distinct yet related parts: the Womb World and the Diamond World. The Womb World is material and female; the Diamond World is spiritual and male. Shintoist worship of the sun goddess recognizes the importance of the Womb World and Buddhism reveres the Great Master of the Heavens who rules the Diamond World. <sup>3</sup>

2. Honen Shonen (1133-1212), founder of the Jodo sect, was a particularly successful evangelist for the message of salvation by faith in Amida. <sup>4</sup> So persuasive was Honen's preaching that soldiers gave up their military careers, prostitutes became nuns, robbers confessed their sins, and even the chief official of the imperial court became one of his disciples.

Naturally, the concept of salvation by faith alone aroused criticism from other Buddhist leaders and led to disregard for the conventional moral code. Monks began to eat meat and drink wine; a few even forsook the rule of celibacy. Although many continued to revere Honen as "a living image of the Bodhisattva Maitreya," complaints grew until the emperor banished him and his followers from the capital city of Kyoto. This edict only reinforced the determination of the Jodo Buddhists who proceeded to preach the saving Amida prayer throughout the country. <sup>5</sup> Shortly before his death Honen was pardoned so he could return to Kyoto in triumph. By preaching salvation based on the infinite mercy of Amida he became the great Buddhist "saint" for rich and poor, high and low, men and women.

3. Eisai Zenshi and Dogen Zenshi Eisai Zenshi (1141-1215) founded the Japanese sect of Rinzai Zen, after spending five years

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<sup>3</sup> Mid, pp. 16-18.

H.H. Coates and Ryugaku Ishizuka, *Honen the Buddhist Saint*, Kyoto, 1925.

<sup>5</sup> For another Pure Land leader, see Alfred Bloom, *Shinran's Gospel of Pure Grace*, Univ. of Arizona Press, Tucson, 1965.

studying in China. Besides introducing tea drinking to Japan, he was famous for his devotion to the practical side of Buddhism. Like his Ch'an masters he minimized the value of Buddhist ritual. Dogen Zenshi (1198-1253), a Tendai Buddhist priest, became Eisai's disciple when he heard him say: "All Buddhas past and present do not know Buddha's nature, but foxes and badgers do." Both believed that the real Buddha-nature of all things is spontaneously known by living creatures which are not caught in the trap set by human words. After Eisai's death, Dogen travelled to China for four years of further practice in Zen meditation. When a Chinese master explained that "meditation means separation from body and heart," Dogen experienced the bliss of enlightenment. Returning to Japan, the monk began to advocate sitting in meditation as the means of revealing one's Buddha-nature. For a decade he taught near Kyoto and for his last ten years he resided in a beautiful mountain retreat. <sup>6</sup>

### **Brief History of Nipponese Buddhism**

Although Buddhism was first brought to Japan by Chinese or Koreans who settled in the islands and was given support at court by prince regent Shotoku at the beginning of the seventh century, it was not until the Nara period (710-781) that Buddhism provided ideological guidance for the entire nation. In 741 a state-supported Buddhist temple was set up in each province and ten years later Todaiji at Nara became the national cathedral. Considering himself the head of the Buddhist church, the emperor appointed the chief abbot and the clergy were subjected to government control. Alongside "official" Buddhism, however, there appeared a sizeable number of mountain recluses, travelling faith healers and shamanic diviners (the *ubasoku*) who offered charms and incantations in the name of Buddha, the supreme miracle worker.<sup>1</sup>

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B Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki has been the foremost internationally-recognized authority on Japanese Zen. Cf. his trilogy *Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, *The Training of a Zen Monk* and *Manual of Zen Buddhism*, Grove Press, N.Y., 1960.

J. M. Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History*, Columbia University Press, N.Y., 1966, pp. 38-45. Also Daigan and Alicia Matsunaga, *Foundation of Japanese Buddhism*. Buddhist Books International, Tokyo-Los Angeles, 1974, pp. 9-23, 133-137.

In 794 the capital was moved to Kyoto. From the ninth through the twelfth centuries (the Heian period) Buddhism became thoroughly Japanese in contrast to its earlier status as a Chinese import; Shinto divinities (the *kami*) were said to be manifestations of Buddhas and bodhisattvas in Japanese form. The Tendai and Shingon Buddhist sects became the most prominent, their chief monasteries being located at Mount Hiei and Mount Koya. By the middle of the Heian period, however, many were turning to the Amida cult. Pleasure-loving aristocrats prayed to Amida Buddha to prolong their life of luxury in paradise while the downtrodden masses prayed to Bodhisattva *Jizo* who could save them from hell. \* Whereas during the Nara period, many looked to Maitreya for comfort, some now emphasized faith in Sakyamuni as the *Lotus Sutra* taught, or the Great Sun Buddha (the Cosmic Buddha) of the Shingon sect, while an even larger number invoked the saving name of Amida. In a famous book *The Essentials of Salvation* produced by Genshin in 985 A.D. can be found a classic expression of Amida's Pure Land Buddhism.

Japan's medieval period covered the thirteenth through the sixteenth centuries. Anthropologist Ruth Benedict described the contrasts in Japanese culture with the phrase: the chrysanthemum and the sword. Beginning with the first great military leader who established his feudal regime at Kamakura in 1192 Japan was for centuries controlled by men of the sword known as *shoguns* (warrior rulers). This rise to power of rough, boisterous militarists who held in contempt the effete imperial court entailed vast changes in Japanese religious life. Aristocratic Buddhism had come to possess a lacy refinement symbolized by miniature landscape gardens and delicate tea-sipping ceremonies.

To counteract the growing influence of the Amida cult, some monks advocated a ritualistic recitation of the name of Sakyamuni. Other monks revived enthusiasm for Maitreya, the coming Buddha. Buddhist doctrines were simplified, and emphasis was placed on the strict observance of monastic disciplines. Finally, the rich

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\* Kitagawa. *Ibid*, pp. 82-84. *Jizo* was called *Ti-tsang* by the Chinese. He had vowed not to accept the peace of Nirvana until the last soul in hell had been redeemed.

monasteries were encouraged to engage in philanthropic activities. Yet none of these efforts could halt the spread of militant and divisive Buddhist sectarianism. At the very time Catholic Europe was being disrupted by the Protestant Reformation, Japanese Buddhism was transformed by Pure Land enthusiasts, Nichiren zealots and the "single-minded" devotees of the Shinran sect.

Honen, the founder of the Pure Land Sect (1133-1212), taught that since enlightenment is too difficult for the vast majority of men to achieve they should simply pray to Amida to be reborn in the celestial Western Paradise. As a commentary on the *Meditation Sutra* advises, "Whether walking or standing, sitting or lying, only repeat the name of Amida with all your heart. . . . This is the very work which unfailingly issues in salvation."<sup>9</sup>

Shinran (1173-1262) originated the True Pure Land School. Believing that man is utterly helpless and hopelessly depraved, he preached that salvation could be achieved solely through reliance upon Amida's grace. Because Amida has compassion upon us, he will save us. Although all men are by nature shameless, by the unmerited gift of Amida's holy name they can be saved. In complete opposition to Theravada self-reliance, Shinran preached that salvation comes only through the "other power" of Amida Buddha.<sup>10</sup>

By emphasizing the value of complete commitment, later followers of Shinran created a compact society of zealous enthusiasts whose aims were both political and religious. Almost fanatically, these "single-direction" Buddhists—as they called themselves—waged war on rival sects and the government. In the late 15th and the 16th centuries, True Pure Land believers engaged in more than twenty rebellions against the military government of the shoguns.

Nichiren (1222-82) was another charismatic leader whose activities gave birth to a militant sect. Angrily denouncing the older Buddhist schools and criticizing the government, he pre-

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<sup>9</sup> A Chinese text by Shan-tao, quoted by Kitagawa, 'ibid, p. 112, footnote 58.

<sup>10</sup> Kitagawa, *Ibid*, pp. 114-117. Also A. Bloom, *Shinran's Gospel of Pure Grace*, pp. 27-85.

dicted the imminent End of the Age (*mappo*)—a time of irreligion, political disasters and natural calamities. His dire predictions seemed to be confirmed by the demand of the Mongol khan for tribute in 1268 and the arrival of the Mongol fleet in 1274 and 1281. As for his attitude toward other Buddhist groups, Nichiren declared that those who recite the name of Amida would burn in hell, the Zen sect is satanic, the Shingon are ruining the country and the Ritsu are traitors. Not surprisingly, Nichiren barely escaped assassination and the shogun sentenced him to a two-year exile on a distant island.

For thirty years he called upon the Japanese to accept and practice the teachings of the *Lotus Sutra*. Against those who prayed to Amida, he advocated reciting the saving formula: "Adoration be to the Sutra of the Lotus of the Sacred Truth" (*Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*). Because ex-Emperors Go-Toba and Juntoku neglected the *Lotus Sutra*, according to Nichiren, they had to suffer death in exile. But if Japan would practice that sutra, it would become an ideal nation, the great Buddha-land. In spite of his foes, Nichiren won large numbers of followers, many of whom enthusiastically took up arms to fight for his cause. In 1532, two and a half centuries after the prophet's death, Nichiren Buddhism was the strongest group in the imperial capital of Kyoto; four years later an army of angry monks from Mt. Hiei destroyed twenty-one Nichiren temples and massacred 58,000 of Nichiren's disciples.<sup>11</sup>

Rinzai Zen and Soto Zen were two new sects which also appeared in medieval Japan, brought from China but altered somewhat. Zen was favored by the powerful military caste and often supported by the shoguns. Zen monks introduced Neo-Confucian philosophy, patronized art, inspired the *Noh* play and spread the tea drinking cult. Even in times of political unrest Zen temples preserved and enriched Japan's cultural life.<sup>12</sup>

The Tokugawa period in Japanese history began in the 17th century and lasted until Admiral Perry forced the country to open

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<sup>11</sup> M. Anesaki, *Nichiren, The Buddhist Prophet*, Smith, Gloucester, 1966.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. D.T. Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Buddhism*, C.E. Tuttle, Tokyo and Rutland Vt., 1958 and *Zen and Japanese Culture*, Pantheon Books, N.Y., 1959.

its doors to the West. Three great shoguns dominate the age: Oda Nobunaga (1534-82), Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-98) and Tokugawa Iyeyasu (1542-1616). The last completed the unification of the country, established his seat of government at Tokyo (then called Edo) in 1603, and installed a feudal regime which lasted until Emperor Meiji took power in 1867.

These shoguns were determined to unify Japan which meant they had to break the power of the tightly-knit Buddhist sects. In 1571 Oda Nobunaga's army attacked Mt. Hiei, burned numerous buildings and massacred most of the monks. Then the shogun turned against the True Pure Land sect, killing tens of thousands. Finally, he crushed the Shingon monks by mass executions at Mt. Koya.

Under Shogun Hidetada Buddhism once more became the established religion, yet the priests were treated as mere servants of the government. At the same time, however, Confucianism became the preferred educational philosophy, which tended to make the intellectuals either indifferent or hostile to the Buddhist cause. Besides, there was a revival of Shinto, which was the native faith, and therefore a better foundation for patriotic zeal and national glory, some said.

Following the Tokugawa age (1600-1868), Japan experienced the return to direct rule by the emperor, the rapid westernization of the country, a flood of Christian missionaries, the enthusiastic promulgation of State Shinto and four decades of imperialistic expansion which ended with the unconditional surrender of the militarist government at the end of World War II.<sup>1</sup> From the Meiji regime to the rule of General Douglas MacArthur, Japanese Buddhism faced one hardship after another. Shinto propagandists claimed that the emperor had been handed supernatural authority from the sun goddess, Amaterasu—and not Buddha. Modernists contended that Buddhist temples, monks and such popular forms of piety as Pure Land sectarianism were obstacles to progress.

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<sup>1a</sup> For an interpretation of Meiji Japan given in lectures at Harvard, the College of France and Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California, see M. Anesaki, *History of Japanese Religion*, C.E. Tuttle Co., Rutland, Vermont, 1963, pp. 329-409.

Christian missionaries implied that theirs was the true religion because their God had blessed the British empire, German science and American business. In 1870 the Shinto faith became the state religion; many Buddhist temples were closed and all temple lands were confiscated. The emperor abolished Buddhist services at the palace and replaced them with worship of the Shinto sun goddess." Yet, despite such an array of powerful foes, Buddhism survived.

Defenders of the Buddhist cause employed various methods to cope with the new situation. Some adopted Christian techniques—like Buddhist Sunday Schools or a Buddhist version of the YMCA. Others engaged in a scholarly and philosophic study of Buddhism in the light of western ideas. Still more priests actively collaborated with the nationalists and militarists, believing that the future of Buddhism depended upon an anti-western policy which hopefully would eradicate the Christian missionaries." None of these endeavors however could restore the Buddhist establishment of the medieval period.

After World War II some problems disappeared—the threat of State Shinto, for example—but new ones took their place. A large number of Buddhist priests have been compelled to take on secular jobs to augment their income. Rampant sectarianism has robbed the main temples of their traditional authority and greatly weakened the financial stability of the various denominations. In 1940 there were 28 Buddhist denominations; by 1951 there were 170. Since then, interdenominational agencies have been created in order to carry on joint programs. <sup>16</sup>

According to one leading Japanese scholar, post-war Buddhism had to rid itself of 1) subservience to the government and excessive nationalism, 2) magical incantations and superstitious practices inherited from the past, 3) preoccupation with funeral

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<sup>14</sup> Kitagawa, *Ibid.* pp. 202-203.

<sup>15</sup> See H. Nakamura, "Controversy between Buddhism and Christianity," *Ibid.*, pp. 111-149.

<sup>16</sup> For one example, see J.S. Weeks, "Rissho Kosei-Kai: a Cooperative Buddhist Sect" in R.J. Miller, ed., *Religious Ferment in Asia*, Univ. of Kansas, Lawrence, 1974, pp. 157-167.

rites and memorial services for the dead at the expense of providing guidance for the living, 4) lack of doctrinal integrity, and 5) stress on formal observance without equal concern for inner spiritual disciplines.'<sup>7</sup> In addition to these internal maladies, Japanese Buddhism in the post-war world has confronted Christianity and the rapidly growing "New Religions"—as well as Communism—in a nation where traditional values are threatened by the temptation to pursue materialistic and hedonistic goals."

### **The Nichiren Revival**

Although many of the Buddhist schools have continued to influence Japanese life and thought, particularly noteworthy is the powerful renaissance of Nichiren Buddhism. As mentioned in previous pages, Nichiren (1222-1282) originated his distinctive sect during the troubled times of the Kamakura period when he preached that he was the only person who could save Japan from ruin. As a virile, enthusiastic and zealous group, disciples of Nichiren played a major role during a crucial turning point in Japanese history and their successors are determined to carry out a similar mission in the contemporary world.

Original Nichirenism was an apocalyptic faith based on the belief that the world was approaching the End-time. According to Nichiren, Buddhism would pass through three stages. For five hundred years men would teach and practice faithfully the Way of Sakyamuni. Then, during a second period of equal length, Buddhism would become diluted and corrupted by alien influences—Hindu notions and rites in India, Taoist and Confucianist ideas in China and Shintoist tendencies in Japan. Finally would come the Latter Days of error and vice so all-pervasive that nothing but a new and pure form of Buddhism could save the world from

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<sup>7</sup> Shoko Watanabe, *Nihon no Bukkyo* (Buddhism in Japan), Tokyo, 1960, pp. 69-139.

<sup>8</sup> In spite of the militarist government's support of Shinto and considerable anti-Buddhist propaganda, the religion had 71,326 temples, 7,753 churches, 40,000,000 believers and six universities in 1940. For a defense of Buddhism during this war period by Prof. Yoshitaru Yabuki of Tokyo Imperial University, see D.C. Holtom, *Modern Japan and Shinto Nationalism*, University of Chicago Press, 1947, pp. 133-137.

destruction. Nichiren believed that his teaching based on the *Lotus Sutra* was the message for such a time and that he was the Bodhisattva who could set up the ideal Buddha-land on earth. Proclaiming his messianic role, Nichiren declared, "I will be the pillar of Japan; I will be the eyes of Japan; I will be the great vessel of Japan."<sup>19</sup>

Although the 13th century monk failed to inaugurate the Messianic Age, his disciples continued to believe that what he had taught was true and that sooner or later his prophecies would come to pass. However, the fanaticism, combativeness and sectarianism which characterized Nichiren himself were inherited by his followers, who soon fought among themselves with as much zeal as they attacked everybody else. One of the six chief disciples of Nichiren—Nikko disagreed with the others, left the main temple at Mt. Minobu, and set up a new temple across the river at the foot of Mt. Fuji. Nikko's sect claimed to be the true followers of Nichiren and called themselves Nichiren Shoshu ("the orthodox") to distinguish themselves from the Nichiren-shu of Mt. Minobu. When World War II ended, the latter, nevertheless, had over ten million followers and more than 5,000 temples while the former had only 300,000 believers and about 200 temples.<sup>20</sup> In addition, there were six other distinct Nichiren sects in 1945 and over forty by 1960.

The Nichiren revival has taken many forms, only four of which will be treated here. Kubo Kakutaro (1890-1944), a carpenter, and a woman companion named Kotami Kimi (b. 1901) founded the Association of the Friends of the Spirit (*Reiyukai*) in 1925. After World War I, Japan suffered economic panic, mass unemployment, rampant inflation and bloody rice riots. Then came the catastrophic Tokyo earthquake of 1923. Confused, frightened and often despairing, many Japanese were ready to believe Nichiren's dire prophecy that man had entered the age of apocalyptic destruction. Kubo warned that Japan could be saved only through

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<sup>19</sup> Quoted in H. Thomsen, *The New Religions of Japan*. Charles E. Tuttle Co., Rutland, Vermont, 1963, p. 88.

<sup>20</sup> Thomsen, *Ibid.* p. 84.

dutiful worship of the ancestors, daily recitation of the *Lotus Sutra*, an altar in the home of every believer and reverent meditation on the Nichiren mandala. In the center of this mandala is the sacred invocation *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo* ("Hail to the Wonderful Truth of the Lotus Sutra"); around it are the names of various Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Shinto deities. Neglect of the traditional ancestor worship causes all kinds of diseases and national calamities, but proper respect for the dead expressed by means of concentration upon the mandala will enable Japan to realize its glorious destiny as the ideal Buddha-land, it was said.

Unlike most Nichiren sects, Reiyukai tolerates other religions. In accordance with Nichiren's strong emphasis upon social responsibility, the Friends of the Spirit donate equipment to rehabilitation centers for the physically handicapped and funds for nurseries. They wage campaigns against drug abuse, provide books in braille for the blind, and give generously of their time on behalf of Community Chest and Red Cross activities. With several million members, Reiyukai was particularly important in restoring Japanese faith in the destiny of their nation prior to World War II and gave birth to at least eight new religions of which *Rissho Kosei Kai* has been the most successful.<sup>21</sup>

Niwano Nikkyo (b. 1906) and a woman helper Naganuma Myoko (1899-1957) founded the Society for the Establishment of Righteousness and Friendly Intercourse (*Rissho Kosei Kai*) in 1938. Niwano was a milk dealer in Tokyo who met Naganuma while delivering milk and persuaded her that she would be healed of a sickness if she joined Reiyukai. She was cured, and the two became good friends. The couple subsequently set up their own religion, not because of a doctrinal disagreement with Reiyukai, but rather because they wanted more freedom to exercise their own qualities of leadership. After about a decade of very modest success, *Rissho Kosei Kai* experienced an extremely rapid rate of growth, with membership multiplying from 1,000 to more than two million in two decades.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, pp. 109-116.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p. 254, footnote #3.

Like the other sects, this one follows the main tenets of Nichiren, recognizes the Shinto sun goddess, and regards all other Nichiren denominations as distortions of the true faith. Unlike other Nichiren groups who think of the mandala as an all-powerful concentration of saving grace, in Risho Kosei Kai one recites "Namu Myoho Renge Kyo" only as an act of faith and gratitude.

As the sect teaches, "Our goal is the attainment of a perfect personality, that is Buddhahood, through practice of the way of a Bodhisattva."<sup>23</sup> Its membership system is built around the family: to join the sect an applicant must submit the names of his parents, his wife's parents and a list of deceased members of the family. A person does not exist as an isolated individual but as a representative of a family unit which includes the living and the dead. Risho Kosei Kai claims to serve its members from the cradle to the grave with nurseries, middle schools, high schools, a hospital, old people's homes, band concerts, choral groups, baseball and judo teams, youth pilgrimages, festivals, even cemeteries. Most important are the daily religious services and the daily group counselling sessions where members can obtain practical advice about raising children or any other everyday problem. At the main temple in Tokyo a counselling session usually involves two hundred groups of ten to twenty participants.<sup>24</sup>

Among the Nichiren groups none has equalled *Soka Gakkai*, the Society for the Creation of Value. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871-1944) was an elementary school teacher in Tokyo who formed a study group of sixty members in 1937. Emphasizing the need for a reform of Japanese education based on beauty, goodness and benefit, Soka Gakkai attracted only 3,000 members prior to World War II. Because it seemed to run counter to the official policy of the Education Ministry and because it looked to Buddhism rather than State Shinto for inspiration. Soka Gakkai encountered serious government opposition. To escape official suppression, it voted to affiliate with Nichiren Sho ("the orthodox"). Then Nichiren Sho as well as Soka Gakkai underwent persecution.

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<sup>23</sup> A Guide to Risho Kosei Kai. Risho Kosei Kai headquarters. Tokyo, 1959, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> Thomsen, /bid, pp. 120-121.

Makiguchi lost his job as an elementary school principal, his magazine was suppressed, and he—with other Soka Gakkai leaders—was imprisoned. After a year and a half of confinement, Makiguchi died of malnutrition at the age of 74.

His successor Josei Toda (1900-1958) had also been imprisoned. He possessed administrative ability, an aggressive spirit and a charismatic personality. A monthly magazine, a weekly paper, a new edition of the collected works of Nichiren and Nikko, a series of commentaries on Nichiren's writings and Makiguchi's book *Kachiron* (Theory of Value) became Toda's tools for carrying out his mission. By 1951 he could dedicate the Great Lecture Hall at Taisekiji, the center of Nichiren Sho Buddhism, and announce that Soka Gakkai had won 750,000 family units to its cause. A month later, Toda was dead. But one sign of the magnitude of his achievements is that both Prime Minister Kishi and the Minister of Education appeared at the funeral.

Daisaku Ikeda (then only 32)<sup>25</sup> became Soka Gakkai's third president in 1960. The sect publishes a magazine for young people sold at newsstands, a daily newspaper, numerous books and pamphlets. Besides speaking often to audiences of 100,000 people, Ikeda has written books entitled *Lectures on Buddhism*, *The Human Revolution*, *Culture and Religion*, *Politics and Religion* and *Science and Religion*. Convinced that Soka Gakkai provides the ideology for a "third civilization" superior to communism and capitalism, Ikeda encouraged his followers to set up a "Clean Government" (*Komeito*) political party which has successfully elected delegates to both houses of the Diet, prefectural assemblies, ward and city councils as well as thousands of town and village councils. In spite of determined opposition from politicians, labor unions, Christian missionaries, communist agitators and Buddhist leaders from rival sects, Ikeda's program won over six million families to the Soka Gakkai cause in a seven year period.<sup>26</sup> Built upon a semi-military structure, strict discipline and

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<sup>25</sup> Born 1928.

<sup>26</sup> Noah S. Brannen, *Soka Gakkai*, John Knox Press, Richmond, 1968, p. 79. Although this book contains much valuable material, it was written by a Christian missionary and some of its value judgments are those of a hostile critic.

zealous evangelization, Soka Gakkai is determined to gain control of the Diet, make Nichiren Sho the state religion and have the temple at Taisekiji with its mandala made by Nichiren become Japan's national shrine, as the Shinto shrine at Ise was in an earlier time. Nor does Soka Gakkai limit its goals to Japan. Already numerous missions have been established in other lands so that the third civilization based in Japan will create a world-wide messianic age of truth, prosperity and peace, it is believed.

Soka Gakkai zealously repudiates all rival religions. Employing a method called *shakufuku*, it believes in "breaking and subduing the evil spirits" of Christianity, Shinto and all the other Buddhist groups. *Shakufuku Kyoten*, a manual prepared by Yoshihei Kohira in 1958, teaches every convert to attack all competing faiths. Typical in this regard is the Soka Gakkai denunciation of Christian faith and ethics.

According to Nichiren Sho, when Christians say they believe Jesus rose from the dead and physically ascended into heaven, they deny the law of gravity, so their faith is unscientific. The miracles attributed to Jesus could have been invented by later Christians and inserted in the Bible, so the scriptures are historically unreliable. Ninety per cent of the New Testament represents the dogmas of the disciples rather than the pure teaching of Jesus. Furthermore, as all Buddhists believe, since there could be no uncaused First Cause, there is no Creator God. Perhaps most significant, Nichiren proved the validity of his teachings by escaping from his would-be executioners, whereas Jesus showed the ineffectiveness or powerlessness of his message by dying on the cross.

Soka Gakkai's criticism of the Christian ethic of unrestricted love is equally thorough. Men naturally love the good and abhor evil. Unlimited love is hence unnatural, impractical and impossible. No one can "love his enemies," even if he thinks he should or says he does so. The Sermon on the Mount violates common sense.

Also Christians err when they think their love will atone for the sins of others. Sins cannot be erased; our forgiveness does not nullify the effect of sins. No matter what we say or believe, the moral law of karma continues to operate: men must reap what they

sow, in this life or in new lives to come.

Having dismissed the reliability of the Christian scriptures, the truth of the Creator doctrine and the usefulness of the moral teachings of Jesus, Soka Gakkai ridicules the notion of original sin. According to the Christian message, they say, man is afflicted with a sin which affects all without exception, a sin nobody can escape. Hence, declares Soka Gakkai, all humans are born criminals: naturally disrespectful, disobedient, rebellious and selfish. Such an idea greatly exaggerates the human situation. A true religion should inspire man, give him confidence, encourage him, praise his vitality instead of degrading him to the status of a common criminal, as Christians do.<sup>27</sup> Worshipping a convicted felon, followers of Jesus therefore teach that every man is born tainted by sin so gross that he is justly sentenced to everlasting punishment. By contrast, for all Buddhists the most important fact about every individual is that he has the capability to become a Buddha; without exception men possess the Buddha-nature or at least the seeds of Buddhahood.

Far more important than the questionable practice of *shakufuku* is the Soka Gakkai theory of value. In his book *Kachiron*, Makiguchi professed to correct western concepts about the relationship between truth, goodness and beauty. Soka Gakkai represents a fusion of Oriental mysticism and utilitarian ethical theory. The Occident mistakenly considers truth to be a value. Truth in fact merely reveals what is. Value, however, always implies a subject-object relationship. Truth is a concern of epistemology rather than ethics. Truth says, Here is a man, a horse, a rock; Value says, The man is good (or evil), the horse is beautiful, the rock is hard. Truth does not depend upon value judgments and is therefore unchanging; value grows out of human relationships so is subject to alteration.

Man creates values and in this faculty he demonstrates his greatness. Happiness comes from the pursuit and possession of

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<sup>27</sup> Thomsen, *Ibid.* p. 103. Other Buddhists would say that behind the Adam and Eve "myth" is a recognition of the four-fold truth taught by Gautama: from birth, man is subject to passions, cravings, self-centeredness and suffering.

values. Whereas truth is objective, value is subjective. Distinctions must, nevertheless, be made between various values. Beauty is an emotional value, based on sense experience and relative to only a part of man's life. "Benefit"—a concept which Makiguchi put in place of truth—is a personal value relative to an individual's total life which contributes to the maintenance and advancement of his existence. Goodness refers to group values, those which buttress and develop the unity of society. We should judge right and wrong therefore, not on the basis of truth or personal pleasure, but on the basis of social value. Man cannot rely on the dictates of his individual conscience, his personal intuitions or his private pleasures. Instead he should recognize and respect the standard of goodness derived from society's need for cohesiveness. Goodness should be understood as a necessary and useful response to the demand for togetherness.<sup>28</sup>

While most of the converts to Reiyukai, Rissho Kosei Kai and Soka Gakkai come from the Japanese masses, Nichiren has also provided inspiration for a select but influential group of intellectuals. Chogyu Takayama (d. 1902) was a notable example of how Nichiren could attract a gifted writer during the Meiji period. Takayama was originally part of the ultra-nationalistic *Nippon Shugi* circle, a literary and philosophic group which exalted total dedication to the Japanese State and the imperial heritage. In their opinion, Japan exemplified three virtues—energetic activity, esteem for the present and observance of purity. To preserve those qualities and restore the empire to its rightful glory, the "Japanists," as they called themselves, advocated purging their country of alien influences—meaning, Chinese Buddhism, European Christianity and western, primarily American, individualism.

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<sup>28</sup> N.S. Brannen, *Ibid.*, pp. 133-139. Brannen claims there are inconsistencies between Makiguchi's theory and Soka Gakkai religious practice. He fails to see how the social theory of value fits nicely into Nichiren Sho if one identifies goodness with whatever Soka Gakkai proposes as goals. A social theory of value is an exceedingly useful ideology for any tightly-knit group because by definition goodness is identified with the group's collective aims. However, does a social theory of value explain goals which transcend those of the group, sometimes to improve the group, sometimes to judge it?

Rather quickly recognizing the defects of nationalism, Takayama moved to the opposite extreme. Whereas he had earlier asserted the supreme authority of the State, now he stressed the unlimited rights of the individual. In a widely-read essay entitled "The Beautiful Life" (1901), Takayama defined a man's true destiny as a life free from restrictive social conventions—purely spontaneous self-expression. Life requires complete sincerity and sincerity cannot be practiced if one worries about what society may think or what external advantages may be derived from certain actions. To be good, he insisted, was to live like the flowers of the field which simply respond to the natural warmth of the sun. To friends and critics, Takayama sounded like Plato, Rosseau, Laotzu and Nietzsche."

Finally, the Japanese intellectual turned to Nichiren. Because he possessed a tender heart, Takayama could not long believe in Nietzsche's strong-willed and domineering superman. Because he recognized the partial validity of the Japanist cause, he could not remain satisfied with mere individualism, pure egoism, as he termed it. In Nichiren, however, Takayama found the answer to his need for hero-worship, patriotism, idealism, romanticism and enthusiasm. Although he died within a year after his conversion to Nichirenism, Takayama's influence became a major factor in the modern development of the Japanese religious spirit."

### **Buddhist Teachings Today**

Although most Japanese are Buddhists or have a Buddhist religious background, what they believe today cannot be discovered by simply reading the sutras or studying the teachings of famous monks from the past. Buddhism has undergone considera-

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<sup>29</sup> During the Meiji period, German science, philosophy, educational practices and Prussian militarism became fashionable. Nietzsche's cult of the superman is one example of Teutonic influence among the architects of the new Japan. Nietzsche was thought of as a modern European exponent of the Samurai spirit.

<sup>29</sup> M. Ancsaki, *History of Japanese Religion*, pp. 367, 370, 375-379. For a comparable case, see how the philosopher-theologian Nicolai Berdyaev was inspired by Dostoicvski's concepts of the messianic mission of the Slavic people, the third Rome, "holy" Russia, and Christ. The Idiot, who transcends conventional reason, bourgeois respectability and middle class morality.

ble modification in Japan during the thirteen centuries since it came from Korea and, as could be expected, there is presently great variety of interpretation among priests and professors.<sup>31</sup>

### *The Meaning of Daily Life*

At a time when Japanese teenagers and young adults question traditional ethical norms like filial piety and patriotism, Buddhists point to the validity of certain abiding ideals. The highest objective of life is to become a Buddha. Or in a more practical sense, supreme happiness comes from devoted service to one's parents, loving support of one's family and honorable work. Man is born to live with others: I live for others and they live for me. Individual pleasure and success from one's youth to old age are not man's real goal; our fortunes are linked with the happiness of all men, all history, all living beings; therefore we are involved in infinite time. Hence, it is important to recognize mutual personal dignity and promote mutual respect. Men can become truly happy when they rediscover the need for cooperation and communal living. Denying the goal of mere individual pursuit of material comforts, Buddhists put their fundamental faith in a collective world view, believing that the whole biological world constitutes an immense living organism of infinitely precious worth. On the basis of that "reverence for life" philosophy, they protest the international armaments race, warn of the dangers of nuclear war and campaign for world peace, in addition to repudiating the materialism and hedonism which have become so prevalent in post-war Japan because of western influence.

### *Karma and Sin*

Because the doctrine of karma has sometimes been misinterpreted to denote predestination or to reinforce a passive attitude toward the world situation, contemporary Buddhists try to correct such false ideas about happiness and misfortune. One cannot

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<sup>31</sup> This section is largely based on Yoshio Tamura, *Living Buddhism in Japan*, a summary of conversations with ten Buddhist leaders, priests, abbots and university professors. (International Institute for the Study of Religions, Tokyo, 1960).

believe in a simplistic way that good causes produce good effects and evil causes result in misfortunes, they say. Some effects of our deeds are felt immediately while others are not experienced for hundreds of years. In any case, original Buddhism did not preach resignation. To accept one's fate rather than striving to improve one's position was a teaching of Japan's feudal age and a perversion of the Buddhist message. Unlike some Christians, Buddhists do not attribute everything that happens to the will of an omnipotent God. In their opinion, man plays the chief role in shaping his own destiny.

The proper meaning of karma cannot be grasped by isolating the individual from his fellowmen. Causality does not operate only on the personal level. Although man is determined by himself alone and never subjected to a will other than his own, there is also a common karma or shared responsibility. The world is woven with an interrelated karma. An individual is part of a larger society whose benefits he enjoys and whose burden of sins he carries.

For Buddhists, common karma also means that all living beings are related. Whereas Christianity says that non-human life was created for the sake of man, Buddhism teaches that it is wrong to think that the whole world exists for the benefit of mankind. This exclusive concern for ourselves—declare the Buddhists—is a grave mistake and the weak point in modern civilization. For them, even plants possess Buddha-nature and can attain Buddhahood.

What do Buddhists teach concerning the nature of sin? On this topic, there is considerable difference of opinion. Some say that sin is a Christian concept which has no place in Buddhist thought. Since Christians define sin as turning one's back on God or rebelling against Him and Buddhists do not believe in the Creator, what can sin mean for a Buddhist? One observation is that Christians worry about sin but Buddhists worry about suffering. Other Buddhists assert that ignorance rather than immorality is the fundamental evil. Because men are unaware of the true cause of decay, suffering, disease and death, their life is polluted. A third group of Buddhists today stress the disastrous effects of man's collective karma. In our complicated social situation, evil must be considered

from the social viewpoint. Sin is not primarily a personal matter. A sinner is unaware of the fact that we are interdependent. To sin is to think (and act) without relating to others.

However, some Buddhist priests assert that men should transcend good and evil in any ordinary sense. Even if one falls ill or suffers misfortune, he can still say, "It is a good day, every day." Sinfulness and blessedness have no substantial reality. This being the case, there exists only an ultimate non-duality of good and evil. When one is truly enlightened, he realizes that neither error nor sin is real. If a Buddhist understands the truth, sins evaporate like dew or melt like frost in the bright face of the sun.

### *Death and the Pure Land Paradise*

Lay Buddhists pray for their ancestors and provide them with offerings. They believe that especially wicked persons are sentenced to hell until they pay for their sins but that those who rely on the saving grace of Amida Buddha will hereafter attain happiness in the Pure Land Paradise. Yet educated priests and some more enlightened laymen feel that such concepts as the immortality of the soul or the existence of hells and bliss in the Pure Land are only "expedients" for those who cannot grasp the profound truths of the Buddha.

According to certain Nichiren Buddhists, the Pure Land, which is said to be the ideal place where we shall rest after death, exists in no other world than on this earth. When our eyes are truly open, this world is felt to be Paradise. We know ourselves only in the present. The Pure Land therefore must be here and now. Eternal life means living continuously and living simultaneously in the three worlds of the past, present and future. Paradise has to exist in the present, for this alone is what man can experience, the past being merely a name for the present which once was, and the future simply the present which can be. The Pure Land refers to our bliss in the eternal Now.

### *The Continuing Inspiration of Buddha*

Aside from the doctrines and ceremonies of the faith, there is

always the appealing figure of Buddha. Even an occasional Christian theologian will come to pay tribute to Sakyamuni. One of these has made the observation that in Kyoto there is an impressive copper image of Buddha, a national treasure from the late 7th century, which speaks to the Japanese people through centuries of tranquillity and times of despair. It is the statue's hands which convey a striking message. There is a web, like those of a duck, between the fingers. Japanese believe this web signifies the intention of Buddha to scoop all into salvation. No one will fall between his saving fingers into the realm of darkness. Buddha's hands, so well-proportioned, so attractive and so kindly, do not reject men but seek and invite people. The hands are soft and open, with beautiful curves. Buddha will not discriminate, as men do, because his compassion is unlimited. According to a contemporary Japanese Christian theologian, Buddha's image at Kyoto depicts the mysterious power of God's all-embracing mercy.<sup>32</sup>

Today, as for more than 2500 years in the past, Gautama sheds a warm and friendly light in a dark world.

### *Buddhism in Tomorrow's Japan*

As the renaissance of Nichiren sectarianism amply demonstrates, Buddhism can suit the modern temper. Nearly all the so-called "New Religions" (*shinko shukyo*) which have mushroomed since World War II come out of older faiths like Shinto, Buddhism or Christianity yet each has reshaped the religious tradition to meet contemporary needs. Students of the New Religions point out certain important characteristics which are usually held in common. They are easy to enter, understand and follow. They are based on an optimistic view of life. They are determined to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, here and now. They emphasize the oneness of religion and life. And, without exception, they rely on a strong leader.

Those faiths which are making an appeal to the Japanese masses give man a sense of importance and personal dignity. They

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<sup>32</sup> Kosuke Koyarna in *One World*, monthly magazine of the World Council of Churches, Geneva, June, 1976, p. 22.

ordinarily teach a doctrine of inclusiveness in regard to other religions. For more than a thousand years Japanese have accepted a synthesis of Shinto and Buddhism and this practice has done much to shape the religious environment. A new factor is that Christian ideas and ideals are being added to the mixture, as Japan seeks an all-encompassing faith for modern man. <sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Thomsen, *Ibid.* pp. 20-29.

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