Binding Sūtras and Modernity:
The Lire and Times of the Chinese
Layman Yang Wenhui (1837–1911)

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Introduction

Buddhism in late imperial China was exposed to the same set of problems which the rest of Asian Buddhist culture had to face: namely colonialism, the influx of Western science and philosophy and the Christian missions. Questions arose as to whether one should abandon or reformulate the tradition and link it to nationalism, or whether one should refer to Buddhism as a religion or as a philosophy, and whether the status of the laity and clergy should be revised. However, neither the way Western impact worked nor the pre-existing structures were the same in each country and therefore the features of a modernized Buddhism would naturally differ considerably in countries such as Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tibet, Korea, Japan or China.

The process of the transformation of Buddhism in modem China has begun to attract growing attention among Western scholars.[1] For further research we still need to inquire more about the general development and the relationships of major personalities, who influenced the direction of history within the Chinese tradition. Chinese historiography itself has largely exemplified general outlines through personal action. As for Chinese Buddhism, personal initiative and individual charisma in many respects resulted in a deviation from narrow sectarian activities and affiliation.

Modern Chinese Buddhism can be roughly divided into three periods; the last fifty years of the Imperial Period, i.e. 1860–1911, the Republican Period

[1] Studies on modem Chinese Buddhism in Western languages have been carried out by Holmes Welch, *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism, 1900–1950*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967; *The Buddhist Revival in China*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968; *Buddhism under Mao*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972. See also Chan Sin-wai, *Buddhism in Late Ch'ing Political Thought*, Hongkong: The Chinese University Press, 1985; and Gotelind Müller, *Buddhismus und Moderne: Ouyang Jingwu, Taixu und das Ritigen um ein zeitgemäßes Selbstverständnis im chinesischen Buddhismus des fruhen 20. Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1993, just to name a few.

(1912–45), and Buddhism after 1945. Each of these phases was marked by the lives of several eminent men. Best known in the West are two representatives of the second period with Taixu (1890–1947) for the clerical side, and Ouyang Jingwu (1870–1943) for the laity. As for the first period—which I shall focus on here—the central person to react to the new transformation taking place in Chinese society was the lay man Yang Wenhui.[2] This man, whom Holmes Welch has called the "Father of Modern (Chinese) Buddhism" endeavoured to translate these changes into the structure of Chinese Buddhism in order to prepare it for further development by following generations.[3]

1. Difficult Conversion and Fervent Devotion

Yang Wenhui, whose public name (*zi*) was Renshan, was bom in 1837 in Shidai, in Anhui province. Instead of preparing for the official exams, which would have opened to him the career of a civil servant or mandarin, he spent most of his time writing poetry and in self-cultivation. His father held an official position and was related to some of the most important reform politicians of the post-Opium War period in China. Thanks to these connections, of which that with Zeng Guofan (1811–72) was especially important, Yang Wenhui was later able to obtain an official position in spite of his refusal to take part in the examinations.

When the Taiping Rebellion devastated central China in the 1850s, Yang's

[2] Yang's works have been collected and published by the Nanjing Scriptural Press in *Yang Renshan jushi jizhu* 楊仁山居士遺著 [Posthumous Works of the Layman Yang Renshan], 10 vols. + 1 vol., Nanjing, 1918 and 1996 [hereafter: *Posthumous Works*]. The latest Taiwanese reprint is by Xinwenfeng, 1993. The collection contains the following texts, the *Yang Renshan jushi shilüe* 楊仁山居士事略 [Yang's "official biography"], the inscription of his memorial stele, etc. (vol. 1); Buddhist commentaries, the *Dazong di xuan wenben lun lüezhu* 大宗地玄文本論略注 (vols. 2 and 3; they can also be found in the *Dainihōn zokuzōkyo* 大日本續藏經 (hereafter: ZZ), vol. 73); the Buddhist educational manual and a short history of the Chinese Buddhist schools (vol. 4), the *Guan wuliangshou fo jing lüelun* 觀無量壽佛經略論 (vol.); Daoist and Confucian commentaries (vols. 5 and 6); a collection of speeches, essays, forewords, editorial notes, catalogue of printed books, many letters to Chinese and Japanese contemporaries, etc. (vols. 7–10), called the *Deng bu deng guan zalu* 等不等觀雜錄 (hereafter: *Various Writings*), as well as some exegetical writings about Japanese Pure Land Buddhism (vol. 11). For other texts, letters, reminiscences, etc., see the *Jinling kejingchu lishi ziliao huibian* 金陵刻經處歷史資料匯編[Historical Materials on the Nanjing Scriptural Press], 7 vols., Nanjing, 1989 (unpublished); and Welch, *Buddhist Revival*, pp. 2–10. Due to the growing interest in pre-modern Chinese Buddhism, various Chinese scholars in the People's Republic and Taiwan have dedicated articles to Yang in the last few years, the most recent of these being Yu Lingbo's book, *Yang Renshan jushi pingzhuan* [A critical biography of the layman Yang Renshan], Taibei: Xinwenfeng, 1995. See also Lou Yulie's study, "Zhongguo jindai foxue zhenxing zhe Yang Wenhui [Yang Wenhui, the Reviver of Modem Chinese Buddhism]", *Shijie zongjiao yatijiu* 1 (1986), pp. 28–32. For further bibliographic details see my dissertation, "Maieutique pour un bouddhisme de demain: Yang Wenhui (1837–1911) – Laîc, imprimeur et modemiste dans la Chine au seuil du XXe siécle", Paris, INALCO, 1995.

[3] For this first period some outstanding personalities from the clerical side, including Yinguang 印光 (1861–1940) and Xuyun 虛雲 (1848–1959) should also be mentioned.

family was forced to flee from their home, and ended up wandering from place to place for a period that lasted almost ten years. When his father died in 1863 peace reigned again in most parts of the empire. However, Yang himself fell seriously ill after the burial, and both events marked a turning point in his life. As the only son, he was forced to take office in order to support his family, and during his illness he had found consolation in Buddhist books.

Most certainly he read the *Dasheng qixin lun* [Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna], a Chinese apocryphal work, which Yang believed to be a translation of the *Śraddhotpāda śāstra* ascribed to the Indian master Aśvaghoṣa. This short treatise was, and still is, one of the most popular texts in Chinese Buddhism, and it has often served to bridge the gap between the literati officials trained in the Confucian value system and the Buddhist believer. According to Hakeda it "is a comprehensive summary of the essentials of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the product of a mind extraordinarily apt at synthesis".[4] For Yang the text represented the "essence of the *Tripiṭaka* itself", and was to serve him as a "guideline" throughout his life.[5]

His granddaughter Yang Buwei, who later achieved some fame in the United States for her *Autobiography of a Chinese Woman*, writes about her grandfather's conversion to Buddhism:

> Suddenly he realized that love, family, and country held no interest for him. From then on he began searching for sutras in all the bookshops, monasteries, and temples, and got his friends to search on his behalf. Whenever he heard that there was some important sutra tucked away somewhere, he would not rest until he had gotten hold of it. He went everywhere discussing scriptures with eminent monks.[6]

His granddaughter also tells us of another more romantic side that was related to his conversion to Buddhism. It appears that Yang had insisted on marrying a girl he had been engaged to since childhood and who became disfigured by illness during her youth. In the 1860s he fell in love with a beautiful and highly educated girl and wanted to make her his second wife. However, his first wife, who had just given birth to a son, refused to accept this new marriage. In deep depression Yang then renounced the world and turned to Buddhism.

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[4] Yoshito S. Hakeda, *The Awakening of Faith*. New York & London: Columbia University Press, 1967, p. 3.
[5] Cf. Yang, "Yu Zheng Taozhai shu 與鄭陶齋書 [Letter to Zheng Taozhai]", in: *Various Writings*, vol. 6, pp. 3a–4b.
[6] Cf. Chao (Yang) Buwei, *Autobiography of a Chinese Woman*, New York, 1947, pp. 82–88, quoted in Welch, *Buddhist Revival*, p. 3. Yang Buwei was still a young girl when her grandfather died, therefore many of her accounts of Yang Wenhui must have been merely told to her. In her various biographies of the Buddhist reformer which she published in Taiwanese popular magazines (*Zhuanji wenxue*, *Puti shu etc*.), information on Yang's life differ notably. Despite this they are still a valuable source for his family background and other details of his private life that none of the other sources provides.

Thanks to his father's connections, Yang took on a job in the section of building and engineering at the staff of the reform politicians in Nanjing. In his old age Yang recalled that during most of his life he had to reconcile both his vocation as a lay Buddhist and his work to support the family. Only as an old man could he fully dedicate himself to Buddhism:

> By nature I like solitude and I am not inclined to fame and wealth. When I was twenty-seven years of age, my father passed away. My family was poor, my mother was old and they had nothing which we could subsist on. For thirty years I have followed the path of a civil servant in China. I served in the provinces of Hubei and Jiangsu, and abroad I served in England and France. Only in my spare time could I roam in my Buddhist books, but luckily I could nevertheless gain a glimpse of enlightenment. Now I have charged my sons with my wordly affairs. I am seventy years old and my strength is fading away. I pray that all my friends and relatives may forgive me in my wish to retire from all social obligations. In the evening of my life, I wish to devote myself fully to philological work, to compilation [of the scriptures], to deepen my knowledge about the *sūtras*, and to carving and printing them.[7]

Yang never took the bodhisattva vows or followed any particular teacher. Neither did he consider becoming a monk in order to realize the Buddhist teachings. In his eyes intellectual freedom was severely limited by the monastic hierarchy and time for study and research was reduced by the manifold obligations inmates in a monastery had to fulfil. Moreover he was convinced that most of the famous masters of his times were basically corrupt and "false Buddhas" who wanted fame and money, and who did not lead people along the path of enlightment.[8] He did not deny traditional Buddhist demeanour, though. He would only eat vegetarian food, he was sexually abstinent in his later days, and followed the devotional tradition of the Pure Land (Jingtu 淨土). His main effort was concentrated on collecting, reading, collating and printing Buddhist texts and on distributing them throughout China and even abroad. As a layman (*jushi* 居士) he wanted to use the possibilities of an "independent" life outside the walls of the monastery in order to promote the Buddhist cause.

Lay Buddhism was already a salient feature of the late imperial period.

[7] Yang, *Xie ke qi* 謝客啟 [Dismissal], in: *Various Writings*, vol. 5, p. 3a. See also his, *Yu Shi Weijing shu yi* 與釋惟靜書— [First letter to the monk Weijing], in: *Various Writings*, vol. 5, p. 17a. He states that since he has "retired" and is able to devote himself entirely to his Buddhist obligations, and that he sees no difference between his life at home and a life in a (small) monastery. In fact, Yang had already retired from public service when he was fifty-two years old. This gave him more than twenty years to work for the Buddhist cause.

[8] For Yang's defence of the advantages of autonomous lay status, see *Letters to Gui Bohua 1 and 2*, in: *Various Writings*, vol. 6, pp. 7a–11a.

With Yang there appeared a new type of "lay pride", which was to become characteristic for the Republican period, and which appears to have been the necessary outcome both of the secularization of Buddhism and the various contacts with the West.[9] Especially from the second generation onwards, laymen wanted to play leading roles in the development of the religion, in teaching and research as well as in regard to social action.[10] The famous political reformer and scholar Liang Qichao (1873–1929), who was very much inclined to Buddhism, wrote that, have nothing special to say about the monks in the Qing period. … There were only some laymen worth mentioning, among whom the most recent one was Yang Wenhui. He (i.e. Yang)," Liang added, "got his inspiration from Huayan Buddhism and taught his disciples the principles of Pure Land. He knew the [Buddhist] classical texts perfectly well, and he studied them constantly. Still today many of those engaged in Buddhism were incited [to do so] by his words."[11]

2. The Printing Venture

Nanjing and the whole area of the lower Yangzi—generally referred to as Jiangnan—were traditionally centres of both printing and Buddhism. It had suffered greatly from the Taiping Rebellion, and as temples, libraries and printing houses had been destroyed, Yang had great difficulty in obtaining Buddhist texts.[12] But "because of the devastations there were no texts to be had and the words of the Buddha in the Chinese Tripiṭaka were nothing but dead letters," Yang stated desperately.[13]

As a consequence, in 1866 he resolved to dedicate himself to printing and with some colleagues who were also Buddhists he founded the Nanjing Scriptural Press (Jinling Kejingchu 金陵刻經處).[14] With this decision Yang engaged in one of the main traditional activities of a lay Buddhist—together with public charity, liberation of animals, donations for temple building and

[9] Cf. Goldfuß, "Maîeutique", in the chapter, "Laîcité entre tradition et modernité". Parallel developments can also be seen in Theravāda Buddhism. See, Richard Gombrich and Gananath Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988; Heinz Bechert, *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft in den Ländern des Theravāda-Buddhismus*, 3 vols. Frankfurt and Berlin: A. Metzner, 1966–73.

[10] Cf. Welch, *Buddhist Revival*, pp. 23–50.

[11] Liang Qichao, *Zhongguo fofa xingshuai yange shuolüe* 中國佛法興衰沿革説略 [An Outline of the Successive Transformations and Changes of Chinese Buddhism], *Foxue yanjiu shiba pian* 佛學研究十八篇 [Buddhist Research – 18 Essays], Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989, p. 14 (reprint of the original edition from 1936).

[12] It is estimated that literacy was then far more advanced in China than in Europe. Mainly during the last centuries, the Qing dynasty encouraged primary schooling throughout the country. Therefore in traditional China reading Buddhist texts was already an essential part of basic Buddhist lay piety. See Evelyn Sakakida Rawski, *Education and Popular Literacy in Ch'ing China*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1979.

[13] Cf. *Yang Renshan jushi shilüe*, in: *Posthumous Works*, vol. 1,p. 1b.

[14] All kinds of documents, including declarations about the foundation, projects, and official correspondence up to the recent activities of the Scriptural Press, are collected in vols. 6 and 7 of the *Historical Materials on the Nanjing Scriptural Press*.

the support of the *saṃgha*.

The growing importance of lay Buddhism was then for many believers a natural outcome due to the "degeneration of the Law" (*mofa* 末法),[15] and Yang considered printing and spreading the *dharma* the adequate action within this period.[16] But rather than gathering merit he wanted to preserve and update the national spiritual heritage and prepare the Chinese Buddhists for the challenge of Westernization.

> In the East and in the West reforms are instigated in every country with the exception of the field of religious affairs. There one sticks to the old without changing anything. If one revived them in the same way, one could make people understand the advantages of respect for religion in order to strive for a better world. How can just our China not be like that?[17]

The first printed edition of the *Tripiṭaka* had been ordered by the first emperor of the Song Dynasty and it was completed in AD 983. Ever since then—both in China and Korea—voluminous editions of the Buddhist Canon were prepared both under imperial auspices and with the help of private contributions from pious laymen anxious to accumulate meritorious *karma*. In addition to that, innumerable individual publications of *sūtras*, sermons, edifying tales or moral books were printed—and also written—by laymen throughout the centuries. As for the printing of the Tripiṭaka in the twentieth century, Holmes Welch is completely right when he states:

> The achievement that has most impressed some [foreign] observers was the reprinting … of the complete Tripiṭaka, as well as parts or sequels thereof. This is certainly evidence of Buddhist wealth and piety, but it does not necessarily indicate readership. The Tripiṭaka, with its millions of words, was like Dr. Eliot's five-foot shelf—decorative and inspiring. It was usually the individual *sūtras*, printed and purchased separately, that were well-thumbed.[18]

Yang had also made plans for the printing of a *Tripiṭaka*. He wanted to complete the extant Chinese editions by adding recently discovered texts to the corpus, and to compare the Chinese versions with the originals in Sanskrit. This task was never completed, however.

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[15] Cf. Ogawa Kan'ichi, "Koji bukkyō no kinseiteki hatten [Modern Developments in Lay Buddhism]", *Ryūkoku daigaku ronshū* 339 (1950), pp. 46–74.

[16] For the production of the Nanjing Scriptural Press and its associated houses until the year 1902 see, *Foxue shumu biao* 佛學書目表 [Catalogue of Buddhist Books], in: Various *Writings*, vol. 2.

[17] Cf. Yang, *Zhina fojiao zhenxing ce 1* 支那佛教振興策策一 [Plans for the Revival of Chinese Buddhism 1], in *Various Writings*, vol. 1, p. 16a.

[18] Welch, *Buddhist Revival*, p. 99.

In 1866, Zheng Xuechuan 鄭學川 from Jiangdu (1826?–81) also made a vow to dedicate himself to printing. He chose to become a monk and was known then both under the name Miaokong 妙空 or just as "the *sūtra* carving monk" (Kejingseng 刻經僧).While he operated houses of scriptural presses in Yangzhou, such as the Jiangbei Kejingchu 江北刻經處, and in five other places, he collaborated with Yang on the *Tripiṭaka* project and became (at least for some time) the clerical head of the Nanjing Press. Welch sees in Miaokong the true founder of modern Buddhist printing, but I prefer to stress the collaboration between him and Yang rather than to argue on the basis of a temporal hierarchy which is difficult to prove.

In the preface from 1911 of the Supplement to the Chinese *Tripiṭaka*, the famous Japanese buddhologist Nanjō Bunyū 南條文雄 (1849–1927) honors the work and the contribution of Yang who had furnished many Chinese texts not yet included in preceding Japanese editions. Nanjō also refers to a letter in which Yang confirms the collaboration with Miaokong on his personal *Tripiṭaka* project. However, in the course of thirteen years they had only printed about two thousand fascicules. Yang complained that they had to make a lot out of nothing as they could not raise enough donations, especially from the rich officials," among whom only very few believers could be found". After Miaokong's death in 1881 the work almost ground to a stop because the latter had mainly been in charge of collecting money.[19]

However, Yang had also committed himself to some slightly different tasks, namely publications more accessible to a broader readership and their purse. In 1910, shortly before his death, he wrote the *Baogao tongren shu* 報告同人書 [Report to My Colleagues] in which he specified the projects he had engaged in, suggesting that they should be completed after he had passed away.[20]

There was the compilation of *tiyao* 提要 or bibliographical notes on the Buddhist Canon (*Dazang* 大藏經) and its Supplement (*Xuzang* 續藏經) which followed the example of the *Siku tiyao* 四畬提要 (Bibliographical Notes on Four Magazines). With this book Yang mainly wanted to make access to Buddhism easier for beginners, because in his opinion the *sūtra*-literature was so complex that people had problems in choosing what to read.[21]

Secondly he had planned to publish a *Digest of the Buddhist Canon* (*Dazang jiyao* 大藏集要) in about three-thousand fascicules which should also help to direct the reading of believers, "[because] if one fixed what to keep and what to eliminate, the readers would not risk going astray.[22]

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[19] Cf. Nanjō Bunyū, Introduction, *Dainihon zokuzōkyō* 大日本續藏經 [Supplement to the Chinese Tripiṭaka], Tokyo, 1911, pp. 17a–18b.

[20] Cf. Yang, "Baogao tongren shu", in: *Various Writings*, vol. 5, pp. 3b–5a.

[21] *Ibid*., p. 4a.

[22] *ibid*., p. *4ab*. For the structure of the *Digest*, see *Various Writings*, vol. 3, pp. 7a–9a. Besides the texts of the different schools, there were sections for biographies, Confucian and Daoist texts. According to Yang "there is only one origin, but many ways (*fangbian* 方便) to get there". *ibid*., p. 9a. A section "spreading and protection" of the Buddhist law, since,

After his death, Yang's successors continued this work, but in spite of a call for donations in the first Chinese Buddhist magazine, the *Foxue congbao* 佛學叢報 [Journal of Buddhist Studies], in 1914, the necessary money could not be raised to finish the project. Meanwhile a *Tripiṭaka*, the *Longzang* edition 龍藏本 of the Qing, had been reprinted in Shanghai between 1909 and 1914, and more editions followed in the Republican period (in one of which, the *Bainazang*, comprising Yang's texts, were included).[23] The Nanjing Scriptural Press finally published a *Digest of the Tripiṭaka* [*Zangyao* 藏要] under the direction of Ouyang Jingwu 歐陽竟無,Yang's main disciple.

Yang's *Report* also mentions the urgent publication of his *Deng bu deng guan zalu* 等不等觀雜錄 [Various Writings], which was almost completed. This work comprised about a hundred pages, which, however, was still "lacking a general structure". As the speeches, letters, essays, etc., included here closely reflected the various Buddhist themes with which Yang was preoccupied, a urgent publication seemed desirable so as to include this material in general discussions in Buddhist circles.[24]

Towards the end of the *Report*, which could be interpreted as a kind of last will of the old editor, Yang expresses his hope that a *Tripiṭaka* would one day be published by his printing press. But he also warns his successors to keep up the high standard of the production of texts and rather not to associate with other printing houses. This might be less demanding (probably for commercial reasons), but errors in the collation, compilation and printing of the material could mislead the readers in their beliefs.[25]

However, that which gave "immortal fame" to Yang's printing venture was his unquenchable desire to acquire old Buddhist texts which had been lost in the course of history, and to offer them again to the world. Here his collaboration with Nanjō Bunyū was of vital importance. Yang not only sent books to the Japanese buddhologist, but in the course of time also received from Nanjō more than two hundred major works of Chinese Buddhism which had disappeared from the continent but which had been preserved in Japan. Many

according to Yang, "it is the task of the monks to eliminate what is bad and to show what is right", cf. *ibid*., p. 8b. Yang insisted that such a book was especially meant for "beginners". All in all Yang drafted about a thousand fascicules.

[23] This canon was also called *Yang Wenhui zang* 楊文會藏 (Yang Wenhui's Tripiṭaka). Cf. Yu, *Yang Renshati jushi pingzhuan* pp. 301–2.

[24] Yang, *Baogao tongren shu*, in: *Various Writings*, vol. 5, p. 4b.

[25] In addition to the works mentioned in the *Report*, the editor of Yang's *Posthumous Works* mentions other, more "grand" projects. Among these were the *Xianshoufa ji* 賢首法集 [Collection of the Worthy and Primary Teaching], a collection of Huayan texts (100 volumes); the *Huanyan zhushi jiyao* 華嚴著述集要 [Essential Collection of All the Transmitted (texts) of the Huayan (School)], a collection of twenty-nine important commentaries written by masters of that school; two series of texts from the Pure Land tradition; a compilation of commentaries and texts relating to the *Dasheng qixin lun*, etc. Cf. *Posthumous Works*, vol. 1, pp. 1b–2a. See also *Various Writings*, vol. 3. For the prefaces and postfaces to the various *sūtras* and other texts printed in Nanjing, cf. the *Catalogue*, in: *Various Writings*, vol. 2.

of these texts came from the Pure Land tradition, including the works of the patriarchs Tanluan 曇鸞(476–542), Daochuo 道掉 (562–645) and Shandao 善導 (613–81).[26] Other works were about Buddhist logic including texts belonging to the Weishi/Faxiang school 唯識 / 法相宗 .Mainly with the publication of Kuiji's 窺基 (632–82) work, the *Chengwei shilun shuji* 成唯識論述記 [Record of the Transmission of the *Cheng weishi lun*],[27] in twenty fascicules, Yang effectively stimulated the growing Buddhist penchant of his time for intellectual speculation.[28] This very philosophic school, which had been more or less abandoned for centuries, gained from then on an unprecedented popularity with the intelligentsia and at the same time made Yang a well-known personality.[29] The high theoretical level and the subtle analysis of consciousness found in these works appealed to the young reform-minded intellectuals who wanted to re-vitalize the fossilized tradition.

They also saw in it an answer to the challenge of Westernization, as an "indigenous ideology" which could open up new areas for development.[30] With the publication of another of Kuiji's texts, the *Yinming ruzheng lilun shu* 因明入正理論疏 [Commentary to the Nāyapraveśa śāstra][31] in eight fascicules, lost since the Song dynasty, Yang also stimulated the "*yinming* fashion" of Indian logic which must certainly be seen as an "Asian answer" to the introduction of Western logic.[32]

According to various sources, during Yang's lifetime the Nanjing Scriptural Press and its associated houses in Yangzhou, Suzhou, etc., distributed more

[26] Cf. *Various Writings*, vol. 3, p. 1b. Because of the financial difficulties Yang's Scriptural Press always had to face, he could not print all the books he had been sent. For the list of the published texts, see the *Catalogue*, in: *Various Writings*, vol. 2, and Yang's editorials notes, postscripts, etc., *ibid*., vols. 3, 7 and 8.

[27] *T*. 1830.43.

[28] The Weishi/Faxiang, which has always been considered the most "philosophic" of all the Chinese Buddhist schools, arose in the mid-7th century with Xuanzang's *Cheng weishi lun* [The Treatise on the Attainment of Mind-Only], *T*. 1585.30. His disciple and successor Kuiji commented on it with his *Chengweishi lun shuji*. Yang was very proud to return this "classic" to the Chinese academic world thanks to the help of Nanjō Bunyū. Cf. Yang's foreword in *Various Writings*, vol. 3, pp. 16b–17a.

[29] Cf. the *Catalogue*, in: *Various Writings*, vol. *2*, pp. 6a–7b. In the Faxiang section are the fundamental texts of (and for) this school already given, including the *Cheng weishi lun* 成唯識論, *T*. 1585.31, in 10 fascicules; the *Cheng weishi lun shuji*, *T*. 1830.43; the voluminous *Yogācārabhūmi śāstra*, *T*. 1579.30, in 100 fascicules; the *Sandhinirmocana sūtra*, T. 676.16; and the *Lengjie jing* 楞嚴經 [*Śūraṅgama sūtra*], *T*. 945.19, etc.

[30] For details cf., Chan, *Buddhism in Late Ch'ing Political Thought,* pp. 29–49.

[31] *T*. 1840.44.

[32] The study of *yinming* florished especially in the Republican period. On the basis of this research the Buddhists argued for the timelesness of Buddhist thought and doctrine. In 1922, for example, Taixu published the "first independent modern work" in Chinese on Indian logic. Cf. Uwe Frankenhauser, "Logik und Selbstverständnis in China zu Begirm des 20. Jahrhunderts", in *Chinesisches Selbstverständnis und kulturelle Identität* – "*Wenhua Zhongguo*", (Collected Papers of the 6th annual meeting 1995 of the German Association for Chinese Studies), ed. by Christiane Hammer and Bernhard Führer. Dortmund: Projekt Verlag, 1996, pp. 69–80.

than one million Buddhist texts. The *Catalogue* gives one hundred and thirteen titles in about 1910 fascicules for the year 1902 alone. Yu Lingbo 于凌波 estimates that all in all the number of fascicules printed amounted to approximately two thousand, and in his *History of Chinese Buddhism* Kenneth Ch'en, who unfortunately is more than brief about the whole question of contemporary Buddhism, adds that "more than anyone else Yang was responsible for the revival of Buddhist literature through his publication endeavours".[33] Finally the *Jinling kejingchu mulu* 金陵刻經處目錄 [Catalogue of the Scriptural Press] published during the Republican period contains more than 530 titles, which represented an essential part of the Buddhist texts published at that time.

Throughout the first sixty years of publication by the Press, the main emphasis was placed on books from the Pure Land tradition for its practical and devotional aspects, and on the Weishi/Faxiang and Huayan traditions for their theoretical and philosophic insights. A special section was reserved for the *Awakening of Faith* and its commentaries. They were followed by the major works of esoteric Buddhism and Chan. Some of the main *sūtras* were printed in bilingual editions with the Sanskrit text in transcription. The Press also published many historical, biographical and apologetic works on Chinese Buddhism, as well as some books pertaining to the Confucian and Daoist persuasions.

It is interesting to see that much of the commentarial literature was not chosen from the repertoire of classical Chinese Buddhist tradition, i.e. works written during the Nanbei Zhao, the Tang and Song dynasties, but were mainly by authors—both monks and laymen—from the two latest dynasties.[34]

In spite of the fact that the Buddhism of the Ming and Qing has often been referred to as "decadent", modem Chinese Buddhists were more aware of these works and felt a closer affinity with them in terms of approach and formulation. For some reason modern researchers—perhaps with the exception of Japanese scholarship—have only become interested in these later periods of Chinese Buddhism recently, and have begun to realize their importance. This includes the major developments in the sinicization and popularization of Buddhism, the impact of Buddhism on vernacular literature during the Ming and Qing, the move towards lay Buddhism, the rise of public charity, the interaction with esoteric Buddhism 密教,and the discourse with

[33] Cf. Kenneth Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964, p. 449. See *Catalogue*, in *Various Writings*, vol. 2; and Yu, *Yang Renshan jushi pingzhuan*, 197–8, who also speaks of the distribution of one hundred thousand Buddhist images. See also Jiang Weiqiao, *Zhongguo fojiaoshi* [The History of Chinese Buddhism]. Shanghai: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1935.

[34] Yang admits in many letters that two of his favorite Buddhist authors, who greatly influenced his basic readings in Buddhism, were Zhuhong 株宏 (1535–1615) and Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清 (1546–1623) both from the Ming. Cf. *Yu mou jun shu* 與某君書 [Letter to a Certain Gentleman], in: *Various Writings*, vol. 6, p. 28a.

Christianity. All these issues still need to be studied further.[35]

3. Journeys to the West and to the East

Let us return to our account of Yang Wenhui. As part of his interest in modernization and the West he went to Europe twice, from 1878 to 1881 and from 1886 to 1889.[36]

At that time all kinds of knowledge about the West were already being circulated in China, but in contrast to the situation in Meiji Japan only few Chinese had gone abroad to familarize themselves directly with the culture of the colonial powers. Yang, who was asked to join the recently opened foreign mission in London, had such a rare opportunity, and he spent his time inquiring about the political, economical, technical and educational conditions in Europe.[37] In this way he also gained knowledge of the recent trends and achievements in Oriental studies in the West.

It is also here that Yang first made his personal acquaintance with Nanjō Bunyū, who worked and studied with Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900) at Oxford, and who was then mainly concerned with the project of the *Sacred Books of the East*. Yang's stays in Paris were also dedicated in part to buddhological scholarship, and it is highly likely that was introduced to some French scholars like Burnouf or Julien.

Yang was certainly struck by the European interest in Eastern religions and the efficiency of Western philological and historical critical research in this non-Buddhist part of the world. For centuries the need for knowledge of Sanskrit and Pāli, and philological questions about the *sūtras* had been ignored by Chinese Buddhists.[38] Yang understood the necessity for the

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[35] Several studies on this topic, all carried out in English language, are e. g. Timothy Brook, *Praying for Power: Buddhism and the Formation of Gentry Society in Late-Ming China*, Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1993; Yü Chün-fang, *The Renewal of Buddhism in China: Chu-hung and the Late Ming Synthesis*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1981; and Hsü Sung-peng, *A Buddhist Leader in Ming China: The Life and Thought of Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing*, University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979.

[36] Documents on this period can be found in the diaries of the Chinese diplomates, such as Zeng Jize or Guo Songdao; in the recollections of Nanjō Bunyū; in the life-long correspondence between Yang and Nanjō in: *Various Writings*, vol. 7 and 8, as well as in some other letters and reminiscences of Yang conserved both in his *Posthumous Works* and in the *Historical Materials*.

[37] Yang was not the only Buddhist to travel around outside his motherland. Especially monks made "fund-raising tours" mainly among the communities of Overseas Chinese in East Asia. On the same occasion they also wanted "to spread the *dharma* and to visit the holy places of Buddhism. One of the most inveterate travellers of the past century was Hsü-yun [Xuyun]". Welch, *Buddhist Revival*, p. 191.

[38] The study of Sanskrit soon became an important issue in the Buddhist and academic circles. Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (Binglin 炳麟, 1868–1936) had a rather controversial exchange of letters with Yang on that subject. Cf. Yang, *Various Writings*, vol. 8, pp. 25b–27b. See also Rao Zongyi, "Tan Zhang Taiyan dui Indu de xiangwang (Concerning Zhang Taiyan's Arguments against Turning towards Sanskrit)", *Mingbao yuekan* 1 (1990), pp. 113–14; and Robert H. van Gulik, *Siddham: An Essay on the History of Sanskrit Studies in China and*

reintroduction of these disciplines and more intense scholarly research in his motherland. His correspondence with Nanjō Bunyū[39] also gives reason to believe that he, who had always been critical of an official career, had simply taken the opportunity to join the foreign mission with the sole purpose of becoming introduced to Western methods of research.[40] After his return he committed the Scriptural Press to the task of producing and distributing philologically flawless editions. Western scholars like de Groot went to Nanjing especially to purchase the high-quality texts they needed for study and translation.[41]

While still in Europe, Yang asked Nanjō for the Sankrit originals with transcription and translation (mainly of the Amitābha *sūtras*) with the intention of printing them. He also looked in vain for the Sanskrit original of the *Awakening of Faith*, but found no positive answer.[42]

Yang was also struck by the strong "Buddhist fashion" in Europe and the variety of reflection on Eastern systems of thought.[43] As early as 1878, according to some of his letters, he believed the Europeans to be well disposed to receive the *dharma*,[44] and he even called Paris the "capital of Buddhism".[45] However, he also realized that Chinese Buddhism first had to undergo a thorough reform within the general context of a general modernization of Chinese society in order to bring China up to the same level as that of the Western countries.

> Reforms in the West mainly aim at two targets: expansion of trade and the promotion of religion. … In our country we have begun to have people to promote trade little by little, but do not do for religion. …
>
> The Buddhist Association has more than 100,000 members, neverthe-

Japan, Nagpur: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1956.

[39] The two men exchanged letters for the rest of their lives, i.e. between 1879–1909. Cf. Yang, *Various Writings*, vols. 7 and 8.

[40] Cf. "Letter to Kasahara Kenjō and Nanjō Bunyū", *Various Writings*, vol. 7, p. 2ab.

[41] E.g. J. J. M. de Groot, *Le code du Mahāyāna en Chine: son influence sur la vie monacale et sur le monde laîque*, Amsterdam: Johannes Müller, 1893, p. 13.

[42] The *Awakening of Faith* remained Yang's uncontested favourite of all the Buddhist texts. He published it several times and therefore was eager to acquire the Sanskrit version. He never doubted its authenticity and recommended its study repeatedly in his letters. Cf. Yang, *Various Writings*, vol. 6.

[43] Cf. Henri de Lubac, *La rencontre du Bouddhisme et de l'Occident*, Paris: Aubier, 1952; and Raymond Schwab, *La renaissance orientale*, Paris: Payot, 1950.

[44] Cf. "Letter to Kasahara Kenjū and Nanjō Bunyū", p. 2a. Yang was the first Chinese to believe in a "world Buddhism", in fact long before taixu and even before he gained knowledge of similar tendencies in Theravāda Buddhism. As for Paris, "capital of Buddhism", one could almost ask if Yang did not have after all some prophetic abilities in view of the huge number of Buddhist believers (more than two million) in France today. Cf. Frédéric Lenoir, "La vague bouddhiste. De plus en plus de Français sont séduits par la modernité du bouddhisme, ses valeurs et son étique", *L'Express*, n°2364 (1996), pp. 48–54 (and some other articles on the same subject, *ibid*., pp. 57–62).

[45] Cf. *Various Writings*, vol. 8, p. 19a.

> less their knowledge of Buddhism is still limited, and as far as the most subtle and mysterious aspects of the teaching are concerned, they still do not understand them. Therefore even the most eminent and intelligent scholars cannot grasp the faith yet. However, we have the intention of reviving the real teaching of Śākyamuni. This is why we have to [go back to our roots] and start from India and then spread the faith to the whole world. China is an old and highly respected civilization and shall not be despised as a country of savages. Let us engage in this large enterprise! Without sufficient funding we cannot succeed and we therefore need the financial support of the high-ranking officials. But after several years we will obtain results: not only will Buddhism stand up to all the Western religions, but in the long run it will surpass them and become the most important religion in the world. Such success would be wonderful, would it not?[46]

After his second return to China in 1889 Yang finally abandoned his public obligations and dedicated himself exclusively to Buddhism under the headings of publication, education, and the propagation of Buddhism inside China and abroad.

In 1893 Dharmapāla (1864–1933), the well known Buddhist reformer of Sri Lanka, toured East Asia on behalf of the Mahā-Bodhi Society. He had just participated in the Parliament of Religions in Chicago[47] and now came to China to secure support for the revival of Buddhism in India. After his arrival in Shanghai, Otto Franke served as interpreter, Joseph Edkins and Timothy Richards arranged the meetings with Chinese Buddhists. Yang was eager to contact Dharmapāla in order to discuss the matter of Buddhist reform. In a speech addressed to the monks in the Longhua Temple 龍華寺 in Shanghai in order to obtain Buddhist missionaries for India, Dharmapāla said:

> I, Dharmapāla, Representative of the Southern Buddhists, and General Secretary of the Maha-Bodhi-Society, in their name greet you, Beloved Brothers.
>
> You know that the birthplace of the religion of the Tathāgata Śākaya Muni is India, and from thence Buddhism spread to the out-lying countries. … 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 ask their support and sympathy for the rehabilitation of this religion. India gave you her religion and now I appeal to you to

[46] Cf. Yang, "Zhina fojiao zhenxing ce 2 (Plans for reviving Chinese Buddhism *2*)", *Various Writings*, vol. 1, p. 17ab.
[47] On the Parliament, cf, *The World's Parliament of Religions*, 2 vols., ed. by John Henri Barrows. Chicago: Parliament Press, 1893. See also Mary Barrows and John Henri Barrows, *A Memoir*. Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1904; and in a recent edition, *The Dawn of Religious Pluralism: Voices from the World's Parliament of Religion, 1893, ed. by Richard Hughes Seager*. La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1993.

help her in her hour of need….

To restore these sacred sites, to station Bhikchus 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 Indian languages, is our object, and to carry out this great scheme, we have formed a great Buddhist Society, called the Mahā-Bodhi-Society, on an international basis.[48]

The monks did not respond positively to his demand and Dharmapāla had to leave China without the hoped for success. He kept in contact with Yang even if he found him reluctant, too, mainly because of the political implications of sending such a Buddhist delegation to India and the problem of communication. None of the Chinese monks could speak any foreign language. Yang suggested that Indians should come to China individually and translate back into Sanskrit those vital texts of the Canon which were preserved only in Chinese.

4. Education and the New Buddhism

From that moment onwards Yang modified his position, especially since he became increasingly interested in the question of education,[49] and in 1908 he opened at the Scriptural Press a school for Buddhist students, the Qihuan Jingshe 抵桓精舍 or Jetavana Hermitage.[50] Originally Yang had planned to open a school for monks.[51] Then, in 1906, he published the *Fojiao chuxue* 佛教初學課本[Manual for Basic Buddhist Instruction], which could be used both at the school and for public distribution.[52]

[48] Otto Franke, "Eine neue Buddhistische Propaganda", *T'oung Pao* V (1894), pp. 301–3.

[49] Around the turn of the century more and more students came to see him and ask for instruction. Usually he put them up in his house, but eventually realized that it would be better to have a special building constructed for this purpose. He was again too short of money to do so, but continued to cherish the idea of a school of his own. Cf. "Letter to Li Xiaoyun", *Various Writings*, vol. 5, pp. 28b–29a.

[50] Cf. Yang, "Qihuan jingshe kaixue ji 祇洹舍開學記 [Opening discourse of the Jetavana Hermitage]", *Various Writings*, vol. 1, pp. 22b–23a. The classes were open to both lay people and monks.

[51] For some time Yang was desperately looking for qualified teachers, but was finally forced to abandon his plans for lack of money. Cf. *Various Writings*, vol. 1, pp. 17b–22a. Critics of Buddhism mainly blamed the monks for their lack of education and their scant knowledge of Buddhist texts. During the widespread reform of Chinese society after the Opium Wars, general education was considered a *conditio sine qua non* of a successful transformation and modernization of the country. The growing reproach of the monks as being "uncultured parasites on society" therefore put the very existence of the monkhood and Buddhism in danger. As a consequence the issue of education became one of the most important questions in the Buddhist modernization movement. See also Welch, *Buddhist Revival*, pp. 703–120.

[52] The publication of Buddhist "catechisms" or "bibles" was also very fashionable in other Asian countries. After Olcott's *Buddhist Catechism*, published in 1881 in Sri Lanka, there followed for example in Japan the *Bukkyō seiten* by Nanjō Bunyū and Maeda Eun (Tokyo, 1905), and the *Shinshū dai seiten* by Andō Masazumi (Tokyo 1916). Yang's

At that time the Chinese government called for the confiscation of Buddhist temples and their conversion into public schools.[53] In parallel, the Japanese Shinshū 真宗 [Reformed Amida School] had launched a mission on the Chinese continent and opened temples and Japanese schools analogous the other colonial powers, a phenomenon Yang deeply resented.

> Just like the Protestants and the Catholics who open schools and engage in education [in China], today Japanese temples spread [their] teaching. They open schools on general Japanese education and everywhere attract the people to follow them. The newly created East Asian Buddhist Association is now making contact with China and Korea: its aim is to make Buddhism flourish in the same way as the Westerners propagate their religions. Our country's Buddhism has been declining for a long time already. If we do not re-organize it in time, not only will we be mocked by our neighbours, but our country's political power might be seized, I am afraid.[54]

Textbook was preceded by a very similar manual written by the famous monk Yinguang. Both books were inspired by a booklet published in 1621 by the monk Guangzhen 光真, Following the very popular scheme of the *San zi jing* 三字經 [Three Character Classic)] used in traditional China both as the first approach to reading and to teach Confucian ethics to children, Chuiwan Laoren 吹萬老人 published a *Shijiao san zi jing* 釋教三字經 [Buddhist Classic in Three Characters] for the same purpose. Yinguang's and Yang's versions were in effect greatly enlarged versions of this text. Yang published a version with extensive commentaries, taking into account the recent progress made both in Buddhist historiography and in philology, cf. *Posthumous Works*, vol. pp. 1a–59b and various independent editions. Today this little handbook is still used for basic Buddhist instruction. Yang also published a collection of texts in the classical language for Buddhist instruction on the secondary level, the *Fojiao zhengxue guwen keben* 佛教正學古文課本 [The Buddhist Textbook for the Correct Study of Classical Texts] in 4 volumes.

[53] Cf. Welch, *Buddhist Revival*, pp. 10-15 and pp. 103–20. Yang, "Zhina fojiao zhenxing ce yi 支那佛教振興策一 (Plans for reviving Chinese Buddhism 1)", *Various Writings*, vol. 1, p. 16a: "Today hundreds of things are renewed. Everyone wants to take away the property of the monasteries to finance public education so as to provide the people with the things they need. This will not work out very well, I am afraid, and one had better leave religious property in the hands of the monasteries so that they can revive their proper teaching and that both [systems] co-operate in the reform process."

[54] Cf. *ibid*., p. 16ab. Even if Yang himself was a fervent devotee of Pure Land Buddhism and since the 1870s had had direct contacts with Japanese Amida adherents like Nanjū Bunyū and with their monastery in Shanghai (already established in 1876), Yang would not tolerate the Shinshū "mission" activities which were directly linked to the political interests of Japan in colonial China. Cf. Otto Franke, "Japans asiatische Bestrebungen", *Ostasiatische Neubildungen*, 1911, pp. 136–57 (first published in *Deutsche Rundschau*, August 1903), and "Die Propaganda des japanischen Buddhismus in China", *ibid*., pp. 158–65 (first published in *Kölnische Zeitung*, 2. 6. 1905). On the Buddhist developments in Japan see also James Edward Ketelaar, *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan: Buddhism and its Persecution*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990. On the theoretical side, Yang was fiercely opposed to the importance being given by the Shinshū to the issue of "other-power" [*tali*/*tariki* 他力—salvation by Amitābha/Amida—following himself the interpretation of an interaction between "self-power" [*zili*/*jiriki* 自力] and "other-power".

If the government, instead of confiscating the monasteries' property, would encourage religious schooling, Yang concludes, secular and religious forces could co-operate in the reform process. Therefore he finally decided to open his own Buddhist school and to link it with "old mission projects" and the idea of an "international Buddhism" that he shared with Dharmapāla.

Fortunately the statutes of the school have been preserved in a German translation.[55] They stipulate that the students—laymen and monks should first take three years of basic instruction in Buddhism, Chinese and English in Nanjing. Yang did not ask for governmental authorization, so as to be able to teach and work without any constraints. He only asked for Nanjō Bunyū's advice and collaboration both for this stage and the following step, in which he foresaw that the students should go to Japan and then to India for advanced studies and in order to learn Sanskrit. They would then participate in the revival of Buddhism in India. Ultimately they were to go to the West in order to convert Westerners to the Buddhist teaching.

Even if Yang had to give up this experiment after only one year—again for financial reasons—he had both set standards for Buddhist education and although he did not realize it, at the very least stimulated a new generation of Buddhist scholars and activists, who were to become the leading figures in the modernization movement in Republican China. At this time several other educational projects were set up, mainly to react to the anti-Buddhist policy of the government. However Yang's school seems to have been the most influential of these by far.[56] It also was the first time in Chinese history that monks had come to study under a layman.

5. Propaganda, Mission and Misunderstandings

Before engaging in education, Yang was already busy with some other activities concerning the promotion of Buddhism. In 1894 together with the well-known missionary Timothy Richard he translated the *Awakening of Faith* into English. The translation is known for being too Christian in both approach and choice of phrasing. In his preface Richard explained that he considered the *Awakening of Faith* to be a Christian book, "an Asiatic form of the same Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in Buddhistic nomenclature."[57] Yang was at first very enthusiastic about having the book translated. In his opinion it was the most important work for understanding Buddhism, as to his mind it was a summary of all its important teachings.[58] He had therefore given it to Richard several years prior to the start of the

[55] Otto Franke, "Ein buddhistischer Reformversuch in China", *T'oung Pao* 2 (1909), pp. 567–602.

[56] Other schools for monks [*suengxuetang* 僧學堂] were opened, e.g., in the Kaifu Temple 開福寺 in Changsha and in the Tianning Temple 天寧寺 in Yangzhou.

[57] *The Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna Doctrine – the New Buddhism*, Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1907, p. VI.

[58] E.g. Yang, "Letter to Zheng Taozhai", in: *Various Writings*, vol. 6, p. 4ab.

translation project, and had published several editions of the book.

When he finally found out how Richard had actually translated the text, Yang became very upset. It was because his knowledge of English was simply too limited for him that he had been unable to supervise the work in progress. The Christian tone of the translation was in stark contrast to Yang's deep-felt conviction, which was to strengthen Asian-Buddhist culture and to take the *dharma* to the West. For this reason he refused categorically ever again to participate in any translation of a Buddhist text together with Westerners.[59] Basically Yang would not acknowledge the idea then prevalent in the West—spread from the Theosophical Society to many European universities—which sought to establish a "universal, rational and authentic world religion."[60] Nonetheless, the enthusiasm for the very "intellectual" Weishi School shows that Chinese Buddhism did not remain untouched by this general tendency, and especially the late Qing intellectuals sought to reinforce the rational aspect of its teachings.[61]

In many Western publications as well as at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, the tendency to bring back the other major religious systems (and their founders) to basic Christian values was predominant. Therefore one also had to search for the original and authentic elements in Buddhism that would lead to that universalization, and free it from the later distortions of the Mahāyāna. In 1895 Max Müller wrote to Dharmapāla on this subject as follows:

> You should endeavour to do for Buddhism what the more enlightened students of Christianity have long been doing in the different countries of Europe: you should free your religion from its latter excrescences and bring it back to its earliest, simplest, and purest form as taught by Buddha and his immediate disciples. If that is done you will be surprised to see how little difference there is in essentials between the great religions of the world.[62]

[59] Yang, "Letter to Nanjū Bunyū", no. 13, in: *Various Writings*, vol. 7, p. 23a.

[60] For the problem of acculturation of Buddhism in the West, cf. Lubac, Rencontre, and more recently Thomas A. Tweed, *The American Encounter with Buddhism 1844–1912*, in: *Victorian Culture and the Limits of Dissent*, Bloomington, 1992. See also Martin Baumann, *Deutsche Buddhisten: Geschichte und Gemeinschaften*, Marburg: Diagonal Verlag, 1993.

[61] In spite of this rationalist tendency, a strong inclination for pseudo-scientific experiences can be seen in these circles. It is possible that the traditional divination rituals—like spirit-writing—which were extremely popular with the Qing literates, were somehow substituted by experiences with electricity, magnetism, by ether theories and the very fashionable spiritist meetings. See for this aspect the chapter "Les années 1890 et l'enthousiasme bouddhique: le scientisme et l'enseignement Weishi/Faxiang", in my dissertation. For the traditional Qing practice, cf. Richard J. Smith, "Divination in Ch'ing Dynasty China", in: *Cosmology, Ontology, and Human Efficacy: Essays in Chinese Thought*, ed. Richard J. Smith and S.W.Y. Kwok, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, p. 154.

[62] Friedrich Max Müller, *The Life and Letters of the Right Honorable Friedrich Max Müller, 2* vols., London: Longman's, Green, & Co., 1902, pp. 350–1.

Ever since the Jesuits had initiated their conversion activcities in East Asia, missionaries up to modern times had either severely attacked Chinese Buddhism on the basis of Christianity, or else pursued a policy of "reconciliation". Richard's translation should be seen as standing squarely in this tradition. Yang, in spite of his criticism, also followed this development to a certain extent. As far as the philological aspect was concerned he tried to modijfy the distorted Chinese versions of the classical *sūtras* (and their interpretations). He also hoped to get hold of the Sanskrit version of the *Awakening of Faith*, in order to prove its claim for truth and authenticity. At the same time he insisted on the "Chinese tradition" of Buddhism which he wished to strengthen for the sake of his own country.

Around the turn of the century, Yang participated in numerous conferences and associations dealing with Buddhist research, its modernization and a general social reform. He felt that it was essential that China should catch up with the technological and scientific progress of the West, and that Buddhists should follow a double path in recovering their identity so as to become responsive to the modern world with its social, political, and economic problems.[63]

Some of the young political reformers like Tan Sitong 譚嗣同 (1865–1898), Liang Qichao 梁啟超 and Xia Zengyou 夏曾佑 (1863–1924) could be found in the circle around Yang. They were not necessarily believers, but for utilitarian reasons took on some Buddhist ideas like the bodhisattva ideal, equality, methods of rational analysis of reality and consciousness offered by the Weishi/Faxiang school, as well as openness to scientific reflection and its philosophical structures, leading at the same time to atheism and to a popular religion they could use to move the people.[64] They "tried" Buddhism while as the same time engaging in various Western systems of thought without sticking to it for any length of time. However, none of them proved to be the panacea which could help transform China quickly into a modern society, and the late Qing reformers, including the "buddhophile" intellectuals, tended to become quite frustrated with the inefficiency of their political and social involvement. The Buddhist fashion in the intellectual circles therefore declined gradually in the first half of the twentieth century.

In contrast to them, the believers—laymen and monks—continued to commit themselves fully to the traditionalist Buddhist cause, without any notable change.[65] Yang refused to take any other political (or social) action

[63] Cf. Yang, *Various Writings*, vol. 1.

[64] Cf. Chan Sinwai, "Buddhism and the Late Ch'ing Intellectuals", *The Journal of the Institute of Chinese Studies of The Chinese University of Hong Kong* Vol. XVI (1985), pp. 97–109. See also Paul A. Cohen, *Between Tradition and Modernity: Wang T'ao and Reforms in Late Ch'ing China*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975.

[65] He still was aware of the enormous task and the little he could do in one lifetime to enhance the situation of Buddhism in his country. Cf. Yang's "Banruoboluomiduo hui 4 般若波羅密多會四 (Association of the Prajñāpāramitā 4)", *Various Writings*, vol. 1, p. 26b.

than that directly linked to his Scriptural Press, or to the questions of education, mission and forms of Buddhist organization that would lead to the revival of the teaching of Śākyamuni.

This path was generally followed by most of the leading Buddhists in the Republican period. Beyond their undisputed contribution to the development of Buddhism in the twentieth century, the reformers did not really represent the majority of the Chinese Buddhist believers. They tried to reformulate Buddhist doctrine and structure so as to adapt them to what they thought to be the demands of a modem society. Whereas Yang was still very much indebted to the Ming and Qing notion of Buddhist piety, men like Taixu or Ouyang also focused on the rational aspects of Buddhism. Ouyang, in his capacity as an outstanding scholar, was a fervent defender of lay Buddhism, and he harshly criticized the clergy by denouncing their excessive rituals and many elements of Buddhist practice as superstition (*mixin* 迷信). He insisted that Buddhism be given a special status as neither a religion nor a philosophy.[66] As for Taixu, he brought about the concept of *rensheng fojiao* 人生佛教, i.e. "Buddhism in the life of man", which aimed at a full integration in the process of transforming society. In both tendencies the problem of continuity remained largely unsolved because a good part of the out-moded tradition would first have to be abolished before new elements could be brought in. From this reshaping or rather re-invention of the tradition there immediately arose the question of traditional Buddhist identity, which would be hard to maintain under these circumstances. It is not surprising that the traditionalists did not share many of these ideas, but instead tended to follow more traditional masters like Xuyun 虛雲 (1848–1959). Nevertheless the tendency towards a stronger participation of lay-Buddhists and the growing concern for all kinds of social affairs could not be reversed.[67]

Binding Sūtras and Modernity

In 1901 Yang drew up a contract in which he divided all the family belongings between his sons and the Scriptural Press. Yang stipulated that the estate the press occupied, including the buildings and all its belongings such as the woodblocks and donations, should all become common property. "The enterprise founded by me more than thirty years ago shall eternally be a public place for the production and distribution of Buddhist books" he wrote.[68] The family could reside there for ten more years and would then have to move out or pay a rent to the press. Probably because of these few

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[66] Cf. Müller, *Buddhismus und Moderne*, pp. 162–75.

[67] Cf. my paper at the 7th annual meeting of the German Association for Chinese Studies (DVCS) in Berlin (26–27 October 1996), "Der moderne chinesische Buddhismus zwischen Erneuerung und Neus, chaffung seiner Tradition", which is going to be published in the Collected Papers 1997 by Christiane Hammer and Bernhard Führer (Dortmund: Projekt Verlag).

[68] Yang, "Yangshi fenjia biju 楊氏分家筆具 [Contract for the partition of the property of the Yang family)", in: *Posthumous Works*, vol. 1, p. 1b

sentences the Nanjing Scriptural Press has been able to continue its work until today.

Yang died in 1911, shortly before the fall of the Qing dynasty; however, the work at the Scriptural Press was continued by his disciples. Ouyang Jingwu finallly assumed overall responsibility. In 1914 he opened a research department at the Scriptural Press, and four years later he founded the Institute for Buddhist Studies (Neixueyuan 內學院), one of the centres of modern Chinese Buddhism.[69]

The activity of the Scriptural Press was brought to a halt in 1937 with the Japanese occupation of Nanjing. It opened its doors again in 1952. At that time a committee for its protection, the Jinling Kejingchu Huchi Weiyuanhui 金陵刻經處護持委員會 was founded by twenty-five well-known personalities of the Buddhist world, some with excellent connections to (or a membership card of) the Communist party. The press possessed by then some 47,000 woodblocks. Several scriptural presses had been destroyed during the war, and after the Communist victory in 1949 most of the other Buddhist publishers, both lay and monastic, were closed down during the 1950s and their woodblocks were concentrated in Nanjing. Since the Nanjing Press was already public property, did the state perhaps see some moral obligation in keeping and maintaining it? Hence by 1965 the Scriptural Press held more than 150,000 woodblocks. During the Cultural Revolution, its function was again interrupted and parts of the buildings and woodblocks were burned, however in 1973 Zhou Enlai provided the press with the special protection of the state and ordered its reconstruction.[70]

Today the Scriptural Press has resumed its activities at its original location at the corner of Huaihai Street and Yanling Lane in the center of Nanjing. It stores an exceptional collection of woodblocks for both texts and religious images. The production of Buddhist scriptures has now started again even if a more contemporary scholarly approach for selection and lay-out could be desired. The books are still printed in the traditional fashion with woodblocks in vertical columns on double leaves with thread-stitched binding. They are sold throughout China—mainly in the closed circles of Buddhist temples, libraries and schools—as well as abroad.

The Press, which is actually one of the most important Buddhist printing houses in the country today, still functions under the high protection of the Chinese Buddhist Association (Zhongguo fojiao xiehui 中國佛教協會). Between 1981 and 1987 it printed and sold more than two hundred different

[69] Other Buddhist institutions where opened, for example by Taixu in Wuchang and in Fujian province, and by Han Qingjing 翰清靜 (1884–1949) in Beijing. However, with the widening of Buddhist studies in the Republican Period, conflicts also grew within the Buddhist world, and rival institutions and organizations struggled for spheres of influence and national leadership. For details see Welch, *Buddhist Revival*, pp. 23–50.

[70] Cf. *Historical Materials on the Nanjing Scriptural Press*, vols. 6 and 7.

Buddhist texts, altogether over 400.000 volumes.[71]

There is also a rapidly growing number of works on Buddhism by commercial publishers, magazines are issued, temples are being rebuilt, meditation retreats and pilgrimages organized, and schools run again etc. In the last few years Chinese society is becoming increasingly interested in religious issues to the point that one may speak of a "religious fever[77] (*zongjiao re* 宗教熱) sweeping the country. Buddhism plays an important and active part in this religious movent. At the same time it is rediscovering its recent past, which will enable it to resume reform activities for which the ground was already laid by the first generations of leading monks in this century. Political pressure and control have not diminished, but Buddhist culture has certainly not vanished from mainland China either, as it was feared it would do a mere twenty years ago. On the contrary it is once more gaining ground in Chinese society.

[71] I have been unable to obtain more recent figures.