

Humanistic Buddhism: Holding True to the Original Intents of Buddha

Chapter Four Summary

Buddhism has exerted tremendous influence on countless facets of Chinese culture. Some of these include: politics, culture, art, fashion, and food.

The Chinese language evolved through Buddhism, not only by its contribution of new vocabulary, but also in enriching its existing literature. The beauty of the Chinese language can be attributed to the effect of Buddhist terminology.

The pride Chinese have for their culture, history and civilization is a result of the impact Buddhist practices and concepts had upon them.

Buddhist masters were forerunners in charitable, humanitarian and educational endeavors. Not only did they provide aid, infrastructure and food, they were also diligent in teaching as well, as shown by the development of the Eight Schools. The golden age of Buddhism, in the Sui and Tang Dynasties, is a direct consequence of all these efforts.

For over 2,000 years, Buddhism has endured in the face of adversity, and prospered. As it thrived so did China prosper as well. Buddhist concepts such as dedication, peace, and compassion helped the country experience better social harmony, productivity, and stability. Catering to people's needs has resulted in Buddhism being one of the world's foremost religions. Moreover, this ability denotes that it is, in fact, Humanistic Buddhism. Through its propagation, we stay true to the Buddha's original intents.

Chapter Four: Development of Buddhism in China

Humanistic Buddhism is not exclusive to any region or individual. As stated in previous chapters, it is what the Buddha taught to human beings. He was born, attained buddhahood, propagated the Dharma and benefited living beings all within the human world. The entire corpus of the Tripitaka and Twelve Divisions are his teachings for human beings. The Mahayana Buddhist Pure Land teachings which hold that the Saha World itself is Pure Land, affliction is in fact bodhi, or when the mind is pure, the land becomes pure too, are all reminders that the Dharma is centered on human beings, cannot be disconnected from the human world, and that attainment must also be attained only within the human world.

After the Buddha entered nirvana, his disciples propagated his teachings in all directions, making Buddhism a common faith within Asia. In the 21st Century, Buddhism has become one of the biggest religions worldwide.

When Buddhism spread Eastward to China, Emperor Ming of Eastern Han Dynasty dispatched Cai Yin (蔡愔) in 64CE to the Western Region to search for the Dharma. He went to Dayueshi and brought two Indian monks, Kasyapa-Matanga and Dharmaratna, back to White Horse Temple in Luoyang. Thus, in China, the spread of Buddhism began from emperors to ordinary citizens.

Since the Eastern Han Dynasty, over a span of two thousand years, Buddhism exerted tremendous influence on Chinese politics, economics, literature, linguistics, art, music, and architecture. Buddhism's spread to other East Asian countries such as Korea, Japan, and Vietnam established the foundation of many East Asian civilizations.

The successful spread of Chinese Buddhism throughout society can be attributed to its key humanistic characteristics inherited from the Mahayana and Theravada traditions. Societies as a whole, from the Emperors to the ordinary citizens, were given equal chance to share in the rich and diverse elements of Buddhist culture.

Despite the rise and fall of Buddhism in various dynasties, monastic and lay disciples of the Buddha remained true to his original intents of instructing, benefiting, and bringing joy to the world. Examples of this include benefiting rulers, society, and all living beings, as well as contributing to the fabric of Chinese culture. Eminent Buddhist masters, throughout history, have embodied the Buddha's spirit and teachings. Some instructed emperors. Others traveled westward not merely to find and translate Buddhist sutras but to promote cultural exchanges. Several built monasteries and established the pure regulations, while others excavated stone caves, planted trees, opened up mills, and set up Inexhaustible Treasure (*Wujinzang*) banks.

Further endeavors involved constructing roads and bridges, providing shelters, engaging in relief aid, providing medical services, and education. A few conferred the precepts to ensure continuance of the Dharma. All of the above undertakings subsist in their contemporary forms to ensure that both the spirit and the propagation of Humanistic Buddhism endure. This chapter provides an overview of such historical endeavors.

1) The Daily Routines and Practices of Humanistic Buddhism

Even the Buddha, an awakened sage, could not forego the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, housing and mobility. Within the Five Vehicles, both human and heavenly beings depend on “this-worldly” needs, while the sravakas bear “other-worldly” minds. Bodhisattvas of the Mahayana path integrate the spirits of human and heavenly beings, sravakas, as well as pratyekabuddhas. Harmonized as one, this is the Bodhi Mind of the bodhisattva path, thus Humanistic Buddhism.

The development of Buddhism in China is elaborated below based on the premise of food, clothing, housing and transportation as the basics for life.

1. Food

As the saying states, “Food comes before everything.” Eating is integral to living. The vast influence of Buddhism can be seen in the culture of Chinese food. Its Eastward diffusion brought with it a majority of the fruits and vegetables eaten daily today. Some varieties include: barley, buckwheat, kidney bean, pea, eggplant, cantaloupe, grape, watermelon, pomegranate, tomato, cucumber, walnut, carrot, spinach, and jackfruit. All are main ingredients of customary Chinese cuisine. Imagine how inconvenient life would be for Chinese without these produce.

Aside from vegetables, eating congee for breakfast is also a result of Buddhist influence. According to the Buddhist sutras, eating congee aids digestion, satiates hunger, and prolongs life. For this reason, congee has become a routine element of breakfast. To celebrate Buddha's [Enlightenment] Day (also known as the Laba Festival), every 8th December of the lunar calendar, Buddhist temples would cook Laba Congee and distribute it gratuitously. To date, the Laba Festival has become one of the most notable festivals in Chinese culture. Each year, Fo Guang Shan temples worldwide dispense over a million bowls of Laba Congee.

The Chinese tea culture descends from traditional Buddhist monastery traditions. Tea was served in the reception halls of monasteries to welcome guests, while monastic assemblies for tea were called “Open Tea Session” (pucha). Particularly, tea was used to clear

a weary and tired mind caused by long periods of sitting meditation. Subsequently, it is now a customary drink among meditation practitioners. Moreover, the drinking of tea, as a ritual duty, is contained in the daily practices of Chan Monasteries. From Chan gongans such as Zhao Zhou Tea, the tremendous contributions of Chan practitioners to Chinese culture, through tea ceremonies, can be seen.

Today, many worldly renowned teas share a connection with Buddhist monastics. Examples include: Biluochun tea from Dongting in Jiangsu, Big Red Robe (Da Hong Pao) from Wuyi in Fujian, Longjing tea from Hanzhou Yuquan Temple, and Pu-erh tea from Xishuangbanna. All were cultivated in monasteries.

Without Pu-erh tea, the main Tibetan diet of beef and lamb would have been difficult to digest. Most tea plantations meeting the demands of tea drinkers in China are found near renowned Buddhist mountains and rivers. As a result, Chan and tea became one, and part of Chinese culture.

Master Jianzhen (鑑真, 688–763) from the Tang Dynasty, known as the father of Japanese Tea, brought tea to Japan. Later, Japanese monk Myoan Eisai (榮西, 1141–1215), studying in China, introduced Japan to the tea ceremony. Buddhist monastics have exerted tremendous influence on the propagation of both Chinese and tea culture.

Other than the above, one of Buddhism's greatest contributions is the promotion of vegetarianism. In the Buddha's time, the Sangha community catered to the local customs when begging for alms. As convenience for the people offering whatever they had, coupled with their practice of impartiality, monastics did not differentiate between meat and vegetables.

However, after Buddhism spread to China, alms begging was deemed an unsuitable practice due to the local customs, climate, and the environment. Moreover, as Chinese monastics settled in monasteries to propagate the Dharma, kitchen and storage facilities became available. In Chinese Buddhism, vegetarianism advocates the spirit of compassion strengthened by the Confucian influence, "Having seen [the animal] alive, how can one bear to see it die? Having heard its noise, how can one bear to eat its flesh?" Vegetarianism thus became a daily custom in practicing Chinese Buddhism. The integration of Buddhist and Confucian culture encouraged vegetarianism as a way of life and established it as a core concept in Humanistic Buddhism.

Although Buddhism is not against the consumption of meat, its advocacy of not killing demonstrates the equality, compassion, and oneness befitting all lives. This is in perfect accord with the modern ideals of environmental and animal protection.

2. Clothing

After the Wei, Jin Northern and Southern Dynasties (3rd to 6th CE), Chinese clothing, due to the influence of Buddhism and Central Asian cultures, began to change markedly both in style and color. Considering the fashion of women's clothing in the Tang Dynasty, the convergence of Buddhist and Chinese culture is exceedingly obvious.

At that time, women were especially fond of the red skirts from the Western regions. The women of the palace favored the *feitianji* hairstyle, evolved from Sakyamuni Buddha's *usnisa*, and sported by celestial beings in Buddhist paintings. The festoon of jewels worn by buddhas and bodhisattvas also became chosen accessories of palace women and musicians. Moreover, the Indian honeysuckle, lotus, and eight auspicious patterns all originated from Buddhist art.

Today, the *changshan* and *haiqing* robes worn by Chinese monastics, and those from India that bare the right shoulder, have all been recognized as the distinctive elements of Chinese robes. Contemporary Chinese Monastics, through their clothing, preserve Chinese culture in their own fashion

3. Housing

Buddhists advocate a life of simplicity and proximity to nature. In Buddha's time, the hot climate made it possible for his disciples to sleep beneath trees and subsist on a single meal per day. Some bhiksus were able to lead communal lives up in the mountains. However, in the cold climates of China, how can one live in the wilderness? For this reason, monasteries and temples were built.

The first Buddhist temple in China was Honglu Temple (also known as White Horse Temple) built during the Eastern Han Dynasty (58-75). Originally an imperial guest house, the arrival of two Indian monastics, Kasyapa-Matanga and Dharmaratna, turned it into a temple and place of cultivation for Chinese monastics.

Not only temples, other architectural names such as monastery, nunnery, and vihara were used as residences for Buddhist practitioners. Furthermore, the magnificence of Buddhist architecture became a feature of Chinese culture with palaces exhibiting such styles in their construction. The collective layouts of farmhouses were also under the influence of monastic communities.

Some time later, Chinese temples were founded under the procedures of "Mazu's establishment of monastery" and the standards of "Baizhang's introduction of pure regulations." Rules and constitutions thus began as features of Chinese Buddhism. These influenced various emperors of different dynasties in refining the laws of their kingdoms.

Some monasteries were built through the contributions of the common people. Others were erected by royal decree, such as Jiangtian Chan Monastery in Jinshan and Qixia Monastery in Nanjing. Both of these large and majestic complexes later became national temples. In the remote Western and Northern regions, temples were built in caves, serving as places of spiritual solace. They are also now considered treasures of Chinese culture.

Historically, and unto today, the diversity of Buddhist architecture is the result of adapting to the requirements at the time. Each variance illustrates the historical development of Humanistic Buddhism.

4. Walking

Transportation is another valued component of Buddhist culture. In the time of the Buddha, when begging for alms, bhiksus maintained their demeanor by the following means, looking straight-ahead, keeping their minds focused, as well as maintaining a firm and steady stride.

In Chinese Buddhism, the “three thousand demeanors and eighty thousand subtle actions” denotes the daily practices of appropriate conduct whilst walking, standing, sitting, and reclining. Particularly, to “walk like the wind, sit like a bell, stand like the pine, and recline like a bow” demonstrates the proper demeanor of a spiritual practitioner.

Particular focus is placed on one's demeanor when lining up. In addition to one's bearing when walking, the formation of the line is as important. This is true whether it be for morning and evening chanting, or entering and exiting a shrine. A sense of space and timing, an essential cultivation in Humanistic Buddhism, is nurtured through the practice of lining up.

This custom of lining up should be re-established in society. Today, people shove each other, cut the line, and shout. They should follow the demeanors of Chinese Buddhists in speaking softly, walking and lining-up properly, as well as heeding daily civilities. Coupled with the elegance and grace of the Chinese gentry, greater harmony and order will pervade society.

Chinese Chan Buddhism split into five schools and the seven sects. More schools meant added regulations. The bell and board signals, as well as the formalities of the drum and bell, varied according to each sect.

The rituals of the five sessions of practice and three daily meals demonstrate Humanistic Buddhism's emphasis on “life itself means spiritual cultivation.” When monastics conduct themselves with demeanor, they gain the respect of devotees. As the saying states,

Let the voice of the Buddha flow gently like water.

*Chant sutras and progress along the Way like orderly flying geese;
Join palms at chest level as if carrying water.
Stand tall and erect as if a bowl of oil is atop the head.*

Such elegant and upright practices have been inspired by the Buddha's personal conduct. When Neo-Confucian philosopher Cheng Yi, of the Song era (程頤, 1033-1107) witnessed Dinglin Temple monastics entering a hall with such elegance, he exclaimed, "The joy of three generations of rites are all displayed here." This proves the general esteem for Buddhist etiquette. The daily necessities of clothing, eating, living and walking have all been tremendously influenced by Buddhism. Chinese culture and Humanistic Buddhism existed alongside the Buddha. Modern day monastics must recognize this to understand the fundamental daily practices of Buddhism.

The meaning of Humanistic Buddhism is that which human beings need. In this case, the needs are clothing, eating, living, and walking. Likewise, it is essential that it cater to the needs of people when establishing formalities and regulations. Such influences are now inseparable from Chinese culture. Thus we Buddhists shall take on the duty of placing greater value on the development of Humanistic Buddhism within Chinese culture.

2) The social welfare and charity works of Humanistic Buddhism

Crucial factors in the global spread and acceptance of Buddhism are its dedication and support in helping people resolve life's daily problems.

The purpose of the Buddha's birth in this world was to benefit sentient beings. As one of the world's utmost philanthropist and volunteer, he was indefatigable as well as selfless.

The Buddha's disciples also followed in his footsteps by teaching and benefiting both self and others. Exemplars abound, such as Upali, who not only visited the sick but also brought them medicine. There were also Sudatta the Elder and Lady Visakha, generous philanthropists. Bimbisara inspired seven thousand of his subjects in taking refuge in the Buddha. King Asoka was tireless in providing meals, pharmacies and lodgings for the sick and the destitute. All were unprecedented Buddhist endeavors in charity and social welfare.

Subsequent to Buddhism's arrival in China, many Buddhist masters applied the Buddha's teachings through charitable activities. For instance, they planted trees, and dug wells in addition to providing water. Free porridge was offered for sustenance. Coffins were also provided free of charge. In terms of infrastructure, free schools were established; roads were paved, along with the building of banks, storehouses, pharmacies, and bridges. Any endeavor that benefits living beings is an instrument of the bodhisattva path, which ties

Humanistic Buddhism to society. Further examples of endeavors are:

1. Free schools

The Sangha community established by the Buddha was the first free school in Buddhism. As he travelled to different places, he in fact embodied the first Buddhist community schools when he would teach at those locations. In olden days, the people viewed Chinese monastics, being educated and knowledgeable, as teachers and sought them for answers. Buddhist temples provided free schooling, private tutoring, and learning centers, inviting distinguished teachers and masters as visiting instructors. Shrines served as classrooms, and sutra repositories as libraries. Temples and monasteries thus became locales for thinkers and the knowledgeable.

Throughout history, many outstanding scholars stayed at temples to study, some for the imperial examination. For example Di Renjie (狄仁傑, 630-700 CE) the Tang Dynasty minister, mandarins such as Yang Zhen (楊震, ?-528), Li Duan (李端, 743-782), Wang Bo (王勃, 759-830), ministers such as Li Shen (李紳, 772-846), Xu Shang (徐商), and Wei Zhaodu (韋昭度, ?-895). Lu Yu (陸羽, 733-804), the sage of tea, having grown up in a temple, later wrote the all time classic — *The Classics of Tea*.

In addition, Song Dynasty minister Wang Anshi (王安石, 1021-1086), Fan Zhongyan (范仲淹, 989-1052), Hu Yuan (胡瑗, 933-1059), and Lu Mengzheng (呂蒙正, 944-1011) also spent time in temples as students. Even Chiang Kai-shek (蔣中正, 1887-1975) lived in Zhejiang Xuedou Temple to study for the imperial examination. When Liang Shuming (梁漱溟, 1893-1988) failed his Peking University entrance exam, he stayed in a temple to focus on his studies of Buddhist and Indian philosophy. His scholarly attitude was discovered by Peking University President Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培, 1868-1940), who subsequently promoted him as honorary lecturer at the university.

Other than the above, academies were also under the influence of Buddhist monasteries. For instance, the renowned Yuelu Academy was founded by Venerable Zhixuan (智璿). The most influential Neo-Confucian thinker, Zhu Xi (朱熹, 1130-1200) once taught there. After the Yuan Dynasty, colleges were established in rural areas and nurtured many talents. All these efforts, under the influence of free Buddhist schools, were undertaken with the aim of assisting the development of education.

2. Environmental Protection and Forestation

Buddhists have always valued the protection of the environment and contributed greatly to the preservation of nature. As has been said, “Renowned Mountains have mostly been

occupied by monastics.” Past generations of monastics have cultivated wastelands and built monasteries. Additionally, in terms of ecological preservation, they took to forestation, conserving sources of water, improving water and soil upkeep as well as natural disaster protection.

Among these monastics was Chan Master Zaisong (栽松) from the Linji lineage. He not only beautified his monastery but also set an example for his successors. Master Mingyuan (明遠) planted ten thousand pine, cypress, and camphor trees to prevent floods in Sizhou. Temples thousands of years old, such as Tantuo Temple and Jietai Temple in Beijing, are now surrounded by trees that reach up to the sky. They are all classed as natural heritage sites today.

3. Turning Wastelands into Farmlands

After Buddhism's arrival in China, the Chan School observed “Mazu's establishment of monastery and Baizhang's introduction of pure regulations.” Monasteries transformed wastelands into farmlands as a means of self-sustenance through agriculture. For example, Venerable Yongjing (永淨) from Xiangshan, developed three hundred acres in the mountainous regions. Chan Master Fori Puguang (佛日普光) cultivated a thousand acres of fertile fields, increasing the annual harvest by five thousand liters. Chan Master Daokai (道楷, 1043-1118) turned dry lake into farmland and grew crops. Zhejiang Tiantong Temple cultivated reclaimed lands and increased the annual harvest by over fifteen thousand liters. Not only were these monasteries self-sufficient, they also contributed greatly to the growth of the surrounding townships.

4. Oil Mills

China, as a nation, was built through agriculture, specifically rice farming. The staple diet of the people was rice. At the time, farmers manually toiled the fields, which was both time and labor intensive. In the Tang and Song Dynasties, monasteries began building grinders and rice mills. Hydraulic trip-hammers were found inside Mingzhou Tiantong, Maiji Mountain Shengxian, Chongguoyuan, Taizhou Huianyuan, and Lengqieyuan Temples. This was a great benefit not only to temple residents but local farmers as well. As some temples set up oil mills to supplement the temple's incomes, this also benefited local farmers by raising the value of local agriculture.

5. Relief Aid

In the past, frequent occurrences of natural disasters, wars and man-made calamities

caused poverty and distress. Not only did Buddhists act as spiritual mentors, they also provided economic assistance to the people. Buddhist temples spared no efforts to provide relief aid to the poor and needy.

For example, Master Tanyan (曇延, 516-588), from the Sui Dynasty, gave away rice, and offered the poor shelter in his temple. He even helped the emperor resolve the issue of rice distribution. Tang Dynasty monk Zhicong (智聰) raised funds for a rice storage to help the people. Other monastics such as Demei (德美, 575-637), Huizhen (慧震, 463-477), Fayun (法雲, 467-529), and Lingrun (靈潤, 590-682) established the Fields of Compassion Funds in addition to distributing free food.

Other Buddhist philanthropic undertakings include the “incalculable registry” (*Senqihu*) introduced by Tanyao (曇曜, 407-463). He also utilized the provisions from the “incalculable grains” (*Senqisu*) storages to relieve people from famines. Furthermore, temple storages and pawnshops were used to bring relief to those in poverty and distress.

Till the Sui Dynasty, Chan Master Xinxing (信行, 540-594) of the Teachings of the Three Levels (三階教) introduced the “Inexhaustible Storehouse” (*Wujinzangyuan*). This allowed people to pawn money, rice, food, lamp oil, and clothing interest-free. Mills that were built in later periods actually followed a similar principle. Similar to modern day farmers unions, cooperative society, and even pawnshops, the Inexhaustible Storehouse was widely accepted for creating the cause for giving by all levels of society in relieving the poor and needy.

Possibly the precursor to modern day pawnshops, Buddhists established loan centers (*Changshengku*) to provide financial aid to the people and the state. The notable distinction of these loan centers was their lack of concern for profit through high rates of interest. Their sole purpose was to give back to society what they had received. This exhibited the core spirit of Humanistic Buddhism by using society's generous contributions to help the people resolve their difficulties.

6. Medical services and support

The Buddha was regarded as the great king of Doctors, whereas the Sangha was the nurse that cared for the people. In the past, many eminent monks such as Fotucheng (232~348), Zhufadiao, Zhufakuang, Tanyan (曇衍, 503-581), and Tanluan (曇鸞, 476-542) were skilled in the field of medicine) and used their expertise to treat the sick. During the Southern and Northern Dynasties, Buddhists established Houses of Benefit (*fudeyuan*), Six Illnesses Center, and the Guduyuan Asylum. In the Tang Dynasty they set up infirmaries and treatment centers, whilst in the Song Dynasty the Futianyuan Welfare House was founded.

Countless other examples exist. These were all charitable undertakings help the poor and sick.

7. Wells and water

Buddhists often volunteered to distribute water and lanterns to help passersby quench their thirst and continue their journey. To improve access to water, monasteries also repaired as well as dug wells to provide drinking and washing water. Chan Master Deshao (德韶, 891-972) from the Wu and Yue periods in the Five Dynasties excavated wells on Mount Wu, Hanzhou, to help people during the drought. In the Tang Dynasty, Venerable Hui Bin (慧斌) dug and built public wells in Wenshui as a show of gratitude to his parents. Venerable Chengguan (澄觀, 738-839) at Puhui Temple in Jiangning provided public access to its water supply. Again, all these efforts benefited the community.

8. Water resource development

Another act of philanthropy related to water, apart from digging wells, was the construction of irrigation works. In the Song Dynasty, Venerable Weixi (維溪) from Fuzhou spent nine years in Changle County to construct a twenty-seven-hundred-meter long embankment by intercepting twelve rivulets. This provided water for forty hectares of farmland. Venerable Shizhen (師振) took eleven years to fundraise for the construction of a thirty-thousand-meter levee. This irrigated over twenty hectares of farmland. Venerable Master Chuncui (純粹) from Hengyue Temple lead the monastic order in digging canals to divert water into drought areas. At the renowned Westlake scenic area, embankments constructed under the supervision of Bai Juyi and Su Dongpo still remain. These infrastructures all share an affiliation with Buddhism today.

9. Paving roads and bridges

One of the most significant Buddhist contributions to local towns were the constructions of bridges and paving of roads. During the Song Dynasty, in the Fujian, Xiamen and Quanzhou regions, bridges funded and built by monastics numbered in the hundreds. Venerable Daoxun (道詢, 1086-1142), in his lifetime, was said to have constructed over two hundred bridges. Venerables Puzu (普足), Liaoxing (了性, 1222-1321), and Shouxing (守性) also erected numerous bridges. When added with those built by other monastics, the sum total was in the order of several thousand.

Others, such as Venerables Mingqing (明慶), Juexian (覺先), Siqi (思齊), and Yunchang (蘊常) constructed street paths. Venerables Daochen (道琛, 1087-1154) and Wenda (文達) led monastics in carrying soil used to build roads. Venerable Daoyu (道遇) supervised the

project of digging a pond near the Longmen Grottoes to build a watercourse. This shipping canal was a great boon for travelers and merchants, generating much local prosperity.

10. Hostels

In olden times, transportation and its related infrastructure were not as sophisticated. Thus, Buddhists erected pavilions to offer refreshment and rest. They also hung lanterns to illuminate roads on the outskirts of towns. Monasteries, such as Baoshou Temple from the Tang Dynasty, and Putong Temple on Mount Wutai also provided lodgings for journeying merchants or imperial examination candidates. All of these were of tremendous convenience for travelers.

To propagate the Dharma, monastics would often travel on foot to faraway places. In doing so, they also brought with them various traditions and cultures. For example, many novices traveled between Chan Master Mazu Daoyi's (馬祖道一, 709-788) monastery in Jiangxi and Chan Master Shitou Xiqian's (石頭希遷, 700-790) monastery in Hunan. The two regions were thus collectively named *Jianghu* (lit. the World). Accordingly, travelers there were called "Jianghu roamers." During the Ming Dynasty, Chan Master Yinyuan (Japanese: *Ingen*) brought kidney beans and Chinese tea ceremony to Japan. Thus the Japanese call the bean "Ingen mame" (Yinyuan's bean). He was also known as the father of the Japanese Way of Sencha (*senchado*).

Historian and professor Tang Degang (唐德剛) once told me that in the Eastern Jin Dynasty, a monastic named Huishen (慧深, 436) had already gone to spread Buddhism in Mexico, preceding Columbus' discovery of America. References to this can be found in Volume 54 of the *Book of Liang* and also Volume 79 of the *History of the Southern Dynasties*. According to him, residents of a Mexican town named Acapulco inherited their Buddhist faith from their ancestors. He also said that Venerable Huishen had left an anchor stone later acquired by a museum in San Francisco.

Originally an unknown religion, Venerable Huishen's efforts brought monastics, sutras, Buddha statues, and the Dharma to the American continent. The propagation works of a Buddhist monastic thus connected China and Mexico, two of the world's greatest civilizations separated by the Pacific Ocean.

11. Emergency Relief

When wars occurred, temples would become grounds for army camps and refugee shelters. During the Anti-Japanese Resistance War, in 1937, Master Taixu (太虛, 1890-1947) traveled all the way to India to propagate the Buddhist doctrine of peace. He hoped to gain

international attention for the anti-Japanese invasion movement. Venerable Leguan (樂觀, 1902-1987) organized a monastic rescue team to help the distressed. Venerable Jiran (寂然) and Venerable Master Zhi Kai (志開, 1911-1979) from Nanjing Qixia Monastery took in over two hundred thousand refugees. General Liao Yaoxiang (廖耀湘, 1906-1968), a high-ranking commander who fought the Japanese, was hiding among the refugees. The monastics at Qixiashan helped conceal his identity to help him reach the frontlines and continue his defense of the country.

Soldiers and refugees were not merely provided with the daily necessities. Through the practice of Humanistic Buddhism, they were also offered comfort from distress, salvation from the cruelties of war, and ultimately a place to call home.

During the Northern Wei Dynasty, the establishment of Buddhist residences (*fotuhu*) allowed convicts to perform community services by farming temple lands, and digging canals. The wish of Buddhists to help not only the poor but also society and the state is evident in their charitable undertakings. Such compassionate efforts include bathhouses, winter aid relief, and free medical services as well as care for the elderly. In addition, releasing animals and nurturing gardens were means of caring not just for humans but also all flora and fauna. These are all Buddhist contributions to both country and society.

Prior to the establishment of any police department in China, temples assisted greatly in mediating disputes. For example, the Reception Hall of Putuoshan Monastery served as a police station to help resolve disputes. Had Mazu not believed in Guanyin Bodhisattva, how could she have relieved people from distress and suffering? Chan Master Puzu (普足, also known as the Patriarch of Pure Water) is revered in Taiwan due to his rain prayer that nourished many lives.

Across different eras and differing societies, Humanistic Buddhism has offered help and relief to the distressed. In this, Buddhists became self-sufficient through the unity of agriculture and Chan. The world must be made aware of this history. Where there is Buddhism, there will always be compassionate people to comfort and relieve people from sorrow and suffering. It is hoped that politicians, scholars, and social workers will contribute to the history of Humanistic Buddhism by recognizing its compassion and service to society.

The contemporary development of Humanistic Buddhism must ultimately be attributed to the Buddha's efforts and teachings. For this reason, as practitioners, we must never forget our gratitude towards the humanistic Buddha. We hope that when China promotes its culture, it also remembers the contributions and influence Humanistic Buddhism has had in shaping it.

3) Arts in Humanistic Buddhism

The archetype of Buddhist art would be the Ajanta Caves in India. In China, it took shape in the form of architecture, carvings, paintings and calligraphy. Many examples of Buddhist art remaining today are considered masterpieces. For example, the UNESCO has listed the Dunhuang, Yungang, and Longmen Caves as Cultural Heritages. These caves are said to be the greatest natural museums of oriental Buddhist art.

In the past, Buddhist temples seldom promoted Buddhist art. Yet, in their talks on daily living, life, and the universe, mentions of aesthetic beauty are noticeable. In the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, the buddhas and bodhisattvas from the universe's three thousand great chiliocosms has inspired magnificent pieces of thousand-buddha caves in China. In the *Buddhacarita*, stories of the Buddha's life were written in a beautiful poetic style, which consequently inspired Buddhist hymn and chanting in China. In the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, the witty dialogues between the celestial lady, Vimalakirti and Sariputra shaped classic dramas and dances such as "The Celestial Rain of Flowers." The depiction of the Pure Land in the Amitabha Sutra was the basis for its majestic illustrations on other sutras. In fact, is the beauty in this world not a manifestation of the Pure Land itself? The paintings in the Dunhuang caves that combine Chinese, Indian, and ancient Western Region cultures have inspired the world-renowned Dunhuang dance. These are not merely means of propagation used by past Buddhist masters but also priceless modern assets of the Dharma.

Such masterpieces showcased Chinese culture and Buddhism to the world. These honorable Buddhist masters had dedicated their lives to Buddhism, and enabled the dissemination of the essence of Chinese culture and Buddhism. How can we not be grateful and value the scope of Buddhist art?

Just as our beauty is found in our character and wisdom, the greatness of a country resides within its culture and art. What people admire today at the Great British Museum, the Louvre, and the Art Institute of Chicago are collections of Chinese art and culture that have gained prominence amongst the originally dominant Western collections. As much as we may regret the loss of such Chinese treasures, it probably has been for the best. During the course of China's countless periods of war and chaos, doubtless many of these artifacts would have been either damaged or destroyed. In the end, these countries aid us not only in preserving Chinese culture, but also in showcasing it to the world.

1. 1. Rock Carvings and Paintings

From the beginning, Buddhism already exerted tremendous influence on Chinese art and

culture. The statues, paintings, manuscripts and texts found in the Dunhuang caves eclipse the discovery of Qin Shi Huang's Terracotta Army. Some universities have even listed Dunhuang Studies as the focus of their professional research programs.

For over a thousand years, rulers, ministers, Buddhists, devotees and common people have regarded the Dunhang caves as the greatest treasure of the world. Even the splendor of the Ajanta Caves in India pales in comparison. It is certainly a miracle for these vivid statues, extraordinarily beautiful reliefs, and carvings of Buddhist sutras to have survived the flames of war and been well preserved in the remote Gansu Province. To date, several hundred professionals at the Dunhuang Museum have taken on the responsibility to preserve, repair and maintain these artistic and cultural treasures, which are certainly not exclusive to just Chinese but also for the entire world.

Other than the Dunhuang Caves, the Yungang Grottoes in Datong, carved by Tanyao, from the Northern Wei Dynasty are also of unparalleled magnificence. The majestic statue of Sakyamuni Buddha is often featured in magazines and other publications. It has been listed as one of the most valuable art pieces in the world.

Moving onto the Longmen Grottoes in Henan, the elegant postures of buddhas and bodhisattvas remind us of Tang Dynasty ladies whose beauty were revealed in their robust and lush body figures. The most iconic would be Yang Guifei (楊貴妃, 719-756) and Empress Wu Zetian. Sculptures from the period portrayed buddhas and bodhisattvas with humanly statures, which is certainly in the spirit of Humanistic Buddhism.

The fine carvings and elegant postures displayed by the buddha and bodhisattva statues at the Maijishan Grottoes are simply stunning. The serene and solemn Baoding Buddha Carvings of the Nirvana of Sakyamuni Buddha are also priceless treasures of Buddhist art. Other cave temples found along the Silk Road are also rich treasuries of carvings and paintings.

2. Calligraphy and Painting

The Buddhist influence on Chinese calligraphy is also profound. For example, Wang Xizhi's (王羲之, 303–361) *Preface to the Orchid Pavilion Collection* and even Huaisu's (懷素, 737–799) *Diamond Sutra in Cursive Script* are both regarded as rare treasures. In the past, some Buddhist masters did not subsist on farming or chanting. Instead, they were recognized for their paintings and calligraphy, which allowed them to make a living while continuing with spiritual cultivation.

Seventy years ago, when I studied at Jiaoshan Buddhist College, apart from the Main

Shrine, known as Dinghui Temple, there were also dozens of smaller temples each containing a studio and gallery, allowing collectors to purchase their favorite art pieces.

For this reason, Wu Daozi's (吳道子, 685–758) portrait of Guanyin became a well-thought-of art piece. Other monastic artists such as Bada Shanren (八大山人, 1626-1705), Shi Tao (石濤, 1642-1707), Shi Xi (石谿, 1612-1692), and Hongren (弘仁, 1610-1664) also exhibited in their works the beauty of painting and elegant writing. These pieces elevated Buddhist calligraphy and art to an even higher level than the palace artists were capable of. In masterpieces such as *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* and *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*, Buddhist temples and monastics almost always feature in the paintings. This is evidence that artists have a somewhat close affiliation with Buddhism.

Although some of these works gradually disappeared over time, some valuable pieces are now part of museum collections around the world. Renowned contemporary artist Zhang Daqian (張大千, 1899-1983) spent almost three years at Dunhuang, copying the various styles of paintings. Others such as Pu Xinyu (傅心畬, 1896-1963) created Buddhism-related pieces, all now priceless.

Speaking of Zhang Daqian, he once gifted to me his work *Lotus*, which was auctioned at the Fo Guang University Fundraiser and acquired by the Hsu Family from The Far Eastern Group. Another of Zhang Daqian's piece, *Guanyin Bodhisattva*, is still at Fo Guang Shan among dozens of other artifacts. A man once offered to buy it for fifty million Taiwan dollars, but we were unwilling to part with it.

3. Buddhist Chanting and Singing

Other than tangible creations of Buddhist art, intangible forms are also prized. For example, the Buddhist chanting in Yushan or Tang Dynasty singing sermons are both unique features of Chinese culture.

According to a legend from the Three Kingdoms period, Cao Zijian (曹子建, 192–232) perceived the sounds of waves and compared them to the sounds of heavenly beings. As a music enthusiast, he composed these heavenly melodies, which later became a Buddhist chant known as “heavenly song” (梵唄).

Buddhist chanting contains the Four Main Prayers, and Eight Incense Praises that include the six-line verse short prayer-Incense Praise (爐香讚), and eight-line chant-Three Jewels Praise (三寶讚). The various tunes and intonation are extremely emotive and profoundly beautiful. Regretfully, many such compositions were subsequently destroyed in the Taiping Rebellion, Sino-Japanese War, Civil War, and Cultural Revolutions. Fortunately, on the verge

of being forever lost, some musicians brought them to Taiwan. I then cut recordings and produced cassette tapes in an attempt to preserve the music. Today, they have been re-transmitted back to mainland China and can be heard all across the nation.

However, as these chants were only transmitted verbally, no music sheets exist. As the handbell and wooden fish were the only instruments available, only single chimes and double strikes were used to remember the following tempo, “three turns and nine twists, the one strong and three weak beats.” Those who have heard these traditional Buddhist chanting would praise them as “sounds only heard from heaven and extremely rare on Earth.”

Several years ago, Fo Guang Shan assembled the Chinese Buddhist Music Performance Group. It performed music from the Four Major Buddhist Schools, including the Theravada, Chinese, and Tibetan traditions. The group's world tour gained wide acclaim.

In the Dunhuang Caves singing sermons are preserved in the form of sutra illustrations such as the Eight Stages of Buddha's Life, The Celestial Rain of Flowers, and Maudgalyayana Saves His Mother. As times changed, songs replaced these sermons. Fo Guang Shan has continued to hold Dharma Lectures mingled with Buddhist chanting at the Taipei National Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall for thirty consecutive years; likewise at the Hong Kong Coliseum for over twenty years. The propagation of Humanistic Buddhism through singing has pervaded all levels of society and should certainly be continued.

4. Sculpture and Architecture

Masterpieces of Buddhist architecture and sculpture are numerous. However, it is regretful to see that most of the ancient Buddhist monasteries in Mainland China are listed only as tourist attractions. Moreover, by charging admission fees, these temples have become commercial ventures. If only these beautiful palace style shrines, viharas, pagodas and pavilions were given their original purpose, the supposedly tranquil and serene ambience of Buddhist temples will perhaps be restored. Buddhist architecture in its myriad forms, such as gardens and landscapes has undoubtedly enriched the splendor of China's natural vistas.

Within the Buddha Memorial Center, itself a representation of Fo Guang Shan's Buddha Gem, is a one-hundred-and-eight-meter seated Bronze Buddha. Flanked by eight Chinese style pagodas, the Main Hall houses a dozen art exhibition spaces. Surrounded by green garden landscape, the Center has become a major tourist attraction that is visited by ten million guests annually.

Representing the Sangha Gem, Fo Guang Shan Monastery is equally a majestic complex that houses a Main Shrine, Buddhist College, Pagodas, and garden landscapes. Embodying

the Dharma Gem, the Sutra Repository is now close to completion. Its grandeur has already left visitors in awe. These two complexes represent major contributions made by both monastics and lay members of Fo Guang Shan to Humanistic Buddhism.

5. Drama and Dance

With regard to Chinese opera, the most famous is the Kunqu Opera from Kunshan, in Suzhou. Other genres of opera such as the Peking Opera, and Yu Opera branched out from Kunqu and developed across China. Kunqu had, in fact, originated from the drama *The Mirror of Origin*, written by Venerable Zhida (智達) during the Ming Dynasty, thus sharing a close connection with Buddhism.

Many of these dramas reflect the ideals of loyalty and dutifulness in tangible form. They are regarded as the best inspiration for moral ethics next to formal school education. This is one of expedient means used in Humanistic Buddhism to spread the Buddha's teachings. For example, *The Biography of Sakyamuni Buddha* has been adapted into musicals, movies, novels, radio shows, and stage plays all across the world. Other stories of loyalty, filial piety, moral integrity, and justice have also been portrayed in Buddhist audiovisual mediums to continue inspiring and purifying the people.

At Fo Guang Shan, Buddhist choirs are spreading the Dharma in different places around the world. he recently established Buddha's Light Youth Philharmonic Orchestra in Vienna has also been composing and performing Buddhist songs. Of note, artists of the Guang Ming College Academy of Performing Arts in the Philippines created *Siddhartha: The Musical*. In Malaysia, Eight thousand youth once gathered in Malaysia to sing beautiful Buddhist songs, such as "I am the Future of Buddhism."

In addition, Dunhuang Dance Troupes in Taiwan alone numbers twenty-six, all performing on a regular basis. The tremendous influence of Dunhuang dance is thus evident. Furthermore, Disabled People's Performing Art Troupe of China has recently been performing *Thousand-Hand Guanyin*, to great acclaim.

6. Martial Arts and Chivalry

Shaolin temple has always been synonymous with martial arts. Legend tells that Bodhidharma, the patriarch of Chan Buddhism, thereby gifting martial arts a place and influence in China, invented the Shaolin Technique of Combat. The art lies not just within the expression of strength but its spirit and poise. The "One Finger Chan" and "Prajna Palm" are among the many kung fu skills that embody profound spiritual cultivation and chivalry. In the past, Shaolin monastics won the hearts of many for being chivalrous. They upheld justice and

protected their country. It is hoped that our inheritance of such spirits, as shown by our ancestors, can help us in protecting the people.

In brief, Humanistic Buddhism made tremendous contributions to the state, society and the individual. By enriching the spread of Chinese culture, it has made it globally respected. The abovementioned artistic achievements by Humanistic Buddhists are only a small part a much bigger whole. They have been examined in the he hopes of stimulating Chinese culture enriched by Buddhist art.

4) Humanistic Buddhism and Literati

Since ancient times, poets and scholars in China always held prestigious social standings due to the influence of their writings and opinions. With a single brush stroke, they had the power to bring down entire armies. This influence has prevailed even beyond their time.

The works of poets and scholars throughout the eras are key reasons as to Buddhism's success. Through them, it was able to harmonize Confucian thoughts and become integral to Chinese culture. Buddhism's profound philosophy and its close connection with reality not only satisfied their pursuit of the Truth and life's numerous questions. It also inspired these writers and intellectuals into broadening their minds, leading to great creativity. One might say that under the influence of profound Buddhist teachings, these poets and scholars were thus able to create timeless classics.

Popular Chinese literature such as Gan Bao's (干寶, 286-336) *In Search of Spirits*, Wu Chengen's (吳承恩, 1501-1582) *Journey to the West*, Cao Xueqing's (曹雪芹, 1715-1763) *Dream of the Red Chamber*, and Liu E's (劉鶚, 1857-1909) *The Travels of Old Decrepit* all exhibit Buddhist reflections. Not only have these literary masterpieces introduced Chinese literature to the world, they also aided in the spread Humanistic Buddhism. As Buddhism enriched the minds of literary writers, they in turn contributed to the dissemination of the Dharma.

Among the Eight Great Prose Masters of the Tang and Song Dynasty, Han Yu (韓愈, 768-824) and Ouyang Xiu (歐陽修, 1007-1072) had severely criticized Buddhism. However, their mindset drastically changed after making the acquaintance of Chan Master DaDian (大顛, 732-824) and Chan Master Mingjiao (明教, 1007-1072). Realizing the ignorance of their past behavior, they repented sincerely and sought refuge in the Dharma. Others nurtured a close affiliation with Humanistic Buddhism, namely, Tao Yuanming (陶淵明, 365–427), Xie Lingyun (謝靈運, 385-433), Wang Wei (王維, 692-761), Liu Zongyuan (柳宗元, 773-819), Bai Juyi (白居易, 772-846), Wang Anshi, Su Shi, and Huang Tingjian. Markedly, Wang Wei,

Bai Juyi, Su Shi, and Huang Tingjian even took refuge. The intimate relationship between Buddhism and literary writers has endured till today. Some of these stories are mentioned as follows.

1. National Constitutions Based on Buddhist Thought

Xiao Tong (蕭統, 501-531), also known as Crown Prince Zhaoming (昭明太子), was the eldest son of Emperor Wu of Liang. Compassionate, kind, and extremely intelligent, he grew up under the influence of his father's devotion to Buddhism. Not only did he strictly observe the Bodhisattva Precepts, he was also well learned in Buddhist texts and teachings. Some of his works include: *Understanding the Two Truths* and *Thirty-Two Rules of the Diamond Sutra*.

Soon after Prince Zhaoming's death at the young age of thirty-one, without ever assuming the throne, Liu Xie (劉勰, 465-521), an acquaintance to the Prince took refuge in Master Sengyou (僧祐, 445-518). He assisted the Master in compiling the fifteen-fascicle *A Collection of Records on the Emanation of the Chinese Tripitaka*, which became the renowned Catalogue of the Chinese Translation of the Buddhist Tripitaka. In addition, he also wrote the ten-fascicle *Literary Mind and Carved Dragon* listed as one of the two most prestigious critiques of Chinese literature alongside Zhong Rong's (鍾嶸, 467?-519) *A Critique of Poetry*.

Eastern Jin Dynasty poet Tao Yuanming, unwilling to "relinquish his dignity for five bushels of grain" (the specific salary of low-rank officials), retreated to lead a country life. His poetic composition was natural, beautiful, and alive with Buddhist sentiments. For example,

Glistening white moon in the clouds
Resplendent flowers among the leaves
Are such but transient beauties
What shall become of them soon?

Treating impermanence with such emotionality, the influence of Buddhism on him is clear. On one of his frequent visits to Master Huiyuan (慧遠, 334-416) at Donglin Temple on Mount Lu, he crossed paths with Daoist priest Lu Xiuqing (陸修靜, 406-477). Upon seeing off his guests, Huiyuan almost broke his self imposed confinement by crossing the Tiger Creek, giving rise to the legend of the "Three Laughing Men at Tiger Creek."

Another close acquaintance of Huiyuan's was Xie Lingyun, a pious Buddhist and author of "Inscriptions of Buddha's Shadow." Inspired by Master Daosheng's (道生, 355-434)

“*Theory on Gradual and Immediate Enlightenment*,” Xie composed *Discerning the Truth* to expound on the meanings of ‘gradual’ and ‘sudden.’ Moreover, having learnt of Venerable Huirui’s (慧叡, 355-439) knowledge in Sanskrit, Xie visited him at Wuyi Temple. There he acquired a profound understanding of the different meanings carried in different voices.

Those were the days when the *Mahaparinirvana Sutra* had just reached China. The short and concise text in addition to strange and difficult writing made it difficult for beginners to understand. He therefore revised the text with Huiyan (慧嚴, 363-443) as well as Huiguan (慧觀, 366-436), and introduced the 36-fascicle “Southern Edition” of the *Mahaparinirvana Sutra*. This enabled wide dissemination of the Nirvana teachings as well as the theories of gradual and immediate enlightenment. As a poet, Xie Lingyun contributed tremendously to the spread of Buddhism.

2. Persecutors Inspired by Chan Masters to Repent

Han Yu was the foremost of the Eight Great Prose Masters of the Tang and Song dynasties. His prose held the distinction of reversing the literary decline of eight dynasties. He advocated that “Writings should serve the purpose of carrying the Way,” and critiqued Buddhism as well as Daoism. Later, when he wrote his famous *Memorial on Bone-relics of the Buddha*, he was demoted to a provincial governor in Chaozhou. There, he visited Chan Master Dadian who, in deep meditative concentration, did not respond. An attendant, standing nearby, whispered into the Master’s ear, “First you move [him] with meditative concentration, then you shall shake [his arrogance] with wisdom.” Upon hearing this, Han Yu replied with admiration, “I have now received the message from your attendant.” From then on, Han Yun continued to practice meditation and visited teachers. He also repented his past wrongdoings and became a pious supporter of Buddhism.

Ouyang Xiu, another opponent of Buddhism, received acclaim for his work *On Principles*. Chan Master Mingjiao Qisong (明教契嵩, 1007–1072) wrote *Auxiliary Teachings* to refute Ouyang’s work by advocating the integration of Buddhist, Daoist, and Confucian thoughts. His work transformed Ouyang’s perspective, who exclaimed, “How could he be such an outstanding monastic!” He made a formal visit to the Chan Master to further his inquiries. Afterwards, under the influence of Chan Master Zuying (祖印, 1010-1071), he finally realized the profoundness of the Dharma and turned to Buddhism in sincere repentance for his previous behavior. Thereafter, his works frequently contained admonitions for the practice of virtuous deeds. He also made acquaintances with many Buddhist masters.

A founder of the Classical Prose Movement, Liu Zongyuan grew up as a devoted Buddhist and assisted in the spread of its concepts. His work *God of the Eastern Sea* is a commentary

on the Pure Land practices. In addition, a large number of plaque inscriptions such as that of Huineng the Sixth Patriarch have been attributed to him.

Known as the Three Literati of the Su Family--Su Xun (蘇洵, 1009-1066) along with his two sons Su Shi (蘇軾, 1036-1101) and Su Che (蘇轍, 1039-1112) are counted among the Eight Great Prose Masters of the Tang and Song Dynasties. All members of the family were followers of Buddhism, despite Su Xun having a scholarly lineage in Confucianism. In fact, he was a close acquaintance of Chan Master Yuantong Juna (圓通居訥, 1010-1071) and Baoyue Weijian (寶月惟簡, 1011-1095). Though extremely talented, Su Shi nevertheless struggled through his career as an official and had been exiled several times. For this reason, his poems are full of Buddhist attainments. His most famous story was that of Chan Master Foyin (佛印, 1032-1098) who had ridiculed him for being “the allegedly unmovable one who was blown across the river by a fart.”

During his visit to Chan Master Changzong (常總, 1025-1091) at Donglin Temple on Mount Lu, having gained some attainment conversing with the master, he wrote the following poem which later become the popular Chan verse,

*The sounds of the creeks are voices spoken by your broad and long tongue,
The mountains are none but manifestations of your pure body;
Of the eighty-four thousand verses that we hear in the night,
How are we to teach them to others in later days.*

Furthermore,, the Summoning Words in the *Yogacara Offering Service* was also composed by Su Shi, in which his compassion for living beings in the Six Realms and spirit of equality are certainly characteristics of humanistic bodhisattvas.

3. Literary and Poetic Creations to Express State of Buddhist Attainment

Also listed among the Eight Great Prose Masters of the Tang and Song Dynasties was Wang Anshi, once praised by Ouyang Xiu in his poem,

*Above all verses from the imperial academy
Excelling the Personnel Department's all time works
Tis' time for this old man to retire now
Because no one will ever surpass this man*

He took refuge in the Three Jewels at a young age, and was a close acquaintance of Chan Master Jiangsan Juehai (蔣山覺海, 1069-1162). As a noble Prime Minister, he often spoke of the Dharma to intellectuals. Under the tremendous influence of Buddhism, he believes that “there are no unchallengeable authorities nor unchangeable rules; what is most important is to

possess the right perspective of reality.”

All Eight Great Prose Masters of the Tang and Song were demoted at one time or another and experienced great bitterness in their lives. When renowned Tang Dynasty poet Bai Juyi visited Chan Master Niaohe Daolin, (鳥窠道林, 741-824) who lived in a tree, he exclaimed, “Chan Master, it is too dangerous to live in a tree!”

“Honorable Chief, you are the one who is in danger.” replied the Chan Master.

“I am a standing minister, what danger can there be?” asked Bai Juyi disgruntled.

“When sparks intertwine, ignitions are endless. How can you say that there is no danger?”

Having somewhat understood his intentions, Bai Juyi continued, “What is the essence of the Dharma?”

“To cease all evil, practice all good, and purify your own mind. Such is the teaching of all buddhas.” recited the Chan Master.

Very disappointed, Bai Juyi replied, “This is too easy even for a three-year-old child.”

“Sure. What is understandable to a three-year-old toddler is but impossible to an eighty-year-old man.”

Fully inspired, Bai Juyi thus took refuge under Chan Master Daolin. In fact, he vowed to dedicate his literary talent to the use of praising the Buddha's practice and to spread the Dharma. In his late years, he was fully committed to chanting Buddha's name, and composed a verse on “Chanting the Buddha”:

*At the age of seventy plus one,
Poetry is what I no longer read or write.
Reading too strenuous for the eye,
While doing good deeds too much of a physical act.*

*How can the mind then pass time?
Amitabha is what I simply chant.
I chant Amitabha while walking,
I chant Amitabha while sitting;
Even when buried in matters,
Never forget Amitabha for a chant.*

*Let those intellects ridicule me,
And most of you skeptics of Amitabha.
So what if you are an intellect?*

So what if I ain't?

*I urge all living beings in the Dharma realm,
To come together and chant Amitabha;
If one seeks liberation from the cycle of rebirth,
To chant Amitabha would be an essential act.*

4. The Family Legacy: Unshakeable Faith

Northern Song Dynasty poets such as Lu Mengzheng and Fan Zhongyan both lived in Buddhist temples at some point in their lives. Being the first scholar to top the imperial examination of the Song Dynasty, Lu assumed the post of Prime Minister to Emperors Song Taizong (宋太宗, 939-997) and Song Zhenzong (宋真宗, 968-1022) on three occasions, and was known as the “Eminent Minister” of his time. He took residence in a Buddhist temple before he rose to success. Twenty years later, in gratitude, he returned to the temple. Each morning he would pay respect to Buddha, praying that, “Let only pious believers of the Three Jewels be born into my family. May generations and generations of my lineage always be prosperous and supporters of the Dharma.” This sense of gratitude and unflinching belief in the Three Jewels are the most valuable family legacy seen in Humanistic Buddhism.

Having sworn to “either be a minister of eminence or a doctor of greatness” and to “regard as one’s top concern the state’s affairs, and place as one’s last goal one’s own enjoyments,” Fan Zhongyan spent his days studying in a Buddhist temple. After rising to fame, he made acquaintances with Buddhist masters such as Chenggu (薦福承古, ?-1045), Yuanyu (圓悟, 1063-1135). Subsequently, he became well attained as a pupil of Chan Master Huijue (瑯琊慧覺) from Langya Province. In his lifetime devotion to the Three Jewels, he built temples to establish monastic communities everywhere he went, and even turned his own residence into Tianping Temple, and provided free farmlands to help his people.

Known as the “Poetic Buddha,” Wang Wei was a pious Buddhist who observed vegetarianism. He was so devoted that he even bore the courtesy name Mojie, which was inspired by the name Weimojie (Vimalakirti). Having taken refuge and learnt how to meditate under Heze Shenhui (荷澤神會, 688-758), he also sought instruction in Chan Masters Daoguang (道光, 682-760), Puji (普寂, 651-739) and Yifu (義福, 658-736). The beauty and delicate style of his poetry also held a strong sense of Chan. For example, in his “Deer Enclosure,”

A secluded mountain with no one in sight

*Yet talking voices echo across the space
Sunlight reaches into the deepest of woods
As reflections on the ground's green moss*

His depiction of the subtle spread of sunlight and an empty mountain at nightfall is a reflection of the Buddhist mindset of quietude and impermanence.

Moreover, Wang Wei also had a mother who was a pious Buddhist. After her death, in order to commemorate her, Wang turned his house into a temple. He then spent the rest of his life as a monastic, diligently chanting and reading the sutras everyday. Upon the final moment of his life, he even foretold his time of death and sent out notices to his friends.

5. Writings are to Carry the Way and Deliver Humanity

Song Dynasty calligraphy master Huang Tingjian (黃庭堅, 1045-1105) also shared special affinities with Buddhism. A prominent poet, his verses were widely circulated. One day, Huang visited Chan Master Yuantong Faxiu (圓通法秀, 1027–1090), who severely criticized him, “Are you no better than these convolutedly trivial writings of yours?”

There was an artist named Li Boshi (李伯時, 1049-1134) who specialized in painting horses. He always portrayed and imitated the movements of a horse. The Chan Master warned him that if he continued, the chances of him being reborn as a horse would be extremely high. After, Li Boshi threw away his paintbrushes and never painted horses again. Having heard of this, Huang ridiculed the Chan Master and said, “Are you going to warn me against being reborn as a horse too?”

“Your speeches of flattery have enticed the minds of many, I am afraid rebirth as a horse is too minor a consequence. You are more likely to fall into hell.” Replied Faxiu. Taken aback by this, Huang immediately repented himself.

Subsequently, having also been inspired and taught by brilliant minds such as Chan Master Lingyuan Weiqing (靈源惟清, d.1117), Huang became thoroughly reinvented and enhanced his knowledge of Buddhism.

*My flesh is the flesh of sentient beings;
Though different in name, the essence remains the same.
We all share in having the same nature;
We merely vary in bodily form.
If I leave others to suffer in pain;
For the sweet and tender are what I want.
There is no need to await Yama's judgment;*

I myself should already know the cost of such deeds.

In his most renowned poem, one can clearly sense the Buddhist spirit of respecting all forms of life.

In the later years of his life, he built an abode in Peibin and focused on his Pure Land practices. His poems were very popular among monastics from the Five Mountains of the Muromachi Period, and have had tremendous influence on the study of Chinese literature in Japan. When it is said that literature transcends borders, it is undoubtedly true.

Literature provides us with insights into the way human emotions and thoughts are expressed. A great work of literature is not merely beautiful, moving words or has an interesting plot, it also needs to embody ideals and principles such as morality, truthfulness, virtue, and beauty that will inspire as well as cultivate human beings. The saying, “writings should serve the purpose of carrying the Way,” means that words must carry the mission of teaching and transforming human minds.

That Dharma can be timeless, omnipresent, and inspire human minds is because the literary works of great thinkers have been invaluable instruments in spreading the Dharma.

5) Humanistic Buddhism and Politics

After Buddhism spread to China, royal patronage enabled this religion to take root. Starting from Emperor Ming of Eastern Han (東漢明帝, 28-75) to Sun Quan (孫權, 182-252), Lord of Wu, Emperor Wu of Liang from the Southern Dynasty (南朝梁武帝, 464-549), Emperor Xiaowen of Northern Wei (北魏孝文帝, 467-499), Emperor Wen of Sui (隋文帝, 541-604), Emperor Taizong of Tang (唐太宗, 598-649), Empress Wu Zetian (武則天, 624-705), Emperor Taizu of Song (宋太祖, 927-976), even Emperors Kangxi (康熙, 1654-1722), Yongzheng (雍正, 1678-1735), and Qianlong (乾隆, 1711-1799) of Qing have all greatly assisted the dissemination of Buddhism in China. Particularly, Buddhism saw its golden eras in the Sui and Tang Dynasties.

Among them were Emperor Wu of Liang, Emperor Xuanzong of Tang (唐宣宗, 810-859), Emperor Shunzi (順治, 1638-1661) of Qing who even renounced their throne to become monastics. During the Nanzhao Period, King Longshun proclaimed Buddhism as the national faith. In the Dali Period, ten out of twenty-two emperors renounced. Buddhism was revered by the whole nation, from emperors to the common people. Empress Cixi (慈禧, 1835-1908) preferred to be called the “Great Lord Buddha.” A large number of emperors and kings ruled their kingdom with Buddhist principles.

Buddhist monks, on the other hand, showed their patriotism differently. As imperial masters or counselors, they advised their rulers in how to protect their country and care for their people. Take Venerable Huilin (慧琳, 385-485) for instance, known as the “black-robed prime minister” of the Southern Dynasty. He was summoned to the palace by Emperor Wendi to serve as a counselor to assist in the making of decisions. Senior Monastic Officer Venerable Faguo (法果, ?-?) from the Northern Wei Dynasty retained the trust of Emperors Taizu (太祖, 371-409) and Taizong (太宗) of Wei. Chan Master Baozhi (寶誌, 418-515) likewise counseled Emperor Liang of Wu, while Venerable Huizhong (慧忠, 675-775) from the Tang Dynasty was mentor to the Emperor. Countless monastics served as imperial masters, advising their rulers on developing their country. This would have been impossible if these masters were unwilling to engage in this-worldly matters whilst maintaining the other-worldly spirit.

“The endeavors of Dharma cannot prevail without sovereign benefaction.” Master Daoan (道安) believed that while politics need the guidance of the Dharma, Buddhism is also in need of political protection. Righteous practitioners of Buddhism have never rejected politics, because only through a prosperous nation and righteous rulers can Buddhism continue to thrive. Throughout history, Buddhism’s prosperity never occurred without a prosperous nation. Examples of the close relationship between Buddhism and politics are as follows:

1. Buddhist Masters as Imperial Counselors and Great Translators

The first emperor to exert tremendous influence on Chinese Buddhism was Emperor Ming of Eastern Han, who not only dispatched messengers to bring Buddhism into China but also decreed the construction of Buddhist temples. He demonstrated utmost respect to Buddhism.

During the Sixteen Kingdoms of the Five Barbarians period, Buddhism thrived in Northern China, under royal patronage inspired by masters such as Fotucheng, Daoan, and Kumarajiva. Using his supernatural powers, Fotucheng, revered as a teacher to the king, transformed the barbaric natures of Shi Hu and Shi Le, and saved countless lives. Shi Le even sent the palace children to temples so they could learn Buddhism. He also visited the Buddhist temple on Buddha’s Birthday on April 8th of the lunar month to bathe the buddha statue and pray. Under their reign, the entire nation followed the Buddhist faith.

Having convinced Fu Jian to cease battle, Daoan was escorted back to Changan to begin translating and writing commentaries on Buddhist texts. Another purpose was also to establish the regulations and rules of monastic communities. The spread of Buddhism in Korea and Japan began when Fu Jian gave these nations gifts of sutras and Buddha statues.

Yao Xing (姚興; 366–416) the Emperor of Qin revered Kumarajiva as his teacher. The

Emperor established China's earliest imperial translation court and pushed the spread of the Buddhist doctrine to its zenith through the fluent and elegant translations by Kumarajiva. Yao Xing also decreed Kumarajiva's disciple to assume the posts of senior monastic officer (僧正) and secretary (僧錄) which marked the inception of monastic ministers in Chinese Buddhism.

The reason for the monastic ministry system came from senior monastics needing to assume official positions (with pay). They were entrusted to supervise and penalize any monastic displaying inappropriate conduct. Thus, they assisted the nation in propagating Humanistic Buddhism. The position is known as senior monastic officer, meaning the duty of correcting self before correcting others. This system was inherited by the Southern and Northern Dynasties with different titles such as monastic officer, monastic secretary, senior monastic officer, left-wing monastic secretary, or rightwing monastic secretary. Each of these posts held authority and status.

In this period, Emperor Wu of Southern Liang (also known as the Bodhisattva Emperor) was China's first ruler to govern by the principles of King Chakravarti. His work "On Refraining from Drinking Alcohol and Eating Meat" was the cause for Chinese monastics to practice vegetarianism. When he took and observed the Bodhisattva Precepts, forty-eight thousand people joined him. He was also the first Chinese emperor to renounce. Being well versed in Buddhist doctrine, he often taught the Dharma to monastic and lay Buddhists, in addition to writing well over a hundred fascicles of commentaries on the *Nirvana Sutra* and *Vimalakirti Sutra*. The well-known Buddhist liturgies *Emperor Liang's Treasured Repentance Ceremony* and the *Water and Land Dharma Service Liturgy* are both his accomplishments.

2. Revitalization of Buddhism through the Creation of the Yungang Grottoes

Following the two persecutions that occurred during the Northern Dynasty, triggering catastrophic effects on Buddhism, rulers such as Emperors Wencheng (文成帝, 440-452), Xianwen (獻文帝, 454-476), Xiaowen (孝文帝, 467-499), and Xuanwu (宣武帝, 483-499) of Northern Wei Dynasty began the revitalization works of Buddhism. Emperor Wencheng decreed for Tanyao to act as Senior Monastic Officer (沙門統) as well as to supervise the carving of the Yungang Grottoes. The first Buddhist cave temple in China, Yungang was listed as a World Cultural Heritage Site in 2001. Moreover, in the five years of Emperor Xianwen's short reign, he constructed temples and pagodas, creating a Buddhist city.

Emperor Xiaowen later relocated the capital to Luoyang. He decreed the large-scale excavation of the Longmen Grottoes, bringing Buddhist rock carving to its zenith. Added with the Maijishan and Dazu caves, Buddhism is said to make up a large part of Chinese

culture. I still remember what Indian Prime Minister Nehru said to me during our meeting fifty years ago, “Both Indian and Chinese cultures are listed as one of the world’s greatest heritages, but without Buddhism, I believe India would fall off the list immediately.” The significance of a rich culture to a nation must not be underestimated.

Chinese Buddhism reached its peak during the Sui and Tang Dynasties, where Emperor Wen of Sui was known as the Buddhist emperor who governed his nation by Buddhist thoughts. During his reign, he constructed temples and over eighty-three pagodas. He also transcribed Buddhist sutras as a way of cultivation. His son, Emperor Yang was also a pious supporter of Buddhism who revered Master Zhiyi and observed the Bodhisattva Precepts.

3. The Thriving of the Eight Schools under Empress Wu Zetian’s Imperial Patronage

Among emperors who supported Buddhism, Emperor Taizong of Tang was particularly pious. Among his contributions to Buddhism is the construction of the imperial translation court for Master Xuanzang (玄奘, 602-664), who later translated Buddhist texts such as the *Yogacarabhumi Sastra*, *Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra*, and the *Heart Sutra*, all of which continue to exert tremendous influence on Chinese Buddhism. The emperor also sought company and advice in Master Xuanzang in governing his kingdom.

Emperor Taizong was a man with magnanimity and a big heart. His royal patronage nurtured outstanding monastics who propagated all schools of Buddhism, thereby bringing Chinese Buddhism into its golden age. The emperor was himself well versed in Buddhist texts and actively practiced the Bodhisattva path. His foreword for the *Yogacarabhumi Sastra* was inscribed on the stele of “Foreword of the Holy Tripitaka Teaching of the Great Tang Dynasty.”

Also a devout supporter of Xuanzang’s translation works, Emperor Gaozong took the Bodhisattva Precepts under Venerable Xuanwan (玄琬, 562-636) and constructed Dacien Temple. He sought the company of Xuanzang on his imperial inspection tours and relied heavily on Buddhist teachings to rule. When Xuanzang passed away, Gaozong was so grief-stricken that he did not go to court for three days, having announced that “I have lost one of the nation’s greatest treasures.”

Master Xuanzang was the first “overseas student” in the history of Chinese Buddhism. He honored his country everywhere he went. Records of his travels to foreign nations are written in his *Great Journey to the West*, alongside *Records of the Buddha Kingdom* by Faxian (法顯, 337-422) of Eastern Jin, as well as *A Record of Buddhist Practices Sent Home from the Southern Sea* and *Buddhist Pilgrim Monks of Tang Dynasty* by Yijing (義淨, 635-713) of Tang. These are considered the most valuable historical records of the Central and

Southern Asian, as well as Eastern and Western transportation and cultural relations.

The first Chinese Empress Wu Zetian inherited Taizong and Gaozong's (高宗, 628-683) royal Buddhist patronage and elevated the status of bhiksus and bhiksunis. The opening verse found in almost all Buddhist texts continue to spread far and wide today. She founded the first imperial pharmacy managed by monastics, donated her own money to the carving of the Vairocana Buddha statue at the Longmen Grottoes, and enabled all Eight Schools of Chinese Buddhism to thrive during the Tang Dynasty.

Before assuming the throne, Xuanzong was once a monastic. After taking reign, he restored Buddhist temples that were destroyed during the Huichang persecution, and built precept altars across the nation to enable bhiksus and bhiksunis who had been forced to disrobe to renew their precepts and vows. He also bestowed the purple-golden robe to Master Wuda (悟達, 811-883) and gave him the title "Master of the Three Teachings." The emperor dedicated himself in the restoration of Buddhism with tremendous success.

4. The Spread and Inspirations of the Dharma

Through generations of royal patronage, Chinese Buddhism was able to take root, bloom, and mature in the Middle Kingdom. Subsequently, it spread to countries such as Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. The Northern Mahayana tradition and a shared East Asian culture were thus formed.

1. *Buddhism believes in reason, not superstition.*
2. *Buddhism believes in the greater good, not the lesser good.*
3. *Buddhism believes in involvement with society, not seclusion from it.*
4. *Buddhism believes in infinity, not limits.*
5. *Buddhism believes equality, not discrimination.*
6. *Buddhism believes in self-reliance, not dependence.*

Not only can Buddhism harmonize political powers, it can also serve to progress the norms of society through the beliefs in righteous faith and wisdom.

In summary, Buddhism does not reject politics. The Buddha himself was born a prince of the royal family, who continued to teach in India after attaining enlightenment. Conscious of his political background, he also counseled rulers on how to govern their countries. Throughout Chinese history, the relationship between politicians and Buddhism as well as officials and monastics has been most harmonious. Consequently, one of the purposes of Buddhism is to be a faith for benevolent rulers as well as human beings.

6) Humanistic Buddhism and Language

After Buddhism's spread to the east, it gradually became acculturated to its new home. A unique result of acculturation is the Chinese language.

Language is vital for communication. Through letters and languages, human beings express and communicate their thoughts and views. Although the Chan School has advocated against the use of letters, language is ultimately the core path through which people will come to understand the Dharma. Language should only be discarded when one reaches the ultimate level of attainment.

One sentence suffices to determine the fate of a nation. Likewise it is also sufficient to bring joy or hatred to a person. Therefore, how can one deny the importance of language? It must be obvious that the spread of Buddhism depends on the use of letters and language. Just as stated in the *Diamond Sutra*, "Not even the greatest treasure of the entire three thousand chiliocosm can compare to the merit acquired from upholding a four-line verse." Thus the emphasis of language on Buddhist is clear.

If Master Xuanzang had never brought the many texts back from India how would Chinese culture have been enriched? Without such words of wisdom and truth, how would any Buddhist canon manage to express the Truth?

Deprived of language, communication between human beings wouldn't be as graceful or pleasing. Without language, how could the works of ancient literati and philosophers be as profound? Thus the spread of Humanistic Buddhism has certainly contributed greatly to the spread of Chinese culture.

1. Chinese Language Enriched by Buddhist Expressions

In general, knowledge of one thousand expressions is sufficient to term one as 'knowledgeable.' Narrowed down to hundreds, it is still adequate for one to speak and write. Yet there are thousands of Buddhist phrases and terms, which have exerted tremendous influence on Chinese letters and language.

In his *Eighteen Chapters on Buddhist Studies and Research*, Liang Qichao (梁啟超, 1873-1929) mentions that, "After Buddhism was transmitted to China, translation works of Buddhist sutras have added thirty-five thousand words to the Chinese language. Not only have these new words enhanced the beauty of Chinese literature, their depth and meanings were also elevated. Even daily speech became more elegant. In fact, the letters and language in Humanistic Buddhism have long become part of people's daily usage. They simply do not realize that a large part of their language is actually Chan language.

Without humanistic Buddhist languages, I wonder if the Chinese could still speak as elegantly. For example, “May the Buddha’s Light shine universally,” “Let the stream of Dharma be everflowing,” “the Four Elements are in essence empty,” or “the Five Aggregates never truly exist.” Each of these Chinese phrases is comprised of four characters. Once translated into English, they lose part of their meaning and elegance. This makes a translation that embodies both meaning and elegance challenging. Therefore, the Chinese language is not only profound in meaning, but its beauty and elegance is something that no language can match.

Other Chan phrases such as “the Gate of Non-Duality,” “True Thusness and intrinsic nature,” “Field of the Eight Consciousness,” or “Let the mind arise without abiding,” are also rich in philosophical context and literary beauty. The task of translation into any other language would undoubtedly be extremely difficult. The four reasons Chinese language stands out as the most unique and profound are as follows:

i. Translation of Sutras and Integration of Languages

The spread of the Dharma would not have happened without the disciples. They held councils and compiled the Buddha’s teachings and words after he entered nirvana. The world can now enjoy the eternal company of the righteous Dharma, which includes the writings and disseminations of the Tripitaka and Twelve Divisions of Buddhist Canon.

Monks originally from India, such as Kasyapa-Matanga, Dharmaratna, An Shigao, Lokaksema, Zhi Qian (支謙, fl. 222-252), and Kang Sengui (康僧會, d.280) took on the task of translating Buddhist texts into Chinese. Later, the Five Great Translators: Kumarajiva, Paramartha, Xuanzang, Amoghavajra (705-774), and Yijing translated a large corpus of Buddhist sutras, thereby completing the system of Buddhist thoughts. The task of translation not only enabled the spread of the Buddha’s profound teachings but also allowed the Eight Schools of Chinese Buddhism to thrive during the Sui and Tang Dynasties. Translations also enabled Chinese Mahayana Buddhism to take form.

Translations done by Kumarajiva are regarded as “older translations” for his ability to grasp the meaning and transcribing them in fluent and concise writing. Four of his most prominent disciples--Daosheng (道生, 355-434), Sengzao (僧肇, 384-414), Daorong (道融, 356-406), and Sengrui (僧叡, 373-439) were all outstanding translators. With their participation, the *Lotus Sutra*, *Diamond Sutra*, *Vimalakirti Sutra*, and *Amitabha Sutra* were widely disseminated and extremely popular among Chinese Buddhists for the eloquent readability of the texts.

On the other hand, Master Xuazang’s insistence on remaining loyal to the original text

increased the difficulty of his interpretations. He also established the rule for the “Five Untranslatables,” the five instances under which only transliterations are rendered:

- 1) Secret: languages such as mantras or Dharanis.
- 2) Polysemy: words that contain multiple meanings.
- 3) Foreign: languages that do not exist in China.
- 4) Deference to the past: established transliterations from the past.
- 5) To inspire respect and righteousness: words such as *prajna*.

Certainly, the spread of a Buddhist text would depend on the fluency of its translations. Translators from later periods followed Xuanzang's rules and rendered the “new translations” which have remained particular in their translation techniques.

Therefore, it is important that the language used in Humanistic Buddhism not be rigid or adamant. A reasonable level of adaptation to ensure the readability and fluency of Buddhist language is necessary. Just as Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Theravada, and Tibetan Buddhism each developed their own unique languages, ways of practice, geographical and historical backgrounds were the major contributing factors.

Today, as we harmonize all forms of Buddhism into Humanistic Buddhism, not only are we integrating all Buddhist vocabularies throughout history; we are also reinstating Buddha's original intents. Our own resolve is to offer, to the world, a unified teaching focused solely on the Buddha's intent at bettering society. Being what is essential to people, and the belief that we all can become buddhas, Humanistic Buddhism is certainly the Way.

ii. The spread of Buddhist texts

Throughout the two thousand years of Buddhism's spread in China, eminent masters went through painstaking efforts to translate Buddhist texts, which later became various editions of Buddhist canons such as the Kaibao (開寶), Khitan (契丹), Vairocana (毘盧), Qisha (磧砂), Koryo (高麗), Jiaying (嘉興), Dragon (龍藏), Pinjia (頻伽), Tegen (鐵眼), Manji Daizokyo (卍字正藏), Manji Zokuzokyo (卍字續藏), and Taisho (大正) Canons.

Embodying profound literary and philosophical concepts, these canons have earned the world's respect and envy of Chinese culture. Not even Shakespeare's love stories or delicate portrayals of human nature and life could outshine these canons.

In Hu Shi's *History of Vernacular Literature*, he mentions that the *Gandhavyuha Sutra* from the *Avatamsaka Sutra* is itself a literary novel, while the *Vimalakirti Sutra* is the longest vernacular poem in history, exemplifying both philosophical attainments and literary beauty. Though certain Buddhists may not agree with such an approach to appreciating the Dharma,

we cannot deny that literature and philosophy are the only way through which the beauty of Buddhism and Buddhist literature can be comprehended.

While gratitude must go the Chinese for developing printing techniques, the demand for these texts, owing to the spread of Buddhism, has advanced, perfected, and profited the printing industry. Indeed, the benefit is undeniably twofold.

Today, books, magazines and even different editions of the Buddhist canon can be found in households. It can be argued that the wide circulation of Buddhist texts has not only enriched the hearts and minds of the people, but also enhanced the spread of Humanistic Buddhism tremendously.

iii. Concurrent sectarian realities

Under the works of past eminent Buddhist masters, along with the Chan School separating into five distinct disciplines, and the Five Schools and Seven Sects, Chan Masters found an alternate way to the Truth. They did this through their mindsets of “pointing straight to the heart” and “attaining Buddhahood upon seeing one’s nature.” Most notably, they conveyed the Dharma to society in a manner that was acceptable and understandable by the people, from the children to the elderly. This is an extremely important accomplishment.

Take Zhiyi (智顗, 539-598) for example. Having taught on the *Lotus Sutra* (*Fahua jing*), his school was thus known as the Tiantai School or Fahua School. Alternatively, in widely disseminating the *Avatamasaka Sutra*, Master Xianshou’s (賢首, 643-712) school is hence known as the Xianshou School. Under similar circumstances, various schools took on names based upon where they were situated, what sutras were being studied, or their founder.

The Pure Land School was otherwise known as the Lotus School, Pure School, and Chanting of Buddha’s Name School. The Three Treatises School is also known as the Emptiness School, or Dharma-Nature School. The Faxiang School was also known as the Mind-Only School. No schools were treated as equals, yet none rejected nor excluded each other.

This is similar to the diverse Buddhist expressions of the Tathagata-garbha, True-Thusness, intrinsic nature, and true reality utilized to help understand the truth about our nature. Despite the distinction, there has never been any feeling of contention or objection.

Just as it is seemly that the Buddha has ten epithets, so it was with elites and nobles in olden times. They had scholarly names, courtesy names, titles, and pseudonyms. Even the multitude has nicknames or alternative names. Regardless, they all refer to the same person.

For this reason, the propagation of Humanistic Buddhism requires the effort of all

Buddhists around the world, for it embodies the Buddha's original intents. By acknowledging the term "Humanistic Buddhism," we already contribute greatly to the future of Buddhism worldwide. Conversely, deeming this term inappropriate or incorrect would only harm Buddhism and its dissemination.

iv. Common Expressions

Some say that the Chinese are the smartest people in the world, I wonder if many know how integral the Buddhist language was? The language spoken, written and used daily by Chinese is essentially derived from Buddhist texts. Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike are seemingly unaware that they are actually speaking the Buddhist language.

The beauty of the Chinese language is said to be without equal. The following are some often used Buddhist expressions.

1) Four-character expressions

坐斷十方	To sever all [delusions] in sitting meditation
作繭自縛	To spin a cocoon around oneself
自作自受	To suffer the consequences of one's own actions
裝聾作啞	To play dumb
轉女成男	To be transformed from a female into a male
諸上善人	Utmost virtuous people
擲地有聲	To make a loud statement
智目行足	Eyes of wisdom and steps of conduct
直指人心	Direct pointing to one's mind
蒸沙作飯	Steaming sand to make cooked rice
遠塵離垢	To be far removed from the dust and defilement of the world
猿猴捉月	Like apes and monkeys trying to catch the moon in the water
有情世間	The sentient world
因果報應	Karmic retribution
一心一意	Single-mindedness
一絲不掛	Not attached to a single thread
一彈指頃	A snap of the finger
葉落歸根	Falling leaves return to their roots
眼橫鼻直	Eyes are eyes, and nose is nose
嚴土熟生	Majestic [Pure] land and well-attained sentient beings

言語道斷	Beyond words
修成正果	To attain spiritual progress through the right path
行住坐臥	Walking, standing, sitting and lying down
心猿意馬	The mind is like a wild monkey and galloping horse
心心相印	Heart-to-heart connection
心隨境轉	The mind changes with the circumstances
心生萬法	All dharmas arise from the mind
邪魔外道	Demons and heretics
五體投地	Throwing all five limbs to the ground
無常迅速	Impermanence strikes fast
味同嚼蠟	The taste of chewing candle
唯我獨尊	I alone am the honored one
通身手眼	Your whole body is your eyes and hands
天女散華	Heavenly rain of flowers
曇花一現	The night-blooming cactus
隨緣不變	To follow conditions while remaining unmoved
隨波逐浪	To drift with the waves and go with the flow
識心達本	To know the mind and penetrate the root
事與願違	When things go against your will
事事無礙	Mutual unobstructedness among phenomena
剎那生滅	To arise or cease within a ksana
三生有幸	Blessings from the past three lifetimes
如影隨形	Like shadows following the body
饒益有情	To benefit sentient beings
前世今生	Past and present lifetimes
七情六欲	The seven emotions and six sensory pleasures
披星戴月	Under the moon and stars
拋磚引玉	To throw a brick to bring back jade
拈花微笑	Buddha's flower and Kasyapa's smile
逆增上緣	Reverse contributive factors
泥牛入海	A mud ox into the sea
磨磚作鏡	To polish a brick into a mirror
明心見性	To realize the mind and see one's true nature
夢幻泡影	Dream, illusion, bubble and shadow
龍頭蛇尾	To start off big and end up in nothing
六時吉祥	Auspicious blessings through out all six periods of the day
留惑潤生	To conserve defilements to benefit beings
冷暖自知	The taste of the water in your mouth

老婆心切	Like an old woman's ardent urgency
剋期取證	To set a time limit for attainment
聚沙成塔	Sand grains accumulate to make a tower
金剛不壞	Indestructible diamond
教外別傳	Transmission apart from teachings
焦芽敗種	Barren seed
將心比心	To see things through other people's eyes
回光返照	Final radiance of the setting sun
畫餅充飢	To try to satisfy hunger by drawing cakes
虎嘯生風	Tiger howl with the rise of winds
橫遍十方	Spanning the ten directions
恆河沙數	As innumerable like the sands of the Ganges
貴耳賤目	To trust one's ears rather than one's eyes
龜毛兔角	Turtle hair and rabbit's horn
廣結善緣	Broadly develop good affinities
隔靴抓癢	To scratch an itch from outside the boot
逢場作戲	To play along for a little fun
風調雨順	Favorable weather
返璞歸真	To recover one's true nature
對牛彈琴	To play the lute to a cow
對機說法	Teaching in conformity with the mental capacity of listeners
端心正意	With a proper mind and regulated will
動靜一如	Movement is the same as stillness
洞然明白	Revealed in perfect clarity
電光石火	Transient lightning and flint-fire
滴水穿石	Constant dripping wears away a stone
當頭棒喝	Strike a telling blow
單刀直入	To cut to the chase
大慈大悲	Great compassion and great loving-kindness
慈航普渡	The ferry of compassion
痴人說夢	To talk ignorant nonsense
晨鐘暮鼓	Morning bells and evening drums
塵盡光生	When dusts are cleared light will shine
不增不減	Neither increases nor decreases
不生不滅	Neither arises nor extinguishes
不即不離	Neither close nor far
不二法門	The Gate of Non-Duality
撥雲見日	To clear the clouds and see the sky

撥無因果	To deny the rule of causes and effect
辯才無礙	Supreme eloquence
本來面目	Original face
安心立命	To find peace and attain enlightenment

Most of these expressions originated from Chan gongans. They embody the profound philosophy and clever wits of Chan masters, which have made modern day Chinese more artistic and elegant.

2) Three-character expressions

一切智	wisdom of all	摩尼寶	mani-jewel
一切法	all phenomena	摩訶薩	mahasattva
一剎那	one ksana	摩訶衍	mahayana
一合相	a composite	撞頭鐘	strike the first bell
一味禪	Chan of one taste	放焰口	Yogacara Dharma Service
一大劫	one great kalpa	放生會	Life Release Ceremony
一宿覺	enlightenment in one night	方便門	expedient means
一彈指	a snap of the finger	施無畏	bestowal of fearlessness
一微塵	a particle of dust	日月星	sun, moon and star
一指禪	One-finger Chan	明行足	perfected in wisdom and action
一筆勾	cross out with one stroke	明鏡台	bright standing mirror
一食頃	The time of a meal	易行道	the easy path
七覺支	The Seven Factors of Enlightenment	普同塔	Universal Unity Pagoda
三寶佛	The Triple Gem Buddhas	普賢王	Samantabhadra
三摩地	samadhi	普門品	Universal Gate Chapter
三昧火	Fire of samadhi	普陀山	Mount Putuo
三法印	Three Dharma Seals	智慧海	sea of wisdom

三界外	outside the three dharma realms	朝山團	pilgrims
三皈依	To take refuge in the Triple Gem	柔軟心	gentle and soft mind
上大供	great offering	標月指	finger pointing to the moon
不二門	The Gate of Non-Duality	歡喜佛	Buddha of happiness
不倒單	Never laying down	歡喜地	Ground of Joy
不共業	individual karma	正遍知	correct peerless enlightenment
不動尊	Acala	比丘尼	bhiksuni
不可得	unobtainable	水上泡	bubble on the water
不可說	inexplicable	水中月	moon in the water
不妄語	not lying	沙彌尼	sramanerika
不思善	not thinking about the wholesome	法依止	rely on the Dharma
不思惡	not thinking about the unwholesome	法同舍	Dharma Abode
不思議	inconceivable	法如是	thus is the Dharma
不放逸	no laxity	波羅蜜	paramita
不自在	not in perfect ease	活潑潑	lively
不誑語	not lying	浴佛節	Buddha's Birthday
不退轉	never regress or change	海潮音	ocean-tide voice
世間解	knower of the world	消業障	to eliminate karmic obstacle
九品蓮	Nine Stages of Lotus Incarnation	添油香	to make a donation
二六時	twelve hours	清涼月	pure and cool moon
人中尊	The Honored One among humans	清淨心	pure mind
人我相	characteristics of the self and others	滴水恩	gratitude for a water drop
佛法僧	Buddha, Dharma, Sangha	無上士	unsurpassed one

作麼生	why, how	無學位	stage of no more learning
來生緣	affinities in future lives	無所得	nothing to be attained
信願行	faith, vow, and practice	無明火	fire of ignorance
俱解脫	simultaneous liberation	無為舍	the house of nirvana
做功德	to generate merits	無盡燈	one lamp which is yet limitless
做好事	Do good deeds	無盡藏	inexhaustible storehouse
做法會	to hold a Dharma service	無遮會	universal offering
優婆塞	upasaka	無量光	infinite light
優婆夷	upasika	無量壽	infinite life
光明燈	lamp of illumination	無門關	Gateless Barrier
光明藏	treasury of light	燒頭香	to burn the first incense
免災難	free from disasters and calamities	獅子吼	Lion's roar
兩足尊	supreme among two-legged creatures	現世報	karmic retribution in the present life
八正道	Noble Eightfold Path	甘露水	nectar
八福田	eight fields of merit	發大心	generate great mind
六和敬	Six points of reverent harmony	盂蘭盆	Ullambama Festival
六齋日	Six Days of Purification	真實義	True meaning
共命鳥	two-headed bird	眾生相	characteristics of sentient beings
共生緣	coexisting affinity	福田衣	The garment of the field of blessing
十法界	Ten Dharma Realms	禪和子	meditation-associates
南無佛	namo buddha	種福田	to cultivate the field of merits
參話頭	contemplate the head phrase (of a gongan)	立大願	to make great vows
受五戒	to take the Five Precepts	紫竹林	Purple Bamboo Forest

口頭禪	lip service Chan	經律論	sutra, vinaya, and abhidharma
吃十方	to live on offerings from the ten directions	聞思修	hearing, contemplation, and practice
吃早齋	vegetarian breakfast	臘八粥	Laba congee
善女人	good women	自性空	emptiness of self-nature
善男子	good men	臭皮囊	vile skin-bag
善知識	virtuous companion	般若門	door of prajna
善護念	safeguard the mind	茶飯禪	Chan in tea and meals
因緣果	cause, condition, and effect	莫妄想	think no delusive thoughts
地獄門	gate of hell	菩提路	the Bodhi Path
地藏王	Ksitigarbha	菩薩心	a bodhisattva's mind
報施恩	repay kindness	菩薩戒	Bodhisattva Precepts
增上緣	contributory factor	萬佛殿	Ten-thousand-buddha Shrine
增福慧	increase merit and wisdom	萬壽園	Longevity Park
多寶佛	Prabhutaratna Buddha	蓮花池	lotus pond
大和尚	master	藏經樓	Sutra Repository
大導師	The great teacher	西方船	Ferry to Western Pure Land
大無畏	great fearlessness	覺有情	awakened sentient being
大神通	great supernatural power	觀世音	avalokitesvara
大菩薩	great Bodhisattva	觀自在	avalokitesvara
大醫王	Great Lord of healing	解脫道	The path of liberation
天人師	teacher of heavenly beings and humans	說好話	Speak good words
天地人	heaven, earth, and humans	貪瞋癡	Greed, hatred, and ignorance
天堂路	road to heaven	走江湖	Jianghu roamer

奈何橋	bridge to hell	趙州茶	Zhaozhou tea
好兆頭	good omen	轉法輪	To turn the Dharma Wheel
如來佛	Tathagata Buddha	造口業	to commit verbal karma
如來殿	Tathagata Shrine	選佛場	Buddha selection court
如實知	to understand things as they really are	金光明	golden light
如意寮	sickbay	金剛心	Diamond heart
妙吉祥	Wonderful and auspicious	金剛身	The diamond body
存好心	Think good thoughts	鑽故紙	study a pile of old documents
安樂行	pleasant practices	門外漢	layman
小沙彌	sramanera	開山門	to open the monastery gate
居士林	Lay Buddhist's Association	開眼界	to broaden one's views
帝釋天	Sakra Devanam-indra	閻羅王	Yama
常不輕	Sadaparibhuta	阿修羅	asura
度眾生	to liberate sentient beings	阿僧祇	asamkhya
弄獼猴	play with a monkey	阿羅漢	arhat
彌勒佛	Maitreya Buddha	阿蘭若	aranya
微塵劫	kalpas as many as fine dust	難行道	the difficult path
心意識	mind, thought, and perception	雲門餅	Yunmen cake
心花開	blossoming of the mind	露馬腳	to show the cloven foot
心解脫	liberation of mind	非思量	not thinking
念佛七	seven-day chanting retreat	須彌山	Mount Sumeru
慈悲心	compassion	香水海	Ocean of Fragrant Water
戒定慧	morality, meditative concentration, wisdom	香積廚	Kitsch of Accumulated Fragrance

所知障	cognitive hindrance	香雲蓋	Incense cloud canopy
打禪七	meditation retreat	體相用	essence, function, and form
接引佛	Welcoming Buddha	鬼門關	the gate of death

3) Two-character terms

功德	merit	雲水	cloud and water	聲聞	śrāvaka
如意	As one wishes	執著	attachment	講堂	lecture hall
神通	supernatural power	寂靜	tranquility	叢林	monastery
安詳	serene, peaceful	常住	monastery	歸命	to devote one's life
罪過	transgression	掛單	lodging	禮佛	to prostrate to the Buddha
絕對	absolute	淨土	Pure Land	繞佛	to circumambulate the Buddha
薰習	influence	清淨	purity	翻案	to reverse a verdict
普遍	universal	現身	manifest	曠劫	since ancient times
諦聽	listen carefully	眾生	sentient beings	羅漢	arhat
手續	procedure	罣礙	affliction	藥石	medicine meal
一切	all, everything	習氣	habitual tendency	顛倒	up-side down
一心	single-mindedly, wholeheartedly	莊嚴	solemn, majestic	懺悔	to repent
一匝	to make a full circle	割愛	to relinquish	覺悟	to awake
三昧	samādhi	善惡	good and evil	警策	warning staff
三寶	Three Jewels	喜捨	joyful giving	闍提	icchantika
上人	supreme teacher	圍繞	to surround	饒舌	chatterbox
小品	short version	報應	karmic retribution	攝受	to receive, take in
山門	mountain gate	悲觀	contemplation on loving-kindness	犧牲	sacrifice
中道	Middle Way	惡道	evil path	纏縛	to bind

公案	gong-an	散亂	distraction	鐃鈴	cymbals
分別	discrimination	普門	Universal Gate	魔障	mara-hindrance
天眼	divine eye	普度	universal salvation	歡喜	joy
方便	expedient means	智慧	wisdom	變易	to change
火宅	burning house	朝山	pilgrimage	靈感	inspiration
世界	world	朝暮	morning and evening	靈驗	efficacious
世間	world	朝露	morning dew	觀音	Avalokitesvara
出家	to renounce	無住	non-abiding	觀想	contemplation
出離	renunciation, transcendence	無念	free from thought	觀照	careful consideration
加持	to bless	無明	ignorance	觀察	clear perception
布施	generosity	無畏	fearless	讚歎	praise
平等	equality	無相	formless	繫縛	tied to
正宗	authentic	無常	impermanence	緣分	affinity
甘露	nectar	無量	immeasurable	機緣	potentiality and condition
生滅	arising and ceasing	無盡	endless	現象	phenomenon
示現	to manifest	無緣	lack of connection	有情	sentient being
合十	to bring the ten fingers or two palms together	發心	to resolve	障礙	hindrance
合掌	to join palms	結緣	to develop affinity	玄關	entrance
吉祥	auspicious blessings	菩提	bodhi	宗旨	cardinal meaning
同事	fellowship	菩薩	bodhisattva	現在	now, present
回向	dedication of merits	虛無	nothingness, unreal	如是	thus, so
因果	cause and effect	鈍根	dull aptitude	單位	a single seat, or position
因緣	causes and conditions	開光	inauguration	迷信	superstition
地獄	hell	開悟	to awaken	相對	relative
如來	Tathagatha	雲遊	to travel freely	上乘	superior vehicle

如實	according to reality	飯頭	rice chef	有緣	to have a cause, link, or connection
妄想	delusive thoughts	傳法	Dharma transmission	化身	nirmanakaya
成就	accomplishment	圓寂	perfect rest	浩劫	disaster, catastrophe
自在	perfect ease	圓通	Universally penetrating	宿命	predestination
自覺	self-awareness	微妙	Subtle, profound	相應	response, correspond
行腳	to travel [by foot]	微塵	fine dust	面壁	to face the all in sitting meditation
衣鉢	robe and bowl	愛河	river of desire	灌頂	consecration
伽藍	sangha community	愛語	loving words	棒喝	stick and shout
住持	abbot	感應	divine connection	袈裟	kasaya
佛道	the Buddha Way	慈航	ferry of compassion	勝利	victory
佛學	Buddhology	慈悲	loving-kindness and compassion	尊重	respect
利行	altruism	會館	lodge	利益	benefit
劫數	inexorable fate	業力	karmic effect	一句	a sentence
弟子	disciple	業報	karmic retribution	一生	all one's life
忍辱	patience	業障	karmic hindrance	一向	one direction
投胎	to be reborn	極樂	ultimate bliss	一劫	one kalpa
投機	to avail oneself of an opportunity	煩惱	defilement	一言	one word
抖擻	to shake off	獅吼	Lion's Roar	一味	one taste
束縛	fetter	當下	immediate moment	一念	one thought
沙門	sramana	當家	superintendent	一門	one gate
沙彌	sramanera	禁語	observation of silence	一流	of the same flow
供養	offering	經行	walking meditation	一面	one side, simultaneously
依止	to depend and rest upon	義工	volunteer	一音	one voice
典座	temple chef	聖凡	sage and ordinary	一家	same family

初心	the initial mind	解脫	liberation	一時	one time
受持	uphold	資糧	provision	一期	one moment of time
和尚	Most Venerable	遊行	to wander, travel	一路	all along the way
居士	householder	遊戲	to be free and at ease	人天	humans and devas
彼岸	the other shore	過去	past	人生	life
往生	to be reborn	道場	place for spiritual practice	人身	the human body
往還	to depart and return	頓悟	sudden enlightenment	人師	a teacher of humans
念佛	to chant Buddha's name	僧伽	sangha	人間	human world
放下	let go	僧侶	monastic	入定	to enter into meditation
放光	to emit light	塵勞	affliction	入門	beginner
放香	free session	塵緣	worldly affinity	入室	to enter the master's study for examination or instruction
法身	Dharma body	實相	reality	入流	Srotapanna, stream-entrant
法乳	the milk of Dharma	實際	actual	入滅	to enter into nirvana
法門	dharma-gate	對治	to remedy	入道	to enter the Way
法界	dharma realm	慚愧	humility	八難	Eight Difficulties
法師	Dharma master, Venerable	演說	to expound	力士	one of great strength
法喜	Dharma joy	福田	field of merit	八苦	Eight Kinds of Suffering
法輪	Dharma wheel	種子	seed	十方	the ten directions
法器	Dharma instrument	稱念	chant Buddha's name	三千	three thousand fold
法寶	Dharma treasure	精舍	vihara	三世	Three Periods of Time
知客	receptionist	精進	diligence	三生	Three Lifetimes
糾察	disciplinarian	維那	karmadana	三劫	Three kalpas
糾纏	entangle	緇素	sacred and secular, monastic and lay practitioner	三災	Three Calamities

舍利	relic	語錄	record of sayings	三思	Three Mental Conditions
金剛	diamond	輕安	at ease	三昧	samadhi
長養	to nurture	增長	to increase, grow	三毒	Three Poisons
信仰	faith	彈指	to snap the fingers	三界	Three Realms
剎那	ksana	慧命	wisdom-life	三乘	Three Vehicles
客塵	external taint	摩頂	to lay the hand on the top of the head	三時	Three Periods of Time
持戒	to uphold precepts	樂觀	optimism	三從	Three Obediences
施主	benefactor	緣覺	pratyekabuddha	三塗	Three Lower Realms
染汙	taint	蓮社	Lotus Society	三學	Threefold Training
流通	to transmit and spread	調伏	to subdue	三禮	Three Rites
流轉	transmigration	輪迴	rebirth	三藏	Tripitaka
紅塵	worldly affairs	遷單	to expel	正命	right livelihood
苦行	austerity	餓鬼	hungry ghost	戒香	fragrance of precepts
苦海	ocean of suffering	學人	student of the Way	惜緣	to cherish affinity
茉莉	jasmine	導師	mentor	止觀	calming and contemplating
降伏	to subdue	懈怠	laziness	共生	coexistence
首座	chief	燒香	to burn incense	安住	to settle
修行	spiritual cultivation	積聚	accumulation	安忍	to bear adversity with calmness
差別	discrimination	醍醐	clarified butter	行禪	to practice Chan
恩愛	affection	錫杖	staff	見道	to see the Way
悅眾	karmadana	閻浮	Jampudiva	和南	A salutation. To pay one's respects to
悟道	to awaken to the truth	隨分	according to (one's) allotment	法忍	patience attained through Dharma
書記	secretary	隨喜	To rejoice [in the welfare of others]	法味	taste of Dharma

根器	aptitude	隨緣	to accord with conditions	法舍	Dharma abode
殊勝	extraordinary	頭陀	austerities	法炬	The torch of Dharma
浮圖	Buddha	龍象	dragon and elephant	法樂	Dharma joy
涅槃	nirvana	應化	manifestation in response	法緣	Causes and conditions that accord with the buddhadharma
琉璃	lapis lazuli	戲論	mental proliferation	問道	ask for the Way
真心	true mind	檀那	dana	梵唄	Buddhist hymn
真如	True Thusness	禪心	Chan mind	清貧	simple and frugal
真諦	truth	禪坐	sitting meditation	無愧	shamelessness
神明	god, deity	禪味	taste of Chan	無憂	without sorrow
素齋	vegetarian meal	禪定	meditative concentration	等持	holding oneself in equanimity
般若	prajna	禪師	Chan master	敬信	respectful and faithful
勘破	to penetrate	禪悅	joy of Chan	學愚	learn to appear dull-witted
參學	travel and learn	禪堂	meditation hall	轉身	turn around
問訊	half bow	總持	to hold to the good, total retention	證悟	to awaken [to the Truth]

4) Literary expressions

一子出家，九族升天	When one child renounces, nine clans of kinsmen will ascend to heaven.
一切有為法，如夢幻泡影	All conditioned phenomena are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, and shadows.
一日不作，一日不食	A day without work means a day without food.
一佛出世，二佛涅槃	When one buddha is born, the other two will pass away.
一佛出世，千佛護持	The birth of one buddha is made possible by thousand(s) of other buddhas.
一即多，多即一	One is many, and many are one.

一把鑰匙，開一把鎖	Each key opens up a lock.
一言既出，駟馬難追	A word spoken is an arrow let fly.
一花一世界，一葉一如來	There is a world in a single flower; a buddha in a single leaf.
一報還一報	An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.
一朝被蛇咬，十年怕井繩	Once bitten, twice shy.
人生難得，大道難聞	It is hard to be born as a human, and hard to hear the Dharma.
人成即佛成	Buddhahood is attained the instant our characters are perfected
人命在呼吸間	We can only count on a single breath.
人要知道苦惱	It is important to feel pain and affliction.
八功德水，九品蓮華	The waters of eight merits and nine stages of lotus flowers (Starting a Daily Practice.
八風吹不動，一屁打過江	He who is allegedly unmovable even by the Eight Winds was blown across the river by a fart.
三千威儀，八萬細行	Three thousand demeanors and eighty thousand subtle actions.
三界似火宅，娑婆如苦海	The Three Realms are like a burning house; The Saha World is like an ocean of suffering.
三界唯心，萬法唯識	The three realms are only in the mind; the myriad dharmas are only in the consciousness.
上報四重恩，下濟三途苦	Have gratitude for the four kindnesses, and follow the Dharma to cross over the three lower realms of existence.
千生萬死，萬死千生	A thousand lives, a million deaths.
千錘百鍊才能成功	Success comes after endless hammering and refinement.
大地眾生，皆有如來智慧德相	All sentient beings possess the wisdom and virtues of the Buddha.
大地眾生，皆有佛性	All living beings possess buddha-nature.
大肚包容，歡喜自在	With great magnanimity comes joy and perfect ease.
山川異域，日月同天	Across the mountains, streams, and foreign lands, the sun and moon, all beneath the one sky.

不是冤家不聚頭	Destiny will make enemies meet.
不看僧面看佛面	If not for the sake of the monk, at least for that of the Buddha.
天外有天，人外有人	There are always people who are better than you.
天堂地獄，來來去去	We go back and forth between heaven and hell.
心如將軍能行令	The mind is like a general who takes command.
心如猿猴難安住	The mind is like a restless monkey.
水中撈月，空有歡喜	The joy of fishing for the moon in the water is as real as emptiness.
出汙泥而不染	To emerge from the mud untainted.
生不帶來，死不帶去	We come and go empty-handed.
生死輪迴，永無休息	The cycle of birth and death never ends.
因果業報，絲毫不爽	Causes, conditions and retributions will never get it wrong.
因緣果報，絲毫不爽	There is no error in causes, conditions and retributions.
地獄不空，誓不成佛	I shall never attain buddhahood until hell is emptied.
好事不出門，壞事傳千里	For evil news rides fast, while good news baits later.
如人飲水，冷暖自知	Only you would know the taste of the water in your mouth.
如入寶山空手回	Never leave a treasured mountain empty-handed.
早知今日，悔不當初	It is too late to ever say "If only I had known..."
有佛法就有辦法	Where there is the Dharma, there is Way.
死了會生，生了會死	There is rebirth after death, and death after rebirth.
色即是空，空即是色	Form is emptiness, emptiness is form.
行如風，立如松，坐如鐘，臥如弓	walk like the wind, stand like a pine, sit like a bell, sleep like a bow.
佛光普照，法水長流	May the Buddha's light shine universally and the Dharma water flow eternally.
佛在哪裡，佛在心裡	Where is Buddha? Buddha is in one's mind.

佛法在世間，不離世間覺	Dharma can only be found in the world, and enlightenment cannot be attained away from it.
佛觀一粒米，大如須彌山	The Buddha sees that a grain of rice is as enormous as Mount Sumeru.
佛觀一鉢水，八萬四千蟲	The Buddha sees 84,000 organisms in a bowl of water.
君子一言，快馬加鞭	A gentleman's word is as good as gold.
我不敢輕視汝等，汝等皆當作佛	I dare not denigrate anyone of you, for you are all going to become Buddhas.
我觀世界，如菴摩羅果	I see that the world is like amalaka fruit.
求人不如求己	It is better to help yourself than to seek help from others.
放下屠刀，立地成佛	Lay down the butcher's knife and become Buddha on the spot.
泥菩薩過江，自身難保	like a clay bodhisattva fording the river, even his own safety is jeopardy.
花落春猶在，人死樓已空	Spring lingers even when flowers have fallen; a place becomes empty when someone passes away.
金剛不壞身	A body as indestructible as diamond.
既來佛會下，都是有緣人	All in the Buddhist community are friends.
是日已過，命亦隨滅	Life shortens at the end of each day.
看破世間嚇壞膽	To see through the world and then be scared to death.
苦海無邊，回頭是岸	The ocean of suffering is boundless; only by turning back can one reach salvation.
飛蛾投火，作繭自縛	Like a moth flying into the flame, and a silkworm trapping itself in a cocoon.
冤家宜解不宜結	Better friends than foes.
做一日和尚，撞一日鐘	For each day that I remain a monk, I will continue my duty in tolling the bell.
救人一命，勝造七級浮屠	The merit of saving one human life outweighs that of building a seven-story pagoda.
清者自清，濁者自濁	A clean hand wants no washing.

無我相，無人相，無眾生相，無壽者相	No notion of a self, No notion of others, No notion of sentient beings, No notion of longevity.
發菩提心，成就佛道	To generate the bodhi mind and attain Buddhahood.
菩薩畏因，眾生畏果	Bodhisattvas fear causes while sentient beings fear effects.
須彌藏芥子，芥子納須彌	Mount Sumeru can contain a mustard seed, yet that same mustard seed can conceal Mount Sumeru.
飯來張口，茶來伸手	To be waited on hand and foot.
慈眼視眾生，福聚海無量	With compassionate eyes he gazes upon sentient beings; His merit as infinite as the ocean.
楊枝一滴，甘露法水	A drop from the willow is like the nectar of Dharma.
萬惡淫為首，百善孝為先	Sexual misconducts are the worst of all unwholesome deeds; filial piety is the foremost among all wholesome deeds.
解鈴還須繫鈴人	The knot can only be untied by the knoter.
道高一尺，魔高一丈	Virtue is one foot tall, the devil ten foot.
寧動江千水，不動道人心	It is better to stir up a thousand rivers than to disturb a practitioner.
慚愧之服，無上莊嚴	Humility is the most beautiful adornment.
種瓜得瓜，種豆得豆	Good begets good, evil begets evil.
遠親不如近鄰	Neighbors are better than distant relatives.
瞋拳不打笑面	No smiling face will ever be struck by a fist of anger
諸惡莫作，眾善奉行	Do no evil, practice all wholesome deeds.
豎窮三際，橫遍十方	Across all of time, and all of space.
擒山中之賊易，捉心中之賊難	It is easy to catch thieves in the mountains, but hard to catch the thieves in one's mind.
應無所住而生其心	To give rise to a mind that does not abide in anything.

From these frequently used Buddhist expressions and terms it can be seen that Buddhist

language had already blended into the lives of the common people and exerted tremendous influence in their way of life.

Single-character Buddhist terms that have become part of daily speech include:

1. **Karma:** deed or action that give rise to retributions.
2. **Awakening:** to help the self and others to realize or be clear about the Truth.
3. **Dissatisfaction:** a state of physical or mental dissatisfaction categorized into three, eight and mundane types.
4. **Kalpa:** an ancient Indian unit of time. In Buddhism this word bears the meaning of calamity.
5. **Condition:** the profound Truth, which the Buddha awakened to. That everything in this world is conditioned and interconnected. This interconnection cannot be severed.
6. **Emptiness:** the essence of being, and the basis upon which matters arise.

For example, without ‘purity,’ how could homes be clean and minds untainted? Without the mention of affliction, how would we be able to see its effect on us? Without “cause and effect,” how can we comprehend the truth and law of life? Without ‘humility,’ how can we be moral? Without ‘compassion’ would enemies not surround us?

Deprived of Buddhist thoughts and literature, how could works such as *The Water Margin*, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, *Journey to the West*, and *the Scholars* ever have been master pieces?

While texts such as the *Lotus Sutra*, and *Diamond Sutra* may be poetic and legible, to fully grasp their profound meanings would be another matter. For this reason, the difficult terms and language used in Buddhism are said to have hindered its propagation.

Expressions such as cause and effect may seem easy to understand; yet their true meanings are very hard to comprehend. Others such as nirvana, dhyana, prajna, sunyata cannot be understood without actual cultivation and experiences. While these expressions are often used, few have grasped their true meanings.

Contemporary literary writers such as Lu Xun (魯迅, 1881-1936) and Ba Jin (巴金, 1904-2005) have admitted to espousing Buddhist thoughts in their works. When the 2012 Nobel Prize in Literature Laureate, Mo Yan (莫言) visited Fo Guang Shan, he too mentioned that the title of his work *Worn Out by Life and Death*, was inspired by the *Sutra of Eight Realizations of Great Beings*.

In conclusion, imagine the Chinese Language in its entirety bereft of Buddhism. Without Buddhism, would Chinese literary and historical expressions have been as elegant and rich? As we speak of revitalizing the Chinese culture, we must be made aware of the variances

Buddhist language has made to society and life. No matter your background or occupation, we are speaking the Humanistic Buddhist language. As Liang Qichao (梁啟超, 1873-1929) has claimed, Buddhism alone contributed over thirty-four thousand words to the Chinese language. Without these contributions, the Chinese language would be empty.

After long-term persistence in spreading the Dharma through culture and prizing the use of text, Humanistic Buddhism has indeed reached into society and assimilated with everyday life.

The Buddhist language has made all positive expressions. If we are able to combine the beauty of the Buddhist language with our era of instant communication, the possibilities are astounding. Daily, we could share words of wondrous splendor, encompassing the world in a warm spring breeze. Just as the saying goes, “a face devoid of anger is already a great way of giving, and to speak no words of anger is to emit wondrous fragrance from the lips,” is one of the most beautiful expressions in Humanistic Buddhism.

7) Causes of the Decline of Chinese Buddhism

Throughout the two thousand years of Buddhism's development in China, the golden eras of Humanistic Buddhism took place during the reigns of Emperor Ming of Eastern Han, the Wei and Jin Dynasties, the Northern and Southern Dynasties, and also the Sui and Tang Dynasties. The efforts of Buddhist masters and devout lay patrons enabled the Buddhist doctrine of universal salvation to spread widely, highlighting the Buddha's focus on liberating people from life's difficulties. Nevertheless, mistakes in the propagation of the Dharma were eventually made and gave rise to unorthodox and inapt teachers. Some causes of the decline of Chinese Buddhism are as follows:

1. Resistance and Exclusion by Local Religions

The transmission of Buddhism into China began precariously. The severe cultural clashes, Confucian persecutions, and Daoist resistance eventually led to the greatest disaster in Buddhist history-the San-Wu Yi Zong (三武一宗) Persecutions. Persecutions of Buddhists were perpetrated by Emperor Taiwu of Northern Wei (北魏太武帝, 408-452), Emperor Zhouwu of Northern Zhou (北周武帝, 543-578), Emperor Wuzong of Tang (唐武宗, 814-846), and Emperor Shizong of Later Zhou (後周世宗, 921-959). Another disaster for Buddhism was the Taiping Rebellion. The mandatory transformation of temple property into schools and the Cultural Revolution damaged Buddhism severely. But its doctrines of universality, equality and timelessness, coupled with its pure and righteous faith enabled

Buddhism to survive. It did so by transcending religious and geographical boundaries. It is for these reasons that Humanistic Buddhism still exists today.

The first persecution began when devout Taoist Prime Minister Cui Hao (崔浩, d450) and Daoist priest Kou Qianzhi (寇謙之, 365-448) incited Emperor Taiwu of Northern Wei, also a pious Daoist, to execute all monastics in Changan, abolish Buddhism by burning all the temples and Buddha statues, as well as, forcing all monastics to disrobe. Even the Prince's teacher, Xuangao (玄高, 402-444), was executed. This utterly devastated Northern Wei Buddhism and lasted for two years until the next dynasty emerged and gave Buddhism another chance to revitalize.

The second persecution followed some one hundred years later, when Emperor Wu of Northern Zhou was similarly encouraged by Daoist priests Zhang Bin (張賓) and Wei Yuanson (衛元嵩) to order the abolishment of Buddhism. This was done by confiscating over forty thousand properties belonging to the temples and forcing over a million monastics to disrobe. In defiance of oppression, and in an attempt to convince the Emperor that this was immoral, Venerable Jingai (靜藹, 534-578) was executed. The following year, the Emperor died suddenly of an illness, viewed by the people as an immediate karmic retribution of his own doing.

Two hundred and sixty years later, in 845, Emperor Wuzong of Tang ignited the third disaster that nearly brought Buddhism to its extinction. A devout Daoist, the Emperor was influenced by Daoist priest Zhao Guizhen (趙歸真, ?-846) and decreed that over forty six hundred were to be abolished and their properties seized. Two hundred and sixty thousand monastics were forced to disrobe. Iron Buddhist statues were remolded into farming tools, while bronze statues, instruments and artifacts were remolded into coins as currency. Perhaps it was karma yet again, for the Emperor died of poisoning the following year by ingesting medicine brewed by a Daoist priest. The six years of his short reign thus ended.

The fourth persecution was initiated by Emperor Shizong of Later Zhou, who ordered the abolishment of Buddhism by destroying over thirty thousand temples and prohibiting the creation of Buddhist statues and instruments. He also ordered that all bronze artifacts be smelted into coins for currency.

The orders for the abolishment of Buddhism and its persecution, as listed above were due to several causes. One such cause was a malicious Daoist's advice to the Emperor. Another was the ruler's own opposition to a foreign religion, and fear of the thriving influence of Buddhism.

In the early periods, Daoism was the national religion of China, and thus Buddhist-Daoist

conflicts began. A Daoist priest named Chu Shanxin (褚善信) boasted to Emperor Ming of Eastern Han about the greatness of Daoist powers. He claimed that they could fly, and, as the supreme texts of the world, the Taoist sutras could not be burnt by fire. However, in a disagreement with Kasyapa-Matanga and Dharmaratna, the Taoist sutras instantly caught fire and were burnt to ashes. Even worse, their artifices of flying, walking on water, and invisibility all failed. In contrast, the Buddha's relic brought forth by the monastics shone in bright colors. Kasyapa-Matanga thereby uttered the following verse, which was later remembered as the greatest Buddhist-Daoist quarrel:

*Foxes were never of the same kind as lions,
and lamps do not shine the true lights of the sun and moon.
Ponds have no capacity of boundless oceans,
and hills cannot peak the height of lofty mountains.
The cloud of Dharma now ascends into the world
And fertile seeds shall be inspired to sprout.
The rare Dharma will be made clear
To deliver sentient beings in all corners.*

(Comprehensive History of the Buddhas and Patriarchs)

No less a tragedy when compared to the four imperial persecutions was the Taiping Rebellion. In the name of the Lord, Hong Xiuquan (洪秀全, 1814-1864) the leader of the rebellion established the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, and claimed to be "the Heavenly Lord." He issued "Heavenly Decrees" to suppress traditional beliefs by burning statues of Buddha and deities, as well as the Confucian and Mencian classics. Taiping rebels set fire to temples and destroyed statues everywhere they went. Buddhist temples in the Jiangnan region (known as the Garden of Buddhism) as well as Yunnan, Guizhou, Guangdong and Guangxi were seriously damaged.

Fortunately, after ten years of resistance by imperial forces, led by Zeng Guofan (曾國藩, 1811-1872) and Zuo Zongtang (左宗棠, 1812-1885) who had sworn to defend Chinese culture, the Taiping army was finally defeated. Buddhism thus was able to rise once again.

During the late Qing and early Republic of China eras, intellectuals and government officials had very little understanding of Buddhism. Moreover, there were also covetous local despots and immoral gentry who not only confiscated temple property in the name of education, but also destroyed Buddhist architecture, and forced monastics to disrobe.

During the Kuomintang Northern Expedition, Christian warlord Feng Yuxiang (馮玉祥,

1882-1948) destroyed Buddhist assets on a large scale, forcing monastics to disrobe and join the army. Temple properties were confiscated and turned into schools, shelters, and even entertainment houses. This was another disastrous episode for Buddhism in Northern China.

The Cultural Revolution brought about the largest persecution of Buddhism to date. Fortunately, the leaders of the Communist Party ended the revolution and redressed the situation. Coupled with the opening up of China by Deng Xiaoping (鄧小平, 1904-1997), Chinese culture and faiths were finally given a chance to renew.

2. The Prosperity of Buddhism as a Cause of Apprehension

In the early days of Buddhism in China, imperial and executive patronage led to the establishment of Buddhist temples, temple storages, Incalculable Registries and Inexhaustible Storehouses. At certain times, large areas of farmland were also offered to Buddhist temples, and their ability at self-sufficiency was largely developed.

The three hundred years of the Sui and Tang Dynasties witnessed the golden era of Chinese Buddhism. Whether academically, exegetically, or on its propagation, Buddhism thrived. Monastics of different schools established various charitable endeavors. For example, they planted trees, dug wells and offered water. They paved roads and built bridges. Practitioners of Humanistic Buddhism focused on any activity that helped society, the nation's financial burdens, and the people with their daily needs. The bond between Buddhism and the people was already indivisible.

As Buddhist undertakings continued to develop, devotees became inspired and offered more donations. Temples became as wealthy as the nation and had extremely large followings. This caused anxiety in the imperial court and triggered envy in weak and incapable emperors. They resented Buddhism's prosperity in their failure to do likewise for their own kingdom. Fearing that Buddhist communities may threaten the existence of their sovereignty, some ordered the suppression of Buddhism. One of the causes of the four imperial persecutions certainly falls into this category.

3. Seclusion from Society

Having lived as a novice monk when young, Emperor Taizu of Ming - Zhu Yuanzhang (朱元璋, 1328-1398) was well aware of the influence of religion on the people. Thus he ordered that monastics withdraw into the mountain forests, and forbade people from entering Buddhist temples to contact monastics. Particularly, during the Yuan and Qing Dynasties, imperial patronage favored Lamaism, and thus Buddhism and Daoism suffered oppressions. The Qing government even banned women from visiting temples and monastics from begging

for alms. As a result, most monastics led lives of secluded cultivation in the deep mountain forests, with the goal of transcending life and death. Buddhism therefore became disconnected from society and the people.

Some monastics even insisted that lay Buddhists live like them. They began instructing them to fear money for it had been said in the sutras that gold is like a poisonous snake. Also, that betrothed couples were enemies in their previous lives, and children were their debt collectors. Such biased and distorted view caused aversion towards Buddhism.

The over-emphasis on suffering, emptiness, and impermanence pushed people away, denying them the proper understanding and positive attitude of Buddhism. This caused people to think of Buddhism as a faith with no connection to reality and no concern for human life. Quite the contrary, Buddha had originally intended to be actively interacting with the world. Unfortunately, spiritual practitioners were concerned only with their own salvation, and had little willingness to practice the bodhisattva path. As a result, Buddhism still had to contend with conflicts and tragedies.

The passive and evasive attitudes of those monastics resulted in very little concern for daily life's issues or the need to improve its quality. Neither was there much bother to teach the Dharma as a way to purify human minds, or to participate in the betterment of society. All they cared for was liberation from birth and death, and taught people to chant the Buddha's name only so they could be reborn in the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss. This largely conflicted from the need to seek happiness and peace in this life. The parting of Buddhism and humanity was made worse.

In those days, Buddhists lacked the ability to guide people towards a life found in peace and stability, creating a big contrast between what people really needed and what Buddhism had to offer. Monastics were unable to embrace suitable means of teaching that fit intellectuals. If so, how can Humanistic Buddhism ever reach into families and people's hearts? If reliant on passive, negative interpretations of the Dharma and lacking the bodhisattva spirit to help people, it is no wonder Buddhism had declined.

4. Emphasis on Metaphysical Investigation over Human Concern

In their teachings, many monastics spoke of metaphysical explorations. They delivered overly philosophical and orotund sermons to boast of their knowledge. As a result, their teachings were found to be irrelevant to real life. Buddha's original teachings are meant as instructions for life. The claim that "the gift of Dharma excels all forms of giving" means for Buddhists that the Dharma applies, enriches and assists to better life. Believing in Buddhism without attainment of the Dharma is truly sad. In their dialogue, Chan master Niaoke and

renowned poet Bai Juyi both consider that Buddhism carries the meaning of purifying the mind. As we passively prevent unwholesome doings, we should also actively do good actions by practicing the Three Acts of Goodness, Four Givings, and Five Harmonies. Only then can we realize a life that is perfect and complete.

The Buddha established the Sangha community for the purpose of guiding people away from complex and profound metaphysical investigations, including the use of difficult and incomprehensible language. Other than the Buddhist schism that occurred in India, another reason is the feud between Hindus and Muslims, which caused Buddhism's decline. In addition, academic studies of Buddha's teachings have also diminished the Dharma's function in helping people resolve their problems. How could Buddhism not have declined when the emphasis is on division of Buddhist schools and classification of its teachings?

Another example would be the sermon on the *Lotus Sutra* delivered by the Taintai patriarch Master Zhiyi. He was said to have expounded on the meaning of 'wondrous' (miao) over a period of ninety days. Subsequently, he established the entire Tiantai system of thought, and was much celebrated by traditional Buddhists. Looking at this from today's outlook, if a single word took ninety days to be fully explained, then how many kalpas of our lifetimes would be required to cover the entire Buddhist sutra? The only outcome of speaking in a metaphysical sense is an even greater separation between Buddhism and people.

Living in an era of speed and efficiency, any study and task that requires a long time to completion would be viewed as unimportant. Such abstract and impractical ways of teaching can never suit the needs of today, let alone be relevant. No matter how great a philosophy or teaching may be, if it is disconnected from the needs of reality, even Buddhism will be headed towards decline.

5. Chanting and Repentance Services Leading to the Decline of Moral Ethics

During the Tang and Song Dynasties, some temples made a living out of collecting land loans, while others survived on devotees' donations. Following the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Buddhist persecutions caused a large fall in income. Monastics were thus forced to conduct chanting and repentance services in the homes of devotees. Consequently, temples turned into chanting service centers or merely shrines receiving offerings for incense and candles.

That is not to say that chanting and repentance services are unacceptable, for they also represent a means to help people through the stages of old age, illness and death. They are equally as important as teaching the Dharma. To benefit both the living and the deceased is also a way for Buddhism to contribute to the world.

Nonetheless, chanting and repentance services should not be regarded as a business. For some monastics, it is much easier to receive offerings by conducting chanting services than delivering Dharma lectures, which seldom inspired people to make offerings. The pursuit for profit thus caused certain monastics to neglect spiritual cultivation and their loss.

As the saying goes, “Being able to chant [an incense anthem], one will not be without food anywhere he goes.” All monastics need in order to make a living is the ability to chant, and it is certainly much easier than being a missionary. However, a true missionary needs to do more than just being able to chant. Without being of service and contribution, how can you be valued by society?

Tantric Buddhism is not regarded as inappropriate either. Tibetan Buddhism already has its own doctrinal system, while Japanese Esoteric Buddhism also has its established tradition. On the other hand, Tantric Buddhism in China seems less organized and focused on accepting offerings, ignoring Buddha's will by underlining the mystic teachings. In particular, during the Yuan and Ming Dynasties, the royals neglected the importance of mind purification and turned the imperial palace into a place of Tantric practices that indulged in pleasure. The people imitated this behavior, halting the spread of righteous Dharma and led Buddhism further into decline.

6. Troubles Caused by Beliefs in Deities and Spirits

The Chinese revere spirits and immortals. Such beliefs are reflected in many literary works that contain parables or reflections. For example, popular works of fiction such as *In Search of Gods*, *Extensive Records of the Taiping Era*, or *Strange Tales of Liao Zhai* all assist the objective of admonishing people to do good. The Chinese have held to the belief that deities watch them from above.

The original purpose was one of restraint, making people fear the consequences of their wrong doings. However, such emphasis resulted in people fearing gods and deities. So, to gain their blessings or have their own wishes fulfilled, people would slaughter animals as a form of sacrifice. In other cases, some emphasized punishments that would follow bad deeds, such as falling into hell or karmic retributions. As a result, people came to fear Buddhism.

The notion of turning to gods and deities for answers is done out of the need to find mystical alternatives in resolving life's issues.

Although Buddhism accepts the existence of traditional deities or gods, they should be regarded as a target of belief or refuge. Since Buddhism follows the teachings of Sakyamuni Buddha, himself a human not a God, what he taught us are all teachings to help us better our

lives.

Humanistic Buddhism values a happy and peaceful life, right livelihood, proper means of entertainment, compassion and loving-kindness, and mutual respect. Regretfully, Buddhists seldom do advocate these. Intellectuals and even the general public still regard Buddhism as some superstition, due to the faulty practices of fortune telling and divination erroneously attributed to it. For this reason, movements against superstitious beliefs also involved Buddhism.

The truth is, not only does Buddhism dispense with superstition; it even strives to eliminate it. In Buddhism, neither the practices of astronomical observation nor those of time calculation are practiced because every day can be a good day. In Buddhism, the practice of fengshui is not followed because with a peaceful mind, any place can be a good place. Buddhism advises people against blindly following superstitious beliefs and instead live a life of moral ethics and righteous faith. Should monastics not teach the Dharma in accord with life's ways, Buddhism would again be destined to decline. That is why all Buddhists must remain rational in this regard.

7. Distorted Views on Buddhism Caused by Heretics

“What eats into the lion's flesh are those bugs living right on it.” When Mara resorted to all means to sabotage the Buddha, the Buddha nonetheless remained unmoved. Mara then threatened him, “I shall dress like you monastics but act otherwise by breaking all of your precepts.” Upon hearing this, tears rolled down the Buddha's cheeks. It has been said that before bugs are able to eat into the flesh, the flesh itself must first be rotten. Internal corruption and dysfunction can be more damaging than external forces. Therefore, as monastics, we must ask ourselves, “Are we pious Buddhists? Do we all possess the right view and right understanding of the Dharma within ourselves?”

The development of Buddhism was always burdened by heretical disruptions. For example, the fall of Buddhism in India was mainly the result of interference by Hinduists. Buddhists resorted to Hindu mantras and mystical beliefs to defy them, thereby losing their ground both spiritually and literally.

They spread unrighteous thoughts in the name of Buddhism, and provoked unwholesome actions under the guise of cultivation. They sought to acquire money, profit, fame and women on the pretext of religion. Even the government was powerless to stop such behavior. They deceived people through flaunting their supposed supernatural powers. They took advantage of people's weaknesses and misunderstandings all in the pursuit of wealth and power. Such heresy at the expense of Buddhism should have been stopped. Yet, no Buddhists of righteous

belief were able to do this. So how could Buddhism not have fallen?

8. Buddhism Replaced by Neo-Confucianism

Ever since Dong Zhongshu (董仲舒, 179–104 BCE) persuaded Emperor Wu of Han (漢武帝, 156-87 BCE) to “dismiss all schools of thoughts and revere only the Confucian,” Confucianism had been the mainstream belief in Chinese politics and culture. After Buddhism’s transmission to China, it gradually harmonized with initially conflicting Confucian thoughts. Further integration with the philosophies of Laozi and Zhuangzi resulted in the vast development of Chinese Culture.

During the Tang Dynasty, Buddhism reached the peak of its popularity in China, and saw the establishment of the Eight Schools. Continuing to the Song Dynasty, each of these schools remained. Of note, the Chan School was especially popular among the literati; almost all of them had converted from Confucianism to Chan Buddhism. For example, former self-proclaimed Confucian thinkers and politicians such as Fu Bi (富弼, 1004-1083), Fan Zhongyan, Wang Anshi, Su Shi, and Su Che were all enthralled by Buddhist thought. A mindset that integrated this-worldly and other-worldly thoughts was innovative and monastics were widely sought after.

As a result, Zhou Dunyi (周敦頤, 1017-1073), Cheng Hao (程顥, 1032-1085), and Cheng Yi (程頤, 1033-1107) pioneered Neo-Confucianism in an attempt to create a more rational and secular form of Confucianism. While these intellectuals recognized Chan Buddhist thoughts, they also criticized Chan and Buddhism separately. For example, Ouyang Xiu’s work *On Principles* was quite popular among those who opposed and critiqued Buddhism.

What possible reasons are there for Neo-Confucians to partially accept Buddhism yet at the same time partly reject it? Confucians believed that Buddhism, as a foreign religion, couldn’t compare with the orthodoxy of Confucianism as mainstream Chinese culture. The strong sense of duty in defending Confucianism was carried by those from Mencius (孟子, 372-289 BCE) to Hanyu, and then onto generations of gentry and elites. Their prejudices towards Buddhism as a foreign religion, and a sense of Confucian superiority instigated the debate between Chinese and foreign cultures. The insular interpretations from the Confucian perspective, coupled with a lack of understanding in Chan Buddhism meant they were looking at Buddhism from an extremely narrow viewpoint, and omitted much.

For example, Zhu Xi, a leading figure of Neo-Confucianism, remained acquainted with Buddhists and extensively studied the Buddhist sutras. His story is even recorded in the *Record of Lay Buddhists*. He had assimilated Sangha regulations and Chan Monastery rules

into his Confucian Academy. In one way, Neo-Confucianism can be said to have been a branch of Buddhist thought. Conversely, Neo-Confucians, in essence, also strongly opposed Buddhism.

The main reason for the decline of Buddhism was the absence of leaders or paragons able to inherit and carry on the lineage. Remaining Buddhists were outnumbered by Neo-Confucians, who still remained skeptical of Buddhist teachings. Their skepticism stemmed from the fact that the large corpus of Neo-Confucian text provided more agreeable answers to their investigations.

9. The Inevitable Influence of Western Culture

During the late Qing Dynasty, Westerners opened up the gate into China through the use of force and canons. Missionary groups entered the country en masse. Hong Qiuquan, the self-proclaimed “Heavenly Lord,” initiated the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom movement.

In 1850, Hong took advantage of the Chinese defeat in the Opium War. Fuelling people's hatred towards imperialism and their admiration for foreign religions, they started a war on religion. Using the name of Jesus, they called upon people to join the Congregation of God-Worshippers and banned all faiths other than Christianity. Everywhere they went, Buddhist, Daoist, and Ancestral temples were burnt and ruined. Statues and sutras were also destroyed. Not only did Chinese culture suffer greatly, any traditions of respecting idols or ancestors were banned. Buddhism in particular, was severely damaged.

In 1953, when the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom occupied Nanjing, all other religions were forbidden. The Manchurian government lacked the power to resist. Buddhism always an advocate against force by promoting compassion and peace was likewise powerless. Buddhism, already much weakened, was dealt another blow through an ominous absence of leadership.

10. The Intimidating Large Corpus of Buddhist Texts

A common reputation of Buddhism is that it is a religious belief that taught old ladies how to chant in order to be reborn in the Western Pure Land, or that it has a large corpus of the Tripitaka divided into twelve canons containing countless terminologies and profound theories.

Without Buddhism, what would remain of Chinese culture? Buddhism has shaped everything, from our clothing, food, lifestyle, transportation, calligraphy, painting, music, dance, art, and architecture. Even the way we speak takes its roots from the Buddhist

language. For example, “Are you having afflictions?” “Do you believe in cause and effect?”, “Know of wholesome and unwholesome deeds.” “Do you see the importance of developing affinity?” “This deed is meritorious.” “Stillness is the same as movement.” “Follow the conditions.” ‘Compassion.’ Removal of the Buddhist elements would mean very little vocabulary left in our speech. Chinese culture itself is Buddhist culture.

To ensure localization of Buddhism in the East, Buddhist masters made arduous attempts to translate Buddhist texts. Although editions of Buddhist canons from the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties remain today, portions of these large corpuses of texts remain unedited and hard to read. The journey into the profound ocean of the Dharma has been rendered potentially more difficult due to the huge variety of titles and profundity of the teachings. Unlike Buddhism, there is only the Bible for Christians, and the Koran for Muslims. The more texts there are, the less one is willing to read.

In the past, Buddhist temples had no financial burdens, owing to royal patronage. However, if monastics did not reach out to teach or spread the Dharma, a way that suits the needs of people, they gradually detached from the world. The situation was worsened by the absence of imperial protection during the Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties. Any time an oppressive force fell upon Buddhism, it was more ready to decline and fall

In conclusion, the success of Buddhism in China can be attributed to its promotion of moral ethics through the teachings of the Five Precepts and Ten Wholesome Deeds. It, in turn, contributed to keeping order in society by the teachings of cause and effect, which rewards the good and punishes the bad. In fact, the Five Precepts can be regarded as equivalents to the Five Constant Virtues:

1. No killing equals benevolence
2. No stealing equals righteousness
3. No sexual misconduct equals propriety
4. No lying equals integrity
5. No intoxicants equals knowledge

In addition, other Buddhist doctrines such as the Four Ways of Embracing, Six Paramitas, Eightfold Noble Path, and Four Universal Vows are teachings that have no equal in other religious doctrines.

Many Humanistic Buddhist undertakings have been established in service to society and benefit of the country. In particular, profoundly knowledgeable Buddhist masters won the respect and support of kings and emperors. For catering to the needs of human minds as well as society, Humanistic Buddhism has thus pushed the development of Buddhism to its

pinnacle.

Regretfully, those who followed did not inherit these outstanding accomplishments and virtues. Many monastics are people who, having failed at a career or relationship, decided to escape to monastic life and simply live off Buddhism. The inherent qualities of these monastics have been somewhat uneven. As a result, the humanistic quality of Buddhism gradually waned alongside Buddhism's decline.

Excluding the above, internal disputes and opposition resulted from an overemphasis of the division of schools and regions. Each school claimed preeminence and disapproved of one another. This led to the deterioration of Buddhism. It is similar to how scholars in Buddhist studies scrutinize and then judge Buddhism based on its flaws and mistakes. It is as if they believe their scholarly endeavors give them the legitimacy to do so. Under such circumstances, Buddhism can only but decline, and eventually end.

It is with mixed emotions and a feeling of inadequacy that I have methodically elaborated on the rise and fall of Buddhism over the two thousand years of its existence. Fortunately, Buddhism is now generally recognized and accepted in Mainland China. With the support and assistance of the Buddhist Association of China and the State Administration for Religious Affairs, the development of Humanistic Buddhism is successful and certain. I am filled with hope that Chinese Buddhism has a bright future ahead.