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Review Essays



Buddhism and Modern Chinese Society

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Hou Kunhong 侯坤宏, *Taixu shidai: Duowei shijiao xia de Minguo Fojiao* 太虛時代: 多維視角下的民國佛教 [*The Times of Taixu: A Multidimensional Perspective of Buddhism in Republican China*]. Taipei: Chengchi University Press, 2018. 548 pages, ISBN: 978-9869630429.

Though I do not have an especially close personal relationship with Mr. Hou Kunhong 侯坤宏, author of *The Times of Taixu: A Multidimensional Perspective of Buddhism in Republican China* (hereafter referred to as *The Times of Taixu*), I have read his books and I admire his body of works and academic achievements within the field of contemporary Buddhist Studies. As colleagues in the Buddhist Studies field, we have naturally met on several occasions at various Buddhist Studies conferences and have spoken briefly. The most recent occasion was on June 2, 2019 in Shanghai at the “Seventh Academic Symposium on the Theory and Practice of Master Hsing Yun’s Humanistic Buddhism” [*Diqijie Xingyun dashi renjian fojiao lilun shijian xueshu yantaohui* 第七屆星雲大師人間佛教理論實踐學術研討會]. At this symposium, Mr. Hou presented his thesis paper titled “From Taiwanese Buddhism to Hong Kong Buddhism: Fo Guang Shan Buddhism as Model” [*Cong Taiwan Fojiao dao Xianggang Fojiao: Yi Foguang shan weili* 從台灣佛教到香港佛教—以佛光山為例]. This paper investigates the close exchanges between Hong Kong Buddhism and Taiwanese Buddhism which have occurred since the end of WWII, expounding upon the various efforts towards promoting the development of Humanistic Buddhism

in Hong Kong by monks of the Taiwanese Fo Guang Shan 佛光山 Buddhist movement. Originally, what is now referred to as “Humanistic Buddhism” was a form of Buddhism (as opposed to a Buddhist sect, per se) first advanced by Master Taixu 太虛 [1890–1947]. This form of Buddhism was intended to transform traditional Chinese Buddhism from a religion which sought to “transcend the world” into a modern religion which would “participate in the world” by encouraging followers of Buddhism to actively engage with current issues and serve contemporary society instead of merely “reading Buddhist scriptures under an oil lamp while sitting and discussing the afterlife.” Originally, Master Taixu referred to his teachings as “Buddhism for Human Life,” while only occasionally employing the term “Humanistic Buddhism.” However, because of Taixu’s disciple Master Yin Shun’s 印順 [1906–2005] successful shift in terminology, we now generally say “Humanistic Buddhism”. Regardless of how it is said, the initiator of Humanistic Buddhism was indeed Master Taixu. From Master Taixu’s pronouncement until the present, Humanistic Buddhism has become the standard of development for contemporary Chinese Buddhism by serving as a framework for the transformation of Chinese Buddhism from a heavily traditional religion into a completely modernized form. Humanistic Buddhism also provides a critical background necessary to our understanding of this book, *The Times of Taixu*.

The Times of Taixu explores Chinese Buddhism during the Republican era from 1912 to 1949. As an editor for the National History Institute, the author utilizes his position to expose readers to a wealth of material regarding Chinese Buddhism during the Republican era by investigating its multifaceted relationship with society. This book can be seen as a kaleidoscope of Republican-era Buddhism (although it is by no means an exhaustive text on Republican-era Buddhism). Looking through this kaleidoscope, we can clearly distinguish the choices made and changes which occurred during Chinese Buddhism’s transformative process from ancient times to the present. In this sense, despite the theory and practice of Master Taixu and Humanistic Buddhism being heavily mentioned through the work, we cannot truly regard *The Times of Taixu* simply as a monograph exclusively focusing on Master Taixu. Ultimately, Master Taixu is just one of many cases of Republican-era Buddhists discussed in this work.

Why, then, does the author use Master Taixu to name this book which explores Republican-era Buddhism on a much wider scale? The author explains this choice in the preface and conclusion. In the preface he writes:

The main reason is that Master Taixu was Republican-era Buddhism’s boldest reformer while at the same time its most keen observer and thinker. Additionally, his career work on Buddhist cultural matters

exhibited the greatest influence during his time. Even more importantly, his collection of innovations and cultural philosophy in the field of Buddhism still hold immense significance and impact for us in the twenty-first century world. (p. 1)

In the conclusion, the author continues:

Why choose Master Taixu instead of Master Yinguang 印光, who illuminated “Pure Land Thought”? Or Master Hongyi 弘一, who expounded on “Nanshan Law,” for example? What about Master Xuyun 虛雲, who stressed the importance of Chan Thought, or Master Yuanying 圓瑛, who specialized in the Shurangama Mantra, or Master Dixian 諦閑, who promoted Tiantai Buddhist Thought? From the perspective of the author, although the Masters Yinguang, Hongyi, Yuanying, Dixian and other religious leaders expended tremendous energies developing particular schools of Chinese Buddhism, their work was limited to their respective branches. Master Taixu’s work, by contrast, addressed Buddhist doctrine as a whole (including the three schools of “Chan Buddhism,” “Southern Buddhism,” and “Tibetan Buddhism”). Master Taixu’s engagement with traditional Chinese Buddhism was not limited to a single branch but rather attached importance to each school equally by developing reforms (such as “Humanistic Buddhism” and “Buddhism for Human Life”) to alleviate the historical ailments which plagued Chinese Buddhism as a whole and provide Buddhism with a path towards the future. The major time period when Master Taixu was promulgating his Buddhist doctrines almost perfectly aligns Chinese Republican era from 1912–1949, and in this way we may aptly use “Master Taixu as a representative figure for the history of Republican-era Buddhism.” (pp. 488–489)

In its survey of Republican-era Buddhism, or rather modern Chinese Buddhism, this work employs two main themes which work together to “inherit the past while ushering in the future.” The first theme, “inheriting the past,” is embodied by the “revival of the Buddhist sects,” while the second, “ushering in the future,” can be found in the exploration of modern day Humanistic Buddhism. Both of these two major ideas were actively preached and promoted by Master Taixu. The author, Mr. Hou Kunhong, devotes a great deal of attention towards the latter theme, Humanistic Buddhism. The first theme, the revival of the Buddhist sects, is left largely ignored, however. If *The Times of Taixu* is lacking in any area, this would be it. We all know that Chinese Buddhism through the Sui [581–618] and Tang [618–907] eras saw the emergence of the “Eight Major Sects”: the

Sanlun 三論宗, Tiantai 天臺宗, Huayan 華嚴宗, Chan 禪宗, Pure Land [*Jingtu zong* 淨土宗], Consciousness Only [*Weishi zong* 唯識宗], Ryuzong [*Lüzong* 律宗], and the Tantric [*Mizong* 密宗] schools of Buddhism.¹ Across the long durée of the history of Chinese Buddhism and up through the Ming [1368–1644] and Qing [1616–1911] dynasties, these “Eight Major Sects” became largely obscured and deserted while losing their original forms and styles. However, to a large degree in reaction to the flood of Western culture, especially Christianity, entering the country, forward-thinking figures from the Buddhist world raised the alarm and once again picked up the instructional tools of “Buddhist sectarian life.” Following this re-awakening, the new spirit of teaching through action was dedicated to the revival of the glory embodied within the fundamental spirit of Chinese Buddhism’s “Eight Major Sects.” The influence of this spirit of “teaching through action” can be seen in Master Yinguang’s [1861–1940] revival of Pure Land Buddhism, Master Hongyi’s [1880–1942] revival of dharmic law, Master Xuyun’s [1840–1959] revival of Chan Buddhism, Master Dixian’s [1858–1932] revival of Tiantai, and Master Yuexia’s 月霞 [1858–1917] revival of Huayan. The author of *The Times of Taixu* does occasionally mention these figures (they are the big shots of Republican-era Chinese Buddhism, after all, and would be normal to mention). Yet, when they are mentioned in the book, it is not in relation to “the revival of the Buddhist sects” but for other reasons entirely. For example, the book brings up Master Dixian’s quote: “Be good at teaching Dharma, so that more people will come to learn.” (p. 381). As opposed to dealing with larger matters of spirituality and revival, this saying simply addresses the material concerns in temple management. Yet, although the author does not speak about the contributions of Master Dixian and the other masters regarding the revival of the Buddhist sects and focuses almost exclusively on research related to Master Taixu’s Humanistic Buddhism, this is still a work which far surpasses its predecessors. Most crucially, one of the author’s major contributions is to reveal the critical relationship between Humanistic Buddhism and Master Taixu’s own beliefs regarding Maitreyan Buddhism.

In previous scholarly explorations of Humanistic Buddhism, a common view holds that Master Taixu’s actions were simply in response to the government between the end of the Qing and the beginning of the Republican Era, which had just launched the “Temple Property School Establishment

1 Also known as the “Ten Major Sects” if one is to count the establishment of the Kusha-shu 俱舍宗 and Satyasiddhi 成實宗 schools which emerged during the Northern and Southern dynasties [420–589] period. However, because these two schools belong to Theravada Buddhism, in the Mahayana-dominated history of Chinese Buddhism, these two schools exhibited little practical influence. Additionally, many of their ideas were absorbed by the Mahayana “Eight Major Sects” so they are not frequently mentioned.

Campaign" [*Miaochan xingxue yundong* 廟產興學運動] due to its rapidly waning political power and near-empty treasury. This "Temple Property School Establishment" campaign was a policy which sought to have temples and their property confiscated by the government in order to establish secular schools and fund other social undertakings. From Master Taixu's perspective, instead of passively watching as Buddhist property was confiscated by the secular government for these social purposes, would it not be preferable for Buddhists themselves to seize the initiative by entering the world and serving society? Against this backdrop, Humanistic Buddhism was born with the aim of actively serving the secular world. Of course, there is no doubt that Master Taixu's Humanistic Buddhist and the "Temple Property School Establishment" had a direct cause and effect relationship. Master Taixu himself said as much, and the author of *The Times of Taixu* also mentions this fact within the book. However, while Humanistic Buddhism was a type of Buddhist movement, it was not exclusively a reaction to stimuli from the secular world. Most importantly, it also possessed its own intrinsic motivation and logic. This intrinsic motivation, from Mr. Hou Kunhong's point of view, was Master Taixu's own Maitreyan Buddhist beliefs. From the many analyses of Master Taixu's Humanistic Buddhism, we can see that Humanistic Buddhism is still often classified as belonging to Mahayana Buddhism's "Life of the Bodhisattva Movement," embodying Chan Buddhism's "No one left in the world" philosophy, falling into Tiantai "Three Truths" philosophy (the ultimate truth, the secular truth, and the middle way to reconcile them), or simply a form of Confucianized Buddhism, etc. These analyses, largely distorted by hindsight, all make claims about Humanistic Buddhism from either a Buddhist rationalistic basis or legalistic basis while failing to address Master Taixu's original inspiration for advancing Humanistic Buddhism—his own deep personal belief in Maitreyan Buddhism.

Maitreyan Buddhism itself belongs to the "Pure Land" branch of Buddhism. In the long history of Chinese Buddhism, Pure Land Buddhism can be seen in the forms of Amitabha Buddhism as well as Maitreyan Buddhism. The concept of Pure Land specific to Amitabha Buddhism is the "Western Paradise," a Pure Land which only exists beyond the human realm and not in this world. By contrast, the concept of Pure Land in Maitreyan Buddhism includes the actual physical world in which you and I live, as well as everything in between. Before the Middle Tang period, Chinese Buddhism's Pure Land movement was mainly found in Maitreyan Buddhism as embodied by figures such as Master Zhiyi 智顛 [538–597] who founded Tiantai, and the celebrated Master Xuanzang 玄奘 [602–664]. Both of these masters were faithful disciples of Maitreyan Buddhism. From the Middle Tang period until today, however, Maitreyan

Buddhism has been largely supplanted by Amitabha Buddhism which has become rampantly popular in its stead. A few people, such as Master Taixu, however, maintained belief in Maitreyan Buddhism, and it was exactly this devotion to the Maitreyan vision of Pure Land which inspired Humanistic Buddhism as a religious moment. To illustrate this point, the author employs the thinking of Master Taixu's disciple Master Yinshun to elaborate, who states,

When the Maitreya is born into the world, the Maitreya will manifest the Pure Land in the human realm, and this is therefore the hope and pursuit of all Buddhists. Generally, followers of Buddhism tend to believe that the Maitreya Bodhisattva dwells in Heaven and in the Pure Land there, but they do not realize that this Pure Land of the Maitreya is actually in the human world. Maitreya, before becoming a Buddha, lived in the inner court of Heaven and was the purifier of the Heavenly Kingdom. We wish to be born into the Pure Land and become close to the Maitreya so that in the future we may join the Maitreya in purifying the human world and thereby attain the roots or capacities of kindness. From the perspective of Maitreyan Pure Land philosophy, it is the Pure Land within our actual human world which must be emphasized instead of the pursuit of Heaven. But for now, however, the rebirth of the Maitreya Bodhisattva is still quite far off. In this vast time beforehand, some preparations must be made for the Maitreya's rebirth. What must be prepared, then? Namely, the implementation of the ideas of Humanistic Buddhism. (p. 93)

This idea of Pure Land is a pragmatic embodiment of the relationship between Buddhism and secular society, specifically Republican-era Chinese society. Of all the themes mentioned in *The Times of Taixu*, the most crucial is the intimate relationship between Buddhism and politics. The exploration of this theme within the book includes the personal relationship between Master Taixu and Jiang Jieshi 蔣介石 [1887–1975] as well as Master Taixu's relationship with the Republic of China government at large.

Whatever relationship exists between religion and politics is not worth making too much of a fuss over. From ancient times to the present, in China and abroad, it is not at all unusual for some countries to have religiously-oriented political parties while in many instances religion and the state are entirely one and the same. However, upon hearing the word "Buddhism," we Chinese people tend to think that politics and Buddhism are entirely insulated from one another, and that disciples of Buddhism should not take an active role in politics. Why is this? Actually, this has much to do with the reality of how Buddhism has developed in Chinese history. In *A Brief Introduction to Buddhist*

Studies, the well-known Buddhist scholar Mr. Lü Cheng 呂澂 [1896–1989] discusses how Buddhism spread in the early Wei [220–265] and Jin [265–420] periods: “At that time, Buddhism and politics were intimately intertwined and many monks become highly active in political affairs. However, this led to many problems with corruption, leading to discontent among the people which in turn resulted in a widespread assault on Buddhism.”² This left a stain upon Buddhism’s reputation as an active player in the state’s political affairs. Additionally, especially since the development of Chan Buddhism during the Tang dynasty, Buddhism became rusticated which further solidified the isolation of Chinese Buddhism and esoteric Buddhism from the rest of society. This isolation gradually reached such an extent that people began to label those monks who advocated active participation in secular affairs and often met with political figures as “political monks.” Notably, in response to people who called him a political monk, Taiwan’s Master Hsing Yun 星雲 has replied:

You cannot say that a follower of Buddhism cannot participate in politics. Political participation is the personal right of all, unless one has committed a crime, has broken the law, or is being penalized by the legal system in such a way that one’s right to participate in public life is taken away and this person no longer has the right to vote. It is no crime to be a Buddhist or to be a monk or a nun. Simply by showing concern society, does that make one a “political monk”? In fact, the meaning of Master Taixu’s teaching “inquire about politics but don’t handle affairs” is that monks and nuns can indeed show concern for society, the nation, and the well-being of the people. However, they simply should not become officials, county magistrates, or mayors.³

Here, Master Hsing Yun discusses the teachings of Master Taixu, who himself was labeled a political monk. This teaching, “inquire about politics but don’t handle affairs,” simply stated as “inquire about politics but do not become an official,” expresses the hope that the relationship with the government will be one “kept at arm’s length, neither near nor far, for everyone’s benefit.” In Part 3 Chapter 8 of *The Times of Taixu*, titled “Master Taixu and Jiang Jieshi: Buddhism and Politics in the 1930s” [*Shi Taixu he Jiang Jieshi: 1930 niandai de Fojiao yu zhengzhi* 釋太虛和蔣介石:1930年代的佛教與政治], Mr. Hou

2 Lü Cheng 呂澂, *Zhongguo Foxue yuanliu lue jiang* 中國佛學源流略講 [A Brief Introduction to Buddhist Studies] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2017), 71.

3 “Shuo wo shi ‘zhengzhi heshang’ shi kandeqi wo 說我是‘政治和尚’是看得起我 [To Call Me a ‘Political Monk’ is a Compliment],” last modified November 10, 2015, http://www.fjnet.com/rw/nr/201511/t2015110_236715.htm.

Kunhong provides a detailed account of Master Taixu's exchanges with Jiang Jieshi and explores how Master Taixu navigated the relationship between government and religion. Mr. Hou Kunhong writes, "Master Taixu expressed, 'stay at an arm's length, neither near nor far, for everyone's benefit' as a principle of the relationship between government and religion. This principle is still worth considering today" (p. 268). In Mr. Hou Kunhong's rich exploration of the relationship between politics and religion, an aspect of extended consideration is the relationship between Buddhism and military affairs. Following the Xinhai Revolution [1911–1912], we all know that China descended into the chaos of the Warlord era which was then followed by the Anti-Japanese War and the civil war between the Nationalists and Communists. In short, warfare was a frequent occurrence at this time. However, just as the flames of war and the burning of temple offerings may complement one another, warfare and Buddhism can be mutually well-suited. During this period, Buddhism, soldiers, and warfare forged an intimate relationship with one each other. Naturally, this crucial point did not escape Mr. Hou Kunhong's attention. Some people may understandably think that Buddhism seeks to avoid killing while war naturally involves killing people. How, then, can these two concepts possibly be rectified with one another? Is this not a case of trying to "match the horse's jaw with the cow's head"? However, this confluence is indeed a true manifestation of Chinese Buddhism. By reading *The Times of Taixu*, one may come to completely understand this apparent paradox. Here, I might as well provide the reader with two notable examples from the book. One deals with Hunanese Warlord Tang Shengzhi 唐生智 [1890–1970]. Because he advocated "using Buddhist teachings in leading the armed forces," he became known as the "Buddhist general." In the military, he once promulgated twelve orders which all battalions were to follow in "(Buddhist) Regulations for Obtaining Certificates" [(*Fojiao*) *De jie zheng zhang tiaoli* (佛教) 得戒證章條例]. The first order stipulated: "In order to promote Buddhism and carry out the mission of promulgating Buddhism in the military ranks, this army shall issue special badges to encourage firm belief and to aid in the advancement of faith" (p. 168). He also formulated the "Hunanese Declaration of the Buddhist People's Association" [*Hunan minzhong fohua xiehui xuanyan* 湖南民眾佛化協會宣言] to promote a "Buddhist Transformation Campaign" [*Fohua yundong* 佛化運動] among the population. In this declaration, he wrote, "Invoking the ways of Confucius and the Revered One of the World [*Shakyamuni* 釋迦牟尼] along with the President's Three Principles of the People, 'the goals of the revolution are all revealed through Buddhism.' Buddhism is a 'true friend of the revolution' and an 'aid to the Three Principles of the People.' Therefore, the Buddhist Transformation Campaign is extremely timely and appropriate" (p. 170). In this way, Buddhism and "The Three Principles of the People" became welded

together. This is not at all dissimilar to today's discussion on how Buddhism may be adapted to modern socialist society.

In *The Times of Taixu*, many instances of the “Buddhism-military relationship” mentioned by Mr. Hou Kunhong are of monks fighting in the Anti-Japanese War. These instances greatly exemplify the spirit of “people's total warfare.” Just imagine, if all of these “otherworldly” monks and nuns were to join the ranks of the resistance, how could others possibly remain apathetic on the sidelines? In short, all the *sangha* among the Chinese people, including Master Taixu, could not help but be drawn into the torrent of resistance against Japan. In confronting this foreign invasion, many people put the interests of the country and the people first, took up the patriotic cause, raised funds, performed logistics and ambulance work, held emergency meetings, or even directly took up arms and served on the front lines. In doing so, many viewed their service in the Anti-Japanese War as acts of Buddhist self-cultivation. In considering the killing of the enemy as an act of demon slaying, “they [Chinese Buddhists] hoped to transform themselves into patriotic citizens of China instead of simply being mere followers of Buddhism.” For example, Master Leguan 樂觀 [1902–1987] was a monk who actively served in the Anti-Japanese War. In his office, Master Leguan hung portraits of Sun Zhongshan 孫中山 [1866–1925], Lin Sen 林森 [1868–1943], and Jiang Jieshi yet not one image of the Shakyamuni Buddha. Hanging alongside the portraits were the brightly colored national and party flags in addition to practical information and guidelines for the ambulance teams. It was readily apparent that Master Leguan held the people of the nation in a much higher position in his heart than his beliefs in Buddhism” (p. 343). In the spring of 1939, Comrade Zhou Enlai 周恩來 [1898–1976] wrote a message to the Hunan Nanyue Anti-Japanese Company of Fighting Monks led by Master Juzan 巨贊 [1908–1984]. Zhou wrote, “On the horse, kill bandits. Off the horse, study Buddhism.” To explain his message, he elaborated:

The first Chinese interpretation of *arhat* 阿羅漢 was a killer of bandits. If he had not killed those troublesome bandits, he would not have been able to become an *arhat*. What I wrote before said to kill bandits and not to kill people. This ‘bandit’ is what Buddhism refers to as a wicked evildoer who absolutely cannot be tolerated. Currently, these Japanese bandits are slaughtering our fellow countrymen. If we do not kill these murderous bandits, how then are we to deliver beings from their suffering?⁴

4 “Zhou Zongli miaojie ‘shangma shazei, xiamaxue Fo’ 周總理妙解‘上馬殺賊，下馬學佛’ [Premier Zhou Enlai Explains ‘On the Horse, Kill Bandits, Off the Horse, Study Buddhism’],” last modified August 31, 2018, http://www.sohu.com/a/251204724_161249.

Upon receiving Zhou Enlai's encouragement, it was not long before Master Juzan articulated his own sentiments about actively resisting the Japanese, stating: "As a Buddhist, one should not seek to cause trouble in the realm of humanity. Yet, at present, our nation is facing a tremendous calamity. Now is the time to show one's true colors as patriotic children of the Yellow Emperor." In referring to these "true colors," Master Juzan means that our moral courage as Chinese people must never falter in the face of foreign aggression. Unfortunately, not all people are made of the same moral fiber. At that same time, some members of the *sangha* saw their "true colors" fade away as they lost their sense of moral integrity and became traitors to the nation, just like Wang Jingwei 汪精衛 [1883–1944]. For example, in Changchun 長春 under the puppet state of Manchukuo, "Master Shanguo 善果 [d. 1951] actively promoted a campaign to sponsor the purchase of a so-called 'Buddhist fighter plane.' Due to his solicitation efforts, the Buddhists of Changchun raised a huge sum of money which enabled the Japanese military to purchase a new plane. Even as the war was drawing to a close, Master Shanguo organized the Buddhist nuns of Changchun in serving the Japanese troops. Once the war was over, due to this type of 'traitorous' collaboration with the Japanese, Master Shanguo was prosecuted under the Nationalist government but somehow escaped any punishment. However, he was unable to evade justice under the People's Republic of China. In 1951, the PRC government sentenced him to death" (p. 347). Although his name was "Shanguo," meaning "good result," he ultimately did not meet with a "good end." This naturally had to do with his own political inclinations and had nothing whatsoever to do with Buddhism.

Besides discussing Buddhism's relationship with politics, military affairs, and other major societal issues, Mr. Hou Kunhong's *The Times of Taixu* also provides readers with a rich and diverse exploration of Buddhist life at level of society. It highlights the spiritual comfort Buddhist can provide when dealing with the problems of sickness, old age, death, and other issues. For example, in his old age, Duan Qirui 段祺瑞 [1865–1936] "moved to the British concession and rose every morning to recite the 'Diamond Sutra' 金剛經 for half an hour. For his three meals, he ate porridge and steamed buns served with vegetables. He laid off most of the servants he had kept previously. In his old age, Duan Qirui lived an austere life and enthusiastically gave alms. His donations helped to fund the construction of the Qingdao Zhanshan Temple" (p. 315). While people such as Li Dazhao 李大釗 [1889–1927] and Liang Qichao 梁啟超 [1873–1929] strongly denied that they were Buddhists, following their deaths people erected memorials to them in the temples so that they could pay homage (pp. 372–373). In short, Republican-era China "confronted 'a catastrophe not seen for three thousand years.' At that time, the sacred land of China

was just as the writer Liu E 劉鶯 had described in his 1903 *The Travels of Lao Can* [*Laocan youji* 老殘遊記]: the nation is a sinking ship sailing the Pacific. Onboard the ship are countless refugees, a muddle-headed captain, and a crew of panicking sailors. There are those who take advantage of the situation to loot, while some escape by diving into the ocean, and even some who instigate mutinies.”⁵ These historical figures mentioned above all formed a connection with Buddhism which in turn demonstrates the profound and widespread influence Buddhism has had upon Chinese society and the Chinese people. Unlike other research papers on Republican China which possess a tendency to emphasize Western culture and thought, Mr. Hou Kunhong’s work helps us to understand how Chinese people during that time looked to the ancient Buddhism of the East to define their values and establish a spiritual roadmap. This book is extremely worth the read.

Translated by Jon Formella

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