

Modern Buddhism Without Modernity? Zhaijiao (“Vegetarian Sects”) and the Hidden Genealogy of “Humanistic Buddhism” in Late Imperial China*

Nikolas Broy

Abstract:

“Humanistic Buddhism” is generally acknowledged as a purely modern phenomenon in the history of Chinese Buddhism which came into being only after the advent of reformist activities in both monastic and lay circles since the late nineteenth century. In my paper I will show that several central aspects of “Buddhism in the human realm” can be found in the Zhaijiao (“Vegetarian Sects”) tradition in late imperial China and Taiwan.

Zhaijiao is a common collective designation given to the three religious traditions: Longhuapai 龍華派 or “Dragon Flower Sect,” Jintongpai 金幢派 or “Gold Pennant Sect,” and Xiantianpai 先天派 or “Former Heaven Sect.” Founded during the late Ming through mid-Qing period in southern China, they were introduced to Taiwan by the middle of the eighteenth century. Today, Zhaijiao is regarded as a form of lay or popular Buddhism both by the general public as well as by most (Western) scholarship. These sects, however, share many traits with the rich tradition of “popular religious sects” which flourished in late imperial Southern China.

Nikolas Broy is postdoctoral research fellow at the Department of East Asian Studies, Leipzig University/Collaborative Research Centre (SFB) 1199 “Processes of Spatialization under the Global Condition.”

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I will show that this strand of “non-monastic” popular Buddhism already highlighted many aspects of *renjian Fojiao* which may alert us to rethink the conventional genealogy of “Humanistic Buddhism” in modern China.

Keywords: modern Buddhism, renjian Fojiao, Humanistic Buddhism, Zhaijiao, Vegetarian Sects

1 Introduction: Humanistic Buddhism in Modern China

The concept of “Humanistic Buddhism” as it came into being in the past century is generally acknowledged as a leading feature of the modern transformation of Buddhism in Chinese societies. It has been understood as an answer to the urgent task of adopting Buddhism to the profound and unprecedented political, social, and economic changes that the Chinese world had to face since the late nineteenth century. Therefore, Humanistic Buddhism may be interpreted as a way to fit into the “national body” of the evolving nation-state in the first half of the twentieth century. Particularly during the 1920s and 1930s, countless Buddhist as well as other temples and monasteries were object to large-scale acts of confiscation and expropriation for the aim of building a new China. The KMT government imagined Buddhism in particular and religion in general to contribute financially, socially, and morally to their project of modernity.¹ On the other side, Humanistic Buddhism may be seen as part of a larger reform movement which has been initiated in the late nineteenth century by such notables as Buddhist layman Yang Wenhui 楊文會 (1837–1911). This development too can be traced back to the encounter of clerics and laymen with modern Western notions of how to define the proper place of religion in both the state and society as well as in the life of the people.²

1 Rebecca Nedostup, *Superstitious Regimes: Religion and the Politics of Chinese Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2009); Shuk-wah Poon, *Negotiating Religion in Modern China: State and Common People in Guangzhou, 1900–1937* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2011); Paul R. Katz, *Religion in China and Its Modern Fate, (The Menahem Stern Jerusalem Lectures)* (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2014).

2 Vincent Goossaert and David A. Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 78–81; Wing-tsit Chan, *Religiöses Leben in China* (München: Barth, 1955), 51–76. On the impact of these notions on East Asian societies, see: Nikolas Broy, “Civilization, Progress, and the ‘Foul Stench

Against this background Humanistic Buddhism appears to be a mere reflexive phenomenon which has been initiated to counter the threats and challenges posed to the religion by Western modernity and the modern nation-state. Thus, the transformation of a putatively “traditional” Buddhism into what appears to be a “modern” variant seems to have been possible only under the circumstances of the modern transition of China. Furthermore, both Buddhist historiography and academic scholarship agree that the characteristic traits assigned to the concept of Humanistic Buddhism are purely modern in origin: They were devised in the modern era (temporally modern) by modernist/reformist agents (agentively modern) in order to suit modern expectations of the proper place of religion within society and the state (politically and socially modern).

The present paper aims to revisit this understanding which assumes an intrinsic alliance between Humanistic Buddhism and modernity. I argue that many if not most of Humanistic Buddhism’s characteristic traits can be found in some strands of what may be termed “popular non-monastic Buddhism” as early as the late Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). Thereby I will show that the putatively modern religiosity as exemplified by Humanistic Buddhism is by no means a mere reflex to the modern transformation of China. Rather, a similar religiosity evolved well before the arrival of Western modernity in East Asia and which therefore can be conceived of as native to the religious landscape of China.

This observation, however, has been neglected almost exclusively both by Buddhist historiography and academic scholarship. Since the religious groups that I will introduce in the main part of this paper evolved outside the reaches of clerical and official dominance, they were highly criticized, stigmatized, and even persecuted by late imperial officials and Buddhist clerics alike. In order to exclude them from what

of Religion’: The Concepts of ‘Religion’ and ‘Superstition’ in the Politics of Modern East Asia,” in *Religion, Place and Modernity: Spatial Articulations in Southeast Asia and East Asia*, ed. Michael Dickhardt and Andrea Lauser (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 37–68.

had been defined as “Buddhism,” they were assigned to the realm of “heresy” and “heterodoxy” (*xiejiao* 邪教 in political discourses, and *waidao* 外道 in Buddhist ones) by political, cultural, and religious elites. Most scholarship has taken the pictures painted by these elites at face value and accordingly it has addressed these groups almost exclusively under the rubrics of sectarianism, heterodoxy, and religious non-conformism.³ This may be the pivotal reason why these traditions have been largely neglected in the study of Chinese Buddhism that usually concentrates on monastic “orthodoxies.”⁴ What I am going to discuss in this paper, then, may help us to better understand what may be termed a “hidden genealogy of Humanistic Buddhism” in the history of Chinese Buddhism.

Although the “Vegetarian Sects” that I will introduce in this paper may be considered sociologically sectarian in terms of voluntary membership,⁵ the adherents themselves most persistently relate themselves to the Buddhist tradition. The symbols, beliefs, and practices they employ are largely Buddhist in origin. Because these groups evolved outside the realm of clerical dominance in order to develop and spread an independent version of the Buddhist faith, they have to be considered “non-monastic” compared to the conventional community of monks and nuns (the Sangha). This does not mean, however, that these sects did not develop their own clergy, i.e. an autonomous class of religious specialists who organize, bureaucratize, and monopolize

3 For a general discussion of this issue, see: Nikolas Broy, “Syncretic Sects and Redemptive Societies: Toward a New Understanding of ‘Sectarianism’ in the Study of Chinese Religions,” *Review of Religion and Chinese Society* 2, no. 2 (2015): 145–185.

4 A remarkable exception is: Barend J. ter Haar, *Practicing Scripture: A Lay Buddhist Movement in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2014).

5 Nikolas Broy, “Die religiöse Praxis der Zhaijiao (‘Vegetarische Sekten’) in Taiwan,” (Dissertation, Leipzig University, 2014), <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bsz:15-qucosa-138361> (accessed April 28, 2014).

worship, theology, and leadership in their particular group.⁶ Furthermore, their version of the Buddhist teaching may be regarded as “popular religious” because their organizational autonomy enables them to freely and creatively draw on numerous symbols, beliefs, and practices which originated in other religious traditions and contexts, a move that would most certainly stir up heated debates and rejections in an “orthodox” monastic context. Yet, innovative potentials are usually curbed by a distinct set of Buddhist symbols, beliefs, and practices that is ascribed a dominant position within both worldview and practice of these sects. Therefore, these and similar sects may be categorized as “popular non-monastic Buddhism.”⁷

After having introduced the aim and object of my paper, I will sketch the basic notions of Humanistic Buddhism in the following section. In section three, I will present aspects of the religious worldview and practice of the “Dragon Flower Sect” which has been established during the late Ming Dynasty. I argue that this strand of popular non-monastic Buddhism may very well be perceived of as a predecessor to Humanistic Buddhism. In the concluding section I will discuss some implications that may follow from this observation.

6 Nikolas Broy, “Secret Societies, Buddhist Fundamentalists, or Popular Religious Movements? Aspects of Zhaijiao in Taiwan,” in *Chinese and European Perspectives on the Study of Chinese Popular Religions: Zhongguo minjian zongjiao, minjian xinyang yanjiu zhi Zhong Ou shijiao* 中國民間宗教，民間信仰研究之中歐視角, ed. Philip Clart, 329–369 (Taipei: Boyang wenhua, 2012), 345–351.

7 For a more thorough discussion on the relationship between popular religious beliefs and popular Buddhism, cf. Lin Meirong 林美容, *Taiwan de zhaitang yu yanzi. Minjian Fojiao de shijiao* 台灣的齋堂與巖仔——民間佛教的視角 (Taipei: Taiwan shufang, 2008), 2–16.

2 Humanistic Buddhism in the History of Modern Buddhisms

The notion and wording of “Humanistic Buddhism” is generally attributed to the ministry of Venerable Taixu 太虛 (1890–1947) who is usually regarded as one of the most visionary monks in the course of China’s modernization. Although most of his reformist effort remained mere vision, his thoughts initiated a profound process of transformation. Amongst his students one finds such prominent figures such as Xingyun 星雲 (*1927) and Yinshun 印順 (1906–2004) who brought his ideas to Taiwan and from there spread them around the globe. The well-known and influential institutions founded by these figures such as “Buddha’s Light Mountain” (Foguangshan 佛光山) or the “Tzu Chi Foundation” (*Ciji gongdehui* 慈濟功德會) are among the organizations which helped to popularize Humanistic Buddhism even beyond the confines of the Chinese speaking world.⁸

These reformers generally agree that Chinese Buddhism suffered persistent decline for centuries by giving too much emphasis on the practice of ritual services. Particularly the commercially oriented provision of funerary rites and other rituals devoted to the salvation of the deceased by means of transmitting merit are what caused the most severe criticisms. Instead of caring about the well-being of the dead only, the reformers concluded, Buddhists should actively participate in human society. According to their interpretation, adherents of the faith are expected to devote all their effort to cultivate merit and wisdom in order to attain enlightenment not only for themselves but also for others. Everything they do is supposed to be “[f]or the people, rely on the

8 Stuart Chandler, *Establishing a Pure Land on Earth: The Foguang Buddhist Perspective on Modernization and Globalization* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2004); C. Julia Huang, *Charisma and Compassion. Cheng Yen and the Buddhist Tzu Chi Movement* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009); Scott Pacey, “A Buddhism for the Human World: Interpretations of Renjian Fojiang in Contemporary Taiwan,” *Asian Studies Review* 29, no. 4 (2005).

people and shaping the people”.⁹ This focus on the human realm is what stands at the center of “Buddhism for the living” (*rensheng Fojiao* 人生佛教, Taixu’s preferred term) or “Buddhism in the human realm” (*renjian Fojiao* 人間佛教, Yinshun’s preferred term).¹⁰ Particularly the second term which originated in Yinshun’s discussion of his teacher Taixu serves as the standard designation of “Humanistic Buddhism,” at least in Taiwan. Finally, the reformers generally take their interpretation of a human-based religion to represent the original faith as it supposedly has been taught by the Buddha himself.

According to a talk given by Venerable Xingyun, founder of “Buddha’s Light Mountain,” in 1990, Humanistic Buddhism may be characterized by the following six features:¹¹

1. Humanity (*renjianxing* 人間性): The Buddha was human. Therefore, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas should not be venerated as if they were gods. Humanistic Buddhism is free of ghosts and gods.

2. Emphasis on daily life (*shenghuoxing* 生活性): Buddhist practice is part of people’s daily life because the Buddha has taught how

9 Wei Daoru, “Buddhism in China and Modern Society: An Introduction Centering around the Teachings of Taixu and Yinshun,” *Journal of Oriental Studies* 20 (2010), 175.

10 Chandler, *Establishing a Pure Land on Earth*, 43–44; Don A. Pittman, *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism: Taixu’s Reforms* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2001), 161–189; Marcus Bingenheimer, “Some Remarks on the Usage of Renjian Fojiao and the Contribution of Venerable Yinshun to Chinese Buddhist Modernism,” in *Development and Practice of Humanitarian Buddhism. Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Xu Muzhu 許木柱, Jinhua Chen, and Lori Meeks (Hualian: Tzu Chi University, 2007), 141–161.

11 Xingyun 星雲, “Renjian Fojiao de jiben sixiang 人間佛教的基本思想,” in *Xingyun dashi jiangyanji (4)* 星雲大師講演集(四), ed. Xingyun 星雲 (Gaoxiong: Foguang chubanshe, 1991), 66–67; translated in: Venerable Master Hsing Yun, *The Fundamentals of Humanistic Buddhism*, with the assistance of Amy Lam, and Susan Tidwell (Hacienda Heights: Buddha’s Light Publishing, 2012 [1999]), 2–3. My translation of “*pujixing*” (6) slightly differs from the official translation as “universality.”

to behave in every situation.

3. Altruism (*litaxing* 利他性): Every thought, word, and act arises from a deep care for others.

4. Joyfulness (*xilaxing* 喜樂性): The Buddhist teaching gives people joy since it relieves them from suffering.

5. Timeliness (*shidaixing* 時代性): Although the Buddha has lived in the distant past of 2,500 years ago, his thoughts and teachings guide us to this day.

6. Universal relief (*puxing* 普濟性): The Buddha cared for all beings without distinctions.

Xingyun's emphasis on (1) human beings' capacity to attain enlightenment by rational and interior forms of spiritual practice without relying on "magical" rituals, and (2) altruism and this-worldly activities resembles the reformist programs of other modern movements such as "Engaged Buddhism" or "Protestant Buddhism." The expression of "Engaged Buddhism" is generally attributed to the Vietnamese Zen monk Thích Nhất Hạnh 釋一行 (*1926) who has been profoundly influenced by the writings of Taixu. According to its rationale, "Engaged Buddhism" urges its adherents to engage actively yet non-violently with the social, political, economic, and ecological problems of society. In itself not a centralized movement, the label of "Engaged Buddhism" is generally attributed to a wide range of Buddhist activists amongst which one finds such prominent figures such as the Fourteenth Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso (*1935) as well as Burmese laywoman and human rights activist Aung San Suu Kyi (*1945)—both of whom were awarded Nobel Peace Prize laureates.¹² The term "Protestant Buddhism," on the other side, was coined by anthropologist Gananath Obeyesekere and prominently portrayed by him and Richard Gombrich in their discussion of nineteenth century reformist Buddhism in Śri Lanka.¹³ According to

12 Sallie B. King, "Socially Engaged Buddhism," in *Buddhism in the Modern World*, ed. David L. McMahan (New York: Routledge, 2012), 195–214.

13 Gananath Obeyesekere and Richard Gombrich, *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), chap. 6.

their understanding, this strand of Buddhism resembles the form of Christianity which evolved in the wake of the Protestant Reformation in early Modern Europe. Both forms of religion can be characterized by four crucial elements: (1) the individual quest for his or her ultimate religious goal without intermediaries (such as monks or priests) (*privatization*); (2) both claim that the truly significant does not take place in exterior forms of religious practice but in one's mind or soul (*internalization*); (3) both insist that their injunctions apply to everyone at every time (*universalization*); and (4) both claim a fundamental approach to their respective religion (*fundamentalization*).¹⁴

In the footsteps of these categorizations, Buddhist scholar Donald S. Lopez has discussed and summarized crucial aspects of these various “modern Buddhisms” which according to him are rooted in the nineteenth and twentieth century collision between traditional Buddhism and Western modernity.¹⁵ According to him, modern Buddhism:

1. reflects on previous periods (particularly the more recent periods) and their deficiencies in regard to the present;
2. rejects many ritual and “magical” elements of previous Buddhism;
3. stresses equality over hierarchy, the universal over the local, and often also exalts the individual over the community;
4. considers the most distant past of ancient Buddhism (the age of the Buddha and his allegedly original teachings) as the most compatible with modernity in terms of reason, rationality, empiricism, science, universalism, individualism, tolerance, freedom, and the rejection of religious orthodoxy.

The understanding of modern Buddhism as the outcome of a reinterpretation of modern “Western” ideas by traditional “Eastern” Buddhists has been carried further by other scholars and is generally

¹⁴ Ibid., 215–218.

¹⁵ Donald S. Lopez, *A Modern Buddhist Bible: Essential Readings from East and West* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), ix–x.

accepted as the master narrative of its emergence.¹⁶ As I will show in the following chapter, however, there may be more to the evolution of this allegedly “modern” religiosity than Western modernity. I will also come back to the four characteristics of modern Buddhism as outlined above by Lopez.

3 Non-monastic Popular Buddhism in Late Imperial China: Zhaijiao

Autonomous interpretations of Buddhism outside the reaches of clerical control or what Barend ter Haar calls “Buddhist inspired options” of popular religiosity can be dated back at least to the Song Dynasty (960–1279).¹⁷ The religious tradition I am going to introduce in this chapter to some extent inherits this non-monastic appeal. The adherents of the “Dragon Flower Sect” (Longhuapai 龍華派) trace their origins back to a religious teacher from Shandong Province commonly known as Patriarch Luo 羅祖 (probably 1443–1527) who is generally regarded as one of the most important sectarian leaders of late imperial China. After his teachings had been brought to the south-eastern provinces of Zhejiang and Fujian, the Dragon Flower Sect has been formally established by two religious masters who not only claimed to be his incarnation but who also continued his iconoclastic and ritual-critic program. Since the mid-eighteenth century, the Longhuapai has been brought to the island of Taiwan by Fujianese emigrants where it exists to this day. There, the Dragon Flower Sect is not only known as one of three “Vegetarian Sects” (Zhaijiao 齋教) but also as an autonomous form of “popular lay Buddhism” (*zaijia Fojiao* 在家佛教), that is usually distinguished from the more “orthodox” forms of lay

16 David L. McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

17 Barend J. ter Haar, “Buddhist Inspired Options: Aspects of Lay Religious Life in the Lower Yangzi from 1100 Until 1340,” *T’oung Pao* 87, 1/3 (2001).

Buddhism (*jushi Fojiao* 居士佛教).¹⁸

The religiosity advocated by Patriarch Luo and his incarnations Ying Ji'nan 應繼南 (1527/1540–1582) and Yao Wenyu 姚文宇 (1578–1646) already anticipate many of the features generally accepted to be characteristic for modern Humanistic Buddhism. The religious teachings of Patriarch Luo are collected in his magnum opus *Five Books in Six Volumes* (*Wubu liuce* 五部六冊) which were printed for the first time in 1509.¹⁹ Ying's and Yao's teachings are summarized in the late seventeenth century hagiography *Overall Record of the Vitae of the Most Exalted Patriarchs in Three Generations* (*Taishang zushi sanshi yinyou zonglu* 太上祖師三世因由總錄).²⁰ These scriptures mix personal experiences, religious views, and countless citations from the Buddhist canon in vernacular Chinese in order to appeal to a wide audience. The religiosity presented in both texts, however, cannot only be observed in the normative writings of religious virtuosos but is also visible in the religious practice of sectarian adherents as it is documented in historical sources.

In the following paragraphs I will discuss four crucial features of Humanistic Buddhism in particular and modern Buddhisms in general as outlined above: (1) iconoclasm and ritual-criticism; (2) universalism; (3) active social engagement; and (4) the view of Buddhism's recent history as decline. I will show that each of these features can be found both in normative religious writings and in actual religious practice of the late imperial Dragon Flower Sect.

As Xingyun and others laid out, Humanistic Buddhism is to be understood as a religion without gods and ghosts. Śākyamuni Buddha was a human being who attained enlightenment not by his veneration of gods but by his sincere and consequent spiritual practice. Therefore, he as well as all other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas should not be venerated as

18 Ter Haar, *Practicing Scripture*; Broy, "Die religiöse Praxis der Zhajijiao," 77–212.

19 BJCJ 1–3.

20 *Taishang zushi sanshi yinyou zonglu* 太上祖師三世因由總錄, preface dated 1682, reprint dated 1875, in MJZJ 6. Hereafter cited as *Sanshi yinyou*.

if they were gods.²¹ Yet, despite this radical outlook, the actual practice of the institutionalized and organized forms of Humanistic Buddhism in Taiwan, such as Buddha's Light Mountain, is not that absolute in its rejection of traditional rituals. Rather, Humanistic Buddhists still carry out rituals on behalf of the deceased, but they aim to pay much more attention to the living.²² Patriarch Luo, on the other hand, applies a similar argument in comparing his iconoclastic program to the spiritual paths of the historical Buddha, Confucius, and Laozi who did not have religious idols at their disposal but who had to rely on their own capacity to attain their respective spiritual goals.²³ Similarly, Luo and Ying do not only stress the uselessness of mere exterior religious practices such as meditation, the recitation of the names of Buddhas (*nianfo* 念佛), the veneration of religious images, the burning of paper money, and dietetic practices. They also insist that these practices may even be harmful in regard to salvation.²⁴ Building on a famous citation from the popular Song scripture *Precious Scroll of the Ritual Amplification of the Diamond Sūtra*,²⁵ both patriarchs propose to emulate the model of the Buddha when he rested on the "numinous mountain" (*lingshan* 靈山). He did not search for enlightenment in exterior practices but in the interiority of himself.²⁶ "*Lingshan*" is a common diminutive of Lingjiu-

21 Wei Daoru, "Buddhism in China and Modern Society," 176.

22 Xue Yu, "Re-Creation of Rituals in Humanistic Buddhism: A Case Study of Fo Guang Shan," *Asian Philosophy* 23, 4 (2013): 350–364.

23 *Zhengxin chuyi wuxiuzheng zizai baojuan* 正信除疑無修證自在寶卷, first print 1601, reprints dated 1678 and 1882, BJCJ 3, 207–220.

24 *Kugong wudao juan* 苦功悟道卷, original printed in 1514, reprint dated 1670, BJCJ 1, 233–234; *Poxie xianzheng baojing* 破邪顯正寶經, BJCJ 2, 292, 390–399; *Tanshi wuwei baojuan* 嘆世無為寶卷, dated 1919, BJCJ 1, 504–512; *Sanshi yinyou*, MJZJ 6, j. 1, 251a–252b, j. 2, 260A02, 267a15–268a01. Cf.: Barend J. ter Haar, "The Dragon Flower Teachings and the Practice of Ritual," *Minsu quyi* 民俗曲藝, no. 163 (2009), 124–131.

25 *Jin'gangjing keyi baojuan* 金剛經科儀寶卷, dated 1835, in *Manji zokuzōkyō* 卍續藏經, 150 vols., reprint: Taipei: Xinwenfeng, 1993, Vol. 129, 261b05–06.

26 *Poxie xianzheng baojing*, BJCJ 2, 121–122, 492; *Zhengxin chuyi wuxiuzheng zizai*

shan 靈鷲山 which is the Chinese translation of Mt. Gṛdhrakūṭāparvata in north-east India where the Buddha is said to have taught the *Lotus Sūtra*.²⁷ Patriarch Luo, however, locates the true “numinous mountain” inside the mind of the practitioner which further highlights his emphasis on interior spiritual practice.²⁸ Therefore, “*lingshan*” became a prominent symbol within the sect’s teachings and even served as its designation as “True Sect of the Numinous Mountain” (Lingshan zhengpai 靈山正派).²⁹ Later followers of the movement too appear to have shared the early patriarchs’ iconoclasm as it is documented in the probably seventeenth century collection of conversion tales *Causes and Retributions of the Seven Branches* (*Qizhi yinguo* 七枝因果). According to one adherent, members of the sect deny ghosts and gods (*feigui feishen* 非鬼非神). Only the mind (*wei yixin* 惟一心) is important in venerating the ancestors but not sacrifices of meat and wine.³⁰

Although the rejection of exterior forms of religious practice is not an invention of patriarch Luo and his followers but can be observed throughout the history of Chan Buddhism,³¹ the Dragon Flower Sect doubtlessly helped to popularize this stance among certain non-monastic circles where it developed into a consequent “religious conduct of life” (Max Weber). Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, numerous non-sectarian sources from the southern provinces of Jiangsu, Jiangxi, and Zhejiang report on the actual religious practice of this

baojuan, BJCJ 3, 154–155, 207; *Sanshi yinyou*, MJZJ 6, j. 2, 272a06–07.

27 Nakamura Hajime 中村元, *Bukkyō-go daijiten* 仏教語大辭典 (Tōkyō: Tōkyō shoseki, 1994), 1429c.

28 *Poxie xianzheng baojing*, BJCJ 2, 121–122, 492; *Zhengxin chuyi wuxiuzheng zizai baojuan*, BJCJ 3, 154–155, 207.

29 Asai Motoi 浅井紀, “Rakyō no shiha—Ryōzen seiha: 羅教的支派——靈山正派,” *Shigaku* 史学 63, no. 3 (1994), 59.

30 *Qizhi yinguo* 七枝因果, MJZJ 6, 488a02–06. For a more thorough discussion of the ritual simplicity advocated here, cf. ter Haar, *Practicing Scripture*, 90–93.

31 Fabio Rambelli and Eric Reinders, *Buddhism and Iconoclasm in East Asia: A History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012), 25–26 et pass.

tradition which came to be known as “Non-Action Sect” (Wuweijiao 無為教) because of its rejection of exterior practice. According to these sources, most adherents refused to light incense and worship Buddhas, gods, and ancestors.³² One group in late seventeenth century north-eastern Jiangxi is even said to have destroyed ancestor tablets.³³ Although the radicalism of the sect’s iconoclasm appears to have diminished since the eighteenth century, descriptions of ritual-critic attitudes can be found until the late nineteenth century.³⁴ In Taiwan, on the contrary, the situation appears to have been slightly different. Whereas proper source material prior to the twentieth century is almost absent, some general accounts on the religious field of Taiwan during the Japanese colonial period (1895–1945) depict the Dragon Flower Sect in a similar way to the one described above. This picture, however, is to be regarded as at least partially distorted since it seems to have been painted more under the impression of normative religious convictions held by individual actors than by actual religious practice.³⁵

The second characteristic of Humanistic Buddhism as proposed by Venerable Xingyun is the conviction that Buddhism should be a visible

32 *Wuxi xianzhi* 無錫縣志, edition dated 1574, microfilm held by Fu Sinian Library 傅斯年圖書館 of Academia Sinica (Taipei), j. 4, 8a03–05; *Yunjian jumuchao* 雲間據目抄, by Fan Lian 范濂 (1534–1597), in *Biji xiaoshuo daguan* 筆記小說大觀 (Yangzhou: Jiangsu guangling guji keyin chubanshe, 1983), Vol. 6, j. 2, 113b06–11; *Yongchuang xiaopin* 湧幢小品, by Zhu Guozhen 朱國禎 (1558–1632), first edition dated 1622, in *Biji xiaoshuo daguan* (Yangzhou: Jiangsu guangling guji keyin chubanshe, 1983), Vol. 6, j. 32, 394b19–21; *Xingmipian* 醒迷篇, by Luo Guangping 羅廣平, dated 1667, in *Ming mo Qing chu Yesuhui sixiang wenxian huibian* 明末清初耶穌會思想文獻彙編, edited by Zheng Ande 鄭安德 (Beijing: Beijing daxue zongjiaoxue yanjiusuo, 2003), Vol. 4, 169–170.

33 *Miaoguantang yutan* 妙貫堂餘譚, by Qiu Junhong 裘君弘 (1670–1740), dated 1703, in *Xuxiu Sikū quanshu* 續修四庫全書 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995–2002), Vol. 1136, j. 6, 641a02–04.

34 Broy, “Die religiöse Praxis der Zhaijiao,” 143–161.

35 Broy, “Secret Societies, Buddhist Fundamentalists, or Popular Religious Movements,” 351–360; Broy, “Die religiöse Praxis der Zhaijiao,” 162–178.

part of daily life. Other famous monks such as Guangqin 廣欽 (1892–1986) also stress that one should never “leave the Buddha” and instead focus on spiritual practice no matter if one moves or rests, sits or lies down.³⁶ Ironically, it is exactly this habitus which has been criticized by sixteenth century clerics such as Mizang Daokai 密藏道開 (dates unclear) who complains that Luo’s followers take everything they do to be related to Buddha.³⁷ This issue which has been addressed by Daokai during the late 1590s obviously demonstrates the consequent nature of the sectarians’ religious practice which was not confined to certain ritual events. Nineteenth century ritual manuals aiming to shape both the ritual and daily practice of the adherents prescribe graveness, whole-heartedness, and moral behavior as the most important ingredients to attain enlightenment—attitudes which are also expected to be cultivated and expressed in daily life.³⁸ In early twentieth century colonial Taiwan too, Japanese observers reiterated the impression of sect members’ profound commitment to a consequent this-worldly ascetic “religious conduct of life” which particularly contrasts with the life of their fellow citizens.³⁹ According to these observers, adherents of the teaching refrain from consuming meat, betel nuts, tobacco and alcohol as well as from gambling and illicit sexual relationships. Apparently, the sectarians’ moral views seem to have been transformed into a rigorous “religious

36 *Guangqin lao heshang yulu* 廣欽老和尚語錄, published by Chengtian chansi 承天禪寺 (Taiwan), no date, 139, 142.

37 *Zangyi jingshu* 藏逸經書, by Mizang Daokai, dated 1597, in *Congshu jicheng xubian* 叢書集成續編 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 1994), Vol. 71, 454a06–13.

38 *Gongji Dehuatang shengji* 恭紀德化堂勝跡, dated 1856, TWZJZL II-4, 31–32; *Dehuatang famai tanggui* 德化堂法脈堂規, written between 1908 and 1921, TWZJZL 22, 216–217, 226–229.

39 *Taiwanjin no Kannon shinkō to saishokujin seikatsu* 台灣人の觀音信仰と菜食人生活, by Nishioka Hideo 西岡英夫 (no biographic information, 1936), 24–25 (first part), 22–23, 25 (second part). A copy of this work is held by the library of the Institute of Ethnology of Academia Sinica (Taipei). For more detailed discussion of this topic, cf. Broy, “Die religiöse Praxis der Zhaijiao,” 162–165.

conduct of life” which appears to apply to even the slightest aspects of daily life.

A third characteristic generally attributed to Humanistic Buddhism is the claim to actively participate in human society. The Dragon Flower Sect is engaged in providing different kinds of social aid from early on. Already in the sixteenth century, its adherents are said to have built bridges, repaired streets, provided food and clothes for the poor, and buried the ones who died a violent death without anyone caring about them.⁴⁰ To this day, sect members in Taiwan engage in a wide range of philanthropic activities, such as running or funding kindergartens, schools, retirement homes, and even halfway houses. Sectarians are also known to hold funerary rituals for the victims of natural disasters or other catastrophes such as airplane crashes.⁴¹ Particularly during Taiwan’s colonial era many Japanese observers highlighted the positive role the Dragon Flower Sect might have in creating modern citizens because its ascetic nature may help to reduce certain social ills such as the consumption of alcohol, opium, and betel nuts.⁴² Following their self-understanding as lay followers, many sectarians pursue conventional professions with some of them working in neighborhood associations and administrative positions in order to help their respective communities.⁴³

Against this background, it is thus surely no coincidence that a 1932 anthology of Buddhist and Vegetarian temples in colonial Taiwan depicts the Dragon Flower sect in a way which could equally apply to Humanistic Buddhism. The article about the “Transformation by Virtue Hall” (Dehutang 德化堂) in Tainan 台南 describes the beliefs of its members as rational, inner-worldly (*rushide* 入世的), and optimistic (*fei*

40 *Sanshi yinyou*, MJZJ 6, j. 3, 298b03–06.

41 Broy, “Die religiöse Praxis der Zhaijiao,” 59, 177–178, 263.

42 *Ibid.*, 164.

43 *Kigen nisen-roppyaku nen kinen Taiwan Bukkyō meiseki hōkan* 紀元二千六百年記念 台灣佛教名蹟寶鑑, by Shi Dechang 施德昌 (Tainan: Minde xiezhenguan, 1941), TWZJZL 28, 393, 446, 454; Broy, “Die religiöse Praxis der Zhaijiao”, 263.

yanshide 非厭世的). Furthermore, their teachings are not only expected to help people to achieve various spiritual aims but also to bring happiness, prosperity, and solidarity to society at large. According to the article, this form of the Buddhist faith is to be considered “Buddhism for the living people” (*huoren zhi Fojiao* 活人之佛教).⁴⁴ This approval of the Dragon Flower teachings’ positive social functions strongly resembles the characterization of Humanistic Buddhism’s impetus to work for the people, rely on the people and shape the people.⁴⁵ It is tempting to speculate about Taixu’s possible impact on the religious worldview of individual sectarian members, particularly because he traveled to the island of Taiwan in October 1917 during his journey to Japan. Although his memoirs document visits to several Longhua temples in Zhanghua 彰化, Lugang 鹿港, and Taizhong 台中,⁴⁶ there is no hint of him having visited the Dehutatang mentioned above. Besides, Taixu’s writings show no trace of the terminology used in the anthology either. On the other hand, however, the term “Buddhism for the living people” (*huoren zhi Fojiao* 活人之佛教) documented in the article and Taixu’s “Buddhism for the living” (*rensheng Fojiao* 人生佛教) bear striking resemblances on a semantic level.

Although it is not exactly clear if this “*huoren zhi Fojiao*” is an emic term or if it has been invented by the editor Xu Shou 徐壽 as an etic category, the religious program as outlined in the Dehutatang entry appears to originate in the ministry of its long-term temple manager Hong Chi 洪池 (1897–1971).⁴⁷ Having been engaged for the uplifting of Buddhism in Taiwan for years, he held a lecture in about 1934 according

44 *Taiwan quan Tai siyuan zhaitang mingji baojian* 台灣全台寺院齋堂名蹟寶鑑, by Xu Shou 徐壽 (Tainan: Guoqing xiezhen guan, 1932), TWZJZL 27, 114.

45 Wei Daoru, “Buddhism in China and Modern Society,” 175.

46 *Dongying caizhen lu* 東瀛采真錄 (dated 1917), in *Taixu dashi quanshu* 太虛大師全書, Vol. 19-03b, 10–11. This online version (<http://www.buddhaway.org/T00-taixu.htm>, accessed 14 October 2014) is based on the edition: *Taixu dashi quanshu* (Taipei: Haichaoyin she, 1950–1956).

47 Note also the similar wording used in the Dehutatang entry and in Hong’s lecture.

to which the true principle of Buddhism lies in producing benefits for “the present world” (*xianshi* 現世). By disseminating the true teaching among the people in order to harmonize their spiritual and material lives, one will achieve solidarity and prosperity (*gongcun tongrong* 共存同榮) as well as happiness for all mankind.⁴⁸ Hong may have been influenced by similar-minded Taiwanese and Japanese Buddhist monks he met during his engagement in the pan-Taiwanese “South Seas Buddhist Association” (*Nanying Fojiaohui* 南瀛佛教會).⁴⁹ This is particularly obvious because the terminology applied by Hong apparently borrows from Japanese religious discourses which often center on the notion of “benefits which can be achieved in this world” through religious practice. This crucial notion of Japanese religiosity is often discussed under the label “*genze riyaku* 現世利益” (“benefits in this world”) which strongly resembles the wording of Hong’s speech.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the account discussed above can be regarded as an original and distinct counter narrative to Humanistic Buddhism as it has been proposed by Taixu and his followers since the late 1930s.

Turning back to the early Dragon Flower Sect, its care for society is also visible in several mythological stories about the patriarchs’ exemplary moral conduct. For instance, the sectarian lore has it that Patriarch Luo repelled a foreign army of 108,000 soldiers by showing his magic abilities and thus protecting the country and his people.⁵¹ Nineteenth century accounts also laud his magical ability to bring rain into drought-stricken regions.⁵² The second patriarch Ying Ji’nan is even

48 *Nanying Fojiao* 12 南瀛佛教 (1934), no. 9: 26.

49 Wang Jianchuan 王見川, “Cong Longhuajiao dao Fojiao—Tainan Dehuatang de chengli yu qi zai jindai de fazhan 從龍華教到佛教——台南德化堂的成立與其在近代的發展,” in *Taiwan de simiao yu zhaitang* 台灣的寺廟與齋堂, ed. Wang Jianchuan 王見川 and Li Shiwei 李世偉, 141–202 (Taipei: Boyang wenhua, 2004), 170–181.

50 Ian Reader and George J. Tanabe, *Practically Religious: Worldly Benefits and the Common Religion of Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1998), 14–23.

51 *Sanshi yinyou*, MJZJ 6, j. 1, 224b06–225a08.

52 *Chongming manlu* 蟲鳴漫錄, by Cai Hengzi 采蘅子, preface dated 1877 (Taipei:

said to have sacrificed his flesh to feed hungry birds and a tiger.⁵³ Similarly, the third patriarch Yao Wenyu too is reported to have used his spiritual power to dispel four marauding tigers and to bring rain to a drought-stricken region.⁵⁴ Regardless of their authenticity (e.g. in regard to the highly symbolic power of the number 108), all accounts create an image of altruistic care which was well-known among sectarians even centuries after the patriarchs had been gone. Particularly the image of inflicting violence to oneself in order to aid others serves as a powerful testimony of altruism. These acts constitute what Jimmy Yu defines as “sanctity” or what may be perceived of as a state of subordinating oneself to certain important cultural values by the means of “embodying” these values in one’s act.⁵⁵ In this case, altruism or the urge to aid others appears to be the social value that has been embodied in the acts.

The last aspect of modern Humanistic Buddhism which I want to discuss in the present section is the tendency to understand the recent history of Buddhism in terms of decline. Taixu and others have criticized late imperial Buddhism as well as their contemporaneous fellow monks as being occupied with the performance of rituals, particularly funerary rites, but simultaneously having neglected the urge to raise people’s spiritual abilities. Criticisms of conventional Buddhism for exactly the same reasons, however, can be found already in the early Dragon Flower Sect. Whereas Patriarch Luo only regarded the distinction between clerics and laity as obsolete,⁵⁶ Ying Ji’nan appears to have been overtly hostile to the monastic order. According to his understanding, by leaving the family, living in celibacy, and damaging the body given by one’s parents by shaving their heads, monks and nuns violate the popular

Xinwenfeng, 1978), 34.

53 *Kugong wudao juan (Kaixin fayao)* 苦功悟道卷 (開心法要), reprint (Zhanghua: Chaotiantang, 1980), MJZJ 2, 6b14–16.

54 *Sanshi yinyou*, MJZJ 6, j. 3, 290b02–09, 291b14–292a06.

55 Jimmy Yu, *Sanctity and Self-Inflicted Violence in Chinese Religions, 1500–1700* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 11–13.

56 *Kugong wudao juan*, BJCJ 1, 230–234.

moral value of “filial piety” (*xiao* 孝). By not committing these harmful acts, members of the Dragon Flower Sect constitute the “true Sangha with hair” (*youfa zhenseng* 有髮真僧).⁵⁷ Similarly, nineteenth and early twentieth century ritual manuals reiterate this self-understanding according to which sect members constitute the “better Sangha.”⁵⁸ This community does not rely on the collection of alms but instead every member pursues a profession to earn his livelihood.

Whereas the recent history of Buddhism thus has been criticized, the most distant past of Śākyamuni and the early Chan patriarchs became the epitome of a putatively unadulterated original teaching which had been distorted by later generations. Building on a myth about the sixth Chan patriarch Huineng 慧能 (638–713), the Dragon Flower Sect depicts itself as his true heir. According to this myth Huineng did not transmit his teaching because there was no one worth to receive it. He kept it hidden until Patriarch Luo rediscovered and spread it almost one millennium later. Thereby, the entire history of (Chan) Buddhism after Huineng is rejected by the sect.⁵⁹

4 Conclusion

As I tried to show in this paper, many if not most of the putatively “modern” features of Humanistic Buddhism already can be found in the Dragon Flower Sect of late imperial China. I have argued that the Longhua sect’s emphasis on iconoclasm, a ritual-critic and interior form of spirituality which aims to nurture one’s own spiritual capacities, the promotion of this-worldly activities to aid society at large, and strict

57 *Sanshi yinyou*, MJZJ 6, j. 2, 263b07–09, 268b01–12.

58 *Keyi baojuan* 科儀寶卷, title page dated 1870, copy held by the library of the Institute for Ethnology of Academia Sinica (Taipei), 19b06–07; *Dacheng zhengjiao keyi baojuan* 大乘正教科儀寶卷, handwritten manuscript dated 1879, MJZJ 6, 380a05–06.

59 *Sanshi yinyou*, MJZJ 6, 241b01–10; *Dacheng zhengjiao keyi baojuan*, MJZJ 6, 380a. Cf. Asai Motoi, “Rakyō no shiha,” 55–56.

interpretations of the precepts which lead to a consequent and inner-worldly “religious conduct of life” closely resemble the six characteristics proposed by Venerable Xingyun. Instead of renouncing the world like conventional monastic Buddhism, the religiosity promoted by patriarchs Luo, Ying, and Yao is to be observed exactly inside the “realm of the people” (*renjian*). Very much the same can be said about similar features of “modern” or “Protestant Buddhism” as summarized by Lopez, Obeyesekere, and Gombrich. The Dragon Flower Sect resembles “modern Buddhism” because it rejects many ritual and “magical” elements of previous Buddhism, it heavily criticizes recent expressions of Buddhism as deficient, and it stresses equality over hierarchy by consequently upholding the notion of “original awakening” (*benjue* 本覺) according to which one only has to realize that enlightenment has always been there from the very beginning.⁶⁰ Furthermore, the Longhuapai resembles what Obeyesekere and Gombrich have called “Protestant Buddhism” in regard of its privatization, internalization, universalization, and fundamentalization of belief.⁶¹

Therefore, as early as the sixteenth century and thus well before the arrival of Western modernity we observe a form of religiosity in China which is generally understood to have emerged only under the conditions of the modern transition of Asia since the late nineteenth century. This crucial observation may help to rethink the superficial distinction between a putatively “traditional” or “premodern” Buddhism and its “modern” transformation. For reasons outlined in the introduction, however, this form of Buddhism has been largely neglected by Buddhist historiography as well as by academic scholarship. The labels of “sectarianism” and “heterodoxy” which are assigned to the Dragon Flower Sect until this day appear to have clouded our understanding of what the three patriarchs may have had in mind: A reformist vision of

60 Lopez, *A Modern Buddhist Bible*, ix–x.

61 Obeyesekere and Gombrich, *Buddhism Transformed*, 215–218.

Buddhism similar to the Protestant Reformation in early modern Europe.

Although this is not the place to discuss this intriguing yet easily misleading comparison in detail,⁶² the similarities of Longhua religiosity and thus “modern Buddhism” with certain aspects of Protestantism calls in mind another important observation but which needs to be discussed more thoroughly by scholars of Buddhism and religion alike: If apparently most features of “modern Buddhism” are ascribed to the collision between indigenous religious traditions and Western modernity—particularly in regard of *the incredible transformative power* of the “Protestant church model” and modern political concepts of “religion”⁶³—then what may be the original Asian contribution to “modern Buddhism” apart from—provocatively spoken—mere emulation of Protestantism? The religiosity advocated by the Dragon Flower Sect in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries may serve as a powerful testimony of an original Chinese attempt of reforming a century-old religious tradition without the impact of “Western modernity.”

62 See my discussion and critique in: Broy, “Secret Societies, Buddhist Fundamentalists, or Popular Religious Movements,” 351–360.

63 Broy, “Civilization, Progress, and the ‘Foul Stench of Religion’.”

Abbreviations

- BJCJ *Baojuan chuji* 寶卷初集, edited by Zhang Xishun 張希舜 et al., 40 Vols. Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1994.
- MJZJ *Ming Qing minjian zongjiao jingjuan wenxian* 明清民間宗教經卷文獻, edited by Wang Jianchuan 王見川 and Lin Wanchuan 林萬傳, 12 Vols. Taipei: Xinwenfeng, 1999.
- TWZJZL *Minjian sicang Taiwan zongjiao ziliao huibian: Minjian xinyang, minjian wenhua (1)* 民間私藏台灣宗教資料彙編：民間信仰，民間文化（第一輯），edited by Wang Jianchuan 王見川；Li Shiwei 李世偉；Gao Zhihua 高致華；Kan Zhengzong 闕正宗 and Fan Chunwu 范純武，34 Vols. Luzhou: Boyang wenhua, 2009.
- TWZJZL-II *Minjian sicang Taiwan zongjiao ziliao huibian: Minjian xinyang, minjian wenhua (2)* 民間私藏台灣宗教資料彙編：民間信仰，民間文化（第二輯），edited by Wang Jianchuan 王見川 and Li Shiwei 李世偉，33 Vols. Luzhou: Boyang wenhua, 2010.

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現當代以前的現代佛教？ 做為民間佛教的明清齋教與「人間 佛教」的隱藏系譜初探

百可思

摘要

學者一般認為所謂「人間佛教」，是現代社會條件下形成的改革中國佛教的運動，特別強調「人間佛教」與現代性的密切關係。本文主張「人間佛教」不是現代轉變下才呈現的一個現象，而是明清時代作為「民間佛教教派」的齋教已有的宗教思想與實踐。齋教，尤其是明末清初在福建流行的龍華派，以羅祖著的《五部六冊》裏的反儀式、反偶像崇拜思想為主，已展示「人間佛教」的特徵。因此，本文闡述明清齋教思想其實是「人間佛教」思潮的一個前身，從而質疑所謂現代宗教思想與現代性的關係。

關鍵詞：現代佛教、人間佛教、入世佛教、民間佛教、齋教