Fostering Education Beyond the Classroom: Examples from Republican Buddhism and their Legacy Today

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Abstract: This research explores how Buddhist "education within/for lay society" translated in the Chinese context. In both the Imperial and Republican eras, Buddhist monastics and lay intellectuals did more than simply preach to the laity. Trusting that Buddhist ethics could offer positive guidance to the community, central and local governments requested that Buddhist monastics lecture in other less usual venues, like military camps or prisons, or open their temple premises to soldiers and inmates. Besides formal lecturing, Chinese monastics often inspired by example, and facilitated the development of the surrounding community through their charisma, leadership, and practical initiatives. This article starts with a historical overview of education in China, and the interlinked development of religious (Buddhist and Daoist) and secular (Confucian) learning in the premodern era. The second and third parts focus on continuation and developments in the Republican era, addressing intellectual arguments and debates, as well as concrete examples of Buddho-Confucian educational initiatives outside the classroom. The study ends with reflections on the contribution of Buddhism to ethical sustainability for global society.

Keywords: Dharma teaching to the army (*jundui hongfa* 軍隊弘法), Dharma teaching in prison (*jianyu hongfa* 監獄弘法), Wang Enyang 王恩洋 (1897–1964), Monk Cihang 慈航法師 (1893–1954), Chinese Prison Dharma Propagation Society (Zhongguo jianyu hongfa she 中國監獄弘法社), Humanistic Buddhism (*renjian fojiao* 人間佛教), Buddhist education (*fojiao jiaoyu* 佛教教育), Republican Buddhism (*minguo fojiao* 民國佛教)

> "Buddhism is the education of the Buddha. The education of the Buddha is the education of character, the education of morality, the education of transcendence, and the education for the benefit of sentient beings."[1]

Introduction

"Buddhist education" makes an important distinction between "education for the *Saṃgha*" (*duinei de sengjiao* 對內的僧教) and Buddhist "teaching for the lay believers" (*duiwai de xinjiao* 對外的信教).[2] This article concerns the latter and explores how Buddhist "education within/for lay society" translated in the Chinese context. In both the Imperial and Republican eras, Buddhist monastics and lay intellectuals did more than simply lecture the laity about doctrinal principles and Dharma practice. For instance, *Saṃgha* members offered elementary and non-religious teaching whenever and wherever public schools were not available.[3] In the premodern era, Buddhist institutions also sometimes served as the only providers of education to certain social groups, especially women. They also functioned as examples of private learning and models for other forms of institutions, like the Confucian academies (*shuyuan* 書院). Furthermore, trusting that Buddhist ethics could offer positive guidance to the community, central and local governments requested that Buddhist monastics lecture in other less usual venues, like military camps or prisons, or that they open their temple premises to soldiers and inmates. Finally, besides formal lecturing, Chinese monastics often inspired by example, and facilitated the development of the surrounding community through their charisma, leadership, and practical initiatives. Buddhists have intervened in the education of Chinese society in multiple ways, offering forms of learning that very often went beyond the traditional format and beyond the space of the classroom.

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1 Bianneng, *Bianneng fashi wenji*, 170–1. Except where noted otherwise, all translations are by the author.

2 For an overview of the history of Buddhist education in China, especially the "education for the *Saṃgha*" (*duinei de sengjiao*), see Ding, *Zhongguo fojiao jiaoyu*.

3 Buddhist temples provided elementary education in rural areas, as well as to women who were otherwise excluded from the possibility of learning. Another example is the case of Peng Shaosheng 彭紹聖 (1740–1796) and the Academy that he founded. See Elman and Woodside, *Education and Society in Late Imperial China (1600–1900)*, 528–60.

This study is based on archival material, historical documents, Republican publications, and ethnographic research. It concentrates on Buddhists as educators for society at large outside the temples, exploring intellectual arguments and concrete activities from the first half of the twentieth century. From the late Qing and early Republican period, new venues and possibilities for Buddhist education opened, enriching the spectrum of practices already performed in the Imperial time. On the other hand, this social engagement in the Republican era 中華民國 (1912–1949) represented a further development of patterns from the premodern period. It continued after the Republican period and is still visible today, although in a different format due to a new socio-historical context.

Certainly, these educational initiatives in modern China could very well be categorised under the umbrella concept of "Humanistic Buddhism" (*renjian fojiao* 人間佛教), which celebrates the possibility of individual and social change through Buddhism (with Buddhism intended as Buddhadharma and moral paradigms, but also as a community of practitioners).[4] Its slogan expression "Buddhicization"—meaning "leading and transforming through Buddha's teachings" (*fo hua* 佛化 or *fofa huadao* 佛法化導)—could designate Buddhist modalities in premodern China but became an identity marker, especially for the socially-present Buddhism that began in early twentieth-century China. Indeed, education, in its variants, has been and is a tool for social change. At the same time, as this article explains, the processes and aims of Buddhist education seem to reflect and certainly share key elements of the foundations of traditional Chinese (Confucian) education. Evidence of practices in pre-modern China and debates from the twentieth-century demonstrate that education in China aimed to be instrumental for the foundation of ethical sustainability; and in the Republican era these ethical lessons *from* China were thought to hold teachings for global societies both present and future.[5]

This article will start with a historical overview of education in China, the interlinked development of religious (Buddhist and Daoist) and secular (Confucian) learning in the premodern era, the mutual influences between these

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4 For a doctrinal and historical overview of *renjian fojiao*, see Travagnin, "Humanistic Buddhism (*Rensheng Fojiao* 人生佛教 / *Renjian Fojiao* 人間佛教)."

5 See the section on Wang Enyang for this point.

two spheres, and their embedding in Chinese society.[6] These are the foundations of the underlying patterns of education in the modern period, from the late Qing onwards. The second and third part will focus on continuation and developments in the Republican era, addressing intellectual arguments and debates (the "theory," topic of the second part), as well as concrete examples of Buddho-Confucian educational initiatives outside the classroom (the "practice," in the third part). In my research I have recognized four possibilities for educational practices; that is, four spheres in which Buddhists intervened and contributed to the public sphere: (1) the sponsorship and opening of non-religious community elementary schools; (2) learning from charismatic models, when monastics simply led by example and inspired positive change; (3) exposing the army to the Dharma, with the military visiting or residing in temples and being lectured by the *Saṃgha*, especially during the Sino-Japanese conflict; (4) exposing prison inmates to the Dharma. This article will focus on the last three, since non-religious schools sponsored by the *Saṃgha* have already received significant attention in recent scholarship.[7] The article will end with reflections on the potential for (Chinese) Buddhists to go beyond China as educators in the twenty-first century, and argue for the global contribution of Buddhism toward social ethical sustainability.

I. Education in Buddhism, China, and Chinese Buddhism—Before the Late Qing

Confucius is *the* sage from the past. He was—and still is—conceived as *the* educator in China. The Buddha has also been labelled an educator. In China, changes in education have been key to reading shifts in historical and social

[6] For general overviews on the pre-modern and modern history of Chinese education, see Chen, *Zhongguo jiaoyu shi*; Li, ed., *Zhongguo jiaoyu shi*.

[7] For details of temples or monks donating funds to support non-religious schools and similar educational activities, or the funding of schools within temples, see Bailey, *Reform the People*, 108. See also Duan et al., *Chengdu fojiao shi*, 259–68, for the specific case of Republican Chengdu. That book explores the local history of Buddhist education, addressing also the foundation by Buddhist temples of non-religious schools (259–68), including elementary schools for children, as well as vocational schools to help the unemployed learn skills for specific professions. See also Travagnin, "From *xue* 學 to *jiaoyu* 教育."

patterns. According to Thomas H. C. Lee, "anyone who wishes to understand Chinese history cannot do so without first possessing an understanding of Chinese education."[8] Similarly, in the study of Indian Buddhism, scholars argue that the history of Buddhist education is the history of the Buddhist *Saṃgha*. We can make similar statements when we examine the development of Buddhism as an institution in China.[9] Confucian ideals and Buddhist educational practices have interacted and mutually influenced each other, together contributing to the uniqueness of the history of Chinese education. As Thomas H. C. Lee has summarized in his book on traditional education: "China's educational history is a product of the combined influence of many intellectual forces, including popular religious practices."[10]

Before turning my attention to educational practices of the *Saṃgha* toward society "outside" the classroom in the Republican era, it is thus pivotal to understand the foundations of education in traditional China. We must turn back to Confucius as *the* educator, and highlight points of contact between the underlying principles and scope of Confucian and Buddhist education, and consider the ways in which the interaction with Buddhism has affected traditional Chinese ways of learning. The key features, conceptualizations, and practices of Confucian education formed the background that also defined, in my view, the trajectories undertaken by Buddhist education in China. At the same time, we need to note how certain Buddhist educational practices have not just been informed by the Chinese cultural milieu, but have also influenced certain patterns and developments in non-religious education. Chinese scholarship has produced several works on the Buddha and Confucius as educators from a comparative perspective, reiterating similarities and intersections between Buddhism and Confucianism in the making of Chinese education.[11]

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8 Lee, *Education in Traditional China*, vii.

9 Nengrong, *Lüzhi, qinggui jiqi xiandai yiyi zhi tanjiu*, 150.

10 Lee, *Education in Traditional China*, viii.

11 Among others, see Chen, *Fotuo yu Kongzi jiaoyu sixiang de bijiao*. The same theme has been the subject of blogs and online debates, a fact that reinforces the connections between the two ideals of education.

1.1 The Confucian and Buddhist Ideals of Moral Leadership and Ethical Sustainability

Starting from the time of Confucius' reforms, a new understanding of education made a distinction between learning in/for the private sphere and learning for the public sphere. Learning as a form of self-cultivation and improvement of the moral self—that is, a learning dedicated to the individual—was labelled as in/for the private sphere. Study, however, was also aimed at the public sphere, because a better "moral self" (resulting from education in the private sphere) would contribute to a better society. Learning was thus conceived to have practical implications: to build the person but also to create a better "humane" society. The importance given to the humanities (from history and literature to music and other arts) over other subjects, as well as the Confucian emphasis on "rituals and etiquette" (*li* 禮), were conducive to the same intents: the former especially supporting the private sphere and the latter especially supporting the public domain. The character *ren* 仁, usually translated as "benevolence," was "the key word in Confucius' educational theory,"[12] because it implied that "learning" (*xue* 學) was directed at establishing a good society. This principle is perfectly understandable within the framework of Confucian ideology, where human beings are perceived as relational beings, and education has then to be socially relevant.

At the same time, this principle applies to the (non-Confucian) Buddhist context. In fact, whether it is *for* the *Saṃgha* or *from* the *Saṃgha*, learning in Buddhism was expected to improve the moral dimension of the individual, and was also conducive for generating a better existence for humanity. The Chinese identified education as moral education, and Buddhism—in its teachings rather than in its institution—was recognized as a form of ethics that provided guidelines for self-correction (*fofa huadao*). Returning to the discourse of "Humanistic Buddhism," the goal of creating a "Pure Land on Earth" (*renjian jingtu* 人間淨土) may seem quite similar to the Confucian objective to rectify and ameliorate society. Buddhist practice and Chinese education clearly show similarities in their intentions and targets.

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[12] Lee, *Education in Traditional China*, 173.

1.2 Buddhist and Daoist Contributions to Education in Pre-Modern China

Buddhism *as* education, in its essence and purpose, developed in parallel to Chinese education but also merged with the Chinese environment and influenced the structural development of Chinese public education. Speaking in terms of general religious influence on Chinese education, we should remember not just Buddhist influence (especially from the Tang 唐 (618–907)) but also Daoist contributions. In other words, religious communities and practices in China have shaped Chinese non-religious (Confucian-based) education on several levels.

Buddhism and Daoism had distinct master-disciple relations, which seemed to have been later emulated by the teacher-student connection outside the religious sphere. Although the specific roles of the teacher in both religious and secular (Confucian) contexts—namely, the authority that a teacher embeds, the transmission and the formation of lineages, and the formation of schools—were present even before the arrival of Buddhism in China, they were surely reinforced through their practice in a Buddhist religious context.

The centrality of written books finds striking parallels between the Buddhist and Daoist spheres and the Confucian context. For instance, the collection of texts into canonized erudition as the basis of specific schools (in Buddhism and Daoism) suggests a concept of orthodoxy of knowledge even outside a religious context. See, for instance, the so-called Confucian canons, namely the *Five Classics* (*Wujing* 五經), the *Four Books* (*Sishu* 四書), and the *Four Books for Women* (*Nü sishu* 女四書). Moreover, Buddhist and Daoist monasteries printed and produced books and functioned as libraries by hosting them, a phenomenon that then extended outside the boundaries of temples.

School programs and teaching delivery methods adopted in religious sites inspired the Confucian academies. The specific components of the Buddhist education program within monasteries, including recitation, oratory skills, and pluri-language abilities, can be detected in the development of specific disciplines in the Confucian academy, from poetry recitation to phonology. In addition, strict discipline and space for private cultivation were pillars in the Buddhist monastic context and later also in the Confucian academy. Buddhist temples were seen as detached lands for intellectual upbringing, and so the Confucian academy became the model of "intellectual space" in the Song 宋 (960–1279). Eventually, Buddhist temples also welcomed non-Buddhists to retreat and study non-Buddhist texts, offering them space for private self-study,

as well as for learning secular subjects from teachers who were members of the *Saṃgha*. The next step was for monastics to build proper non-religious schools within the temple.

The middle of the fifth century marked the beginning of nuns' education in Buddhism. It is important to remember that the creation of female Buddhist education had a major impact on women's education overall. In fact, religious institutions, whether Buddhist nunneries or Daoist female temples, were eventually the only places for women to receive an education from the fifth and sixth century.[13]

On the one hand, Buddhist traits came to affect and permeate Confucian academies and cover gaps in public education. On the other hand, Buddhist temples also welcomed and absorbed Confucian elements, and both Buddhist and non-Buddhist education started occurring within the temple boundaries. Chinese Buddhist monastics were not just Buddhist, but also—and in certain respects first of all—Chinese. This also translated into the inclusion of key texts of Chinese learning, such as the Confucian *Five Classics* and the *Four Books*, in the curriculum of the Buddhist *siyuan* 寺院 since premodern days. The Chinese identity of Buddhist monastics is evinced even more strongly in the Republican era with the rising discourse of nationalism. As we will see in the following section, the synergy between Confucian and Buddhist spheres of education inspired Buddhist monastics to bring secular education into the sacred temples, and propose secular or moral education outside the temple premises.

II. Buddhist Contributions to Chinese Education in the Republican Era

Philosophy, structures, and practices of education in China went through substantial changes towards the late Qing and especially in the Republican era. From the decline and eventual abolition of the imperial examinations (*keju* 科舉) to the establishment of the first Ministry of Education (*jiaoyu bu* 教育部), in the early twentieth century the Chinese education system started to welcome and adopt foreign models of learning.[14] Changes in the domain of education

13 For more details on Buddhist and Daoist influences on traditional (Confucian) education, see, for instance, Lee, *Education in Traditional China*, 217–362; 564–99.

14 For reforms of education in China since the late Qing, see Adams, *Education and Modernization*

became, first and foremost, the foundation for the renewal that the country felt necessary and urgent. Slogans on the "omnipotence of education" (*jiaoyu wanneng* 教育萬能) and the call to "save the country through education" (*jiaoyu jiuguo* 教育救國) recurred throughout modern Chinese history, including the Republican period, to emphasize the direct connection between the two contexts.

Similar phenomena occurred in the Buddhist sphere. Since the late Qing, Buddhists started framing Buddhism and Buddhist practice within new conceptual categories, especially those imported from the West or via Japan, as well as through revisited Chinese (and Buddhist) endogenous ideas. Buddhists tried to reposition themselves and their tradition in a new cultural and political time; they updated Buddhist taxonomies and articulated new semantics for traditional vocabulary. This process was unfolding in the wider social and intellectual atmosphere of challenges and paradigm shifts. This milieu involved other groups and patterns, with whom Buddhists acted in parallel but also intersected. In this context, transformations in both *Saṃgha* education as well as in the education (Buddhist and otherwise) that the *Saṃgha* delivered to the laity became the first step in rethinking the religious and societal role of the Buddhist community.[15] Not only "education" (*jiaoyu* 教育), then, but also Buddhism—now intended as a form of education—were repurposed to "rescue the nation" (*jiuguo* 救國).

This article explores the main arguments and debates regarding education that Buddhist monastics and Chinese intellectuals advanced at this shifting time in Chinese civilization, which repositioned Confucian ideals and Buddhist doctrines by giving them a more substantial role in the social sphere. We will focus on the writings and propositions of the intellectual Wang Enyang 王恩洋 (1897–1964) and the Buddhist monk Cihang 慈航 (1893–1954), two key figures in the first half of the twentieth century who have so far been neglected, especially in Western scholarship. Wang Enyang was trained first in classical Chi-

in Asia; Bailey, *Reform the People*; Borthwick, *Education and Social Change in China*; Cleverley, *The Schooling of China*; Hsiao, *The History of Modern Education in China*; Peterson, Hayhoe, and Lu, eds., *Education, Culture, and Identity in Twentieth-Century China*; Zarrow, *Educating China*. Several works address the effects of Christian colleges on changing the education system in modern China, see for instance Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges 1850–1950*.

15 For these changes in the Buddhist sphere, see Chen and Deng, *Ershi shiji zhi zhongguo fojiao*; Travagnin, "Buddhist Education between Tradition, Modernity and Networks"; *idem*, "From *xue* 學 to *jiaoyu* 教育."

nese thought and Western philosophy, and later in Buddhist doctrine and texts. He was a theorizer of an alternative education and culture for the new China, and the initiator of schools open to *Saṃgha* members and non-Buddhist laity. As we will see later, Wang Enyang's positions reflected certain tendencies of the May Fourth Movement and were also embraced by several Buddhist monks of the Republican era. The monk Cihang lived in China in the Republican period but moved to Taiwan in the late 1940s, becoming one of those clerics who bridged China with Taiwan, and worked on the "rebirth" in post-colonial Taiwan of the kind of *new* Buddhism that had developed in China in the early twentieth century.

These arguments embraced foreign influences but also attempted to revive and reinforce the traditional essence of Chinese (Confucian) education and also, explicitly, Buddhism. This shows continuity with the pre-modern period, but also a renewed appreciation for the Confucian and Buddhist contribution to ethical sustainability in the modern context. Section Three of this article will move from theory to practice and outline how these intellectual and theoretical debates became embodied in several Buddhist educational practices.

2.1 Cihang 慈航: Buddhism as Education to "Rescue the Nation"

Born with the name Ai Jirong 艾繼榮, Cihang was ordained in Jiangxi in 1913. He started his monastic career in China, where he studied with the well-known monks of the time, from Yuanying 圓瑛 (1878–1953) to Dixian 諦閑 (1858–1932) to Taixu 太虛 (1890–1947). In 1927, he enrolled in one of the first modernized Buddhist seminaries, the Minnan Institute of Buddhist Studies (Minnan foxueyuan 閩南佛學院). Cihang engaged in all the major debates that animated Buddhist circles in the 1930s, and proposed arguments that resonated—but did not fully coincide—with the positions of the reformer Taixu. Cihang's oeuvre is vast and varied; he lectured and published on Buddhist texts that were popular in early twentieth-century China, but also debated contemporary issues such as education and *Saṃgha* reform, and stressed the important role that nuns could play in Buddhist and social communities. Cihang was among the first proponents of Humanistic Buddhism, and it is in these terms that his idea of Buddhism *as* education should be interpreted.[16]

16 For more about Cihang, see Kan, *Taiwan gaoseng*, 47–92. See also the collections Cihang fashi yongjiu jinianhui, ed., *Cihang fashi quanji* 慈航法師全集, 3 vols., and Cihang dashi jinianji

In Cihang's writings, Buddhism is addressed as both a *zongjiao* 宗教 (religion) and a *jiaoyu* 教育 (education). Cihang lists Buddhism as one of the three main religions available in China,[17] but also categorised it as a form of "national education" (*guojia de jiaoyu* 國家的教育). Cihang argued it is as education that Buddhism could "rescue the nation" (*jiuguo*). Buddhism, Christianity, the Three Principles of the People (*san min zhuyi* 三民主義), and Confucian teachings (often called *kongjiao* 孔教 in Cihang's writings) are all forms of education, Cihang continued, and as education they can save the nation. According to Cihang, there are three types of education: (1) the education given within the household (*jiating jiaoyu* 家庭教育); (2) the education given at school (*xuexiao jiaoyu* 學校教育); and (3) the education given within/for society (*shehui jiaoyu* 社會教育). Buddhism, as a "religion" and hence more than a secular education, offers a special guidance to society that can compensate for the deficiencies of the other two forms of education within the family and the school system. On this basis, Buddhism should be conceived as an education system with a societal role, and thus the ability to rescue the nation.[18]

Cihang's arguments evince features of Humanistic Buddhism, where Buddhism is not just a passive religion but functions within the social sphere and contributes to it. His arguments echo what other Buddhist voices claimed at that time, such as the call for a "Buddhicized education" (*fohua de jiaoyu* 佛化的教育) from several monks in the 1920s.[19] Others not only remarked on the value of Buddhism as education, but also tried to merge the *new* Buddhism with contemporary political doctrine, so as to legitimise and reinforce the societal role of the tradition. In 1928, for instance, Taixu firmly endorsed the Three Principles of the People not merely as a political ideology but as a basis

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bianyinchu, ed., *Cihang dashi jinianji* 慈航大師紀念集, 2 vols.

[17] The three religions were Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam; local Chinese traditions, like Daoism, were not included.

[18] See the following articles published in *Cihang fashi quanji*, vol. 3 *Puti xinying—renshengpian* 菩提心影—人生篇: Cihang, "Fojiao yu shehui zhi guanxi" 佛教與社會之關係, 42–6; *idem*, "Jiuguo wenti" 救國問題, 75–83. See also the following writings from *Cihang fashi quanji*, vol. 3, *Puti xinying—shiyipian* 菩提心影—釋疑篇: Cihang, "Jiuguo yanjiu" 救國研究, 46–9; *idem*, "Fojiao keyi jiuguo" 佛教可以救國, 50–6; and *idem*, "Fojiao zenme keyi jiuguo" 佛教怎麼可以救國, 57–9.

[19] Daxing, "Foxueyuan yu conglin"; Huasheng, "Foxue yanjiu zhi lishiguan"; Tang, "Tan fohua jiaoyu zhi zhiqu"; *idem*, "Daode jiaoyu shuoyao."

for the educational system, and defined his "humanistic Buddhist education" (*rensheng fojiao jiaoyu* 人生佛教教育) as being in line with the new Guomindang 國民黨 (GMD hereafter) policies. In the same article, Taixu proposed a "moral education in accordance with the Great Unity" (*datong de daode jiaoyu* 大同的道德教育) as a thorough form of education that embodied religious values and could thus benefit society overall. "Humanistic Buddhism" was then defined according to concepts of social sustainability and civility embedded in the Three Principles of the People, and it finally became the Buddhist expression of the latter.[20] *Rensheng fojiao*, *renjian fojiao*, and the GMD's Three Principles of the People were then in harmony, and the educational ideals they proposed were in line with the educational ideals of the (Confucian) "Great Unity" (*datong* 大同).

2.2 Wang Enyang 王恩洋: Chinese (Buddhist and Confucian) Education to "Rescue Humanity"

The "invasion" of Western values into Chinese educational practices, including the change of curriculum in religious institutions, was not always received with enthusiasm and was often contested. Within the Buddhist sphere, even the monk Dongchu 東初 (1908–1977), for instance, was very critical of the secularisation of programs in Buddhist seminaries.[21] The call to preserve the Chinese identity of educational practices and the fear of idealising Western knowledge opened debates in China outside the Buddhist *Saṃgha* as well. Wang Enyang played an important role in this context.

A native of Nanchong 南充 (Sichuan), Wang Enyang enrolled in the Nanchong Middle Study Hall (Nanchong zhongxuetang 南充中學堂) in 1913 where he received Chinese traditional (Confucian) education. After graduation, Wang moved to Beijing in 1920, where he studied at Beijing University. He studied Western philosophy and also took courses on Indian philosophy, Yogācāra, and Sanskrit. Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 (1893–1988) was among his teachers. In 1922, Wang Enyang moved to Nanjing, to the newly founded Chinese Metaphysical Institute (Zhina neixueyuan 支那内學院) and studied with resident scholars like

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[20] Taixu, "Quanguo jiaoyu huiyi tiyian." See also Xinsheng, "Foxue yu san min zhuyi"; Jiang, "Lun fohua yu san min zhuyi," *idem*, "Lun fohua yu san min zhuyi." See also Travagnin, "From *xue* 學 to *jiaoyu* 教育."

[21] Dongchu, *Zhongguo fojiao jindaishi*, 217.

Ouyang Jingwu 歐陽竟無 (1871–1943) and Lü Cheng 呂澂 (1896–1989). Later, in 1925, he became a teacher in the same institute. In 1928, after five years in Nanjing, Wang Enyang returned to Nanchong, where he continued his research on the Consciousness-only philosophy (*Weishi* 唯識). In the following years, he founded a few institutes where he concretized his educational philosophy, including the Guishan Academy (Guishan shuyuan 龜山書院) in Nanchong (1930–1942) and the Research Institute of Eastern Culture and Education (Dongfang wenjiao yanjiuyuan 東方文教研究院), which was first hosted in Shengshui Monastery (Shengshui si 聖水寺) in Neijiang 內江 (1942–1947) and then later moved to Chengdu (1947–1951).

According to Wang Enyang, Confucian and Buddhist values should be seen as the essence of the ideal education. Confucianism and Buddhism were sources of moral values that could guarantee the sustainability of a harmonious, peaceful, and virtuous society.[22] His mission was to return attention to these two traditions (*rufo wei zong* 儒佛為宗).[23] This was in line with his perspective on culture and education, on the legacy of the May Fourth Movement, and on the adoption of Western thought at the expense of his own Chinese national and cultural identity. The institutes that Wang opened repeated the model of other educational initiatives from the period, like the Research Institute on Eastern Culture (Dongfang wenhua yanjiuyuan 東方文化研究院) founded by the Buddhist Tang Dayuan 唐大圓 in Wuchang 武昌 (1931–1937).[24]

According to Wang Enyang, the systems, contents, and scope of education reflect the culture within which they are embedded. In response to a frenetic and enthusiastic reception of the values and aims of Western culture and education (generally referred to as *xifang* 西方)—even to the point of replacing Chinese traditional perspectives with Western ideas—Wang Enyang reflected on the main discrepancies between Chinese and Western culture and education. Specifically, he considered how Chinese traditional ideas might be ideal not just for China, but to foster a better humanity for the world at large. Much

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[22] Among his writings, Wang's "Guishan shufang ji" 龜山書房記 [Notes on the Guishan Academy] is a manifesto of his view on what education should be, and reflects his initial motivations to start schools and engage in teaching. The later "Jiaoyu gaige lun" 教育改革論 [On Education Reforms] reveals more mature reflections on the contemporary system of education. See also Chen, "Wang Enyang's Response."

[23] Wang, "Dongfang wenjiao yuan zhiqu shu," 275.

[24] Around the same time Tang Dayuan also founded the journal *Dongfang wenhua* 東方文化.

of Wang Enyang's arguments seem to revive traditional Chinese (Confucian) views of education, which centred on self-cultivation and moral improvement, and were instrumental to the foundation of a harmonious society. The same views also permeated the Buddhist sphere, as in the ethical emphasis and the societal contributions preached by the monk Cihang. According to Wang Enyang, "education is the foundation of a country": a prosperous education brings prosperity to the country, whereas a corrupted education brings corruption to the country.[25] Furthermore, education serves to perfect "human virtues" (*wanshan ren de dexing* 完善人的德性), with the effect of developing "civilization" (*wenming* 文明).[26]

The name of the institute that Wang opened in Neijiang—Dongfang wenjiao yanjiuyuan 東方文教研究院—also reveals how, in practice, he stressed the relevance of "Eastern" education and culture. *Wen* 文 here refers to *wenhua* 文化 (culture) and *jiao* 教 stands for *jiaoyu* 教育 (education), rather than *zongjiao* 宗教 (religion).[27] By "eastern" he meant Chinese but also Indian, thinking of the original birthplace of Buddhism.

While promoting a third form of culture and education, one which went beyond the sole promotion of either Chinese or Western values, Wang emphasised the essence of a Chinese education based on Confucian and Buddhist studies. He highlighted the complementarity and the successful combination of the two systems; an education that perfects "human virtues" and engenders "civilization." This is an educational (and cultural) vision that does not encourage individualism and exclusion, but rather the idea of inter-dependence and a non-dualistic "one world philosophy." Buddhism's "theory of cause and effect" (*yinguo* 因果) and no-self certainly lead to this. This is how a "united" (*tongyi* 統一) and "harmonious family" (*hehe yijia* 和合一家) is achieved.[28] The Confucian idea of the Great Unity highlighted in Wang Enyang's writings is also shared, implicitly, by Buddhists. The monk Taixu and other promotors of Humanistic Buddhism had proposed the same, underlining it as a key feature of a "*renjian fojiao* education" (*renjian fojiao jiaoyu* 人間佛教教育).[29]

25 Wang, "Jiaoyu gaige lun," 228; Wang, "Zhongguo wenjiao lun," 252–62.
26 Wang, "Jiaoyu geige lun," 229.
27 Huang, "Pingmin jiaoyujia Wang Enyang," 159.
28 Wang, "Benyuan kaixue ji," 289.
29 Wang, "Dongfang wenjiao yanjiuyuan yuanqi," 281.

Wang did not just try to rescue the lost value of Chinese (and Buddhist) education for the new modern world, he was also aware that the non-Chinese could not be ignored completely. This is why he proposed "new culture and education" as a novel solution for creating a better world. It would be a new system of culture and education in addition to, and inclusive of, the two systems of Eastern and Western cultures. This was the conclusion that Wang Enyang reached after his longterm study of Western and Eastern philosophies: a new third system, and a new plan that he wanted to implement in the schools he either founded or in which he was teaching. Wang Enyang encouraged not just China but the entire world to pursue such new system as the only way to reach a more fruitful and peaceful future. In his view, there was need for a new culture to build a new humanity, and the new culture had to "encompass, merge, and be based on Chinese and non-Chinese past and present traditions" (*rongshe zhongwai gujin* 融攝中外古今).[30] It was the education that, using Wang's terms, could have fostered "peace for humanity, renaissance of the nation" (*heping renlei, fuxing minzu* 和平人類, 復興民族).[31]

III. From Theory to Practice: Values in Action in the Republican Era

We have seen an overview of *what* Buddhism could teach Chinese society, its interface with Confucian values and learning, as well as how modern theorizers conceived Confucian and Buddhist education as crucial elements for ethical sustainability in a global modern society. The following section will now explore some examples of *how* Buddhists embodied these values in practice, lectured on them, and spread them beyond the premises of the temples and the classic classrooms. I will explore three models of educational practice: leading by example, lecturing the army, and Dharma in prisons.

3.1 Leading by Example

Collections of monks' and nuns' biographies present the achievements of a set of Buddhist practitioners who then became exemplars of premodern Chinese Buddhism. They also represent how Chinese Buddhism wanted to be

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30 Wang, "Dongfang wenjiao yuan zhiqu shu," 275.
31 Wang, "Benyuan kaixue ji," 288–92.

memorialised. The translation of texts and doctrinal exegesis were key factors in defining "eminent Buddhism" and "eminent Buddhists." However, it was not only through lecturing and preaching that exemplary Buddhists left their mark on the community; their leadership and welfare interventions were also highly influential. Monastics and lay people have led by example and inspired surrounding communities throughout the history of Chinese Buddhism; being exemplary should thus be understood as a form of education that intends to nurture a sense of ethical sustainability.

Examples of this in the Republican era are many and varied. I will mention one case from my recent research on Sichuan Buddhism: a nun from the periphery of Chengdu, Fangchong 方崇 (1841–192?), who moved to a small temple already in ruins, but which under her leadership became the celebrated Zhuyin Nunnery (Zhuyin si 竹隱寺). After Fangchong's death, a statue and text commemorating her were installed at the temple. Fangchong was born in 1841 to a well-known local family and became interested in Buddhism in childhood. As a monastic, she felt a mission to disseminate the Dharma and save sentient beings; she preached the (Mahāyāna) "Bodhisattva practice" (*pusa xing* 菩薩行) as the only effective form of cultivation. Fangchong also followed the traditional Chan practice and strongly believed in the rule attributed to Baizhang 百丈 (720–814) that "a day without work is a day without food" (*yiru bu zuo, yiri bushi* 一日不作一日不食) as well as in the idea of a self-sustained monastic community rooted in farming labour. Fangchong visited Zhuyin temple in 1874, when it was already abandoned and in ruins due to the rains and floods from the early 1870s. The water had corroded and destroyed all the statues, which had become unrecognizable. She was deeply touched by the devastation of the sacred site, and made a vow to rebuild the temple, return its lost dignity, and inspire and nurture the surrounding community.

Fanchong moved to Zhuyin in 1876 with two disciples and some lay followers. Money saved from the nuns' farming and various donations from the local community helped four nuns give Zhuyin Nunnery a new life. By the late 1920s, the Zhuyin Chan Nunnery (Zhuyin chansi 竹隱禪寺) reached its completion. The beauty of the decorations and details—the result of the efforts of Fangchong and her disciples—had turned Zhuyin Chan Nunnery into the most popular and known temple in Pixian 郫縣 and adjacent areas.[32]

[32] Pixian corresponds to Pidu 郫都 district in today's Chengdu.

From 1876 to 1949, Fangchong and her direct generations of disciples focused on three main charity initiatives: (1) the donation of rice and other goods to the needy, with even local political figures participating in the food collection; (2) the distribution of medicine to the poor; and (3) the annual temple fair (on the seventh day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar), where the nuns delivered lectures on Buddhist teachings and texts, especially emphasising the spirit of Chan and Bodhisattva practice, which were central in Fangchong's cultivation and the practice that she promoted at Zhuyin. The nun Fangchong was determined to stay in the rural area and continue another traditional feature of the Chan school, namely the "equal emphasis on Chan practice and farming" (*nongchan bingzhong* 農禪並重). She transmitted this spirit to her monastic disciples, as well as to the lay families that were living in the village and working in the temple's fields. And even now, with the reopening of the nunnery after the long closure that started in the beginning of the 1950s, and despite the reduced and modest appearance of the temple complex, the nuns follow the Chan spirit and are a crucial reference point for local families and farmers. Thanks to the presence of Fangchong, Zhuyin became a centre of inspiration and moral guidance for those families living in the surrounding areas. It became a site that educated, and still educates, the laity. I felt the same atmosphere during my recent visit in August 2019.[33]

It is worth noting that the temple exhibits posters and other written material on Confucian teachings and virtues, which serves as further evidence of the interface between the latter and Buddhism in terms of promoting individual moral cultivation to lead to a better society. Monastics turning prayers into action, making the essence of the Bodhisattva spirit manifest through concrete assistance to the community: this is a successful way to teach Buddhist principles and to show a Confucian sense of social responsibility at the same time. At a time when the history of Buddhism tends to be very much about the male *Saṃgha*, it is relevant to underline that Buddhist women and nuns were also all active participants in social welfare, and they are still remembered as such by local communities.

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[33] For details about the nun Fangchong and Zhuyin nunnery, see Gao, *Zhuyinsi ji*. See also Travagnin, "Monk Changyuan," 215–7.

3.2 Lecturing the Army

In my research on Buddhism in modern Sichuan, I have also analysed the effect of the Sino-Japanese conflict on the interaction between the *Saṃgha* and the laity, and the further development of another instance of Buddhists engaging in *duiwai* 對外 education (education of lay believers) in the public sphere. In certain cases, this was a way to bring the public sphere into the temple by turning the temple into a school for soldiers.

Since the late 1920s, but especially from the mid and late 1930s, not only governmental offices and intellectuals moved from Nanjing to the Southwest, but military academies were also transferred to what is today Sichuan and Chongqing,[34] and this is how tens of thousands of soldiers spent about eight years in Sichuan. In Chengdu alone, Daoist temples, like Qingyang gong 青羊宮, and Buddhist monasteries, like Baoguang si 寶光寺 and Caotang si 草堂寺, hosted the army and served as military schools.[35] From a different perspective, turning the temples into military schools or camps was also helpful for the survival of the religious sites in those years of turmoil. Certainly, good relations between abbots and the military could also spare temple sites and surrounding communities from being too affected by the conflict.[36]

Members of the army did not only need a place of residence and practice, they were also in need of support and moral instruction, which members of the *Saṃgha* delivered. While residing at temples, generals often requested that monks and Buddhist lay teachers lecture the army on various subjects, from Pure Land texts to Yogacāra philosophy. Teachings included meditation sessions, lectures on the fundamental tenets of the Buddhadharma, lectures

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34 In 1937, due to the Sino-Japanese war and the Japanese occupation of Nanjing, the China Metaphysical Institute moved to Jiangjin (within Chongqing), where it was renamed Chinese Metaphysical Institute—Sichuan branch (Zhina neixueyuan shuyuan 支那內學院蜀院). The site in Chongqing was closed in 1945; Wang Enyang became the real protagonist especially after the passing of Ouyang Jingwu in 1943.

35 On the topic of Baoguang monastery during the Sino-Japanese war, see for instance "Jianchi fojiao Zhonghuohua jianghao Chengdu fojiao gushi, diwu qi."

36 It was also because of the good terms between monks and the military that certain areas were spared the atrocities of war. See the case of the monk Chuandu 傳度 (d.u.), abbot at Wuyou Monastery (Wuyou si 烏尤寺), in Leshan. At the beginning of the 1930s, Chuandu used his connections with the military to avoid battles in the area, and thus saved the monastery as well as all of the local people. See Bianneng, *Bianneng fashi wenji*, 140–2.

on texts like the *Jingang jing* 金剛經 [Diamond Sūtra], the *Yuanjue jing* 圓覺經 [Sūtra of Perfect Enlightenment], the chapter "Pumen pin" 普門品 [Universal Gateway] in the *Fahua jing* 法華經 [Lotus Sūtra], sūtras and commentaries on the Western Pure Land and Amitābha's vows. Lectures also involved several metaphors on the concept of "protection of the country" (*huguo* 護國), with the country taken as metaphor and embodiment of the "Pure Land." Monks also spent time teaching the notion of karma, in the sense of interconnectedness via the law of cause and effect.[37] Troops outside Sichuan were also instructed by *Saṃgha* members; eminent monks like Yuanying and Changxing 常惺 (1896–1939) and lay intellectuals such as Ouyang Jingwu were involved in the teaching.[38] This was moral upbringing; it was a way to "perfect human virtues" (*wanshan ren de dexing* 完善人的德性), to borrow Wang Enyang's expression, and a way to explain interconnectedness within humanity, insofar as a time of international conflict would allow of course.

The military eventually showed a deeper interest in Buddhism due to the close presence of the *Saṃgha*. For instance, the famous army general Feng Yuxiang 馮玉祥 (1882–1948), a Christian believer, wrote poems about Baoguang Monastery that are highly revered by the temple; some generals took shelter in Buddhist temples, which agreed to act in that capacity;[39] young soldiers ended up converting to Buddhism, some of them even entering monkhood. Finally, military figures eventually sponsored the creation of Buddhist seminaries for the education of young monks.[40]

3.3. Dharma in Prisons

Since Imperial times, the Chinese firmly believed that the Buddhadharma could provide moral teachings and help inmates rectify their behaviour. Two main thoughts seem to recur in the history of Buddhist missions in prison. First of all, Buddhism—both in terms of doctrine and practice—could rehabili-

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37 For the recurrence of the concept of "state protection" (*huguo* 護國) throughout the history of Chinese Buddhism, see Wei, *Fojiao huguo sixiang yu shijian*.

38 See Hou, *Taixu shidai*, 298–307.

39 For instance, the famous Zhu De 朱德 (1886–1976) was hidden in Zhaojue temple (Zhaojue si 昭覺寺) in Chengdu, and later donated an inscription to the temple to show his appreciation for the help of the monastic community. The inscription, which still stands at the temple today, says *ying shi renjian* 應世人間.

40 Similar situations have been documented in Hou, *Taixu shidai*, 298–307.

tate the inmates and transform the "evil" (*e* 惡) of their previous intentions and actions into "goodness" (*shan* 善) for their years to come. Secondly, Buddhism could also help the inmates overcome the suffering (*ku* 苦) caused by their crimes, and see that as a crucial stage in the process of Buddhist practice.[41] Stories from Buddhist texts, like the figure of Aṅgulimāla (Ch. Yangjuemoluo 央掘魔羅) who was also popular in China, could provide legitimacy to the claims that criminals could turn into positive leaders in society.

The first documented instances of Buddhists aiding the convicted in Chinese prisons date back to the Northern Wei Dynasty 北魏 (386–534), in the mid-fifth century. At that early stage, we did not have monastics entering prisons, but rather offenders were brought into Buddhist temples, which then were seen as venues that could offer "reforming education" (*ganhua jiaoyu* 感化教育). The rehabilitation work at the temple was also perceived as potentially leading to the stability of Chinese society. When serious offenders were transferred temporarily to the temple, they were called *fotu hu* 佛圖户 or *si hu* 寺户 (literally "Buddhist householders") to indicate that they were staying inside temple property and were to undertake labour tasks, like cleaning the temple or working in the temple's fields, while also learning Buddhist doctrine and ethical principles.

Records from the Sui 隋 (581–618) and later in the Tang present different scenarios, but with similar aims. At that time, Buddhist monastics did not enter prisons. However, specific vihāras, called *taiyu jingshe* 台狱精舍, were built and administrated by the supervisory and judicial system. In these vihāra, inmates tried to repent for their mistakes and were guided by Buddhists (and Buddhism) to "make a change in their life" (*fojiao ganhua* 佛教感化). A famous instance occurred in Chang'an 長安 at the ordinance of Empress Wu Zetian 武則天 (624–705).[42]

Considerable changes started in the late Qing and were especially implemented during the Republican period. This is when Buddhist *Saṃgha*s started entering prisons. Not only Buddhists, but also members of other religious traditions, could enter and teach in detention centres. This was decided in *Da Qing jianyu lü cao'an* 大清监狱律草案 [Great Qing Prison Code], a text from the late Qing (1910) that gave provision for religious instruction and the performance of liturgies/rituals in prisons. Several other codes were introduced in

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41 See also Han, "Fojiao yu jianyu fuxing renyuan jiaozheng yanjiu," 22–37.

42 For the premodern period, see ibid., 12–4.

the Republican era—in 1913, 1928, and 1946, for instance—but they were all minor revisions of the late Qing code. On the other hand, the Republican prisons did not just inherit regulations from the late Qing, but also tried to emulate what was happening abroad, namely the prison reforms in Japan and in several Western nations. Hence, similarly to what we see in other spheres of the new Chinese nation, Japanese and Western cultures of reform were evaluated, although filtered, and eventually adopted.[43]

In 1913, it was decided that religion should be used in prisons for moral instruction, and the Beijing prison, which was the first prison to be reformed in 1912, started this practice. Two decades later, in 1935, the Nanjing government issued a new document stating that inmates could request religious personnel as preachers or counsellors. Several religions were included; we have evidence that religious instruction from Daoism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam were all made available and given. Portraits of founders or relevant figures of these religious traditions were also hung inside the prisons.[44] Needless to say, Buddhist judges or even Ministers of Justice, like Ju Zheng 居正 (in office from 1932 to 1948), were crucial in concretizing this plan.[45]

Speaking more specifically about Buddhism, we find several articles in Buddhist journals and other magazines that explained how Buddhism could positively intervene in the correction of criminal offenders. They discuss monks who were sent to prisons to intervene, which sermons or Buddhist texts were used in these meetings, and give information on Buddhist organizations that were founded with the aim of transmitting Buddhist tenets for the moral cultivation of criminal offenders. It is compelling that although Buddhism was not the only religious belief present in prisons, it was probably the most popular one. Sources report that in 1922, the library in the first reformed prison approved by the Ministry of Justice contained 4383 volumes and of these 2070 were Buddhist (more than 47% of the then-total).[46] In a recent work, Ming

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43 Comprehensive studies of prison reforms in China include Dikötter, *Crime, Punishment and the Prison in Modern China*.

44 Scholarship about religious and Buddhist presence in prisons in Republican China includes Jiang, "Minguo 'fojiao rujian' kao"; Ming, "Minguo fojiao de jianyu jiaohui yanjiu"; Han, "Fojiao yu jianyu fuxing renyuan jiaozheng yanjiu," 14–21; Dikötter, *Crime, Punishment and the Prison in Modern China*, 107–12.

45 For more on this topic see especially Jiang, "Minguo 'fojiao rujian' kao," 94–7 and 99–101.

46 See Han, "Fojiao yu jianyu fuxing renyuan jiaozheng yanjiu," 16.

Chengman 明成满 indicated three main ways that Buddhists intervened in prisons and in the life of inmates: lectures, practice, and well-being, with the first two being easily labelled as educational practices. The Buddhist practice/educational activities run in prisons were varied; they included "lectures" (*jiangyan* 講演), "classes/curriculum on various topics of Buddhism" (*shouke* 授課), "sermons/exegesis of texts" (*jiang jing* 講經), "*nian fo* practices" (*nian fo* 念佛), "Buddhist chanting" (*fanbei* 梵唄), self-reading of Buddhist books.[47] Long was the list of books used by *Saṃgha* members in their lectures or for self-study, from the Pure Land sūtras and śāstras to writings about Buddhist doctrinal tenets and scriptures about the Bodhisattvas Guanyin 觀音 and Dizang 地藏. The scope was to put Buddhism on the frontline in the "re-education" (*ganhua* 感化) within the prisons, and to "dissolve evil and develop goodness" (*qu e cong shan* 去惡從善). Monks lectured on how to "develop humane-ness" (*zuoren zhi dao* 做人之道) and this reiterated the traditional (Confucian) view mentioned earlier: namely, that "learning" (*xue*) was the tool or path to "becoming fully human" (*zuoren* 做人), and that learning was a process of personal cultivation involving the acquisition of virtuous conduct (*zuoren zhi dao* 做人之道).[48]

Different provinces in China, from Zhejiang, Jiangsu, and Jiangxi to Sichuan, each created their own model within this general framework.[49] Several monks, including the famous Taixu and Yuanying, were all active in this mission, lecturing on Buddhism but also on Confucian values, a fact that illustrates the connection between these two ethical systems.[50] In Sichuan, for instance, the monk Changyuan 昌圓 (1879–1945)—president of the Sichuan chapter of the Chinese Buddhist Association (Sichuan fojiao hui 四川佛教會),

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47 Ming, "Minguo fojiao de jianyu jiaohui yanjiu," 130–3.

48 Shao, "Jianyu hongfa ji," 13.

49 Among Republican publications discussing Buddhist achievements in local prisons in different provinces, see Ku, "Huqing fotu xiang jianyu hongfa"; Liu, "Jiangxi di'er jianyu qing Baojing fashi kaishi lu"; Ganxian fojiaohui, "Jiangxi Ganxian jianyu shishi fofa ganhua qiufan"; "Guonei zhi bu"; "Zhejiang di'er jianyu jiaohui yanjiang lu: chongxiao"; "Zhejiang jianyu yi fofa ganhua"; "Zhesheng jianyu xuanjiang fofa." Several articles report monks' lectures on different Buddhist concepts, but also their lecturing Confucian values, and contemporary values; see for instance Jiang, "Zhejiang di'er jianyu jiaohui yanjiang lu: guobao"; "Zhejiang di'er jianyu jiaohui ci: chanhui"; "Zhejiang di'er jianyu jiaohui ci: mixin"; "Zhejiang di'er jianyu jiaohui ci: xin yuan xing"; "Zhejiang di'er jianyu jiaohui ci: xingbenshan."

50 See for instance Liu, "Yinguo: Taixu dashi zai Jiangxi di'er jianyu jiang"; Longxin, "Taixu dashi jianyu shuofa ji." As for Yuanying, see "Yuanying fashi zai Hang jianyu xuanjiang fofa."

one of the most active monks in the province from the 1920s until his passing in 1945, and one of the main educators and founders of schools in the Chengdu area—in 1934 started visiting prisons on Tuesdays and Sundays, accompanied by other monks, to explain and spread the Buddhist message. On specific days every month, he also visited the military prison with the same mission.[51] From 1944 onward, the monk Guangwen 廣文 (d.u.) replaced him in this endeavour. By 1945, in just one site in Sichuan, more than sixty inmates had become Buddhists. The number of converted inmates in the Sichuan No.1 Prison was higher—more than four hundred—and even larger was the number of those who were simply interested in the Dharma.[52]

The Chinese Prison Dharma Propagation Society (Zhongguo jianyu hongfa she 中國監獄弘法社) is a further example of the institutionalisation of this educational practice. Established towards the end of the Republican period in 1946 (although it was planned between 1931 and 1935), it was a nation-wide institution. Other similar structures, operating within a more limited territory, had already been founded decades earlier. See, for instance, the Shanghai Prison Reform Association (Shanghai jianyu ganhua hui 上海監獄感化會), founded in 1925, and others in Hangzhou (Zhejiang) and Hefei (Anhui). Publication and distribution of Buddhist texts was among their main activities, but they of course also organised talks by eminent monks. These were serious and complex enterprises, variedly funded, that reported regularly on their progress in Buddhist journals.[53]

Conclusion: Ethical Sustainability from China to the Global Scene

Buddhism is often associated with collections of scriptures and a firm ethical system. Buddhism is also an institution, a monastic and lay community, and a localised phenomenon that affects the host society while also assimilating the

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[51] For a comprehensive study on Sichuan No. 1 Prison, including its religious activities, see Li, *Minguo shiqi Sichuan diyi jianyu jianshe yu guanli yanjiu*. About Changyuan specifically, see "Xiandai fojiao shiliao: Chengdu junren jianyu qing Changyuan fashi shuofa."

[52] Ming, "Minguo fojiao de jianyu jiaohui yanjiu," 133.

[53] See "Jianyu hongfa she yuanqi"; "Jianyu hongfashe huadao zhanfan: guofangbu laihan zhi xie"; Xiao, "Zhongguo jianyu hongfa she zhi chuangli jingguo ji gongzuo baogao." See also "Shanghaishi fojiao qingnianhui zhuban: Zhongguo jianyu hongfahui jianzhang."

customs and traits of the latter. In China, Buddhism intersected with local Confucian culture, impacting the latter but also integrating its key principles and practices. One area of constructive encounter between Confucianism and Buddhism has been the educational sphere. In both the Imperial and Republican eras, Buddho-Confucian educational ideals have had the potential to engender ethical sustainability.

Buddhism also served to bridge regions, as it did in early times in central Asia, and as a pan-Asian force beginning in the late nineteenth century. Furthermore, from the late nineteenth century but more substantially in the past few decades, Buddhism has become a global presence. From that perspective, Chinese Buddhism has also been a global force, and its embedded sense of ethical sustainability has now extended outside China and beyond the Asian continent.

A number of social interventions and contributions to ethical sustainability have continued in and beyond China after the Republican period and remain visible today. These include Buddhist groups "supplementing education matters" (*zhuxue* 助學); organizations establishing non-religious schools, from elementary level to college and graduate research institutes; Buddhist chaplaincy in the army; Buddhist instructions in prisons, from reading and listening groups to meditation retreats. Much of this is still labelled, in English, as the expression of "Humanistic Buddhism." Most of the strength behind such activities is the charisma of leading Chinese Buddhists who, like the previous so-called *eminent Saṃgha* members, led by example. In Taiwan, monastics like the nun Zhengyan 證嚴 (b. 1937) and the monks Shengyan 聖嚴 (1930–2009) and Xingyun 星雲 (1927–2023) are clear examples of Buddhist actors who have inspired and attracted millions of followers and guided welfare activities in Taiwan, Asia, and all over the globe. The activities carried out especially by the Tzu Chi Foundation (Ciji gongdehui 慈濟功德會), founded by Zhengyan, and Foguangshan 佛光山, founded by Xingyun, are a good representation of how the heritage of social welfare and Buddhist instruction from Imperial and Republican China persist today. Their work in prisons, just to mention one of my case studies, expands to a few continents. In their prison work, Tzu Chi and Foguangshan members underline the notions of karma, interconnectedness, and the role of compassion.[54] They refer to canonical scriptures but also use

[54] About Foguangshan's activities in prison, see Han, "Fojiao yu jianyu fuxing renyuan jiaozheng yanjiu: yi Foguangshan jianyu jiaohua weili."

and distribute books of Zhengyan's aphorisms or writings by Xingyun, texts in which Buddhist teachings speak of Confucian virtues and which have become as authoritative as the traditional *Buddhavacana*.

What is happening today also echoes the traditional (Confucian) concept of education in China: education as a way (*dao* 道) to develop the moral character of the student—the student who is also a citizen—and eventually integrate the individual into their social environment to build a harmonious society. Here is where personal and inner cultivation become connected—and beneficial—to the surrounding community. Whether it is the Great Unity or the Pure Land on Earth, it is a society founded on ethical responsibility. As explained above, the same protagonists of the "*renjian fojiao* discourse" integrate their Buddhist lessons with Confucian sayings and wisdom.

This spirit extends beyond China and becomes even more relevant for present and future sociey, and for the prospect of global citizenship given the many challenges this new identity brings. Wang Enyang's views on Confucian and Buddhist contributions to ethical sustainability, his "third new culture and education" (*xin wenjiao* 新文教), as well as the way the monk Cihang positioned Buddhism and its potential within the education sector could all be relevant to the contemporary global world. To conclude with Wang Enyang's phrasing: Chinese education (here intended as a fusion of Confucianism and Buddhism) has the potential to contribute important lessons on ethical sustainability to the rest of the world.

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