

## Taixu and the Question of Labour

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### ABSTRACT

China's confrontation with European modernity in the middle of the nineteenth century not only had an important impact on the way the traditional Confucian elite saw themselves and China's position in the world, but also had an important impact on Chinese Buddhism. The Chinese Buddhist world was hereby not only confronted with the growing competition of new religions such as Christianity, but found itself compelled to redefine its position in Chinese society in conditions of increased secularization, and the ideas of socialism, communism, and anarchism advancing. This article examines how the famous Buddhist reformer Taixu (1889–1947) was inspired by these new ideologies to reform Buddhism on the one hand, but how he also clung to the Chinese tradition and its focus on religion on the other hand. The article argues that Claude Henri de Rouvroy, count of Saint-Simon (1760–1825), a French reform thinker during the French Revolution, may have had a more important impact on Taixu's thinking than has been recognized to date.

### KEYWORDS

Taixu; socialism; communism; anarchism; Henry de Saint-Simon

## 1 Introduction

Much scholarly attention has been devoted to the way the traditional Chinese Confucian intellectual world tried to formulate an answer to the challenges posed by European modernity at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Less attention has, however, been devoted to the way also the Chinese Buddhist community was influenced by European modernity, and even less attention has gone to the way ideas of socialism, communism, and anarchism have impacted Buddhist thinkers. It is to the latter that this article is devoted. I will, more precisely, discuss the background and importance of such sayings of the famous Buddhist monk and reformer Taixu's (1889 – 1947) as that Buddhist disciples should " 'under a voluntarily communism' pursue the cause that agricultural work, mining, labour, medicine, education, and arts are for the cause of becoming a Buddha", published in the 1921 issue of *Haichao Yin* (Sound of the Sea Tide), as well as discuss Taixu's later critique on socialism, as voiced in his *Yi Fofa piping shehui zhuyi* (Criticizing Socialism with Buddhism), published in 1925.

## 2 Historical background

Born in the village of Chang'an in Haining county of northern Zhejiang Province, Lü Peilin (1889–1947) would become known as Taixu, one of the most important reformers of Chinese Buddhism in the Republican period. The young Lü Peilin became familiar with the fundamentals of Chan, Tiantai, Huayan and Faxiang Buddhist thinking and practice through his maternal grandmother who took care of him

after the young boy's father had died and his mother had remarried.<sup>1</sup> It is at the age of fourteen that Lü Peilin decided to renounce lay life and that he took on the monastic name of Taixu. Important for his later thinking is that in the 34th year of the Guangxu Emperor (1908–1909)–Taixu was then twenty years old – he came into contact with the reformist monk Wenzhou Huashan, also known as Yunquan who came to the Western Temple (Xifang si) where Taixu was residing.<sup>2</sup> According to Yinshun (1906–2005), one of Taixu's disciples, "Huashan was the first person to start modernizing the Buddhist saṃgha".<sup>3</sup> In a context of a Buddhism that was focused on the veneration of buddhas and bodhisattvas and on the performance of funerary rites for lay people, the latter being a principal source of income for some clerics and their monasteries,<sup>4</sup> and amidst ideas of modernity and secularization that entered China and in which also Christianity was gaining field among many intellectuals, Huashan told Taixu about the necessity for the Buddhist monastic order to modernize and to promote reforms in education, much in line with those intellectuals who were engaged in political and social changes within the secular Chinese world.<sup>5</sup> Judging from Taixu's autobiography, however, Taixu was at first uncertain about the feasibility of such a reform. He wrote:

"When I first heard his (i.e. Venerable Huashan's) words, I did not approve of them [...] I also was of the opinion that what he said could never be in line with the [level of the] scientific thinking of China."<sup>6</sup>

Judging from his creation of 'Buddhist Academies' (*Foxue yuan*) that would have to offer a curriculum that emphasized on the study of the highly logical texts of Yogācāra and Madhyamaka Buddhism, texts that were especially appreciated by European academics at that time but that had been neglected in China for some centuries, however, it appears that Taixu must have gradually become convinced of the necessity to create a rational and superstition-free Buddhism.<sup>7</sup> He in this respect formulated the challenge with which he saw Buddhism confronted, in the following words:

"At present, the Buddhist doctrine is able to establish itself in the world; the only question is whether the Buddhist community is able to maintain itself in the world".<sup>8</sup>

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1 See Taixu (2005j), where he states that "I started to be conscious of things when I was five years old. [...] My earliest memory and image are a lamp in coloured glass in front of a niche for Guanyin (Avalokiteśvara)".

2 See Taixu (2005k).

3 Yinshun (1973, p.33).

4 See Birnbaum (2003, p.129); Pittman (2001, p.175).

5 See Pittman (2001, p.67).

6 Taixu (2005k).

7 This refocusing on the logical tradition of Buddhism – away from the prevailing ritual form of Buddhism – may also be partly explained by the fact that Taixu studied works on Western logic while in solitary retreat from 1914 to 1917. See Ritzinger (2001, p.5). On the 'modern' and 'scientific' aspect of Yogācāra: see Li (2003, pp.22-24 and p.48). According to Pacey (2014, p.149), Taixu was of the opinion that it was especially Yogācāra Buddhism that had the potential to enhance the modernist endeavor of his contemporaries.

8 See Taixu (2005c). Also Zhang Taiyan (1868–1936) and Su Mansu (1884–1918) had pointed out that it were the Buddhists themselves who were the cause of corruption in the Buddhist world. This, so they claimed, was because the monks had become lax in following the precepts and were enjoying a cozy and banal life instead of practicing meditation. Monastics, so they further claimed, were not interested in the cause of the Dharma when performing ceremonies for the dead, but in money. This interest also had led to internal strife about property. It would, therefore, only be appropriate for the government to confiscate their property and use this revenue for educational purposes. See Deng (1994, p.146). Also see Bingenheimer (2004, pp.77-78 and pp.120-125).

For Taixu, the study curriculum of the 'Buddhist Academies' further had to be complemented with charitable action—very similar to the work Christian missionaries were doing in China.<sup>9</sup> 'New monks' (*xin seng*) who were impregnated with these new values had to turn the here-and-now into a 'pure land'.

One of the first such 'new monks' was Zhang Zongdai, a native of Sichuan Province who had studied law, literature, philosophy, and Buddhism in the Pingmin University of Beijing, and had, in 1921, gone to Russia to investigate socialism. Back in China, Zhang Zongdai was installed in the 'Wuchang Buddhist Academy' (*Wuchang Foxueyuan*), the first 'Buddhist Academy', established in 1922. Zhang Zongdai actively participated in the patriotic student movement and, in Wuchang, founded the journal *Xin Fohua xunkan* (New Buddhistic Weekly). Soon after its establishment, the journal changed names to *Fohua xin qingnian* (Buddhistic New Youth), a name that is reminiscent of the famous *Xin Qingnian* (New Youth) that had been founded by Chen Duxiu in September 1915 in Shanghai. In the journal *Xin seng* (New Monks), the 'Wuchang Buddhist Academy' criticized the conservatives within the Buddhist community.<sup>10</sup> In this sense, the position of the journal *Xin seng* parallels the endeavor of the revolutionaries to create a '*xin min*' (new people).<sup>11</sup>

Taixu's acquaintance with Venerable Qiyun, a monk who had joined the 'Revolutionary League' (*Tongmeng hui*) in Japan and with whom he met in Anhui Province, further made him familiar with the ideas of Sun Zhongshan (1866–1925). Taixu was particularly intrigued by the political programme of Sun Zhongshan that is known as the 'Three Principles of the People' (*San min zhuyi*).<sup>12</sup> This contact with the ideas of Sun Zhongshan can be regarded as Taixu's introduction to political partisans (*dangren*).<sup>13</sup> To this has to be added that the revolutionary atmosphere that preceded the declaration of the Republic of China in 1912 not only brought Taixu in contact with the ideas of Sun Zhongshan, but also with the ideas of important socialists, anarchists, and revolutionaries. With them, he engaged in reading and studying the works of Karl Marx (1818–1883) as well as with the works of revolutionary authors such as Leo Tolstoi (1828–1910), Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921), Mihail Bakunin (1814–1876), Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865), and Kōtoku Shūsui (1871–1911).<sup>14</sup>

### 3 Taixu on socialism, anarchism, and buddhism

It might be rewarding to interpret the development in Taixu's thinking from his first encounter with the monk Wenzhou Huashan in the 34<sup>th</sup> year of the Guangxu Emperor to the establishment of the 'Wuchang Buddhist Academy' in 1922 against the background of two historical events that showed the negative side of capitalist modernity. The first of these was the replacement of Sun Zhongshan by Yuan Shikai (1859–1916) as President of the Republic of China in 1912 that stood in stark contrast with the successful experience of the 1917 Russian revolution. With respect to the latter, communist ideas spread among the Chinese youth in general, and communism was increasingly advocated as an alternative for the erstwhile Confucian society.<sup>15</sup> The second historical event that shaped Taixu's vision on politics was the decision of the 'Versailles Treaty' that the German possessions in China were not to be returned to

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9 See Birnbaum (2003, p.130).

10 See Jiang (1992, p.17).

11 Pittman (2001, p.62).

12 See Pittman (2001, p.69). The 'Three People's Principles' are (1) *Minzu* nationalism: removing the Qing; (2) *Minquan* power of the people: introducing a Western style democracy in three phases: military dictatorship; guided democracy; full democracy with a 'trias politica'; (3) *Minsheng* wellbeing of the people: Sun Zhongshan's social-economic programme.

13 See Yinshun (1973, p.35).

14 Taixu (2005k).

15 See Jiang (1992, p.6).

China, but to be transferred to Japan.<sup>16</sup> This decision abruptly shattered the hopes that had been raised through President Thomas Woodrow Wilson's (1856 – 1924) speech to the American Congress of 8 January 1918 in which he mentioned his famous 'fourteen points', a series of propositions that had to make an end to World War I and that had to be brought to the table of the peace talks in Versailles. Among these fourteen points were the call for the establishment of a 'League of Nations' in which both small and big states would be politically independent and territorially uncontested (point 14), and the call for decolonization, taking into account the sovereignty of the concerned people (point 5).<sup>17</sup> In China, the journal *Xin Qingnian* had welcomed these fourteen points as a sign of the advance of Western democracy and science, and as a sign that the Allied victory in World War I would indeed make an end to the imperialist encroachments on Chinese territory.

The indigestible outcome of the 'Versailles Treaty' helps to explain why Taixu advocated to combine Buddhism with socialism. In the journal *Haichao Yin* (Sound of the Sea Tide), a monthly publication established by Taixu after the May Fourth Movement (*wu si yundong*) of 1919 and aimed at the exploration of models for the organization and education of 'new monks' (*xin seng*), Taixu published the text "*Seng zizhi shuo*" (Explanation of Self-governance of Monks) in 1921, a year prior to the establishment of the 'Wuchang Buddhist Academy'. In this text, it is stated that Buddhist disciples have to:

" 'under a voluntarily communism' pursue the cause that agricultural work, mining, labor, medicine, education, and arts are for the cause of becoming a Buddha, and that 'under a peaceful nationalism' policemen, lawyers, officials, servants and merchants are added".<sup>18</sup>

This statement, according to Yinshun, was indebted to the earlier mentioned monk Wenzhou Huashan.<sup>19</sup> Yinshun links this viewpoint up to the first year of the Republic, when Taixu was close to the 'New Socialist Party' (*Xin shehui dang*) and functioned as editor-in-chief of the journal *Liangxin Yuekan* (Conscience Monthly), a journal advocating 'anarchistic communism'.<sup>20</sup> In 1912, Taixu is, more precisely, reported to have stated that:

"The political perspectives of anarchism and Buddhism are very close; it can be progressively advanced from democratic socialism".<sup>21</sup>

It is in this respect most notable that when Taixu organized a first 'East Asian Buddhist Conference' in Tokyo in 1925, Venerable Shanhui (1881 – 1945), a monk who was born in Taiwan but who had been ordained on the mainland and who had established a temple near Keelung upon his return to Taiwan,<sup>22</sup> delivered a talk in which he claimed that the Buddhist monastic system corresponded to the Marxist idea of a classless society, but did not have to resort to violence. Buddhism, so he claimed, could therefore help bring about world peace and egalitarianism.<sup>23</sup>

To understand why, for Taixu, democratic socialism was a step towards anarchism—the latter arguably

16 Furth (2002, pp.92-93).

17 Wilson (1918). <https://kr.usembassy.gov/education-culture/infopedia-usa/living-documents-american-history-democracy/woodrow-wilson-fourteen-points-speech-1918/>

18 Jiang (1992, pp.6-7).

19 Yinshun (1973, pp;122-123).

20 Yinshun (1973, p.63).

21 See Yinshun (1973, p.64).

22 See Welch (1968, pp.160-173).

23 See Sengcan (1981, p.2).

being a political goal with at least some resemblances with the Buddhist world view—it is useful to have a look at his *Yi Fofa piping shehui zhuyi* (Criticizing Socialism with Buddhism), a text he wrote in 1925. Outlining the difference between governance and anarchy, he states:

“When there is governance, then one keeps relying on the fact that it is to the nation-state to set up a government in order to either go into collective production (*jichan*), or communism (*gongchan*). Russia, for example, uses the government to execute communism. When there is no governance, no government is established, and each person does to his capability and receives according to what he needs. Because a government is the talisman of the capitalists, it is therefore so that advocating to topple the government also extends to the nation-state, the family, and religion, that are also fully to be toppled.”<sup>24</sup>

In the following passage of *Yi Fofa piping shehui zhuyi*, Taixu explains the difference between ‘*jichan*’, collective production, and ‘*gongchan*’, communism, in more detail, as follows:

“Collectivism is when the remuneration for benefits that is based on the amount of work done and on the ability, can be attributed to private use, and remains limited to the use of the individual. When an individual has died, it is then returned to the collective. In communism, it is not only so that all institutions of production are common property, but regardless of the amount of work, the use is ‘each according to what one needs’. No private accumulation is allowed”.<sup>25</sup>

Three important elements can be deduced from the above two quotations. The first regards Taixu’s statement that “advocating to topple the government,” as the socialist revolutionaries in Russia had done, “also extends to the nation-state, the family, and religion”. For Taixu, the socialist revolution had thus exchanged the capitalist type of state organization for a socialist/communist one. As a logical deduction, an anarchist society will – by absence of state organization – keep social institutions such as the family and religious organizations such as the Buddhist monastic organization intact. This explains why, as second important element, anarchism therefore is the better system. The third element is that Taixu’s description of ‘collectivism’ indeed appears to resemble the actual organization of monastic life. That is to say, it thus appears that Taixu prefers ‘*jichan*’ over ‘*gongchan*’ or communism.

Taixu’s ‘regret’ that religion would be overthrown is visible in his critique on Russian communism he voiced in a lecture he delivered in Xiamen, Fujian Province, in 1930:

“Contemporary people have come to regard religion as a relic of the past and as unsuited for the civilized world of today [...] As far as I observe the countries in the West [however], the foundation of their social cohesion is nothing but the power of religion [...] The Communist Party [of Russia] only believes in its communism. It discards religion in name, but adopts the reality of religion. When it appeals to communism to unify the thinking of the people, this is in order to accomplish the feature of their Communist Party rule. The intention of the Socialist Party is the same. Therefore, when the Socialist Party and the Communist Party instigate to overthrow religion, this merely is [an expression of] their wish to destroy the old-style religion and to establish a new religion; one might consider extreme anarchism as the contemporary movements that can really do without religion [...] In reality, mankind is social [...]. Therefore, individualist anarchism is a dead end; it leads nowhere. Mankind cannot live together without the formative power of mutual social cohesion

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24 Taixu (2005f).

25 Taixu (2005f).

even for one single day. In other words, mankind cannot be without the uniting force of religion for even one single day".<sup>26</sup>

The gist of this 1930 lecture—upholding the Chinese cultural tradition—was, actually, already expressed in a lecture he had held in Taiwan in October 1917 and in which he had proposed Buddhism as an alternative for Christianity (that was associated with the West):

"Buddhism is representative of East Asian civilization. At this point, Christianity that is representative of contemporary Western civilization has already lost its religious power in Europe and in America. Europeans and Americans have thus lost their basis for a secure life and for the fulfillment of their destiny. This is the reason why the great World War is now taking place. We should proclaim our East Asian good word of peace and universally spread Buddhism throughout the world in order to change their murderous perversions and in order to save all beings from great disaster".<sup>27</sup>

Interestingly, in his *Yi Fofa piping shehui zhuyi*, he also touches upon the religious 'origin' of socialism:

"The name 'socialism' was used by the eighteenth-century Englishman Robert Owen in his treatise on social transformation, and later also by Saint Simon and others.<sup>28</sup> [...] Although the origin of socialism is a reaction to machine production, it was also derived from the idea of religious fraternity and equality, and therefore, the Christian Saint-Simon [should be considered as] the first one to speak about socialism, with his idea that all people should have equal access to all property, that there is no need of the classes of rich, poor, high and low. Later, there was Marx who made use of science. According to him, all who had been speaking about socialism previously, did not go beyond idle talk. He impregnated society with scientific methods. [In society that was] first constituted by the assembly of the masses, what was needed for the life of the masses was property. Therefore, regardless whether it concerns politics, religion, literature, customs, thought, etc., all was changed through changes in the property system. In olden times, when natural objects were used as the value standard, what was honoured in religion were also natural things, and when later gold, silver, and banknotes were introduced, these were also enshrined as the most respected spirits for worship or impersonal spirits. Therefore, it is known that the phenomena of society are all changed through the system of property. Therefore, changing society should be from a change in the property system. When the property system is changed for the good, then society will be good".<sup>29</sup>

That Taixu adheres to the 'Chinese tradition' is also evident from the following passage of *Yi Fofa piping shehui zhuyi* which appears to indicate that the classical Chinese ideal of 'datong' 大同 resembles communism.

"When speaking about socialists, it may [indeed] be so that, on the one hand, thoughts of envy

26 Taixu (2005g).

27 See Yinshun (1973, p.92).

28 Robert Owen (1771–1858) was a Welsh social reformer. He is considered to be the founder of the cooperation movement and British socialism. Claude Henri de Rouvroy, count of Saint-Simon (1760–1825) was a French reform thinker during the French Revolution. According to Karl Marx, both Robert Owen and Henri de Saint-Simon were prominent champions of 'utopian socialism'. See Koenen (2018, p.203).

29 Taixu (2005f).

may arise when seeing the arrogance of the capitalists, which is not a good thing, and that, on the other hand, thoughts of wanting to relieve the poverty and bitterness of the workers come up, which then is a very good thing, and that, therefore, the aspirations of [socialists] are good, but, in the Liyun chapter of the old books, it is said: 'In the world of great unity (*datong*), goods are left abandoned on the ground; there is no need to hide them'. This [quotation] also applies to communism. When a Buddhist monk does not have property because he has discarded property, [...] then also this is public possession. All receive the shared use [of property], each according to one's ability, and each according to what one needs".<sup>30</sup>

The reference to the Chinese ideal of '*datong*' in this 1925 text gains even more importance in light of the fact that, judging from Taixu's autobiography, it is his reading of the philosophical works of influential thinkers of the time such as Kang Youwei's (1858–1927) *Datong shu* (The Book of the Great Community), that convinced him of Wenzhou Huashan's ideas.<sup>31</sup> This also explains why, on another occasion, he had expressed the 'universal' possibilities of Buddhism, as follows:

"We have to spread the Buddhist doctrine to mankind now. Regardless of whether it concerns England, Russia, France, Japan, or America, we have to propagate the Buddhist doctrine, to create a Buddhist doctrine that is social and universal, and to enable mankind to experience its benefits. The Buddhist doctrine therefore is not devoid of the masses of the people or an independent science. All politicians, lawyers, educators, scientists, philosophers, authors, farmers, workers and merchants all need to study it. It is not necessary to leave lay life to study Buddha".<sup>32</sup>

When democratic socialism is a preparatory step towards anarchy, when anarchy is, in some sense, to be compared with the Buddhist type of social organization in which all is collective production (*jjichan*), and when Buddhism has to be spread to the whole of mankind without – as the monk Shanhui claimed – having to resort to violence, then indeed the following passage of *Yi Fofa piping shehui zhuyi* becomes logical. Taixu states:

"Explained more logically, it is so that in this receptacle world (*bhājanaloka*), all things one depends on and in which one invests are in their origin transformations through common *karman*".<sup>33</sup>

With mentioning the Buddhist 'receptacle world', we indeed may come more closely to Taixu's interpretation of anarchy. From a *Yogācāra* point of view, the receptacle world – *bhājanaloka* in Sanskrit – is a transformation of common/collective *karman*. The *bhājanaloka* is the surrounding world that is experienced by all human beings similarly by virtue of their cognitive communality. The receptacle world differs from the so-called *sattvaloka* or the 'world of sentient beings'. The latter is the world as

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30 Taixu (2005f).

31 Taixu (2005k); Pittman (2001, pp.67-68). Other works that influenced his thinking were Liang Qichao's (1873–1929) *Xinmin shuo* (On New People), Zhang Taiyan's (1868–1936) *Gao fo dizi shu* (Letter to Followers of the Buddha), Yan Fu's (1894–1921) *Tianyan lun* (On Evolution), and Tan Sitong's (1865–1898) (An Exposition on Benevolence). Koenen (2018, p.195-, interestingly remarks that Henri de Saint-Simon aspired world domination in the domain of ideas, in the same way as Napoleon had done in the domain of the material.

32 Taixu (2005i). This is an undated document. However, as in the *Taixu dashi quanshu* (The Complete Works of the Venerable Master Taixu), it is inserted in between a document dated in the Winter of 1928 and a document dated in the fifth month of 1929, we may assume that this text was written in late 1928 or early 1929.

33 Taixu (2005f).

experienced by sentient beings individually. This experience differs according to the karmic fruition that underlies each individual existence. That the *bhājanaloka* may, in first instance, be a description of monastic life, but has to, eventually, encompass the whole world, can be surmised from Taixu's claim that the whole world should be transformed into a Buddhist paradise.

This religious stance of Taixu's, and the relation between the receptacle world and the world of sentient beings translates into his propagation for a 'Buddhism for the human society' (*renjian Fojiao*) as a complement to and perfection of Sun Zhongshan's form of nationalism.<sup>34</sup> Taixu stated:

"We depend on Mr. [Sun] Zhongshan's 'power of the people' (*minquan zhuyi*) to establish China, and we simultaneously have to make sure that there is a belief that suits the universe and that is the essence that unites the power of the people. When I observe all religions, it is Buddhism that is best suited [for this aim]. When the masses of the people will have this new universal belief, the power of their faith in [Sun Zhongshan's] 'power of the people' will increase because the spirit of these politics and this religion are fully the same".<sup>35</sup>

On occasion, Taixu even referred to his own efforts in terminology that paralleled Sun's *Sanmin zhuyi*, advocating a "Three-principled Buddhism" (*San fo zhuyi*) that comprised an ideal Saṃgha of Dharma teachers (*foseng zhuyi*), an ideal lay Buddhist order of active bodhisattvas (*fohua zhuyi*), and a national culture infused with the spirit of Mahayana Buddhism and reaching out to the entire world (*foguo zhuyi*).<sup>36</sup> The parallel between Sun Zhongshan's '*San min zhuyi*' and the 'Three-principled Buddhism' was even expressed in terms of "Buddhism being the ultimate goal of Sanminism and Sanminism being Buddhism put into practice".<sup>37</sup>

That it is life on earth that has to be made into a paradise may also explain Taixu's standpoint, proclaimed in 1947, that there was no need for Buddhists to form their own political party. He claimed:

"Once again, Buddhist adherents can be found within the Nationalist Party (Guomindang), the China Youth Party (Qingnian dang), the China Democratic Socialist Party (Minzhu shehui dang), and the Democratic League (Minzhu tongmeng). Even in the Communist Party (Gongchandang), there are [Buddhist adherents]. There are even more [Buddhist adherents] among [people] without party affiliation. When a Buddhist Party would be formed, they would all have their original standpoints [that align with] some political party or [standpoints which] do not belong to a political party, and it would be impossible to ask them to convert [themselves] into a Buddhist Party. When, alternatively, a Buddhist Party would be established separately, it would deviate from each of them individually. Also among my friends who study Buddhism and [Buddhist] adherents, there are people who [belong to] different political parties and some who do not [belong to a party]. To this have to be added their connections with philosophical culture and charitable tasks such as setting up cultural education. Every single religious person or anarchist has many friendly relations. When I would be leading a Buddhist Party, then previously existing relations in all possible domains would be reversed and reduced. That is why Buddhism should not establish a political

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34 We can also mention that Taixu's political stance practically materialized in his close ties with Jiang Jieshi (1887–1975) and his membership of the Nationalist Party. See Guo (1997, pp.3-4).

35 Taixu (2005g). Also see Pacey (2014, pp.161-162).

36 Also see Taixu (2005g).

37 Pittman (2001, p.184). Taixu's orientation towards the Nationalist party had actually already set in in the mid-1920s when he began to distance himself from the Communist Party. This may have been the result of his struggle with the role of social conflict in Communism.



party".<sup>38</sup>

#### 4 Conclusion

As this was the case for so many of his contemporaries, the constant changes on the national and the international political scene deeply impacted Taixu. Convinced of the necessity to modernize Buddhist practice so as to safeguard the survival of the Buddhist faith in the contemporary world, the way he envisioned the methods to make this modernization possible were inspired by socialist, communist, and anarchist ideas, as well as by traditional Confucian concepts and Sun Zhongshan's 'Three Principles of the People'. In the end, it was on the latter doctrine that he construed his 'Buddhism for the human society' (*renjian Fojiao*), in this way linking the relation between the Buddhist concepts of the 'receptacle world' and the 'world of living beings' up with a philosophical/political connection. Labour was not for the socialist cause but for the Buddhist cause of making life on earth a paradise. This concept was first expressed in the term '*rensheng Fojiao*': the Buddhism of the 'vehicle of ordinary people'.<sup>39</sup> In 1928, focusing on the aspects of (1) transformation of the self and the world, (2) transcending local culture, and (3) harmony with science, he introduced the term '*rensheng Fojiao*', 'Buddhism for the living'.<sup>40</sup> As remarked by Hong Jinlian, the concept 'Buddhism for the living' thus comprises elements of Western humanism and scientific optimism, as well as original Buddhist values.<sup>41</sup> A modern, humanistic, and scientific 'Buddhism for the living' had to divert its attention away from focusing on the death and the afterlife to focusing on the present world of the living; 'Buddhism for the living' had to use the teachings of the Buddha to take care of practical issues and had to help human beings to make progress and to improve the world in which they are living.<sup>42</sup> The thisworldly orientation of Taixu's reform movement explains the introduction of the concept '*renjian Fojiao*', 'Buddhism for the human society' or 'humanistic Buddhism', a term he first used in 1933. Taixu stated:

"[The term] '*renjian Fojiao*' expresses that one in no way has to instruct people to leave mankind and become a spirit, or that it would be a Buddhism in which everyone should go forth and become a monk in a temple, on a mountain, or in a forest. [The term] expresses that one should improve society with the Buddhist principles and make sure that mankind makes progress. It is a Buddhism that improves the world. [...] In order to establish '*renjian Fojiao*', it is therefore necessary to start from the thinking of the common people. [...] When ordinary people believe that buddhas and bodhisattvas are like spirits, this is a very big mistake!"<sup>43</sup>

Let me conclude by referring back to Taixu's idea of '*jichan*', and more precisely in a comparison with Claude Henri de Rouvroy, count of Saint-Simon. For Saint-Simon, 'socialism' was a historical process that had to lead to ever higher forms of socialization and ultimately to a systematic organization of total social production, in which private property would in any case be subordinate to the common good and the right of inheritance would be abolished. He was also, however, a fierce opponent of

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38 Taixu (2005e).

39 See Taixu (2005d).

40 See Taixu (2005d). Pittman (2001, p.169) states that '*rensheng Fojiao*': "was a theme that Taixu first began to explore in a 1928 lecture in Shanghai, and [...] was one that he continued to detail until his final lecture on the subject in Zhenjiang in August 1946". For Taixu's 1928 lecture: see Taixu 2005a. Also See Taixu (2005b).

41 Hong (1995, pp.137 ff).

42 Taixu (2005d); Long (2000, p.59).

43 Taixu (2005h).

political upheavels and he advocated a system in which political authority was gradually replaced by social authority. Towards the end of his life, he propagated a 'new Christianity' in which he focused on the uniting force of religion.<sup>44</sup> There may therefore be more Saint-Simon in Taixu than has hitherto been acknowledged.

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<sup>44</sup> See Koenen (2018, p.207).

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