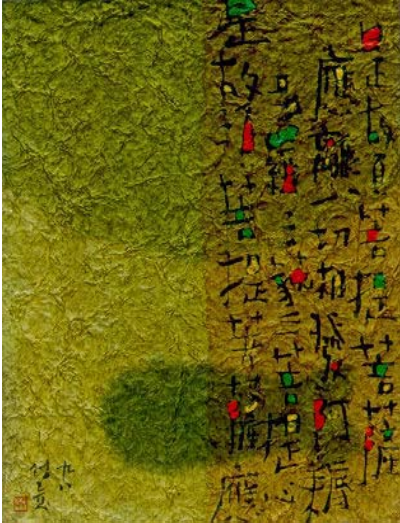


Research Article

Journal of Global Buddhism 10 (2009): 145 - 192



Buddhist Activism and Chinese Modernity

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Article

Buddhist Activism and Chinese Modernity

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Abstract

The history of modern Chinese Buddhism has begun to attract attention in recent years. Some scholars have done inspiring research as they unravel the integration of Buddhism into the highly secularized process of Chinese modernity by drawing on the repository of knowledge on modern China. While this special issue joins this exciting endeavor, it also uses Buddhism as a window to reflect on scholarship on Chinese modernity. Conceptually, this special issue presses scholars in the field of modern China to rethink the place of tradition in the course of modernity. Thematically we show the expansionist impulse of Chinese Buddhism: In addition to envisioning the geographical expansion of their religion, Chinese Buddhists have endeavored to enhance the significance of Buddhism in various dimensions of Chinese society in particular and human life in general.

Once neglected, the history of modern Chinese Buddhism has begun to attract attention in recent years. Some scholars have done inspiring research as, in unraveling the integration of Buddhism in the highly secularized

process of Chinese modernity, they draw on the immense repository of knowledge on modern China.(2) While this special issue joins this exciting endeavor, it also uses Buddhism as a window to reflect on scholarship on Chinese modernity. Conceptually, this special issue presses scholars in the field of modern China to rethink the place of tradition in the course of modernity. Thematically we show the expansionist impulse of Chinese Buddhism—i.e., Chinese Buddhists have been committed to making their religion a global one, and to enhancing the significance of Buddhism in various dimensions of Chinese society in particular and human life in general. (3)

Why "Buddhist Activism"?

Our research efforts are based on a close examination of Buddhist/Buddhist-inspired historical actors who have left significant marks on Chinese Buddhism. In other words, we explore those who work(ed) strenuously for Buddhism—that is, to ensure its survival in the face of formidable challenges, to pursue the "truth" of their religion, to apply their tradition to important issues of their own times, and/or to promote their visions of Buddhism within or beyond the boundaries of China. In this project their activities are included in what I would venture to call Buddhist activism. (4)

On the surface, the concept of "Buddhist activism" seems superfluous. Scholars have for a while examined the evolution of Humanistic Buddhism (Humanitarian Buddhism, Buddhism for the Human Realm, Buddhism for this World, *renjian fojiao* 人間佛教). More recently, they have begun to discuss the question of whether Humanistic Buddhism can be considered a localized trend of Engaged Buddhism. It seems, therefore, that the Buddhist-based activities we examine here are parts of the Chinese construction of Humanistic Buddhism, or the

global creation of Engaged Buddhism. I believe, however, that it would be beneficial if we refuse to be circumscribed by the terms of Humanistic Buddhism and Engaged Buddhism. To use but to transcend them will, I would argue, help us better understand the multiple ways in which Chinese Buddhists build (built) the modern presence of their beloved tradition.

Reflecting on Humanistic Buddhism

Humanistic Buddhism originated at the turn of the twentieth century, as some Chinese Buddhists reshaped their religion because of Christian missionaries' aggressive proselytization, many modernist intellectuals' attack on religion, (5) and their own interest in modern Western secular and religious cultures and lack of confidence in Confucianism. Although Taixu 太虛 (1890-1947) might not be the person who invented the term "Humanistic Buddhism," he has been best-known for promoting it in the Republican period (1911–1949), (6) and was readily supported by others like Daxing 大醒 (1900–1950) and Fafang 法舫 (1904–1951) in the early 1930s.

The theory of Humanistic Buddhism migrated to Taiwan against the backdrop of the victory of the Chinese Communist Party (hereafter the CCP) in 1949. In Taiwan, some eminent mainland monks used the term Buddhism for Human Life (*rensheng fojiao* 人生佛教), which Taixu had preferred since the late 1930s. In these influential Buddhists' writings, like Humanistic Buddhism, Buddhism for Human Life also meant the adaptation of Buddhism to the situation and needs of one's own time, the application of Buddhism to problems of one's society, and the promotion of Buddhist education (Bingenheimer, 2007). Undeniably Yinshun 印順 (1906-2005) played a most crucial role in establishing Humanistic Buddhism on the island, although the

question of how or whether he differed from Taixu has been debated. (7) And it is obvious that in postwar Taiwan, Humanistic Buddhism, with its emphasis on adaptation to changes, has metamorphosed into many forms—the advocacy of Buddhist education and scholarship, various efforts to link meditation to everyday life, charitable services, etc. If well-established Buddhist organizations, despite their different approaches to social and political involvement, share the refusal to pose serious challenges to the status quo, others have intended to challenge the status quo in the name of Humanistic Buddhism. (8)

I am reluctant to use the term Humanistic Buddhism, rooted in some Chinese Buddhists' efforts to remold their religion, as an analytical category framing this special issue. This reluctance is based on two seemingly contradictory reasons—its exclusivity and its inclusivity.

Humanistic Buddhism is too exclusive and therefore unable to explain many individuals and groups who have significantly contributed to the presence of modern and contemporary Chinese Buddhism. While it seems possible that some Buddhist-informed thinkers whose lives preceded the emergence of Humanistic Buddhism could be considered the precursors of *renjian fojiao*, there have been many others who cannot be incorporated into its parameters. In China, influential practitioners who did a great deal for Buddhism always operated outside of the Humanistic Buddhist circle. (9) In contemporary Taiwan, Humanistic Buddhism may not be sufficient if we want to better understand those practitioners, Humanistic and non-Humanistic Buddhists alike, who still cling to traditional modes of the religion. Neither can Humanistic Buddhism do much to deepen our knowledge about the rising influence of Tibetan Buddhism there. (10)

But quite ironically, Humanistic Buddhism can also be

too inclusive; if we take into account the numbers of people who are affiliated in various ways with centers of Humanistic Buddhism, or of those assuming that they to a certain degree are practitioners of Humanistic Buddhism. This point is particularly germane to the contemporary religious landscape of Taiwan. Many of these Humanistic Buddhists neither work hard nor give away much for Buddhism (Chou, 2007: 240-245). Granted, research on them, who are in the majority, promises to give important insights into Humanistic Buddhism as a significant phenomenon, but I have to confess that my approach to Buddhism here is more elitist, aimed at locating people and collectives who were/are more committed to their religion and/or transpersonal agendas than those "rank-and-file" Humanistic Buddhists.

Reflecting on Engaged Buddhism

Like Humanistic Buddhism, Engaged Buddhism is not entirely adequate if we use it as an analytical category for this special issue. It is widely known that the term "Engaged Buddhism," coined by Thich Nhat Hanh in the 1960s, was to a significant extent based on Taixu's theory of Humanistic Buddhism, (11) although the details of the story about how the theory itself arrived in Vietnam still beg to be told. (12) And it is also known that in defining the term, Thich Nhat Hanh once said that Buddhism in itself is Engaged Buddhism.

However, soon after the invention of the term, many self-identified Engaged Buddhists and Engaged Buddhism scholars (some of them consider themselves Engaged Buddhists as well) have assertively defined, or rather redefined, Engaged Buddhism. As a result, the circle of Engaged Buddhism includes Buddhists whose work predated the usage of the term. While until the mid or late 1990s, internationally recognized Engaged Buddhists, including Thich Nhat Hanh, Sulak Sivaraksa,

A. T. Ariyaratne, Buddhadasa, and the Fourteenth Dalai Lama (Queen and King, 1996; Queen, 2000), were mainly from and/or active in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Tibetan communities, in recent years certain versions of Humanistic Buddhism have gained entry into the parameters of both Engaged Buddhism and Engaged Buddhism studies (Queen, Prebish, and Kewon, 2003; King, 2005).

If Thich Nhat Hanh wanted to create broad, or even infinite, contours for Engaged Buddhism, Engaged Buddhism has not developed exactly according to his vision. From the 1960s to the 1990s, Engaged Buddhists always focused on addressing a fairly specific range of social/political issues, which sometimes were interrelated—war, economic oppression, discrimination against or domination over the disadvantaged, political authoritarianism/dictatorship, creation of a faith-based and presumably peaceful society, and advocacy of Buddhist education for the betterment of humankind. Their work attracted the lion's share of attention in Engaged Buddhism studies when this field rose steadily in the late 1980s and the 1990s. Recently Engaged Buddhism researchers have expanded the boundaries of Engaged Buddhism. They think that Engaged Buddhism includes not only actions intended for shaking up the status quo but also charity work and social services (Queen, Prebish, and Kewon, 2003). In Taiwan, in fact, the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu-chi Association identifies clearly its approach to religion as Socially Engaged Buddhism.

But still, despite the broadening of the Engaged Buddhist circle and redefining of Engaged Buddhism in the discipline, it seems that Engaged Buddhism is always bound with a couple of characteristics. First, Engaged Buddhism can be viewed as faith-based activities coordinated by Buddhist organizations and individuals

articulating clearly or even advancing aggressively their visions, goals, or ideals. And second, Engaged Buddhists always share the consciousness to reform—to modernize—their religion in order to develop their agendas and strategies in response to modern times (Bingenheimer, 2007). Engaged Buddhism, if used as a concept, may not be comprehensive enough to cover many of those who work(ed) hard to augment the presence of Buddhism in modern and contemporary China.

Certainly, it is by no means fresh news that influential historical phenomena—whether intellectual / philosophical / ideological traditions or social movements—evolve into or provide powerful analytical categories allowing observers to understand history. However, Buddhism, obviously a major tradition and one inspiring many movements, is still at an early stage of this evolution. In addition, the conversion of Engaged Buddhism and Humanistic Buddhism into analytical concepts is beyond the scope of this special issue, since the process itself involves discussion and debates that may not directly contribute to our goal of proving Buddhism's expansion and expansionism. Therefore, I would like to opt for the concept of Buddhist activism.

In this special issue, the concept of Buddhist activism is broader than that of *yundong* 運動 (movement), which is of European origins and the formation of whose meanings were under Japanese influence (Wagner, 2001: 66-120). The term *yundong* has come to refer mainly to the process in which a collective, an organization, or an establishment coordinates activities for social, political, economic, and cultural goals and, for those purposes, intends to mobilize secretly or publicly as many supporters as possible. But, of course, some of these movements can be better organized than others. In this collective research project, in addition to incorporating

into Buddhist activism undertakings that can be considered *yundong*, we also conceptualize as Buddhist activism those socially and culturally significant efforts to promote, defend, explore, and reinvent Buddhism which were/are not accompanied by the objective of recruiting followers, and might/may be launched by individuals eschewing the usually public role of the social/political activist. (13) Therefore, applying the concept of activism, I press readers of this special issue to move beyond the "conventional wisdom" about, or rather the connotation tied to, the common usage of the term, that activists are usually loud or even militant.

The concept of Buddhist activism includes Buddhists who belong(ed) to the tradition of Humanistic Buddhism as well as those who operate(d) outside of it. It also allows us to look into those who may/might or may not/might not be rightful members of the Engaged Buddhist tradition. I would, in other words, like to regard as Buddhist activism undertakings that are not commonly accepted as parts of Engaged Buddhism in the contemporary world. I also consider Buddhist activists those who addressed conditions of modern/contemporary China without issuing a clarion call for modern reformism. (14) I hope that the concept of Buddhist activism can help shed light on the multiple ways in which Buddhists act(ed) to expand their religious tradition in the course of modernity.

Whither Tradition?

Existing scholarship on Chinese modernity: 1950s–1970s

Needless to say, the quest for modernity, the context where the story of Buddhist expansionism has continued to unfold, is an extremely well-explored topic in Chinese studies. Scholars have worked diligently to revise

interpretations, or dig deep into unexplored dimensions, of modern Chinese culture. But new things can always be said about any well-established topics, and much can still be done if we want to push the boundaries of our knowledge about Chinese modernity. One of the most crucial issues of Chinese modernity that has invited much attention is the presence of tradition in the context of the modern. And I would argue that our exploration of Buddhist expansion and expansionism can benefit from as well as offer refreshing insight into the ongoing discussion of this issue.

At first glance, it seems that China scholars have changed their position on the issue quite drastically—from assuming the modern decline of tradition to emphasizing tradition as an integral part of modernity. And yet a more careful analysis reveals that these two positions have unfailingly kept each other company not only in the modern China field in general, but also in many influential scholars' individual works.

On the surface, from the 1950s to the early 1970s, scholarship on modern China had been dominated by what I would like to call a conflict mode—a research framework characterized by researchers' tendency to dichotomize China as tradition and the West as modernity. In influential scholars' works, Chinese tradition was represented as a cultural or political entity which could not but crumble in the face of the challenges of the West. For instance, Mary Wright's masterpiece, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism*, which examines the reign of emperor Tongzhi 同治 (1862–1874). In the book, she focused on the Qing court's Restoration project, aimed at recovering the Chinese empire which had been devastated by the Taiping upheaval (1850–1864) and other rebellions. While admitting the Qing political elite's impressive ability, Wright also emphasized that the Restoration fell short of

these capable officials' goal of recovering the dynasty, for their Confucian approach to statesmanship was unable to modernize and strengthen the Chinese state (Wright, 1957). And in his celebrated trilogy, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate*, J. R. Levenson examined the destruction of the Confucian empire and the collapse of the worldview which was both essential for and dependent on the Confucian state. According to him, the changes of modern China, especially the victory of the Communist revolution, eventually placed Confucianism in a museum as a kind of national treasure (Levenson, 1958-1965).

In addition, pitting a feeble, traditional China against the strong, modern West, the conflict mode also determined how scholars identified China's decisive turn from tradition to modernity. For many researchers, that turn was the May Fourth movement (1915–1921), which they believed involved the consciously brutal and even totalistic rejection of old values and thought serving as the ideological foundation for traditional institutions and practices. In *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China*, Chow Tse-tsung, who must be credited for establishing the May Fourth as a significant topic in modern Chinese studies, highlighted the anti-traditional stance of the process. In his analysis, anti-traditionalism derived from the Chinese lack of confidence in their tradition, as they were painfully aware of the fact that as it was, China seemed too fragile to stand up to the relentless pressure of imperialist powers (Chow, 1960).

But despite the prevalent assumption of the downfall of tradition, scholars still remained intrigued by how tradition played a role in the Chinese construction of modern culture. For instance, numerous studies produced at this stage discussed how, while rejecting consciously the status quo, Communist intellectuals were in fact under the influence of tradition. A case in point is Maurice

Meisner's famous piece, *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism*. Studying one of the co-founders of the CCP, Meisner argued that though attracted to Bolshevism, Li Dazhao 李大釗 (1889-1927) was not entirely a Marxist determinist: he maintained his own voluntarism, believing in the historical importance of humans' creative activities. As Meisner saw it, Li's voluntarism, rooted not only in Emerson's thought but also in Chinese tradition, was inherited by none other than Mao Zedong 毛澤東 (1893-1976) (Meisner, 1967).

As a matter of fact, sometimes those known for supporting the conflict mode could not hold on to it. For instance, in *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China*, J. R. Levenson expanded on the tension between history, defined as the individual's emotional commitment to tradition, and value, understood as the ideas the same individual perceives as true. He analyzed in detail how, intellectually drawn to modern Western liberal-democratic ideas, Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873-1929) struggled to embrace what he valued emotionally and to downplay the inferiority of Chinese tradition: he first sought traditional Chinese equivalents to modern Western thought; he then founded modern Western ideas not in culture, but in individual thinkers' "genius"; and finally he accentuated the problems of the modern West in response to the First World War. Levenson confined tradition to the emotional realm but still found it impossible to deny its strong appeal to one of the most important minds of modern China. In addition, by discussing how Liang reinterpreted Chinese philosophy so as to ease the psychological imbalance caused by his own appreciation of the West, Levenson pointed to the remaking of tradition as the path to modernity (Levenson, 1953).

*Existing scholarship on Chinese modernity:
1970s–present*

As the modern China field sailed into the early and mid-1970s, scholars invested much more effort in dissecting how tradition helped the Chinese make the transition to modernity. Criticizing Levenson for misinterpreting Liang Qichao's appreciation of tradition as wounded cultural pride, Chang Hao showed how Liang transformed traditional Confucian statesmanship into new modern images of state and citizenship (Chang, 1971). He also examined how various traditions such as Confucianism, Neo-Confucianism, and Buddhism shaped the ways in which Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858-1927), Tan Sitong 譚嗣同 (1865-1898), Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (1869-1936), and Liu Shipei 劉師培 (1884-1919), all major thinkers in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, constructed their own visions of change (Chang, 1987). And in Guy Alitto's analysis of Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 (1893-1988), a prominent defender of tradition drew upon Confucian values to confront a modern West deemed too individualistic and materialistic, and endeavored to restructure rural life through the reinterpretation of Confucian practices (Alitto, 1986). It was also said that even at their most iconoclastic moments, the Chinese still remained somewhat traditional: Lin Yusheng argued that May Fourth radicals' totalistic onslaught on tradition was rooted in a traditional mode of thinking (Lin, 1979). And those who studied issues pertaining to the Communist revolution, ranging from socialist radicals' theories on the revolution to the CCP's localized mobilization campaign, provided strong evidence revealing the influence of Confucian tradition on Communist elitism and the CCP's approach to mass mobilization (Chen, 1986; Dirlik, 1989: 82 & 90).

But it is since the mid-1980s that criticisms of the conflict mode have mounted most rapidly in the field of modern

China. Continuing to deepen their search for the involvement of tradition in modernity, scholars now emphasize that the conflict mode does violence to the reality of modern Chinese history, and choose to expand on the various ways in which tradition was reinvented.

Some researchers discuss how reconfigured tradition helped the Chinese to cope with challenges of the modern world. For instance, in describing urban Chinese residents' modern experience, in *Republican Beijing: The City and Its Histories*, Madeleine Yue Dong describes how, in the first half of the twentieth century, ordinary Beijing residents built a system of cultural and material production, one based heavily on elements of the past. In addition, experts on modern China also dwell on the fact that the Chinese always combined traditional elements to create novel effects: in his analysis of Feng Zikai 豐子愷 (1898-1975), Geremie Barmé shows how this celebrated artist and Buddhist householder regrouped poetical and visual components of traditional Chinese literary-artistic heritage to strive for freshness in his wildly popular cartoon pictures (*manhua* 漫畫) (Barmé, 2002).

To study reconfigured tradition, many scholars earnestly declare their determination to uncover visions of modernity that had the misfortune of being marginalized by modernists equating iconoclasm with modernity. One influential work is *Fin-de-siècle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction*: by focusing on middle-brow writers, David Der-wei Wang shows the involvement of traditional elements in the creation of modern Chinese literature (Wang, 1997). What has followed is a stream of books in which scholars unearth a panoply of suppressed voices, ranging from modern but non-iconoclastic writings to cultural defenders' critiques of the West. (15) In addition, scholars are now enthralled by the concept of alternative modernity, which could be based on traditional resources (for instance, Wang Hui,

2004; also see Huang, 2008).

Undoubtedly, this new wave of scholarship eloquently argues for Chinese modernity as a process without (much) rupture—to be exact, it discloses the interpenetration between tradition and modernity as a key feature of modern Chinese history. But if earlier works opposing traditional China to modern Western/Westernized culture always take into account the involvement of tradition in modern transformation, the scholarship that has evolved since the late 1980s centers on the intertwined relationships between the past and the present without necessarily discrediting the opposition theme. To be sure, quite a few scholars stridently challenge what they call "binarism," which they think inaccurately pitches tradition against modernity. But in itself the concept of reinvented tradition cannot completely rule out the possibility of conflict: when a tradition is reshaped according to modern conditions and needs, its reinvented versions may embrace new goals that do not accord well with the pre-reinvented tradition. (16) And in the process of reinvention, some original elements may have been decentered, or even rejected. More significantly, by documenting how critics of the West found their voices smothered, or how the poor in Beijing made do with what they had to fend for their survival, scholars tell a history in which tradition, reinvented or not, and its supporters were forced to fight an uphill battle against the challenges of modernity. (17) And sometimes they lost out.

Therefore, while de-emphasizing rupture, current scholarship reveals specific ways in which rupture may have existed, or did exist. The ambiguities of existing scholarship press for a more complex approach to contextualizing tradition in the unfolding of modernity. Those interested in how tradition has fared amid modernity may need to tackle frontally the issue of how

tradition has navigated between these two routes— that of becoming organically entangled with modernity, and that of conflicting with or even facing the possibility of being overcome by the modern. By examining this "dual-track" history of tradition in the modern era, we can explore more deeply the issues of how pre-reinvented tradition has been treated by modern men and women, and what parts of it have remained significant in shaping peoples' goals, everyday conducts, and life courses. (18)

We plan to explore these questions by concentrating on Buddhism.

Buddhism and Chinese modernity

To a significant extent, modern Chinese Buddhism as a research field mirrors the broader trend of scholarship on modern China. Earlier scholarship on the subject was dominated by the conflict mode, which does not deny the working of tradition in the formation of modernity. In the 1960s and 1970s, while expanding on how Chinese Buddhists revived and revamped their religion, Holmes Welch concluded: "[m]ost of what occurred was not...a religious revival...." In fact, according to him, not only did this "Buddhist revival" fail to make an impact on the majority of the Buddhist laity and of Chinese monks, but it also contained trends that, if allowed to develop further, would have led to Buddhism's demise (Welch, 1968: 264; also see Welch 1967 & 1972, and Wright, 1959). And in his analysis of late Qing Buddhist thought, Chen Sin-wai analyzed how intellectuals reinterpreted Buddhism but argued that Buddhism was deemed to be brushed aside when they achieved the modern goal of securing the independence of the nation (Chan, 1985: 161-162).

Such views certainly have been cast in doubt by recent scholarship. By studying Buddhist figures from monastics to lay Buddhists and by examining their

activities, from reflecting on modern Western culture to making use of modern elements such as printing technology and Western music, current works choose to stress Chinese Buddhists' resilience, reformism, and, most importantly, vitality (Pittam, 2001; Goldfuss, 1996; Birnbaum, 2003a; Tarocco, 2008). In addition, the interpretation that Buddhism has declined in the modern age seems obsolete when we take into account scholarship on Taiwanese Chinese Buddhism. This pool of research vividly details how this localized trend of Chinese Buddhism, including Humanistic Buddhism, has thrived under modern conditions, (19) including postwar prosperity, the rise of education (especially female education), and the expansion of the public space based on political and legal changes (Jones, 1999; Chandler, 2004; Cheng, 2006; Madsen, 2007; DeVido, forthcoming).

But recent scholarship on Chinese Buddhism does not necessarily render the conflict model irrelevant. After all, as current works also duly recognize, conflicts between Buddhism and modern forces were real and bitter in the turbulent history of modern China. The challenges that Buddhism had to go through were indeed numerous. Just to name a few: the state's intention to suppress traditional religions and confiscate temples (including Buddhist temples), the modernizing political and intellectual elite's modernist attacks on Buddhism, the threats of imperialism, and insiders' modernist views of reform (Goosaert, 2006; Ashina, 2009; Brook, 2009).

Drawing on scholarship on Chinese modernity in general and modern Chinese Buddhism in particular, we argue that as an ongoing process, Chinese Buddhist activism has become an expansive and even expansionist force that not only intends to shape various dimensions of Chinese life but also aims at reaching out to foreign lands in hope of making an impact on humanity as whole. We argue, in

addition, that this history of expansion/expansionism sometimes cannot but bear the marks of tradition's conflict with modernity.

What follows then is a quick introduction to articles included in this special issue. I shall describe how these works analyze the interplay between Buddhism and a few important themes marking the modern process unfolding in mainland China and Taiwan. These themes include the emphasis on the individual's liberation, the commitment to the Chinese nation, the rise of Communism, the pursuit of women's emancipation, the pursuit of economic prosperity, transnational traffic at the cultural and demographic levels, and the presence and prestige of foreign cultures. (20) But in doing so, I shall also explain how, by analyzing the interaction between Buddhism and these themes, these papers press scholars to think more about the ways in which Buddhism strove to expand amid modernity.

Expansion and Expansionism of a Tradition in the Modern Age

Late Qing and Republican China

Observers have long noted modern Chinese Buddhists' ecumenism, which could not exist without their confidence in the universal value of their tradition. This confidence is revealed in Hung-yok Ip's article, "The Power of Interconnectivity: Tan Sitong's Invention of Historical Agency in Late Qing China," which focuses on this major late Qing reformer's masterpiece, *Renxue*, written in 1896 and 1897. With his Buddhist eclecticism, Tan, who could be considered a late nineteenth-century Engaged Buddhist, explored the concept of non-differentiation to imagine the creative disposition of human agency. According to him, this disposition

would contribute greatly to agendas that defined Chinese modernity, including the individual's liberation, national self-strengthening, and cosmopolitan involvement in the world. In addition, Tan perceived his human agency as an omnipotent history-making force, as he brought together philosophical discussion of the spiritual path with the belief in the superhuman qualities of the Buddha and advanced Bodhisattvas. However, he also emphasized that the efficacy of this powerful human agency was not determined by itself but by the world it set out to save.

For its theorization on a human agency shaped by a commitment to and/or deep understanding of non-differentiation, *Renxue* could be considered an integral part of the global formation of Engaged Buddhism. As such, it deserves attention from those who are interested in the history of modern Chinese Buddhist expansionism. But Tan Sitong's story is also one that shows the confrontation between cultures. For all his professed admiration for various threads of Chinese tradition, his rejection of some traditional practices was vehement. His iconoclasm, selective and incomplete as it may have been, portended the cultural rebelliousness of many Chinese intellectuals in the early twentieth century.

The expansion of a tradition requires its supporters' strength. This point was fully appreciated by those historical actors examined in Yuan Yuan's article, "Chinese Buddhist Nuns in the Early Twentieth Century: A Case Study in Wuhan." Working at the intersection between works on the women's movement in the history of Republican China and the literature on female Buddhists and Buddhism during this period, Yuan Yuan dwells on how, in response to the reshaping of gender relationships in modern China, reformist monastics, especially nuns, worked for gender equality in their tradition. In late Qing and early Republican China,

women's emancipation was an important part of Chinese intellectuals' discourse on national self-strengthening. Though not totally without genuine sympathy for women's plights, male intellectuals—reformers and revolutionaries alike—argued for women's rights, education, and public role so as to transform them into good mothers capable of cultivating good citizens for the nation. Taixu quickly answered this clarion call for both women's emancipation and the modernization of the nation. He founded the Wuchang Buddhist Seminary for Nuns in 1924, which later became the World Buddhist Institute for Nuns. A couple of other institutions for Buddhist women were founded as well.

However, despite the fact that their mentors were always male authorities, nuns intended to make use of their cultural capital to create their own agenda of change: they defined their gender identity; they advanced gender equality inside the Buddhist tradition; and they constructed an alternative to women's prescribed role as mother of good citizen. Most interestingly, these nuns contended that their strength, buttressed by gender equality, would lead to the growth of female Buddhism, which in turn would help augment the presence of Buddhism in both China and the rest of the world. By injecting a female perspective into modern Chinese feminism, and especially by reinterpreting Buddhist scriptures such as the *Avatamsaka Sutra* and *Vimalakirti Sutra* in light of the notion of women's emancipation, they conjured up the vision that Buddhism's future would to some extent hinge on the defeat of its perennial patriarchal practices, which could only look "unenlightened" by both reinvented Buddhist and modern Western standards.

But if Buddhists in the late Qing and Republican era were able to imagine Buddhism as an important world religion, it was Taixu who epitomized modern Chinese

Buddhism's ecumenism. His transnational career is captured in Elise DeVido's article, "The Influence of Master Taixu on Buddhism in Vietnam." The international success of this Buddhist modernizer began against the backdrop of Chinese Buddhist Revival and its Vietnamese equivalent. His theory on *renjian fojiao* made quite an impact on Vietnam. The flow of Chinese materials into Vietnam, Taixu's trips to that country, and the Chinese Buddhist communities there which helped coordinate his visits—all this laid the foundation for his success. Taixu's writings and his journal, *Hai Chao Yin* 海潮音 (*Sound of the Tide*), guided Vietnamese Buddhists such as Khanh Hoa, Thien Chieu, and Tri Hai in the building of the organizational foundation for Buddhist reform through the reform of sangha education, management, and temple administration. Inspired by Taixu's nationalism, Vietnamese Buddhist groups undertook their anti-colonial resistance against the French and pursued gender equality.

More importantly, Taixu's concept of *renjian fojiao* captivated Vietnamese Buddhists, and they strove to build their own version of Humanistic Buddhism (*nhan gian phat giao*). Because of his admiration for Taixu, in the 1960s Thich Nhat Hanh went so far as to say that *nhan gian phat giao* was Engaged Buddhism. The Revival of the 1920s–50s continued to shape the monastics who played important roles in the making of modern Vietnamese Buddhism in the 1960s and 1970s. Taixu's theory on *renjian fojiao*, transplanted in Vietnam, helped forge modern Vietnamese Buddhism, which was to be essential in the religious landscape of the contemporary world.

But to expand, a tradition must first secure its own survival—this certainly is true when it comes to modern Chinese Buddhism. Tanxu's case, discussed in James Carter's "Buddhism, Resistance, and Collaboration in

Manchuria," shows how an illustrious monk defended Buddhism in difficult situations. In the 1920s and 1930s, Tanxu 倓虛 (1875-1963) took part in the temple-building projects in the Westernized cities of Harbin and Qingdao, both located in Manchuria. The temples that he helped build were deliberately traditional in physical appearance. As a Buddhist, he wanted to revive Buddhism in the north. As a Chinese individual, he took part—and did so willingly—in these projects so as to maintain China's national-cultural identity in the public space of Europeanized places. A devout monk and a patriot, he was critical of the highly secularized nature of modern Japanese Buddhism, and suspicious of the Japanese empire's covetous eyes on China.

But the same Tanxu did not take a clear political stand during the Japanese occupation. During the occupation, he continued to do what had been doing, lecturing and traveling. On the one hand, he to some extent collaborated with the Japanese authorities, enjoying Japanese support for him, but on the other, he maintained his ties with the resistance and appeared happy to see that patriotic monks who fought against Japan were not arrested. When the war was over, his activities remained the same. Later on, in his famous memoirs, *Yingchen huiyilu* 影塵回憶錄 (*Recollections of the Material World*), Tanxu represented himself as an apolitical monk. Taking into account Tanxu's tireless efforts to work for Buddhism, which are well-documented in others' recollections (Cham Shan Temple, 2008), his self-representation should at least to some extent be credible. But his life shows how, like many other Chinese individuals (see, for instance, Fu, 1997, and Brook, 2007), a prominent monk, when measured by the standards of nationalism, acted in an ethical gray area.

Mid-twentieth century to present

For those interested in how Buddhists struggled to preserve their tradition at the nexus of tradition and modernity, the experience of Buddhism in the face of the advent of the Communist regime is a crucial issue. It is addressed in Xue Yu's article, "Buddhist Contribution to the Socialist Transformation of Buddhism in China: Activities of Ven. Juzan 巨贊 1949–1953." Juzan (1908-1984), a student of Taixu, operated as a politically active monk in a context where monastics and radical intellectuals sometimes reflected on Buddhism from socialist perspectives (Zarrow, 1990; Krebs, 1998; Jones, 2000). A man attracted to socialist radicalism in his early days, Juzan supported the Communist state in its project of undertaking socialist transformation of the sangha. As the editor-in-chief of *Modern Buddhist Studies*, he helped the state publicize its policies on Buddhist-related issues and deal with the discontents of the Buddhist community.

Juzan legitimated the CCP's leadership and policies in the language of Buddhism. During land reform, as monastic communities were dismantled, he told Chinese monks and nuns to give up what they had so as to follow the Buddhist spirit of renunciation, despite the dangerous implications of the change for the sangha. Confronted with the inevitable question of whether Buddhists, especially the clerics, should commit the act of killing, he invoked the concept of compassionate killing and the image of Sakyamuni Buddha defeating the troops of Mara to justify the killing of Americans.

As clearly shown in Juzan's career, the so-called progressive Buddhists' reinterpretation of Buddhism allowed the CCP to incorporate the sangha into the socialist state. This, according to Xue Yu, predetermined the tragic fate of Buddhism in the Cultural Revolution.

Juzan's involvement in the Buddhist clerics' socialist transformation reflects the precarious place of a reinvented tradition in the course of modernity: a Buddhism reconfigured according to the demands of the Communist government weakened its capacity for self-defense vis-à-vis a modern state's high-handed approach to change.

Whereas Buddhism suffered greatly in the mainland from the 1950s through the mid-1970s, it has enjoyed remarkable growth in Taiwan in the post-war period. Yinshun, whose theory on *renjian fojiao* pivotally defined the character of contemporary Chinese Taiwanese Buddhism, was far from socially and politically active. But he was an activist in his own way: an outstanding monastic scholar, his activism is academic in nature, as he, aside from analyzing Chinese Buddhism, also sought to recover the truth about Indian Buddhism (Ng, 2007: 38). His academic activism is analyzed by Marcus Bingenheimer, who authors "Writing History of Buddhist Thought in the Twentieth Century: Yinshun (1906–2005) in the context of Chinese Buddhist historiography."

According to Bingenheimer, Yinshun modernized the historiographical practice for Buddhist scholars and, with his influential scholarship on Indian Buddhism, allowed others to look into the roots of Buddhism in seeking support for social engagement. In Bingenheimer's analysis, some of Yinshun's hermeneutic devices were well-established in the tradition of Chinese Buddhist historical writing, built by Buddhist scholar-monks, especially Zhipan 志磐, who lived in the Song dynasty. It must be noted, however, that Yinshun used selectively traditional historical methods and Buddhist historical perspective. For instance, he put aside the influential concept of *mofa* 末法 (the final days of the Dharma), which did not go well with his vision of

renjian fojiao, aimed at the betterment of the world. His selective use of traditional historiographical elements was coupled with his appreciation of the modern genre of academic monograph as an exhaustive approach to a chosen topic or period.

Yinshun's academic activism drives home the point that the relationship between tradition and modernity has been complex: while reinvented historiographical practices contributed to the expansion of Buddhism, the process of reinvention entailed the abandonment of certain well-established components of Chinese Buddhist historiographical tradition—hence the tension between the reinvented and pre-reinvented forms of tradition.

Charles Jones's paper illustrates the same tension. Titled "Modernization and Traditionalism in Buddhist Almsgiving: The Case of the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu-chi Association in Taiwan," his article examines the factors which have led to this mega-sized organization's success. In Jones' view, in mobilizing its members in earnestness, Ciji (the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu-chi Association) chooses to valorize compassion but not wisdom, reframing the theory on six perfections to accentuate the importance of almsgiving. Supported by its emphasis on compassion, Ciji constructs a narrative of conversion which helps publicize its image. In Ciji's publications, prominent is the message that Ciji gives meanings to individuals' lives: whereas men, under the auspices of Master Zhengyan 証嚴, have refined themselves by abandoning the rough edge of their masculinity or turning away from the materialist aspiration for success, women have evolved from idle consumers to compassionate individuals. By expanding on the theme of self-improvement, Ciji re-creates affluent, middle-class individuals as modern Bodhisattvas, directing their resources and energies to social services.

Aside from representing itself as an institution able to transform modern individuals into compassionate beings, Ciji has also been able to develop a complex approach to charity which agrees with these modern Bodhisattvas' educational and economic backgrounds. In executing the principle of compassion, it couples traditional almsgiving with the modern Western/Christian practice of scientific charity. Ciji members attend to such issues as case histories, the measurement of outcomes, and the building of a transparent system to maximize the benefits they can bestow on those who suffer. By combining the aforementioned traditional elements and modern practices, Ciji has molded itself into a *Gemeinschaft*-type association, leading its members to build a new identity whose essence is defined by help extended to those in need.

Ciji's break from tradition can be detected quite easily. As Master Zhengyan does not take donations directly from supporters and Ciji publicizes its intention of receiving donations for the less fortunate, they forsake the traditional Buddhist practice of planting "the field of merit" (*futian*), giving up the notion that the giver will eventually reap some reward by sowing the seeds of charity. In addition, Ciji's decision to privilege compassion is a departure from the traditional Buddhist discourse on spirituality, which values equally compassion and wisdom.

Many observers are aware that well-established Buddhist institutions like Ciji and Foguangshan in Taiwan have been oriented towards the world. (21) Entitled "Socially Engaged Buddhist Nuns: Activism in Taiwan and North America," Venerable Karma Lekshe Tsomo's paper examines Taiwanese nuns' work in the Chinese diaspora, in addition to depicting their activities in Taiwan.

In showing the plurality of Buddhists nuns' activism,

Tsomo focuses on Zhengyan, Chao Hwei 昭慧, and Shig Hiu-wan 曉雲 (1912-2004). Whereas Zhengyan focuses on medical services, Chao Hwei employs protest tactics well-established in the West and among Taiwanese activists, attempting to make changes by staging her social theater. And Shig Hiu-wan invested her efforts in education, taking advantage of her education and experience as the first Buddhist nun working in the system of higher education. At the age of seventy-six, she founded Huafan University, now one of the leading Buddhist universities in Taiwan.

But despite nuns' prominent influence in Taiwan, they have not been as successful in the Chinese communities in North America. Many Chinese nuns in the United States work for well-established organizations, which regularly rotate its members among temples, a policy that hinders their influence and deprives them of the opportunity to actualize their potential as spiritual workers. Tsomo considers the policy of rotation patriarchal, reflecting the traditional, centralized, and authoritarian nature of the Buddhist organizations that these nuns come from. (22) In saying so, she suggests that the traditional-style power structure works against the goal of international expansion, a modern condition important for reinvented Buddhism.

In addition, as Tsomo points out, these nuns lack the cultural capital that would allow them to actualize their potential in foreign lands. To be sure, they lead those temples that have been established in the U.S. and Canada since the 1970s, but as they are not highly proficient in English, they mainly work in Chinese-speaking communities, and their involvements are limited to activities serving the needs of Chinese immigrants. This, too, reveals a kind of dissonant relationship between tradition and the modern, as the modern goal of ecumenism demands support that is not available in a

strictly Buddhist culture.

Certainly, major Chinese Taiwanese Buddhist institutions, aimed at moving beyond national, ethnic, and racial boundaries so as to be truly global, are not content with serving mainly overseas Chinese communities. But as scholars are quick to point out, there is always a tension between religious diaspora and ecumenism (Chandler, 2005: 275-300; Huang, 2005: 185-209). How can Buddhism emerge to be a globally significant voice? This, in fact, is an important question for all those Chinese Buddhists, Asian Buddhists, and non-Asian Buddhists who support the goal of globalizing Buddhism.

To reflect on this question, this special issue concludes with James Blumenthal's article, "Toward a Buddhist Theory of Justice," which, on the surface, does not have much to do with Chinese Buddhism. Blumenthal tackles the question of how one kind of Buddhist activists, Engaged Buddhists, can engage more substantively in the dialogue on social change and ethics on the international stage. In order to do so, as Blumenthal sees it, they should go back to Buddhist scriptures with sensitivity to the historicized nature of these sources as well as contemplate ideas outside of their tradition.

To illustrate how the latter can be done, the author focuses on the concept of justice, a term widely invoked but never clearly defined by internationally influential Asian Buddhist activists. In the article, he reflects on two theories in the Western philosophical discourse on justice: John Rawls's "justice as fairness" and the rising model of restorative justice. Rawls's notion of justice is supported by his argument that those involved in determining justice must reflect on the notion from behind the "veil of ignorance"—that is, we must discard, or rather transcend, our knowledge about our genders, social states, and other facets as we contemplate issues

and situations important to the goal of constructing a just society. Restorative justice, as a non-punitive model of justice, is advocated by those attempting to heal the wounds inflicted by crimes. In addition to recognizing that Buddhism has much to contribute to Western models of justice, Blumenthal emphasizes that while Buddhists contemplating justice do not need to cater to voices foreign to their own tradition, they should definitely broaden their own intellectual-cultural horizon: they should prepare themselves for an exploration of knowledge outside of Buddhism, examine how Buddhist perspectives differ from and echo non-Buddhist perspectives on justice, and, last but not least, contemplate how the two can benefit one another. This will, the author stresses, help Buddhism to evolve into a significant global religion.

On the one hand, Blumenthal's article theorizes on the value of Buddhist tradition—i.e., the traditional wisdom of Buddhism—for the modern goal of Buddhist ecumenism. But on the other hand, it also argues that it is necessary for Buddhists to dive into non-Buddhists' traditions in making their voices heard in cross-religious/cross-cultural dialogues. It is clear, however, that in-depth cross-cultural fertilization, made important by modern Buddhist ecumenism, requires cultural capital—knowledge about Western philosophical tradition, the ability to articulate oneself in Western languages, etc.—not associated with the Buddhist tradition.

CONCLUSION

Getting involved

Invoking the concept of Buddhist activism, this special issue focuses on historical actors who play(ed) important

roles in expanding their religion in China and throughout the world. Their endeavors encourage us to think about significant issues relevant to Buddhism's social and political participation, whether it is Engaged Buddhism, Humanistic Buddhism, or beyond.

We show how Chinese Buddhist activists have helped create the historical process through which Buddhism has emerged as a significant force working for the betterment of the modern world. Like Buddhists of other countries, Chinese Buddhists have worked for nationalism, women's liberation, and, in general, the concepts of freedom and equality. Sometimes, their expositions of how Buddhism could be mobilized to improve human lives, such as the Republican-era nuns' critiques of Buddhist patriarchy, foreshadowed many postwar Buddhists' theoretical construction of Buddhist social/political involvement. In addition, by pointing out Buddhism's universal significance for the world, by formulating ideas in which non-Chinese Buddhists may find a congenial spirit, or by working with and for the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia and North America, Chinese Buddhists like Republican-era nuns, Taixu, and Taiwanese nuns have joined forces with Buddhist activists of other countries in adding a transnational component to the vigor of Buddhist social and political involvement.

One crucial dimension of transnationalism is cross-cultural fertilization, an issue essential to those studying modern/contemporary Buddhism in general and Buddhist activism in particular. In this respect the East-West connection has commanded much attention from scholars. This special issue helps expand the current knowledge about the cultural exchange taking place along the East-West axis, as it offers insights into how Ciji combines the modern approach to scientific charity with traditional cultural elements, or how Tan Sitong's Buddhist eclecticism reveals the plurality of the Eastern

end of the interaction. We additionally draw attention to the cross-cultural fertilization unfolding within the cultural sphere of the East: whereas Taixu was instrumental in planting the Vietnamese roots of Engaged Buddhism, Yinshun borrowed what was from Japan to pursue his influential scholarship on Buddhism. (23) How to de-center the East-West axis is indeed a significant issue for those interested in exploring the transnational traffic of Buddhist activism. (24)

More importantly, contributors to this special issue also press for more attention to the historicized nature of controversies revolving around Buddhist activists' historical agency. Humanistic Buddhism and Engaged Buddhism, as two important forms of Buddhist activism, are fairly contentious issues. While it is clear that Humanistic Buddhism is received positively by a considerable number of people (Bingenheimer, 2007), it is equally obvious that important figures of Humanistic Buddhism are always controversial, criticized by many—insiders and outsiders alike—for their overly aggressive attitude, their unrelenting approaches to secularization, problematic political involvements, ambitions, patriarchal structure, or disregard for others' personal and familial concerns. As for Engaged Buddhism, although observers always appear impressed with many Engaged Buddhists' commitment to justice and social services, Christopher Queen has long called for critical perspectives on this attention-drawing phenomenon. And in recent years, scholars have reflected critically on such issues as whether Engaged Buddhism is Buddhist at all, or whether Engaged Buddhists' faith-based political actions violate(d) Western-style humanitarianism or Buddhist principles (see, for instance, King, 2000, and Deitrick, 2003).

The cases of Tanxu and Juzan encourage scholars to move beyond critiques done on moral and/or

philosophical grounds so as to reflect on controversial acts and writings of Buddhist activists. Tanxu's "failure" to take part in active resistance to the Japanese certainly has troubled many Chinese individuals. Even his identification of protecting Buddhism as his most important goal may have been regarded as problematic by those who presume(d) the paramountcy of focusing on secular problems. But perhaps his case reveals the axiomatic but important truth that as historical agents Buddhist activists are always faced with dilemmas, created by their own contexts, and are therefore bound to make morally or realistically imperfect choices. As for Juzan, his complicity with the Communist state certainly looks dubious to many, regardless of their political positions. Was he motivated by self-interest? Did he naively invest too much hope in the Communist state? Did he use complicity as a strategy to protect the sangha? Was his socialist reinterpretation of Buddhism Buddhist? While innumerable questions can be raised, from a historical perspective, Juzan's career shows the malleability of Buddhist activism as a historical product. How its rhetoric was invoked and what purposes it served were dependent upon the historical players.

Rethinking (reinvented) tradition

Modern Chinese Buddhist activism has been marked by a strong commitment to and capacity for expansion at both national and international levels. But behind its will to and acts for expansion, there were always stories about the tension between tradition (or reinvented tradition) and modernity to be told.

Such tension manifested itself as political and cultural contention between Buddhism and modern forces prevailing on the religion from the outside: for example, Tanxu found it necessary to create a cultural space for Buddhism as a "Chinese" religion in Manchuria by

countering European presence in that region. But as many scholars have already noted, sometimes the contest between tradition and modernity played out on religion's home turf (Goossaert, 2006: 311). The story of reinvented Buddhism's expansion always unfolded against the backdrop of competition between the comparatively tradition-inclined and modernizing forces inside the Buddhist community: just as Taixu's reforms, which were to help shape modern Vietnamese Buddhism, encountered significant opposition from monastics who disliked his ideas, Buddhist revival in Vietnam, which laid parts of the foundation for the contemporary phenomenon of Engaged Buddhism, faced many insiders' pungent disapproval. It must be noted, moreover, that the victory of those insiders aligned with the modern did not mean the reinvigoration of Buddhism: as Juzan's career reveals, progressive monks' reinterpretation of Buddhism stripped the sangha of its ability to resist the state's political domination.

Studying Buddhism and modernity, this special issue argues that the old research mode accenting conflict is still worthy of attention. In addition, we also use the new research mode stressing reinvention so as to shed light on Buddhism's presence in the modern age. By studying how Buddhism has traveled simultaneously the routes of reinvention and of conflict with tradition, we are able to reflect on how these two routes crisscrossed.

We show that sometimes conflicting with tradition was/is—or could/can be seen as—beneficial to tradition's expansion. Although coming from various cohorts, Chinese nuns of the Republican period, Yinshun, and Zhengyan have proved just that. Whereas nuns in Republican China challenged Buddhist patriarchal culture in order to increase the number of those who could work for Buddhism, Yinshun forsook some well-established methods and perspectives in Buddhist

historical writings so as to produce his immensely influential scholarship. And Zhengyan's tendency to privilege compassion but not wisdom has led to Ciji's success both at home and abroad.

But at the same time, this collection of articles also shows how, as a modern course, the reinvention of tradition may challenge—or have already challenged—a tradition. We show that many Chinese Buddhists have, by restructuring their tradition, been interested in the international expansion of their tradition. We also argue that cultural capital, especially knowledge of foreign languages and non-Buddhist cultures, is essential if they want to establish their influence on the international scene. On the basis of our research and the ongoing development of Chinese Buddhism, we can certainly raise the following questions: How does the modern impulse of expansionism shape the lives of monastics and lay Buddhists who work for Buddhist institutions expressing a strong commitment to globalizing Buddhism? How does ecumenism impact those who lack cultural capital useful for Buddhism's global expansion? And how do "internationalist Buddhists" weigh such factors as cultural capital for expansion, spiritual achievement, and domestic social services against one another?

In addition, we also show how in the process of reinventing Buddhism, Buddhists and/or Buddhist-inspired thinkers might have introduced ideas that did not go well with pre-reinvented forms of Buddhism. When Tan Sitong created a faith-based human agency, which to some extent sang the harbinger of the rise of Western-style individualism, did his reformed Buddhism contradict pre-reformed Buddhism? When the Compassion Relief Tzu-chi Association chooses not to give precedence to wisdom and to promote its founder's writings rather than Buddhist scriptures, has this limited its members' exploration of a complex tradition? To be

sure, in the case of Chinese Buddhism, reinvention has ensured survival and vitality of the tradition. But it also poses potential and real challenges to (pre-reinvented) tradition itself.

To conclude, then, it seems fitting that we contend for a non-dualistic—hence, fairly Buddhist—way to look at the intertwined routes of conflict and reinvention. They are not necessarily divorced from one another. As an element of the reinvention process, conflict may lead to tradition's growth. And reinvention, even if it contributes to tradition's expansion (in the case Tzu-chi), may as well subvert tradition (in parts, though maybe not as a whole). To attend to both conflict and reinvention will enrich our understanding of how tradition has fared not only in late Qing and Republican China, but also in the contemporary Chinese-speaking world, where various trends of tradition, with their reinvented forms, are prepared to express their voices.

Notes

1. The completion of this project is based on the support of many people. Generous funding from the Chun Chiu Endowment at the Department of History at Oregon State University allowed me to organize an international conference on Buddhist Activism in Greater China in 2008. Paul Farber's wisdom and moral support were essential for the success of the conference. Shiao-ling Yu, Hua-yu Li, Xun Jin, and Bryan Tilt were so kind as to chair conference panels for me. I would also like to thank Mariae Hunter and Patty Curtis for their help. Elissa Curcio deserves special thanks for her involvement in the organizational process of the conference, and in the technical production of the special issue. I am grateful to

all the scholars who granted me the honor of including their articles here. Among them, Charles Jones, Xue Yu, and Marcus Bingenheimer shared with me their knowledge about Buddhism and sources. I feel especially indebted to Elise DeVido, who worked with me from the onset of the project and helped me to improve this introduction. Ven. Yifa, Ven. Zhiru, Alexander Mayer, and Esther-Maria Guggenmos all made important contributions to the conference. Finally, I would express my deep gratitude to Cristina Rocha and Martin Baumann, who kindly provide us the platform to publish this special issue. I would also like to thank Alana MacMillan and Patricia Campbell, copy-editors at the *Journal of Global Buddhism*. As a latecomer to Buddhist studies, I feel overwhelmed by everyone's warm welcome.

2 . In this special issue, China means the Chinese-speaking world, including mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao, and also the Chinese diaspora. Chinese modernity here refers to the development (from the late nineteenth century to the present) of social, political, cultural, and economic features departing from what the Chinese were used to before the second half of the nineteenth century. In this special issue, the concept of Chinese modernity is used to cover both the modern period/modern China (late nineteenth – mid-twentieth century) and the contemporary period/contemporary China. Humanities scholars always agree that modernity is a nebulous concept. But it seems that as long as researchers are interested in the question of how societies blessed with rich traditions have changed since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, modernity seems an important concept. As for the features identified as themes marking

Chinese modern, see the subsection entitled "Buddhism and Chinese modernity."

3. In this introduction, I do not conceive expansionism merely as a numerical category, despite the tremendous influence of Buddhist organizations in present-day Taiwan, where 22% of the population identify themselves as Buddhists, and the rising presence of Buddhism in mainland China. I would like to emphasize, instead, that even when Buddhism seemed to be in decline in numerical terms (e.g., the decreasing number of temples converted to nonreligious purposes; see Pittman, 2001: 48), there were still Chinese Buddhists who were committed to expansionism.

4. I define strenuousness as Buddhist-informed historical players' (individuals' or organizations') serious commitment to their religion and/or their Buddhist-related transpersonal agendas. This commitment should be serious to the extent that it is essential for these Buddhist agents' being. But, of course, commitment and one's sense of being are always in flux. Contributors to the special issue attempt to capture how Buddhist agents work at those moments when they are more serious about their missions.

5. For the definition of being modernist that I use here, please see Charles Jones's article in this special issue. My article on Tan Sitong also reflects on the term in the context of Engaged Buddhism. It must be noted that in this introduction, "modernist" always refers to a fairly conscious set of intellectual and psychological traits,

which allowed individuals to set the modern apart from the traditional, or to elevate the modern above tradition. Therefore, "modernist" in this introduction is a little different from the concept of modernism as used in other studies. For instance, in his 2008 book, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism*, David McMahan's use of the term includes both the experience of modernization and the tendency to judge/critique tradition from a modern viewpoint (McMahan, 2008).

6. It is suspected that *renjian fojiao* may have first been used in the late nineteenth century. See Marcus Bingenheimer, 2007: 141-61. In addition, it should also be pointed out that others also had committed themselves to the reform of the sangha and the concept of modernizing Buddhism before Taixu did. However, Taixu should be regarded as the one who proposed most rigorously the idea of modernizing Buddhism. And he did so comprehensively, arguing for the restructuring of the sangha, the systematization of Buddhist education, modern charity works, and the importance of using modern-day technology for the promotion of Buddhism.

7. Marcus Bingenheimer, for instance, argues that Yinshun is not so different from Taixu (Bingenheimer, 2007). But other scholars think otherwise. See Jiang Cantang, 2001: 67-97.

8. One of the most powerful examples is Chao Hwei (Zhaohui) 昭慧.

9. Famous monks like Xuyun 虛雲 (??-1959) and Laiguo 來果 (1881-1953), for instance, did not work hard to promote Humanistic Buddhism. It should be noted that in the Republican period, there was a revival of Tibetan Buddhism in China, initiated by intellectuals who wanted national and spirituality for Tibet and China. See Tuttle, 2005.

10. Observers note that the trend of modernizing Buddhism has not eradicated traditional texts, prayers, and iconography from Buddhists' lives. See Jones, 2003a. Also see Bingenheimer, 2007.

11. While Taixu was a major influence on Thich Nhat Hanh's Engaged Buddhism, others shaped his thought as well. Gandhi and Bhave were also crucial in the formation of Nhat Hanh's thought. According to Elise DeVido, who is working on a manuscript on modern Vietnamese Buddhism, it is quite likely that the concept of being "engaged" came from Sartre and Camus, whose existentialism was all the rage in Buddhist journals in South Vietnam.

12. See Elise DeVido's article in this special issue.

13. This explains why this project includes an article on Yinshun.

14. A keen pursuit of scholarship, which marked Yinshun's career, is not a major feature of Engaged

Buddhism. And this special issue also includes a piece on Tanxu. Scholars note that seemingly traditional monks adjusted to modern conditions to some extent (Birnbaum, 2003b: 113). While I agree with this observation, I would also like to argue that Buddhist clerics varied widely concerning how much they wanted to accommodate modern conditions.

15. Regarding works that echo Wang's, see Gimpel, 2001 and Hutters, 2008.

16. Since I recognize that tradition in the pre-modern period was also historically/continuously reconfigured (see note 18), pre-reinvented tradition does not mean a tradition that has never been reinvented. It means the form(s) of a tradition before its modern reinvention.

17. One of the more recent examples showing this complex position on tradition and modernity is Joan Judge's new book. In its conclusion, she draws attention to how turn-of-the-twentieth-century feminist writers appear ambivalent about the Chinese past: on the one hand, they reject that past as feudal; but on the other, they do not want to lose touch with what they consider "feudal history" and recognize its power. See Judge, 2008.

18. The nature of a tradition is always hotly debated by both insiders and outsiders. I basically agree with many scholars' view that the core of a tradition is historically conditioned and therefore continuously reconstructed and unstable. But as far as Buddhism is concerned, it is

obvious that there were/are theories and goals which were always, if not consistently, identified as more central than others in their histories. In this sense, a modernized Buddhism human agency supporting desires, or one designed not to privilege wisdom, may be viewed as a radical departure from Buddhist tradition (see this paper for details).

19. The concept of localized Buddhism is inspired by Charles Jones (see Jones, 1999). It is important to note that the development of Taiwanese Chinese Buddhism has been conditioned by Taiwan's unique history, including its colonial period. For instance, Jones discusses effects of Japanese rule on religion, including Buddhism (see Jones, 2003b). As for Humanistic Buddhism, it can be argued that Japanese influence in the colonial period may have helped lay the foundation for it; for details, see Jiang Cantang, 2003: 51–118. But it is also obvious that the dominant form of Taiwanese Chinese Buddhism, Humanistic Buddhism, was fundamentally shaped by monks from mainland China (see Bingenheimer, 2007). In addition, recent scholarship also notes that Chinese Taiwanese Buddhism, including Humanistic Buddhism, continues many cultural and organizational trends of mainland Buddhism (Kuo, 2008: 16-21).

20. Certainly, the affluence of postwar Taiwan, based on a successful capitalist economy, is a well-noted development. In the field of modern China, in response to the Communist state's post-1976 changes and under the influence of post-modernism emphasizing the plurality of history, scholars have in recent years shown a deep interest in examining capitalist ventures and

consumerism in the Republican period. For a recent example, see Yeh, 2007.

21. It can be said that to some extent, contemporary ecumenism of this small island was rooted in what happened decades ago: despite the mid-century political turbulence of their country, Chinese Buddhists kept alive the goal of globalizing their religion. For both religious and political reasons, the Buddhist Association of Republic of China (BAROC) began to get involved in international Buddhist organizations in the 1950s. There are quite a few studies that analyze Taiwan-based Buddhist organizations' globalization efforts. See Chandler, 2005, and Huang, 2009.

22 . Recent scholarship also notes that traditional authoritarianism still marks Buddhist organizations in Taiwan (see Kuo, 16–21).

23 . Japan's influence on modern Chinese Buddhist activism should not be a new topic among those who know modern Chinese history and modern Chinese Buddhism well; for example, see Goldfuss, 1996. Please also refer to note 2 of DeVido's article in this special issue.

24. Certainly, it is a gross exaggeration if we say that Engaged Buddhism scholars only focus on the East-West axis. After all, interaction between well-known Buddhist activists such as the 14th Dalai Lama, Sulak Sivaraksa, and Thich Nhat Hanh is well-noted. But attention paid to it cannot match that to topics of Buddhist-Christian dialogue.

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