



Mung Duong Thanh

**Mung Duong Thanh¹, Long Doan Trieu²,
Dung Nguyen Viet³**

^{1,2} The Academy of Politics Region III – Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics,

³ The Institute of Economics – Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, 173 Xuan

^{1,2} 232 Nguyen Cong Tru St., Son Tra Dist, Danang City, Vietnam

³ Thuy St., Cau Giay Dist, Hanoi City, Vietnam

¹ thanhmung88@gmail.com; ² trieulong1503@gmail.com; ³ dungnv.hcma@gmail.com

Buddhist Revival: The Rebirth of Buddhism in Some Asian Countries from the Second Half of the 19th Century to the First Half of the 20th Century



Long Doan Trieu

Abstract. The article focuses on analyzing the process of Buddhist revival in Sri Lanka, India, China and Japan from the second half of the 19th century to the first half of the 20th century. Research results show that, from the second half of the 19th century, Buddhism in Asian countries found itself confronted by many difficulties. The main reasons include: colonial invasion by Western capitalist countries; the expansion of many new religions in Asia; the deterioration of morality of monks; the Buddhist Sangha is fragmented and unorganized; lack of training for monks and nuns. Besides the dark colors of the picture, new rays of light have appeared and given Buddhism new hope. The interest and appreciation of Western scholars for Buddhism offered huge encouragement and motivation. The accompanied East – West cultural exchange and acculturation has promptly supplemented Buddhism with progressiveness and modernness. Since then, a Buddhist revival and reform movement has been launched by Buddhist, scholars and people who love Buddhism. The movement started in Sri Lanka, then quickly spread to India, China, Japan and many other Asian countries. This study contributes to clarifying the process of Buddhist revival in Sri Lanka, India, China, Japan as well as the revival of Buddhism in Asia from the second half of the 19th century to the first half of the 20th century.

Key words: Asia, Buddhism, China, India, Japan, Sri Lanka, revival



Dung Nguyen Viet

**Мунг Зыонг Тхань¹, Лонг Доан Триеу²,
Зунг Нгуен Вьет³**

^{1,2} Академия политики

³ Национальная политическая академия имени Хо Ши Мина;

^{1,2} Вьетнам, г. Дананг, р-н Сон Тра, ул. Нгуен Конг Тру, 232

³ Вьетнам, г. Ханой, окр. Кау Гяй, ул. Нгуен Фонг Сак, 135

¹ thanhmung88@gmail.com; ² trieulong1503@gmail.com; ³ dungnv.hcma@gmail.com

Буддийский ренессанс: Возрождение буддизма в некоторых странах Азии во второй половине XIX – первой половине XX вв.

Аннотация. Авторы анализируют процесс возрождения буддизма в Шри-Ланке, Индии, Китае и Японии со второй половины XIX века по первую половину XX века. Результаты исследований показывают, что со второй половины XIX века буддизм в азиатских странах столкнулся со многими трудностями. К основным из них относятся: колониальное вторжение западных капиталистических стран; распространение множества новых религий в Азии; падение нравственности монахов; раздробленность и неорганизованность буддийской сангхи; недостаточная подготовка монахов и монахинь. Однако интерес западных учёных к буддизму оказал на него ободряющее и мотивирующее воздействие. Культурный обмен между Востоком и Западом быстро придал буддизму прогрессивность и современность. С тех пор буддисты, учёные и просто люди, которые сочувствуют буддизму, начали движение за его возрождение и реформирование. Это движение началось на Шри-Ланке, затем быстро распространилось на Индию, Китай, Японию и многие другие азиатские страны. Данная статья способствует прояснению этапов возрождения буддизма на Шри-Ланке, в Индии, Китае, Японии во второй половине XIX – первой половине XX веков.

Ключевые слова: Азия, буддизм, Китай, Индия, Япония, Шри-Ланка, возрождение

1. Factors affecting the formation of the Buddhist revival movement in Asian countries

The first factor affecting the formation of the Buddhist revival movement in Asian countries was the invasion of Western countries. The colonial rule broke the traditional social structure of the East and replaced it with a new one characteristic of a colonialism – feudalism model. It was this combination that caused huge conflicts in terms of culture, ethnicity and customs. Many new cultural values were quickly shaped and developed while there were ones facing the risk of being lost. Despite the harsh rule, national pride persisted and was on the rise in many Asian countries. As a natural instinct of survival, the reaction of the populace in the colonial countries through the struggles for independence broke out and was followed by movements for reform, conservation, and promotion of cultural values.

As a religion with a long-standing history in Asia, the emergence of Western capitalism in the region posed new challenges to Buddhism. Firstly, the harsh policies of colonial governments aggravated the crisis of Buddhism. Therefore, it required Buddhism to reform to adapt to the general changes of the social context. Secondly, the emergence of Western cultural values and civilization also created new opportunities for Buddhism. This includes the approaching and experimentation with other religions such as Catholicism, Protestantism, theories from the philosophical movement of Light to enrich the system of doctrine, ideology as well as to finalize its organizational structure. And also, from this process, monks and Buddhists realized that it was not beyond the bounds of possibility to transform Buddhism in order to make it more adaptive [Le Tam Dac, 2012, 12].

Another factor was the interest and appreciation of the Buddhist doctrine and ideology of Western scholars. These scholars had studied Buddhism from an early stage. However, a systematic and comprehensive approach to this religion started from the beginning of the 19th century. According to Nyanaponika Mahathera¹, in the early stage, European-American scholars often focused on studying Buddhism through three main aspects. Specifically, British-German researchers investigate Buddhism through the Pali scripture system. French-Belgian researchers approached the Buddhist schools through Sanskrit texts, while Russian scholars focused on the study of Indian Buddhist thoughts. In the following stage, Buddhism became a religion with great influence on many communities in Europe. In addition to the title of an awakening religion, Western scholars also saw Buddhism as a complete philosophical system. This philosophical system not only objectively and scientifically explains the categories of worldview and human life, but it also provides the values of truth, goodness, and beauty for life. Therefore, there have been many Western researchers who have passionately studied Buddhism with all their enthusiasm and fervor.

For German scholars, the one who created an important turning point in the transformation of Buddhist studies from academia to practice was the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer. Arthur himself was not a Buddhist, but his writings exerted a profound influence on European thinkers and brought many people back to Buddhism. There are at least three great figures who came to Buddhism through his works. The first was a Belgian Indologist named Karl Eugen Neumann. He was the one who translated the Digha-Nikāya and Majjhima Nikāya into German. The next two researchers were Physicist George Grimm² and Doctor Paul Dahlke³. These two men were the pioneers in supporting the introduction of Buddhism to Germany in the early decades of the 20th century.

For the British intellectuals, the person who had significant contribution to a complete picture of the historical process of Buddhism for the Europeans was the linguist Thomas William Rhys Davids. In 1881, Thomas and his wife Caroline Augusta founded the Pali Text Society (London) to research, compile, and print Buddhist scriptures in Pali and English. By 1900, the Pali Text Society achievements included the publication of 42 sets of Pali scriptures and texts, with a total of more than 15.000 pages. The second figure is Edwin Arnold with the project “The Light of Asia”. In this work, Edwin described the Buddha as a hero with compassionate personality towards humanity and the critical thinking ability. Once published, his work had a strong impact on European intellectuals and attracted them into the study of Buddhism [Edwin Arnold, 1900, 3–6].

For the French intellectuals, the Orientalist Eugene Burnouf is considered a significant figure. Eugene painstakingly researched Pali and later Sanskrit and Zen sources. In 1844, he published the very famous work “Introduction à l’histoire du Bouddhisme Indien”. In addition to research, Eugene also translated and edited the Lotus Sutra, which was then published in 1852.

The representative of Belgian academic research was the Buddhist scholar Louis de la Vallée Poussin. He spent more than 30 years studying Buddhism, especially the Sarvāstivādin school of Theravada Buddhism. Poussin’s great work was the *Abhidharmakosa* by Vasubandhu, which he translated from Sanskrit into French in the years 1923–1931 [Thich Tri Chon, 2010, 59].

Along with their academic contribution, many Western researchers truly practiced Buddhism such as: Henry Steel Olcott (American, in 1880), Allan Bennett McGregor (British, in 1902, with dharma name Ananda Metteyya), Anton Gueh (German, in 1904 with dharma name Nyanatiloka), Siegmund Feniger (Germany, in 1936, with dharma name Nyanaponika Thera), etc.

It can be said that the process of studying Buddhism by Western scholars created a vibrant academic atmosphere, stimulated the interest of many different strata of society. The recognizing and appreciating the role of Buddhism not only helped this religion gain a certain respect in the views of Western colonial countries, but it also aroused great pride in Eastern Buddhists and Buddhism followers. This was one of the very important sources of motivation to urge monks, nuns, and Buddhists to start a revival movement of Buddhism.

The third factor driving the revival of Buddhism in Asian countries stems from the crisis and weakening of the religion itself. As in Sri Lanka, after arriving in Galle on May 15, 1880, H. Olcott found that the main obstacle to the revival of Buddhism in this country was due to the decadent state of the monks, nuns and Buddhists [Thich Tri Chon, 1972b, 32]. Or in China, the declining state of Buddhism was reflected by many contemporary scholars as: “The moral level of monks is very low” [H. Hackman, 1910, 256]; “Buddhism gradually became formal. The Sangha is no different from the Taoist, lazy and uneducated” [Helen Sanford, 1985, 384–385]; “Temples are filled with commercial atmosphere” [Wing-Tsit Chan, 1953, 116–118], etc. And in Japan, from the Edo period, Buddhism became an effective arm of the government. The attraction of political power and temptations from material life has made “monks increasingly alienated, become extravagant, depraved, turn away from the ideal of liberation, getting hatred anger of the intelligentsia and the general public” [Thich Tri Chon, 1971, 67–74]. In addition, after 1867, in order to unify the ideology in the country and to affirm the supreme leadership role, Emperor Meiji issued the decree “Shinbutsu Bunri Rei” that forced monks specializing in worship to return to the world, small temples to merge with large temples, etc. The decree of God-Buddha separation caused a lot of pressure on monks, nuns, and Buddhists. At the same time, it gradually diminished the Buddhism’s position in Japanese social life.

The fourth factor is the change in political, economic, cultural and social situation in Asian countries in the last decades of the 19th and early 20th centuries. While a stable feudal political institution created favorable conditions for Buddhism to grow in the past, the deprivation of independence and freedom in many countries led to the decline in the role and position of this religion. The colonial and semi-feudal social status with the ruling of Western colonial governments increased the difficulties in the activities of material and spiritual life (including the practice of faith). In addition, the rise of many new spiritual and religious phenomena was also an important factor. This included the Brahmanism and Hinduism in India, Shinto in Japan, Islam and Protestantism in Sri Lanka, etc. The emergence of these new spiritual and religious phenomena created competition as well as motivations to promote Buddhist revival and reform.

2. The revival and rebirth of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, India, China and Japan

2.1. In Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka was the first country to initiate the Buddhist revival movement. The formation of the revival movement in this country gave Buddhism a new direction of development as well as helped to promote such spirit in other Asian countries namely India, China, and Japan.

According to Ernst Benz, the reason behind the formation of the Buddhist revival movement in Sri Lanka stemmed from the need to resist the invasion of Western countries and the emergence of a number of new religions such as Catholicism and Protestantism. In 1853, after the annexation of Sri Lanka, the British colonialists made sure that the Sri Lankan government was no longer the official patron of Buddhism. Next, in 1856, the British continued to issue Decree No. 10 on "Protecting the land and property of temples". Accordingly, the land and property of the temples will be confiscated by the government due to having "no legal owner" [Thich Tri Chon, 1972a, 29]. With these moves, the British colonial government automatically became the protector of Buddhism. This also means that the position of Buddhism in Sri Lankan society will be pushed back, because the dominant religious belief that the British colonial government is pursuing was Christianity rather than Buddhism.

Despite under colonial rule, Sri Lankan Buddhism continued to be consolidated and nurtured through the roles of many monks, nuns and Buddhists. In 1839, Parivena Buddhist Academy was established in Ratmalan (southern Sri Lanka). Many famous figures of Sri Lankan Buddhism were trained in this school, such as the Venerable Hikkduwe Sri Sumagala⁴ and Pandit Ratmalane Sri Dharmaloka⁵. Along with education, the Sri Lankan Sangha also actively promotes dharma work through lectures or debates with other religions (primarily comparing the value of Buddhism with Protestantism and Catholic). Debates took place in 1866, 1871 and most notably in 1873, between the Venerable Migettvatla Hunananda and pastors such as David De Silva, F. Sirimanne (Protestant), etc. The debates increased the position of Buddhism as well as promoted the revival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka [Nandasena Mudiyanse, 1971, 445–446].

After reading the debates in the "Ceylon Times", Henry Steel Olcott went to Sri Lanka to meet Venerable Hunananda (1880). With his faith, Olcott and his wife, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky⁶, started to practice in the Three Jewels at the Wijananda Temple in Galle (1880) [Stephen Prothero, 1996, 13–19]. It was also after this event that Olcott and his wife actively mobilized monks, nuns and Buddhists to revive Buddhism. Being aware that, unlike Buddhism, Christians have the groups to spread the teachings of God, they established the Buddhist Theosophical Society in Colombo. Next, he established many Buddhist schools, drafted and published Buddhist scriptures; distributing medicine and charitable treatment to everyone. Olcott also persuaded British Governor Arthur Gordon to re-recognize Buddhist Vesak as one of the national holidays in Sri Lanka. The iridescent flag designed by Olcott in 1889 became a symbol of global Buddhist unification in 1950 [Quang Lien, 1953, 33–36].

The activities of Mr. and Mrs. H. Olcott impacted the minds of many monks, nuns, and Buddhists in Sri Lanka at that time, especially Anagarika Dharmapala (also known as David Hewavitarane). In 1886, Dharmapala officially joined the Buddhist Theosophical Society. Next, he founded the Maha Bodhi Society in Colombo (later moved to Calcutta, India) [Chatterji, Suniti Kumar, 1952, 37–40]; restored the tradition of Vipassana practice for lay people; founded the Sinhalese weekly Sandarasa and later co-founded The Buddhist Journal. In the process of reviving Buddhism, Dharmapala believed that the deterioration of moral and spiritual values in Sri Lanka stem from the "non-morality of the West" rather than from the weakening of Buddhism. Therefore, he always prayed for Buddhism to be revived in his homeland India, for Europeans to understand Buddhism and meditation to be restored in Sri Lanka [Thich Tri Chon, 1972a, 33–36].

The revival efforts of monks, nuns, Buddhists and the above-mentioned figures contributed to the Sri Lankan Buddhist revival [K. N. O. Dharmadasa, 1974, 159]. That the British colonialists returned independence to Sri Lanka in 1947 opened a new era for Buddhism in this country. In 1950, Sri Lanka was honored to be chosen as the venue for the World Buddhist Conference. At this conference, 26 participating countries agreed to establish the World Fellowship of Buddhists and elected Dr. Malalasekera (Sri Lankan) as the President. The principles and purposes of the Association include: To encourage members to practice the Buddha's teachings; tighten friendship, solidarity and unity among Buddhist countries; promote the work of propaganda; bring Buddhist activities into the social life, etc. On July 30, 1951, the Sri Lankan Buddhist delegation led by President Malalasekera had a meeting with Prime Minister Senanayake and requested to

establish a commission to investigate the Buddhism practice and carry out reforms aimed at restoring the national religion of Buddhism. Prime Minister Senanayake not only accepted the request but also emphasized that: “During the British colonial period, Buddhism suffered too much and today Buddhists have rights to wish that their faith would be restored to its former preeminent position in a newly independent Ceylon” [Thich Tri Chon, 1971, 67–70].

2.2. *In India*

According to Bhagwan Das, the process of Buddhist revival in India can be divided into two stages. The period from 1750 to 1891 is considered a prerequisite stage with main activities including the discovery and restoration of Buddhist holy sites. The period of development started from 1891 to 1950. This period was marked by the arrival of a Sri Lankan monk, Dharmapala [Bhagwan Das, 1998, 36–40].

In 1885, Edwin Arnold published many articles in the newspaper “London Telegraph” reflecting the decline of Bodh Gaya. This attracted the attention of many contemporary scholars, especially Dharmapala. In early 1891, Dharmapala visited Bodhgaya. After witnessing the ruins of pagodas and towers, the rolling down of Buddha statue, being imprinted with traces of devastation without care, he was determined to restore this saint room [Trevor Ling, 1980, 34–40]. In his diary he wrote: “After having breakfast, I went with Kozen, Durga and Dr. Chatterjee to Bodhgaya. Scattered outside the temple were old, damaged Buddha statues. What a thrill! Inside the temple was a large Buddha statue, His solemnity seemed to spread around, making the hearts of devotees sobbing. As soon as I touched the statue, a strange feeling took over my soul. I felt I had to stop here to take care of this sacred place [Bhagwan Das, 1998, 36–40]”.

In May 1891, Dharmapala moved the Maha Bodhi Society headquarters from Colombo to Calcutta with the view to restoring the Buddhist relics at Gaya, Sarnath and Kushinara as well as promoting revival activities here. On May 31, 1891, with the support of Venerable Hikkaduwe, Dharmapala held a public meeting, calling Indian monks, nuns and Buddhists to support the establishment of the Maha Bodhi Society. At the same time, he also mobilized an international movement to reclaim the Temple of Great Enlightenment (Caitya Maha Bodhi) from the Hindus. On October 31, 1891, a large-scale Buddhist congress was held at Bodh Gaya and attracted the participation of many countries such as China, Japan, Sri Lanka and Thailand, etc. In addition to discussing the plan to restore Bodh Gaya, the congress also officially launched a movement to revive Buddhism worldwide [Thich Tri Chon, 1971, 67–74]. Thanks to the efforts of the Maha Bodhi Association, many Buddhist holy sites such as Lumbini (where Buddha was born), Sarnath (where Buddha turned the wheel of Dharma), and Kushinagara (where Buddha passed away) were restored.

In May 1892, the Maha Bodhi Society made a turning point by publishing the journal “The Maha Bodhi and United Buddhist World”. This is the first time in the history of Buddhism that a periodical journal had been published in Western languages (English) to disseminate the Buddha’s teachings to all devotees and it was also the first journal that support the Buddhist revival movement globally [Kahawatte Siri Sumedha Thero, 2006, 132].

In 1900, the Association established two branches in Madras, Kushinagara (India) and one branch in Anuradhapura (Sri Lanka). Dharmapala and his associates have constantly made efforts to promote the influence of this organization. The most important goal was still to receive recognition from the British colonial government for the revival of Buddhism in the Indian homeland. Speaking at Maha Bodhi headquarters, Dharmapala emphasized that: “Many Europeans are currently working to revive Buddhism. Brothers, we as Indians, as the homeland of Buddha, we must do more than what Europeans are offering to the Buddhist revival. It is not a strange irony that we will have to look to the West where traditional cultural values are always respected to pray for Buddhist philosophy to be revived. We are indebted to the British Government for various help. However, the greatest request and gratitude now is to honor and disseminate the ancient religious and philosophical values that archaeologists have discovered and especially those related to Buddhism” [Dharmapala, 1909b, 88–100].

By 1915, the Maha Bodhi Society was recognized as legal by the British colonial government. The Association’s activities had achieved many remarkable results: many

members had applied to join; restoration activities, construction of pagodas and Buddhist meditation centers attract the participation of many different sectors of society; many programs had been organised to translate Buddhist scriptures into languages such as Hindu, Taxil, Telugu and many others [Dharmapala, 1909a, 33–37]. In addition, the Association regularly organised sermons in cities in India, as well as actively called for the elimination of caste discrimination, and encouraged charity activities. In 1922, the Association expanded its branches to Bombay, New Delhi, and Lucknow and built Buddhist research centers and libraries.

In 1947, India gained independence, opening a new period for the development of Buddhism. In 1949, the Indian government headed by President Rajendra Prasad issued a decree recognizing Bodh Gaya as a place of pilgrimage and a center of Buddhist study. In 1952, the British Museum returned the Buddha's relics to the Maha Bodhi Society. Buddha relics are one of the extremely sacred and noble items for Buddhists. Therefore, when returned to India, the Buddha's relics were paraded nationwide and welcomed by people everywhere with all respect. "No hero who fought for freedom and liberated India from British colonial rule was worshiped like that. The relics were brought to the altar in Shanchi where they were formerly kept. Here, in the presence of the Prime Minister of India, the relics were placed in a new stupa built by the Maha Bodhi Society" [Thich Tri Chon, 1971, 73].

2.3. In China

From the first centuries of the C.E., Buddhism entered China and quickly spread deeply into people's lives. Along with Confucianism and Taoism, Buddhism provided the ideological foundation for Chinese feudal dynasties for many centuries. However, from the end of the Manchu period, the crisis of feudalism led to the decline of Buddhism. Faced with such a situation, from 1908, Dharmapala wrote an invitation to Yang Renshan to join in the revival of Buddhism⁷. In 1909, Yang Renshan founded the "Society for Inscripting Sutras" in Jinling, followed by the Buddhist Study Society in Nanjing. The goal of these organizations is to translate Buddhist scriptures, research and clarify Buddhist teachings and ideas through Chinese, English and Pali sources. The two organizations were disbanded after 2 years due to lack of funding [Hua Master, 1987, 1–4]. In 1910, the shaman Guang Jing mobilized monks, nuns, and Buddhists to revive Buddhism, focusing on 5 points: (1) Promoting the Buddha's spirit of compassion and suffering; (2) Reduce worship rituals to make money from monks, nuns and Buddhists; (3) Implementing educational and training activities; (4) Actively adapting to the society; (5) Actively joining the engagement [Guang Jing, 1938, 31–35]. Compared to Yang Renshan, Guang Jing's program outlined measures to improve the status of Buddhism. However, because of its large scale and lack of a specific plan for implementation, the program failed.

The man who made the revival of Chinese Buddhism successful was Grand Master Taixu⁸. He made great contributions in correcting the practice methods of the monks; uniting monks, nuns, and Buddhists into a unified organization; protecting the property of temples and reforming Buddhist education towards modernity. According to him, it was necessary to reform the Sangha so that there were people who could maintain the Dharma; it was necessary to unite monks, nuns, and Buddhists to spread Buddhist teachings into social life. Monks, nuns and Buddhists could not only think about personal liberation but need to enlighten the masses and serve humanity [Vietnam Association of Buddhist Studies, 1952a, 3].

In 1911, Taixu called for monks, nuns and Buddhists to establish a Buddhist Education Association in Jiangsu. Immediately after its inception, this organization actively mobilized financial resources to establish schools such as: Tu Van Primary School in Dinghai, Monk Primary School in Wuhan... In 1912, Venerable Jichan and Gengshan reformed this organization into the "Chinese Buddhist General Association", headquartered in Shanghai. And in Nanjing, Taixu and Yang Renshan founded "Association for the Advancement of Buddhism Chinese". The purpose of this organization was to amend the method of property management in temples and unify all Buddhist followers in the country. However, due to opposition from many contemporary scholars and intellectuals, the Progressive Buddhist Association was forced to disband. In 1913, Venerable Daojie and Haicheng founded the "Buddhist Congregation" in Beijing to unite monks and lay

people to participate in the revival of Buddhism. This organization was also forced to stop working not long after because of the reform policies of the Chinese intellectual class [Taixu, 1957a, 51–55].

In 1915, a group of Chinese intellectuals strongly influenced by Western culture and civilization such as: Hu Shih, Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao, <...> launched a movement of reforming and building a new life. This movement aimed at propagating science, democracy and human rights; opposing tyranny, superstition, and backward rituals. On September 15, 1915, Chen Duxiu published Youth Magazine in Shanghai (in 1916 renamed New Youth). This newspaper published many articles reflecting the limitations of Chinese monks and at the same time called for the confiscation of temple assets, etc. The articles of New Youth magazine had a strong impact on the monks as well as the Chinese intellectual community. The consequence was that it created a strong division within the monks, nuns, and Buddhists participating in the revival of Buddhism

In response to this problem, Master Taixu issued the set of “On the Reform of the Sangha System”, in order to affirm the position of monks and at the same time as well as call on Chinese Buddhists to take education as the basic element for the process of Buddhist revival. Based on Sun Yat-sen’s “Three People’s Principles” [Do Cong Dinh, 1999, 34–38] (Sanmin Zhuyi), Taixu proposed the Trikaya doctrine. The purpose was to reform Buddhism, eliminate illiteracy, and train monks and nuns to become true Buddhists; widely promote Buddhist teachings and build a nation imbued with Buddhist thought.

In 1918, after surveying Buddhism in Taiwan and Japan, Taixu and Chen Yuanbai, Huang Baocang and Jiang Zuobin established the “Awakening Society” in Shanghai and published “Jue she Series”. In 1920, the newspaper changed its name to “Hai Chao Yin” (Sound of the Sea Tide) with the meaning of “awakening voice in the midst of human thought movement”. At this point, the newspaper was published more regularly (one issue each month) and with Taixu himself as Editor-in-Chief. Assessing the position and role of this newspaper, Li Shuyou commented that: “Hai Chao Yin is the longest-running Buddhist newspaper in the history of Chinese Buddhism. It has been certainly playing an important role in promoting the growth of Buddhism in the country” [Li Shuyou, 1995, 32–40]. Not only popular in China, this newspaper also had a great influence on the Buddhist revival movement in many countries within and outside Asia.

In 1919, Taixu founded the “Buddhist Right Faith Society” in Hunan. Explaining the establishment of this organization, Grandmaster Taixu wrote that: “Currently in China, there are many people who want to practice Buddhism, which necessitates the establishment of an organization for Buddhists and then expand it from within the country to many other countries. Thus, the cause of spreading Buddhism would be served” [Taixu, 2001, 180–206]. In 1921, Taixu established “Jinling Buddhist Academy” in Nanjing and “Minnan Buddhist Academy” in Xiamen. In 1922, Taixu founded the “Fa t’sang Buddhist School”. This was a preparatory school to prepare the necessary conditions for monks, nuns, and Buddhists to study and research scriptures in Tibet and India. In 1923, Taixu and Li Kaixian founded a Wuchang Buddhist Academy in Wuchang. This Buddhist academy was among the largest of its kind in China at that time. In 1925, Master Thai Hu convened the World Buddhist Union Conference at Dai Lam Pagoda, Lo Son, with the participation of many Buddhist countries in both Asia and Europe [Ritzinger, Justin R, 1999, 57–65]. The conference approved many issues, of which, the most important was promoting the spirit of harmony among monks, nuns and Buddhists in many countries to promote the process of unification of Buddhism at the international level.

In 1928, Tai Shuangqiu initiated the Movement “Temple Property and School reform Movements” with main ideas as: “Overthrow feudal lords, disband monks, evenly distribute temple assets, and restore national education” [Taixu, 2001, 180–206]. The movement had a strong impact on the Chinese authorities. Also, in this year, the Republic of China government promulgated the “Temple Management Regulations” to re-investigate the properties of the temples nationwide. This was followed by the law “Monitoring the order of temples” to review the existence conditions of worship facilities. Pagodas that met the conditions of landscape, worship space, and architecture would be allowed to exist and others would be forced to be dismantled. The above policies exposed Chinese Buddhism to new challenges [Atsushi Ibuki, 2019, 263–287].

It should be noted that the time the government of the Republic of China promulgated the above policies was also the time when the Buddhist revival movement was at its peak. According to statistics, by 1928, many Buddhist organizations and schools were established in the provinces such as: Gushan Buddhist Academy in Fuzhou; Jiangnan Buddhist Academy in Jiuhuashan; Nianhua Buddhist Academy in Beijing, Yingjiang Buddhist Academy in Anqing [Taixu, 1957b, 76–79]...

The time for the unification of Chinese Buddhism had truly come. This important event took place in 1929 with the establishment of the “Buddhist Society of China” (1929) by Master Taixu. This organization was headquartered in Nanjing with the main goals of: “Widely disseminating Buddhist teachings; promote training of monks and nuns and charity activities; preserve Buddhist relics; Build libraries and centers as places to research and study Buddhism” [Buddhist Association of Tonkin Ancient Mountain Gate, 1936, 6–8].

After completing the goal of reviving Buddhism in the country, Thai Hu went to many countries such as Germany, France, England, America, Japan, Vietnam, <...> to campaign for the unification of Buddhism worldwide [Vietnam Association of Buddhist Studies, 1952b, 4–8]. Recognizing his contributions to the revival of Buddhism, Venerable Tri Quang wrote: “Master Taixu is a historical figure of the global Buddhism, the one who outlined a great new phase. It was the Master who initiated and directed the new movement of pre-modern and modern Buddhism. The Master’s thought and action influenced all Buddhist followers in the world, especially Europe and America. Master Taixu may never think and know that his writings and actions could extend beyond the borders of China and spill over into all classes of monks around the world” [Thich Tri Quang, 2009, 256].

2.4. In Japan

Since the victory of the Meiji Emperor in the Boshin War (1868–1869), signs of weakness in Japanese Buddhism began to appear in many aspects. The main reason was that Buddhism lost support from the Shogunate government – a regime that had manipulated the Emperor’s court for many centuries. Being the main political ideology of the old regime, Buddhism no longer received support from the Emperor [Lam Nhu Tang, 1997, 32]. To consolidate power, the Meiji Emperor used Shinto ideology to rule the country, and established social management principles based on this religion’s views [Richard Bowring, Peter Kornicki, 1995, 87]. Japanese Buddhism during the Meiji period really encountered many difficulties. First in 1867, Meiji issued the “Osei Fukko” edict to abolish the remnants of the old political regime and establishing a new government with key members from the faction opposed to the Shogunate. In March 1868, the imperial court issued the order “Shinbutsu Bunri Rei”. The goal was to separate Shinto from Buddhism. In 1870, the Japanese government continued to issue the “Taikyo Senbu” decree⁹. In addition, the government established a Ministry of Religion (Kyobusho). In addition, since 1871, the daily lives of monks, nuns, and Buddhists were forcibly renounced by the Meiji government and many small temples were merged into one large temple. All of the above-mentioned policies aimed to gradually eliminate the influence of Buddhism in social life, affirm the dominant position of Shinto and sanctify the supreme role of Meiji. Meiji policies created a nationwide anti-Buddhist whirlwind, and the movement to abolish temples (Haibutsu Kishaku) spread throughout Japan.

Faced with that difficult situation, Japanese monks, nuns and Buddhists realized that it was necessary to conduct a campaign for Buddhist reform with the basic purposes of: (1) Maintain the moral purity of the monks; (2) Strengthen education to build a team of monks, nuns, and Buddhists with knowledge and capacity to spread Buddhism; (3) Promote connectivity and cooperation among Buddhist sects in the country; (4) Promote the role of Buddhism in building the country; (5) Build a spirit of harmony between religions [Richard Bowring, Peter Kornicki, 1995, 87]. On that basis, since 1868, the Japanese Buddhist sects united into organizations such as: Alliance of United Sects for Ethical Standards (Shoshu Dotoku Kaimei, 1868), Sectarian Ethics Council (Shoshu Dotoku, 1868) to make recommendations to the government. The movement of monks, nuns and Buddhists pioneered by monks such as Taigu Sochiku, Gudo Toshoku of the Rinzaï sect, and Eishu of the Soto sect, gradually forced the Meiji government to adjust its policies.

Firstly, in 1870, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Japan established the temple office opened within the Civil Ministry (Minbusho Ji'inryo) to unify the management of pagodas. Then, in 1872, under the guidance of the Ministry of Religion, Shinto and Buddhist officials collectively called "Kyodoshoku" (similar to State Missionaries) were appointed to implement an educational program based on three basic principles: "Respect for God, Patriotism and Respect for King". In addition, the government also set up the position of "Kanchō" to control the monks in each sect. In order to train "Kyodoshoku", religions required the state to set up a school system. Therefore, at the central level, there were "Great Teaching Institutes" (Daikyoin). At the local level, there were "Intermediate Teaching Institutes" (Chukyoin). In Shinto temples and shrines, there were a "Small Teaching Institute" (Shokyoin). However, the activities of these educational institutions must be based on Shinto thought. Therefore, many monks, nuns and Buddhists expressed dissatisfaction.

In 1875, the Ministry of Religion was abolished, and the sects had to train their own Kyodoshoku. Regarding the Buddhism, there were many established academies such as Hannyarin (now Hanazono University in Kyoto), Senmon Hongakko (now Komazawa University in Tokyo) in this period. Through these educational institutions, Japanese Buddhism gradually solved the urgent need of training monks with enough talent to continue to shoulder the responsibility of reviving Buddhism.

In 1884, when the role of Kyodoshoku was abolished, the Kanchos were entrusted with the responsibility: (1) Supervise the implementation of precepts at religious establishments; (2) Dividing the hierarchy for monks, nuns and Buddhists; (3) Appoint or abolish the position of abbot; (4) Select qualified missionaries; (5) Establish principles for property management in temples [Giac Dung, 2002, 265–266]. Then, in 1889, Emperor Meiji promulgated a constitution, whose article 28 stipulated that "Japanese citizens have the freedom of religion" [Sueki Fumihiko, 2011, 238]. After this event, many living facilities and temples of Japanese Buddhist sects were re-established. To adapt to new changes, Japanese Buddhist sects promoted the unification of doctrines, rituals, and practice methods. Specifically, the Buddhist sects agreed to publish "Standard Rites of the Soto Tradition" (Tojo Gyoji Kihan, 1889) to regulate ordination, spiritual practice and obligations such as prohibiting bizarre worship rituals and burning votive papers, etc.

On January 17, 1889, Henry Steele Olcott and Noguchi went to Kobe, Japan. Here, he was invited to participate in 76 lectures in 33 towns. Along with the lectures, on February 19, 1889, Olcott invited representatives of 12 Japanese Buddhist sects to Chion-in (Kyoto) to meet and discuss the national unification method. As a result, 12 sects agreed to establish the General Association of Japanese Buddhism. In a speech at Adyar in 1890, Tokusawa assessed Olcott's merits as: "Colonel Olcott's success has exceeded our expectations. Buddhism was revived and faith was alive in the hearts of Buddhists everywhere. Concrete evidence is the reincarnation of 3 Buddhist Universities and many Bodhi High Schools. In addition, there are 300 magazines being circulated to protect the Dharma... All of these changes are due to the Colonel's influence. The Colonel's mission will be recorded in history and the Japanese people will forever be grateful" [Nguon Har, 1965, 22–28].

In 1890, a set of standards for the evangelization of monks called "Soto Kyokai Shushogi" (Rules of Salvation and Enlightenment of the Soto Sect of Zen) was established. The Soto Kyokai Shushogi presented the rules whose main foundation was Dogen Zenji's "Shobogenzo" (Treasury of the True Dharma Eye), which is still widely applied today in Buddhist activities in Japan. Soto Kyokai Shushogi set out four conditions for monks: Repent and eliminate sins, take the precepts, vow to benefit and practice gratitude.

Turning to the 20th century, the Buddhist revival movement in Japan flourished. Many monks and nuns studied abroad in Western countries such as: Suzuki Daisetsu, Omori Zenkai, Nukariya Kaiten, <...> bringing back new academic methods and progressive perspectives for the Buddhist revival. They involved researching and studying religious teachings (from primitive to modern) based on scientific advance; reforming education and directing Buddhist activities into secular life. For "those who just sit in the mountain to practice and wait for sentient beings will be eliminated by the law of social development" [Thanh Nghiem, Tinh Hai, 2008, 632]. These new perspectives gave Japanese Buddhist monks and nuns a profound and active incarnation movement.

The process of cultural exchange and acculturation between the East and West in the early years of the 20th century gave Japanese Buddhism. Under the influence of modern culture and civilization, many new Buddhism sects were born. The general principle of existence of the sects in this period was to attach importance to the organization and development of community activities, especially to uphold the spirit of solidarity among monks, nuns and Buddhists. The formation of a variety of sects led to the establishment of many newspapers such as: Buddhist Studies, Mahayana Zen, Buddhist World... Research institutes, specialized universities of Buddhist sects were established such as: Taisho University of the Pure Land sect; Koyasan University of the Shingon sect; Rissho University of Nhat Lien sect, etc...

Besides, in response to the expansion in scale of monk training activities, many Buddhist scriptures have been translated and published such as: Dai Nihon Kotei Zokyo, Dainippon Zokuzokyo, Dai Nihon Bukkyo Zensho, Nihon dai Zokyo, etc... The revival of Buddhism in Japan also spawned many famous monks such as: Imakita Kosen, Yuri Giboku, Shaku Soyen... With the achievements from this revival, in 1915, Japanese Buddhist sects decided to unite to form the Buddhist Union, and at the same time, passed a resolution on the structure and functions of the Association and established a new management method nationwide.

Commenting on the success of Buddhist revival movement in Japan, Taixu wrote: "Japanese Buddhism flourished because of predestined cultivation 30 years ago. Currently, Japanese Buddhism has established 6 universities and many colleges. All sects are organized according to a fairly strict standard and are accompanied by the establishment of agencies to manage. In addition, they also set up many medical facilities and do a lot of charity work" [Taixu, 1957c, 42–46]. According to Tomomatsu: "In Japan in the 1930s, there were about 50,000 temples and 70,000 monks. There are about 3,000 high schools and 6 universities in the country. Each school has a major in Buddhism. Most monks practice according to the Pure Land (Jodo) method. Monks, nuns, and Buddhists who practice Buddhism only choose the quintessence of this religion, not all of it. As for the domestic monastic regime, each temple has a precept management board, clear records, and can be grasped by outsiders, so the practice is even easier" [Tu Hu, 1931, 1–2].

Conclusion

There are subjective and objective reasons behind the Buddhist revival movement in Asian countries, of which the most basic is the crisis of this religion. Before embarking on a revival, Buddhism in Asia faced many complex problems. That was the state of poor academic background, non-observance of the precepts of many monks, and even the fact that many temples tried to add to the Buddhist rituals "services" to satisfy the needs of spiritual activities of the masses. Besides, Buddhism did not have a mechanism to manage all monks, nuns, and Buddhists belong to different sects... In order to continue to exist and develop, Buddhism was forced to systematically and comprehensively reform. This ranged from building schools, research institutions, libraries to modifying the method of practice and living for monks. The Theosophical Society in Sri Lanka, the Maha Bodhi Society in India, the General Buddhist Association of China or the General Directorate of Buddhism in Japan are relatively new organizational models and have never appeared in the history of Buddhism. In addition to the teachings and precepts, these organizations also implemented a new management method for all Buddhist sects through the provisions specified in the rules and regulations. Instead of maintaining isolation among Buddhist sects, a common community principle has been established by monks and nuns on a voluntary basis. The traditional organization of Buddhism (sangha) was replaced by primitive models. Almost all monks have recognised this new organizational model as an inevitable part of the reform process.

The revival movement in Asian countries also marked the first appearance of the Buddhist press. Newspapers such as: "Buddhist Journal" (1888, Sri Lanka), "The Maha Bodhi and the United Buddhist World" (1892, Indian), "Hai Chao Yin" (1920, China), "The Eastern Buddhist Journal" (1921, Japan) was established and soon confirmed their role in the development of Buddhism. Not only propagating and promoting the revival movement, the Buddhist press also acted as a mouthpiece to convey cultural values to many

countries in Asia and the world as well as to protect the legitimate interests of Buddhists against Western colonial policies. Buddhist press during this period was established in many different forms, among which, the magazine was still a popular one chosen by many organizations.

The formation of a Buddhist school system based on a modern training style is also a distinctive feature of the Buddhist revival movement in Asian countries during this period. In the past, Buddhist training programs were mostly conducted through the retreat seasons, summer months or ashrams. Monks would gather and study at certain times of the year. The rest of the time, the monks reviewed and practiced Buddhist rituals on their own. During the Middle Ages, this form of Buddhist training proved to be adapted to the state of Eastern feudal society. However, in the early modern period, when science and technology was rapidly developing and people's lives were improving, the maintenance of this traditional form of training created a major barrier to the development of Buddhism. This is the reason why so many complaints about the education level of monks appear in the contemporary press. In order to overcome these shortcomings, Buddhist revival leaders actively sought, researched and built new training models. A common feature of training programs of Buddhism in Asian countries during this period is that they actively absorb modern cultural and civilized values, especially Western-style educational models. At the same time, they added more sources of knowledge from secular life for monks. Thanks to such important changes, Buddhism in Asian countries during the revival period has created a new adaptive education system and continue to exist and assert its position today.

¹ Nyanaponika Mahathera is a Zen master and famous scholar of Buddhism. He is the founder of the Buddhist Publication Society – specializing in publishing Buddhist documents in English and Sinhala.

² many works such as: *Die Lebre des Buddha*, *Die Religion der Vernunft und der Meditation*.

³ In 1924, Paul Dahlke established the first Center for Buddhist Studies named as: “Buddhistische Haus” in Frohnau, Berlin. This is the largest and oldest Buddhist heritage of Europeans.

⁴ Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala Thera is one of the pioneer figures of the Buddhist revival movement in Asia. He has been honored and awarded many titles by the people of many Eastern and Western countries. Many prestigious organizations in Ireland, Italy, Hungary and Germany have also provide certificates of merit in recognition of his work.

⁵ Ratmalane Sri Dharmaloka is a talented linguist with extensive knowledge of Pali, Sanskrit and Buddhist philosophy. He founded many famous higher education institutions for Buddhism such as Vidyalankara Pirivena and Peliyagoda.

⁶ Helena Petrovna Blavatsky is a Russian theologian and philosopher. She is the co-founder of the Theosophical Society and the founder of the Theosophical religious school.

⁷ Yang Renshan (1837–1911), whose real name is Yang Wenhui, was born in Anhui province. In 1865, he happened to read the book “The Great Vehicle of Faith” and realized many interesting things about Buddhist teachings. After reading this work, he vowed to follow the religion and continued to study more sutras, laws, and treatises. During a business trip in England, he met and made friends with Dr. Fumio Nanjo (Japanese). Through this relationship he brought back many lost scriptures from Japan to China. In 1866, he mobilized the movement to engrave the Great Tripitaka at Kim Lang. Thanks to this policy, more than 2,000 copies of sutras were engraved, which helped to overcome the consequences of devastating temples and scriptures caused by the uprising of Hong Xiuquan.

⁸ Master Tai Xu (1889–1947), from Zhejiang province, became a monk in 1904, in Wujiang, Suzhou. He is a great master of Buddhism and a figure who has made many important contributions to the development of Chinese Buddhism as well as world Buddhism.

⁹ The Taikyo Senbu decree created a large-scale boycott of Buddhism. Many temples, Buddha statues, and Buddhist scriptures were demolished, and privileges for Japanese Buddhist monks were also revoked.

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Submitted for publication: November 27, 2024.
 Accepted for publication: December 26, 2024.
 Published: June 26, 2025.