Chinese Communist Attitudes Towards Buddhism in Chinese History

by KENNETH CHEN

In the journal *Hsien-tai Fo-hsueh* (*Modern Buddhism*), September 1959, there appeared a long article entitled "Lun Tsung-chiao Hsin-yang Tzu-yu" ("A Discussion Concerning Freedom of Religious Belief"), by Ya Han-chang, which was originally published in the official Communist ideological journal *Hung Ch'i* (*Red Flag*), 1959, No. 14. Appearing as it did in *Red Flag* it is justifiable to conclude that the views expressed in it represented the accepted Communist attitude toward religion. In this article, Ya wrote that the basic policy of the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Republic of China is to "recognise that everyone has the freedom to believe in a religion, and also that everyone has the freedom not to believe in a religion."

Primitive man, according to Ya, was awed and overwhelmed by the forces of nature around him; he felt there must be some supernatural deity behind such forces of nature that must be propitiated by prayers, charms, formulas or sacrifices. Such was the origin of religion and religious practices. Later, society advanced to the stage when opposing classes began to appear, the ruler and the ruled, the oppressor and the oppressed. The oppressed classes, in order to seek relief from such oppressions and sufferings, sought refuge in religion, which promised them the prospects of a better life in a future paradise. The ruling class actively encouraged such a tendency among the oppressed people, for belief in a future paradise would keep the people docile and satisfied with their earthly status. Religion thus became a tool which the oppressors used to maintain their acts of oppression.

With the victory of the proletariat in the Socialist revolution, the masses and the workers would naturally feel that all forms of oppression, even that under the banner of religion, should be abolished. However, even though a Socialist society may be against religion, it cannot control entirely the natural forces in the world that foster belief in a religion. A lengthy period is necessary to educate the masses to the truths discovered by science. Moreover, religion has existed for a long time in the history of man, and it still wields considerable influence over the thoughts and actions of people, even in a Socialist society. Consequently it cannot be wiped out at once. Force should not be applied, for fear

that it may dislocate the lives of the people who still believe in religion. With the elevation of the cultural level of the masses, and with the increase in scientific knowledge, belief in religion will naturally decline and will in due time disappear altogether.

It is on these historical and cultural considerations, according to Ya, that the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Republic base their policy of freedom of religious belief. Such a policy, he contends, is entirely compatible with the goals of the Socialist revolution. Ever since the liberation of the entire country, the Government has established offices for the supervision of religions and religious affairs in the central government, in the provinces, and in the cities. All religious institutions, temples, monasteries and historical sites are protected by the government, and all legitimate and correct religious activities are permitted to carry on as usual.[1]

This statement furnishes us with the official attitude on the mainland toward Buddhism as well as the other religions which are permitted to function. It makes it clear that such religions are permitted to carry on only if they confine themselves to their legitimate religious functions under the supervision of the Government. It states that the people have freedom of religious belief, but it also makes clear that the converse is equally important, the freedom not to hold any religious belief. Chinese Communist commentators have interpreted this to include the freedom to engage in anti-religious propaganda.

In view of their critical attitude toward all religions in general, it would be interesting to find out the position taken by the Communist intellectuals on the mainland toward the development of Buddhism in China. Such an inquiry would reveal some good examples of how these writers apply their methods of dialectical materialism to the study of Buddhism. Here I would like to examine the attitudes of these writers under three headings: (1) factors responsible for the development of Buddhism in China during the Northern and Southern Dynasties; (2) the triumph of the Ch'an School during the mid-T'ang period; and (3) the Communist critique of the Vijnānavāda and Hua-yen Schools.

1. *Factors responsible for the development of Buddhism during the Northern and Southern Dynasties.* Non-Communist historians of Buddhism in China in their discussions of this problem are generally agreed that important roles were played by: the breakdown of the centralised Confucian state, thus permitting an alien ideology to enter China and claim the attention and allegiance of the Chinese; the political and social unrest of the period, which drove many people to take refuge in the relative tranquillity and safety of the Buddhist temples, either to find solace in Buddhist philosophy or to escape from heavy military and

[1] *Modern Buddhism*, September 1959.

labour burdens; the large numbers of non-Chinese peoples in north China, who were not bound to the indigenous religions and therefore found it easier to embrace a foreign religion, Buddhism, under the active encouragement of the non-Chinese rulers; the religious activities of a few outstanding Buddhist months in China, Kumārajīva, Tao-an, and Hui-yuan, who were able to win converts among the cultured literati; the favourable intellectual climate in China under the Southern Dynasties, which permitted considerable interchange of ideas between Chinese and Buddhist thinkers, as both groups were primarily concerned with similar problems of ontology; and finally, the attraction that Buddhism offered with its promise of universal salvation and the presence of Buddahood in every sentient being.

These factors are not given any prominence by the historians on the mainland now. Practically all of them contend that Buddhism flourished because it was sponsored and encouraged by the ruling class in order to prevent the oppressed classes from thinking too much about their miseries and sufferings. Fan Wen-lan, the veteran Communist historian, gave the following reasons for the acceptance of Buddhism. First, the ruling class, after being driven out of north China by the invading barbarians, migrated to the south. There on the banks of the Yangtze, they looked back longingly to their days of glory and splendour in Lo-yang, and in order to forget their sorrows and disappointments, they sought refuge in Buddhism. Secondly, the bodhisattva ideal in Mahāyāna Buddhism stressed endurance and tolerance to all kinds of sufferings, insults and oppression without any idea of revenge. Such an ideal was favoured by the ruling class, for it was valuable in keeping the oppressed people satisfied with their conditions.[2]

In a long article on Hua-yen thought, published in *Philosophical Studies*, No. 2, 1961, Jen Chi-yü presented his views on the development as follows: "During the period of the Northern and Southern Dynasties, the great and privileged families held powers and enjoyed political, economic and social privileges. To seek pretexts to justify their privileges, to stamp out popular resistance to their role and to propagate slavery and cultivate a docile character, the ruling class had recourse to Buddhism and assisted the religion considerably. At that time, many Buddhist works were translated into Chinese. The common goal of Buddhism was to propagate teachings concerning the blessings of the Buddha land in the future, so that people would not concern themselves too much with the sufferings of the present. People were taught that in the Western Paradise every earnest and pious

[2] Fan Wen-lan, *Chung-kuo T'ung-shih Chien-pien* (*Concise General History of China*), (Peking: 1949) pp. 231–232.

Buddhist was welcome. From this standpoint, we can see that during the Northern and Southern Dynasties, the great and privileged families subjected the people to all kinds of injustice and oppression. Religion was one of their spiritual weapons." [3] A viewpoint similar to that expressed by Fan and Jen is found in Shang Yüeh's *Chung-kuo Li-shih Kang-yao* (*Outlines of Chinese History*), (Peking: 1954), p. 108, where the author wrote that Buddhism held out the reward of a paradise for all the suffering and oppressed people in the world, and hence was encouraged by the ruling class, who wanted the people to forget about their earthly woes.

2. *Triumph of the Ch'an School during the mid-T'ang period.* Students of the Ch'an School in China usually explain the popularity of this aspect of Buddhism as being due to its being in consonance with the practical nature of the Chinese people, and its non-dependence on the accoutrements of Indian Buddhism. The Ch'an masters broke away from such Indian practices as recitation of the scriptures, worship of images and metaphysical speculations; instead they favoured a plain, direct, concrete and practical approach to enlightenment. The Buddha-nature is in all of us, and we need only to look directly into ourselves to find this Buddha-nature. The Ch'an masters also spoke in plain everyday language, easily understood by any common Chinese. Hence the growth and popularity of the Ch'an School. The appeal was predominantly religious.

The Communist writers on the mainland do not accept such an explanation. They explain the popularity entirely on social and economic considerations. According to them, the Ch'an School came into prominence at the end of the seventh and the beginning of the eighth centuries, when Empress Wu Tse-t'ien was usurping power and establishing her new dynasty. In order to build up a new aristocracy which would support and strengthen the new dynasty, Empress Wu began to bestow honours, ranks and titles to newly arisen clans and landlords, so that they might serve as a counter-balance to the old great families who were supporters of the T'ang Imperial house. Such newly arisen clans and landlords were not connected with the traditional aristocracy but were commoners who had achieved success. This effort to raise one social class at the expense of another was accompanied by considerable struggle in which many of the old-established families were executed.

With the creation of the new aristocracy, a religion beneficial to its

[3] Jen Chi-yü, "Hua-yen-tsung Szu-hsiang Lüeh-lun" ("A Preliminary Discussion of Hua-yen Thought"), *Philosophical Studies*, No. 1, 1961. The entire article was translated into English and published in the *Union Research Service*, Vol. 24, Nos. 5 and 6, July 18 and 21, 1961. However, I have made independent translations of the portions I use in this article.

members was necessary. At this juncture, Empress Wu decided that the Ch'an School was exactly what was needed for the times. Ch'an was revolutionary in tendency, and this fitted in with the Empress's desire to create a new society. Ch'an reflected the spirit of the common people. Hui-neng (638-713) one of the important masters of the period, was a commoner belonging to the lower ranks of society. The school did not insist on intellectual efforts and prolonged periods of study of the scriptures, which only the upper classes could afford; it insisted that the Buddha-nature was in every one of us, regardless of station, position or learning. It was, therefore, egalitarian and progressive. Even a commoner could become a patriarch and preach the law. With Empress Wu actively supporting the Ch'an School, the aristocracy which she created followed her example. As the power and prestige of Empress Wu and the newly created aristocracy increased, so did the power and prestige of the Ch'an School. In this manner, the dominant position of the school was assured.[4]

Before the Ch'an School attained prominence, it was progressive and egalitarian, but as soon as it became the main school of Buddhism, the Communist writers claim that it changed its nature. It now became identified with the ruling class, and as supporters of the rulers, it ceased to be egalitarian but became oppressive. This aspect of Ch'an is clearly seen in the regulations drawn up by Huai-hai (720–814), which separated the leaders from the common monks. With this division and separation, the leaders or abbots were regarded with respect by the ruling class, they worked hand in hand with the feudal lords to preserve order and keep the masses suppressed. It was no wonder that the rules of Huai-hai were compiled again under Imperial orders during the Mongol dynasty in 1338 after the original list had been lost.[5]

3. *Communist critique of the Vijñānavāda and Hua-yen Schools.* The Vijñānavāda School in China is based on the translations and teachings of Paramartha (*c.* 500–570) and Hsüan-tsang (*c.* 600–664). Its main tenet is that all external phenomena are but creations of the mind. This idealistic nature of the school drew the fire of the Communist writers. They charge that the school is not only erroneous but also reactionary. According to them, the Vijñānavāda teaches that all surroundings and circumstances under which the individual lives are but manifestations of his consciousness. The miseries that the individual suffers and the pleasures that he enjoys are created by his consciousness, and the individual can do nothing about them because they are the results of his *karma.* If we follow such teachings, then we would have

[4] For these views, see Hou Wai-lu and others, *Chung-kuo Szu-hsiang T'ung-shih* (*General History of Chinese Thought*) (Peking: 1959) IV, pp. 149–155, 262–263.
[5] *Ibid.* 275.

to conclude that the oppression of the peasants by the landlords is not the result of the evils of the feudal system, but only the concrete manifestation of their own inner consciousness. At the same time, one would also say that the persecution and oppression by the landlords are but the external phenomenal conditions created by their inner consciousness. Such a viewpoint is entirely erroneous and unacceptable,[6]

The Communist evaluation of the Hua-yen teachings is found in the article already mentioned, that by Jen Chi-yü in *Philosophical Studies*, No. 1, 1961. This is the most important full length article against Buddhism to appear on the mainland. That the article was published in *Philosophical Studies*, a journal devoted to articles of a scholarly nature, and not in *Modern Buddhism*, the official organ of the Chinese Buddhist Association, where the articles are friendly to Buddhism and are more popular in nature, is of some significance and points to the author's desire to reach the Communist intellectuals with his condemnation of the Hua-yen School. Since the brunt of the attack is directed against Hua-yen idealism, and since practically all the Mahāyāna schools in China are idealistic in their philosophy, one might conclude that the target of the author's criticisms is not just the Hua-yen School but Buddhism as a whole.

The first portion of the article is devoted to a review of the translations of the *sutra* and the writings of the Hua-yen masters in China. Then follows the discussion of Hua-yen tenets. In the last portion we come to the critical remarks of the author.

The main objectives of Hua-yen philosophy, according to Jen, are to attack materialism and to serve the interests of the ruling class. It ignores all the differentiations of the world, it aims to lead men away from earthly struggles, and to persuade men to take no interest in the events of the present but to seek only for spiritual comfort in the future. "The Hua-yen School employs all sorts of devious methods to prove that the present world is not real, that it is unknowable, illusory and relative. Its ultimate aim is to lead people away from the human world to the heavenly world."

"From the viewpoint of Hua-yen, the task of freeing man from the miseries of human life does not require a reformation of the present world; it is only necessary to change our viewpoint concerning the present world. When this is done, the problem is solved completely.... The main purpose of the ten profound mysteries is to propound the theory that if one were to adhere to the idealistic world view, and consider all things and events from the religious point of view, then everything would be perfect and everyone would be happy...."

"Such a mass of confused ideas as these mentioned above is but an

[6] *Ibid.* 228–229.

array of subjective views piled one above the other, repeatedly stressing that although the world appears to be very complicated, in reality it is very simple, for everything in the world is related to the Buddha-nature and embodies one aspect of the Buddha-nature or Thusness. It holds that all things in the world, good or bad, big or small, are indispensable in making up the world as a whole. In essence, the school is but using detailed verbiage and coarse descriptions to justify the conclusions required by the ruling class, namely, that whatever exists is reasonable. Such a set of theories was designed mainly to provide the theoretical foundations for the corrupt, reactionary, tyrannical, and exploiting system of the T'ang Dynasty. Very naturally the ruling authorities were delighted, and willingly encouraged the development of such a school." [7]

From this attack on Hua-yen idealism, the author proceeds to criticise the Hua-yen principles of interpenetration and mutual identification. " The theory of the four *dharma*-realms is also advanced to meet the demands of the ruling class. . . . The four *dharma*-realms are: (1) the realm of *shih* or things; (2) the realm of *li* or principle; (3) the realm in which principle and things are interfused without obstruction; (4) the realm in which all things are interfused without obstruction. . . ."

" But the Hua-yen denies there is an objective world outside of consciousness. From this fundamental premise, one must conclude that *li* is not the norm of events and things, and *shih* is not objective phenomena. Their so-called *shih* is but a mixed array of individual existences embodying the Buddha-nature or Thusness, and their *li* is but a principle which does not reflect the objective world and which is suspended in the void without foundation. . . ."

" In this theory of the *dharma*-realms, the basic viewpoint is identical with that of their philosophical system, namely, that all things in the world are but reflections or embodiments of the Buddha-nature or Thusness. Regardless of what the embodied individual existences and the general principles may be, they are in harmony, they are not contradictory, and they are mutually complementary to each other. The path leading to emancipation from misery pointed out by the Hua-yen admits and accepts the view that everything in the present is ordained by fate."[8]

On the basis of this analysis of Hua-yen tenets, Jen condemns the school for advocating that we look upon the inequalities and miseries of the world, such as class oppression, tyranny and exploitation, as mere creations of the mind and not connected with the existing social system, and that consequently we need not do anything about them. He also attacks the Hua-yen principles of interpenetration and mutual identification on the ground that they negate the differences between classes and

[7] Jen, *op. cit.*, pp. 28, 29.
[8] *Ibid.* p. 30.

seek to draw people's minds away from inequalities and iniquities. Such a view is contrary to the basic principle of Communist dialectics, the law of contradiction of things, and would permit the ruling class to carry out their tyrannical acts without protest and opposition. The Hua-yen error consists of its concern only with the mutual relations and connections between things, it does not dare concern itself with the contradiction and struggle between opposites. The inevitable consequence of the Hua-yen views is that all things in the world are in perfect harmony, regardless of whether they are right or wrong, good or evil, oppressor or oppressed, landlord or peasant, that all are indispensable links in the network of relations, and that this network is filled with co-operation and equilibrium. Such a world view is thoroughly unacceptable to one who holds to the truths of dialectics and materialism.

In spite of this critical attitude of the Communist intellectuals, some Buddhist activities are being carried on on the mainland in line with the proclaimed policy of freedom of religious belief. The position of the Government is that the followers of Buddhism will be left alone if they obey the official policy of the Government and abide by the pattern of co-existence, by which is meant that the Buddhist monks are not to carry on religious activities outside the Buddhist temples, and the Government is not to interfere with the religious activities within the temples.[9]

For the purpose of bringing together the Buddhist clergy and laymen into an organisation that can be supervised by the Government, the Chinese Buddhist Association was organised in 1953, "to unite all followers of Buddhism under the leadership of the People's Republic in order to demonstrate their love for the Fatherland and to protect world peace." The officers of the association claim that the organisation's chief activities consist of the following:

(1) To serve as a bridge between the followers of Buddhism and the Government;

(2) to train Buddhist personnel;

(3) to promote Buddhist cultural activities;

(4) to encourage Buddhist international co-operation.

Observers outside mainland China have pointed out that while these activities have undoubtedly been performed by the association, they do not constitute the real and essential reason for its existence. Instead, they contend that the fundamental reason for the existence of the

[9] In the *People's Daily* for July 21, 1959, appeared the following statement: "In the midst of the democratic revolution, the protection of the freedom of religious belief, the protection of temples and monasteries that abide by the law, and the protection of historical and cultural monuments, must be carried out thoroughly. At the same time, the temples and monasteries should oppose all counter-revolutionary movements, all feudalistic special powers, and all illegal deprivations."

organisation is that it serves as the agent of the Party for the control and supervision of Buddhism and Buddhist activities.

Besides these functions, the association also fulfils another role, this time in the realm of international politics. Since its inception, Communist China has been trying to gain the goodwill of the countries in south-east Asia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Burma, Buddhist countries all. If these countries could be made to believe that even in Communist China, Buddhism is not being persecuted, but is permitted to function, they would be more favourably inclined toward the Communist giant to the north. To create this favourable image among the Buddhist countries and peoples of south-east Asia, the People's Republic permits delegations of the Chinese Buddhist Association to visit those countries, and in turn welcomes representatives from those countries. Upon arrival in China, these Buddhist delegations are received by the Chinese Buddhist Association and taken on tours of the Buddhist temples in the metropolitan areas, just to demonstrate that the Chinese Buddhists enjoy freedom of religious belief. To a certain extent, the Chinese Communists have been successful in their attempts to woo the Buddhist countries. For example, a group of Cambodian monks toured China from June 15 to July 26, 1958, to the accompaniment of banquets and speeches in various cities. On the eve of his departure, the leader of the Cambodian delegation told reporters that he sincerely believed the Buddhists in China enjoyed freedom of religious belief, and that what he had seen was entirely different from the rumours he had heard.

Within the limits imposed by the People's Republic, the Chinese Buddhist Association is able to function and to carry on religious activities within the temples which are often subsidised by the Government. Moreover, since Buddhism has had such a long history in China, the Communists could not very well close their eyes to this historical development. Some studies of Buddhism are, therefore, being carried out. This leads us to our consideration of the second problem, what is the Communist attitude concerning the cultural contributions of Chinese Buddhism?

In the search for data bearing on this problem, I have consulted such periodicals as the *Li-shih Yen-chiu* (*Historical Studies*), *Che-hsüeh Yen-chiu* (*Philosophical Studies*), and the index *Ch'uan-kuo Chu-yao Pao-k'an Tzu-liao So-yin* (*Index of the Important Newspapers and Journals in the Entire Country*). I also had a friend in Hong Kong examine the files prepared by the Union Research Institute. With the exception of one article in *Philosophical Studies*, which has already been considered, these efforts did not reveal anything of value. For some reason which is not clear to me, writers on the mainland have not devoted the time and effort to study the history of Buddhism in China that one

would expect. For example, no monograph or journal article has appeared discussing that aspect of Buddhism during the T'ang Dynasty which should be of interest to the Communist historians, namely, the economic and commercial activities of the Buddhist monasteries. It would appear that the older scholars of Buddhism on the mainland, such as T'ang Yung-t'ung before he died in 1964, and Chou I-liang, have steered away from Buddhist studies for various reasons, and younger writers are not yet sufficiently advanced in their Buddhist studies to publish. In the end, my main sources of information are first, *Modern Buddhism*, the official organ of the Chinese Buddhist Association, and secondly, the books on Chinese history and thought by Communist writers.

At the outset, it is well to point out that the Communist writers freely admit the extent of the cultural contributions of Chinese Buddhism. One wrote that " if it were not for the large scale introduction of Buddhist *sutras* since the Eastern Han Dynasty, there would not have been the new Chinese culture of the Sui and T'ang Dynasties." [10] Another wrote, " Through the introduction of Buddhism, the fine arts of foreign countries, such as music, lyrics, dances and architecture, were introduced into China. Moreover, through the translations of the Buddhist *sutras*, the study of phonology was promoted in China. Finally, under the influence of Buddhism, the teachings and doctrines of Taoism became systematised." [11] There is also the following summary in a general history of China that is widely read. " With the gradual introduction of Buddhism into China, many new elements were added to Chinese culture. Buddhism itself was, of course, the most important of the innovations. But there were also many other elements whose development in China was either directly or indirectly connected with Buddhism. Such were the new elements in literature, language, thought, architecture, sculpture, painting and so forth." [12]

Turning to specific contributions, the Communist writers have gone to great lengths to point out the influence of Buddhism on Neo-Confucianism. Neo-Confucianism was the intellectual movement which arose in the latter stages of the T'ang Dynasty and reached full bloom during the Sung. It represented the Chinese protest against the Buddhist emphasis on other-worldliness and the illusoriness of all phenomena, and marked a return by Chinese thinkers to their own cultural heritage. The Chinese philosophers of the Sung Dynasty claimed that they could find in the Confucian classics a system of ethics and metaphysics that

[10] Fan Wen-lan, *Concise General History of China*, p. 722.
[11] Chien Po-tsan and others, *Chung-kuo Li-shih Kai-yao* (*Outlines of Chinese History*), (Peking: 1956), p. 24.
[12] Chou Ku-ch'eng, *Chung-kuo T'ung-shih* (*General History of China*), (Shanghai: 1959), p. 442.

could take the place of Buddhism. However, while they used terms found in the classics, it is safe to say that they interpreted those terms in the light of their understanding of Buddhism.

The biographies of the Neo-Confucians Chou Tun-i (1017–73), Ch'eng Hao (1032–85), Ch'eng Yi (1033–1107), Chang Tsai (1020–77), Chu Hsi (1130–1200), and Lu Hsiang-shan (1139–93) all indicate that they had contacts with Buddhist monks and were acquainted with Buddhism. Communist writers point out in great detail the influence which the Hua-yen concepts of *li* (ultimate principle or the absolute) and *shih* (phenomena or mundane things) exerted over the thinking of the Neo-Confucians.[13] The Hua-yen School in China was concerned with the fundamental problem of the relationship between the absolute and phenomena. It established two basic principles, that *li* or the absolute and *shih* or phenomena are perfectly interfused with each other, and that all phenomena are mutually related to each other. According to the first, everything in the phenomenal world is a manifestation of the absolute perfectly and completely. Translated into religious terms, it means that the Buddha-nature is in all of us. Since every phenomenon is a manifestation of the absolute, it follows that every phenomenon is related to every other phenomenon. The unity and universality of life are thus affirmed.

Communist writers acknowledge that the Ch'eng-Chu School of Neo-Confucianism was influenced by such Hua-yen ideas. The philosophy of the Ch'eng-Chu School often stressed that substance and function stem from the same source, and that there is no difference between the hidden and manifested. Such a statement means that events and things are but the embodiment of *li* or the totality of the spirit. The Ch'eng-Chu School also holds that all men and things have the Great Ultimate, a view similar to the Hua-yen contention that all is the one, the one is all.[14]

Communist writers point out that the Neo-Confucian School was also influenced by the writings of the Ch'an School. Hou Wai-lu, for

[13] Hou Wai-lu and others, *General History of Chinese Thought*, IV, 256 *et seq.*

[14] Jen Chi-yü, "A Preliminary Discussion of Hua-yen Thought," *Philosophical Studies*, No. 1, 1961. See also Hou, *Chinese Thought*, IV.259/262, where copious quotations from the Neo-Confucian philosophers are cited. Examples of such quotations are:

(a) "The myriad things are complete in me; not merely is this true of men but also of things." *Erh-ch'eng Yü-lu* (*Recorded Sayings of the Ch'eng Brothers*) 2.20b, Cheng-i-t'ang edition.

(b) "Things are *shih*. If one can exhaust the *li* that is in *shih*, then there is nothing that is not understood." *Ibid.* 9.1b.

(c) "By observing the *li* that is in *shih*, the *li* of the whole world can be obtained." *Ibid.* 15.9a.

(d) "The myriad things in their entirety is the Great Ultimate, but if we take them separately, then each thing shares in the Great Ultimate." *Chou Lien-hsi Chi*, 1.16a, Cheng-i-t'ang edition.

instance, wrote, " The Neo-Confucians of the Sung Dynasty were really in the same tradition of the Ch'an School of Buddhism. Not only did the Szechuan School of Su Shih and Su Che clearly take its model from Buddhism, but the orthodox wing of the Neo-Confucians, Ch'eng, Chu, Lu and Wang (Yang-ming) also trace their systems of thought to the different schools of Buddhism, especially the Ch'an School. . . . For example, Wang Kuan, who was once a disciple of the Neo-Confucians, but who later switched his allegiance, wrote on the basis of the secrets taught in the inner circles of Neo-Confucianism that the teachings of the Sung Confucians all trace their source to the Ch'an School." [15]

Specifically the system of subjective idealism worked out by Lu Hsian-shan was traced to the Ch'an and Vijñānavāda emphasis on mind or consciousness. The Vijñānavāda School of Mahāyāna Buddhism has as its fundamental tenet that all external phenomena are but representations of the mind. The phrase that Lu Hsiang-shan uses is, " The universe is my mind, my mind is the universe." This is similar to the Ch'an slogan, " Within my nature are the myriad things of the world, the myriad things are embraced in my nature." The conclusion drawn by Hou Wai-lu is that " Lu Hsiang-shan combined the thought of the Ch'an School with subjective idealism of Mencius and Tzu-szu of the Confucian School to form his system of philosophy." [16]

In literature, the contribution of Buddhism to the formation of the literary genre known as *pien-wen* or texts of marvellous events, is emphasised by the Communist writers.[17] The *pien-wen* consists originally of stories told by the Buddhist monks to the crowds who gathered at the temples during festival days. The nucleus of such stories was usually an episode taken from a Buddhist *sutra*, and retold in the vernacular in a greatly expanded and embellished style. In form, the *pien-wen* consisted of prose and poetry in the manner of the Buddhist *sutras*. In the beginning, the *pien-wen* was used for religious propaganda. But it soon became so popular that it was seized upon by non-Buddhist writers, wandering minstrels and ballad singers, who converted the religious themes to those of a popular nature, based on famous historical events or well-known heroes of the past. The *pien-wen* was thus transformed into popular literature, and as such played an important role in the rise of later literary genres such as the drama, novel, stories and prompting manuals used in the theatre.

The contributions to phonology which were discovered by such scholars as Ch'en Yin-ch'üeh and Lo Ch'ang-p'ei in pre-Communist

[15] Hou, *Chinese Thought*, IV.262–263.
[16] *Ibid.* 4.670.
[17] See Ch'iu-lo, " Pien-wen yü Chung-kuo Wen-hsueh," (" Pien-wen and Chinese Literature), *Modern Buddhism*, November 1958; Ch'ang Jen-hsia, *Tung-fang I-shu Ts'ung-t'an* (*Collected Remarks on Eastern Art*), (Shanghai: 1956), p. 99.

days are accepted by the Communist writers of the present. Professor Ch'en's article, entitled "Szu-sheng San-wen" ("Three Questions Concerning the Four Tones") was first published in the *Tsing-hua Journal*, September 1934. All the findings in the article are accepted in a short paper published by Chang Chien-mu, entitled, "Fo-chiao Tui-yü Chung-kuo Yin-yün-hsüeh Ti Ying-hsiang" ("Influence of Buddhism on Chinese Phonology"), *Modern Buddhism*, February 1957. It was Professor Ch'en's contention that the three tones in Chinese, *p'ing*, *shang* and *ch'ü*, were based on the pitch accent used by the Indians in reciting the Vedas, the *udatta*, *svarita*, and *anudatta*. Likewise, the studies of Lo Ch-ang-p'ei, who pointed out that the thirty *tzu-mu* or phonetic radicals were formulated by the Buddhist monk Shou-wen on the basis of his knowledge of the Sanskrit alphabet, are also accepted by present-day writers in Communist China.[18]

In art, the contributions of Buddhism to architecture, painting, music and sculpture are pointed out, but it is the contribution in sculpture that is most often stressed. This is understandable, for the works carved out of the earth and stone in Yun-kang, Lung-men, Tun-huang and Mai-chi-shan are present for all to see. The cave temples and sculpture in these centres are now considered to be national treasures by the Chinese Communists, and the Government undertakes to preserve and maintain them. In their discussions of such sculptural monuments, the Communist writers emphasise one point above all others, that this type of art was folk art, conceived and executed by the common people and as such must be considered as the glorious contributions of the common people to Chinese culture.[19]

Turning to science, one of the most fertile fields for the study of Buddhist contributions is medicine. Buddhism from its earliest days had stressed the health of the community of monks, and many passages in the scriptures refer to the medicine that the Buddha permitted his followers

[18] Lo Ch'ang-p'ei, "Indian Influence on the Study of Chinese Phonology," *Sino-Indian Studies*, March 1944.117–124.

[19] On the Buddhist contribution to sculpture, see the following articles: (a) Ch'ang Jen-hsia, "Yun-kang Shih-k'e I-shu" ("The Sculptural Art of Yun-kang"), *Modern Buddhism*, February 1958; (b) *Ibid.*, "Fo-chiao yü Chung-kuo Hui-hua" ("Buddhism and Chinese Painting"), *Modern Buddhism*, October 1958; (c) *Ibid.*, "Fo-chia yü Chung-kuo Tiao-k'e" ("Buddhism and Chinese Sculpture"), *Modern Buddhism*, December 1958; (d) *Ibid.*, "Mai-chi-shan ti Fo-chiao I-shu" ("Buddhist Art of Mai-chi-shan") *Modern Buddhism*, February 1957; (e) Chin Wei-no, "Sui T'ang Shih-tai ti tiao-su-chia" ("Sculptors of the Sui T'ang Period"), *Modern Buddhism*, January 1963; (f) T'ung-i and Tung Yü-hsiang, "Yun-kang Ti-wu-shih-ch'üeh ti Tsao-hsiang I-shu" ("The Sculptural Art of Cave 50 in Yun-kang"), *Modern Buddhism*, February 1963. As for the stress on folk art, here are some samples. "The special feature about the rock-cut images of Lung-men is that the artists were able to synthesise various forms of traditional art and create a new form of people's art." "The artistic products of the Sui T'ang Dynasties to an even greater extent manifested a superior people's style." *Modern Buddhism*, December 1958.

to use. The master himself called his teachings a therapy to cure the ills of the world, and in the Buddhist pantheon a prominent position is accorded the master of medicine, Bhaishajyaguru. Among the Buddhist monks who went to China, An Shih-kao (second century), Fo-t'u-teng (fourth century) and Buddhayásas (fifth century) were acknowledged masters in the Indian art of healing. Such contributions of the Buddhists in medicine have already been pointed out in the past.[20]

The Indian theory of the four great elements that compose the body, earth, water, fire and wind, and that good health results when these four elements are in proper equilibrium, was adopted by the Chinese. The most prominent of the T'ang physicians, Sun Szu-miao (601?–682), who was nicknamed by his contemporaries the "New Vimalakīrti" because of his interest in medicine, wrote a medical treatise entitled *Ch'ien Chin Yao Fang* (*Book of Prescriptions Worth a Thousand Gold*), in which he said that the Chinese should be well-versed in the medical lore of the Buddhists if they wished to understand the virtues of love, compassion and impartiality that a doctor must possess. Moreover, such surgical techniques as laparotomy or removal of the abdominal walls, and trepanation or surgery on the skull, were influenced by Indian methods. It was said of Fo-t'u-teng, for instance, that on certain days he would cut a hole in his abdomen, take out his entrails, wash them, and then put them back.

Further discussion of this contribution in medicine by a writer in Communist China is to be found in an article, "Yin-tu I-hsüeh tui-yü Chung-kuo I-hsüeh ti Ying-hsiang" ("The Influence of Indian Medicine on Chinese Medicine"), *Modern Buddhism*, June 1956, written by Lin Tzu-ch'ing. The writer first points a list of *sutras* dealing with medicine.[21] These are but a few of the translations of medical works which have survived and are preserved in the Chinese Tripitaka. Undoubtedly there must have been many others which have been lost. With so much medical knowledge introduced to the Chinese from India, the influence on Chinese medicine must have been considerable. One of the best indications of this is in the nature of the medical literature which appeared in China. Lin points out that in the bibliographical treatise of the *Sui Shu* (*History of Sui*) Chap. 13, there are a

[20] See the article on "Byo" in *Hōbōgirin*, 3.225–265, especially 257–265; Pierre Huard and Ming Wong, *La Médecine Chinoise au cours des Siècles*, (Paris: 1959), pp. 27–32; Ch'en Yin-ch'üeh, "Hua-t'o Chuan" ("Biography of Hua-t'o"), *Tsinghua Journal* June 1930.

[21] *Taishō*, No. 793, *Fo-i Ching* (*Sutra on Buddhist Healings*); *Taishō*, No. 219, *I-yü Ching* (*Medical Parables*); *Taishō*, No. 1330, *Lo-fu-nu Shuo Chiu-liao Hsiao-erh Chi-ping Ching* (*Sutra Spoken by Ravana on Healing Children's Ailments*); *Taishō*, No. 1325, *Liao-chih Ping Ching* (*Sutra on Healing Piles*); *Taishō*, No. 1691, *Chia-yeh Hsien-jen Shuo I-nü-jen Ching* (*Sutra Spoken by Kāśyapa on Treating Women*).

number of medical works whose titles reveal some connections with Buddhism.[22]

As for Indian physicians in China, there were two so well-known that they even attended the T'ang emperors. One was Na-lo-erh-p'o-sa, who arrived in 648 and was commissioned by T'ai-tsung to concoct some pills which would bring everlasting life. The other was Lu-chia-i-to, the trusted physician of Kao-tsung, who dispatched him to the four corners of the empire to search for longevity potions.

Indian treatment of eye ailments, such as the removal of cataracts, were followed by the Chinese. During the T'ang, a *Treatise on the Eye*, attributed to the bodhisattva Nāgārjuna, was very popular.[23] In various parts of China, Indian eye specialists were also practising their art of healing. For instance, the famous Buddhist monk Chien-chen was treated for an eye ailment in 748 in Chü-chiang, Kwangtung, by a foreign doctor. The poet Liu Yü-hsi (772–842) also consulted an Indian eye specialist for the removal of cataract, which the doctor performed with a golden comb.[24]

The contributions of Buddhist monks in astronomy and mathematics are mentioned by present-day writers under the Communist régime, but the subject is not given extended treatment.[25] In 1955 a special postal stamp was issued by the People's Republic to commemorate the astronomical and mathematical contributions of the famous monk I-hsing (682–727). This monk charted the stars in the southern skies during an expedition which he led to the southern seas and which went as far as the southern tip of Sumatra. He also determined the latitudes in China by setting up nine stations, the northernmost one in Shansi and the southernmost in Indo-China, and measuring the shadows cast

22 (a) *Lung-shu P'u-sa Yao-fang*, 4 ch. (*Nāgārjuna's Book of Prescriptions*); (b) *Hsi-yü Chu-hsien So-shuo Yao-fang*, 23 ch. (*Prescriptions Prescribed by Various Immortals from the Western Regions*); (c) *Hsi-yü P'o-lo-hsien-jen-fang*, 3 ch. (*Prescriptions of Brahman Immortals from the Western Regions*); (d) *Hsi-yü Ming-i So-chi Yao-fang*, 4 ch. (*Prescriptions Collected by Famous Doctors of the Western Regions*); (e) *P'o-lo-men Chu-hsien Yao-fang*, 20 ch. (*Prescriptions of Brahman Immortals*); (f) *P'o-lo-men Yao-fang*, 5 ch. (*Brahman Prescriptions*).

23 One line in a poem of Po Chü-i referred to this work. "On the table the pages of *Nāgārjuna's Treatise* is scattered about."

24 This treatment is mentioned in a poem by Liu presented to the Indian doctor, now found in *Ch'uan T'ang-shih*, ch. 13.

> "My two eyes have become blind early,
> Although I am middle-aged, I am like an old man.
> I look at vermilion and it resembles green.
> I am afraid of the sun and cannot stand the wind.
> You, my master, know the method of the golden comb.
> Can you help me see again?"

The method of using the golden comb for cataracts is described in the *Ta-pan Nieh-p'an Ching*, ch. 8 (*Mahāparinirvānasūtra*), *Taishō*, 12.411c, 652c; and *Ta-jih Ching Su*, ch. 9 (*Commentary on the Mahāvairocanasūtra*), *Taishō*, 39.699c. See also *Hōbōgirin* 3.261 for illustrations of the golden comb.

25 Chao Pu-chu, *Buddhism in China*, (Peking: 1957), p. 30.

by a standard eight-foot gnomon simultaneously during the summer and winter solstice. In the T'ang court there were three clans of Indian calendrical experts, Kāśyapa, Kumāra and Gautama, who helped the Chinese determine the positions of the heavenly bodies and prepare the calendar used by the dynasty.

Finally, the contributions of Buddhism in the practice of magic and on tales of magic are acknowledged and form the subject of an interesting article by Fu T'ien-cheng, "Fo-chiao tui Chung-ko Huan-shu ti Ying-hsiang Ch'u-t'an" ("A Preliminary Investigation of the Buddhist Contribution to Magic in China"), *Modern Buddhism*, May 1961. In this article, the writer points out various feats of Indian magic copied and repeated by the Chinese. Such feats include the following: restoration of a severed tongue, restoration of a piece of cloth cut in twain, spitting fire and burning objects without destroying them. In the biography of Kumārajīva in *Chin Shu* (*History of the Chin Dynasty*), Chap. 95, is a description of the magician swallowing needles. This became a popular feat of magic in China, where some more sophisticated touches were added. For instance, the magician after swallowing the needles would then swallow some thread, and then pull out the thread from his mouth with all the needles strung on it.

As for the tales of magic, one of the best known is the *E-lung Shu-sheng* (*The Goose Cage and the Student*), which Lu Hsün declared was based on a Buddhist source.[26] According to this tale, a certain Hsü Yen was walking along a road carrying a cage with some geese in it when he met a student who complained of sore feet and asked to be carried in the cage. Hsü put him in the cage together with the geese. The student did not shrink nor did the cage expand, but student and geese remained comfortably within the cage. After a while, the student got out of the cage and spit forth from his mouth some wine cups, wine and a feast. He and Hsü enjoyed the feast together. The student then spit out a girl, and the girl in turn spit out a boy. From the boy's mouth came forth another girl. In the end every one returned to the mouth of the spitter, and the utensils also returned to the mouth of the student.[27]

In China such magic acts and tales of magic were usually presented before crowds gathered at the temple fairs. According to Fu, this

[26] Lu Hsün, *Chung-kuo Hsiao-shuo Shih-lüeh* (*Short History of Chinese Fiction*) (Hong Kong: 1958), pp. 32–34.

[27] The Buddhist source of this story is the *Chiu-tsa Pi-yü Ching* (*The Old Book of Miscellaneous Parables*), *Taishō*, 4.514a, translated by K'ang Seng-hui in the third century, where we read that a religious student spit out a jar, and in the jar was a girl. While the student went to sleep, the girl then spit out a jar which contained a boy. After sleeping with the youth, the girl then swallowed the jar with the boy. The student then awoke, put the girl back into the jar and swallowed it.

feature endowed the acts and the tales with a collectivist nature and transformed them into sources of entertainment for the masses.[28]

From this review of the Communist attitude towards the cultural contributions of Chinese Buddhism, it is clear that the Communist writers have not differed much from the conclusions arrived at by writers of the pre-Communist era. To a certain extent, this was a disappointment to the author, for he had hoped that they, with their different viewpoints and methodology, would have attacked the problem in their own manner and come forth with some different assessment of such contributions. However, it may be that the position they have taken on such contributions is the only tenable one. The contributions and influence of Buddhism on Chinese culture are historical facts and are imbedded so firmly in the fabric of Chinese life that they are not susceptible of being interpreted differently.

Let us now summarise what we have discussed at some length. The Communists contend that they permit freedom of religious belief in China, and that Buddhism is permitted to function if it stays within the limitations imposed by the state. In their assessment of Buddhist contributions to Chinese culture, the writers under the Communist régime are essentially in agreement with the conclusions of those in the pre-Communist era. It is in their interpretations of the historical development of Buddhism and their evaluation of the Chinese Buddhist schools that we see the Communist historians differing from their non-Communist counterparts. Given the Buddhist insistence on idealism and the harmonious identification of all dualisms, and given the Communist insistence on materialism and on contradictions in society as the supreme law, the strong and caustic attacks against the important Buddhist schools in China should come as no surprise. What is interesting is that the leaders of the Chinese Buddhist Association have apparently chosen to ignore these attacks, for so far no reaction to the critical remarks of Jen Chi-yü has yet to appear in the official organ of the association, *Modern Buddhism*.

[28] *Modern Buddhism*, May 1961. A graphic description of such mass entertainment is given in the *Lo-yang Chia-lan Chi* (*Description of the Monasteries in Lo-yang*), ch. 1, *Taishō*, 51.1003b, "Musicians were assembled to demonstrate their art within the temple, while rare birds and strange beasts danced within the courtyard. Acrobatic stunts, deceiving magical acts, and strange skilful feats such as had never been seen previously by people, were assembled and performed before the crowds. Some magicians skinned a donkey in a moment, others dug a well and drew water. Some made dates and melons grow on the spot and became eatable instantly. Such sights were indeed amazing and bewildering to the spectators."