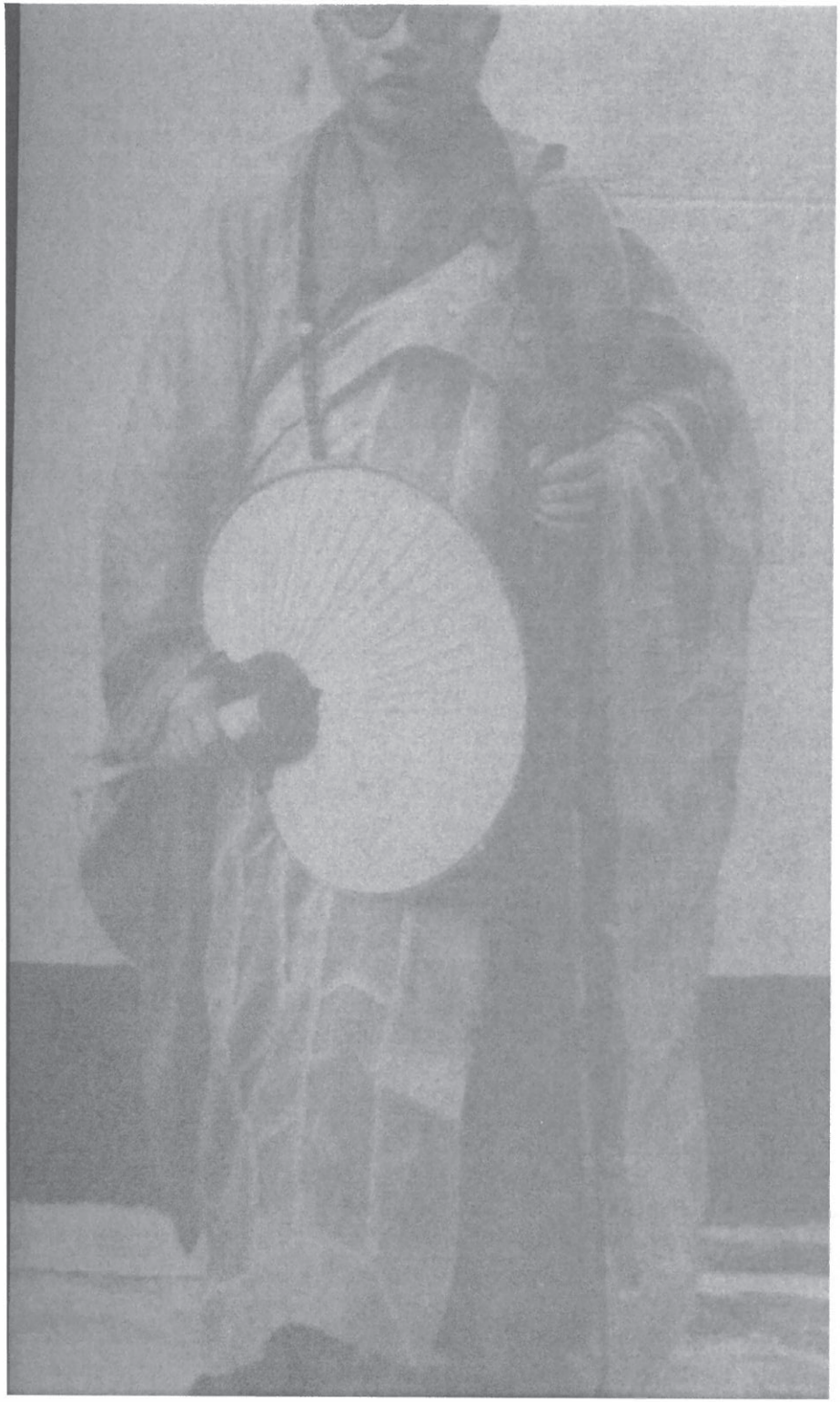


TOWARD A MODERN CHINESE BUDDHISM

Taixu's Reforms

Don A. Pittman

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For Nancy

and in memory of
Joseph Mitsuo Kitagawa
(1915–1992)

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D. A. P.

A NOTE ON ROMANIZATION

No single romanization system for Chinese names and terms is satisfactory in all respects. The Wade-Giles system or some variant of it was used in virtually all the English-language resources cited in this study. However, because the *pinyin* romanization system, often referred to as the United Nations' Mandarin Phonetic Symbol System, is increasingly used in both scholarly and popular literature, I have chosen to adopt it in this book. Therefore, romanizations within quoted material have been edited to conform to this system, unless otherwise noted.

A few exceptions have been made for certain personal or place names that are commonly recognized in the West, such as Chiang Kai-shek (rather than Jiang Jieshi) and Taipei (rather than Taibei). For clarification, the Wade-Giles romanization is included in parentheses following the *pinyin* romanization for all personal names in the Glossary of Chinese Characters.

Chinese authors whose works have been published in English are cited under their own chosen romanizations (e.g., Yu-yue Tsu), except in a few cases where the authors were significant participants in the events of the period and are mentioned as such in the text; an example is Hu Shi, whose English publications bear the romanized name Hu Shih.

All romanizations within the titles of published works in English have been retained. Also preserved are the self-selected romanized names of certain Buddhist institutions or organizations that are internationally known, such as Tzu Chi (*pinyin:* Ciji).

INTRODUCTION

IN SEARCH OF A NEW BUDDHISM

The chaotic Republican period in China (1912–1949) was one of intense self-criticism, ideological polarization, military conflict, and change. The corrupt Manchu dynasty had been overthrown, yet the forging of a new social order proved far more difficult than anyone had imagined. It was a time of grand utopian dreams and of harsh, unyielding realities. Foreign intrusions, famine, civil war, and constant struggle in social, political, and religious spheres among conservatives, progressives, and radical modernists characterized the period.

Striving to recover from the anti-Buddhist paroxysms of the violent Taiping Rebellion (1851–1864) and deeply concerned with spiritual revitalization, the Buddhist community was not exempt from bitter clashes between traditional and reformist visions of an appropriate response to the post-dynastic context and the secularizing influences of modernity. Moreover, against external threats of confiscation, the sangha had to defend its institutional holdings in China and assert its right to self-regulatory propagation.* The numerous Chinese Buddhist associations chartered during the Republican period tried to present their institutional concerns to governmental authorities

* In this study, the term "Sangha" with an initial capital letter refers to the entire Buddhist community, including monastic and lay practitioners, whereas the term "sangha" in lowercase refers more narrowly to the monastic community.

and counter the arguments and actions of hostile anti-religionists. They sought to affirm their ancient religious tradition as an enduringly valuable part of the Chinese cultural heritage, to improve the public image of Buddhism through various devotional, educational, and social service activities, and to present an effective challenge to Christian missionaries from Europe and North America.

A pivotal figure among Chinese Buddhist reformers in the quest for a new, modern form of Buddhism was the monk Taixu (1890–1947). An energetic, intelligent leader whom many Buddhists came to revere highly, he was nevertheless judged by most of the Chinese monastic community as a teacher far too radical in his insistence on religious change. More concerned with establishing a pure land on earth than in achieving rebirth in the Western Pure Land of Amitābha, Taixu called for a revitalization of Buddhism through institutional reorganization, modern education, compassionate social action, and ecumenical cooperation in global mission. Conservative teachers in the sangha, such as the respected Pure Land master Yinguang (1861–1940), responded by portraying Taixu as a gifted but dangerously strident and disruptive voice within a Chinese Buddhist community that did not need innovation but only rededication to its ancient patterns of spiritual discipline.

Taixu's own assessment of his ultimate failure to convert the majority of the sangha to his point of view about the need for a complete "Buddhist revolution" *(fojiao geming)* referred not to the extremity of his ideas but to his unfortunate inability to inspire and lead people in a difficult and divisive time.[1] Holmes Welch, however, in *The Buddhist Revival in China,* asserts that Taixu's most serious failing was that he did not seem "to have pondered deeply enough on whether, if Chinese Buddhism was reformed in the manner he proposed, it would still be Buddhist or even Chinese." In Welch's opinion, had Taixu's modernizing, secularizing reforms been fully carried out, "most of the identifiably Buddhist, specifically religious institutions and practices would have faded away."[2]

Although I prefer not to speculate about the validity of this latter hypothesis, I would suggest that Taixu did seriously consider the direction of his proposed reforms. In fact, his specific intention was

to facilitate a transition toward a modern form of Buddhism *and beyond*. His teachings, which he sought to ground in Mahāyāna scriptures and traditional paradigms, were intended to address directly the pressing social and spiritual problems of the twentieth century in keeping with what he understood to be the ultimate goals of institutional Buddhism—goals that lay beyond the preservation of institutional Buddhism itself. Indeed, in forging his unique response to the issues that the Sangha confronted in the Republican period, Taixu can be said to represent within the Chinese Buddhist community a "classical" figure, in Joachim Wach's sense.[3] That is to say, he represents a "type" of spirituality which exemplifies religious trends that John Randall, Joseph Kitagawa, and others have identified as prominent in the modern period: namely, an ethicization of religion and a this-worldly soteriology.[4] In essence, he represents a particular form of religious piety.

TAIXU AS "ETHICAL PIETIST"

To appreciate Taixu's particular form of piety and the nature of the "Buddhist revolution" to which he called his religious community, a brief preliminary discussion of the heuristic model that I employ in this study is appropriate. Without imposing an overly rigid analytical framework on Taixu's life and work, I want to be clear about my use of comparative terminology in characterizing his teachings and contribution to modern Chinese Buddhism. Thus, in this particular study, I use the term "truth" in its most comprehensive, transformative sense, to refer to a disclosure of the way things are in actuality in relation to the way things ought to be ideally. "Religious" truth refers to such a disclosure or revelation that is specifically linked to compelling experiences of transcendent realities or verities. Nonreligious ideologies often present comprehensive and functionally similar pictures of present realities and future possibilities without explicit references to transcendence. Yet in both cases, truth includes both a visionary and an ethical dimension.[5]

By "visionary," I intend to convey the idea that what a perspectival tradition enables one to "see" is precisely the ultimate context for human existence. What is apprehended are those realities or values that are of central significance for life, and to which all other realities and commitments should be subordinate. Religious or ideological communities, therefore, support identity formation as individual people come to realize who they are in relation to all things. Expressions of visionary experiences—through forms of art, music, dance, poetry, mythic narrative, sacred history, highly systematized doctrinal apology, and so forth—map reality and locate persons in terms of past, present, and future verities. Defining normative ways of thinking, they orient one to the nature of ultimacy, the spatio-temporal universe, and the human being in community, as Table 1 shows.

The "ethical" dimension of truth, as employed in this study, refers broadly to a tradition's normative modes of action that integrally and creatively relate to aspects of the visionary dimension of truth.[6] That is, religious or ideological perspectives are most comprehensively founded not only on realizations of who each person is in relation to all things, but on intuitive apprehensions of what each one should do to live within reality-as-it-is in greater congruity with reality-as-it-should-be. As a result, creative interactions between disparate visionary and ethical experiences of truth may contribute to significant perspectival changes within a tradition—and to redefinitions of what it is most important to teach and how truth should be embodied in contemporary contexts.

Within specifically religious communities, primary apprehensions of salvific modes of action are often expressed in at least four basic types of norms, or sets of ideal rules, roles, themes, and images:

Norms for cultic performance—requirements for proper liturgical practice in both ordinary and extraordinary times;

Norms for self-cultivation—personal disciplines for spiritual maturation, including dietary, hygienic, meditational, educational, and other transformational practices;

Norms for the organization of the holy community—structural expectations for optimally productive forms of intracommunal religious

Table 1. Transformational Truth

Transformational Truth	Experiential Aspect	Expressional Aspect	
Visionary Dimension	Immediate, holistic apprehensions of reality, of the way things are in actuality in relation to the way things ought to be ideally; the realization of personal identity in relation to all things	Shared understandings of the ultimate context for human existence; theoretical articulations that map reality and locate persons in terms of past, present, and future verities; normative ways of thinking	Understandings of the nature of ultimacy Understandings of the spatio-temporal universe Understandings of the human being in community
Ethical Dimension	Intuitive apprehensions of what one must do to live within reality-as-it-is in greater congruity with reality-as-it-should-be	Shared understandings of how most appropriately to live in light of the total context and conditions that shape human identity and destiny; normative ways of acting	Norms for cultic performance Norms for self-cultivation Norms for the organization of the holy community Norms for social responsibility (morality)

interchange and for appropriate relations with other communities, sacred and secular; and

Norms for social responsibility—basic moral guidelines that contribute to spiritual progress and the realization of the ideal social order.

Any particular valued or devalued action may, of course, be related to more than a single norm. For example, religious practices such as fasting, praying, preaching, healing the sick, and hunting could be described in relation to all four of these types of ethical norms.

Religious traditions are dynamic realities, of course, which in varying degrees and contexts validate competing forms of piety and different emphases with regard to truth. By the term "piety," I refer to a disposition of thought and action that is both the means and the end, or goal, of transformational discipline. Historians of religions and students of comparative religious ethics are naturally interested in understanding the multiple ways—even within single traditions—that link the visionary and ethical dimensions of truth. Historians of religions have been especially interested in studying the historical development of different forms of spirituality and the dynamics of intra-religious as well as interreligious conflict.

In relation to this bidimensional characterization of religious truth, important features of many religious traditions may be illuminated by identifying two basic forms of religious piety: visionary piety and ethical piety. Advocates of a visionary piety may be said to emphasize the attainment of mental dispositions, the "seeing" of the true nature of things. For them, being religious primarily means believing certain things, trusting in the verity of certain comprehensive visions. Ethical expressions of truth deemed most important for sustaining such visions without obstructing them are given priority. Ethical pietists, in contrast, tend to emphasize transformation through normative activities—that is, the doing of truth. For them, being religious primarily means acting according to prescribed rules and roles. Regardless of the ethical norms emphasized, what are highlighted are those aspects of the tradition's vision that undergird such practices without apparent contradiction or unnecessary complication.

In addition to the differences in orientation between these two basic forms of piety, strong disagreements frequently occur within pieties. Individuals and groups within a religious community may vigorously debate which aspects of their shared vision or ethical norms ought to be judged of the highest priority for spiritual attainment. For example, some religious people who can be fundamentally characterized as ethical pietists may be drawn to emphasize cultic performance. For them, religious practice means, essentially, participation in rites. Other ethical pietists within the same community may locate the essence of their spiritual life in actualizing norms for social responsibility, while giving minimal attention to cultic participation.

Religious debate can also be related to the tension between different expectations about experiential intensity or expressional clarity. A central issue may be to what extent it is necessary or even possible to describe the content of religious experiences. Many practitioners may question to what degree such intellectual efforts constitute spiritually centripetal or centrifugal activities—that is, whether they draw one closer to ultimate transformation or propel one farther away from it. A "mystic," for example, may assert that other seekers within his or her own tradition have lost the transforming immediacy of their religious experience due to excessive concern with producing systematized doctrines or with advocating prescribed ethical systems. Yet those who make such charges may themselves be criticized as seekers so absorbed in the immediacy of the sacred that they are unable or unwilling to share such experiences with clarity and thereby foster the creation of community.

These distinctions help us understand Taixu's significance within his own religious community and, even more broadly, the significance of his particular type of piety in the history of religions. I hope to demonstrate, first, that Taixu was an ethical pietist. While he was concerned about explicating the Buddhist vision, and accordingly devoted considerable attention to reviving interest in the complex idealistic philosophy of the Weishi (Consciousness-Only) school, Taixu believed that religious actions were at the very heart of the spiritual life. In a new bodhisattva's process of religious transformation, the Chinese reformer gave priority to selfless modes of action that both expressed

and produced profound insights into emptiness. For those struggling along the bodhisattva's path toward full enlightenment, Taixu emphasized that wisdom could not be attained apart from compassionate actions in the world. This was a truth, he asserted, that far too many Mahāyāna Buddhist practitioners, both monastic and lay, seemed to have forgotten, to their peril.

Second, I hope to show that, in the course of stressing enlightenment through the doing of truth (i.e., the concrete embodiment of religious truth within the world), Taixu also emphasized those ethical norms of the Buddhist heritage especially related to social responsibility. He was concerned with norms for cultic performance, self-cultivation, and organizational efficiency, yet his principle concern was, clearly, human morality. Furthermore, he affirmed a soteriology that understood personal metanoia as intrinsically related to the transformation of the entire social order. Unlike many of his contemporaries within the sangha, he understood action within the socio-political sphere to be a primary means to complete enlightenment, not an obstacle to it.

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS STUDY

Chapter 1 summarizes the historical context in which Taixu's controversial leadership emerged. China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was marked by political and intellectual revolution, by conflicting responses to the West and what it represented. The goal of virtually all civic leaders was the creation of a "new people" *(xin min)*, yet there was much disagreement on the necessary and appropriate means to that end. Some leaders were optimists who hoped for a slow, evolutionary transformation of Chinese society; some were warlords who sought to dictate the direction of change; some were cultural iconoclasts with more energy for tearing down than building up; some were utopian dreamers who envisioned completely new forms of socio-political order. Buddhist leaders were determined to protect their religious community during this turbulent period and to promote its role in a new China. Yet they faced a

formidable task. Thus I review key elements of the crises of the late Qing and Republican periods and of the efforts of Chinese Buddhists to defend the Dharma in light of complex internal and external challenges.

In Chapters 2 and 3, I offer a biographical sketch of Taixu's career as a Buddhist master, from his introduction to the religion as a young boy to his eventual status as the most internationally recognized leader within the Chinese Buddhist community of his day. Chapter 2 looks at Taixu's early career, including his spiritual formation and initial efforts to reenliven the Chinese Sangha. Thus this chapter highlights his concerns as a Chinese patriot immediately before and after the historic 1911 revolution and his relationships with known socialists, anarchists, and Buddhist radicals; it also reviews his plans for reorganizing and reforming the monastic community, and for promoting its closer ties to lay groups interested in reform. In Chapter 3, I summarize Taixu's religious activities both in China and abroad in the latter half of his career, as he sought to foster interreligious and intercultural understanding, Buddhist ecumenical cooperation, and global mission.

Chapters 4 and 5 present a synopsis of Taixu's teachings about his "new Buddhism" *(xin fojiao)*. Of particular interest is the way he shaped his presentation of the Mahāyāna heritage so as to highlight the tradition as potentially, if not in actual practice, the most scientifically respectable and socially responsible religious force within human society. In Chapter 4, I examine Taixu's basic perspectives on the role of Mahāyāna Buddhism in the contemporary world, summarizing his description of what he judged to be the fundamental dilemma of the modern, secularized age—namely, the catastrophic loss of any adequate foundation for moral action. Taixu argued that the development of modern science, however beneficial, had effectively discredited all god-language, had undermined both theological and philosophical ethics, and had fueled a consumerism that threatened to destroy all civility. In response, the Chinese master prescribed what he considered the only effective antidote to the spreading global poison of egocentrism and violence: a "Buddhism for human life" *(rensheng fojiao)*.

In the context of this human-centered Buddhism, Taixu pursued concrete solutions to real human problems, both spiritual and politi-

cal. He sought to restate and refocus traditional Chinese Buddhism as he simultaneously encouraged a reconstitution of the Chinese social world. The most politically involved of all the major Buddhist leaders in the Republican period, he clearly thought of himself as a patriot working toward practical religio-cultural syntheses of new and old. His concern was to demonstrate the relevance of Mahāyāna Buddhism for the creation of a "moral culture" that could heal the wounds of a deeply divided China as well as those of an increasingly polarized and violent global community.

Chapter 5 presents a more detailed account of the bodhisattva's pilgrimage toward complete enlightenment and the religious community's potentialities. Taixu's characteristic descriptions of the path to buddhahood, though in accord with Mahāyāna understandings, were still expressive of his particular form of piety. Through what might be termed a "creative recovery of tradition," he sought to distance himself from those masters who stressed dependence on great celestial buddhas and bodhisattvas. Rather, he emphasized what could actually be accomplished in this world through the self-sacrificial work of thousands of average bodhisattvas dedicated to building a pure land here and now. Indeed, beyond merely recommending the unified practice of the Six Perfections *(liu du)*, Taixu was willing to explore practical plans for realizing a communal utopia on earth. His complementary plans for reorganizing and reducing the size of the Chinese sangha proved to be highly controversial and were widely ridiculed. Although many aspects of his parallel efforts to modernize monastic education for "new monks" *(xin seng)* were gradually accepted, many Buddhist leaders actively discouraged students from attending Taixu's seminaries.

Nevertheless, despite conservative Buddhist critiques that Taixu was rashly dangerous, secular humanist conclusions that he was completely irrelevant, and Christian missionary charges that he was spiritually misguided, the reformer's sense of direction remained unaltered. In response to ardent advocates of Pure Land devotionalism who spoke of declining abilities in the final Dharma age *(mofa)*, Taixu asserted that their pessimism about this world was not in keeping either with the spirit and needs of the modern world or with the primary thrust of Mahāyāna. In response to secular humanists, Taixu argued that their position was fundamentally relativistic and that they had misjudged the beneficial contribution that a modern form of Buddhism could make to China's reconstruction and to an emerging global culture. In response to Christian evangelists, he claimed that a theistic faith was no longer tenable in the modern, scientific world and that the particular form of civilization that Christianity had spawned was destructive of human community everywhere.

Chapter 6 discusses Taixu's legacy after 1949 within the Chinese Sangha, especially his influence on the revival of Buddhism in contemporary Taiwan. As Frank Millican remarked in 1923, "Taixu and modern Buddhism are inseparable. You can no more write intelligently about modern Buddhism and ignore Taixu than you could about the [Protestant] Reformation and leave [Martin] Luther out."[7] Developments in the last seventy-five years have only reinforced Millican's prescient judgment, made when Taixu was only thirty-three. Today, the teachings of the charismatic master from Zhejiang continue to shape aspects of a revitalized Buddhism in East Asia. In the People's Republic of China there is renewed interest in his career, despite his close ties to the Guomindang government, and in Taiwan important masters such as Yinshun, Xingyun, Shengyan, and Zhengyan have all advanced dimensions of his modernization. Taixu may have felt that his "Buddhist revolution" failed, yet his work remains the basis for intellectual, humanitarian, and missionary-minded expressions of the religion around the world. Contemporary Buddhism within the Chinese cultural sphere simply cannot be fully understood apart from his efforts at reform.

Taixu interpreted Mahāyāna Buddhism as a religion that was both in harmony with Śākyamuni's teachings and appropriate to the special needs and spirit of his time. In so doing, he exemplified trends found within many religious traditions in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His efforts have much in common with those of other Asian Buddhist leaders who have advocated a socially engaged Buddhism and joined liberation movements against all forms of human oppression. Much like advocates of the liberal Christian Social Gospel and of Reform Judaism, Taixu simplified and radicalized his

religious heritage, defining the essence of the religion in a way that emphasized the role of selfless bodhisattvas in, but not of, the world.

As a realist, Taixu acknowledged the complexities of the human condition in an increasingly interdependent and dangerous global community. As a utopian, he sought to paint with bold colors intriguing images of an enlightened realm of justice and equanimity, a future pure land on earth. Optimistic about human potential for attaining final buddhahood, his goal was progress toward a fully modern form of Buddhism and beyond.

CHAPTER 1

DEFENDING THE DHARMA IN A REVOLUTIONARY AGE

In the late nineteenth century, long before the 1911 revolution that forced the abdication of Puyi (1906–1967), the last emperor of the Qing dynasty (1644–1912), Chinese intellectuals were engaged in a reevaluation on an unprecedented scale of the very foundations of their ancient culture. The primary reasons for this intense introspection, and the sometimes polarizing, divisive debate that it occasioned, were serious dynastic decline and the growing influence in China of western civilization.[1] Local revolts and regional rebellions against Manchu rule caused significant upheaval and dislocation. Many issues that contributed to the general unrest and sense of insecurity, such as official corruption, taxation policies, and governmental treatment of minority groups, were essentially unrelated to the presence of westerners in China. Other critical issues, however, were either directly or indirectly related to western influences on a society that for centuries had been minimally affected by developments elsewhere in the world.

Westernization was largely a consequence of the Chinese empire's forced political and economic concessions to foreign powers that began with the Opium War (1839–1842). China's military defeat by Great Britain and the subsequent infusion of western personnel and ideas into the country had created a piercing awareness of a fundamental disequilibrium between civilizations that had to be addressed.

Not only had China's sovereignty been compromised, but the previously confident self-perception of the Chinese people had been seriously challenged. The precise nature of the imbalance between East and West and the identity crisis that it precipitated were differently evaluated. Yet on one resolution virtually all Chinese could agree: in view of these untoward circumstances, creative, energetic leadership was needed to reconsider the country's past and reenvision its future in a changing global environment. The solution to China's internal problems, many judged, was intrinsically related to an appropriate response to the new external pressures. As a result, as Joseph Levenson has suggested, two sharply contrasting responses emerged to this crisis of identity vis-à-vis the West: the abandonment of tradition by iconoclasts on the one hand, and its petrifaction by traditionalists on the other. Significantly, both these responses, the iconoclastic as well as the traditionalistic, demonstrated "a Chinese concern to establish the equivalence of China and the West."[2]

For several millennia, the Chinese people had considered their country, Zhongguo (the "Middle Kingdom"), to be the center of the world. They thought of their domain not so much as one nation among others but as the sole civilized world surrounded by peoples of less developed societies. Attempts to enforce a tributary system, in which countries that desired relations with China were required to acknowledge their inferior status, reflected this ethnocentric worldview. During the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), the ceremonies associated with a unified tributary system became highly structured, and the formal procedures for establishing and maintaining relations with China were very complicated and expensive.[3]

By the late sixteenth century, elements of a more bilateral model for foreign relations were introduced through interchange with the Manchus and Mongols. However, western nations encountering the country's hierarchical political ideology in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries responded to all aspects of the tributary system with considerable resentment. Prior to 1800, all but one of the leaders of the trade missions to China from western powers were forced to accede to demands to kowtow before the Qing emperor in accordance with the rituals of the system.[4] Yet by the early nineteenth century, the governments and commercial agents of the western nations refused to recognize or comply fully with Chinese expectations. As Immanuel C.Y. Hsü notes:

> The traders wanted greater freedom of action, and the Western governments, newly released from the Napoleonic Wars and greatly strengthened by the Industrial Revolution, would not suffer the tributary treatment. They insisted on international relations according to the law and diplomacy of Europe; but the Chinese would not sacrifice their cherished system. In effect, they said, "We have not asked you to come; if you come you must accept our ways," to which the West's reply was "You cannot stop us from coming and we will come on our own terms."[5]

The English defeat of the Chinese in the Opium War dramatized and reinforced that sharp reply. Furthermore, it opened China to increased western trade based on a series of unequal treaties that not only were extremely advantageous to the western nations but substantively undermined Chinese sovereignty as well. Five treaty ports were authorized by the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842, and that number increased dramatically in the last half of the nineteenth century through other treaty concessions. By 1911, westerners from a number of nations resided with extraterritorial privileges in forty-eight Chinese cities. Governed by their own national laws rather than those of the empire, such treaty-port communities were established on a combination of commercial self-interest and Christian evangelical zeal.[6] Indeed, many westerners interpreted their presence and work in China as a part of a divinely ordained vocation, in Max Weber's sense.[7] Many related their individual calling to the manifest destiny not only of Christianity but of capitalism throughout the world. Given this rationalization of their place on Chinese soil, it surprised no one that these "foreign devils," as they were commonly called, often displayed arrogance and disdain, whether or not consciously intended, for the Chinese people and their ways of life.[8]

The Manchu's authority to rule the empire was increasingly challenged from within the country as well as from without. Their right to govern was jeopardized not only because of the bureaucracy's

inability to respond effectively to the aggressive exploitation of China by foreign powers, but also because of widespread poverty among the rural peasants, unemployment and crime in urban areas, excessive taxation, and notable government corruption and mismanagement. The Mandate of Heaven on which Qing authority rested was widely questioned, and in mid century, civil strife erupted throughout the empire. The Taiping (1851–1864), Nian (1851–1868), and Moslem (1855–1873) rebellions were suppressed only with tremendous bloodshed and loss of life.[9] In the 1860s and 1870s, as a result, the Qing government was forced to adopt a reform agenda in a self-strengthening movement known as the Tongzhi Restoration (Tongzhi zhongxing). However, as Mary Clabaugh Wright has shown, the "restoration" only momentarily reduced growing social conflict and alienation with the Manchus.[10]

During the final quarter of the nineteenth century, debate between ideological conservatives and advocates of modernization intensified. The fundamental flaw in the initially attractive proposal of selective innovation championed by Zhang Zhidong (1837–1909) and others —and captured in the famous phrase *"Zhongxue wei ti, Xixue wei yong"* (Chinese learning for essential values, Western learning for practical values)—came to be recognized by all.[11] The Chinese "essence" was increasingly devalued as wholly irrelevant for achieving the practical objectives of economic and technological advancement required for parity with the West. At the same time, western imperialism and Japanese aggression continued to increase throughout Asia, with numerous spheres of interest and leased territories in China being exploited for foreign gain, accompanied by a corresponding increase in xenophobia and anti-Christian sentiment among the Chinese people. Political decentralization also accelerated, in part because of governmental corruption, in part because of local militarization and the formation of regional armies.[12] The reform program initiated by the emperor Guangxu (1871–1908) in the wake of China's humiliating defeat in the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) was immediately countermanded by the powerful empress dowager Cixi (1835–1908).[13] Incarcerating the emperor in the palace and continuing to blame all China's problems on foreign intervention, the dowager's court chose

furtively to support the anti-foreign paroxysms that characterized the Boxer Rebellion of 1899–1900.[14]

With the death of the empress dowager in November 1908, and the mysterious death the previous day of the emperor Guangxu, the dowager's three-year-old grandnephew Puyi succeeded to the Dragon Throne as the Emperor Xuantong. His father, who was selected to assume the responsibilities of regent during the emperor's minority, was at first perceived to be receptive to a transition toward a true constitutional monarchy. Yet he immediately disappointed reformers, both by rejecting petitions calling for the convening of a parliament and by appointing a preponderance of Manchu advisers to his cabinet. Optimism quickly waned about any significant change under Qing rule, and the political momentum swung sharply toward revolutionary leaders like Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925). Chairman of the Chinese United League (Tongmeng hui), a revolutionary organization founded in 1905, Sun succinctly formulated the three primary goals of the radicals: nationalism *(minzu)*, democracy *(minquan)*, and economic livelihood *(minsheng)*. The manifesto of the Chinese United League called explicitly for the overthrow of the tyrannical Manchu dynasty, the restoration of China to control of the Chinese, the establishment of a republican form of government elected by the people, and the equalization of land ownership in a socialist state.[15]

When an anti-Manchu revolt in Wuchang in October 1911 precipitated multiple declarations of provincial independence from Beijing, Sun Yat-sen was in the United States pursuing diplomatic support for revolution. Upon his return to China, provincial delegates to a revolutionary assembly convening in Shanghai immediately elected him provisional president of the Republic of China, a position he officially assumed in Nanjing on January 1, 1912. Yuan Shikai (1859–1916), the powerful governor-general of Hunan and Hubei, was finally persuaded by Sun, through assurances of future power, to throw his support behind the burgeoning revolutionary movement. With that critical political and military development, the position of the Qing court, which had also pleaded desperately for Yuan's continued support, became untenable. On February 12, 1912, the young emperor Xuantong's abdication was formalized, ending 268 years of Manchu

rule, and the long dynastic history of China came to an end. Taixu, the politically active young Buddhist monk from Zhejiang who was advocating a parallel religious revolution, was then twenty-two years old.[16]

A NEW REPUBLIC IN TURMOIL

Yuan Shikai was elected the first president of the Republic when Sun Yat-sen stepped aside for tactical reasons. However, at the time there was no one reform agenda—or leader—to which a majority of the Chinese people were clearly committed. As James Sheridan has described this transitional period,

> There was little sense of a national community, little cooperative effort toward a national end. The orientation [of the revolution] was anti-Manchu, anti-imperialist, and strongly provincialistic. There was no national hero or leader who could become the symbol of national aspirations, and thereby stimulate nationalist feelings. Sun Yat-sen did not have the capacity for that role, and in any event Sun was not a central figure in 1911, except to his own United League. . . . But the most important limitation on Chinese nationalism was the limited involvement of the mass of the Chinese people. Peasants joined the revolt, of course, but their participation was localized in character and restrictive in goals. For most, the revolution ended with provincial secession. That is why, despite the bloodshed that did occur, the revolution seems curiously bland. In 1911, Chinese nationalism was only skin deep.[17]

Yuan Shikai's own rather limited reform commitments were immediately obvious when he became engaged in bitter struggles with Sun Yat-sen's more progressive colleagues who were active within the newly formed Nationalist Party (Guomindang). In part this stemmed from Yuan's basic judgment that the Chinese people were not actually prepared for democracy, a view in which he was encouraged by numerous conservative advisers who favored a monarchy. With the help of provincial warlords, Yuan soon betrayed the republican movement altogether, dissolving the Guomindang in 1913 and brashly

attempting to assume imperial powers. The ill-conceived bid was ultimately unsuccessful; Yuan died in the summer of 1916 as his political authority was disintegrating into the political confusion and bitter civil warfare that was to characterize the next twenty years.

With the death of the Republic's first president, chaos reigned. In the power vacuum, warlords rushed into battle with each other for control. For a brief time Kang Youwei (1858–1927) and others sought vainly to restore the last emperor Puyi to an imperial throne, while Sun Yat-sen reestablished his military government at Guangzhou (Canton) in order to protect the fragile Republican constitution. Discouraged by his lack of success and in failing health, Sun died in Beijing nine years later, in 1925, during efforts to negotiate peace and unification between his Republican government in the south and the warlord government that had succeeded that of Yuan Shikai in the north. It was not until 1927 that Nationalist forces under the direction of general Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975) succeeded in unifying the country with an extensive military expedition against the northern warlords.

That successful unification, however tentative and superficial, was also in part the result of an uneasy coalition forged between the Guomindang and the fledgling Chinese Communist Party (Gongchandang), founded in Shanghai in 1921 through the efforts of intellectuals such as Chen Duxiu (1879–1942) and Li Dazhao (1889–1927). With the guidance of Bolshevik emissaries, the Chinese Communist Party initially committed itself to a radical Marxist utopianism and the advancement of socialism without any collaboration with bourgeois-democrats. Ultimately, however, Lenin counseled a strategic accommodation with the Guomindang until the communist movement had an opportunity to develop greater popular support throughout the country. A first united front agreement for the purpose of seeking national unification was thus reached with leaders of the Guomindang in 1924. As Derek Waller has suggested, the Communists thought a united front would provide an opportunity for taking eventual control of the Guomindang, whereas Nationalist leaders thought they could contain the Communists while making use of the economic aid and military weaponry provided by their Russian supporters.[18] As

a part of the first united front agreement, three Communists were elected to the Central Executive Committee of the Guomindang. The young political radical from Hunan, Mao Zedong (1893–1976), was made an alternate member.

Fundamental tensions, however, between the aims of the Guomindang and the more radical revolutionary goals of the Communists could not long be peacefully mediated. By 1927, Chiang Kai-shek was prepared to terminate the united front and deal militarily with the Communists, their Russian patrons, and their left-wing sympathizers within the Guomindang. His army's swift and ruthless massacre of Communist Party members and supporters in Shanghai, which had become a center for their activities under the leadership of Zhou Enlai (1898–1976), marked the end of the united front. Within days, the party's structure was almost totally destroyed and its future viability in China seriously jeopardized. In the wake of the Shanghai disaster, it was Mao Zedong who was increasingly recognized as the Communist Party's visionary leader. An advocate for the advancement of communism through the organization and ideological education of peasants in the countryside, Mao argued forcefully that rural bases, or "soviets," would provide opportunities for effective land reform and guerrilla warfare against the Guomindang. Moreover, they would be far less vulnerable to attack than urban proletariat organizations.

In the early 1930s, Chiang Kai-shek directed four "encirclement and annihilation" campaigns designed to eliminate the Communists. Mao was eventually forced to abandon his principal base in Jiangxi in 1934 and flee on a torturous year-long "Long March" to Shaanxi, on which many thousands of his followers perished. At the same time, with Chiang's political fortunes apparently on the rise, the Guomindang tried to instill in the populace the expectation of a forthcoming period of peace and prosperity for China. Government leaders encouraged an increased measure of optimism about the creation of a new people and about the salvation of the country. In a campaign initiated in 1934 and known as "the New Life Movement" (Xin shenghuo yundong), Chiang advocated a form of militaristic personal discipline and hygiene for the entire citizenry. Such appeals for reform through personal discipline were only partially successful, however,

and ultimately failed to inspire the confidence and passion of the masses to the same extent as Mao's continuing call for change through systematic class struggle.

From 1937 to 1945, to counter Japanese aggression during the second Sino-Japanese War, the Guomindang and the Communist Party were led of necessity to forge another united front, although the truce was never faithfully observed. The Communists used the time during World War II to gain considerable popular support, military strength, and territorial control. By the end of the war in 1945, they were well-positioned for the final, bitter days of civil war, despite the Nationalists' confidence that they themselves could win a military confrontation. Attempts by the United States to moderate discussions of a possible coalition government between the Communists and the Nationalists quickly failed. The military struggle that ensued ended only four years later, with Mao Zedong's declaration in Beijing, on October 1, 1949, of the founding of the People's Republic of China, and his rejection of Chiang's desperate proposal for a division of the country at the Yangzi River, the lines of the former Sung dynasty. The brief and turbulent Republican period in China, a period only thirty-eight years long, came abruptly to a close. For some Chinese as well as outside observers, it ended as suddenly and unexpectedly as the long dynastic history of the country ended in the 1911 revolution. For many, it was viewed as equally inevitable.

ICONOCLASM AND THE INTELLECTUAL RENAISSANCE

The late Qing and early Republican years in Chinese history were aptly characterized by Wu Yue, a revolutionary from Anhui, as a "season of assassins."[19] It was an age of violent terrorism and valiant heroism. Yet it was also a time of significant intellectual creativity and achievement. The creation of a new social order—indeed, of a new humanity—was the common goal of all the intellectuals of the age.[20] As Jerome Grieder has commented, prior to the 1911 revolution, Chinese intellectuals, whether monarchists or republicans, had an ebul-

lient, naive optimism that political change would quickly translate into a much broader and efficacious socio-cultural transformation.[21] Following the revolution, disappointments about the lack of change led to a sweeping critique of traditional Chinese civilization and the cultural ethos that informed such individual and collective resistance to progress. Within many circles, attention came to be focused less on new political structures and more on the development of a new culture. Reversing the logic of most pre-revolutionary arguments, many intellectuals began to maintain that a distinctly new and modern Chinese culture would eventually provide an adequate foundation for the creation of a more efficient and just political order.

"The New Culture Movement" (Xin wenhua yundong) refers to the decade or so of intense intellectual activity, usually dated from 1915, that was directed toward a comprehensive reappraisal of Chinese cultural traits and practices. Labeled "the Chinese Renaissance" (Zhongguo wenyi fuxing) by the scholar Hu Shi (1891–1962), the period was marked by a critical, iconoclastic spirit. It was a time in which intellectuals systematically doubted everything in order, finally, to believe in something. Challenging Chinese intellectuals not to shy away from a penetrating examination of their nation's history and culture, Chen Duxiu declared boldly in 1915:

> We indeed do not know which of our traditional institutions may be fit for survival in the modern world. I would rather see the ruin of our traditional "national quintessence" than have our race of the present and future extinguished because of its unfitness for survival. Alas, the Babylonians are gone; of what use is their civilization to them now? As a Chinese maxim says, "If the skin does not exist, what can the hair adhere to?" The world continually progresses and will not stop. All those who cannot change themselves and keep pace with it are unfit for survival and will be eliminated by the processes of natural selection.[22]

As Chen's statement suggests, the concepts of evolution and natural selection fired the imagination of Chinese intellectuals in the early twentieth century. According to James Reeve Pusey, it was the work of Charles Darwin, rather than that of Immanuel Kant, G. W. F. Hegel, or Karl Marx, that first revolutionized Chinese concepts of history: "It was Darwin who 'proved' progress, who brought 'scientific proof' that the world was 'evolving' and, more important, 'evolving upwards.'"[23] Hu Shi argued that the idea of social evolution was compelling to Chinese intellectuals because it resonated with their humanistic optimism that the course of events could be altered and a brighter future realized despite China's desperate circumstances.[24] Interest in social evolution was fueled by important translations of western literature by Yan Fu (1853–1921) and other literary scholars. Works such as T. H. Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics,* Herbert Spencer's *A Study of Sociology,* J. S. Mill's *On Liberty,* and Montesquieu's *De l'espirit des lois* became widely available.[25] Those students who had returned from studies in Japan, the United States, and Europe were able to interpret the unique Chinese story within the broader context of an evolving human story. Most returned to China with an empowering sense that they could actively create history and help save their country from extinction.[26]

Education at the feet of "Mr. Science" and "Mr. Democracy" was thought by most to be the key for the creation of a new people. Accordingly, there were new initiatives in the field of adult vocational education, in order to train workers for positions in modern industry, and a new focus on higher education at the university level. The respected scholar Cai Yuanpei (1876–1940) returned in 1916 from four years in Germany and France to assume the chancellorship of the National University of Beijing. He took immediate steps to restructure the university on a European model, recruiting a diverse and qualified faculty who were promised academic freedom and participation in curricular decisions. Both the American philosopher and educator John Dewey (1859–1952) and the English philosopher Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) accepted invitations to become visiting lecturers for a year. University enrollment increased markedly as professors and students considered together creative new possibilities for cultural syntheses between the East and the West. Despite opposition from some literary scholars and translators like Yan Fu and Lin Shu (1852–1924), most educators affirmed the need for a literary revolution and the adoption of the vernacular form of Chinese *(baihua)* for all contemporary literature. In fact, in 1920, following an appeal by

the National Alliance of Educational Associations, the Ministry of Education ordered that all textbooks written in the ancient classical language *(wenyan)* be abandoned in public schools.

University iconoclasts associated with the New Culture Movement also proceeded to sharply attack the Confucian heritage, traditional Chinese family relationships, and popular religious superstitions. Numerous prominent scholars denounced Confucianism as the product of an agrarian and feudal society of the ancient past. Confucianists, they argued, merely encouraged submission to superiors instead of critical thinking and independent action; emphasized family patterns and expectations rather than individual potentialities; valued hierarchy and inequality rather than egalitarianism; and reinforced tradition while suppressing innovation. As John K. Fairbank has commented,

> The attack on the old Confucian order of hierarchy and status denied the validity of the ancient "three bonds," the subordination of subject to ruler, of son to father, and of wife to husband. It denounced the three corresponding virtues—loyalty to superiors, filiality, and female subjection—as props of despotism in both state and family. The anti-Confucianists attacked the tyranny of parents, their arrangements of marriages, and the subordination of youth to family.[27]

In a stinging rebuke of tradition, the popular writer Lu Xun (1881–1936), for example, declared that "Chinese culture is a culture of serving one's masters who are triumphant at the cost of the misery of the multitudes."[28] Thus convicted, intellectuals extended their reexamination and "reorganization of the heritage" *(zhengli guogu)* to virtually every field of academic endeavor, from literary criticism and the arts to history, philosophy, science, and so forth.

Yet although many of the scholars involved in the debates of this period were influenced by the West, they were certainly not uncritical of western civilization. The horrors of World War I in Europe, they pointed out, prevented any simplistic exaltation of all things western. As Guy S. Alitto has observed, Liang Qichao (1873–1929), Zhang Jiasen (or Zhang Junmai, who published in English under the name of Carsun or C. S. Chang; 1886–1969), and Liang Shuming (1893–1977) all articulated a more conservative position vis-à-vis the adoption of western culture.[29] Such intellectuals feared that any "cultural synthesis" might ultimately destroy the uniquely valuable elements of traditional Chinese culture, elements that indeed had universal significance for humankind. Liang Shuming's *Dong Xi wenhua ji qi zhexue* (Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies) became a classic statement of the problem from a conservative perspective.[30] Liang argued that China was not simply "behind" the West in its historical development but on an altogether different and more efficacious cultural track. Wu Zhihui (1864–1953), Guomindang leader and a longtime friend of Cai Yuanpei, responded unequivocally by characterizing Liang Shuming as a "useless creature of the 17th century."[31]

Most intellectuals of the New Culture Movement summarily dismissed religious beliefs and practices as worthless remnants of a prescientific feudal society or unfortunate survivals from humanity's psychological childhood. Accordingly, Chinese popular religion as well as Daoism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity were all devalued in the forging of a new national and global culture. Nevertheless, as Chow Tse-tsung has indicated, in the earliest years of the reform movement, religion was not a primary target of attack.[32] A negative view of religious commitments was implicit in many criticisms leveled in 1913 against the attempt to make Confucianism the state religion during the presidency of Yuan Shikai. Again, in 1916, anti-religious sentiments surfaced when Kang Youwei urged the parliament and President Li Yuanhong (1864–1928) to adopt a similar Confucian proposal in order to unify the country. On both occasions, a number of intellectuals took the opportunity to characterize religion as primitive superstition based on fear and ignorance and to describe religious adherents as dogmatic and divisive. Chen Duxiu, for example, while claiming that "the value of a religion is in direct proportion to the extent of its benefit to the society"[33] and urging the Chinese people "to cultivate the lofty and majestic character of Jesus,"[34] also finally charged that "all religions are useless as instruments of government and education. They are to be classed with the other discarded idols of a past age."[35]

Cai Yuanpei's public lecture on religion at the National University of Beijing in 1917 set the tone for many intellectuals. Cai argued that the Chinese mentality was not favorable to the attitudes and sentiments of religion and that the religious institutions of the world had only obstructed the progressive development of the human race. As Hu Shi has indicated, Cai ventured to propose a more acceptable substitute for religious commitment:

> He thought that religion was essentially a product of the instinctive love for beauty and sublimity, and that it might be replaced by a universal education in aesthetics, a training which should lead men to love the beautiful and the sublime in human conduct as well as in nature.[36]

In the midst of continuing controversy about the place of religion in Chinese society, the convening in Beijing in the spring of 1922 of the World's Student Christian Federation sparked an intense anti-Christian campaign as well as a more organized nationwide anti-religion movement. A "Great Federation of Anti-Religionists" (Fei zongjiao da tongmeng) was established with leadership from both the left wing of the Guomindang and the fledgling Communist Party.[37] The Federation sponsored educational efforts that sought to label all forms of religious belief and activity as fundamentally irrational and to identify the Christian religion, in particular, as both un-Chinese and unscientific. As Levenson observes, in the seventeenth century Christianity was widely rejected by the Chinese for not being traditional and Confucian enough; ironically, in the early twentieth century it was rejected for not being scientific and modern enough.[38] Many intellectuals charged not only that Christianity was a foreign spiritual tradition ill-suited to the Chinese people, but that it represented a naive theistic worldview increasingly rejected by scientific minds everywhere.

In concert with more organized efforts to eliminate religious practice came more specific attacks on both Christian teaching and the institutional church. According to Zhang Jiasen, doctrinally, Christianity was seen as too unscientific because of its teachings on miracles and the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It was contrary to logic because of its intractable theodicy problem (i.e., a good Creator

God and an evil world). Christian faith was contrary to modern social theories because its spiritual emphasis on reliance on God and on heavenly rewards neglected human capabilities for social reformation and advancement within this world. Finally, it was not suitable for Chinese culture because Christianity's foreign character was an unnatural and potentially dangerous basis for a national renaissance.

Institutionally speaking, according to Zhang, the Christian church was portrayed as a hypocritical organization with a terrible history of contributing to human oppression and war while preaching that one "love thy neighbor." Thus it was seen as supporting unbridled capitalism in China and throughout the developing world, but maintained little interest in more just and sustainable solutions of social and economic reconstruction. The church was interpreted as an agent of western colonialism both because of its past function as a religious vanguard for imperialistic governments and because of its continuing insensitivities to the national integrity of the Chinese people. It was understood to be given to corrupt methods of proselytization because of its various ingenious ways of tricking and seducing poor and uneducated people into converting to Christianity. And finally, according to Zhang, the church was said to be made up of persons of low moral standards because of its many "rice Christians," who professed faith merely for personal gain.[39] Chen Duxiu, for example, while complaining about the numerous "rice Christians," also queried critically in 1920:

> Jesus said, "Every one that listens to this teaching of mine and does not act upon it may be compared to a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain poured down, the rivers rose, the winds blew and struck that house, and it fell; and great was its downfall" (Matt. 7:26–27).
>
> Are the Christians of the world all like the foolish man or not? We need not speak about those who look upon preaching as a means of livelihood. In every country there are many professed Christians. Why do they not oppose the unchristian acts of militarists and the moneyed? And why do they, instead, connive at the injustices practiced by them? They see the "House of Prayer for all the nations" turned into "a den of robbers," and are indifferent. They hold tenaciously to frivolous traditions as if they were the weightiest doctrines. In my view, these fool-

ish men, and not the anti-Christian scientists, are the real destroyers of Christianity. The responsibility for its destruction should be on their shoulders.[40]

Some intellectuals in the Republican period, of course, were willing to acknowledge that western Christian missionaries had accomplished a modest measure of good in China and could continue to contribute to national reconstruction. However, a far greater number concluded that Christianity was tainted beyond redemption by western imperialism; that it was inappropriately emphasized in the curriculum of too many mission schools, to the detriment of the overall educational needs of the students; and that, with the advances of modern science, the outdated theistic religion would ultimately disappear in the Middle Kingdom, as elsewhere in the world. The long-term outlook for Buddhism, Christianity's major religious competitor in China, was commonly judged to be even bleaker.

ASSESSING THE VITALITY OF CHINESE BUDDHISM

The study of Buddhist philosophy was something of a vogue in intellectual circles in the late Qing, as the scholar-reformer Liang Qichao testified.[41] Nevertheless, the religion as popularly practiced was often subjected to harsh criticisms. Even for many intellectuals for whom the challenging subtleties and intricacies of Chinese Buddhist philosophy held some appeal, Buddhism as an institutional religion offered very little. A moderate number of educated persons were appreciative of the Buddhist heritage and hoped expectantly for Buddhist reform and revitalization, but many more concluded that there were few Chinese Buddhist masters of ability anymore, that the average monk had little education or moral virtue, and that institutional Buddhism was effectively and justifiably moribund. Most members of the Chinese sangha were seen to be primarily engaged in performing rites for the dead for personal financial gain and were judged largely incapable of contributing much of significance toward national goals.

Accordingly, in the waning years of the Qing dynasty, some political reformers proposed that the considerable assets of Buddhist monasteries be appropriated by the government for use in modernization efforts. Zhang Zhidong, for example, in his 1898 *Quan xue pian* (Exhortation to Learning), suggested that the Qing court confiscate Buddhist monasteries and Daoist temples—up to 70 percent of their property—to support general educational reform. He even argued that this action would serve in the long run to benefit Buddhism and Daoism. Zhang reasoned that because the property confiscations would reinforce Confucianism as the guiding political ideology for the country, the more stable central government that resulted could subsequently protect and encourage the revitalization of all religious traditions, including Buddhism and Daoism.[42]

Liang Qichao, who studied Buddhist philosophy with his friend Tan Sitong (1865–1898), is typical of the intellectuals who expressed mixed feelings about Buddhism's potential place in a modern China. If Buddhism, he suggested, could distance itself from superstition and emphasize its rational temper and beneficial spirit toward the world, it could actively contribute to the nation's future. If not, its influence could only be a detrimental one. Acknowledging Buddhism's historically important position within Chinese society, Liang commented:

> In this unclean and evil world, men developed all sorts of vexation, frustration, grief, and sorrow; seeking a refuge that could offer security of life and peace of mind, men with some spiritual proclivity naturally fled to Buddhism. Buddhism, by nature, was neither renunciatory nor negativistic, but men who studied it faithfully and could truly maintain it with a positive spirit [were so few] that it would have been difficult to find even one or two, apart from Tan Sitong. . . .
>
> The Chinese had always been quite badly tainted with the poison of superstition; as Buddhism became prevalent, all sorts of belief in evil spirits and unorthodox doctrines as well as methods for public deception and popular delusion were revived in its wake. . . . If this [trend] continues unchanged, then Buddhism will become a great obstacle in our intellectual world, and even those of us who have always treated Buddhistic teachings with respect will henceforth be tongue-tied and afraid to discuss it any more.

> Jiang Fangzhen has said: ". . . Our country's new turning point hereafter should also develop from two directions: one, the emotional, which [involves] a new literature and a new art, and the other, the rational, which [involves] a new Buddhism." I very much agree with his words. There is no doubt that Buddhism in China, which could not be suppressed or eradicated even by those who hated it intensely, will always be an important factor in our social thinking; whether this is beneficial or baneful to our society depends solely on whether the new Buddhists appear.[43]

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, social reformers of many different persuasions wondered with Liang Qichao whether "new" expressions of Buddhism would appear. They openly questioned whether or not the ancient religion had enough vitality left to respond to the changes being wrought in the modern world. Throughout its long history in China, from the middle of the Han dynasty (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.) forward, the Sangha had experienced numerous cycles of growth and decline. Significantly, from the Ming period on, in times of crisis and decay it had been most notably the Buddhist laity who activated renewal movements. Of course, accomplished Buddhist masters had continued to achieve broad attention, to be widely revered, and to help stimulate and guide lay activities and organizations. The health of monastic and of lay Buddhism were always closely interrelated.[44] However, associations of devoted lay followers had come to play an increasingly important role in Buddhist life.

Throughout the Tang period (618–907), lay associations in China commonly emphasized the planning of Buddhist festivals, the preservation of scripture, and sūtra recitation, but by the time of the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127), the primary focus of most lay associations was the communal recitation of the Buddha's name. As Chün-fang Yü has explained, "During their periodic meetings members recited together the name of the Amitābha Buddha and transferred the merits thus accrued to their speedy rebirth in the Western Paradise. The members also engaged in philanthropic activities, but invocation of the Buddha *(nian fo)* was the main purpose."[45]

In contrast to their earlier prototypes, these groups were more frequently comprised of commoners than members of the upper class. Moreover, they tended to be rather informally constituted and loosely organized. By late Ming times, however, lay Buddhist groups were usually much more highly structured. As Edward Ch'ien comments,

> Organization and group consciousness also characterized the highly syncretic lay Buddhist world of late Ming, during which lay Buddhist associations proliferated in number. . . . These associations were rather unlike their earlier counterparts, which consisted of an indeterminate number of people meeting at unspecified times. By contrast, the lay Buddhist associations of late Ming were formally established institutions with definite rules for both group conduct and individual behavior. . . . Lay Buddhist associations grew numerically and organizationally, involving both the common people and also the educated literati-gentry elite, who, though steeped in the Confucian tradition, embraced with all seriousness certain Buddhist principles and practices in their daily lives.[46]

In the Ming and Qing dynasties, while large numbers of Buddhists explored doctrine and ritual practice within these lay associations, many other Chinese became familiar with elements of the religion through popular literature, syncretic religious traditions, or millenarian sects and secret societies. Chinese novels such as *Jin Ping Mei* (Golden Lotus), *Xiyou ji* (Journey to the West), and *Shuihu zhuan* (Water Margin) gave both readers and illiterate listeners opportunities to learn about Buddhist values, practices, and personalities. Simply written morality books *(shan shu)* offering ethical maxims, lists of good and evil deeds, and expected merits and demerits reinforced Buddhist understandings of karma and of merit-making possibilities for the laity.

Beyond the unreflective syncretism of Chinese popular religion, more sophisticated syncretic religious groups such as the Three Teachings Sect (San jiao) of Lin Zhaoen (1517–1598) contributed to the broadening of a sinicized Buddhism.[47] Lin's own goal was to develop a single method of mind cultivation that effectively integrated the insights of the Confucian, Buddhist, and Daoist traditions. Finally, many sectarian religious groups, such as the Maitreya Society (Mile

tuan), the White Cloud Sect (Baiyun zong), and the White Lotus Sect (Bailian jiao) extended Buddhism's appeal. Devotionally focused and highly syncretic, these sects made adherents familiar with certain elements of the Buddhist tradition, especially Maitreyan eschatology.[48] The White Lotus Sect, for example, synthesized accounts of a deity known as Xi Wang Mu (Mother Ruler of the West) with traditional Buddhist expectations about transmigration, the decline of the Dharma through three periods of history, a paradisaical Western Pure Land, and the Buddha of the Future, Maitreya. In similar ways, members of most Chinese secret societies encountered diverse elements of Buddhist practice and belief. Rites of the Triad Society, for example, so named for its ideal of harmony between Heaven, Earth, and humankind, included explicit references to various Buddhist deities.

IN THE DAYS OF THE LAST DYNASTY

During the Qing era, Lamaism (Lama jiao), a form of Tantric Buddhism integrated with elements of indigenous Tibetan religion, expanded its influence in China through special court patronage. It had once been recognized as the state religion by the Mongol rulers of the Yuan dynasty (1280–1368). Largely for political reasons, support for the tradition had also been extended by Ming rulers. As the monk Dongchu has observed, the Qing emperors also aimed to maintain good relations with the Mongols and Tibetans by showing courtesies to the Dalai Lama and other venerated "living buddhas." Governmental assistance was provided for the construction of numerous Tibetan temples throughout the country, including the large and important Huangjiao si in Beijing, constructed in 1651 to house four hundred Lamaist monks.[49] Also generally favored by the court was Chan Buddhism, especially the Linji school. Nevertheless, virtually all the Qing emperors were interested in promoting religious harmony and encouraging the ecumenical impulses evident within post-Tang Buddhism. Chan remained the dominant tradition, but Pure Land

devotionalism was widely practiced in monasteries associated with all Buddhist schools.

Lay Buddhist associations continued to be important in the mid and late Qing, with their lay leaders enjoying even greater freedom from sangha control.[50] Yet in many parts of China, the Buddhist monastic establishment struggled in light of declining popular support for its operations. The Qing government sponsored a new printing of the Chinese Buddhist canon, completed in 1738, as well as its translation into Manchu, completed in 1790. At the same time, facing new financial exigencies itself, the court was becoming considerably less generous with institutional Buddhism than had been true under the benevolent paternalism of Ming and early Qing emperors. Moreover, the government sought more strictly to control ordination and to reduce the number of Buddhist monks and Daoist priests, charging that most were not authentic spiritual seekers but mere social parasites. For example, the fourth Qing emperor, Qianlong (1711–1799), declared in a 1739 edict:

> The ruling princes of old often issued decrees calling for the screening of monks and Daoist priests. Certainly this was because there was indiscriminate mixture of the good and bad among the Buddhist and Daoists. Those among them who shut themselves from the world to practice secretly the monastic discipline probably number but one or two in a hundred, while those who are idlers and loafers, joining the sangha under false pretenses just to seek for food and clothing, and those who are criminals and draft dodgers, fearing punishment and concealing themselves to escape the clutches of the law, are probably countless.
>
> If one male does not farm, some people will starve; if one female does not weave, some people will be cold. The addition of one new monk means the decrease of one farmer. This group does not farm but it still eats, it does not weave but it still wears clothes. Moreover, it consumes choice foods and wears elegant clothing shamelessly, as if these were its proper due. Therefore, the income of two or three hard-working farmers is not sufficient to satisfy the needs of one monk or priest. Since these monks and priests waste the wealth of the people and contaminate the customs of the land, and since they are parasites in society and a disgrace to their religion, certainly they should not be permitted to

> increase in numbers without cease. However, since these religions have been transmitted for a long time and their followers are numerous, it is difficult to proscribe them at once. Therefore we command that the system of issuing monk certificates be again practiced, so that there may be an investigation and registration of the monastic order now, for the ultimate purpose of gradually decreasing their numbers in the future. This is our purpose in administering this business.[51]

In addition to encountering more hostile government policies on religion, the sangha faced two other significant challenges in the late Qing. The first was monastery reconstruction following the devastating Taiping Rebellion. The rebellion was led by Hong Xiuquan (1814–1864), a visionary from Guangdong who was influenced by Confucian utopianism and Protestant Christianity. In 1851, after claiming to have experienced revelations of his true identity as the son of God and younger brother of Jesus, Hong formally declared his revolutionary intention to establish in China a "Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace" (Taiping tianguo).[52] Serving as "the Heavenly King" (Tian wang), Hong soon organized a theocratic state that unified religious, civil, and military command. Basing his utopian teachings on his readings of Christian scriptures, he ordered the communalization of all privately owned land and property. The equality of the sexes was advanced, cohabitation restricted, and strict ethical codes formulated that prohibited opium, tobacco, wine, prostitution, foot-binding, slavery, gambling, and polygamy. The reading of Confucian classics was forbidden and a new civil service examination system designed around the Christian Bible and other Taiping literature. An intemperate crusade against ancestor veneration and idol worship was undertaken. In the process, Daoist and Buddhist monks were threatened and killed, and monuments and monasteries defaced and destroyed. Yang Xiuqing (d. 1856), commander of the Taiping Grand Army, issued a proclamation in 1853 that read, in part:

> With regard to the temples and monasteries, where the Buddhist and Daoist monks stay, together with property possessed by brothels and gambling houses, it is much better that it should be distributed among the poor people of the villages. At present we are seizing the Buddhist and Daoist monks throughout the country and having them beheaded, and we are inquiring into those who have been foremost in the building and repair of Buddhist temples, that we may have them apprehended likewise.[53]

Before the Qing government was able finally to end the rebellion in 1864, with the cooperation of western governments—a rebellion in which perhaps twenty million people died—the Taipings controlled an extensive area in south-central China, the very heartland of Chinese Buddhism. Citing the report on the region by the Hunanese scholar-general Zeng Guofan (1811–1872) that, because of the Taipings, "there is no Buddhist, Daoist, or city god temple that has not been burned and no idol that has not been destroyed," Dongchu concluded that the Taipings inflicted on Buddhism an almost fatal blow. In Guangdong and Guangxi, in particular, he stated, "not a Buddhist temple or Buddhist image was fortunate enough to escape damage."[54]

Buddhism's second major challenge was that presented by the Christian church. Christian missionaries posed a threat not to the external paraphernalia of institutional Buddhism but to its internal spirituality and popular support. The Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) and his colleagues had labored under difficult circumstances to provide a foundation for Christian missionary endeavors in China. As Chan Kim-kwong has noted, hoping to appeal to the ruling elite and Confucian literati, Ricci's mission strategy was to commend Confucianism as a philosophy compatible with Christianity while repudiating Daoism and especially Buddhism.[55] The strategy had limited success because it remained in conflict with the popular understanding of the complementarity of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. Nevertheless, despite firm and widespread opposition, especially among the intelligentsia, to any potential expansion of foreign Christian missions, the eventual edict of Qing emperor Kangxi (1654–1722) seemed to promise an atmosphere of respect and toleration. As the court declared in 1692,

> The Europeans are very quiet; they do not excite any disturbances in the provinces, they do no harm to anyone, they commit no crimes, and their doctrine has nothing in common with that of the false sects in the

> empire, nor has it any tendency to excite sedition. . . . We decide therefore that all temples dedicated to the Lord of heaven, in whatever place they may be found, ought to be preserved, and that it may be permitted to all who wish to worship this God to enter these temples, offer him incense, and perform the ceremonies practiced according to ancient custom by the Christians. Therefore let no one henceforth offer them any opposition.[56]

This spirit of goodwill, however, did not survive the so-called Rites Controversy of the early eighteenth century, when the Roman Catholic pope and the Chinese emperor each attacked the authority of the other to determine the character of the Christian mission in China.[57] As a result of the pope's decision to denounce any accommodation with ancestor veneration and all rituals associated with it, as well as the Chinese emperor's corresponding decision to expel missionaries who refused to accept such accommodations, the early Roman Catholic mission in China was virtually abandoned. When the first Protestant missionary Robert Morrison (1782–1834) reached the southern port city of Guangzhou in 1807, he was able to begin only very slowly, after language study and without legal status, to spread the gospel to the Chinese people in the area.

Morrison's pioneer successors in mission continued to push the limits of government toleration. Karl F. A. (Charles) Gützlaff (1803–1851) of the Netherlands Missionary Society made several missionary voyages along the coast of China from 1831 through 1833. A subsequent attempt to travel inland via the Min River was repelled by the Chinese military. It was only after the treaty of Nanjing, at the close of the Opium War, that foreigners were able to penetrate the previously inaccessible interior of the mainland. As mission historian Stephen Neill has commented on these developments,

> Little was said in the treaty about religion, but it was clear that missionaries no less than merchants could take advantage of the privileges accorded to foreigners. On the whole, while deploring the war and doubting the wisdom of the treaty, missionaries took the view that what was deplorable in itself had been overruled by divine providence with a view to the opening up of China to the Gospel. This manifestation of western aggressiveness was bitterly resented at the time by the Chinese, and the feelings it aroused have never quite died away. That Christian work seemed so plainly to enter in the wake of gunboats and artillery was to be a permanent handicap to it in China.[58]

In the second half of the nineteenth century, almost every missionary society in Europe and the United States began organizing for a major new evangelization effort in China. Early missionary endeavors were limited and primarily restricted to the coastal areas. As late as 1865, Protestant missionaries were located in only seven of the eighteen provinces. However, in that year the English missionary James Hudson Taylor (1832–1905), who had himself served in China from 1853 through 1860, founded the China Inland Mission (now the Overseas Missionary Fellowship), which became extremely influential in shaping an effective approach to mission in the Chinese context. Taylor called for a mission that would be conservative theologically but interdenominational; that would enlist for mission work in China all Christians of good character willing to serve, rather than only highly educated professionals; that would be directed primarily from the mission field in China, rather than from distant home offices in Europe or the United States; that would encourage missionaries in the field to dress according to Chinese custom and to identify as much as possible with the indigenous culture of the people; and that would be more concerned with personal evangelism than other forms of Christian education and service.[59] By the turn of the century, the China Inland Mission and other missionary organizations were able to report considerable success both in recruiting personnel for overseas service in China and in establishing fledgling mission churches throughout the mainland. By 1906, there were more than seventy different independent Protestant mission societies at work in China, with nearly four thousand foreign missionaries.[60]

From its inception, an important dimension of the modern mission to China was the publication of Christian books and tracts to be used in preaching, evangelism, and education. Perhaps not surprisingly, many of those materials not only described classical Christian teaching (calling people to "the Way, the Truth, and the Life") but offered pointed criticisms of other religious beliefs and practices of

the Chinese people (calling people away from falsehood and perversion). As Ralph R. Covell observes, an analysis of the content of the most widely distributed missionary publications among the nearly eight hundred that were produced from 1810 to 1873 reveals that Buddhism was the religious tradition that the majority of Christian writers most explicitly wished to condemn. "The Protestant missionaries," writes Covell, "were one with the Jesuits in finding nothing of any help in the teaching of Buddhism. It was a foreign intrusion into the religious scene and was worthy only of condemnation."[61]

Only a very few Christian missionaries in the 1800s, like the English Baptist Timothy Richard (1845–1919), articulated a more inclusive theology. Arriving in China in 1869, Richard sought to define an approach to mission that was based more on the striking continuities between Buddhism and Christianity than on their often highlighted discontinuities. Indeed, he preferred to think of Mahāyāna as "not Buddhism, properly so-called, but an Asiatic form of the same Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, in Buddhist nomenclature."[62] Richard once stated:

> Let no man conclude . . . that I think lightly of Buddhism. On the contrary I hold it to be one of the noblest efforts, on one of the grandest scales the world has ever seen, of men trying to solve some of the greatest problems of human existence. I hold also that in its search after a better life it has given comfort to untold millions of our race by that light of nature which the Apostle Paul says is from God. . . . Notwithstanding its weak points it has its strong ones too. Its aims to save all mankind and even all living beings; its doctrines of repentance, faith, love and self-sacrifice; its teaching of the utter vanity of the best in this world, as compared with the future, and an unfailing recompense of our deeds, whether good or ill; its teaching of the supreme importance of union with the One Mind of the universe, though often vague and almost forgotten, are still truths dear to every Christian heart. If we can see them more clearly than the Buddhists, we should pity them, because they have not had the same privileges as ourselves. Although Buddhism has not succeeded in its great purpose, yet owing to its experiments the world is much richer today than it was.[63]

The vast majority of Protestant missionaries, in contrast, maintained an exclusivist theological perspective and saw little of value in Buddhism. As Whalen Lai points out, having already derisively condemned Roman Catholic monks and nuns as uncaring and immoral, it was easy for Protestant missionaries to excoriate Chinese Buddhist monastics.[64] Gützlaff thought Chinese Buddhism's "orgies of idolatry" repulsive and referred to its sacred island of Putuo Shan, which he visited in 1833, as an "infamous seat of abomination."[65] And although Ernest J. Eitel, one of the first missionaries to study Chinese Buddhism in any systematic way, was somewhat appreciative of its scriptural injunctions to be compassionate to other beings, he judged the religion to be fundamentally abhorrent, an "unnatural and monstrous" tradition, and its priesthood among the most ignorant, indolent, and "wretched specimens of humanity, more devoted to opium smoking than any other class in China."[66] Writing in 1884, Eitel concluded straightforwardly:

> Whether we look upon Buddhism as a system of religion, morality or philosophy, we cannot help observing everywhere fundamental errors directly antagonistic to a healthy development of either the intellectual or moral faculties of mankind. . . . Buddhism is intellectually defective. It arose from a feeling of spiritual bankruptcy and never recovered its mental equilibrium. It is therefore essentially a religion of sullen despair, based on the total obliteration of a healthy faith in the actual constitution of things, penetrated by a spirit of morose abandon, mental and moral. . . . Buddhism is in fact a system of religion without hope and strictly speaking even without God, a system of morality without a conscience, a system of philosophy which wears either the mask of transcendental mysticism or of nihilistic cynicism. Again, Buddhism is further intellectually weak because of its prodigious fondness for the miraculous. . . . [It] is utterly incapable of comprehending or appreciating the claims of reality and the demands of the present.
>
> Morally also Buddhism is found sadly wanting. Though professing to destroy self, its system of morality is pervaded by a spirit of calculating selfishness, its social virtues are essentially negative and strikingly unfruitful in good works. . . . It is a science without inspiration, a religion with-

> out God, a body without a spirit, unable to regenerate, cheerless, cold, dead and deplorably barren of results. Can these dry bones live?[67]

Among the more widely respected of the many Christian mission leaders who concurred with the negative answer implied in Eitel's rhetorical question was Joseph Edkins, a missionary-scholar first associated with the Evangelical Missionary Society of Basel and later with the London Missionary Society. Edkins claimed that, despite Buddhism's long influence on the Chinese, its intellectual vigor was dead beyond any hope of resurrection. Buddhism's superstitions and idolatry, he argued, would continue to be an effective barrier against its civilized advance and true illumination. Therefore, he concluded in 1893, "Buddhism is not so powerful in China as to cause alarm to the Christian missionary, in view of the coming struggle which he anticipates. . . . Buddhism makes no effort that can for a moment compare with the work which Christianity has done for mankind."[68] The ancient religion had served merely as a *praeparatio evangelica* for the Christian gospel. Although Buddhism was a part of China's past, Edkins maintained, it had no capacity for being a religion of China's future. Reflecting on his own experience in thirty-five years of mission work in China, Arthur H. Smith similarly concurred that Buddhism had long ago "degenerated into a mere form." "Its priests," he wrote in 1908, "like those of Daoism, are for the most part idle, ignorant, vicious parasites on the body politic. The religion, like many of its temples, is in a condition of hopeless collapse."[69]

TAKING UP THE CHALLENGES

In the waning years of the Qing dynasty, the Buddhist community struggled to respond both to the disruption and devastation brought about by the Taiping Rebellion and to the piercing criticisms by Christian missionaries of the religion's doctrines, spiritual practices, and institutional forms. Unquestionably, the most important attempt to respond to these challenges was that of the remarkable lay Buddhist leader Yang Wenhui (1837–1911), also known by his courtesy name of Renshan. Yang was an energetic young man who one day, at

the age of twenty-six, happened to purchase a copy of *Dasheng qixin lun* (The Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna). The text sparked his interest in Buddhism, and he soon began to study other popular Mahāyāna literature enthusiastically, including the *Jingang jing* (Diamond Sūtra) and *Lengyan jing* (Sūraṅgama Sūtra). His granddaughter, Zhao Yang Buwei, later reported that Yang so immediately became preoccupied with his Buddhist studies that his family was concerned that he might ultimately choose to become a monk.[70]

In 1864, immediately after Qing forces commanded by Zeng Guofan took control of the Taiping capital of Nanjing, Zeng appointed Yang Wenhui supervisor for the construction of the Zongli Yamen (Office for the Management of the Business of All Foreign Countries) in the city. Thus it was in Nanjing that he settled permanently, and that he and other Buddhist friends eventually established the important Jinling Scriptural Press (Jinling kejing chu). Yang was convinced that any adequate response to the challenges that Buddhists were facing first required that they become more knowledgeable about the tradition's sacred literature. Unfortunately, many of the great Buddhist libraries in south-central China had been destroyed by fire during the Taiping Rebellion. The monasteries themselves were being actively restored, but the libraries needed to be replaced and their contents made more accessible if Buddhism was to continue to be a vital force in modern China. As Welch aptly observes,

> What motivated Yang was not the sight of monasteries in decay (because many of those he saw were just being rebuilt), but the traditional wish to gain merit by filling the shortage of Buddhist books.
>
> But if Yang and his friends had little reason to consider Buddhism decaying, they must have become increasingly aware of the contrast offered by Christianity, more and more of whose evangelists they could see about them after the treaties of 1858 and 1860. It is a significant coincidence that 1866, the year Yang began his printing venture, was also the year when the first party of the China Inland Mission took advantage of the newly won right of Europeans to live in the interior rather than in the treaty ports. Letter-perfect in the gospel, they expounded it not intramurally to other clerics, but on street corners to

audiences of common people. How many Buddhist monks knew their scripture so well? And of the few that did, how many were expounding it to lay audiences? Yet one of their traditional obligations was to spread the Dharma among all sentient beings. Such thoughts must have reinforced Yang's determination to make the scriptures available.[71]

The Jinling Scriptural Press ultimately published more than a million copies of Buddhist works. During the early years of the press's existence, Yang Wenhui provided most of the operational funding himself by working at his official post during the day. In the evenings, Dongchu states, "Yang studied Buddhism devotedly. In addition, he collated and prepared scriptures for publication and distribution. He chanted scriptures, recited the Buddha's name, or sat in silent meditation, often until he fell asleep in the early hours of the morning."[72] In 1878, Yang accepted an appointment extended by Zeng Guofan's son, Zeng Jize (1839–1890), to serve as a staff member during his term as ambassador to Great Britain. During two separate tours at the embassy, Yang spent a total of about five years in London, where he enjoyed the opportunity to learn more about western technology and civilization. He also established important contacts with scholars interested in Chinese Buddhism, such as Max Müller, the renowned professor of comparative philology and religion, and Nanjio Bunyiu, Müller's able Japanese student, who later helped Yang retrieve from Japan Buddhist texts that were not included in the Chinese Tripiṭaka.

After Yang Wenhui returned to China from England in 1888, he was introduced by Timothy Richard to the Anagarika Dharmapala (1864–1933), the revered lay Buddhist leader from Ceylon who had founded the Maha Bodhi Society in Columbo in 1891.[73] Following Dharmapala's participation in the World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in September 1893, the Ceylonese leader was visiting Japan and China in the hope of gaining support for his plan to restore Buddhist holy sites in India and to organize a cooperative international Buddhist mission to India.[74] Dharmapala thought it should be a grave concern of Buddhists everywhere that since the fifteenth century the ancient Indian religion had almost vanished in the land of its origin. In a late December meeting that the Christian missionary-scholar Joseph Edkins had helped arrange with monks at the Longhua si near Shanghai, Dharmapala stated to those assembled:

> Today there are nearly four hundred and seventy five millions of people who acknowledge the Buddha as their Teacher. A thousand years ago almost the whole of Asia was under the benign sway of the gentle teachings of this great Teacher.
>
> About seven hundred years ago Buddhism was totally destroyed in India by the Mohammedan conquerors; and as long as they were in power, Buddhism had no place in the land. Thousands of priests were killed, temples and sacred books destroyed, and those who escaped from these persecutions fled into the mountain countries of Nepal and Tibet and also to China. . . .
>
> Now there is no Buddhism in India, and my object in coming to this great country is to inform my Chinese co-religionists of this fact and to ask their support and sympathy for the rehabilitation of this religion. India gave you her religion and now I appeal to you to help her in her hour of need.
>
> The Christians, Mohammedans and Hindus (Brahmans) have their respective sacred places in Jerusalem, Mecca, and Puri under their guardianship; but to our sorrow, I find that the Buddhists have entirely forgotten their holy land.
>
> The Blessed Buddha addressing Ananda soon before his final passing away, said: "Ananda, there are four places, which my Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunīs, Upāsakas and Upāsikās should visit, and these places are, where the Tathāgata was born, where he attained anuttara-samyak-saṁbodhi, where he preached the Dharma-cakra, where he attained Nirvāṇa. A visit to these places will bring joy into their minds, and after their death they will be born in heaven."
>
> To restore these sacred sites, to station Bhikkhus from all Buddhist countries in these places, to train them as Buddhist missionaries to preach Buddhism to the people of India, to translate again from Chinese the Buddhist scriptures into the Indian languages, is our object, and to carry out this great scheme, we have formed a great Buddhist Society, called the Maha-Bodhi-Society, on an international basis. All the Buddhist countries, viz. Japan, Siam, Burma, Tibet, Ceylon, Chitta-

gong and Arakan have joined us in our work, and now I make this appeal to the Buddhists of China, whose illustrious predecessors, the great Faxian, Xuanzang and Yijing, have shed a lustre by their heroic devotion to Buddha and by their pilgrimages to the sacred land—the land of the Buddhas.[75]

Otto Franke, a representative from the German consulate who, along with Timothy Richard, accompanied Dharmapala to the monastery to serve as interpreter, reported that the visit was unproductive and discouraging.[76] The monks were curious about the Buddhist relics that Dharmapala brought with him, but hesitant about participating in any type of religious "society" that might appear suspicious to the Chinese government. Initially they offered to print and distribute a Chinese translation of Dharmapala's appeal. Eventually, however, as Whalen Lai has noted, the monks at the Longhua monastery became "so scared of being impeached by the government for 'illicit association' that they begged to be relieved of their initial promise to help."[77] Rather than recruit Chinese missionaries willing to go to India, Yang Wenhui recommended to Dharmapala an alternate plan more likely to succeed. Indian Buddhists could be recruited for advanced studies in China in order to prepare them for subsequent mission work among their own people. In the process of discussing such innovative ideas, both lay leaders expressed their wish that Buddhism be revitalized in Asia "in order to spread it throughout the world."[78]

By this time, Yang Wenhui was already attracting a number of able students, among them the gifted young political activist Tan Sitong, who later praised his teacher as one "who was widely versed in Buddhist texts and history."[79] Several years later, in 1898, to expand his work, Yang purchased a large estate in Nanjing that came to be known as "the Jetavana Hermitage" (Zhihuan jingshe). The property was acquired to house the Jinling Scriptural Press and also, in response to Dharmapala's appeal, an innovative school for the education of monks for global mission.[80] Eventually, a basic three-year curriculum of full-time studies was designed in Buddhist scripture, history, literature, and foreign language training, with the possibility for further advanced

work.[81] Especially remarkable was the fact that knowledgeable laypeople actually offered instruction in many subjects to ordained monks. A Buddhist Research Association (Fojiao yanjiu hui) was later founded that sponsored weekly public lectures, principally by Yang himself.

Because of financial difficulties, Yang Wenhui's innovative school survived only the 1908–1909 academic year. Yet even a partial list of those who were teachers or students there reveals the significance of the layman's efforts. Among faculty members were Dixian (1858–1932), the eminent Tiantai master and later abbot of Guanzong si, who served as dean of students *(xuejian)*, and Su Manshu (1884–1918), the poet, translator, and anti-Manchu revolutionary, who taught English.[82] Among the twenty-four students (twelve monks and twelve laymen) were Zhiguang (1889–1963), later the respected abbot of Dinghui si on Jiao Shan; Ouyang Jingwu (1871–1943), the brilliant lay Buddhist educator and leader of the revival of interest in the Weishi (Consciousness-Only) school; Mei Guangxi, who would later become one of Ouyang Jingwu's major financial supporters; and the controversial reformist monk Taixu.[83] Remembered as a model of lay Buddhist piety and as the principal initiator of the revitalization of Buddhism that began in the late Qing, Yang Wenhui died just before the Republican revolution in October 1911.[84]

In the early Republican period, the monastery rebuilding program that had begun to gain momentum in the last quarter of the nineteenth century continued, although it varied considerably by region. Lewis Hodous, writing in 1923, commented in particular on the newly completed monasteries in Fujian, and on the construction projects then underway in Zhejiang and Jiangsu, as well as in many large cities, including Beijing.[85] He also noted that there were a number of monasteries, especially in the Yangzi valley and in southern and western China, that still stood in ruins as a result of the Taiping Rebellion. From Shaanxi in the northwest to Sichuan in the west and Guangdong in the far south, many monasteries were either abandoned or poorly staffed and in a state of disrepair.

This is in basic harmony with the assessments of James B. Pratt and Johannes Prip-Møller. In a paper delivered before the Chinese

Social and Political Science Association in 1924, Pratt reported that in the southern city of Guangzhou, for example, most temples had been confiscated by the government and were being used by the military as barracks. A few lay Buddhist societies were active in the city, but their membership and activities were limited. North of the Yangzi valley, especially in Shandong, the Buddhist temples were often in poor condition and generally reflected as much Daoist as Buddhist influence and devotional practice. In Beijing, most temples and monasteries were in fair to excellent condition, but Pratt discovered few well-educated monks and little evidence of significant interaction between the monastic community and the laity.

In the northwest, in Shanxi, except for the sacred pilgrimage site of Wutai Shan, Buddhism appeared to be in no better condition than in Guangdong. In the provincial capital, Taiyuan, the only Buddhist temple was closed nearly all the time. Concluding with a pointed question, Pratt commented:

> In the smaller towns and villages one finds Daoist temples, but the Buddhist temples have either been made into schools or are falling to pieces. All over central Shanxi, in short, Buddhist temples and the Buddhist faith are quietly decaying. The most marked architectural features of the region are the great bottle-shaped tombs of former Buddhist abbots, mute witnesses to the fervor of the Buddhist faith in this region in a day long past. In some places one can count a score of these great tombs. They mark the graves of dead abbots; do they also mark the grave of a dead religion?[86]

In Shaanxi, according to Pratt, the poor conditions of Buddhist institutions did not differ greatly from those of Shanxi, except perhaps in the provincial capital of Xi'an.

In the central region of China in the 1920s and 1930s, in contrast, Buddhist monasteries were being actively repaired, rebuilt, and newly constructed. This work represented a considerable capital investment. In addition, the number of people active in the practice of Buddhism appears to have been considerable, and the communication and cooperation between the monastic and lay communities generally quite good. Pratt reported that from Sichuan in the west, with its impressive Emei Shan, eastward to Hubei, Hunan, Anhui, Jiangxi, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Fujian, the Buddhist temples and monasteries were largely well cared for and well populated.[87] "Hankou and Wuchang," he remarked, "are perhaps the most important centers of the so called Buddhist revival; while Nanjing, Suzhou, Hangzhou, Ningbo and all the adjacent regions of Jiangsu and Zhejiang are filled with very living Buddhism. New temples are being constructed, old ones repaired and pilgrimages carried on, young monks are studying and old monks meditating, throughout all this region."[88]

Prip-Møller, reporting on his own studies of Buddhist monastic architecture between 1929 and 1933, explained the necessity of conducting research in central China by contrasting the vitality of Buddhism in that region to its condition elsewhere in the country. He further noted that virtually all the monasteries in the lower Yangzi valley bore witness to the extensive destruction caused by the Taiping rebels. As a result, a great many of the facilities were being totally or substantially rebuilt, although, according to Prip-Møller, only in a very few cases were they being restored "with anything like the same splendour as before."[89] In line with these reports highlighting Buddhist activity in the central region of the country, Welch notes that, by 1930, based on statistics said to have been compiled by the Chinese Buddhist Association, "there were twenty times more monks per capita in central China than in most of the northern and southern provinces."[90]

The Buddhist community maintained no effective organizational structure that bound together the independent monasteries and the individual abbots who were in charge of them. The vast majority of the five hundred thousand some monks in China during the Republican period lived in small hereditary temples *(zusun miao)* whose ownership remained within a "family" of monks that was created through tonsure, the ceremonial head-shaving by a master that initiated the monastic life.[91] The large public monasteries *(shifang conglin)*, which were owned by the entire sangha and whose leadership selection transcended tonsure relationships, represented only a small percentage of the approximately 100,000 temples and monasteries in which monks resided. In addition, about 225,000 nuns lived in more

than 130,000 nunneries—most of which were, obviously, very small, and provided for by particular families. Thus the total size of institutional Buddhism, along with its lack of a unified organizational structure, made it quite vulnerable to localized anti-religious activity and to governmental attempts to confiscate property in order to support educational or military aims.

In the early Republican period, especially during the first united front between the Guomindang and the Communist Party, the government often acted with no concern for the rights or interests of Buddhist communities. Government troops frequently damaged and looted monasteries, destroyed images, and converted temples into schools and other institutions. According to E. H. Cressy's research in Wuchang, for example, by the early 1930s, 65 of the city's 165 religious institutions—39 percent of its Buddhist and Daoist temples and monasteries—had been converted by the government to nonreligious purposes.[92] On the basis of a study of temples and monasteries in west China, D. S. Dye concluded in 1931 that only about 2.3 percent of the temples were being used exclusively for religious purposes; 2.9 percent had been demolished; 58 percent were being used at least in part for public projects such as hospitals or government bureaus; and 36.8 percent had been converted to private uses such as residences, factories, and business concerns. Dye reported:

> In many of these temples now diverted to other uses idols are still *in situ* and incense may be burned. Priests may be found in ones and twos in many, while in a few temples some tens of priests may still be found.
>
> The writer ventures a shrewd guess without data to support, that the functioning priest population of Chengdu temples does not exceed 30 percent of that which existed in March, 1911—two decades ago.[93]

Not infrequently, both Christian missionaries and Buddhist modernists exaggerated the severity of the sangha's problems for their own purposes. However, their parallel observations about the state of Chinese Buddhism did identify many issues that a broad spectrum of Buddhists leaders acknowledged as critically important. The Norwegian missionary Karl Ludvig Reichelt (1877–1952), for example, whose fair-minded attitude led Welch to refer to him as "the leading champion of Chinese Buddhism's good repute,"[94] described in 1934 the generally poor condition of institutional Buddhism, while also outlining features of developing reforms that showed the vitality of the religious community:

> Turning to Buddhism in China, as it is at the present time, the first thing to be said is that *externally,* that is in regard to temple buildings, processions, the grandeur of public festivals, etc., Buddhism is decidedly on the decline. In all the provinces many temples and monasteries have been ruined or badly damaged by the soldiers or by the young people. . . . In many places the temple fields and the other sources of revenue have been confiscated by the authorities and the funds used for educational purposes. In consequence the monks are hustled back into some of the corner buildings where it is impossible for them to conduct religious ceremonies in a decent way. In some districts the temples seemingly stand intact, but even there a marked decrease in income is noticed and the monks have to struggle hard to secure the most necessary means of living. The result is that many of the inmates are driven to the big cities, where they join the despised crowds of "business monks," who operate in rented houses in bigger or smaller teams, as exorcists or as common priests, chanting masses for departed souls or practicing all kinds of obscure divining methods.
>
> Under such circumstances much of the temple paraphernalia is missing and there are no rules or discipline. The moral standard is very low. The financial stringency in general naturally affects the whole Buddhist society also. There has been, therefore, a remarkable decrease in the number of monks during recent years. Even at the big Buddhist centers and holy mountains the financial difficulties are very great. For that reason many of the best monks have to go out with subscription lists in order to collect the most necessary funds for the repair and maintenance of the monasteries. The low ebb in spiritual and religious life at these places must be considered in the light of this general depression.
>
> This decline in connection with present-day Buddhism in China is so apparent that it does not take much ability to observe it. Consequently the judgment passed by most people is this: Buddhism is vanishing; the monks are disappearing more and more; and the temples and monasteries are on the decline.

> How important it is that [Christian] missionaries at least know the truth about these things which is, that the picture of the external decline, as given above, does not mean that Buddhism as a religion is either dying out or going back in China. To those who live in close contact with the new religious movements in modern China it is apparent that in some ways Buddhism is going forward. There are revivals and activities such as never were. Buddhism is taking a new and strong grip on circles which were not seriously interested before.[95]

Indeed, central to the agenda of the Chinese Buddhist community throughout the Republican period was organizing for self-protection and local mission. A number of the fledgling organizations were designed to honor the Dharma by upholding the ancient Vinaya regulations—that is, by clarifying and enforcing proper standards for ordination and monastic discipline. Some societies were established to improve educational opportunities for both monastic and lay followers. A few were especially interested in funding publication efforts such as new editions of the Tripiṭaka, scriptural commentaries, and periodicals such as *Fojiao congbao* (Buddhist Miscellany) and *Fojiao yuebao* (Buddhist Monthly). Other Buddhist organizations aimed to promote moral cultivation, social service, or institutional effectiveness. In the post-dynastic era, progress on all of these fronts was deemed necessary not merely for spiritual renewal but for the Sangha's survival in an increasingly secularized modern society.

The most important and broad-based of these organizational ventures was the Chinese General Buddhist Association (Zhonghua fojiao zonghui), founded in Shanghai in 1912 by the revered old Buddhist master Jichan, also known as Eight Fingers (Bazhi Toutuo) because of his devotional sacrifice of one finger from each hand. The organization was established in immediate response to the founding in Nanjing of the Chinese Buddhist Association (Zhongguo fojiao hui) under the leadership of Ouyang Jingwu, the radical lay disciple of Yang Wenhui, who at the time of his teacher's death was given charge of the Jinling Scriptural Press. Numerous other societies were begun about the same time, including the Buddhist Confederation (Fojiao gonghui); the Buddhist Moral Endeavor Society (Fojiao jinde hui); the Buddhist Research Society (Foxue yanjiu she); the Young Buddhist Study Association (Fojiao qingnian xuehui); the Chinese Yellow Swastika Society (Zhonghua huangwanzi hui), which engaged in emergency relief work similar to that of the International Red Cross; the Association for the Advancement of Buddhism (Fojiao xiejin hui), which Taixu founded in January 1912 at the Pilu si in Nanjing; the Buddhist Society of the Great Vow (Fojiao hongshi hui), which Taixu founded in February 1913 at Ningbo's Yanqing si; and the League for the Support of Buddhism (Weichi fojiao tongmeng hui), which Taixu announced in March 1913 from the Guanyin si in Beijing.[96]

Very few of these Buddhist organizations were functionally effective or long-lived. Initial inspiration was rarely matched by sustained commitment to action. Many were merely announced but never actually formed, while others vanished soon after they were established. As Yu-yue Tsu reported,

> As a reaction to external circumstances enthusiasm surged high at first, but there was nothing within the Order to uphold it, and so, when the first impetus had spent itself, the movement fell to pieces. One by one the activities such as educational and charitable institutions, lectures and magazines were given up, and the various societies, which had sprung up like mushrooms, disappeared as quickly.[97]

Even the Chinese General Buddhist Association of 1912, impressive because of its proposals for representational accountability, could not long maintain its initial momentum. At its first annual conference in March 1913, soon after its charter had been approved by the government, it was able to claim twenty-two provincial branches and more than four hundred local chapters, coordinated from national offices in the Jing'an si in Shanghai.[98] Yet even though the eminent Chan master Yekai (1852–1922) was elected to serve as president and a basic national structure was rapidly developed, the association failed to operate effectively within the year. Its new periodicals, which Taixu had been appointed to edit, ceased publication for lack of adequate funding.[99] Apathy within the sangha, factional distrust, organizational inexperience, and general economic difficulties were all contributing factors.

The Chinese General Buddhist Association was resuscitated briefly in 1915 to defend the community from the potentially destructive consequences of a bill entitled "Regulations for the Control of Monasteries and Temples" (Guanli simiao tiaoli). Although adopted by the parliament, it became meaningless in the political chaos that prevailed after Yuan Shikai's failed bid to become emperor in the spring of 1916 and his sudden death in June of that year. A more formal effort in 1917 to resurrect the association with an amended charter was terminated in 1919, when questions about the legality of the organization led the Ministry of the Interior to order its dissolution. Several other attempts failed at creating a lasting representative structure prior to the modest success of the Chinese Buddhist Association (Zhongguo fojiao hui), which was founded in Shanghai in April 1929 and reorganized after World War II by Taixu and other prominent monks.

At the same time that the monastic community struggled to organize institutionally, it sought to address pressing economic problems, support lay Buddhist activity, improve monastic education, and monitor political events while cultivating sympathetic officials within the government. The sangha had always served as a "field of merit" for the Buddhist laity, who had historically given generously to those Chinese monastic institutions that exemplified selflessness and proper discipline. Most large public Buddhist monasteries, therefore, owned a considerable amount of property. The rent income from donated farmlands provided the principal funding with which the monasteries were operated. A second important source of capital for many of the large monasteries—and the primary source for most of the small hereditary temples—was the income from fees collected for ceremonies for the dead.

Direct monetary donations from lay patrons was a third source,[100] although a distressed national economy that was severely disrupted by civil strife and warfare throughout the Republican years, Guomingdang land reform policies that restricted the rights of landowners, the anti-superstition attack on Buddhist funerary rites, and the harsh anti-bourgeois rhetoric of the progressively influential Communist movement all curtailed the monasteries' ability to collect rent and to receive other donations. Few monasteries were substantially enough

endowed with land and other resources not to be constantly dependent on lay patronage. Therefore, to ensure financial stability, monastic leaders found it increasingly important to foster closer ties with the lay societies.

The fact was that committed lay Buddhists in China—namely, those who had formally taken refuge in the Three Jewels of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha *(guiyi sanbao)*—made up only perhaps 1 percent of the country's population. Given the traditionally syncretic patterns of Chinese religious practice, a great number of people occasionally worshipped at Buddhist temples, employed the services of monks at family funerals, and even read Buddhist literature without ever seriously considering taking the five vows *(wu jie)* required to become a lay disciple.[101] Religious harmony remained highly valued and religious eclecticism quite common, as illustrated by the success in the Republican period of sects like the United Goodness Society (Tongshan she), the Apprehension of Goodness Society (Wushan she), the Court of the Dao (Dao yuan), the Six Sages True Dao Union Society (Liu shen zhen Dao tongyi hui), the Study of Morality Society (Daode xue she), the Temple of Five Religions (Wujiao Dao yuan), the Way of Unity (Yiguan Dao), and others. Such religious groups flourished in the period by offering syntheses of Chinese popular religion, Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, Christianity, and other forms of spirituality.[102] Nevertheless, the Buddhist revival movement did succeed in leading many people to develop, far more intentionally than before, their own religious identities *as Buddhists.*

This development was in part the result of a genuine spiritual renewal movement within the Buddhist community and in part a response to strident expressions of Christian theological exclusivism, which heightened a sense of interreligious competition. Many Chinese were, in fact, experiencing new religious insecurities in light of Christian preaching that explicitly or implicitly devalued their own traditional patterns of spirituality as excessively syncretistic and otherworldly. Thus it was in response to both internal enthusiasms and external critiques that lay Buddhist societies sought to redouble their own social service efforts in the areas of public health, welfare, and dis-

aster relief work, as well as to deepen religious commitment through scriptural study and devotional practice.

Several lay associations even provided residential facilities for members who wished to engage in reading and contemplation in a tranquil setting. Laypeople who practiced vegetarianism and celibacy were at times permitted to reside in monasteries for periods of study and meditation with the monks. Likewise, monks benefited from programs specifically designed for educated lay Buddhists, as they did by enrolling in classes at Ouyang Jingwu's Chinese Metaphysical Institute (Zhina neixue yuan) in Nanjing, which emphasized Weishi philosophy. Established in 1919, the Institute operated continuously until the Japanese invasion of Nanjing in 1937, offering learning opportunities that served to underscore some of the inadequacies in both lay and monastic education.

A few ambitious masters within the Chinese sangha were committed to experimental projects for improving monastic education. Perhaps 70 or 80 percent of monks were literate, compared to the 1926 estimate of a 20 percent literacy rate among the general population. However, their educational opportunities were limited largely to a small number of traditional texts and practical manuals.[103] After renouncing the lay life in a hereditary temple, a monk's basic training in monastic life was customarily provided by his tonsure master and tonsure family. This education might extend over several years before a monk was encouraged to seek ordination *(shou jie)*. Although after 1911 ordination was no longer controlled by the government through a limited number of monasteries authorized for such actions, ordinands generally continued in the Republican period to travel to the large public monasteries that provided "Vinaya schools" or structured programs of monastic discipline. Education for monks in such centers focused on the practice of the 250 vows of the Prātimokṣa *(sifen jieben)* and concluded ceremonially with the "bhikṣu vows" *(biqiu jie)*, the 58 "bodhisattva vows" *(pusa jie)*, and the burning of "incense scars" *(xiang ba)* in the monk's scalp with moxa *(shao ba)*.

According to the monk Zhenhua (b. 1922), completing the standard educational program was a difficult endeavor, particularly so in the largest and most famous ordination center in central China, Baohua Shan, east of Nanjing. Recalling the intensity and severity of the monastery's Vinaya school, Zhenhua wrote:

> From the time classes were opened at the beginning of the session to the burning of ordination scars at the end, we lived a life of "trembling dread, like skirting an abyss or treading on thin ice." From the beginning to the end, the features of the ordination masters were hardened into forbidding masks. For the entire fifty-three day session, I never once saw them give a kind look or say a civil word to an ordinee. Never once did I see an encouraging smile. . . . The ordination instructors at Baohua Mountain had excellent deportment and were dedicated to teaching monastic rules, but they were overly severe. In fact, they were severe to the point of cruelty. This made the ordinees feel more resentment than respect, more enmity than gratitude.[104]

Ordained monks who were interested in expanding their understanding of doctrine or ritual techniques would subsequently travel around to different monasteries to find sound teachers. Most often they would travel on foot, finding shelter when they could in the public monasteries that were obligated to grant them hospitality, however meager. Some of the most serious and zealous monks would eventually seek to become disciples of a particular Dharma master *(fashi)* recognized for knowledge of a particular text or tradition. Well-known teachers, such as the eminent Chan master Xuyun (1840–1959) or the venerable Tiantai master Dixian, had large numbers of monastic students and lay followers. The anti-sectarian spirit within the Buddhist community at the time made it easy for monks to belong to one particular lineage but also to broaden their knowledge beyond it. One could be tonsured by a Chan master of the Linji lineage, yet also extensively study Tiantai, Huayan, or Tantric texts and engage in Pure Land practice. As the memoir of the monk Zhenhua suggests, regionalism, factionalism, and personalism often limited one's access to learning and spiritual advancement, but many dedicated monks persevered.

Distinctively new in the Republican period were monastic schools that attempted to reform pedagogical methods and to expand the scope of education beyond traditional Buddhist studies. In many

schools, modern instructional methods such as the use of the blackboard and the graded evaluation of demonstrated learning were gradually introduced. In some monastic schools, lay teachers were even employed. Among the most notable institutions were Huayan University (Huayan daxue), founded in Shanghai in 1912 by Yuexia; the Academy for Spreading the Dharma (Hongfa xueyuan), founded at the Guanzong si in Ningbo in 1918 by Dixian; the Wuchang Buddhist Institute (Wuchang foxue yuan), founded in that city in 1922 by Taixu; the South Fujian Seminary (Minnan foxue yuan), founded in Xiamen (Amoy) in 1925 by Taixu; and the Tianning Buddhist Institute (Tianning foxue yuan), founded in 1931 in Zhangzhou and led by Deyi, Minzhi, and others who favored educational modernization.[105]

Most of the new monastic schools, however, were poorly funded and short-lived. Altogether, they attracted probably no more than 1 or 2 percent of the Republican sangha. Most monks seemed to think that the traditional educational system was more than sufficient for their needs. In Dongchu's judgment, the new efforts at monastic education in the Republican period were a failure for three basic reasons: first, because sangha leaders did not sufficiently manifest the required spirit of self-sacrifice and persistence in the face of difficulties; second, because the schools were usually not organized according to sound educational principles; and, third, because students were sometimes permitted to concentrate on peripheral secular subjects and to neglect the fundamental moral disciplines emphasized in traditional monastic training. This third element, he concluded, led not a few young Buddhist monks of talent and promise to become so secularized in outlook that they ultimately abandoned their religious practice. Perhaps not wishing to appear overly critical in this respect of Taixu and the monastic schools established under his leadership, Dongchu tempered his remarks by acknowledging that the reformer did consistently offer appropriate and compassionate counsel to young monks who chose to return to lay life. According to Dongchu, Taixu advised them to remain active laypersons within the Buddhist community rather than become completely secularized citizens without commitments to the Dharma.[106]

Besides seeking ways to achieve financial stability and improve monastic education, the Chinese sangha was concerned during the Republican period with forecasting the political weather in order to detect potentially destructive storms brewing on the horizon. The historic principles that discouraged monks from direct involvement in political matters did not deter monastic leaders from pursuing relationships with, and currying favors from, national and local officials in the hope of preventing new attempts to confiscate Buddhist property or intervene in sangha affairs. The 1898 and 1904 Qing appropriations of Buddhist monasteries and farmlands for the support of educational reforms, both of which had been rescinded after Buddhist protests, had not been forgotten. In those cases, prominent monks had appealed to the throne for a reconsideration of the policies, asserting in part that the sangha was also promoting modern educational reform.

After the 1904 action, some monasteries had also tried to protect themselves through temporary affiliations with the Japanese Buddhist Higashi-Honganji sect, which was engaged in missionary work in China.[107] This more radical strategy of seeking shelter under a Japanese institutional umbrella, first proposed by two Japanese priests, Mizuno Baigyō and Itō Kendō, apparently caused some consternation at the Qing court. Imperial concerns that such protective relationships with Japanese institutions might begin to increase may actually have contributed to a 1905 edict that provided the Buddhist community with temporary relief from extensive governmental confiscations.

During the Republican years, most Guomindang leaders concluded that the Buddhist community constituted no significant political threat. Therefore, although the sangha was closely supervised, it was allowed to function with relative freedom. Nevertheless, under the provisions of the Regulations for the Control of Monasteries and Temples, promulgated in 1915 during Yuan Shikai's presidency, all monks and nuns, monasteries and temples were to be registered with the government. In addition, Buddhist properties could not be alienated without state approval, and religious activities and public preaching were to be monitored and regulated.[108] An organized Buddhist protest and lobbying effort against the legislation soon led to Yuan's

retaliatory order to close the Chinese General Buddhist Association. Although the regulatory law of 1915 was never enforced, most of its provisions were revived in December 1929 with the adoption of "Regulations for the Supervision of Monasteries and Temples" (Jiandu simiao tiaoli). While the 1929 law did recognize the representative authority of the Chinese Buddhist Association that had been founded in Shanghai that year, the organization was placed under the direct control of the Ministry of the Interior to ensure its patriotic allegiance to the state.

Throughout the Republican era, Buddhist properties were the target of military or local government confiscations. Condemning such actions, Buddhists remained especially indignant that the large and historic Longhua si in Shanghai, visited by Dharmapala in 1893, was occupied by one military force after another from 1911 on.[109] The editors of *The Young East* reported in September 1928 that Japanese Buddhists were again offering to help by lodging an official protest because the Christian General Feng Yuxiang (1882–1948) and other leaders of the Nanjing government had "shown a disposition to confiscate all landed properties belonging to Buddhist temples throughout China."[110] Zhenhua testified that by the time he set out from his home in Henan in 1945 in search of spiritual instruction in the south, "Buddhism in Henan had been crushed by the 'Christian General' Feng Yuxiang, and . . . ninety percent of the province's pristine, solemn places of truth had already become vacant and dilapidated temples. . . . The better temples were changed into schools and army camps, their scriptures and images vandalized with impunity and the temple lands divided and taken."[111] Such appropriations and property damages increased notably after 1937, when the war of resistance against the Japanese began. In fact, sangha leaders found it increasingly difficult to cultivate effective friends in high places. Guomindang officials were far more concerned with achieving critical military and political goals than with not offending Buddhists.

Moreover, an increasing number of government officials were either influenced by anti-superstition campaigns and antagonistic toward all religious faiths or were Christian converts with strong anti-Buddhist prejudices. According to Kenneth Scott Latourette, vigorous Christian missionary efforts in the early Republican years had established a growing community of about 3.5 million church members by 1927—three times the number in 1900.[112] Although this still represented an extremely small percentage of the total population of China, Christians were often educated people who held important positions of leadership in education, commerce, and government. Sun Yat-sen was a professing Christian who had once been banished from his home village as a youth for breaking a finger off an image of a deity associated with Chinese popular religion. Chiang Kai-shek was baptized a Christian in Shanghai in 1930, after his marriage to a Chinese convert, Soong Meiling (b. 1897), a member of a prominent Chinese family.[113]

Buddhist leaders were accustomed to encountering Christians in large coastal cities with sizable foreign communities, such as Shanghai, and even in small, isolated mission stations in the interior. They were aware of "the Mountain of the Logos Spirit" (Dao Feng Shan), the special mission station devoted to Christian-Buddhist encounter that Karl Reichelt founded at Shatin, near Hong Kong, in 1927.[114] Yet they were not accustomed to confronting unsympathetic Christians holding important positions in public institutions and government offices. Most leaders of the sangha began to realize that both secular humanism and Christianity would present Buddhism with ever more serious challenges in the years ahead.

A VOICE OF REFORM

It was in the context of these many efforts to reinvigorate the Buddhist community and to defend the Dharma in an era of social change and civil strife that Taixu, a young Buddhist monk from Zhejiang, rose to prominence as a religious reformer. Sometimes expansively referred to as "the Saint Paul of Chinese Buddhism"[115] and "the Buddhist Pope of China,"[116] he was a person of considerable energy, intelligence, and charisma. Taixu believed that, given a constantly changing world, Chinese Buddhism must change, too; were it to cling rigidly to a form shaped by past realities and experiences, he observed, it