

Renjian Buddhism and Its Successors

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13 Renjian Buddhism and Its Successors: Toward a Sociological Analysis of Buddhist Awakening in Contemporary Taiwan¹

Jen-Chieh Ting

Introduction

Since the 1980s Buddhism has grown prominent in Taiwan, whether in regard to number of participants, visibility, or social influence. For many, the contemporary booming of Buddhist in Taiwan can be attributed to Buddhist leaders' engaging in this-worldly social practices. For this new orientation, successfully extend Buddhist ideals into a broader social scale. The phrase "renjian Buddhism" (人間佛教) can not only refer to the most salient characteristic underlying modern Taiwanese Buddhist revival but can also itself explain the unprecedented growth of Buddhism in modern Taiwan.

Renjian Buddhism is not a new invention in modern Taiwan, rather, it is the legacy from the Chinese monks Taixu (太虛) and Yinshun (印順). Scholar Lou Yu-lie (樓宇烈2004:C1) proclaims:

Renjian Buddhism is the main current of Chinese Buddhism in the twentieth century. Up to now it has been recognized by people both in Mainland China and Taiwan, be they members of the clergy, lay people, or scholars. Today, people have traced renjian Buddhism back to Buddha's original thoughts, Mahayana's compassion, as well Taixu and Yinshun's endeavors. The achievements of Taixu and Yinshun's

¹ The earlier version of this article was originally presented at the 2004 conference on "Development and Practice of Engaged Buddhism" at Tzu Chi University, Hualien, Taiwan. I would like to thank my discussant, Professor Lu Hwei-syin, for her judicious comments on the paper. I also have benefited greatly from the comments of the participants of this conference. Unfortunately, the greatest educator and practitioner of renjian Buddhism, Master Yinshun passed away on June 3, 2005. Nevertheless, the heart of renjian Buddhism that Master Yinshun advocated for his whole life certainly will be remembered and its tradition will be continued by all his spiritual successors.

advocating renjian Buddhism promoted the growth of Chinese Buddhism a lot.

This mushrooming of Buddhism in modern Taiwan can be observed by the rapid growth of several Buddhist organizations, especially the Fogungshan 佛光山 (Buddha Light Mountain), the Tzu Chi Gongdehui 慈濟功德會 (Compassion and Relief Association), the Fagushan 法鼓山 (Dharma Drum Mountain), and the Zhongtaichansi 中台禪寺 (Zhongtai Zen-temple). Scholars and the media have designated them as "The Four Chief-heads" of the modern Buddhist flourishing in Taiwan.

However, this Buddhist booming has also been criticized. Criticisms mainly focus on the overly worldly and popular taste of these Buddhist organizations. For example, Qiu Min-Jie (邱敏捷 2000:135-145), in her book on Yingshun's Buddhist teachings, has criticized the Fongungshan as a "vulgar Buddhism"; the Tzu Chi Gongdehui as a Buddhism "doing charity yet no focusing on cultivation and salvation"; and the Fangushan as "only putting emphases on the teachings of mind-affirmation (唯心), yet without any substantial instruction on how to gain salvation." Qiu (2000:144-145) has concluded:

Xingyn (星雲), Zhengyan (證嚴), and Shengyan's (聖嚴) ideas of renjian Buddhism all are just in very general terms.. They emphasize on satisfying people's desires and only lead people to be good persons. In terms of the four siddha (悉壇, "attainments" or "perfections"), their ideas only correspond to the "worldly siddha," "auspicious siddha," and "everyone's siddha"—all are at the level of desire satisfaction. Contrasting to this, *Yinshun's focus is on the "highest truth siddha"—to reveal truth and face the real problems—annihilating any hesitation.* In other words, within the renjian Buddhism of Xingyn, Zhengyan, and Shengyan, there are no instructions on how to accomplish oneself and how one can actually gain salvation. Their followers are idol-worshipping and practicing only for their own happiness. A lack of "ultimate concern" is there. (Italics mine.)

That is, even though the mention of renjian Buddhism is quite popular in modern Taiwan, and many Buddhist leaders legitimize their organizations by this term, these organizations have actually missed the core essence of

the real renjian Buddhism. Moreover, from a different perspective, the real influences of Taixu and Yinshun on Taiwanese Buddhism also have been put into doubts. Kan Zheng-Zong (闕正宗 2004b:461) believes that even without Taixu and Yinshun's influences Buddhist awakening in modern Taiwan would happen anyway:

Renjian Buddhism in Taiwan has experienced a process of moving from localization to internationalization. It has passed a series of reconstructions. *Even without Taixu's advocating rensheng (人生) Buddhism or Yinshun's promoting renjian Buddhism, Chinese Buddhism still may become a this-world Buddhism.* Modern Western religions in China and Taiwan have already conducted social welfare, education, and cultural practices, and this may already be sufficient enough to stimulate Buddhism to become a this-world Buddhism. Moreover, as traditional Buddhism has been stigmatized as corrupt, superstitious, and excessively focused on ritual performance, without any self-adjustment or self-reformation Buddhism would perish. (Italics mine.)

Here, therefore, the association between Taixu's or Yinshun's teachings of this-world Buddhism and recent Buddhist growths in Taiwan has been reconsidered. However, these issues may easily fall into harsh ideological debates. Who will be the true inheritors of Taixu and Yinshun? Have Taixu and Yinshun's teachings really been implemented? Must a Buddhist development in modern Taiwan follow Taixu and Yinshun's ideals?

To date, there have been many studies on renjian Buddhism, mainly by religious and historical approaches. The purpose of these studies was to trace the personal relationships and doctrinal lineages among different Buddhist thinkers and leaders. Indeed, this reconstruction of the lineage of renjian Buddhism has its importance per se. Nevertheless, larger social contexts that may actually foster various kinds of this-world Buddhism have not been explored enough yet, especially those movements currently flourishing in Taiwan.

This paper, in terms of a sociological perspective, or, say, a structural-functional approach, thus tries to broadly address society as a whole and the interaction of the whole and its component parts. That is, in terms of a whole society, with Buddhism as one of its components, I try to discuss the

developments and varieties of renjian Buddhism in the specific Chinese and Taiwanese social contexts. The current study may provide a new lens with which to view some social aspects of the developments of renjian Buddhism.

Below, I will discuss renjian Buddhism through two study strategies: (1) sociologically speaking, I want to know that under what kinds of social and historical backgrounds different Buddhist leaders have made different cultural choices and (2) I want to offer a sociological classification of renjian Buddhism according to each Buddhist group's internal configuration and composition.

To highlight my discussion, I will also consider the issues through three dimensions: progress, identity, and transcendence. Here "progress" refers to Western-type ideas that are based upon the advance of the ability to systematically control the environment. The idea of progress assumes an open possibility for unlimited achievements, in contrast with the fixed type of doctrine. "Identity" means categories people use to specify who they are. Under external pressure and frequent intergroup interaction, how to maintain the identity of a group may become crucially important for a group's survival. "Transcendence" refers to a quality of transcending secular and everyday life experience; this quality may penetrate our daily life experience, yet there still is an *a priori* basis of this quality.

These three dimensions intertwine in the history of Buddhism within modern Chinese social contexts. Seeing through these three dimensions may help us to shed light on modern Buddhist developments and provide a fresh look.

Cultural Choices for Buddhists in Modern Chinese

Before 1949: When Chinese Buddhism Encountering Modernity

King (1996:401) wrote: "Colonialism, foreign invasion, war, westernization oppression, social injustice, poverty, discrimination—these are the contexts out of which contemporary Buddhist social activism was born." The situation in Mainland China before 1949 is no exceptional.

Historically, the renovation of Chinese Buddhism in modern time is provoked by external forces. Chen Bing and Deng Zi-mei (陳兵、鄧子美 2000:6-8) summarize:

Since the Song dynasty, by the enforcement of centralized feudalism and the continual enhancement of Confucianism the spreading of Buddhism has been limited. Buddhism lost energy...In the later half of the nineteenth century both Chinese feudalism and Buddhism were under the oppression of foreign powers. After the twentieth century, the confrontation between East and West becomes intensive. Social change is fast. Buddhism must meet the new historical challenges.

Briefly speaking, as Buddhism faces historical challenges it has to redefine itself and re-prove its social functions in order to regain its social legitimacy in the new era.

Under the oppression of Western colonial power, intellectuals in non-Western countries have to reflect on the ways indigenous culture can survive. In China, Confucian intellectuals blamed Buddhism for its Indian heritage, saying it had actually corrupted Chinese people. For example, Liang Shu-min (梁漱溟 1983:248-249) pointed out that the essential nature of Buddhism is its other-worldness. This other-worldly quality sometime may have the positive social functions. If we want to change this other-worldly quality of Buddhism, we may actually misplace Buddhism and may even ruin it. From this perspective, in a certain way, Buddhism has been respected for its own value. Yet, it has also become a scapegoat for Chinese long-lasting cultural and political deterioration.

To debunk Liang's challenges, it seems Buddhist intellectuals must do several things. They must (1) clarify that Buddhism is not an other-worldly religion; (2) make clear, at least at the theoretical level, that there is no confrontation between Buddhism and modernity; and (3) prove through action that Buddhists can engage in an inner-worldly path. That is, Buddhists must prove that they have, or at least are compatible with, a modern, "progress" orientation.

Religion and Progress

Weber (1968:85-86) made a distinction between two kinds of rationality: "substantive rationality," which characterizes religion and "formal rationality," grounded in science and technology, which characterizes modernity. Constituted by a systemic way of thought and ethical standards, religion actually pertains to only one form of rationality, substantive

rationality. For quite a long time, religion has been the main cultural source leading the progress of civilization.

Bellah (1964:21) defines religious evolution as "a process of increasing differentiation and complexity of organization that endows the organization, social system, or whatever the unit in question may be with greater capacity to adapt to its environment than were its less complex ancestors." Bellah characterizes five types of religions: primitive, archaic, historic, early modern, and modern. Starting from the third phase, historic religion, religions begin to have the potential to lead social change. Or, from Bellah's perspective, the criterion that distinguishes the historic religions from the archaic is that the historic religion is transcendental. The cosmological monism within primitive or archaic religion is more or less broken at that point.

Starting from historic religion, a different realm of universe emanates. For religious man, higher values that are different from temporal affairs, are proclaimed. A presumed transcendental realm thus can become a leverage point for social change. According to Bellah, historic religions include Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, among others.

Historic religions can be the cultural resources for social change. However, as historic religions pertain to substantive rationality, they may include a fixed commitment to a detailed pattern of traditional action, therefore having little room for radical self-transformation (Bellah 1965:178-179). Moreover, as one important resource to sanctify established social arrangements, historic religions may exercise a steady resistance toward progress in a wide variety of areas.

Perhaps it may be said that, comparing to traditional and modern societies, their ideas of progress are different. In traditional societies, progress implies certain kinds of transcendence and moral idealism, while in modern society progress has been viewed as generating a this-worldly competence rather than an other-worldly accomplishment.

The modern ideas of progress are based upon the advance of ability in the systematic control of environment. These ideas open the possibility of unlimited achievements, in contrast with the fixed type of religious doctrine or revelation. It is why historic religion, when it encounters modern formal rationality, can be a hindrance to any modern forms of progress.

However, historically, in the eyes of people in non-Western

countries, Christianity has been seen as an exception. It has been held that Protestantism has played an important role in fostering the birth of the modern world. Modern "liberalism" actually contains the same basic commitment to individual responsibility and social voluntarism that emerges from the Puritan Revolution (Bellah 1965:199). Indeed, Protestant doctrines later became deeply problematic as they faced the advances of science and technology, even as those advances may have partly resulted from the doctrines. However, people in non-Western societies' people may still consider Protestantism or Christianity in general as the breeding ground for modern progress. Furthermore, compared to Protestantism, traditional religions in non-Western countries often are thought of as barbarous and unprogressive.

Identity and Cultural Choices —As Non-Western Societies Encounter Modernity

Confronting the imperialism, colonialism, and capitalism introduced by Western countries, people in non-Western countries, especially intellectuals, need to search for a way to survive this suffering and these pressures. In term of cultural choices, several possibilities exist, one of which being simply giving up old tradition and totally copying Western culture in order to aim for their stage of progress; this is the so-called wholesale Westernization (全盤西化). With regard to this stance, in terms of religion, people may adopt Christianity, and in terms of secularism, people may adopt one of the following Western political ideologies: liberalism, nationalism, or socialism (Bellah 1965:2000).

Yet "wholesale Westernization" is dangerous if a country wants to remain functional. As Deutsch (1966:240) points out:

How is it possible for an autonomous organization to accept outside information in the making of its most crucial inner decisions without losing its own identity? To accept the impact of outside information in a sequence of decisions may lead to decisions incompatible with one another. To accept it in the rearrangement of inner structures may leave the system with a collection of partial inner structures among which little or no communication and coordination may be possible. In such cases the effect of indiscriminate receptivity may be the destruction

of autonomy or even the destruction of the system. Even where the system as such survives and retains a measure of autonomy, its steering performance and its capacity for further growth may be substantially lowered.

This kind of discussion about the autonomy of systems, Bellah (1965:172-178) rephrases it in terms of the problem of balancing between progress and identity. For a society as whole, pursuing progress is indeed important, yet society still needs to maintain a rather stable identity in order to preserve solidarity and coagulation. Otherwise, society as whole can not withstand external pressures for long.

In a traditional society, religions' functions in identity maintaining are obvious and significant since in these contexts religions are the main sources from which time and space obtain meanings. Eliade (1959:23) wrote the following about religion: "Revelation of a sacred space makes it possible to obtain a fixed point and hence to acquire orientation in the chaos of homogeneity, to 'found the world' and to live in a real sense." Thus when we are talking about the maintenance of identity in non-Western countries, usually we are talking about religions. It is religion, especially traditional religions, that may help people in non-Western countries to construct their individual and collective identities.

Under the condition that cultural identity must be integrated into one's alternatives responses to Western countries, according to Bellah (1965:205-222) there might be three kinds of cultural responses: traditionalism, reformism, and neo-traditionalism (Bellah 1965:200). "Traditionalists" are those who find change to be neither necessary nor desirable. "Reformism" is defined as a movement "that reinterprets a particular religious tradition to show not only that it is compatible with modernization but also that, when truly understood, the tradition vigorously demands at least important aspects of modernity" (Bellah 1965:207). In labeling Kang Yu-wei and Tan Si-tong, who lived in China in the 1890s, as reformists, Bellah (1965:210) furthermore characterizes reformism as "a return to the early teachers and texts, a rejection of most of the intervening tradition, an interpretation of the pristine teachings...advocating social reform and national regeneration." "Neo-traditionalism," as the Chinese phase "Chinese body and Western technique" (中學為體西學為用) has

shown, is the idea that one could maintain traditional orientations as a base but utilize modern technology as an auxiliary.

Considering Chinese historical contexts, as Chinese encountered the modernity introduced by Western imperialists various cultural responses were aroused. Those include the radical traditionalism of Yihe Boxer (義和團), the neo-traditionalism led by Kang Yu-wei and others who wanted to establish a Confucian study group, and the new Confucian reformism of those who wanted to integrate traditional Confucianism with modern democracy. At the same time some lines of action were built upon secular ideologies such as liberalism, nationalism, and communism. Moreover, extreme "anti-traditionalism" also existed. As we know after 1949 Mainland China took a stance that broke vehemently from tradition. Based upon communism and nationalism the dominant ideology of communist China followed Western ideas of progress yet at the time criticized the capitalism for the exploitation of the few to the many. Communist China held social equality as the ideal for national building.

Situating Buddhism in Modern China before 1949

In discussing intellectuals' cultural choices while facing Western modernity, with regard to Buddhists in China the issues become extremely complicated. The core of the mainstream religions in traditional China is less readily observable than institutional religion. In terms of "diffused religion," Yang (楊慶堃 1961:294) discusses Chinese mainstream religions in a pervasive and diffused form. With regard to its content, Mo (牟鍾鑒 1995:82) has labeled this diffused kind Chinese mainstream religion as the "Chinese patriarchal traditional religion" (Ting 2004:65-66).

Indeed, in traditional China, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism all are just one thread of the coherent, mainstream, diffused "Chinese patriarchal traditional religion." Yet, officially, the imperial order is formally maintained by Confucianism, mainly through education and the examination system, the heaven-worship system, and most important, the ethical codes of *san-gon-wu-qang* ("the three cardinal guides and the five constant virtues," 三綱五常). With this historical and cultural background, as traditional China became disgruntled the presumed core of Chinese cultural tradition, that is, Confucianism, may be thought of as responsible and the issues surrounding

this tradition may come to the front stage in disputation.

For most, the downfall of modern China, at the very beginning, as people begin to be aware of this issue, thus may be attributed to the failures of orthodox Confucianism and the patriarchal social system. Buddhism can be linked to this historical picture in only two ways: either by Confucian reformists' self-reflection, in which Buddhism is the target that needs to be cut off or, in a rather general stance, by some more widely orientated neo-traditionalists who believe that, as one element of Chinese cultural tradition, Buddhism actually can help Chinese to adapt themselves to the modern world arena.

Confucians and Buddhists still blame each other for degrading China. However, one thing Buddhists can be sure of is that they certainly have stronger religious sentiments than secularist and humanist Confucians. With this difference, and as Western modernization may possibly simultaneously be fostered by Protestantism, Buddhism may also play an important role in bringing China into modernization, or at least, it can solidify and strengthen modern China. Yinshun's (1978) criticism of Confucianism's lack of religious sentiments has made these points clearly.

However, unfortunately, after 1949 communists, the extreme anti-traditionalists, took over Mainland China. That is, a radical appeal for progress surpassed a need for continuance in cultural tradition. This result is actually an announcement of a substantial failure of reformism and neo-traditionalism in Mainland China before 1949.

Thereafter, due to strong political control and ideology confrontation, in the case of both Buddhists and Confucians, the main tasks for reformation or renewing would then mainly take place outside Mainland China.

Contrasts between Taixu and Yinshun

The differences between Taixu and Yinshun have been widely discussed. For example, Taixu has been characterized as having a stronger patriotic tendency regarding Chinese Buddhism, believing all beings are interrelated in a substantial and mystical sense; having an intellectual style of total comprehension, and guiding action according to circumstances. In contrast, Yinshun has been characterized as cutting off from Chinese Buddhism and going back to Indian Buddhism, proposing an anthropocentric

necessity of Buddhism, having an intellectual style of analytic specification, and guiding action by a tendency to return to the essential.

Without involving too many details, however, it is important to note that through the dimensions I have elaborated (progress and identity), we may get a better understanding of the differences between Taixu and Yinshun. Moreover, by adding a new dimension—transcendentality—into the framework of comparison the picture can be even better illuminated.

Taixu's Proposal of a This-World Buddhism

Taixu's rensheng Buddhism may be called "this-world Buddhism" since the main purpose behind it is to transform Buddhist practices into this-life contexts. Taixu (1956/1970[47]:431-432) explained that:

rensheng Buddhism manifests itself clearly through the Buddhist core truth that the goal is to reform society, *to search for progress and enhance the world*, rather than to renounce the world or want to become mystical beings...Some think that Buddhist monks have a kind of magic power, such as fortune-telling, expiation, geomancy, or the like...this way of thinking has concealed the real truth of Buddhism. (Italics mine.)

Taixu (1956/1970[5]:209) continued writing that the way to implement rensheng Buddhism should be by:

keeping away from the category of heavens and ghosts. *Concentrating on this life. Making this life better.* Washing out superstitious belief in spiritual beings. *Buddhism should be based upon this-life, people, and science.* By these bases, we may build up a Mahayana Buddhism toward supreme enlightenment. (Italics mine.)

Specifically, Taixu proposed revolutions in doctrines, institution, and property. A further goal was to build up a "Chinese-based Newness in Buddhism." Taixu (1956/1970[2]:452-453) said:

The so-called "Chinese-based Newness" will build up Buddhist teachings that have been spread in China for more than two thousand years. To adapt Buddhism to human needs from now on we should absorb all virtues in Buddhism that have been passed through history. *We thus can renew Chinese Buddhism. This is a "Chinese-based Newness"*

rather than Westernization or Japanization. It is also different from building up Buddhism through criticizing traditional Chinese Buddhism. My idea of "Chinese-based Newness" Buddhism has two qualities: (1) to remove those features that may impede Chinese Buddhism from adapting itself into modern society, and (2) to rectify the idea that our Chinese Buddhism can be replaced by a non-Chinese Buddhism. (Italics mine.)

To sum up, the missions, for Taixu, are to maintain a national identity and at the same time to adapt Buddhism itself into the modern world. It is actually quite a parallel to Sun Yat-sen's (孫逸仙) ideal of creating a new China. Therefore, in Taixu's words:

Confucianism played a central role in traditional China, but now the "three principles of the people" (三民主義 *sanmin zhuyi*), the fusion between Chinese traditional culture and modern science, can replace this position. Buddhism should be like the "three principles of the people," Connecting bodhisattvas' practices of Mahayana we can then add a rensheng Buddhism to the sequence of enhancement from human to bodhisattva to Buddha. (Cited in Qiu 2000:77.)

However, Taixu's plan is a direct response to and reflection of the Chinese and Buddhist crisis that happened in his time. This parallelism between the creation of a new nation and a new Buddhism may cause some serious ambiguities and confusions for Buddhists, especially the confrontation arising between Buddhists and Confucian nationalists.

Yinshun's Proposal of an "Anthropocentric Buddhism"

Taixu's ideas of this-world Buddhism laid the foundation for Yinshun. We can say that both of them are committed modernists who want to humanize and modernize Chinese Buddhism. Yet Yinshun underscores his ideas of reforming in a rather deepened historical base. Yinshun appeals for a Buddhism that is "corresponding to truth and corresponding to times" (*qiliqiji*, 契理契機). On one hand, in terms of "corresponding to times," Yinshun shares parts of Taixu's ideas of this-world Buddhism:

With regard to "corresponding to times" (契機), emphasizing "right path" is appropriate for our needs nowadays. Chinese always put emphasis on human affairs. An example is Master Yinquang (印

光), who promotes the practice of "recitation of Buddha's name for going to the Pure Land." Yet he also put emphasis on the proper way of life, as Confucians always emphasized...Yinquang hasn't ignored the importance of this life. After the Republic was founded in 1911, *Buddhist clergymen and laymen tried to adapt themselves to this society. To move into this society, they promoted charity and education. Buddhism is a human-world Buddhism.* (2001:Preface; Italics mine.)

Yet on the other hand, for "corresponding to truth" (契理), Yinshun has his own ideas. On this side, he is not only more radical than Taixu, but he is also critical of Taixu. As Buddhist scholar Yang Hui-nan (楊惠南 2000:479) has noted, Yinshun's renjian Buddhism is based upon the humanitarianism of Agaama sutras (阿含經) and the loving-kindness and compassion of early Mahayana Buddhism toward all sentient beings. Therefore, it is also a movement of "returning to India's primitive Buddhism and early Mahayana Buddhism." I cite several paragraphs from Yinshun below:

Based upon the simplicity of early Buddhism, yet promoting the thoughts and paths coming from middle-period Buddhism. (1989:1-2; Italics mine.)

I admire Buddhist Dharma, and admire earlier Mahayana Buddhism's thoughts and paths without reservation. (1989:45; Italics mine.)

Even in its early days, Buddhism adapted itself to this world, yet that was not the main purpose of Buddha. *The prospering of Buddhism ...is due to its own unique strengths. Now we should promote Buddhism through a new adaption...* based on selection from and promotion through traditional Buddhism, penetrating into two ends (not partial to any one side, yet penetrating into both sides). Let this right-path Buddhism adapt itself and be promoted in this world. (1989:2; Italics mine.)

Renjian Buddhism has put emphasis on human's bodhisattva path. People may feel it is strange and wonder how this Buddhism can be based upon the simplicity of early Buddhism. Aren't Theravada Buddhists more reclusive and don't they always retreat from this world? Don't they lack compassion? How can this be the foundation for renjian Buddhism? Few people realize that there is no distinction between great

or little in Buddhist teachings. All were developed throughout history... *The teachings Buddha gave were adapted to customs in his time, that is, they emphasized on a monastic life. However, laity still was important. Both clergymen and laymen were practicing the vehicle of liberation to seek ultimate liberation.* (1989:50; Italics mine.)

To summarize, Yinshun built his renjian Buddhism upon two grounds. One is the vehicle of liberation articulated and practiced by Buddha. The other is the presumed bodhisattva's paths and practices richly developed in earlier Mahayana Buddhism. We may say that Buddhism should adapt itself to the world, yet a path of liberation is its premise. Social engagements must build upon a deepened Buddhist base.

Here may be implied two contrasting yet not necessarily conflicting qualities of Yinshun's ideas of renjian Buddhism. One is the return to Buddha's humanist concerns and compassion acts, especially like those of earlier Mahayana in which it had profoundly expressed this kind of spirit. With regard to this humanist turn, Yinshun's renjian Buddhism may be called anthropocentric Buddhism. That is, renjian Buddhism relocates living human beings as the central concern of Buddhism.

Given the emphasis on Buddha's ultimate concern for liberation, for our purpose, we may conceive of the other quality of Yinshun's renjian Buddhism as a kind of transcendence. That is, it is believed that in the Buddhist doctrines and practices a reality surpassing our common thoughts or ideas does exist, even if it closely intertwines with our daily life experiences. I will discuss this issue next.

The Ideas of Progress, the Struggle for Identity, and an Insistence on Transcendence

The struggle between Progress and Identity

Without a doubt, both Taixu and Yinshun worked in earnest for the idea of progress. Since under Western impacts, both of them took tremendous efforts to modernize Chinese Buddhism. Yet because they worked through different historical situations and visions, these two masters had different strategies for achieving progress.

Looking at Taixu, his proposal of a "revolution for doctrine, institution,

and properties" is, to some extent, evolutionary. He wanted to transform traditional Chinese Buddhism into a modern style, from which might arise a "Chinese-based Newness." However, even though this tendency is revolutionary, the intention underneath it is still quite moderate.

Briefly speaking, as mentioned before, when a country or nation encounters external threats several possible cultural choices may emerge. Neo-traditionalism refers to the idea that one can maintain traditional orientations as a basis but utilize modern technology as an auxiliary. Reformism, especially in its radical form, takes the stance of a "return to the early teachers and texts, a rejection of most of the intervening traditions." Taixu had a strong motivation to reform, yet theologically he still accepted most of the traditional Chinese Buddhist philosophy. He may be considered "a neo-traditionalist with a partial reformist tone." Yinshun, in contrast, takes "a radical attribute behind reformism." He wants to get rid of negative Chinese influences on Buddhism.

Certainly, at the beginning, no such radical reformist ideas came to Yinshun's mind. Rather, he learned the lesson through history. In the preface of his 1949 book *Indian Buddhism*, he presents a deep self-reflection on his own change: "At the beginning [before 1938], I believed deeply in 'perfect harmony and upaya' [the kind of Buddhist philosophy rooted in Chinese Buddhism] and though it was the unique and best part of Buddhism." At this stage, Yinshun's position did not have any large differences from Taixu's. However, a rather moderate reformism did not prove itself to be effective. In 1938, Confucian Liang Shu-min had a debate with Buddhists, including Yinshun. Liang had been a devoted Buddhist but at some point broke with the religion. Instead, he became a Confucian and postulated a slogan: "this time, this place, and this people." Liang's conversion from Buddhist to Confucian, and his strong denunciation of Buddhism, actually equals a declaration of Buddhism's failure in China.

Under this presumed failure, Yinshun took a new stance on reformism. That stance involved returning to the earlier teachers and texts and rejecting most of the intervening traditions, especially the influences from old China. Yinshun explained:

After 1938, to seek refuge from calamities, we came to this Jinyun Mountain...I felt bitter that even there were so many Buddhists in

China, we could not assist our nation and people. The holy doctrine is in danger. We haven't done enough. We should blame ourselves. (Italics mine.)

Many have commented on Yinshun's lack of a taste for nationalism, but I would emphasize that it is just the opposite. Actually, it is exactly a strong patriotic bent that pushed him into a rather reformism. To make a parallel comparison, I would say that the position of Taixu to Yinshun looks just like the position of Sun Yat-sen to Lu Xun 鲁迅; that is, the relationship of a moderate reformer with a neo-traditionalist stance to a radical reformer.

However, the dilemma is that, as mentioned before, since Buddhism was from India, it had not yet established a predominant social or cultural position for itself in traditional China. A radical reformism involving reverting to earlier Buddhism, rather than Sinicized Buddhism, immediately bring up the issues of loyalty and identity. The question was: How could China be improved without an appeal, at least partially, to China's own traditions?

Rejecting "Sinicized" Buddhism: A Choice for Transcendence rather than Immanen

Yinshun's rejection of Chinese Buddhism, with the purpose of radical reformism, also has a theological reason beneath it. Yinshun, summarizing Taixu's ideas, wrote:

Master Taixu's thought, the core part, is Chinese Buddhist tradition. Tiantai, Huayan, Chan, and Pure Land. (台賢[華嚴]禪淨) ... From Indian Buddhist theory to see, it all belongs to later Mahayana ... There are three features: (1) theoretically, it articulates itself in terms of perfect completion, (2) methodologically, it emphasizes itself the simples, and (3) the way of practicing is through a sudden enlightenment ... *The true spirit of Mahayana, that is, to attain liberation through practicing the path of compassionate bodhisattva, under the three features above cannot be developed.* (1989:44; Italics mine.)

I feel that Master Taixu puts too much emphasis on perfect harmony. So, the core meaning of Buddhist truth cannot be discovered. Master's Buddhism belongs to Chinese Buddhist tradition. (1992:224;

Italics mine.)

With regard to this Chinese Buddhist tradition, it may be said that since the appearance of Chinese Tien-tai sect (天台宗), reality has been approached as "all phenomena are the manifestations of the Mind of Pure Nature" (Chan 1963:397), with the result that "the phenomenal life... is affirmed absolutely. The everyday life of the layman is part of the life of the Buddha" (Ch'en 1964:312; Chan and Ch'en both cited in Overmeyer 1976:61). Under these ideas, a dichotomy between sacred and profane might not be noticeable. That is, a radical emphasis on the unity of all things (Overmeyer 1976:61) would have tremendous influence on Chinese Buddhist history. A popularized version of these ideas has been called "Yuanrong" 圓融, which Soothill and Hodous (1937:172), define as: "The complete interpenetration of the absolute and the relative, the identity of apparent contraries. All things are of the same fundamental nature, *bhutatatahata*... The universal realizes its true nature in the particular, and the particular derives its meaning from the universal."

This presumption of the "unity of all things" is a monism with a strong mystical bent, and it has transformed Indian Buddhism into a new Chinese Buddhism. Under this mystical monism, secular activities have been given sacred religious meanings.

This mystical monism, at some historical moment, may be helpful for Buddhism to spread in China. Yet for some, this Sinification of Buddhism goes so far that Buddhism is no longer itself. Yinshun certainly held this view.

While Taixu was an advocate for the ideas of Yuanrong in traditional Chinese Buddhism, Yinshun is in a stance opposed to this position, as described before. To make a sociological distinction between them, I would propose that Taixu has a standpoint of "immanent non-duality," in contrast to Yinshun, who has a standpoint of "transcendental non-duality."

Here, borrowing from Western theology, I use the terms transcendence and immanence, which originally referred to the way divinity is presented. While transcendence implies a divinity exalted above and apart from the universe of physical beings and finite spirits, immanence implies a ubiquity or "being everywhere" quality of the divine.

I borrow these terms, yet still maintain a Buddhist bent by adding the word "non-duality." Therefore, for the purpose of sociological comparison

and heuristic understanding, we may label Taixu as having a position of immanent non-duality and Yinshun as having a position a transcendental non-duality. Where Taixu emphasizes the "unity of all things" in a mystical stance, in contrast, Yinshun insists on a higher reality, even in a non-duality or middle-path sense, that may ultimately surpass the secular world.

A Sociological Categorization of Buddhist Organizations in Modern Taiwan

A New Historical Arena

How to characterize Buddhist development in modern Taiwan? As most Buddhist groups claim that they share the heritage from Taixu and Yinshun, whether doctrinally or historically, it is hard to tell whose position is closer to Taixu or Yinshun, and whether modern Buddhist growth can really be attributed to Taixu and Yinshun's endeavors.

It has been noted by Kan (2004a:3) that "under martial law, Buddhism had a very good chance to develop, since the KMT [Chinese Nationalist Party] at that time allowed Buddhism to exist but strictly restricted some religions." We also notice several other crucial background changes when comparing the early twentieth-century Mainland China to the Taiwan of the 1980s. One is that the issue of struggle for Chinese identity fades and a new search of Taiwanese identity arose. The other change is that the impoverished economics of a peasant society was replaced by an economically developed and urbanized society.

Therefore, whether from the top or from the bottom, there are crucial differences between the social situations that stimulated Taixu and Yinshun's ideas of inner-worldly Buddhism. The current, new awakening of Buddhism in Taiwan might result partly from the specific cooperative arrangements between the KMT and Buddhist groups, and partly from a developed economics that fostered indigenous religious movements. However, there are large confrontations between these two forces. We must be very careful not to equate current Taiwan Buddhist growth totally with Taixu's or Yinshun's total achievements.

To conclude, instead of reconstructing the linear relationships among different Buddhist thinkers and leaders, I will put more emphasis on the

substantial social base and internal dynamics of Buddhist organizations now flourishing in Taiwan. This approach may help us to gain some fresh perspectives on the relevant issues.

Zhengyan and the Tzu Chi Association

In modern Taiwan many Buddhist groups use propaganda to make a name for themselves as renjian Buddhists. As previously mentioned, these groups have been criticized for this. These criticisms do catch part of the story, yet the historical contexts have still been ignored. Moreover, the criticisms do not make basic distinctions among the leaders' visions, the strategies for mass mobilization, and the unintended consequences of actions. These three should be seen as interrelated yet separated ideas. We can compare the actual differences among them without mixing them up.

For the convenience of discussion, I will start my analysis from Zhengyan's Tzu Chi Gongdehui (hereafter simply called Tzu Chi or the Tzu Chi Association). It is so intriguing that a group founded by a Buddhist nun, with early followers predominantly middle-aged women, now has become the foremost nonprofit charity organization in Taiwan (Ting 1999:79-106). Even at the very surface, we can see several paradoxes involved in the so-called Tzu Chi Phenomenon:

1. Yinshun mentioned: "I cannot say that Tzu Chi is influenced by my philosophy." But Tzu Chi's leader Zhengyan mentioned often that her Tzu Chi is deeply influenced by Yinshun, especially by Yinshun's words: "For Buddhism. For all sentient beings."

2. Because his whole life worked for Buddhist education, Yinshun had many students learning directly from him. However, at last, it is a Buddhist nun, Zhengyan, with only a very weak tie to Yinshun before, who now uplifts Yinshun's renjian Buddhism to unprecedented public attention.

3. Yinshun's ideas of renjian Buddhism are based upon Madhyamika's philosophy (中觀哲學), the so-called middle-path principle. It has presumed a highly dialectical relationship between theory and practice. However, in Zhengyan's schema of Buddhist theory and practice, this philosophy of Madhyamika has not been discussed much.

4. In Yinshun's renjian Buddhism, the focus of identity issues is mainly on the balance between Buddhism and the identity of China. In Tzu Chi, the

situation is different. The original conflict between Chinese nationalism and Buddhism ceases to be an issue in Taiwan, and Buddhism can be adopted as one key symbol for national identity for Taiwan.

To sum up, in a rather exaggerated yet analytical way, from Yinshun's starting point a Chinese renjian Buddhism ideal now has been dislocated by a group of middle-aged Taiwanese middle-age women into these women's specific everyday life experiences. There is nothing wrong with this. Yet a structural rearrangement indeed appears, and a Buddhist ideal led by the elite has now become a popular Buddhist collective movement.

Yinshun has been with the term of "transcendental non-duality," which means that he has based his ideal in a transcendental "void," with "dependent co-arising" and "non-attachment" grounds. At the same time, using this transcendental void, one thus can actively engage in needed social practices.

In Tzu Chi Association, without doubt, the leader Zhengyan is a role model who has successfully embodied this kind of renjian Buddhism. She is not only a Buddhist nun who herself stands in a non-attaching position, but she is also a social practitioner who actively engages in many kinds of charity and cultural-promotion projects. As Zhengyan has emphasized on many occasions, and shows in various Tzu Chi settings, her actions are based upon 32 words (Chinese characters) in *Wulingyi* 無量義經 (Infinite meaning Sutra):

Their minds are calm and clear, profound and infinite. They remain in this state for hundreds of thousands of kotis of kalpas, and all of the innumerable teachings have been revealed to them. Having obtained the great wisdom, they penetrate all things. (靜寂清澄玄玄虛漠。守之不動億百千劫。無量法門悉現在前。得大智慧通達諸法。)

Or, presented in a rather common way, Zhengyan explained her ideas of "still thoughts" as follows:

"Still thoughts", as the term suggests, is to maintain a peaceful mind in any situation and to walk into the mundane world with a tranquil mind. Born into this world, we cannot detach ourselves from all the worldly affairs. However, affairs do not go as expected in this world. Therefore, we should deal with the constantly changing world by sticking to our principles while keeping a tranquil mind. (<http://www.tzuchi.org/>

global/master/index.htm ; Italics mine)

From the paragraph above, it may be said that, to some extent Zhengyan's personal practices may tally well with Yinshun's ideas or renjian Buddhism, in the sense that e Yinshun's renjian Buddhism is characterized as a kind of transcendental non-duality. That is, his Buddhism has a transcendental voidness and purity at its core, yet it still engages in the unselfish social acts.

However, we may question if, in Tzu Chi, with the exception of Zhengyan, who can successfully integrate the two sides of transcendental non-duality and secular engagement; for most other participants, this inner integration is possible. Or, how does it work?

Structurally speaking, we see that there are two positions in Tzu Chi those of clergyman and layman. These positions are not only structurally different, but also results in the mental limitation of achieving both. In Tzu Chi, clergymen maintain the condition of independence, purity, and selflessness, which can symbolize a transcendental idealism; laymen continually engage in prosocial commitment under everyday life's settings. As the transcendence has been embodied by the clergymen's lifestyle, laymen thus can pursue instrumental management and efficient operation without worrying about deviating from the transcendental quality of renjian Buddhism.

The Tzu Chi Association as a whole does embody renjian Buddhism structurally in the sense that both transcendental emptiness and inner-worldly engagement have been implemented into the organization through the structural arrangements of the function alignments of clergyman and layman. Yet for an individual participant, who does not have the chance of crossing the boundary between transcendental emptiness and inner-worldly engagement, he or she may fall into a state of self-alienation and mental fragmentation.

Indeed, Tzu Chi's social engagement is strong and effective. Yet for its deep social base, especially for the laity participants, this base is not purely from a Buddhist tradition, rather, it is closer to the traditional concept of "public" (gong, 公) (Mizoguchi 溝口雄三 1995:46-62; Jin 金耀基 1995) in the Chinese cultural context. That is to say, in traditional Chinese society there are the concepts of self-discipline, mutual respect and assistance, and

voluntary efforts to provide for the needs of the community. The underlying base for these social practices is the traditional Chinese concept of *gong* 公, a postulated category of non-selfish acts that are beyond any individual's personal interests. When people get together to practice these concepts, the voluntary association is often named a "merit Association." Sometimes the association will be entrusted to the management of a Buddhist monk or nun. In a sense, there clergy have left home, and so presumably they can transcend their personal interests (Baity 1975:244). An organization like this thus does not only carry on the social function of mutual assistances, but it also helps to maintain social hierarchy and public morality (Liang 梁其姿1997). With regard to self-cultivation, since participating in this kind of group is a manifestation of a non-selfish virtue, this involvement also has been thought of as a social practice that can accumulate both personal and family merits. In the Chinese cultural repertoire, as this concept of publicity constitutes the main social base for Tzu Chi's resource mobilization, Tzu Chi may be labeled as a "public Buddhism."

That is to say, to mobilize more social resources for engaging in public charity, Zhengyan built Tzu Chi upon traditional concepts of publicity and then implemented them. Zhengyan's personal background here makes her a liminal person who can mobilize various resources beyond boundaries. Her social characteristics cross both layman and renouncer, inner-worldly and other-worldly, Chinese (her master is a Mainlander) and Taiwanese, man (as a nun she is without social gender) and woman, person from the West coast of Taiwan (she was born there) and person from the East coast of Taiwan (she lives there), private cultivation and public service, and so on. All these characteristics have the quality of boundary-crossing. In an authoritarian regime, these qualities may invite discrimination, yet in a pluralistic society, due to this characteristic of boundary-crossing, the qualities may make it possible to mobilize social resources to a maximum level.

It is very interesting to note that from 1949 to 1980 Yinshun's ideas of renjian Buddhism had been neglected and marginalized by the only legal Buddhist association in Taiwan, the Chinese Buddhist Association. Yet at last, institutionally, Yinshun's ideal has been implemented by a liminal person, the Buddhist nun Zhengyan. This implementation is stimulated by both the traditional idea of *gong* and the moral uplift by the modern

Taiwanese middle class, especially the extensive social network of middle-aged women.

TzuChi's success comes from its successful fusion of modern Buddhist social engagement and the function of publicity working in the traditional Chinese community. Yet traditional public services do not equal modern social engagement. In Chinese cultural contexts, there are no intermediate or formal channels between local organizations and state ones, and local people have confined themselves away from upper-level, state policy-making. This self-confinement by a local collective mentality may possibly alter Yanshun's original plan of renjian Buddhism.

Xingyun and the Buddha Light Association

In the website (http://ww.byby.com.tw/buddhism/se_fgs6.htm) of the Buddha Light Association (BLA), a so-called Zong-fong (list of guidelines, 宗風) lists eight items: (1) Spreading the eight teachings, *sangha* is sharing by people; (2) Work is done by all participants with respect and forgiveness; (3) Cultivation and practice, conducting democracy; (4) Harmony for *sangha* and equality for both clergyman and layman; (5) Politics and religion keeps a peaceful relationship, yet they are not mixed; (6) Integration of the tradition and the modern; (7) International communication, living on the same planet; and (8) humanistic Buddhism, the Buddha Light Pure Land.

In the same place, with regard to the "purpose" of the BLA, there are four items have been listed: (1) Training people by education, (2) Propagandizing Buddhism by culture, (3) Benefiting society by charity, and (4) Purifying minds by collective cultivation.

Xingyun wrote an article entitled "How to Build up a Renjian Buddhism," and listed six guidelines there: "(1) To build a renjian Buddhism with life pleasure, (2) To build a renjian Buddhism with wealthy, (3) To build a renjian Buddhism with compassion and morality, (4) To build a renjian Buddhism with family harmony, (5) To build a renjian Buddhism with Mahayana's widespread helping, and (6) To build a renjian Buddhism as a Buddha Pure Land (Xingyun's book of speech 1: 257-280). Xingyun declared that: "What I am saying about renjian Buddhism, is that it is full of pleasure, wealthy, compassionate and moral widespread with help, and imitates the Buddha Pure Land." (cited by Fu 1995:167). The author of the

biography of Xingyun, Fu (符芝英 1995:166), thus concludes: "Xingyun has the qualities of both idealism and realism. His viewpoints on renjian Buddhism have two special features: *one is that he confirms the value of this life; one is that he advocates a joyful cultivation* rather than a painstaking cultivation" (Italics mine).

As BLA emphasizes this popular spreading and secular tendency, some scholars, such as Qiu (2000:139), criticizes the BLA, and stigmatize it as only a "popular religion." This kind of labeling may hold some truth, as mentioned before, however, we must be aware of the misunderstanding involved.

Indeed, the BLA does emphasize a popular route for spreading Buddhism, yet the core of this popularizing is "modernity" rather than "vulgarity." It is not exactly the same as what Buddhism has done in the past so many time to adapt itself to different socio-geographic contexts. Rather, now there is an inclusion of modernity in order to adapt itself to a modern progress orientation. A better designation for this adaptation "progress Buddhism" or "positive Buddhism," rather than "popular Buddhism." That is, based on its guideline of inner-worldly concern and positive engagement, the BLA is trying to shift the other-worldly Buddhism into a progress Buddhism. Popularizing itself is not its main concern.

To some extent, the BLA adheres to Yinshun's ideas of renjian Buddhism as well. That is, those practitioners in a position of non-selfish and transcendental non-duality, those who are continually engaging in any kinds of positive social practices, this can tally well with Yinshun's ideal designs. In the BLA, it is just those clergymen who have embodied Yinshun's ideas of renjian Buddhism. Since clergyman in *sangha* presumably have sufficient transcendentality and non-attachment, as they conduct any kind of social engagements these inner qualities may correspond well to the criteria of Yinshun's renjian Buddhism, a transcendental non-duality.

However, some problems may still arise. In the BLA, the inherent quality of non-attachment or transcendental non-duality is just presumed to be in the *sangha*. Nevertheless, if the clergy do not self-cultivate sufficiently this non-attachment quality, or the *sangha* has only been taken as an external form, the presumed transcendentality of the *sangha* may actually been lost.

As the presumed transcendentality of *sangha* has not been infused

into clergymen's daily training and cultivation, if the *sangha* have been to involved in secular practices, the ideal of a progress Buddhism may actually change into a quite vulgar and popular form. This drive to search for progress will soon be encroached upon or even be colonized by so-called instrumental rationality. It is the dilemma inherent for the BLA.

Shengyan and the Dharma Drum Mountain

Dharma Drum Mountain (DDM) was established by Master Shengyan in 1989. It is another organization often mentioned by scholars and the media that may actually embody the ideas of renjian Buddhism in modern Taiwan. The DDM's mission is to "uplift the character of humanity and build a Pure Land on earth." (<http://www.dharmadrum.org/ddm/print.asp?pkey=&NuiID=&fontsize=13>). According to Shengyan, as the mission of the DDM is to uplift the quality of life and mind, the DDM places the most emphasis on building a Pure Land on this earth rather than searching for any mystical places somewhere else. Shengyan said:

If we can experience the Dharma, we will know that this earth is just the Pure Land. In other words, if your mind is clean, there is just your Pure Land. Chinese Tiantai's (天台宗) Master Zhi-Zhe (智者) claims: "One thought embraces 3,000 worlds (一念三千)... So even in the absurd mind of an ordinary person there can be merits equal to many buddhas... There are different levels of "Pure Land," yet there are no differences in the space it has occupied. The primary one is the "Human Pure Land," then there are the "Heaven Pure Land," and the "Buddha Pure Land," and finally the highest one is the "Mind-Clean Pure Land." In everyday life, as your thoughts correspond to Buddhist compassion and wisdom, you have seen the "Human Pure Land." If you live by Buddhist compassion and wisdom, at that moment, you live in the "Human Pure Land." In other words, as you concentrate on chanting, you can see the "Pure Land." Practicing Zen then brings you into a state of attaining your true nature and as a result you can find the "Pure Land." If you neither chant the Buddha's name nor practice Zen but you observe the five precepts and ten good deeds, are responsible, contribute to society, are compassionate and wise, and so forth, you may at least see the "Human Pure Land." (2001:1-3; italics mine.)

These words show that structurally the DDM is neither "collaborating between clergymen and laymen" as in the Tzu-Chi's structural arrangement, nor is it like the BLM, where the clergy play a central position. Rather, as the DDM's main base is constituted by people's everyday lives, those laymen more deeply situated in the mundane life may logically come to the front-stage of the DDM.

That is, as the transformation of mundane life experience becomes the focus of a religious group, then, in a rather inconceivable way, even though the clergy still play an important role, the world of the layman's life will emerge as the central part of the group, whether regarding the organization's rhetorical vocabularies or the content of their practices.

Let me pause momentarily and return to Yinshun. As discussed before, there is a quality of transcendental non-duality underneath Yinshun's ideas of renjian Buddhism. We may imagine here that both a transformed laity strata and a socially engaged clergy strata can tally with Yinshun's stance of transcendental non-duality. The former transforms a mundane life experience into a transcendental one, and the latter originally has a transcendental essence and adds a new socially oriented engagement, thereby both bring in the quality of non-duality.

That is, any individuals or collectives who can adhere to the attitude of nonattachment and at the same time can actively engage in social practices, these individuals or collectives then bear the qualities of both transcendence and non-duality (without a distinction between inner-world and other-world acts). Analytically then, with regards to the typology of renjian Buddhism, the BLA as described previously is one type of renjian Buddhism, one based upon clergymen's social engagements; and the DDM described here is another contrasting type, based upon laymen's transformation of their daily life experience. It is exactly as the DDM's organizational purpose has postulated: "Everyone should face his or her immediate moment, in order to transform his or her life into a 'Human Pure Land.'" Regarding this particular salient orientation, we may call the DDM's religious practices "present Buddhism," that is, a Buddhism with a focus on transforming any immediate moment of one's current time-space realm.

Since the transformation of laymen's everyday life has been the main focus of the DDM's religious practice, the social base of mobilization has

been extended to be quite common and huge. Moreover, it is very clear that the religious orientation is toward an enlightened transformation, not only blessing-giving or merit-accumulation.

All the above characteristics, if my interpretations are right, do not violate any of Yinshun's ideas of renjian Buddhism. However, there is still a very big difference between the DDM's religious practices and Yinshun's ideas.

For Yinshun, the transcendental quality of Buddhism must be based upon the philosophy of middle-way and dependent co-arising, that is, the quality of "emptiness." The actual performance of this renjian Buddhism should be through the boddhi-mind (the enlightened mind) that is empty. Yet is it possible for the masses to reach this ideal state of mind and collectively act it out?

Logically, the boddhi-mind that has the quality of non-dualities and emptiness corresponds well to the structural arrangements of *sangha*, and since Buddhist clergymen are in the position of not owning any material possessions, structurally, it is easier for the sangha to remain in a position of emptiness and non-attachment. Also, social practices conducted by *sangha* should meet the criteria of a non-duality or middle-way emptiness. However, for most laymen, who live upon a rather non-empty material base, a state of emptiness is not pre-existent for them and also is not easily reachable.

Therefore, it seems that the DDM leader Shengyan, for effectively mobilizing lay people, does not actually adopt Yinshun's approach of middle-way or emptiness; rather, he adopts an approach that Yinshun has been strongly against, a traditional Chinese Buddhist mysticism, such as the Tiantai idea of "one thought to embrace the 3,000 worlds." Here, obviously, the transcendental non-duality has been replaced by the "immanent non-duality," thus deviating from Yinshun's ideal of renjian Buddhism. It is possible that Shengyan's Chinese Chan (禪宗) background causes him to share this Chinese Buddhist tone of immanence. However, I still want to emphasize that it is the structure of the DDM that makes this immanent tone inevitable. For the DDM, as its main base is commoners' everyday life experiences, to transform these commoners' experiences into an immanent Pure Land, it will be much easier to use an immediate confirmation of daily life experience than an approach of negative transcendentalism toward these

life experiences, especially if we consider this issue through the collective level. As Shengyan uses this Tiantai metaphor to transform commoners' daily life experience, he has fallen into a position that sharply contrasts with Yinshun's, because Yinshun is strongly against this Chinese immanent tone.

Structurally, we may surmise that as the religious discourses of an organization put more emphasis on the immanent state of people's surrounding life experience, the ideas of transcendence become less conceivable. Therefore, the importance of the key symbol of religious transcendence in Buddhism, the *sangha*, may become less salient. The result is that the *sangha* then play a relatively weak role in the whole organization, whether theoretically or practically. The only exception is the organization leader, such as Shengyan, who will always play a central role in the organization in the sense that he is the charismatic figure providing discourses and guiding direction for the whole movement.

Discussion and Conclusion

Sociologically speaking, structure and agency are two attributes of human society that exist in the same time and place. Structure and agency retain an interdependent relationship via a feedback loop. Agency assumes that humans have free will and engage in a decision-making process. However, there is no such thing as free will because the sum of individual decision-making is all that counts, and so resulting social structures are decided by the degree of conformity that can be imposed upon the decision-making process.

It is well known that in human behavior agency and structure are highly interdependent. Yet with regard to renjian Buddhism in modern Chinese and Taiwanese social contexts, it seems that past studies have shown less interest in the structural dimension. The sociological dimensions of renjian Buddhism have rarely been explored, and the current paper thus tries to compensate for the theoretical and empirical gaps in past studies of renjian Buddhism regarding the underlying structural dimension undying.

Regarding sociological dimensions, this paper emphasizes two questions: (1) what kinds of social and historical backgrounds stimulate these new Buddhist activities and discourses? And (2) sociologically thinking, how can different Buddhist projects be categorized into a typological comparison

in order to consider them through a deep structural base?

The term "renjian Buddhism" is used to refer to the inner-worldly orientation of Buddhism, but there are various other terms that have been used to describe the apparently new orientations of Buddhism appearing in the modern world arena.

First, the term "engaged Buddhism" appears to have been coined by the Vietnamese Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh in 1963 (Yarnall 2003:286). Although the usage of this term varies, using a rather strict sense Queen (1996:16) writes the following about engaged Buddhism: "A liberation movement, we proposed, is a voluntary association of people, guided by exemplary leaders and a common vision of a society based on peace, justice, and freedom. Such a movement is significantly different in character and function from a sovereign stage, which exercises temporal power over its citizens in the name of a common purpose." Here, engaged Buddhism has been defined through an orientation toward political emancipation. It is clear that this radical sentiment of engaged Buddhism is stimulated by the colonialism and exploitation from Western countries. That is, under the exploitation and colonization by Western countries, as Buddhism in non-Western countries faces such invasion it has to make a political shift. A new orientation toward social change and political emancipation has been integrated into Buddhism.

Another term that has been discussed often is "Protestant Buddhism." Obeyesekere's (1972:62) definition of it is as follows: "the term 'Protestant Buddhism' in my usage has two meanings. (a) As we have pointed out many of its norms and organizational forms are historical derivatives from Protestant Christianity. (b) More importantly, from the contemporary point of view, it is a protest against Christianity and its associated Western political dominance prior to independence." Using the term Protestant Buddhism Obeyesekere intended to describe how Buddhism, modeling itself on the social forms of Protestant Christianity, was increasingly domesticating, in public ways, its chief symbols and monastic religious practices; that is, how Buddhism was moving spatially "out of the temple and into the market place" in a manner reminiscent of how Reformation Protestants had released religious sentiments from the monastery into life as it is lived in the everyday context (see Holt 1991:307).

In the globalized context, comparing renjian Buddhism to engaged Buddhism and Protestant Buddhism, we indeed see similarities, since all are stimulated by Western colonialism and imperialism. Yet, there still are crucial differences, and these make renjian Buddhism unique. For example, the ways China or Taiwan were colonized are different from the situations in other countries. For Mainland China, it has been called a "semi-colony" because even under severe economical exploitation, politically it still maintains relative autonomy. In the case of Taiwan, it was colonized by Japan. This colonization was by an Eastern country that shared some similar cultural traditions with Taiwan. After 1949, Taiwan became the last territory controlled by the Nationalist Party from Mainland China. At the same time, various Buddhist reformist and neo-traditionalist movements that had originally been spreading in Mainland China were imported into Taiwan. This historical background is much more complicated than that of a colony in which Buddhists try to emancipate people from Western or authoritative powers. A drive to political emancipation is only implicit in renjian Buddhism.

Generally speaking, in the current paper, I characterize renjian Buddhism through three dimensions: progress, identity, and transcendence. The term "progress" may have various meanings, yet under Western influence the modern form of progress has been viewed as "generating a this-worldly competence." Under the threats coming from colonialism and imperialism, people in the non-Western world, especially intellectuals, want to attain progress as soon as possible in order to survive this dramatic historical crisis. However, for society as a whole, in pursuing progress it still must maintain a stable collective identity in order to sustain the functions of the whole social system.

For Buddhists within Chinese cultural contexts, especially from 1911 to 1949, maintaining a balance between progress and identity was not an easy job. With regard to the issue of identity, in China, Buddhism itself is neither holding a central cultural position nor an indigenous one. Under external threats, the legitimacy of its position is challenged. With regard to the issue of progress, the presumed other-world orientation in Buddhism also makes Buddhism less appealing than Christianity or Confucianism.

Comparing the various choices Buddhist leaders have made, I find that

Taixu saw a parallelism between the creation of a new nation and a new Buddhism. As Taixu's main purpose was to reverse a traditional other-world Buddhism and make it into a modern this-world Buddhism, we may label it as a "this-world Buddhism." However, if Buddhism is not differentiated from surrounding cultural traditions, this situation may actually cause an identity crisis for Buddhists, especially as Buddhists face confrontation from Confucians and secular Nationalists.

Yinshun's deep digging into the essence of Buddhism, we labeled as "anthropocentric Buddhism" and it is a radical shift from Taixu's "this-world Buddhism." The thoughts of these two are not necessary in conflict, and they were different cultural choices following in sequence. In the historical process, as Taixu's neo-traditionalist stance showed its limitations, Yinshun's attempt for a rather radical reformism thus followed. Theologically and historically, Yinshun felt a need to distance later Chinese influences from earlier Buddhism. To do this, he grounded Buddhism in a more transcendental stance, a stance of a transcendental non-duality, than most traditional Chinese Buddhism have emphasized, such as the unity of all things, or, say immanent non-duality. Here, I introduce the pair of concepts of transcendence and immanence. Although these terms do not have exactly the same meanings as in their original Christian contexts, this comparison can help us to highlight the differences between Taixu and Yinshun. The purpose of using these terms thus is a rather heuristic one.

Moving to modern Taiwan, we face a very different background for fostering the growths of Buddhism. There is prosperous development under the name of renjian Buddhism, yet it is hard to say that these Buddhist flourishings directly inherited Yinshun's instruction. The underlying reason for Buddhist growth in modern Taiwan may just be due to Taiwan's success in economic development, which may have brought up magnificent local religious ferment. Also, under Japanese influence, before 1949, Buddhism in traditional Taiwan was already quite a popular religion. Now the local Buddhist revival may look like renjian Buddhism but is not actually equal to it.

However, we are not in a position to criticize those popular Buddhist movements currently vigorously developing in Taiwan. Even though they are different, in one way or another they do reflect parts of Yinshun's ideals on renjian Buddhism. Still, these organizations also each have their own specific

dilemmas and limitations inherent in their structural arrangements.

Three cases have been discussed in the current paper—the Buddha Light Mountain, the TzuChi Association, and the Dharma Drum Mountain. For the convenience of the discussion, according to their main sociological characteristics and religious missions I then labeled the cases as “positive Buddhism” (for BLM), “public Buddhism” (for Tzu Chi) and “present Buddhism” (for DDM).

Thinking structurally, first, with regard to the BLM, I find that Xingyun’s main ideal is to infuse a progress orientation into the traditional Buddhist community. For this ideal, transformations of the clergy’s other-worldly attitude is central. And it is true that the main carriers of the BLM are those Buddhist clergy who are responsible for heading branches within the large global network. Now, as the BLM becomes deeply involved in various secular tasks, such as publishing, media, and organizational management, the sangha has been secularized, and this is mainly the result of the BLM’s earnest mission to enhance progress in Buddhism. However, now some kind of transcendental spirit behind the sangha is becoming increasingly burred.

For the DDM, with its rather limited number of clergymen and with leader Shengyan’s Zen background, the layman’s immediate everyday life experience becomes the focused target to be cultivated and transformed. This immediate bent thus makes the DDM a “present Buddhism,” one which is particularly concerned with how to transform mundane life experience into an immediate Pure Land. Practically, it seems that an immediate positive confirmation of daily life experience is much easier to achieve than a transcendental negation. For mobilizing the resources and zeal of lay participants, Shengyan has appropriated traditional Chinese Buddhist vocabularies, such as the Tien-tan’s metaphor of “one thought to embrace the 3,000 worlds.” Thus, to some extent, this is quite close to a traditional Chinese Buddhist path. The DDM’s structural base and way of mobilization reinforce a mystical rather than a transcendental tone, and so it will gradually distance itself from Yinshun’s ideas of renjian Buddhism. The core essence of Buddhist may water down gradually in quite an inconceivable way. Here, for the DDM, how to maintain a relatively transcendental standpoint for a modern popularized Buddhist group constituted mainly by laymen is a permanent internal dilemma.

TzuChi is characterized as a “public Buddhism” in the sense that within Taiwanese society Tzu Chi’s success is actually due to its successfully playing the public roles that were previously played by local religious organizations. Now, during the processes of urbanization and industrialization, on one hand the local community has been encroached gradually and on the other hand a well-developed public association to substitute for earlier local ones has been developed into a national or even global organization as the Tzu Chi’s case has shown. The base of Tzu Chi’s expansion thus comes both from the mutual cooperation bond prospering in traditional Chinese society and a kind of Buddhist self-transformed social engagement.

Structurally, it seems that Tzu Chi does embody Yinshun’s renjian Buddhism well. A stratum of the non-attached clergymen and a stratum of the socially engaged laymen integrate into a selfless, socially engaged Buddhist group. Yet these two strata, clergymen and laymen, are still structurally unrelated and each remains in an insufficient state. The self-cultivation of each stratum thus also is self-alienated and insufficient.

Finally, we may then ask, what is an ideal renjian Buddhism? Can it really be implemented? Here I cannot offer any direct answer for this question. Yet thinking sociologically, I would like to cite the words of the anthropologist and Indologist Dumont. In discussing the position of Buddhism in Indian history, Dumont (1975:163) pointed out that around the first millennium B.C., as the caste system was formulized at the same time the general figure of the Indian renouncer also began to appear.

According to Dumont (1975:163):

the renouncer, as an individual-outside-the-world, inventor or adept of a “discipline of salvation” and of its social concomitant, best called the Indian sect. These sects were religio-philosophic movements transcending the Hinduism of the man-in-the-world. They also were to be perennial in India and acted powerfully on this Hinduism, witness the two most prominent of them in retrospect, which appeared near the end of our period, Buddhism and Jainism.

We perceive in the period of something of the genesis of the renouncer. What the Upanishads and kindred texts show is essentially a process of questioning, but a questioning not of the social order, but of

the priestly representations in their ultimate bearing...the metaphysical inquiry had gone further and further, and it had delivered all the major solutions or orientations of thought that India would subsequently feed upon, develop, and refine. *The attitude of these men, let us say the renouncers, to social life, is noteworthy; it was not a revolutionary or reforming, but a relativizing attitude...The attitude of the Buddha regarding the conception of the Brahman is typical...*(Italics mine.)

All along this extraordinary process of thought, *internalization* is evident. Indeed, it might be one of the key words to describe the process. Sacrifice, the essence of the priestly function, is internalized in the renouncer's yogic exercise, which are portrayed and theorized as the internal, real sacrifice. In a further, actually a crowing, step, renunciation itself is internalized in the school of devotion or bhakti (the Bhagavad-Gita Gita): through devotion to God as a person, one can escape the fetters of the world without physically leaving it, as does the renouncer, *for by attaching oneself to one's Lord one detaches oneself from the world, leaving it, as it were, from within.* (Italics mine.)

Dumont (1975:164-164), further developing his discussion, wrote that:

I shall now comment on the above sketch in a comparative perspective, very briefly for a few abstract features, with more detail about the two more concrete points. We have found at work three processes: I mentioned earlier *relativization* as pointing to a hierarchical model as distinct from our conflictual mode. That the feature is not peculiar to India there is no doubt. The other two, *internalization* and *differentiation*, have been put forward by other participants in the Dadalus conference. That internalization has been essential to the development of modern civilization should be obvious. (Italics mine.)

I will not go into the details of these words here. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that Dumont clearly shows that if we put Buddhism in its original historical contexts we would find that even Buddhism emerged from the stance of the renouncer, and later it also was institutionalized into a sangha order. However, within whole social contexts, the importance of Buddhism reflects in the three results of relativization, internalization, and differentiation, rather than renunciation. Whereas relativization means that

some value systems will begin to transcend our daily life thus making our mundane world relativized, internalization means mundane or even ritual activities will be infused with inner meanings and will not be mere acts, and differentiation means an autonomous and separated set of value systems will emerge that can play an independent and influential role in history.

In these senses, Buddhism is part of this world yet at the same time transcends this world. The main drive for Buddhism might be simply to pursue self-salvation rather than to pursue social justice. Yet it is still always in this world, and at the same time it always constitutes a relativizing force to this world. Through these mechanisms, Buddhism thus may become a positive and active force, with deep internal meanings, to rectify any social injustice and inequality in this world.

We may say that there are no fixed formulas of how to implement Buddhism in this world, yet the intention and potential for Buddhism to transform this world is inherent. Losing this intention or potential, self-salvation may lose its meaning but only focusing on social engagement may also lose the fundamental stances and strengths that Buddhism has had. These stances and strengths, as Dumont has shown, are relativization, internalization, and differentiation.

In other words, with regard to renjian Buddhism, the purpose of this inner-worldly Buddhism is not only a social one but also a personal one. A Buddhist cultivation or salvation without a social orientation is just a partial emancipation.

These inherent qualities of relativization, internalization, and differentiation indeed cannot be routinized and stabilized, since once they have been routinized they no longer have the potentials for relativizing this world. However, at any time and any place these qualities can be embodied by religious practitioners who are aware of these inherent qualities and then implement them into real historical contexts. Any kind of stabilized structural arrangement in a Buddhist organization, in its attempt for better resource mobilization, may at the same time cause some disadvantage in implementing these potentials, thus losing the hearts of Buddhism that Yinshun emphasized. Nevertheless, we may perceive that there are inherent dilemmas, rather than unresolved limitations, for a Buddhist organization to implement the ideal of renjian Buddhism at a broader collective level.

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