

Yu Xue

Buddhist Manifestations of Patriotism during the Korean War

Abstract A great deal of research on the Korean War has focused on the military, politics, economy and international affairs, and far less on the religious, particularly the Buddhist, perspective. The Korean War exerted a tremendous impact on institutional Buddhism, and consequently Buddhists were heavily involved. This paper examines the history of Chinese Buddhist participation in the “Resisting America and Assisting Korea Campaign” from Buddhist perspectives such as political propaganda, material donations especially the donation of the “Chinese Buddhist Airplane,” and the enlistment of young monks into the People’s Volunteer Army (the PVA). The paper will then look into social and political factors involved in Buddhist leaders’ reinterpretation of Buddhist doctrines to justify participation in the campaign, as a response to the surge of patriotism in Chinese society. This kind of investigation may shed light on the relationship between institutional Buddhism and politics in the new socialist society of China after 1949.

Keywords Korean War, Buddhism, compassionate killing, propaganda, Buddhist doctrine, Buddhist institutions

The Korean War (1950–53) exerted a huge impact on the new Chinese state and changed the landscape of Chinese society, including institutional Buddhism. From the very beginning of China’s involvement in the war, the “Resisting America and Assisting Korea Campaign” (hereafter “Resistance Campaign”) was fervently promoted in China. The campaign raised patriotic passions among Chinese citizens who were proud of their national identity and would willingly sacrifice themselves to support a national cause. Millions of the People’s Volunteer Army (PVA) were dispatched across the Yalu River and engaged in direct military action, and Buddhist clergy who were patriotically aligned with the government committed themselves to the war effort under the leadership of

Yu Xue (✉)

Department of Cultural and Religious Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China

E-mail: xueyu@cuhk.edu.hk

the government. What is interesting, however, is that institutional Buddhism in China then had already suffered unprecedented political suppression and persecution. The land reform which started even before the 1949 Liberation empowered government to confiscate temple lands, and to appropriate temple properties to be repurposed as public schools, government offices, and factories. Consequently, the majority of monks and nuns had to earn livings as farmers or factory workers. The land-reform movement forced them to realize that they must abandon traditional Buddhism and adapt to socialist reform. The Korean War, known as the Resistance Campaign, pushed monks and nuns further into the secular world. The whole sangha, or monastic community, in various parts of China thus became involved in war activities such as political propaganda, parades, patriotic pledges, material donations, and joining the PVA.

“Resisting America and Assisting Korea” Propaganda

In September 1950, a report about North Korean resistance against the American invasion was published in *Xiandai foxue* 現代佛學 (Modern Buddhist studies). The journal was started in the early 1950s by a group of Buddhist leaders in Beijing as the only Buddhist publication that the government permitted after 1949.¹ Citing the Information Telegraph Agency of Russia, *Xiandai foxue* described a Buddhist community in North Korea as furious about the news that US soldiers randomly bombarded innocent civilians. All Buddhists there pledged to stand firm with the North Korean government to resist American intrusion and to fight for Korean independence.² This report kicked off the Resistance Campaign among the Buddhist community in Beijing. Soon after, Zhao Puchu 趙朴初 (1907–2000) published an article entitled “All Chinese Buddhists Rise Up Together to Fight for the Resistance Campaign,”³ which uncovered the crimes of the American imperialists in Korean and the military occupation of Taiwan. Zhao recognized the fact that the development of Chinese communism needed a peaceful environment, yet as he believes, the Chinese people and nation are not afraid of any war. He says: “Today, we should show our compassion and fearlessness to stand firmly in safeguarding peace and take effective actions to

¹ In the contemporary social and political context, the journal as all other publications in China was politically censored and monitored. It was by no means to promote Buddhist faith or to report anything against the new regime. Instead, it plays a large role to convey the government’s messages to Buddhist society and display Buddhist activism for the socialist reform of institutional Buddhism. Thus Buddhist activism recorded in the journal may not reflect the whole picture of the sangha.

² *Xiandai foxue*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1951): 30.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, no. 4 (1950): 3.

protect the resolutions made in the Second Meeting of the United Nations.”⁴ Meanwhile, Zhao reminds Chinese Buddhists to be cautious of the criminal acts of American imperialism that use religion as a disguise for military undertakings, and that they should firmly stand on the side of the Chinese government.⁵

On February 2, 1951, the Chinese government issued a new directive, appealing to all Chinese to step up military efforts to support North Korea against American invasion. The directive had three main points: 1) protest America’s attempt to remilitarize Japan by organizing parades and publishing books and articles, etc., that denounce such acts; and encourage Japanese citizens and other Southeast Asian peoples to rise against American-Japanese cooperation; 2) render service to PVA and Korean People’s Army (KPA) soldiers: make donations and write consolation letters to troop members and organize consolation teams to consult families; 3) take pledges to be loyal to Chairman Mao, the Communist Party, and the Chinese government, to support the PVA, to encourage labor productivity and protect state properties, etc.⁶ In response to the government’s appeal, Buddhists in Beijing under the leadership of Ven. Juzan 巨贊 (1908–84) moved their Resistance Campaign from the inside of temples outward into the public.

On the same day, more than 600 monks and nuns, together with 2,000 others, including lamas, lay-Buddhists, and students from Buddhist schools in Beijing, assembled in Zhongshan Park for a demonstration in support of the North Koreans against the American invasion.⁷ The activity started at around 11 a.m., and three separate telegrams to Chairman Mao, the Chinese Volunteer Army, and the KPA were publicly read out. On behalf of all Buddhists in Beijing, the letter to Chairman Mao pledged: “We should enhance our political awareness through learning and increase our productive labor under your leadership; we should fight for lasting peace in the midst of invasive war according to your doctrines; we must fight to the very last against our enemy, the American imperialist, with courage and fearlessness. All of these are possible because of your grand inspiration.” At the end of the assembly a resolution announced the forming of a Committee of Buddhist Circles in Beijing for Safeguarding World Peace and Resisting the American Invasion (which will be referred to hereafter as the CBCP).

The Resistance Campaign organized by Buddhists in Beijing marked a new

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ It was reported by China News Agency and widely circulated among religious circles at the time that some Catholics in Guangzhou served as American spies, who made use of religion to collect military information for America. *Xiandai foxue*, vol. 2, no. 4 (1951): 30–33.

⁶ *Jianguo yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian*, 24–27.

⁷ There were around 724 renounced monks in Beijing and 689 of them joined the event; 220 temples signed patriotic pledges.

face of Buddhism and a new image for Buddhists. The formation of the CBCP demonstrated a patriotic passion among Buddhists and that they would be ready to support the war efforts of the Chinese government. According to Juzan, it was the bound duty of Chinese Buddhists as citizens of China to stand by the side of the government. He listed four significances of the CBCP: 1) the Chinese government under the leadership of the Communist Party has liberated Chinese people, including Buddhists, from imperialism and feudalism; the formation of the committee demonstrates Buddhists' gratitude towards the government and pledges to serve the well-being of the nation; 2) the CBCP promotes the government's policy on the freedom of religious belief and confirms the practice of freedom of religion in China; 3) the CBCP displays the traditional bonds between China and North Korea; 4) the CBCP reveals to Buddhists worldwide the aggression of American imperialism and the Chinese Buddhists' fondness for peace and their determination against invasion. The best way for Buddhists to support and be involved in the Resistance Campaign, according to Juzan, was to continue to enhance their political knowledge, and to support the military frontlines by increasing productivity. Ye Gongchuo 葉恭綽 (1881–1968), a well-known Revolutionary veteran and lay Buddhist in Beijing, praised the formation of the committee, which he believed would lead Buddhists' participation in the Resistance Campaign nationwide.⁸

The assembly ended at around 2 p.m., and more than 2,000 clergy and others then gathered outside of Zhongshan Park, proceeding from there on a patriotic parade that marched for over ten miles. Monks and nuns, in grey and black robes with hood hats, carried on their shoulders huge portraits of Chairman Mao, Stalin, Kim Il-sung and other leaders of Communist states worldwide. The participants shouted slogans such as "Resist the American Invasion," "Oppose the Remilitarization of Japan," and were heard from far away and thus attracted many watchers. Most of the monks and nuns had never participated in this kind of activity and as *Xiandai foxue* reported, they could hardly hide their excitement and enthusiasm. In traditional Buddhism, such religious people were regarded as world-renouncers who led reclusive lives inside temples or on mountains. Yet, after the Communist revolution they became citizens of China, as stated in the Common Programs known as the first constitution of the PRC. As citizens of China, it was expected that they appear in public to demonstrate support for the government and to work for the wellbeing of ordinary people in China. Thus to fulfill such a duty, monks and nuns put aside their wooden bowls and beads, and they came out from their temples seemingly to express their love for their nation and hatred towards Americans. Among these monks was Baolin 寶林 from the Temple of the Medicine King in the suburbs of Beijing. He left his temple at nine

⁸ *Xiandai foxue*, vol. 1, no. 6 (1950): 32–33.

in the morning and walked as much as ten miles to take part in the parade. During the parade he constantly held a wooden board that read "Protest against American imperialism's use of religion for invasion." There was also a blind monk called Langzhao 朗照, who could only march forward using a walking stick, yet he never complained. For them and many others it was their duty, being both Buddhist and citizen, to take part in these events and to show a new image of the Chinese sangha.

The CBCP later changed to become the Committee of Buddhist Circles in Beijing for Resisting America and Assisting Korea (hereafter, the CBCR). It consisted of two departments—a secretariat and a study department, the latter formed of representatives from different temples in various districts of Beijing. One representative in each district in Beijing was elected to communicate with all temples in the area. Whenever an activity concerning the Resistance Campaign was scheduled or there were messages to be disseminated, the committee would inform the district representative, who then spread the word to his/her responsible temples in the district. A meeting of representatives was held each Saturday to conduct work reviews and learning activities. There were six learning groups within the committee under the supervision of the Public Affair Bureau of Beijing 民政局, which oversaw the activities of monks and nuns. All expenses were shared equally by the temples. Thus Buddhists in Beijing became an example for Buddhists in other places. Juzan urged all Buddhists in China to learn from Buddhists in Beijing and to form similar committees all over China, which, as Juzan believed, would provide multiple functions that effectively conveyed the government's orders to Buddhist communities as well as to individuals, while uniting Buddhists to participate in social and political action. All these, he felt, were necessary for the healthy development of institutional Buddhism in China.⁹

In March of 1951, the South China Bureau 中南局¹⁰ issued an order demanding all Chinese to intensify their resistance campaign into actual undertakings.¹¹ On September 20, 1951, the CBCR, the Shanghai Buddhist Society, Tianjin Buddhist Society, and Wuhan Buddhist Society issued a joint declaration rejecting the Japan Peace Treaty signed in San Francisco, and calling for "all Buddhists in China and worldwide to unite against the illegal act of the Japan Peace Treaty."¹² In December of 1950, Buddhist communities in Ningbo

⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1951): 24.

¹⁰ After the founding of the PRC, China was divided into six administrative regions under six bureaus in charge of military and political affairs. The South China Bureau covers six provinces including Henan, Hubei, Guangdong, and others.

¹¹ Zhonggong zhongyang Zhongnanhai bangongting ed., *Zhonggong zhongyan Zhongnanju dang'an*, no. 2314.

¹² *Xiandai foxue*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1951): 20.

held assemblies in different temples to demonstrate their support for the Resistance Campaign. They passed two letters to the PVA and KPA from the Ningbo Buddhists. The letter to the KPA praised the efforts of the North Koreans in resisting the Americans: "We Buddhists are determined to support you who fight with courage against the invasion. We hope that you will continue to defeat invaders to bring peace and well being to peoples throughout the world."¹³ In the letter to the PVA, they expressed their appreciation for the noble acts of the Volunteer Army and appealed to Buddhists across China to join the army at the frontline.¹⁴

On March 10, 1951, a similar campaign was organized cooperatively by Buddhist temples and lay organizations in Changzhou, and more than ninety representatives both lay and clergy took part. The participants first denounced the criminal acts of the Japanese during World War II and accused America of remilitarizing Japan. 1,900 monks and nuns from different temples in the city paraded in the street on March 19. They were divided into six marching units: 1) the monk unit, including a large red-flag troop, waist-drum troop, small red-flag troop, slogan-board troop, Buddhist music troop, and a visiting troop of Buddhists from neighboring Yixing 宜興; 2) the male householder unit; 3) the nun unit, including a large red-flag troop, small red-flag troop, and a Buddhist children's dance troop; 4) the female youth unit, who sang patriotic songs; 5) the female householder unit; 6) the Buddhist propaganda unit, which placed an amplifier on a truck to broadcast slogans of the resistance and patriotic Buddhism.¹⁵

The Resistance Campaign changed the monastic atmosphere of the sangha that had become the norm over the past several centuries, especially the lives of nuns. Although most nuns did not go to the war frontline, they made contributions and sacrifices. Not long after 1949, nuns in Chengdu had joined the Women's Union of Chengdu City and participated in various of its activities. At the eve of International Women's Day on March 8, 1951, the Preparation Committee of the Women's Union of Chengdu City issued a notice requesting nuns in the city to gather at the Ai Dao Tang 愛道堂 for a parade to oppose American imperialism. Upon receiving notice, 300-plus nuns gathered. Many came from their farming fields and were still wearing white field scarves on their heads. Some even carried blankets and bed sheets in preparation for staying overnight at Ai Dao Tang. Before the parade, a brief training workshop was arranged and government officials were invited to explain the history of the International Women's Day and the importance of the Resistance Campaign. As described in *Xiandai foxue*,

¹³ Ibid., vol. 1, no. 5 (1951): 32.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., vol. 1, no. 8 (1951): 34.

on the morning of March 8, the whole group of nuns took off for the assembly led by a large banner proclaiming "Union of Buddhist Nuns." The group was divided into three units according to three different colors of robes the nuns wore—grey, black and blue. At the end of the assembly, the nuns embarked on a large parade which consisted of up to 100,000 women from the city. The journal claimed that the shaved nuns among these troops of marchers drew attention from the surrounding crowd, and at the end of the parade the nuns were so excited that they gathered again to share their feelings of the event. One of them stated: "We have realized that American imperialism is our enemy, which obstructs our victory of the revolution and attempts to plot battles in the world. Buddhists are fond of peace yet we cannot tolerate such devil to exist in our world, therefore we must take up the sword of discipline to eliminate the devil, to act as Vajra and to shout as a lion in fighting against the enemy!"¹⁶

The Resistance Campaign reached its high point in China during the middle of 1951, as the propaganda activities of Buddhist communities nationwide were entering a new stage. A column on the Buddhist Resistance Campaign was started in the ninth issue of *Xiandai foxue* that year, exclusively reporting the war activities of monks and nuns. The gist of the column was to welcome tremendous changes being promoted for individual Buddhists and the socialist transformation being pushed on the sangha. Monks and nuns were described as being united with other Chinese people and acting together to demonstrate their determination and commitment to serve their country. The Resistance Campaign thus intensified the so-called socialist transformation of Buddhism, as monks and nuns quickly lost their monastic identity: they could not remain in isolation but were joining other Chinese and becoming citizens of the Chinese nation. By participating in public activities, they were depicted as realizing their duty to show patriotism and to demonstrate willingness to defend the nation that was threatened by American invasion.¹⁷

Donation of a Chinese Buddhist Airplane

During 1951 the Korean War was in a stalemate. The PVA's offensive was stifled by the UN troops led by the US. Chinese soldiers suffered great casualties, and supply shortages became an imminent threat to their survival. To support military reinforcements, the General Committee of Chinese People for Resisting America and Assisting Korea 中國人民抗美援朝總務委員會 on June 1 called for all people in China to enhance their patriotic campaign and to improve productivity so that they could make more donations to the PVA: this would result in

¹⁶ Ibid., vol. 1, no. 10 (1951): 34.

¹⁷ Ibid., vol. 1, no. 9 (1951): 31–36. This special column continued up to November 1952.

purchases of aircraft and weapons.¹⁸ The call was received well, and Buddhists were also led to organize donation activities. During this period, as mentioned earlier, Buddhist temples were almost bankrupted, largely due to land reforms, which confiscated temple lands. The traditional temple economy that depended on land rents was thus severely cut back, and monks and nuns were forced into farm and other work. Most became quite poor, but the government nonetheless, considering them as equal with farmers and workers, pressed them to contribute to the Resistance Campaign. Thus, willingly or not, they donated whatever they had, such as labor, food products, money, and other materials. Among these offerings was the noteworthy donation of a “Chinese Buddhist Airplane.”

In June 1951, a public letter from the members of the CBCR was published in *Xiandai foxue*, proposing that Buddhists in China collectively donate “A Chinese Buddhist Airplane” to the PVA. The letter states: “We have a common understanding; for our country and for our people we should exalt our patriotic passion and do whatever we can to support the PVA so that they can gain victory with the minimal cost. All of our Buddhist fellows in China, let us donate! We must donate a “Chinese Buddhist Airplane.” We must donate enthusiastically and work hard to increase our productivity for a “Chinese Buddhist Airplane!”¹⁹ On June 19, 1951, a Buddhist assembly was held in Suzhou and a Resisting America and Assisting Korea Working Committee was formed. The committee discussed the agenda of donating aircraft and weapons to the PVA, and issued an “Appeal Letter to All Chinese Buddhists.”²⁰ Meanwhile, the Buddhist community in Jiuquan, Gansu, also sent a letter to Buddhists calling for the donation of a Buddhist Airplane.²¹

On November 1951, Panchen Lama²² issued a statement in Xining saying that

¹⁸ Jialu Xu, ed., *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo rishi*, vol. 2, 190–92. At the same time on June 2, 1951 an editor from *Remin ribao* called for all the citizens in China to announce a patriotic pledge.

¹⁹ *Xiandai foxue*, vol. 1, no. 10 (1951): 2

²⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, no. 11 (1951): 35. “Since the General Committee of Chinese People for Resisting Americans and Assisting Korea issued Great Calls of the patriotic pledge, which are the donation of aircrafts and canons, giving of privilege service to the military and their relatives, we Buddhists from Suzhou have responded enthusiastically and launched different donation campaigns through cash and through scrap iron and steel from temples. To illustrate the strength of all the Buddhists in the nation, we suggest that in unity we donate a ‘Chinese Buddhist Airplane’ to support the PVA to defeat American imperialists and to bring peace to our world. This is an ample extension of our Buddhists spirit of great compassion, courage, and strength. All our fellow Buddhists in China, let us arise and respond!”

²¹ During the Anti-Japanese War it was the Jiuquan Buddhist Society which first advocated the donation of a “Buddhist Airplane” to the Chinese anti-Japanese military and received great responses from the leaders of the Buddhist communities.

²² In May 1951, the Panchen Lama and Dalai Lama arrived in Beijing to sign the “Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet.”

“[I] pledge to do my best to appeal to the Tibetan people and Buddhists that they actively participate in the Resistance Campaign, to donate military equipment with enthusiasm. We should make efforts to implement the plan of purchasing a Buddhist Fighter Plane earlier than the schedule.”²³ He thus set an example by donating 130 million *yuan* for the purpose. Meanwhile he and Xêrab Gyaco 喜饒嘉措 the Vice Chairman of Qinghai Autonomous District wrote a joint letter addressed to temples in Qinghai, urging participation in the donation campaign for a “Qinghai Buddhist Warplane.” Then Xêrab Gyaco went to Sku-'bum byams-pa gling (Kumbum) Monastery 塔爾寺 and other Lama temples to discuss the war in Korea and the importance of the donation. He successfully convinced Sku-'bum byams-pa gling to donate 130 million *yuan* and seven temples from Datong to donate 24 million *yuan*. In response to their call, the well-known Jamyang from Bla-brang bkra-shis-'khyil Monastery 拉卜楞寺 in southern Gansu donated 500 sheep, 100 cows and 500 pieces of cowhide for the same purpose. The enthusiasm of these well-known Lamas and temples encouraged Tibetans to participate in the donation campaign.²⁴ On November 21, the Panchen lama came to Kumbum Monastery in Qinghai and gave a talk to the lamas there, calling upon them to accomplish the donation of the “Qinghai Buddhist Warplane.” Many of the lamas made donations on the spot and around 10,000 silver coins were collected.

On August 8, 1951, the CBCR proposed, through *Xiandai foxue*, donation quotas required of Buddhist communities in large cities.²⁵ It urged these communities to send their donations to the General Committee of Chinese People for Resistance through the People's Bank of China and to annotate their drafts with: “for the purpose of donating to the Chinese Buddhist Airplane.” Meanwhile, they should also supply the CBCR with the receipts. Not long afterwards, the Buddhist community in Beijing collected up to 10 million *yuan* and was expecting to collect 60 to 100 million total within six months. By December 16, 1951, Buddhists in Beijing had collected 57,716,100 *yuan* in cash. Together with a few million *yuan* that were promised and some valuable antiques collected, they were able to meet the 60 million *yuan* target.²⁶

The donation quota that the CBCR requested for Buddhists in Shanghai was 750 million—worth about half the cost of such an airplane. On July 14, 1951, twenty Buddhist leaders in Shanghai met to form a Preparation Committee of Buddhist Circles in Shanghai for Resisting America and Assisting Korea. The committee decided to share the quota among individual Buddhists and Buddhist

²³ *Xiandai foxue*, vol. 2, no. 4 (1951): 16.

²⁴ *Juexun*, vol. 5, no. 10 (1951): 10.

²⁵ *Xiandai foxue*, vol. 1, no. 12 (1951): 28; also see the appendix.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, no. 12, (1951), 28; vol. 2, no. 5 (1952): 23.

units in Shanghai. "For the sangha, individual monks have to save and donate 200 *yuan* or 500 *yuan* per day, and each nun is to contribute 200 *yuan* per day. On the collective level, temples are divided into four classes with the first class donating 20,000 *yuan* per day, the second 10,000 *yuan*, the third 5,000 *yuan*, and the fourth 2,500 *yuan* per day. It is estimated that the sangha in Shanghai would be able to meet a 300 million *yuan* target."²⁷ Meanwhile, all thirteen lay Buddhist organizations in Shanghai held meetings about the following four issues: 1) the reason for Buddhist participation in the Resistance Campaign; 2) donating warplanes and weapons from the perspective of Buddhist precepts and karma; 3) how to perform the patriotic donation in each organization; and 4) how to articulate the patriotic pledge.²⁸ After meetings, lay Buddhist organizations in Shanghai quickly organized donation activities.²⁹ The Shanghai Buddhist Youth Society 上海市佛教青年會 had about 6,000 members, about 600 of which lived in Shanghai. They were asked to donate either 6,000, 30,000, 60,000 or 120,000 *yuan*, according to their financial capability.³⁰ The Society held a members' meeting in Jing'an Temple 靜安寺 on July 15, and Director Fang Zipan 方子藩 initiated the donation campaign by donating 30,000 *yuan* himself. On August 12 the Shanghai Buddhist Youth Society met in order to launch a Movement for Donating a Hundred Yuan Per Day.³¹ With all these donation events on course, it was estimated that their goal of donating a so-called Buddhist airplane could be completed within six months. In December of 1951, Buddhist clergy and lay people in Shanghai held a book and painting exhibition in Jixiang Temple 吉祥寺, and the works of renowned calligraphers and other artists throughout China were sold to promote the purchase of the "Chinese Buddhist Airplane."³²

From the records available in Buddhist sources, monks and nuns seem to have all participated in the donation tasks and made efforts to fulfill the assigned quotas. Although some did not have money for donations, they were described in *Xiandai foxue* as never doubting the significance of the campaign nor were they discontented with the donation demands placed on them. On the contrary, they were described as feeling guilty for being poor and incapable, and as expressing willingness to fulfill donation quotas.³³ Some monks and nuns contributed free labor and products such as rice and wheat in substitution.³⁴ In Beijing some

²⁷ Ibid., vol. 1, no. 12, (1951): 29.

²⁸ *Juexun*, vol. 5, no. 9 (1951): 1.

²⁹ E.g., the Buddhist Study Society in Shanghai 上海佛學會; the Safeguard Society of the Vajra Temple 金剛道場護法會; the Buddhist Study Society of Merit Forest 功德林佛學會; and the World Lay Buddhist Organization 世界佛教居士林.

³⁰ *Xiandai foxue*, vol. 1, no. 12 (1951): 29.

³¹ *Juexun*, vol. 1, no. 12 (1951): 29.

³² *Honghua yuekan*, vol. 7, no. 128 (1952): 11.

³³ *Xiandai foxue*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1951): 23.

³⁴ A thousand catties of unhusked rice at that time was worth around 600,000 *yuan*.

monks donated entire monthly incomes, while others sold their watches and other valuables. Those who worked in Beijing factories were willing to work overtime and donated those earnings. The donation quota the CBCR assigned for Buddhists in Guangzhou was 100 million *yuan*. When Ven. Pujue 普覺 and Liaokong 了空 received the notice, they launched a donation campaign immediately. But July 2, Buddhists in Guangzhou had collected up to 3.4 million *yuan* and reached 20 million in November of 1951. They then decided to organize a crop-selling charity event to meet the donation quota. From November 29 to 31, 1951, the event was held in Liu Rong Temple 六榕寺, and eventually collected 12,183,700 *yuan*.³⁵

More than 120 monks in Lingyanshan Temple 靈巖山寺, in Suzhou, donated all incomes raised from their crops to the purchase of the "Buddhist Airplane," a total of 2,091,500 *yuan*. Meanwhile, they also initiated a 10,000-per-person activity and collected 141,500 *yuan* in six months.³⁶ In June 1951, Buddhists in Wuzhou assembled, and more than 2.4 million *yuan* were collected. Lay Buddhist Chen Shuxin 陳漱新 donated a 12-tael equivalent diamond ring and 2 taels of gold. He also promised to donate 20% of his regular land-rent income (worth 200 catties of rice) as a long-term donation. His act was seen to have inspired others: Ven. Miaozhen 妙真 said he would donate two pigs he had raised, and Huang Miaoxiang 黃妙湘 promised to donate a portion of her monthly rent income. An 80-year-old lay Buddhist woman donated all her life savings of 30 silver coins, which she had formerly laid aside for her coffin, and she said: "I'm still alive and I should donate for the purchase of aircraft and weapons. If we can defeat the Americans then it should not matter if I have a coffin or not."³⁷

The donation activities ran relatively more smoothly in areas with strong economies such as Shanghai and Wuxi. On June 24, 1951, the Wuxi Buddhist Learning Group had collected 2.3 million *yuan*, 2 silver coins and 200 bronze coins, meeting their 2.3 million *yuan* donation quota in advance.³⁸ But in the poor areas or in places that lacked talented people and social organizations, the donation campaign was not as effective. Moreover, corruption occurred that hurt

³⁵ *Xiandai foxue*, vol. 2, no. 8 (1952): 26–27.

³⁶ *Honghua yuekan*, vol. 7, no. 127 (1951): 14. The services included: 1) lending 54 blankets and household utensils to the Committee of the Recruitment; 2) tea services to PVA and other officials when they visited Linyanshan Temple; 3) free medical services to the military personnel; 4) priority for registering children of military personnel into the Junior School of Linyanshan Temple, and providing them with free textbooks, and to hire relatives of the army as school teaching staff; 5) work in the farmlands for military personnel; 6) respect and take care of soldiers who pass through the temple; 7) provide consolation letters to injured soldiers resting in the Recovery Hospital in Suzhou.

³⁷ *Xiandai foxue*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1951): 30.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, no. 12 (1951): 30.

the donation enthusiasm of local Buddhists. A piece of news was published in the January issue of *Xiandai foxue* in 1952, reporting that “up to December 10, 1951, the Buddhist community from Guiyang has collected donations of 2,468,076.5 *yuan* and these were already transferred to The People’s Bank of China Guiyang office.” This news was questioned by local Buddhists and a reader wrote to *Xiandai foxue* exposing the falsity of the report. From December 31, 1951, to January 2, 1952, Buddhist activists in Guiyang reviewed donation accounts and discovered corruption on the part of Ven. Jiyun, who was in charge of donations.³⁹ This kind of incident revealed the reality that Buddhist communities in some areas were not well-organized, and malpractice did occur in some donation campaigns.

Military Recruitment of Young Monks

If donations for a “Buddhist airplane” represented the material aspect of Buddhist giving, then the phenomenon of young monks joining the PCA may be considered as a type of spiritual giving—in this case it was their bravery. This resonates with the traditional threefold way of giving in Buddhism, namely, material things, Dharma, and fearlessness. Traditionally, monks and nuns considered Dharma-giving to be an exchange: receiving alms from laymen in return for imparting moral instruction. Nevertheless, during the Resistance Campaign, many monks and nuns seem to have taken political propaganda as a way to pursue Dharma-teaching; they performed material giving by donating money for aircraft and weapons to the PVA; and some young monks, wishing to follow the Bodhisattva path of fearlessness, enlisted to fight the enemies on the warfront. That monks joined armies was not a new situation, and in fact some had taken part in military action against the Japanese invasion during the Anti-Japanese War (1937–45). Nevertheless, the sangha back then was divided about this issue, the majority being cautious about encouraging monks to fight, and preferring that they serve ambulance and rescue groups. In contrast, during the Korean War, no reports are available in the Buddhist sources to show objections to the military service of young monks. In fact, many newspaper items reported about elderly monks who encouraged young disciples to go to the frontline and fight, and as a result we learn of farewell parties in Buddhist communities to send off their warriors.

When the government called for Chinese youths to join the army soon after war broke out, Buddhist communities nationwide responded positively and many young monks appeared at local recruitment centers for enlistment. On June 10,

³⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, no. 8 (1951): 27–28.

1951, the young monks Wang Yunhuan, Zhijing, Juean, and Hongshen, with ninety-four others in Mount Jiuhua attended a Jiuhua village recruitment meeting. At the end of the meeting they applied for enlistment and their request was granted immediately. These young monks then appealed to others in the Mount Jiuhua region: "Do not yearn for this little village of Mount Jiuhua and impede your great task to fight for your country. Every Buddhist should be courageous enough to go out of the monastery and contribute to the cause of defeating American imperialists."⁴⁰ Up to June of 1951, seven temples in Mount Jiuhua became military families 軍屬戶, which indicates that at least one monk from each temple was recruited.⁴¹

In January of 1951, a large Buddhist assembly was held at Qingliang Temple in Changzhou to celebrate a young monk called Shangchun for having become a member of the PVA. Shangchun came from Dongtai, Jiangsu, and was twenty-five at the time. Once his application for the military was accepted, Buddhists from Changzhou are said to have expressed pride toward him. A farewell and celebration party was organized inside the temple one afternoon, and more than forty leading monks and nuns from major temples in the area participated. All of them extended blessings and appreciation in support of Shangchun.⁴² After the party, a public parade took place in the streets. The magazine describes Shangchun as riding a horse and with a huge red flower pinned on his clothes. More than twenty Buddhists, including monks and nuns, carried red flags at the front of the parade, beating drums and striking gongs. Fireworks announced the event, as the parade passed through the major streets of the city and attracted large crowds of people, who exhibited praise for the monk's patriotism. A similar event occurred in Jiangxi, when a monk called Yongba 永拔 from Yuantong Temple 圓通寺 left his temple to report to the military; forty-plus monks from the temple gathered and bade farewell to him.

Military enlistment of young monks became the highlight of Chinese Buddhist participation in the Resistance Campaign. The monks dropped their robes, put on military uniforms, and left their temples, but not only did no one criticize them for betraying their Buddhist commitments, on the contrary, they were applauded. Zizhi 自智, a monk from Chongfa Temple 崇法寺 in Liuyang, Hunan, joined the army in the winter of 1950. He used to be an activist and a Buddhist educator who once held the position of instructor in the Hunan Buddhist Institute 佛學講習所. Since the outbreak of the Korean War, Zizhi had been active in organizing propaganda. Later on, he voluntarily undertook military training in the city of Liuyang, and become a clerical staff in the Southern Hunan Liuyang military unit,

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, no. 11 (1951): 34.

⁴¹ *Honghua yuekan*, vol. 7, no. 127 (1951): 10.

⁴² *Xiandai foxue*, vol. 1, no. 6 (1951): 35.

preparing to leave for Korea. Before he left his temple, Zizhi gave all his belongings and the land allocated to him during the land reform to the Chongfa Temple.⁴³ On January 12, 1951, more than a thousand secondary-school youngsters in Hangzhou joined the military, and Jing Zhengming was one of them. Jing was an orphan from the age of two; at some point a monk named Shiliang 式梁 from Linying Monastery adopted him and raised him in the temple. On the day Jing left for the military with other youngsters, thousands of Hangzhou citizens went out to the street to bid farewell to them. "There was Ven. Shiliang among the Buddhist crowd lining the side of the road. Dressed in black robes with a big red flower showing on his chest, he stood excitedly under the waving flags and paid no heed to crossing trucks in search of his foster son, who had proudly joined the military... he wanted to bid farewell to him in person on his way towards a glorious patriotic road."⁴⁴

In post-revolutionary China the social status of both monks and soldiers changed, but in different directions. Monks lost their religious identity and became members of society and citizens of the nation, while People's Liberation Soldiers became respected as saviors and heroes. It made sense that young monks in the military would enhance the status of Buddhism and improve the image of the sangha. Wuran 悟然 was a young monk from Shanxi and became a member of the PVA on January 17, 1953. Having heard about his enlistment, his seventy-year-old Grand-Master was jubilant and showed full support. He said: "The purpose of joining the PVA is to eliminate the devilish American imperialists and to establish a *Pure Land on earth*. It is for the liberation of all people in this world. By joining the military, young monks bring glory to Buddhism."⁴⁵ Wuran's Grant Master would no longer call him "grant disciple" but instead "comrade," and he would like to "publish this proud event of our comrade Wuran in our monthly journal to inspire other young Buddhists of our nation." In March 1953, three young monks, Wucan 悟参, Youheng 有恒, and Xingkong 性空 from Nantong 南通 county in Jiangsu proudly announced that they had become members of the PVA. During the farewell event held by the local government and the Buddhist community, they expressed their joy and honor, and said: "We respond to the call of our country and voluntarily join the PVA for our homeland and our people. For the lasting peace of Buddhism we are determined to go to the frontline and never return until we eliminate American devils!"⁴⁶

Very little is known about the situation of these monks after joining the

⁴³ *Xiandai foxue*, vol. 1, no. 12 (1951): 28.

⁴⁴ *Jueyouqing*, vol. 12, no. 2 (1951): 24.

⁴⁵ *Xiandai foxue*, vol. 3, no. 30 (1953): 27.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, no. 33 (1953): 26.

military and about their performance in battle. One possibility is that brutal fighting may have led them to completely drop their former identities; they were no more monks but had become PVA warriors: they had to fight to their death the same as other PVA soldiers did. Yanli 演禮 was a young monks from Xiangguo Monastery 相國寺 in Kaifeng. He changed his name to Liu Zhizhong 劉治忠 after joining the PVA in 1951 and later marched to Korea for combat. In June of 1951 he wrote a letter to his fellows at the monastery and told them about killing. The following is from the letter: “Dear Deshan 德山, Yongxing 永行, Fuyuan 福元 and Yanchen 晏塵, I have received your letters. The situation in North Korea is improving day by day. The task given to us by our commanders was to protect Kaesong at the very frontline of the war. In facing enemies, we are determined to eliminate all of them. Regarding the concerns and love from our homeland, we will repay through our utmost endeavors for the glory of Chairman Mao and our family. Hope you all be able to gain the title of ‘labor models’ by your diligence in production; this is the noblest way to contribute to our people. Also hope you all can train yourselves physically. Look forward to hearing from you! Sincerely, Liu Zhizhong, June 5, 1952.”⁴⁷

It is not known how many young monks joined the military and went to the war. Sporadic records indicate that the numbers were not small. In Mount Jiuhua, five monks were enlisted.⁴⁸ In September 1951, about 300 youths were recruited in Jintan, Jiangsu, and 36 of them were monks.⁴⁹ In Mount Emei tens of young monks joined the military and became the unit with the highest enlistment figures among all other villages in Emei county.⁵⁰ At the end of war, around 14,000 members of the PVA went to Taiwan, 30 of whom were formerly monks.⁵¹ One of them was Wang Xingyi 王興義 from Fujian, who had been a monk for over twenty years in Lingyin Monastery 靈隱寺 before he joined the PVA in the early 1950s. After 1949, as he recalled, the new government confiscated the monastery’s property including temple lands, and persecuted the former abbot for being a landlord. In October 1951, Wang Xingyi and ten other monks from Lingyin Monastery joined the PVA and were sent to Korea after one month, without any military training. Not long after, they surrendered to the UN troops near the Han River. On January 27, 1954, they were sent to Taiwan and landed at Pier 4 in Jilong Harbor. Huge numbers of people turned out to receive them with a welcoming reception held by the Taiwanese Buddhist community. At the time, Wang Xingyi was forty-one years old, and is said to have been quite sad about his past. He told his story to the audience. He said: “Imperceptibly the Buddha

⁴⁷ Ibid., vol. 3, no. 3 (1952): 23.

⁴⁸ Ibid., vol. 2, no. 2 (1951): 21.

⁴⁹ Ibid., vol. 2, no. 1 (1951): 32.

⁵⁰ Ibid., vol. 1, no. 12, (1951): 30.

⁵¹ *Haichaoyin*, vol. 35, no. 8 (1954): 19.

has already given me permission to kill; I must fight together with my country's fellows to eliminate the devilish Communists."⁵² According to his estimation there were about 500 monk-soldiers like him fighting in the Korean War and most were forced to join the military. This statement was verified by another PVA monk—Chen Wenguang 陳文光, who came from Guang'an in Sichuan and used to be called 昌漢 at his temple. He said that he was also forced to join the army to fight in Korea during the Resistance Campaign and volunteered to go to Taiwan after being captured.⁵³

From different reports we may see different or even contradictory pictures about the enlistment of young monks at the time. Almost all reports from Taiwan confirmed the fact of forceful recruitments, while those from Chinese mainland all talked about Buddhist volunteers, whose enlistments received public and Buddhist encouragement. Perhaps, the two paths existed concurrently, and there were differing motivations to join. First, disruptive social and political reforms, particularly the land reform would have been a factor in forcing monks and nuns to rethink their futures as well as the future of Buddhism. To a large extent, joining the military would have been a way to rediscover or rather recreate their future. For the elders, destruction of temples and confiscation of temple lands demonstrated to them the coming of the religious apocalypse traditionally known as the "End of the Dharma" 末法. As Homes Welch once said: "The temples are a place for refuge no more, what would be the future for the monks and nuns who live within?"⁵⁴ Second, with the Chinese Communist victory, military service achieved a higher status in society, and Chinese youths, including monks, were increasingly inspired to serve the nation. It seems, therefore, that the enthusiasm behind the act of enlistment was embedded in deeper social attitudes and emotions of the time. Young monks, influenced by the prevailing patriotism, could contribute to the great national effort as a type of Buddhist patriotism. Thirdly, with the onset of the war, Buddhist leaders in various parts of China often encouraged monks and nuns to become involved in war activities, and in some cases they saw this as a correct religious act, and justified possible acts of killing through the very logic of the Buddhist doctrine of compassion—an aspect of Buddhist patriotism that is discussed next.

Compassionate Killing and Buddhist Patriotism

Buddhism is a religion of compassion that advocates the cessation of violence and the rejection of violent revenge. The donation of aircraft and enlisting in the

⁵² Ibid., vol. 35, no. 4 (1954): 3.

⁵³ Ibid., vol. 35, no. 8 (1954): 19.

⁵⁴ Holmes Welch, *Buddhism under Mao*, 68.

military both seem to be related to violence. Does this mean that Buddhists involved in such affairs were engaging in violence? Some Buddhists did articulate such concerns about the donation of a “Buddhist Airplane.” To a large extent, their concerns were justifiable if seen from the perspectives of the history and ideology of Buddhism, yet they were severely criticized by mainstream Buddhist communities.

On September 30, 1951, religious communities in Shantou joined a National Day celebration organized by the Shantou local government, and on this very occasion the Buddhist community was urged to commit themselves to donation activities. “At the beginning some of the members were confused because they associated aircraft and cannon with weapons for killing, and thus this type of donation would conflict with the Buddhist path of compassion. Directing against this misconception, we, having undertaken political studies, and stress the importance of the Resistance Campaign for the protection of our country and world peace. Our donation of aircrafts and weapons is to support our PVA to eliminate Americans for the well-being of mankind. This conforms to Mahayana Buddhism’s spirit of ‘killing one to save many.’ After the study, all members now understand the meaning of the donation campaign and are carrying on with all their effort.”⁵⁵ In March 1951, a Buddhist community from Nanchang formed a Committee of Buddhists for Anti-America Patriotism Movement with Ven. Xindao 心道 and fifteen other monks elected as committee members. In his address to an audience, Xindao said: “We Buddhists must unite as quickly as possible, and together with the followers of other religions, to give unconditional support to the PVA and KPA. The best way to show this support is to join the army directly and to learn the sprit in which Sakyamuni, the embodiment of compassion, killed robbers in order to save people and endured suffering on behalf of other living creatures. To wipe out the American imperialist demons, who are destroying world peace, is in accordance with Buddhist doctrines, and would be not only blameless but will actually raise merit as well.”⁵⁶

To advocate the donation of military weapons and to encourage enlistment were still, however, a challenge to Buddhist leaders, who had to create justification. Therefore, they reinterpreted Buddhist doctrines to prove the religious legitimacy and necessity of Buddhists committing violence in war. Leaders from the Jiuquan Buddhist Association believed that: “Buddhists, who are the family members of the Chinese nation, should not hesitate to do the same. [We Buddhists] should dispel all misgivings in that while observing precepts we perhaps violate the precept of non-killing when we donate an airplane or cannon, which are the instruments of killing. I [We] dare to assure that one who practices

⁵⁵ *Xiandai foxue*, vol. 2, no. 12 (1952): 22.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, no. 8 (1951): 35.

Bodhisattva's path will take up a knife and kill evil ones so that good people may live in peace and happiness. The crazy criminals of American imperialists have threatened the peace of the whole world. He [They] attempts to rule the world and take charge of Asia and their bombardments and killing have intensified. It is crystal clear now that peace and invasion cannot live side by side. Safeguarding the nation is definitely the important task of every citizen. We are determined to eliminate all evil enemies through 'killing for stopping killing.' Removing all sense of worries, we shall further unite all peoples of different nationalities, and take actions to accomplish the donation tasks."⁵⁷ American imperialists were seen as monstrous killers who jeopardized peace, and China's Buddhists should act like the Bodhisattva of self-sacrifice and eliminate them to save the North Koreans from suffering.

In dispelling the concerns about the possible violation of Buddhist morality, Juzan argued that in Mahayana Buddhism the highest morality is great compassion, which is to eradicate suffering and to provide happiness.⁵⁸ To eliminate the suffering of the North Koreans is to manifest Buddhist compassion and fulfill the duties of Buddhists. Juzan made use of a metaphor in which the Buddha attained enlightenment only after he subdued the Evil One, which highlighted the point that the liberation of suffering of the Northern Koreans could only be possible once American invaders were eliminated. Thus, military resistance against the US is considered as a skillful means, and releasing the North Koreans is an act of compassion. *Xiandai foxue* refers to a passage in the *Yogācāra Bodhisattva Precepts Text*: "The Bodhisattva encounters a robber who kills people due to his own greed. Having seen this, the Bodhisattva thinks to himself, 'I would fall into hell if I kill this evil one. Yet, he will suffer great pain if he commits his sin before I kill him. I would rather fall into hell instead of letting him suffer.' Thus, the Bodhisattva, out of compassion, kills the evil one. For this reason, the Bodhisattva not only has not violated the precepts but also engenders merit." Juzan cited the scriptural passage to reassert the concept of compassionate killing and its contemporary application, as he said, "American imperialists attempt to murder more people out of craving; they are the robber thieves. Due to our compassion, we may kill them. By doing so not only would we not violate the precept, but would instead generate more merit."⁵⁹

Compassionate killing is an act of wisdom as well as a form of tolerance. When Sakyamuni was still an Ascetic of Patience 忍辱仙人 before attaining Buddhahood, he was once dismembered by a king, yet he was not concerned. Then does it mean that one who follows the path of the Buddha should endure the invasion and insult of enemies? As early as in the Anti-Japanese War, Juzan

⁵⁷ Ibid., vol. 1, no. 11 (1951): 33.

⁵⁸ Ibid., vol. 1, no. 3 (1950): 27.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

had already called upon Chinese Buddhists to actively resist the Japanese invaders, simply because the well-known tolerance of the Chinese people would accomplish nothing and in fact make the Japanese bolder. According to Juzan, Chinese people and particularly Buddhists had long misunderstood the concept of tolerance in Buddhism, so that it became an excuse to evade problems. Tolerance in Sanskrit is *chandhi*, and in Tang times the Master Xuanzang 玄奘 translated it as “quiet forbearance” 安忍, as in the following: “In confronting difficulties, dangers, mistreatment, and insults...one accepts them and perseveres without fighting back. It means that in misfortune one does not complain; one does not give rise to hatred when being insulted; one maintains one’s faith on profound Dharma. One is perseverant and persistent in his practice of excellent Dharma without surrendering just because of the misfortune. This is called Quiet Forbearance.”⁶⁰ Based on this, Juzan argued that Buddhists should learn about true tolerance, which is not non-action or a surrendering to aggression, but firmness in the face of hardship and danger. At the same time forbearance is the will to tolerate injustice done to oneself but not through indifference. In other words, Buddhists may tolerate their own sufferings but should not be indifferent to others’ sufferings. Therefore, endurance and compassion, according to Juzan, do not contradict the use of violence and killing, in the spirit of a skillful means.⁶¹

Compassion may prompt Buddhists to exercise violence against evil if it is a way to save good people. For the sake of saving good people, Buddhists should show no mercy but eliminate evil. Zhao Puchu once said: “It is a mistake to sympathize with the enemy. It is even worse to think that the enemy will also show their sympathy, simply because by thinking so it makes the enemy less bad.”⁶² Ideally, one who practices great compassion and loving-kindness shares happiness with all sentient beings and releases them from sufferings without discrimination. Yet, Buddhists in China in the 1950s believed that Buddhist compassion and loving-kindness should be guided in accordance with Marxist ideology, the principles of the Communist Party, the sayings of Chairman Mao, and the interests of the Chinese nation. They should make a clear distinction without the slightest ambiguity between good and bad, enemies and friends, and stand always in the side of the Volunteer Army, showing no sympathy but only hatred toward US troops.⁶³ Love of one’s fellow citizens prompts one to save them from suffering, while the hatred of one’s enemies pushes one to destroy

⁶⁰ I could not find exact quotation from Buddhist cannon. Perhaps, Juzan collected it from different Buddhist texts. Similar passage can be found in T. 16 (676), 795b; 705c; 706c.

⁶¹ *Xiandai foxue*, vol. 1, no. 11 (1951): 4.

⁶² Holmes Welch, “The Reinterpretation of Chinese Buddhism,” 149.

⁶³ Yilian, “Patriotic Issues of Four Groups of Buddhists.” *Xiandai foxue*, vol. 1, no. 11 (1951): 6–7.

them without mercy. This is the meaning of Buddhist patriotism of the time, as Holmes Welch observed: "To satisfy Buddhist patriotism they reinterpret the precept of 'non-killing:' Buddhists should not be unwilling to kill a bad person but only should not kill a good person. Eliminating bad people such as the American imperialists is a good deed."⁶⁴ The concept of compassionate killing thus not only freed Buddhists from their constraint in reference to the ethics of non-violence, but also fused the prevailing forces of patriotism to prompt Buddhist participation in the Resistance Campaign.

The Buddha never demanded Buddhists to be indifferent towards their secular societies, nor did he advocate tolerance of foreign invasions on the excuse of compassion. Sakyamuni once intervened against an invasion of his homeland Kapilavastu by the troops of King Virudhaka 琉璃王, and he also praised prompt action against foreign invasions. In the *Ekottara-agama sutra*, there is a story of King Parasi who came to the Buddha one early morning and informed him that his army had just successfully repelled an enemy invasion. Invaders would not have been stopped if he had not responded to the invasion promptly. The Buddha praised the king's action and endorsed what he said. Again, according to the *Records of Eminent Monks (Gaoseng zhuan 高僧傳)*, Master Gunabhadra once urged King Vaisa to resist an invasion by a neighboring country. Juzan cited these classical records to admonish the Buddhists of his time to commit to the Resistance Campaign. He said: "Buddhists should face reality without shivering, standing firmly on the side of the anti-invasion. In other words, we should staunchly protect our nation without questioning. Therefore, we Buddhists set up an organization to participate in the activities of the Resistance Campaign, in safeguarding our own nation from invasion. By doing so, one does not violate Buddhist principles, rather one produces merit. This is the necessary path to releasing suffering for happiness, and Buddhists should take it up seriously. This is the reason why Buddhism and Buddhists resolutely uphold patriotism."⁶⁵

Juzan thus revealed the reason why he and other Buddhist leaders actively, even passionately, advocated compassionate killing. It was patriotism to a great degree, although some considerable part of the new Buddhist patriotism emerged from a need to go along with the Party's dictates. Traditionally, Buddhism in China was said to serve the dead only while Buddhist monks and nuns were considered as "outsiders" in relation to the human world. Yet, after the Communist victory in 1949, monks and nuns assumed secular, equal status and became citizens of the Chinese nation. They had to share the same duties, as laid down in the Common Programs, the first carefully constructed "Constitution of

⁶⁴ Welch, "The Reinterpretation of Chinese Buddhism," 148.

⁶⁵ *Xiandai foxue*, vol. 1, no. 11 (1951): 5.

the PRC.” Even before China’s involvement in the war, the Chinese government under the leadership of the CCP made use of the state machinery to carry out patriotic indoctrination in society, calling all Chinese, including monks and nuns, to fulfill their national duties during national crises.⁶⁶ Such propaganda was so powerful and penetrative that it was almost impossible for Buddhists to turn down the demands. Deeply influenced by contemporary patriotism or rather compelled by the demands of the government, monks and nuns realized what they could do was to transform themselves and participate in patriotic movements like the war.

The contents of patriotism differ over time and in different places, yet to oppose depredation, safeguard national sovereignty, and resist foreign invasion are all widely accepted characteristics of patriotism.⁶⁷ In the history of modern China, patriotism became an extension of nationalism, which exerted a profound impact on Chinese society since the late 1800s.⁶⁸ The changing of political regimes led to the change of meaning and practice of patriotism, yet it has always been associated with political parties. After 1949 the Chinese government intensified patriotic education to stimulate the people’s sentiment towards their nation and to promote the courage to fight foreign machinations.⁶⁹ This kind of education infiltrated into the sangha and stirred patriotic sentiment among monks and nuns who had recently become citizens of China. Zhao Puchu declared: “Buddhists are members of the people; they should love their country.”⁷⁰ Buddhists who loved their nation were required to make self-sacrifice: only then would they be considered to have fulfilled their patriotic duty.

On June 14, 1953, Zhao Puchu delivered a speech at the Conference of Young Christians in Beijing and summarized the political task of religious believers. He emphasized the importance of patriotic practice among religious followers. He continued: “It is required in all religions that their followers must love their nation and people, resisting invasion and safeguarding peace. Buddhists are duty-bound to repay the kindness of the nation and people, and always remind us of this duty through reciting the scriptures every day. Working for the benefit and happiness of people without considering even our lives is the vow of

⁶⁶ For more information please see: Walpola Rahula, *The Heritage of Bhikkhu in Educational, Cultural, Social, and Political Life*; Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed? Religion, Politics, and Violence in Sri Lanka*; Xue Yu, *Buddhism, War, and Nationalism—Chinese Monks in the Struggle against Japanese Aggressions, 1934–1945*.

⁶⁷ Shao Tiezheng, *Cong aiguo zhuyi dao gongchan zhuyi*, 9–10.

⁶⁸ During the long history the meaning of patriotism has changed according to different social, political, and geographical situations. For more of some interesting discussion on patriotism, please see: Mary Dieta, “Patriotism: A Brief History of the Term,” 201–15.

⁶⁹ In modern Chinese history there are many similarities between nationalism and patriotism; for more please see: Yongnian Zheng, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China*, 87–95.

⁷⁰ *Xiandai foxue*, vol. 3, no. 36 (1953): 3.

Buddhists.”⁷¹ Here Zhao Puchu reiterated the importance of love toward nation 愛國 more than the love of one’s religion 愛教. Loving one’s nation is primary and the other is secondary: the existence of the religion depends on the existence of the nation. He also claimed that Chinese Buddhists had no separate political standpoints of their own, but always shared the ideology of the Chinese people under the leadership of the Communist Party. Chinese Buddhists in demonstrating their patriotism should work hard for the country and stand firmly by their fellow citizens; only then could they go further by loving their religion.

During the war, an emphatic feature of Buddhist patriotism was the signing of patriotic pledges. In January of 1951, the CBCR, responding to the government call for patriotic education, requested Buddhists in Beijing to sign a patriotic pledge, which consisted of five items: 1) all Buddhists unite to oppose the American invasion of Korea and Taiwan, to resist America’s remilitarization of Japan, and to protect world peace; 2) study hard to enhance one’s understanding of politics, firmly denounce all anti-revolutionary sects; 3) love the nation, love the people, work hard for more production; 4) assist the government to eliminate bandits and Nationalist spies, and reject rumors; 5) fully support the people’s government, the Communist Party, and Chairman Mao.⁷² Earlier, in December 1950, 386 Buddhists in Ningbo signed a patriotic pledge, promising to voluntarily organize a rescue team and prepare to serve soldiers on the warfront. The pledge stated: “We should put aside our robe and rosary, and step up to the frontline with our fellow countrymen with courage and selflessness, and demonstrate the great force of the nation of peace and democracy that we are, against American imperialists. We must destroy the evil fortress of American imperialism and place every one of them before justice. We must eradicate these devilish American imperialists and safeguard peace on our Chinese soil.”⁷³ According to incomplete records pieced together from *Xiandai foxue*, more than 10,000 monks and nuns in more than 20 cities signed patriotic pledges from June 1950 to August 1953.

On March 17, 1951, The Culture and Education Committee of the Democratic Union of China, and its Beijing Branch, jointly organized a seminar on Buddhism and Patriotism. Over twenty Buddhist leaders including Juzan, Fazun 法尊, Zhengguo 正果, Li Shucheng 李書城 (Minister of Agriculture), Pan Huaisu 潘懷素 (Counselor of the State Council), and Zhou Shujia (Director of Lay Buddhist Society in Beijing) articulated their opinions concerning the patriotic history of the Chinese sangha and the role of Buddhist patriotism in contemporary China. They agreed that Buddhism had always been on the side of the people, encouraging the oppressed to resist their rulers while showing love to

⁷¹ Ibid., vol. 1, no. 11 (1951): 7.

⁷² Ibid., vol. 1, no. 6 (1951): 31.

⁷³ Ibid., vol. 1, no. 5 (1951): 32.

the nation. At the end of the seminar, ten tasks of Buddhist patriotic activities were suggested: 1) a Buddhist petition to support the peace pledge campaign; 2) a May 1st parade; 3) encourage Buddhists in Japan and West Germany to protest remilitarization of Japan by American imperialism; 4) encourage Buddhists to join the military; 5) a sangha ambulance corps; 6) urge Buddhists to increase productivity to support the frontline; 7) send delegates to console PVAs in the frontline; 8) consolation letters and medical supplies to the PVA; 9) elect Buddhist representatives into the Committee of Buddhist Circles in Beijing for Resisting America and Assisting Korea; 10) to praise labor models.⁷⁴ The above were said to be the guidelines to Buddhist participation in the Resistance Campaign and the best way to express Buddhist patriotism.

As the Korean War intensified during mid-1951, Buddhist patriotic propaganda reached its climax with the Buddhist idea of repaying kindness.⁷⁵ In July 1951, Yiliang published the article "Patriotic Issues for Four Buddhist Groups" in *Xiandai foxue*. It elucidated the importance of patriotism in connection with the necessity of repaying kindness to the nation's leadership. In this thinking, the establishment of a new China had provided an opportunity for the development of Buddhism and released Buddhists from their previous constraints under so-called feudalistic superstition. According to Yiliang: "Under the wise and just *Common Program* the Buddhists of four groups can finally recover from the fetters of feudalism. This is a gift from this glorious era and a joy for the people, therefore the Buddhists of four groups should above all salute the era of Chairman Mao and praise the rightness of the CCP's cultural policies, or else the Buddhists of four groups today would repeat the disaster of Buddhism in the previous hundreds of years when Buddhists were only able to search for their personal liberation in the dark."⁷⁶ In this way, it was thought that Chairman Mao and the Communist Party saved Buddhism from destruction and gave freedom to Buddhists, who in return therefore should follow the lead of Mao and the Party in protecting the country.

During the early 1950s, a modern twist to patriotism emerged in China. Since the nation, the Communist Party, and the government had become integrated, thus to repay the nation for liberating the people was the same as repaying the kindness of the Communist Party and Chairman Mao. Chairman Mao was conceived of as a savior and a bodhisattva, and Buddhists worshipped him in the same way as they worshipped bodhisattvas. Just before the National Day in 1951, there was a celebration by 400 Fuzhou Buddhists at Fahai Temple 法海寺. They changed the lyrics of traditional Buddhist chants; for example, *Hymn in Praise of the Treasure Cauldron* 寶鼎讚 became: "Precious incense burning in the

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, no. 8 (1951): 32.

⁷⁵ Juzan, "On Buddhist Patriotism." *Xiandai foxue*, vol. 1, no. 11 (1951): 4.

⁷⁶ *Xiandai foxue*, vol. 1, no. 11 (1951): 6.

treasure cauldron, penetrating in ten directions of the universe; support Chairman Mao wholeheartedly; long live the People's Republic of China."⁷⁷ A couplet hung on the sides of the main hall that stated: "The Sixfold Harmony of the Sangha United with the Path of the People; the Limitless Lifespan of the Buddha, Blessing the Long Life of the Nation" 僧號六和要與人民一道; 佛壽無量共祝祖國萬年.

The belief in bodhisattvas is one of the main characteristics of Mahayana Buddhism, and the best form of such belief is to listen to bodhisattva teaching and follow the path. In this way, listening to the word of Chairman Mao and following the path of the Communist Party are the same as expressing belief in Buddhism and faith in the Bodhisattva. Tao Wang Qingyun 陶汪青雲 was a pious lay Buddhist who worked in the education department for years after her graduation from the Hubei Women's Institution of Education in 1919. She truly believed Chairman Mao to be a bodhisattva savoir. She said: "... [H]e is a rebirth of the Bodhisattva! His every thought and action is self-sacrificing and endeavoring toward the welfare of the people."⁷⁸ On September 25, 1951, Buddhists in Chengdu participated in a parade celebrating the second anniversary of the establishment of the People's Republic of China. After the event a lay Buddhist called Niu Cifeng 牛次封 told the audience: "The new concept of democracy is our new teaching; Chairman Mao is the reborn Bodhisattva to actualize such doctrine and alleviate our sufferings."⁷⁹ The audience shouted in agreement and chanted with great devotion: *Namo Avelokitesvara Bodhisattva of Great Compassion* 南無大悲觀世音菩薩.

Conclusion

The Resisting America and Assisting Korea Campaign was both a political and military as well as a social movement. As a social movement it was a collective expression of the Chinese people's patriotic sentiment.⁸⁰ Buddhist participation in the Resistance Campaign, while reflecting the common scenario of the society at the time, also revealed some special features of institutional Buddhism simultaneously. After the liberation and especially because of the land reform, Buddhism in China faced a stern challenge for its very survival. Traditionally, Chinese monks and nuns, and even the whole institution of Buddhism in the past were largely dependent on land rents via farmers who cultivated temple lands

⁷⁷ The traditional text reads: "寶鼎蕪名香, 普遍十方, 虔誠奉獻法中王, 端為世界祝和平, 地久天長; 端為世界祝和平, 地久天長。"

⁷⁸ *Xiandai foxue*, vol. 2, no. 5 (1952): 28.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, no. 4 (1952): 17.

⁸⁰ Zhou Xiaohong, *Xiandai shehui xinlixue*, 435.

and paid a portion of the harvest as rent. The land reform however confiscated temples lands so that monks and nuns lost their economic resources; some in remote areas could not obtain enough food. Monks and nuns had to become self-reliant laborers, and they had to submit to productivity campaigns, just like other farmers and workers. Consequently, the Chinese sangha with a history of over 1,600 years disintegrated, and monks and nuns gradually lost their monastic identity in society. The gloomy future of institutional Buddhism and the fate of the sangha became the outmost concern of Buddhists, especially young monks and nuns. Buddhist participation in the Resistance Campaign therefore not only reflected the social and political situation then, but also illustrated the desperate attempt of the sangha, which worked hard to explore a new path for the survival of Buddhism.

To a large extent, the success of the government's directing the Resistance Campaign into Buddhist communities can be credited to the intense political propaganda and the organizational mobilization of the CCP. In addition, the success should be linked to the vigorous advocacy and engagement of Buddhist leaders such as Juzan and Zhao Puchu. These leaders accommodated the social and political needs of the moment and reinterpreted Buddhist doctrines such as compassionate killing and repaying kindness to one's country; they integrated those ideas into patriotic education and encouraged Buddhists to participate in the Resistance Campaign. Their reinterpretation of traditional Buddhist doctrine was in certain respects arbitrary. For instance, according to the original texts of doctrine, only advanced bodhisattvas could perform such acts as compassionate killing. Why then did these Buddhist leaders in the 1950s intentionally or unintentionally ignore the original texts so as to emphasize compassionate killing? To a large extent, it is because their interpretation had to conform to the wider context of patriotism, which was sweeping Chinese society. Such reinterpretation of Buddhist doctrines in connection with contemporary patriotism was quickly conveyed to Buddhist community nationwide mainly through *Xiandai foxue*, which had been widely received by ordinary Buddhists in general and Buddhist leaders in local areas in particular.⁸¹ To a large extent, *Xiandai foxue* reinforced the patriotic sentiment among Buddhists and thus became part of political propaganda of the CCP and organizational mobilization of the state. Similar to almost all other publications in PRC during the time, the journal could not and would not

⁸¹ At the very beginning, there were about 700 subscriptions, and within a short period the subscription numbers increased up to 4,000.

report any news or materials against the patriotic movement of the Resistance Campaign led by the government although there must be such incidents occurred somewhere, yet as the journal reported they were condemned as “Reactionary Elements” among Buddhists.

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Appendix

Donation Quotas for the Buddhist Airplane as Suggested by the Buddhist Circles in Beijing

Places	Donation Target	Places	Donation Target
上海 Shanghai	750 Million	常州 Changzhou	50 M
北京 Beijing	60-00M	東北 Dongbei	50 M
天津 Tianjin	100 M	鎮江 Zhenjiang	50 M
漢口 Hankou	100 M	福州 Fuzhou	30 M
杭州 Hangzhou	100 M	南昌 Nanchang	30 M
寧波 Ningbo	100 M	青島 Qingdao	30 M
重慶 Chongqing	100 M	寧夏 Ningxia	30 M
成都 Chengdu	100 M	開封 Kaifeng	20 M
廣州 Guangzhou	100 M	青海 Qinghai	20 M
無錫 Wuxi	100 M	甘肅 Gansu	20 M
廈門 Xiamen	50 M	太原 Taiyuan	20 M
西安 Xi'an	50 M	新疆 Xinjiang	20 M
貴陽 Guiyang	50 M	濟南 Ji'nan	20 M
長沙 Changsha	50 M	廣西 Guangxi	20 M
昆明 Kunming	50 M	汕頭 Shantou	20 M
蘇州 Suzhou	50 M	平原 Pingyuan	10 M
揚州 Yangzhou	50 M	綏遠 Suiyuan	10 M
南京 Nanjing	50 M	察哈爾 Chaha'er	10 M
安徽 Anhui	50 M		

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