

**THIỆN PHÚC**

**ESSENTIAL SUMMARIES OF  
HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT OF  
VIETNAMESE BUDDHISM**

(YẾU LƯỢC LỊCH SỬ PHÁT TRIỂN PHẬT GIÁO VIỆT NAM)

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## *Preface*

Buddhism may have been introduced to Vietnam by sea as early as the first century. By the second century, Tongkin already had several famous monks, especially Sanghapala. However, Vietnamese Buddhism had not developed until 580 when Vinitaruci, an Indian monk, a disciple of the Third Patriarch Seng-Ts'an, long before its split into northern and southern schools. The first lineage of Vietnamese Zen Masters ended with the death of its twenty-eighth patriarch in 1216, however, its influence continued to be prominent in the north. The second Zen lineage in Vietnam was initiated by the Chinese monk named Wu-Yun-T'ung, a disciple of Pai-Zhang. This lineage of Zen Masters also died out in the thirteenth century, though the school itself survives. Although the first two lineages of Zen did not survive as lineages, they did lay the solid foundations for future Vietnamese Buddhism. In the Đinh dynasty (969-981), king Đinh Tiên Hoàng established a State-sponsored Vietnamese Sangha and initiated the practice of appointing eminent monks to advisory positions at court, offices formerly filled exclusively by Confucian scholars. In the Early Lê dynasty (981-1009), the first complete Chinese Tripitaka was imported from China, establishing the scriptural basis of Vietnamese Buddhism. The Lý dynasty spanned the golden age of Vietnamese independence. In 1069, the Lý dynasty's campaign of southward expansion against Champa reached its farthest extent, the seventeenth parallel. In the course of this campaign, a very significant prisoner of war was brought to Thăng Long Capital from captured Champa territory. This prisoner was the Chinese monk Ts'ao-Tang. With the strong support of king Lý Thánh Tông (1054-1072), Ts'ao-Tang established the Ts'ao-Tang Zen lineage. Later, the Pure Land sect (from China) also gradually became prominent in Vietnam and it maintains to the present day. Besides, most of Chinese Buddhist sects were propagated and survived in Vietnam.

This little book titled "Essential Summaries of History of Development of Vietnamese Buddhism" is only briefly sketching the development of Vietnamese Buddhism with some recorded Great Buddhist thinkers and scholars that this author has noted; it is not a

profound study of Buddhist history in Vietnam. Truly speaking, when Buddhism was transmitted to Vietnam, its teachings wonderfully mixed with Vietnamese popular faith to create exceptionally special teachings, for instance, teachings of Hoa Hao Buddhism. No matter what happened, the understanding of Buddhist teachings always remain a matter not easily comprehensible. The Buddhist practitioners' journey demands continuous efforts with right understanding and practice. Presently even with so many books available on Vietnamese Buddhism, I venture to compose this booklet titled “Essential Summaries of History of Development of Vietnamese Buddhism” in Vietnamese and English to introduce a brief history of development of Vietnamese Buddhism, some Vietnamese Buddhist Sects, Vietnamese Zen Sects and methods of cultivation; the Vietnamese Pure Land Sect and the method of cultivation; the Vietnamese Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Sect and methods of cultivation; scholar Monks & Nuns who had helped maintaining and developing Buddhism in Vietnam. At the same time, some typically outstanding lay Buddhist scholars in Vietnam are also introduced in this little book. Hoping everyone can penetrate the Buddha's wonderful teachings and can achieve a mindful, peaceful, and happy life.

Thiện Phúc

***Part One***  
***Vietnamese Buddhism &***  
***Its Steps of Ups and Downs***  
***(Phần Một: Phật Giáo Việt Nam & Những Bước Thăng Trầm)***





## *Chapter One*

### *An Overview of Vietnamese Buddhism*

Because of its location at the edge of Southeast Asia and bordering on China, Vietnam has been influenced by both Theravada from the South and Mahayana from the North. Furthermore, among the Southeast Asian countries, Vietnamese culture had been more closely akin to that of Chinese, so Vietnamese Buddhism tends to lean more to the Mahayana Buddhism. However, owing to her geographical location and historical development, Theravada Buddhism gradually rooted into the daily lives of the people. Buddhism came to Vietnam from a variety of quarters, including China, Funan, Cambodia, Champa (a lost kingdom in Central Vietnam in the 15<sup>th</sup> century), and from monks who traveled directly from India by sea. Buddhism may have been introduced to Vietnam by sea as early as the first century. In around the second and the third century B.C., when numerous Buddhist missions were sent abroad by Emperor Asoka to disseminate the Buddha's Teachings in such distant countries beyond the borders of India as those in Africa, West and Central Asia as well as South East Asia including Malaysia, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Champa and Vietnam which was then known as Tongkin or Giao Chi District (now Bac Ninh province). Until the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Vietnam was still under Chinese control, so Chinese influence was so strong on Vietnamese society in all aspects, including the spread of Buddhism. By the second century, Tongkin already had several famous monks, especially Sanghapala. It is believed that among the three ancient Buddhist centers in East Asia, Lo-Yang, Peng-Ch'eng, and Luy-Lau, Luy Lau center in Giao Chi (Tongkin) was then the first to be founded under the Han Dynasty, around the early first century A.D. Luy Lau at that time was the capital of Giao Chi, which was then a Chinese colony, was on the main trade route between India and China, so before landing in China, most pioneer Indian monks landed in Tongkin. Therefore, Luy Lau became a favorable and prosperous resort for Indian pioneer missionaries to stay and preach the Buddha's Teachings before continuing their journey to the North. And therefore, the Order Buddhism of Luy Lau

was founded even before the ones in Lo-Yang and Peng-Ch'eng. According to the document recorded in an Anthology of the Most Talented Figures in Ch'an Park, our most ancient Buddhist literary collection, Master K'ang Seng Hui, a monk of Sogdian origin, was the first Buddhist Master at Luy Lau Center. He was born in Tongkin, where he was received into the Order of monks afterwards. He became the most famous monk who translated a large number of Buddhist Canonical books into Chinese and later he visited Nan-King, where he built the first temple and preached the Dharma. At that time, Luy Lau had more than 20 temples and 500 monks. It is known that the Sutra of the forty-Two Sections appeared at Luy Lau in the second century.

## *Chapter Two*

### *The Sangha's Role in Vietnamese History*

*A Summary of the Role of the Monks in the History of Establishing and Defending the Nation in Vietnam:* The Buddha never encourages his disciples to participate in the government political activities, and His Teachings never mention the role of the Sangha in the Government. However, the Buddha's Teachings always concern with human beings' welfare and happiness. If we look closely into the four immeasurable minds we will see through Immeasurable loving kindness, Immeasurable compassion, Immeasurable inner joy, Perfect equanimity or immeasurable detachment, Buddhism positively contributes to stabilizing society and training people in good character. As for Vietnam, Buddhism entered Vietnam during the process of establishing and defending the nation of this people, and therefore, Vietnamese Buddhism also contributed so many eminent Zen Masters and Monks for the country. In the process of establishing and defending the nation, it's no doubt that the Buddhist ideology being attached to the nation's political activities, and this religion has become a national religion going along with the ups and downs of the national history. From dynasties of Dinh, Pre-Le, Ly, Tran, Post-Le, and Nguyen, the role of the Sangha has been so important to the nation in all fields. Under the Dinh dynasty, Zen Master Khuong Viet (Ngo Chan Luu) was appointed the Supreme Patriarch of the Sangha Council. He helped king Dinh Tien Hoang stabilize society through Buddhist doctrines, at the same time, he worked officially for the imperial court to help the mandarins to govern the country effectively. Later, in 980, he assisted king Le Dai Hanh in the role of a consultant on diplomacy with the Sung in China. In the Pre-Le dynasty, king Le Dai Hanh always consulted with Zen Masters Van Hanh and Phap Thuan about national affairs. Under the Ly and Chen dynasties, so many monks held the title of the National Teachers who were responsible to advise the king and imperial court on how to govern the country. In 1130 king Ly Nhan Tong invited Zen Master Vien Thong to the imperial court to ask about the national affairs. He advised the king that to love the people means

to respect them, so both the king and the mandarins must practice their virtue in order to rule over the nation in peace. In the history of establishing and defending the nation, there have been a lot of eminent monks who took part in the national affairs; however, feudal historians only mentioned the kings and the mandarins of the dynasties. In recent history, in 1963, the power of the Sangha of the United Buddhist Order in particular, and the power of Buddhism in general were demonstrated by a decisive role in bringing down the regime of President Ngo Dinh Diem.

*Reasons for the Monks to Participate in the Government Political Activities:* There are many reasons for the monks to take part in the government political activities. In the history of establishing and defending the nation, Vietnam experienced a lot of wars, so its leaders needed intellectuals who could help win these wars. From the first to the seventeenth century, Vietnam could only find its intellectuals in two classes: intellectual students and monks. In 971, king Dinh Tien Hoang established Dai-Co-Viet Sangha and appointed the title of Supreme Patriarch (Zen Master Khuong Viet). The king also adopted Buddhist doctrines as spiritually guiding principles of the imperial court. Later, king Le Dai Hanh appointed Zen Masters Van Hanh and Phap Thuan as his political advisers. So, why did the monks take part in the government political activities? The first reason was the circumstances of the nation; the country needed them to defend the nation. The second reason was that they were knowledgeable on national affairs, and they understood the public because they lived very close to the commoners. The third reason was that most of the kings trusted them because they only came to give the king their advice and then went back to their temples, and they never took any positions in the imperial court or government.

## *Chapter Three*

### *Vietnamese Canonical Literature & Educational Facilities of Vietnamese Buddhism*

*Vietnamese Canonical Literature:* The canonical literature of Vietnamese Buddhism comes mainly from China. Even though many scriptures have been translated into Vietnamese, they contain a plethora of technical terms, which cause uncomfortable to most lay people as well as most monks and nuns when reciting sutras. Despite this, chanting of sutras is one of the most widespread religious practices of Vietnamese Buddhism. The most popular sutras in Vietnamese Buddhism include the Saddharma-Pundarika-Sutra, the Vimalakirti-Nirdesa-Sutra, the Surangama Sutra, the Amitabha Sutra (both long and short versions), and the Mahaparinirvana Sutra, etc. Until this date, Vietnamese Buddhism does not have its own canon yet; however, in the 1980s lots of efforts have been focused in translating the Buddhist Tripitaka, either from Chinese or Sanskrit, or Pali into Vietnamese. In 2003, Bhiksu Thich Nguyen Tang in Taiwan claimed that he finished translating a complete Vietnamese Buddhist Canon and he is in the process of publishing all the volumes at this time.

*Educational Facilities of Vietnamese Buddhism:* a) *The Formation of Buddhist Study Associations:* In the 1920s, there was a Buddhist revival in Vietnam, and beginning in 1931 a number of new Buddhist organizations were founded throughout the country. From 1931 to 1934, Most Venerable Khanh Hoa headed many Vietnamese Buddhist Learning Centers and he tried to gradually restore Vietnamese Buddhism. For Vietnamese Buddhism, in the 1930s, the tasks of establishment an educational system have been initiated. However, due to lack of a unified organization, three regions North, Central and South established their own facilities and associations. After 1954, Buddhists in Southern Vietnam established many Buddhists Associations, such as The An Nam Buddhist Study Association, The Southern Buddhist Research, and so on. In 1964, Buddhism in the South restored with the formation of the United Buddhist Order. Thus, after almost 50 years of revival and development, even though the country

was still in the war time, and even the Buddhist educational system has not yet perfected, Vietnamese Buddhism has been considered revived.

*b) Van Hanh University:* Before 1975, there was Van Hanh University in Saigon which was so famous with its five departments: Buddhist Studies, Humanity, Social Science, Applied Science and the Linguistic Department. Especially the Department of Buddhist Studies, there were around 400 students each year.

*c) Current Buddhist Educational Facilities:* Nowadays, Vietnamese Buddhism has three Buddhist Universities, one in Saigon, one in Hue, and one in Hanoi. In Cantho, the Theravada Buddhist Institute was established in 2008. Besides, there are about ten Buddhist Colleges opened in other cities and towns, and around 30 Buddhist High Schools in almost every province.

*d) Vietnamese Buddhist Research Institute:* The Vietnamese Buddhist Research Institute was founded by Most Venerable Thich Minh Chau in 1989. Its main tasks include elucidating the Buddha's Teachings, widening Buddhist activities both in Vietnam and abroad, and propagation of the Dharma. The Institute consists of many departments such as the Department of Vietnamese Buddhism, responsible for the History of Vietnamese Buddhism, Vietnamese Buddhist Literature, culture, architecture, archaeology; the Department of World Buddhism, responsible for Buddhism in Himalayan Region, Southeast Asian Region, East Asian Region, European and American Regions; the Department of Buddhist Specialties, responsible for Meditation studies, Psychology, Logic, Linguistics and native medicine; the Department of Monastic Education, responsible for training of monks and nuns at Basic Buddhist schools and Institutes of Advanced Buddhist Studies. Especially, the Department of Translating and Publishing the Tripitaka, responsible for translating and publishing the Buddhist Tripitaka from Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese and English into Vietnamese. The translation of the Tripitaka has been under way since 1991. Since that time, many sutras written in Pali has been translated from the Original Pali Canon such as Digha Nikaya or Long-Length Discourses, Majjhima Nikaya or Middle-Length Discourses, and Samyutta Nikaya or the Kindred Sayings. Besides many collections translated from Chinese and Sanskrit versions such as the Digha Agama, the Madhya Agama and the Samyukta Agama. The above mentioned results are the inconceivable efforts of monks and nuns in Vietnam.

## *Chapter Four*

### *The Ups and Downs of Vietnamese Buddhism*

As mentioned above, Buddhism may have been introduced to Vietnam by sea as early as the first century. By the second century, Tongkin already had several famous monks, especially Sanghapala. However, Vietnamese Buddhism had not developed until 580 when Vinitaruci, an Indian monk, a disciple of the Third Patriarch Seng-Ts'an, long before its split into northern and southern schools. The first lineage of Vietnamese Zen Masters ended with the death of its twenty-eighth patriarch in 1216, however, its influence continued to be prominent in the north (see Tỳ Ni Đa Lưu Chi). The second Zen lineage in Vietnam was initiated by the Chinese monk named Wu-Yun-T'ung, a disciple of Pai-Zhang. This lineage of Zen Masters also died out in the thirteenth century, though the school itself survives. Although the first two lineages of Zen did not survive as lineages, they did lay the solid foundations for future Vietnamese Buddhism. In the Đinh dynasty (969-981), king Đinh Tiên Hoàng established a State-sponsored Vietnamese Sangha and initiated the practice of appointing eminent monks to advisory positions at court, offices formerly filled exclusively by Confucian scholars. In the Early Lê dynasty (981-1009), the first complete Chinese Tripitaka was imported from China, establishing the scriptural basis of Vietnamese Buddhism. The Lý dynasty spanned the golden age of Vietnamese independence. In 1069, the Lý dynasty's campaign of southward expansion against Champa reached its farthest extent, the seventeenth parallel. In the course of this campaign, a very significant prisoner of war was brought to Thăng Long Capital from captured Champa territory. This prisoner was the Chinese monk Ts'ao-Tang. With the strong support of king Lý Thánh Tông (1054-1072), Ts'ao-Tang established the Ts'ao-Tang Zen lineage. Later, the Pure Land sect (from China) gradually became prominent in Vietnam and it maintains to the present day. Besides, most of Chinese Buddhist sects were propagated and survived in Vietnam. During the length of almost two thousand years of history, Vietnamese Buddhism has experienced many periods of ups and downs.

***The First Period Is the Period of Introduction of Buddhism into Vietnam:*** Some people believe that Buddhism may have been introduced to Vietnam by Mau Bac (Meou-Po) from You-Chou, China, a former Taoist who had become a Buddhist Monk, later immigrated to Giao Châu and studied with Indian monks there. However, it is most likely to have been introduced to Vietnam by sea as early as the first century. Perhaps its origin dates back to the second or the third century B.C. when King Asoka sent numerous Buddhist missions abroad to disseminate the Buddha's Teachings. Among the three Ancient Buddhist centers, perhaps Luy Lâu, the capital of Giao Châu, was the most favorable place for Indian missionaries to arrive, stay and preach the Buddha's Teachings. By the second century, Tongkin already had several famous monks, especially Sanghapala. Besides Meou-Po and Sanghapala (K'ang-Seng-Hui), there were many other famous monks, i.e., Marajivaka and Kalyanaruci had come either from China or arrived by sea, and had stayed some time in Giao-Chau, originating point of the present Viet Nam. They surely expounded the necessary teachings that prepared the way for Meou-Po to expand Buddhism into Vietnam later on. At that time, Giao Chau belonged to China, a nation with the majority of Confucianists. Even though Buddhism was not prohibited, it was not supported by the government. Therefore, only a few sutras were known in Chinese translations, no one knew about a precious tripitaka of Buddhist doctrines at that time.

***The Second Period Is the Growth of Vietnamese Buddhism:*** From 544 to 602, in a short period of independence, it was an extremely important period for the expansion of Buddhism in Vietnam. However, Vietnamese Buddhism still had not developed until 580 when Vinitaruci, an Indian monk, a disciple of the Third Patriarch Seng-Ts'an, long before its split into northern and southern schools. The first lineage of Vietnamese Zen Masters ended with the death of its twenty-eighth patriarch in 1216, however, its influence continued to be prominent in the north. The second Zen lineage in Vietnam was initiated by the Chinese monk named Wu-Yun-T'ung, a disciple of Pai-Zhang. This lineage of Zen Masters also died out in the thirteenth century, though the school itself survives. Although the first two lineages of Zen did not survive as lineages, they did lay the solid



foundations for future Vietnamese Buddhism. During this period of time, Vietnam had only 15 translations of sutras from Sanghapala.

***The Third Period Is the Period of Non-Development of Buddhism in Vietnam:*** In 939, Ngo Quyen expelled Chinese army, ended foreign domination in more than a thousand years, and regained the independence for Vietnam. But not long after, the Ngo dynasty weakened and collapsed, the whole country fell amid the fire and blood of the “Rebellion of the Twelve Lords.” During this period of time, Buddhism in China suffered a terrible persecution, while Vietnamese Buddhism survived without any further development.

***The Fourth Period Is the Period of Prosperity of Buddhism in Vietnam:*** In the beginning of the tenth century, King Ly Nam De opened Dai Viet’s Independence. He highly honored Buddhism and he often consulted with Buddhist monks and followed their advice on national affairs. In the Đinh dynasty (969-981), king Đinh Tiên Hoàng established a State-sponsored Vietnamese Sangha and initiated the practice of appointing eminent monks to advisory positions at court, offices formerly filled exclusively by Confucian scholars. In 970, King Dinh Tien Hoang appointed a monk named Ngo Chan Luu to be Head of the Sangha and granted him the complimentary title Khuong Viet, the expression of the king’s appreciation of the monk’s sound advice on public affairs.

***The Fifth Period Is the Flourishing Period of Buddhism in Vietnam:*** In the Early Le dynasty (981-1009), the first complete Chinese Tripitaka was imported from China, establishing the scriptural basis of Vietnamese Buddhism. The prosperity of Vietnamese Buddhism reached its height under the Ly and the Tran Dynasties during four centuries. Until the eleventh century, present day Vietnam was effectively under Chinese control, and even after the Ly dynasty (1010-1225), China continued to exert considerable influence. However, from the second half of the tenth century to the eleventh century, Buddhism reached its peak of glory. The Ly dynasty spanned the golden age of Vietnamese independence. During the Ly dynasty, Buddhism in Vietnam had to depend on the protection and support of the Government. All eight kings of the Ly dynasty from 1010 till 1224 were staunch Buddhist supporters. Thus, the Ly dynasty had a very special place in the history of Vietnamese Buddhism. Many Buddhist

monks were engaged in politics under the Ly Dynasty, such as Ch'an Master Van Hanh (... 1018), who made his great contribution to the enthroning of King Lý Thái Tổ, the founder of Ly Reign, and was later granted the title "Sangha President." In 1069, the Ly dynasty's campaign of southward expansion against Champa reached its farthest extent, the seventeenth parallel. In the course of this campaign, a very significant prisoner of war was brought to Thang Long Capital from captured Champa territory. This prisoner was the Chinese monk Ts'ao-Tang. With the strong support of king Lý Thánh Tông (1054-1072), Ts'ao-Tang established the Ts'ao-Tang Zen lineage (see Thảo Đường). Later, the Pure Land sect (from China) gradually became prominent in Vietnam and it maintains to the present day. Besides, most of Chinese Buddhist sects were propagated and survived in Vietnam. King Ly Thai To and his successors were devout Buddhist supporters and patrons who officially recognized Buddhism as a state religion and ruled righteously in accordance with the ten duties of a king. They showed their great compassion, loving-kindness and tolerance towards their people, even criminals, prisoners and foreign enemies or rebels. Under the reign of King Ly Thanh Ton, Confucianism had already been introduced into Vietnam when the king issued an Imperial Decree for selecting mandarins. However, the Confucian Movement did not harm Buddhism because all the kings continued to support Buddhism by all means. Many writings of the time show the profundity of contemporary Buddhist thought, represented for example by Venerable Vien Chieu, Ngo An, Kho Dau. Like Khuong Viet under the Dinh and the Le, the latter filled most of the important posts of Imperial Councilor. Throughout Vietnamese history, Buddhism was never so flourishing as under the Ly dynasty. In a period of 215 years, Buddhism was the only one worshipped and honored. In the beginning of the Tran dynasty, kings Tran Thai Tong and Tran Nhan Tong were even more devout than Emperors of the Ly dynasty. Buddhism during the Tran Dynasty, or Truc Lam Buddhism, name of a special Zen Sect, which was founded and developed by king Tran Nhan Tong, became a Buddhist ideology being attached to the people. This was the first Engaged Buddhist Movement in Viet Nam. Under the Tran Dynasty, almost all people participated in all Buddhist activities. Twelve rulers of the Tran dynasty who ruled Vietnam for 175 years (1225-1400) also continued

to support Buddhism, but it also experienced increasing competition from Confucians, who gradually replaced Buddhists within the royal court. When the Chen Dynasty was vanquished in 1400, Buddhism began to dwindle and support for Confucianism was accelerated as a result of Chinese invasions in 1414. Thousands of temples were built under the Ly and the Tran Dynasties. Under the Tran Dynasty the engraving of Buddhist scriptures completed. The great task was carried out by Master Phap Loa (1284-1330) and lasted 24 years from 1295 to 1319 at Quỳnh Lâm temple under the King Tran Anh Tong. *The Bamboo Forest Zen Sect during the flourishing period of Buddhism in Vietnam*: During the Tran Dynasty, a famous Zen sect was founded, that was The Bamboo Forest Zen Sect. This sect was founded and developed by king Tran Nhân Tông. The Engaged Buddhism which initiated by king Tran Nhan Tong was participated in by all people. After defeating the Mongolian forces, the king renounced in 1299, and turned the top of Yen Tu Mountain into his place of cultivation. A characteristic of the Bamboo Forest Zen Sect was to enter into everyday life of the people. This was a form of religion that served both the material and spiritual well-being of the people. Zen Master Vien Chung, king Tran Nhan Tong's National Teacher, said very clear on the leading principles as follows: "When you decide to devote yourself to serve people, you should consider the people's wishes and thinking as being your own. However, you should be never neglecting your own cultivation." Under the Tran Dynasty, monks did not directly take part in political activities, but Buddhism was an extremely important factor that linked people's minds. It was the Buddhist spirit that made kings in the Tran dynasty governed the country with simple means, but they were so democratic and so friendly to the people. It was king Tran Nhan Tong who employed the potential of Buddhism in general, and the Bamboo Zen Sect in particular to serve his country and people. The Bamboo Forest Zen Sect did develop Buddhist effects on society and politics. As a matter of fact, as regards the causality, the nation's stabilization and prosperity arose from the peaceful mind of the people. The Bamboo Forest Zen Sect made the Buddhist doctrines clear that "When inner feelings are happy, the surroundings are peaceful." In summary, during the Tran Dynasty, Buddhism, the

Bamboo Forest Zen Sect, and the Sangha remarkably contributed in every way to the golden era in the national history.

***The Sixth Period Is the Decaying Period of Buddhism in Vietnam:***

By the end of the Tran Dynasty, as Confucianists and scholars gained their influence at the royal court, Buddhism gradually lost its influence, especially after the invasion of the Ming in 1414, Đại Việt became a colony of China again. With the policy of assimilating the Vietnamese into Chinese and spreading the Confucianism, Ming rulers oppressed Vietnamese Buddhists by confiscating most of their Buddhist textbooks, sent them to Chin-Lang and destroying a large number of temples. Moreover, a large number of talented monks were sent to China in exile. When Vietnam regained its independence (second Le dynasty), the influence of Confucianism was still very strong in the royal court. During that period of time, Taoism and Lamaism gradually made their influence, but Buddhism lagged behind. Fortunately, Buddhism had been rooted so deeply in the majority of Vietnamese people and they always tried to keep their faith despite Confucianist scholars' strong opposition and the king's exclusive orders (it was likely that the royalties were more inclined to Confucianism whereas the commoners were maintaining their faith in Buddhism). In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, during the Trinh and Nguyen conflicts, lasting about 300 years, both Trinh and Nguyen Lords tried to restore Buddhism. Many of them were sincere Buddhists and devout patrons of Buddhism. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a number of Chinese monks came to Vietnam and founded such Ch'an Sects as the Lin-Chi Sect and the T'ao Tung Sect. They were warmly received by the Trinh in the North. The Ch'an Sect of Truc Lam was also restored. At the same time, in the South, the Nguyen Lords also heartily welcomed numerous Ch'an Masters from China. Many Vietnamese famous monks also appeared in both the North and the South. However, by the seventeenth century, the Pureland School had begun to take over the place of the meditation schools and it became the main stream in the North. During that period of time, the rulers of the Nguyen dynasty totally reversed the trend of supporting of Confucianism to the support of Buddhism. In 1601, Lord Nguyen Hoang sponsored the construction of the famous Thien Mu Pagoda in Hue. Especially under King Gia Long, King Minh Mang and King Thieu Tri, many temples were renovated and many more were

built. The Nguyen Lords and Kings granted many temples a royal charter board and approved tax exemptions for their farming land.

***The Seventh Period Is the Modern Period of Buddhism in Vietnam:*** In the second half of the nineteenth century, though Buddhism remained popular among the masses, but encountered a setback during the age of French colonists' domination over Vietnam, they supported Catholicism and cruelly suppressed Buddhism. The French were only expelled in the twentieth century. In 1917, Dharma Protector Pham Cong Tac founded a new religion called "Cao-Dai" which embraces Buddhism, Taoism and Christianity. Cao-Dai has adopted the cosmological view of Buddhist Pureland School and Taoism; however, some Buddhists do not agree to classify it under Buddhism as a school. By the mid-twentieth century, there were more than eighty percent of Vietnamese population were Buddhists; however, the majority of the so called Buddhist had very vague ideas of true Buddhism. In the 1920s, there was a Buddhist revival in Vietnam, and beginning in 1931 a number of new Buddhist organizations were founded throughout the country. From 1931 to 1934, Most Venerable Khanh Hoa headed many Vietnamese Buddhist Learning Centers and he tried to gradually restore Vietnamese Buddhism. In 1948 the United Vietnamese Buddhist Association was established in Hanoi. Many Buddhist magazines and translations were issued. In Hue, Most Venerable Thich Giac Nhien and Upasaka Minh Tam Le Dinh Tham have tried their best to contribute to the Buddhist restoration by preaching the Buddha's Teachings in Vietnamese, founding several Buddhist youth organizations and translating the Surangama Sutra into Vietnamese. In 1951, a National Buddhist Conference was held in Hue, aimed at unifying all Buddhist associations and reorganizing the Sangha's activities. It approved the participation of Vietnamese Buddhist in the World Fellowship of Buddhists which was founded in Colombo, Ceylon in 1950. In September 1952, the Second Buddhist World Congress was held in Tokyo, Japan. The Singhalese Delegation to this congress was taking a relic of the Buddha to Japan on a French steamer named "La Marseillaise", which had stopped for a day in Saigon. The Unified Vietnamese Buddhism proved to the world its auspicious strength with 50,000 Buddhists assembled to accord a devout reception to this relic in

6 days. After 1954, Vietnam was divided into two parts, the Communist North Vietnam, under Ho Chi Minh; and the Republic of South Vietnam, under Ngo Dinh Diem. Because of the political turmoils in both North and South Vietnam, Buddhism could not been developed as it has been in some other countries in the region. Vietnamese Buddhism was oppressed in both North and South Vietnam, the North was under the Communist regime, the South was under Ngo Dinh Diem, a Catholic. After 1963, Buddhism in the South restored with the formation of the United Buddhist Order, but Buddhism in the North was still quiet with limited activities under the Communist regime. After 1975, the Communist Regime dominated the whole country, Buddhism in Vietnam had been disintegrated. Many Buddhist monks and nuns and several hundred thousands of Buddhists had escaped to other countries in the world and Oversea Vietnamese Buddhism prospers in its new homes. In 1980, the government founded another Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation. Since then, there exist two Buddhist Congregations in Vietnam. No matter what happens, Buddhism always has public support and remains deeply rooted in Vietnam.

***Part Two***  
***Buddhist Sects In***  
***Vietnamese Buddhism***  
***(Phần Hai: Các Tông Phái Phật Giáo Việt Nam )***





## *Chapter Five*

### *Northern Vietnamese Buddhist Orders*

The Mahayana doctrine is not only a highly developed and profound philosophy and psychology, it is also an accessible, dynamic vehicle for achievement of Buddhahood. The basic practice doctrine of Mahayana Buddhism is the cultivation of the six paramitas; among them, the perfection of wisdom is the crown of the six perfections, for it is the penetrative, direct understanding of emptiness will transform the practices of generosity, morality, patience, energy, and meditation into perfections. The role of the perfection of wisdom is unique among the six perfections, for it is in the light of the perfection of wisdom that we see the emptiness of the subject, object, as well as action of the other five perfections. For example, in the perfection of generosity, it is the perfection of wisdom that causes us to understand the emptiness of the subject of the action of giving or the giver, the emptiness of the object of giving or the recipient, and the emptiness of the gift. Similarly, in the perfections of morality, patience, energy, and meditation, it is through understanding the perfection of wisdom that one understands the purity or emptiness of the subject, object, and action present in every sphere of action. The practice of the six paramitas results in the accomplishment of the two accumulations of merit and knowledge. The perfection of generosity, morality, and patience result in the accumulation of merit; while those of meditation and wisdom result in the accumulation of knowledge; the perfection of energy is necessary in both accumulations of merit and knowledge. These two accumulations is very necessary for the cultivation and achievement of the Buddhahood. Besides, four infinite minds or four perfections of virtues may also be termed stereological or altruistic perfections. They are great vows of the enlightened ones with intention to free all sentient beings. These Enlightened Beings use all kinds of skillful means to save themselves as well as to save others. In the present time, in Vietnam, there are two Northern Buddhist Orders:

*First, the Unified Buddhist Order of Vietnam (1964):* From 1955 till 1963, Ngo Dinh Diem's regime missed the political power to brutally

suppress Buddhists. In 1963, almost all monks and nuns in the South took part in the Buddhist struggle against religious discrimination, calling for the abrogation of the Tenth Colonial Decree. This decree, adopted by the French Colonists and maintained by President Ngo Dinh Diem, which recognized only Roman Catholicism as a “Church”, while Buddhism and all other religions were reduced to the status of a mere “association”. On the night of August 20, 1963, in a massive police sweep launched by the Ngo Dinh Diem Government in Hue and Saigon to terrorize and arrest a lot of monks and nuns. In order to safeguard Buddhism, Most Venerable Thich Quang Duc together with some other monks and nuns burnt themselves for the cause of Buddhism. After this calamity, the United Buddhist Order became even stronger. The power of the Sangha of the United Buddhist Order in particular, and the power of Buddhism in general were demonstrated by a decisive role in bringing down the regime of President Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963. After 1963, Buddhism in the South restored with the formation of the United Buddhist Order in 1964. The Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam represents the 2,000-years tradition of Vietnamese Buddhism, and it has the unique characteristic of uniting Buddhism’s three principle schools, the Northern School (Mahayana), the Mendicant School, and the Southern School (Theravada) into one congregation.

*Second, the Vietnamese Buddhist Association (1983):* Organization founded in 1983 by the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, which was conceived as an umbrella organization for all monastic and lay Buddhists. So, in Vietnam, there exist two Buddhist Orders: United Buddhist Order, founded in 1964; and Vietnamese Buddhist Association, founded in 1983. According to the Vietnamese Buddhist Association, Buddhism does not only believe in compassion and love, but also in class struggle as did the Buddha more than twenty-five hundred years ago. The organization publishes a monthly magazine called “Giac Ngo” (Enlightenment), which informs Buddhist activities as well as reflects current government policies regarding to represent 100,000 monks and nuns, and 60,000,000 lay Buddhists, but these figures are questionable.

## ***Chapter Six***

### ***Theravada Buddhism in Vietnam***

***1) An Overview of the Theravada Buddhism in Vietnam:*** Buddhism in Vietnam has been influenced by both Theravada from the South and Mahayana from the North. However, Vietnam was occupied by China for almost a thousand years, from the beginning of the first century till the middle of the tenth century. Therefore, Vietnamese culture had been more closely akin to that of Chinese, and Vietnamese Buddhism tends to lean more to the Mahayana Buddhism. In the fifteenth century, when Vietnamese people opened their boundaries to the South and occupied the Champa Kingdom where the Champa either followed Theravada Buddhist tradition from as early as the third century A.D., or some others followed Islam. Then, in the beginning of seventeenth century, they moved farther to the South and occupied Cochinchin where most of the Khmer also followed Theravada tradition. Since then, both traditions (Mahayana and Theravada) have been co-existing peacefully in South Vietnam. Thus, Theravada Buddhism in Vietnam has two branches, the Theravada Branch of the Khmer Community, and the Theravada Branch of the Vietnamese Community which began to develop in the 1930s.

***2) The development of the Theravada Buddhism in the Vietnamese Community:*** In the early 1930s, Mr. Le Van Giang, a young Vietnamese Veterinarian who was assigned to station in Phnom Penh to work for the French Colonist Government. During that time, he began to have interest in Buddhism. At first he practiced the Pure Land and Tantric Buddhism but he was not satisfied. When he visited a Cambodian Temple in Phnom Penh, he met the Vice Sangharaja of the Cambodian Sangha and was given a Theravada text book on the Eightfold Noble Path written in French. He was delighted with the clear message in the book and decided to follow the Theravada Method. After a few years, he decided to become a monk and to be ordained with the Dhamma name of Ho Tong. In the 1940s, he returned to Vietnam to establish the first Theravada Temple, Buu Quang Tu, in Thu Duc District, about 20 kilometers northwest of Saigon. At Buu Quang Temple, a lot of

outstanding Theravada monks propagated and preached the Buddha-Dharma in Vietnamese language. Later, Ven. Ho Tong also translated many Buddhist materials from the Pali Canon into Vietnamese. Since then, Theravada Buddhism officially entered the mainstream of the Vietnamese Buddhism. In 1949, Ven. Ho Tong together with supporters built a new temple in Saigon, named Ky Vien Temple. This temple became the centre of the Theravada headquarters in Vietnam. In 1957, the Vietnamese Theravada Buddhist Sangha Congregation was officially formed and recognized by the Government of the Republic of Vietnam. Venerable Ho Tong was elected the first Sangharaja (President of the Congregation). In the 1960s and 1970s, because the country was still at war, monks of the Theravada Congregation were sent to either Sri Lanka or Thailand for further training. After 1975, the Theravada tradition spread to other parts of the country. By the year 2000, there were about 65 Theravada temples throughout the country.

### 3) *Theravada Sutras:*

a) *Suttas:* Three baskets in Pali recognized by Theravada school, including the sutras (kinh), Tantras (luật), and the Commentary (luận). Mahayana name for collections of writings of the Sanskrit canon or sutras or sermons as collected by the Sarvastivadin school of Hinayana which the Theravada Buddhism calls Nikaya. *First, the Nikaya Suttas:* i) Dighanikaya (p), ii) Majjhimanikaya (p), iii) Samyuttanikaya (p), iv) Anguttaranikaya (p), and v) Khuddakanikaya (p). Most Venerable Thich Minh Chau translated 27 volumes of the first four Nikayas in the late 1980s. He is still translating the Fifth Nikaya. *Second, the Dhammapada Sutta:* Ven. Tinh Su translated the Dhammapada into Vietnamese in beginning of the 1980s. *Third, the Milinda-Panha Sutta:* Ven. Tinh Su translated the Milinda-Panha Sutta into Vietnamese in beginning of the 1980s.

b) *Vinaya:* Basic precepts, commandments, discipline, prohibition, morality, or rules in Buddhism. Precepts are designed by the Buddha to help Buddhists guard against transgressions and stop evil. Transgressions spring from the three karmas of body, speech and mind. Observe moral precepts develops concentration. Concentration leads to understanding. Continuous Understanding means wisdom that enables us to eliminate greed, anger, and ignorance and to obtain liberation,

peace and joy. Rules and ceremonies, an intuitive apprehension of which, both written and unwritten, enables devotees to practice and act properly under all circumstances. Precepts mean vows of moral conduct taken by lay and ordained Buddhists. There are five vows for lay people, 227 for fully ordained monks, 348 for fully ordained nuns; however, nowadays, the Theravada Buddhism has no Nun Order. The Buddha emphasized the importance of morals as a means to achieve the end of real freedom for observing moral precepts develops concentration. Concentration leads to understanding. Continuous understanding means wisdom that enables us to eliminate greed, anger, and ignorance and to advance and obtain liberation, peace and joy.

c) *Abhidhamma*: Abhidharma or the Higher Dharma or the analytic doctrine of Buddhist Canon or Basket of the Supreme Teaching. Abhidharma is the third of the three divisions of the Buddhist Canon. The study and investigation of the Buddha-dharma. Abhidharma was translated into Chinese as Great Dharma, or Incomparable Dharma. However, in many later Mahayana works, the term “Abhidharma” is always referring to Hinayana teachings. As a matter of fact, Abhidharma consists of books of psychological analysis and synthesis. Earliest compilation of Buddhist philosophy and psychology, concerning psychological and spiritual phenomena contained in the discourses of the Buddha and his principal disciples are presented in a systematic order. Abhidharma with the prefix “Abhi” gives the sense of either “further” or “about.” Therefore, Abhidharma would mean “The Higher or Special Dharma” or “The Discourse of Dharma.” While the Dharma is the general teaching of the Buddha, the Abhidharma is a special is a special metaphysical discourse brought forward by certain elders. Abhidharma contains highly abstract, philosophical elucidations of Buddhist doctrine; the sastras which discuss Buddhist philosophy or metaphysics; defined by Buddhaghosa as the law or truth (dharma) which abhi goes beyond the law. This is the third of the three baskets (tripitaka) of the Buddhist canon, which contains scholastic treatises that discuss the central doctrines of Buddhism. It comprises the philosophical works. The first compilation is accredited to Maha-Kasyapa, disciple of Buddha, but the work is of a later period. The primary focus of Abhidharma Pitaka is on philosophy and psychology, usually known or called by the short name Abhidharma. Books of

psychological analysis and synthesis. Earliest compilation of Buddhist philosophy and psychology, concerning psychological and spiritual phenomena contained in the discourses of the Buddha and his principal disciples are presented in a systematic order. The Chinese version is in three sections: the Mahayana Philosophy, the Hinayana Philosophy, and the Sung and Yuan Addenda (960-1368 AD). The Abhidharma also reflects the views of Hinayana. The Abhidharma is the third division of the Buddhist Canon of the Theravadan School. Although most of the early Buddhist schools probably developed their own Abhidharmas, only two complete versions are extant today: 1) the Sarvastivada Abhidharma, which exists in Chinese and Tibetan; and 2) the Theravada Abhidharma, which is preserved in Pali. It should be noted that the complete set of the Abhidhamma was translated into Vietnamese by Ven. Tinh Su in the beginning of the 1980s.

*d) Other Theravada Literatures:* In the 1960s, one of the most eminent laypersons, Mr. Pham Kim Khanh, translated many books of Ven. Narada, including “The Buddha and His Teachings,” “Manual of Abhidhamma,” “Buddhism in a Nutshell,” “Satipatthana Sutta,” “The Dhammapada Sutta,” etc. Mr. Pham Kim Khanh is now almost 90 years old, lives in Seattle, Washington State, U.S.A. He is still active in translating Dhamma books of well-known meditation masters from Burma, Thailand, and Sri Lanka.

## *Chapter Seven*

### *Vietnamese Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Sect*

Minh Dang Quang was an important Vietnamese Monk in the first half of the twentieth century. He was born in 1923 and considered missing on the way to preach in 1954. When moral and traditions of Vietnamese Buddhism were in rapid decline, he was one of the key monks in the revival and reformation of Vietnamese Buddhism during that time; he was also the founder of the Vietnamese Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist school. Most Honorable One Minh Đăng Quang cleverly combined both doctrines from Mahayana and Theravada (Hinayana) to make the doctrine for the Vietnamese Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Sect. Not long after the day he founded the school, millions of followers followed him to practice. In mid 70s, one of his great disciples, Most Venerable Thích Giác Nhiên, founded the International Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Association in the United States of which followers are all over the world nowadays. Venerable Master Minh Dang Quang was born and raised in a family with Confucian tradition. He was much imbued with the lofty principles of Confucianism since he was very young so that He was always sincerely respect the main principles of Confucius-Mencius although he deeply devoted to the Triple Gem. Even though his time of propagation of the Dharma was only ten years, he had contributed so much to Vietnamese Buddhism and to Buddhism in general. Venerable Master Minh Dang Quang had come and gone. Seventy years had elapsed since his magnificent propagation of the Buddha-dharma adorned the historical background of Vietnam at that time, especially the Southern parts. From a lonely shadow of his during the most chaotic time of Vietnamese history, he opened a new era for Buddhism in Vietnam, an era of a real Buddhism, an era of an orthodox Buddhism, a Buddhism that indeed deeply infiltrated Vietnamese people after years of suffer under the policy of religious destruction implemented by the French colonists. More than half a century had passed, Venerable Master Minh Dang Quang, his life and his religious works never lose their powerful impact upon not only his disciples, but also those who come across them. As a matter of fact, time seems to

have no impact on his memory and the law of impermanence also seems to refuse to imprint its miserable seal on the great fame of this outstanding master. His shining personality and supernatural character, in addition to his determined will to carry out his noble mission had helped his ability to found a famous Buddhist tradition in Vietnam. He started his mission even when he was very young. His vigor and his unceasing search for and propagation of the Buddha-dharma always inspire our respect and encourage us to continue to follow his footsteps and his gorgeous example to serve the Correct Dharma.

Vietnamese Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Association, founded in 1944 by the Late Most Honourable One Minh Đăng Quang. The school was established during declined period of the Vietnamese Buddhism. Most Honourable One Minh Đăng Quang cleverly combined both doctrines from Theravada (Hinayana) and Mahayana to make the doctrine for the Vietnamese Sangha Buddhism. Not long after he founded The Vietnamese Sangha Buddhism, millions of followers followed him to practise. He was so famous; however, he suddenly disappeared in 1954. He was officially considered missing in 1954. After he disappeared, the Vietnamese Sangha Bhikshu Buddhism developed more quickly on a larger scale from all over the South Vietnam to North of Central Vietnam with millions more followers.

At this time, in Vietnam, there are six Missionaries of Monks and four Missionaries of Nuns. *a) Missionaries of Monks:* The first Missionary of Monks led by Most Venerable Giac Chanh and its headquarters is Ngoc Vien Monastery in Vinh Long Province. The second Missionary of Monks led by Most Venerable Giac Tanh and its headquarters is Ngoc Trang Monastery in Nha Trang Province. The third Missionary of Monks led by Most Venerable Giac An and its headquarters is Ngoc Tong Monastery in Nha Trang Province. The fourth Missionary of Monks led by Dharma Master, Most Venerable Giac Nhiên and its headquarters is Minh Dang Quang Dharma Institute in Bien Hoa Province. The fifth Missionary of Monks led by Most Venerable Giac Ly and its headquarters is Central Monastery in Saigon. The sixth Missionary of Monks led by Most Venerable Giac Hue and its headquarters is Loc Uyen Dharma Hall in Saigon. *b) Missionaries of Nuns:* The first Missionary of Nuns led by Venerable Nun Huynh Lien and its headquarters is Ngoc Phuong Monastery in



Saigon. The second Missionary of Nuns led by Venerable Nun Ngan Lien and its headquarters is Ngoc Tien in Ha Tien, Rach Gia Province. The third Missionary of Nuns led by Venerable Nun Tri Lien and its headquarters is Ngoc Hiep Monastery in My Tho Province.

Vietnamese Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Association led by Most Honorable One Minh Dang Quang from 1946 till 1954. From 1954 to 1975, led Most Venerable Giac Chanh. After 1975, Most Venerable Giac Chánh continued to lead the Vietnamese Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Association in Vietnam. Meanwhile, Dharma Master Thich Giac Nhien, leader of the fourth Missionary of Monks went oversea and established the International Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Association in California, the United States of America. Most Venerable Giac Chanh passed away in 2004. At this time, Vietnamese Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Association and International Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Association led by Dharma Master, Most Venerable Thich Giac Nhien. However, Vietnamese Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Association in Vietnam is directly led by Venerable Thich Giac Toan, and its headquarters is Central Monastery in Saigon.



## ***Chapter Eight***

### ***Vietnamese Zen Sects***

#### ***(A) A Brief History of Vietnamese Zen Buddhism***

##### ***I. A Brief History of Vietnamese Buddhism and the Development of Zen Schools in Vietnam:***

Because of its location at the edge of Southeast Asia and bordering on China, Vietnam has been influenced by both Theravada from the South and Mahayana from the North. Furthermore, among the Southeast Asian countries, Vietnamese culture had been more closely akin to that of Chinese, so Vietnamese Buddhism tends to lean more to the Mahayana Buddhism. However, owing to her geographical location and historical development, Theravada Buddhism gradually rooted into the daily lives of the people. Buddhism came to Vietnam from a variety of quarters, including China, Funan, Cambodia, Champa (a lost kingdom in Central Vietnam in the 15<sup>th</sup> century), and from monks who traveled directly from India by sea. Buddhism may have been introduced to Vietnam by sea as early as the first century. In around the second and the third century B.C., when numerous Buddhist missions were sent abroad by Emperor Asoka to disseminate the Buddha's Teachings in such distant countries beyond the borders of India as those in Africa, West and Central Asia as well as South East Asia including Malaysia, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Champa and Vietnam which was then known as Tongkin or Giao Chỉ District (now Bac Ninh province). Until the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Vietnam was still under Chinese control, so Chinese influence was so strong on Vietnamese society in all aspects, including the spread of Buddhism. By the second century, Tongkin already had several famous monks, especially Sanghapala. It is believed that among the three ancient Buddhist centers in East Asia, Lo-Yang, Peng-Ch'eng, and Luy-Lau, Luy Lau center in Giao Chi (Tongkin) was then the first to be founded under the Han Dynasty, around the early first century A.D. Luy Lau at that time was the capital

of Giao Chi, which was then a Chinese colony, was on the main trade route between India and China, so before landing in China, most pioneer Indian monks landed in Tongkin. Therefore, Luy Lau became a favorable and prosperous resort for Indian pioneer missionaries to stay and preach the Buddha's Teachings before continuing their journey to the North. And therefore, the Order Buddhism of Luy Lau was founded even before the ones in Lo-Yang and Peng-Ch'eng. According to the document recorded in an Anthology of the Most Talented Figures in Ch'an Park, our most ancient Buddhist literary collection, Master K'ang Seng Hui, a monk of Sogdian origin, was the first Buddhist Master at Luy Lau Center. He was born in Tongkin, where he was received into the Order of monks afterwards. He became the most famous monk who translated a large number of Buddhist Canonical books into Chinese and later he visited Nan-King, where he built the first temple and preached the Dharma. At that time, Luy Lau had more than 20 temples and 500 monks. It is known that the Sutra of the forty-Two Sections appeared at Luy Lau in the second century. Some people believe that Buddhism may have been introduced to Vietnam by Mau Bac (Meou-Po) from You-Chou, China, a former Taoist who had become a Buddhist Monk, later immigrated to Giao Châu and studied with Indian monks there. However, it is most likely to have been introduced to Vietnam by sea as early as the first century. Perhaps its origin dates back to the second or the third century B.C. when King Asoka sent numerous Buddhist missions abroad to disseminate the Buddha's Teachings. Among the three Ancient Buddhist centers, perhaps Luy Lau, the capital of Giao Châu, was the most favorable place for Indian missionaries to arrive, stay and preach the Buddha's Teachings. By the second century, Tongkin already had several famous monks, especially Sanghapala. Besides Meou-Po and Sanghapala (K'ang-Seng-Hui), there were many other famous monks, i.e., Marajivaka and Kalyanaruci had come either from China or arrived by sea, and had stayed some time in Giao-Chau, originating point of the present Viet Nam. They surely expounded the necessary teachings that prepared the way for Meou-Po to expand Buddhism into Vietnam later on. At that time, Giao Chau belonged to China, a nation with the majority of Confucianists. Even though Buddhism was not prohibited, it was not supported by the government. Therefore, only a

few sutras were known in Chinese translations, no one knew about a precious tripitaka of Buddhist doctrines at that time. From 544 to 602, in a short period of independence, it was an extremely important period for the expansion of Buddhism in Vietnam. However, Vietnamese Buddhism still had not developed until 580 when Vinitaruci, an Indian monk, a disciple of the Third Patriarch Seng-Ts'an, long before its split into northern and southern schools. The first lineage of Vietnamese Zen Masters ended with the death of its twenty-eighth patriarch in 1216, however, its influence continued to be prominent in the north. The second Zen lineage in Vietnam was initiated by the Chinese monk named Wu-Yun-T'ung, a disciple of Pai-Zhang. This lineage of Zen Masters also died out in the thirteenth century, though the school itself survives. Although the first two lineages of Zen did not survive as lineages, they did lay the solid foundations for future Vietnamese Buddhism. During this period of time, Vietnam had only 15 translations of sutras from Sanghapala. In 939, Ngo Quyen expelled Chinese army, ended foreign domination in more than a thousand years, and regained the independence for Vietnam. But not long after, the Ngo dynasty weakened and collapsed, the whole country fell amid the fire and blood of the "Rebellion of the Twelve Lords." During this period of time, Buddhism in China suffered a terrible persecution, while Vietnamese Buddhism survived without any further development. In the beginning of the tenth century, King Ly Nam De opened Dai Viet's Independence. He highly honored Buddhism and he often consulted with Buddhist monks and followed their advice on national affairs. In the Dinh dynasty (969-981), King Dinh Tiên Hoàng established a State-sponsored Vietnamese Sangha and initiated the practice of appointing eminent monks to advisory positions at court, offices formerly filled exclusively by Confucian scholars. In 970, King Dinh Tien Hoang appointed a monk named Ngo Chan Luu to be Head of the Sangha and granted him the complimentary title Khuong Viet, the expression of the king's appreciation of the monk's sound advice on public affairs. In the Early Le dynasty (981-1009), the first complete Chinese Tripitaka was imported from China, establishing the scriptural basis of Vietnamese Buddhism. The prosperity of Vietnamese Buddhism reached its height under the Ly and the Tran Dynasties during four centuries. Until the eleventh century, present day Vietnam

was effectively under Chinese control, and even after the Ly dynasty (1010-1225), China continued to exert considerable influence. However, from the second half of the tenth century to the eleventh century, Buddhism reached its peak of glory. The Ly dynasty spanned the golden age of Vietnamese independence. During the Ly dynasty, Buddhism in Vietnam had to depend on the protection and support of the Government. All eight kings of the Ly dynasty from 1010 till 1224 were staunch Buddhist supporters. Thus, the Ly dynasty had a very special place in the history of Vietnamese Buddhism. Many Buddhist monks were engaged in politics under the Ly Dynasty, such as Ch'an Master Van Hanh (... 1018), who made his great contribution to the enthroning of King Lý Thái Tổ, the founder of Ly Reign, and was later granted the title "Sangha President." In 1069, the Ly dynasty's campaign of southward expansion against Champa reached its farthest extent, the seventeenth parallel. In the course of this campaign, a very significant prisoner of war was brought to Thang Long Capital from captured Champa territory. This prisoner was the Chinese monk Ts'ao-Tang. With the strong support of king Lý Thánh Tông (1054-1072), Ts'ao-Tang established the Ts'ao-Tang Zen lineage. Later, the Pure Land sect (from China) gradually became prominent in Vietnam and it maintains to the present day. Besides, most of Chinese Buddhist sects were propagated and survived in Vietnam. King Ly Thai To and his successors were devout Buddhist supporters and patrons who officially recognized Buddhism as a state religion and ruled righteously in accordance with the ten duties of a king. They showed their great compassion, loving-kindness and tolerance towards their people, even criminals, prisoners and foreign enemies or rebels. Under the reign of King Ly Thanh Ton, Confucianism had already been introduced into Vietnam when the king issued an Imperial Decree for selecting mandarins. However, the Confucian Movement did not harm Buddhism because all the kings continued to support Buddhism by all means. Many writings of the time show the profundity of contemporary Buddhist thought, represented for example by Venerable Vien Chieu, Ngo An, Kho Dau. Like Khuong Viet under the Dinh and the Le, the latter filled most of the important posts of Imperial Councilor. Throughout Vietnamese history, Buddhism was never so flourishing as under the Ly dynasty. In a period of 215 years, Buddhism was the only

one worshipped and honored. In the beginning of the Tran dynasty, kings Tran Thai Tong and Tran Nhan Tong were even more devout than Emperors of the Ly dynasty. Buddhism during the Tran Dynasty, or Truc Lam Buddhism, name of a special Zen Sect, which was founded and developed by king Tran Nhan Tong, became a Buddhist ideology being attached to the people. This was the first Engaged Buddhist Movement in Viet Nam. Under the Tran Dynasty, almost all people participated in all Buddhist activities. Twelve rulers of the Tran dynasty who ruled Vietnam for 175 years (1225-1400) also continued to support Buddhism, but it also experienced increasing competition from Confucians, who gradually replaced Buddhists within the royal court. When the Chen Dynasty was vanquished in 1400, Buddhism began to dwindle and support for Confucianism was accelerated as a result of Chinese invasions in 1414. Thousands of temples were built under the Ly and the Tran Dynasties. Under the Tran Dynasty the engraving of Buddhist scriptures completed. The great task was carried out by Master Phap Loa (1284-1330) and lasted 24 years from 1295 to 1319 at Quỳnh Lâm temple under the King Tran Anh Tong. During the Tran Dynasty, a famous Zen sect was founded, that was The Bamboo Forest Zen Sect. This sect was founded and developed by king Tran Nhan Tong. The Engaged Buddhism which initiated by king Tran Nhan Tong was participated in by all people. After defeating the Mongolian forces, the king renounced in 1299, and turned the top of Yen Tu Mountain into his place of cultivation. A characteristic of the Bamboo Forest Zen Sect was to enter into everyday life of the people. This was a form of religion that served both the material and spiritual well-being of the people. Zen Master Vien Chung, king Tran Nhan Tong's National Teacher, said very clear on the leading principles as follows: "When you decide to devote yourself to serve people, you should consider the people's wishes and thinking as being your own. However, you should be never neglecting your own cultivation." Under the Tran Dynasty, monks did not directly take part in political activities, but Buddhism was an extremely important factor that linked people's minds. It was the Buddhist spirit that made kings in the Tran dynasty governed the country with simple means, but they were so democratic and so friendly to the people. It was king Tran Nhan Tong who employed the potential of Buddhism in general, and the Bamboo Zen

Sect in particular to serve his country and people. The Bamboo Forest Zen Sect did develop Buddhist effects on society and politics. As a matter of fact, as regards the causality, the nation's stabilization and prosperity arose from the peaceful mind of the people. The Bamboo Forest Zen Sect made the Buddhist doctrines clear that "When inner feelings are happy, the surroundings are peaceful." In summary, during the Tran Dynasty, Buddhism, the Bamboo Forest Zen Sect, and the Sangha remarkably contributed in every way to the golden era in the national history. By the end of the Tran Dynasty, as Confucianists and scholars gained their influence at the royal court, Buddhism gradually lost its influence, especially after the invasion of the Ming in 1414, Đại Việt became a colony of China again. With the policy of assimilating the Vietnamese into Chinese and spreading the Confucianism, Ming rulers oppressed Vietnamese Buddhists by confiscating most of their Buddhist textbooks, sent them to Chin-Lang and destroying a large number of temples. Moreover, a large number of talented monks were sent to China in exile. When Vietnam regained its independence (second Le dynasty), the influence of Confucianism was still very strong in the royal court. During that period of time, Taoism and Lamaism gradually made their influence, but Buddhism lagged behind. Fortunately, Buddhism had been rooted so deeply in the majority of Vietnamese people and they always tried to keep their faith despite Confucianist scholars' strong opposition and the king's exclusive orders (it was likely that the royalties were more inclined to Confucianism whereas the commoners were maintaining their faith in Buddhism). In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, during the Trinh and Nguyen conflicts, lasting about 300 years, both Trinh and Nguyen Lords tried to restore Buddhism. Many of them were sincere Buddhists and devout patrons of Buddhism. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a number of Chinese monks came to Vietnam and founded such Ch'an Sects as the Lin-Chi Sect and the T'ao Tung Sect. They were warmly received by the Trinh in the North. The Ch'an Sect of Truc Lam was also restored. At the same time, in the South, the Nguyen Lords also heartily welcomed numerous Ch'an Masters from China. Many Vietnamese famous monks also appeared in both the North and the South. However, by the seventeenth century, the Pureland School had begun to take over the place of the meditation schools and it became the main stream in the North. During that period



of time, the rulers of the Nguyen dynasty totally reversed the trend of supporting of Confucianism to the support of Buddhism. In 1601, Lord Nguyen Hoang sponsored the construction of the famous Thien Mu Pagoda in Hue. Especially under King Gia Long, King Minh Mang and King Thieu Tri, many temples were renovated and many more were built. The Nguyen Lords and Kings granted many temples a royal charter board and approved tax exemptions for their farming land. In the second half of the nineteenth century, though Buddhism remained popular among the masses, but encountered a setback during the age of French colonists' domination over Vietnam, they supported Catholicism and cruelly suppressed Buddhism. The French were only expelled in the twentieth century. In 1917, Dharma Protector Pham Cong Tac founded a new religion called "Cao-Dai" which embraces Buddhism, Taoism and Christianity. Cao-Dai has adopted the cosmological view of Buddhist Pureland School and Taoism; however, some Buddhists do not agree to classify it under Buddhism as a school. By the mid-twentieth century, there were more than eighty percent of Vietnamese population were Buddhists; however, the majority of the so called Buddhist had very vague ideas of true Buddhism. In the 1920s, there was a Buddhist revival in Vietnam, and beginning in 1931 a number of new Buddhist organizations were founded throughout the country. From 1931 to 1934, Most Venerable Khanh Hoa headed many Vietnamese Buddhist Learning Centers and he tried to gradually restore Vietnamese Buddhism. In 1948 the United Vietnamese Buddhist Association was established in Hanoi. Many Buddhist magazines and translations were issued. In Hue, Most Venerable Thich Giac Nhien and Upasaka Minh Tam Le Dinh Tham have tried their best to contribute to the Buddhist restoration by preaching the Buddha's Teachings in Vietnamese, founding several Buddhist youth organizations and translating the Surangama Sutra into Vietnamese. In 1951, a National Buddhist Conference was held in Hue, aimed at unifying all Buddhist associations and reorganizing the Sangha's activities. It approved the participation of Vietnamese Buddhist in the World Fellowship of Buddhists which was founded in Colombo, Ceylon in 1950. In September 1952, the Second Buddhist World Congress was held in Tokyo, Japan. The Singhalese Delegation to this congress was taking a relic of the Buddha to Japan on a French steamer named "La

Marseillaise”, which had stopped for a day in Saigon. The Unified Vietnamese Buddhism proved to the world its auspicious strength with 50,000 Buddhists assembled to accord a devout reception to this relic in 6 days. After 1954, Vietnam was divided into two parts, the Communist North Vietnam, under Ho Chi Minh; and the Republic of South Vietnam, under Ngo Dinh Diem. Because of the political turmoils in both North and South Vietnam, Buddhism could not been developed as it has been in some other countries in the region. Vietnamese Buddhism was oppressed in both North and South Vietnam, the North was under the Communist regime, the South was under Ngo Dinh Diem, a Catholic. After 1963, Buddhism in the South restored with the formation of the United Buddhist Order, but Buddhism in the North was still quiet with limited activities under the Communist regime. After 1975, the Communist Regime dominated the whole country, Buddhism in Vietnam had been disintegrated. Many Buddhist monks and nuns and several hundred thousands of Buddhists had escaped to other countries in the world and Oversea Vietnamese Buddhism prospers in its new homes. In 1980, the government founded another Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation. Since then, there exist two Buddhist Congregations in Vietnam. No matter what happens, Buddhism always has public support and remains deeply rooted in Vietnam.

## ***II. Cultivation in the Point of View of Zen:***

Dhyana is Meditation or Zen, probably a transliteration. Meditation is an element of Concentration; however, the two words (dhyana and samadhi) are loosely used. Concentration is an interpretation of Samadhi. Samadhi covers the whole ground of meditation, concentration or abstraction, reaching to the ultimate beyond emotion or thinking. There are several different definitions for Dhyana and Samadhi. Meditation or Mental development, or to meditate upon the implications or disciplines of pain, unreality, impermanence, and the non-ego. Although different in forms and methods in different Buddhist schools, but has the same goal is to concentrate the mind of the cultivators, to calm and to clarify it as one would calm and clarify the surface of a turbulent body of water, so that the bottom of which can be seen. Once the surface of that turbulent water is pacified, one can see it's bottom as when the mind is pacified, one can come to an

experience or a state of awakening, liberation or enlightenment. In addition, diligent repetition of practice of meditation, if the cultivator has not yet become one with the “absolute truth,” dualistic state of mind and distinction between subject and object disappeared in that person. Zen is also a process of concentration and absorption by which the mind is first tranquilized and brought to one-pointedness, and then awakened. The term “Dhyana” connotes Buddhism and Buddhist things in general, but has special application to the Zen (Ch’an) sects. As a Mahayana buddhist sect, Zen is a religious free of dogmas or creeds whose teachings and disciplines are directed toward self-consummation. For example, the full awakening that Sakyamuni Buddha himself experienced under the Bodhi-tree after strenuous self-discipline. Meditation is not a state of self-suggestion. Enlightenment does not consist in producing a certain premeditated condition by intensely thinking of it. Meditation is the growing conscious of a new power in the mind, which enabled it to judge things from a new point of view. The cultivation of Zen consists in upsetting the existing artificially constructed framework once for all and in remodelling it on an entirely new basis. The older frame is call ‘ignorance’ and the new one ‘enlightenment.’ It is evident that no products of our relative consciousness or intelligent faculty can play any part in Zen. Buddhists practise meditation for mind-training and self-discipline by looking within ourselves. To meditate is to try to understand the nature of the mind and to use it effectively in daily life. The mind is the key to happiness, and also the key to sufferings. To practice meditation daily will help free the mind from bondage to any thought-fetters, defilements, as well as distractions in daily life. Practicing meditation is the most direct way to reach enlightenment. In Vietnam, Zen sects comprise of Lin-Chi, T’ao-Tung, and Ch’u-Lin.

### ***III. Vietnamese Zen Sects:***

Hjiang-Jing-Hui was the first Vietnamese Zen master; however, Vietnamese Zen sects only developed at the time of Zen master Vinitaruci. Zen Buddhism has several branches in Vietnam, namely, the Vinitaruci, the Wu-Yun-T’ung, and the Tsao-T’ang. In Vietnam today, Ch’an is the dominant tradition of Buddhism, but in some of the southern Vietnam, Theravada predominates, the main sect being the

Disciplinary school. It is mainly practiced by Khmers. In Vietnamese Zen history, Vietnamese Zen Buddhism has six sects, but only three sects survive until today, among which the Trúc Lâm Zen sect has just been revived by Zen Master Thich Thanh Tu in the end of the twentieth century. Vietnamese Zen Sects include: *First, Vinitaruci Zen Sect*: The first branch was founded in Vietnam by an Indian monk named Vinitaruci, who was one of the great disciples of the third patriarch, Seng-Ts'an from China. He came to Vietnam at the end of the sixth century. *Second, Wu-Yun-T'ung Zen Sect*: The second branch was founded by a Chinese Zen master named Wu-Yun-T'ung, a great disciple of Pai-Ch'ang-Huai-Hai from China. *Third, Tsao-T'ang Zen Sect*: The third branch was founded by Tsao-T'ang, a disciple of Te-Shan. *Fourth, Trúc Lâm Zen Sect*: Trúc Lâm Zen sect was founded by the first patriarch Trần Nhân Tông. *Fifth, Lin-Chi Zen Sect*: The Lin Chi Zen sect was transmitted directly from China from Lin Chi Patriarch. *Sixth, T'ao-T'ung Zen Sect*: T'ao-T'ung Zen sect was transmitted directly from T'ao-Tsi, China.

## ***(B) The Vietnamese Ts'ao Tung Zen Sect***

### ***I. The Vietnamese Ts'ao-Tung Zen Sect:***

T'ao-T'ung Zen sect was transmitted directly from T'ao-Tsi, China. Chinese Ch'an tradition founded by Tung-Shan Liang-Chieh (807-869) and his student Ts'ao-Shan Pen-Chi (840-901). The name of the school derives from the first Chinese characters of their names. It was one of the "five houses" of Ch'an. There are several theories as to the origin of the name Ts'ao-Tung. One is that it stems from the first character in the names of two masters in China, Ts'ao-Shan Pên-Chi, and Tung-Shan Liang-Chieh. Another theory is that Ts'ao refers to the Sixth Patriarch and the Ch'an school was founded by Hui-Neng, the sixth patriarch. In Vietnam, it is one of several dominant Zen sects. Other Zen sects include Vinitaruci, Wu-Yun-T'ung, Linn-Chih, and Shao-T'ang, etc. Ts'ao-Tung emphasizes zazen, or sitting meditation, as the central practice in order to attain enlightenment. In Soto Zen, 'Mokusho' Zen and thus 'Shikantaza' is more heavily stressed; in Rinzai, 'Kanna' Zen, and koan practice.

Lineages of Transmission And Patriarchs of the Ts'ao-Tung Zen sect (Counted From Patriarch Mahakasyapa). Twenty-eight lineages of transmission from Patriarch Mahakasyapa to Bodhidharma. Bodhidharma founded the Zen Sect in China to be the first patriarch there and transmitted to the sixth patriarch Hui-Neng of the thirty-third generation. The thirty-fourth lineage was Zen master Ch'ing-yuan Hsing-ssu. The thirty-fifth lineage was Shih-t'ou Hsi ch'ien. The thirty-sixth lineage was Zen master Yao-Shan Wei-Yen. The thirty-seventh lineage was Zen master Yun-Yen-T'an-Shêng. The thirty-eighth lineage the first generation of the Ts'ao-tung Tsung was Zen master Tung-Shan Liang-Chieh. The thirty-ninth lineage the second generation of the Ts'ao-tung Tsung was Zen master Yun-Chu Tao-Ying. The fortieth lineage the third generation of the Ts'ao-tung Tsung was Zen master T'ung-An Tao-P'i. The forty-first lineage the fourth generation of the Ts'ao-tung Tsung was Zen master T'ung-An Kuan-Chih. The forty-second lineage the fifth generation of the Ts'ao-tung Tsung was Zen master Liang-Shan Yuan-Kuan. The forty-third lineage the sixth generation of the Ts'ao-tung Tsung was Zen master Ta-Yang Ching-Hsuan. The forty-fourth lineage the seventh generation of the Ts'ao-tung Tsung was Zen master T'ou-Tzu I-Ch'ing. The forty-fifth lineage the eighth generation of the Ts'ao-tung Tsung was Zen master T'ao-K'ai Fu-Jung. The forty-sixth lineage the ninth generation of the Ts'ao-tung Tsung was Zen master Tan-Hsia Tzu-Ch'un. The forty-seventh lineage the tenth generation of the Ts'ao-tung Tsung was Zen master Chên-Hsieh Ch'ing-Liao. The forty-eighth lineage the eleventh generation of the Ts'ao-tung Tsung was Zen master T'ien-T'ung Tsung-Chueh. The forty-ninth lineage the twelfth generation of the Ts'ao-tung Tsung was Zen master Hsueh-Tou Chih-Chien. The fiftieth lineage the thirteenth generation of the Ts'ao-tung Tsung was Zen master T'ien-T'ung Ju-Ching.

## ***II. The Ts'ao Tung Zen School in the Tonkin:***

Till the end of the seventeenth century, the Chinese Ts'ao-tung Tsung started to spread to Vietnam from the Thirty-Fifth Generation with Zen Master Nhat Cu Tri Giao. The Thirty-Sixth Generation with Zen Master Thuy Nguyet Thong Giac. The Thirty-Seventh Generation with Zen Master Tong Dien Chan Dung. No records from Thirty-Eighth

Generation to the Thirty-Ninth Generation. The Fortieth Generation with Zen Master Thanh Lang Dao Nguyen. The Forty-First Generation with Zen Master Thanh Dam. The Forty-Second Generation with Zen Master Minh Chanh. No records from Forty-Three Generation to the Forty-Fourth Generation. The Forty-Fifthth Generation with Zen Master Nhu Nhu.

### ***III. The Ts'ao Tung Zen School in the Cochinchin:***

The Chinese Ts'ao-tung Tsung started to spread to Cochinchin of Vietnam in the beginning of the seventeenth century from the Twenty-Ninth Generation with Zen Master Thạch Liêm. No records from Thirtieth Generation to the Thirty-Fifth Generation. The Thirty-Sixth Generation with Zen Master Phap Thong Thien Hy. No records from Thirty-Seventh Generation to the Forty-Fourth Generation. The Forty-Fifthth Generation with Zen Master An Thien.

## ***(C) The Vietnamese Lin Chi Zen Sect***

### ***I. The Vietnamese Lin-Chi Zen Sect:***

The Lin Chi Zen sect was transmitted directly from China from Lin Chi Patriarch. This is one of the most famous Chinese Ch'an founded by Ch'an Master Lin-Chi I-Hsuan, a disciple of Huang-Po. At the time of the great persecution of Buddhists in China from 842 to 845, Lin-Chi founded the school named after him, the Lin-Chi school of Ch'an. During the next centuries, this was to be not only the most influential school of Ch'an, but also the most vital school of Buddhism in China. Lin-Chi brought the new element to Zen: the koan. The Lin-Chi School stresses the importance of "Sudden Enlightenment" and advocates unusual means or abrupt methods of achieving it, such as shouts, slaps, or hitting them in order to shock them into awareness of their true nature. Nowadays, almost Zen monasteries in Vietnam belong to the Lin-Chi Zen sect.

The Vietnamese Lin Chi Zen sect was originated from the Lin Chi Sect in China, which was founded by Zen master Lin Chi. Lineages of Transmission And Patriarchs of the Tsu Lin Zen sect (Counted From Patriarch Mahakasyapa). From the first lineage to the twenty-eighth

lineage was twenty-eight patriarchs in the Indian Zen Sect. From the twenty-eighth lineage to the thirty-third lineage were the six patriarchs in China. The thirty-fourth lineage of the Tsu Lin Zen sect was Zen master Nan Yueh Huai Rang. The thirty-fifth lineage of the Tsu Lin Zen sect was Zen master Ma Tzu Tao-I. The thirty-sixth lineage of the Tsu Lin Zen sect was Zen master Pai Chang Huai-Hai. The thirty-seventh lineage of transmission was Zen master Huang-Po Hsi-Yun. The thirty-eighth lineage of transmission and the first generation of the Lin-Chi Tsung was Zen master Lin-Chi-I-Hsuan. The thirty-ninth lineage of transmission and the second generation of the Lin-Chi Tsung was Zen master Hsing-Hua Ts'un-Chiang. The fortieth lineage of transmission and the third generation of the Lin-Chi Tsung was Zen master Nan-Yuan-Hui-Yung. The forty-first lineage of transmission and the fourth generation of the Lin-Chi Tsung was Zen master Fêng-Hsueh Yen-Chao. The forty-second lineage of transmission and the fifth generation of the Lin-Chi Tsung was Zen master Shou-Shan Hsing-Nien. The forty-third lineage of transmission and the sixth generation of the Lin-Chi Tsung was Zen master Fên-Yang Shan-Chao. The forty-fourth lineage of transmission and the seventh generation of the Lin-Chi Tsung was Zen master Shih-Shuang Ch'u-Yuan. The forty-fifth lineage of transmission and the eighth generation of the Lin-Chi Tsung was Zen master Huang-Lung Hui-Nan. This was also the starting point of the Huang-lung Zen Sect in China. The forty-sixth lineage of transmission and the ninth generation of the Lin-Chi Tsung was Zen master Hui-T'ang Tsu-Hsin. The forty-seventh lineage of transmission and the tenth generation of the Lin-Chi Tsung were Zen master Tsu-Hsin Wu-Hsin Huang-Lung and Zen master Ling Yuan. The forty-eighth lineage of transmission and the eleventh generation of the Lin-Chi Tsung were Zen master Hui-Fang and Zen master Chang Ling, Chinese Zen masters during the Sung Dynasty (960-1279).

## ***II. The Lin Chi Zen School in the Tonkin:***

Till the middle of the seventeenth century, the Chinese Lin Chi Tsung started to spread to Vietnam from the Thirty-Fourth Generation with Zen Master Chuyet Cong. The Thirty-Fifth Generation with Zen Master Zen Master Minh Hanh and Zen Master Minh Luong. The Thirty-Sixth Generation with Zen Master Chan Nguyen. The Thirty-

Seventh Generation with Zen Master Như Hien and Zen Master Như Trung Lan Giac. The Thirty-Eighth Generation with Zen Master Tinh Tinh. The Thirty-Ninth Generation with Zen Master Tinh Tuyen. The Fortieth Generation with Zen Master Hai Quynh Tu Phong. The Forty-First Generation with Zen Master Kim Lien Tich Truyen. The Forty-Second Generation with Zen Master Tuong Quang Chieu Khoan and Zen Master Phuc Dien. The Forty-Third Generation with Zen Master Pho Tinh. The Forty-Fourth Generation with Zen Master Thong Vinh.

### ***III. The Lin Chi Zen School in the Cochinchin:***

Till the middle of the seventeenth century, the Chinese Lin Chi Tsung started to spread to Vietnam from the Thirty-Third Generation with Zen Master Nguyen Thieu, Zen Master Nguyen Phuoc Hiep, and Zen Master En-Sui. The Thirty-Fourth Generation with Zen Master Minh Vat Nhat Tri, Zen Master Tu Dung Minh Hoang, and Zen Master Tinh Giác Thiện Tri. The Thirty-Fifth Generation with Zen Master Lieu Quan, Zen Master Lieu Đạt Thiet Thanh, Zen Master Phật Ý Linh Nhạc, Zen Master Thiet Dinh Chanh Hien, Zen Master Thiet Kien Lieu Triet, Zen Master Thiet Thoai Tanh Tuong, and Zen Master Toan Quang Nhat Dai. The Thirty-Sixth Generation with Zen Master To An Mat Hoang, Zen Master To Tong Vien Quang, Zen Master Te Bon Vien Thuong, and Zen Master Te Giac Quang Chau. The Thirty-Seventh Generation with Zen Master Nhat Dinh and Zen Master Tien Giac Hai Tinh. The Thirty-Eighth Generation with Zen Master Minh Vi Mat Hanh, Zen Master Minh Khiem Hoang An, and Zen Master Đào Trung Thien Hieu. The Thirty-Ninth Generation with Zen Master Tanh Thong Giac Ng, Zen Master Như Nhan Tu Phong, Most Venerable Fuhou, Zen Master Tanh Hue Nhut Chon, and Zen Master Tanh Khoat Duc Giai. The Fortieth Generation with Zen Master Hai Binh Bao Tang. The Forty-First Generation with Zen Master Ngo Chan Long Coc and Zen Master Thanh Ke Hue Dang. The Forty-Second Generation with Zen Master Van An. Zen Virtues of The Lin-chi Zen School in the Twentieth Century with Most Venerable Tinh Khiết, Zen Master Khanh Anh, Zen Master Phuoc Hue Chon Luan, and Zen Master Thien An



## *Chapter Nine*

### *The Vietnamese Pure Land Sect*

#### *I. The Origin of the Pure Land Sect:*

The sect of Amitabha had originated in the North West of India, in the borderland between India and Iran. Pure Land is a translation of a sanskrit word “Shukavati” which means Land of Bliss. The Pure Land sect, whose chief tenet is salvation by faith in Amitabha (Liên Hoa Tông in Japan: The Lotus sect). Those who believe in Amitabha Buddha and continuously recite his name will be born in the Pure Land to become a Buddha. Bodhisattvas related to Amitabha Buddha include Mahasthama Bodhisattva, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, Manjusri Bodhisattva, and Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva. Truly speaking, the Sutra of Questions of King Milinda was the starting point of saving through faith in practicing of Buddha Recitation. *Some people believe that the idea of being “saved” is generally considered new in Buddhism. But in around 150 B.C., King Milinda also questioned Bhiksu Nagasena, recorded in the “Milinda-Panha” as follows: “It was unreasonable that a man of bad conduct could be saved if he believed in a Buddha on the eve of his death.” Bhiksu Nagasena replied: “A stone, however small, will sink into water, but even a stone weighing hundreds of tons if put on a ship will float.”* This is really one of the starting points of saving through believing in practicing of Buddha recitation. Pure Land Patriarchs in India began with Asvaghosa Bodhisattva, Nagarjuna Bodhisattva, Vasubandhu Bodhisattva. Missionaries from the Northwestern India had carried the teachings of this school to China about 150 A.D.

Pioneer Monks in Chinese Pure Land Schools began with Buddhacinga or Buddhochinga, an Indian monk who came to Lo-Yang about 310 A.D., also known as Indian Fo-T'u-Ch'êng, noted for his magic. In China, the authorities of the faith in Amitabha Buddha are many, but Fo-T'u-Ch'êng was recognized as one of the four major lines. Fo-T'u-Ch'êng transmitted the teachings to Tao-An, Tao-An transmitted his teachings to Hui-Yuan, and Hui-Yuan established the biggest Pure Land line in Chinese Pure Land Buddhism. In China and

Japan, it is also called the Lotus sect, established by Hui-Yuan of the Chin dynasty (317-419), it claims P'u-Hsien (Samantabhadra) as founder. The second patriarch was Master Kuang-Ming Shan Tao, the third patriarch was Master Sheng-Yuan Great Master, the fourth patriarch was Master Fa Chao, the fifth patriarch was Master Shao-K'ang, the sixth patriarch was Master Yung-Ming Yenshou, the seventh patriarch was Master Tseng-Shang, the eighth patriarch was Master Chu Hung Lien-ch'ih, the ninth patriarch was Master Chu-Rut Ou-I, the tenth patriarch was Master Hsing-She Tsao Liu, the eleventh patriarch was Master Hsing-She Tsao LiuSua-Sen Tseng-an, the twelfth patriarch was Master Hsing-She Tsao LiuChi-Sun Tz'ie-Wu, and the thirteenth patriarch was Master Hsing-She Tsao LiuLing-Yan Yin Kuang. Meanwhile the Second Line of Transmission of the Pure Land in China led by Master Tzu-Min. The Third Line of Transmission of the Pure Land in China led by Master T'an-Luan. After Lu-Shan Hui-Yuan the next important figure in the Pure Land Movement was T'an-Luan, whose home was near Wu-T'ai-Shan in the North. Therefore, Tan-Lan officially founded the Pure Land (Sukhavativyuha) in the seventh century A.D. under the reign of the T'ang dynasty. T'an-Luan, the first Chinese patriarch of the third line of transmission of the Chinese Pure Land Sect from the first patriarch Bodhiruci, an Indian monk. He was the first to divide Buddhist practices into two types: the "easy" and the "difficult." T'an-Luan felt that the meditative practices and monastic rules are ineffective, inappropriate and too much difficult for the mass of Buddhists in the "final dharma age," so he initiated the method of practicing of chanting the name of Amitabha Buddha: "Namo Amitabha Buddha" (Praise to Amitabha Buddha). This practice combined with prostrations, chanting the Buddha's name, visualizations of the Pure Land of Sukhavati, and making vows to be reborn there. According to the biography of T'an-Luan in Chinese Buddhism, on one occasion T'an-Luan recovered from a serious illness when he suddenly saw a heavenly gate open before him. With this experience he decided to search for an elixir that would bring about everlasting life. When he heard that a Taoist master in the south, possessed such a formula, he proceeded to that area and obtained the "Sutra on Immortals" in ten volumes from the Taoist. On his way back to the north he met the Buddhist monk Bodhiruci, who told him that in Buddhism there was a

formula for attaining everlasting life that was superior to that of the Taoist. Upon being asked to reveal the formula, Bodhiruci taught him the texts of the Pure Land School, whereupon T'an-Luan became so convinced that he discarded the Taoist text which he had obtained and concentrated on the attainment of the Western Paradise. This conversion took place in around 530 A.D., and for the remainder of his life he devoted his time to the propagation of the Pure Land tenets. T'an-Luan's place in Buddhist history is based mainly on his efforts to spread the Pure Land teachings and practices in Chinese society during his time. In this respect he differed from Lu-Shan Hui-Yuan. The practice of reciting and contemplating on the name of the Buddha Amitabha probably originated with him. In one of his works he wrote about contemplating on various attributes of the Buddha: his name, characteristics, extraordinary faculties, merits, wisdom, and so on. The oral invocation of the name of Amitabha was deliberately fostered by him in societies that he organized in the north. T'an-Luan's Biography wrote that as he neared death, his disciples, who numbered about three hundred, gathered about him to chant "Amitabha." People also said that Bodhiruci transmitted the teachings to Hui-Chung, Hui-Chung transmitted his teachings to Tao-Ch'ang, Tao-Ch'ang to Tan-Luan, Tan-Luan transmitted his teachings to Ta-Hai, and Ta-Hai transmitted his teachings to Fa-Shang (495-580). At the present time, we do not have details on this line.

## ***II. The Birth of the Pure Land Schools:***

The hard way of self-trained, vigorous wisdom was no longer feasible for many, if not for the majority, even among those who had renounced the world. Under these circumstances, the easy way of faith was the only one of which people were still capable. The movement of the easy way of faith had gathered momentum in India from four hundred years Before Christ, and about the beginning of our era it had gained great strength. And the Pure Land Schools continue to develop quickly and strongly till today, for it had not only concentrated on the elite, but it also was an effective means that helped the less endowed to salvation. The Pure Land schools pay attention to less developed fellow-beings. These schools try to make the Dharma, if not intelligible, then at least the skilful means is always ready and

accessible to them. In fact, if the Buddha's compassion is unlimited, He must save everyone including the fools. If the Buddha-nature is equally present in all, then all are equally near Buddhahood. The Pure Land Schools draw these practical conclusions as follows: Buddha Recitations are methods that help remove the difference between poor and rich, between ignorant and learned, between sinners and saints, between the pure and the impure. Since all have the same claim to salvation, these teachings must be made equally accessible to all. In short, the Pure Land schools had been opened so that all beings, whether honest or criminal, are, without distinction, admitted to Amitabha's Paradise. Faith in Amitabha's grace is the one and only condition of admission.

### ***III. The Philosophy of the Pure Land:***

Great Master Hui-Yuan founded Chinese Pure Land School to teach an easy way to practice and salvation, based on the Sukhavati Sutra. For a long time the Chinese Pure Land based on Sakyamuni Buddha and some important Bodhisattvas like Maitreya, Avalokitesvara, and Ksitigarbha. According to Dr. Edward Conze in "Buddhism: Its Essence and Development (p.205)," although Maitreya Bodhisattva always remained popular, and the cult of Manjusri and Vairocana spread widely in the eighth century, the inscription and images suggest that Amitabha came to the fore about 650 A.D., and Avalokitesvara became then firmly associated with his cult. While in India so far scarcely any portrayals of Amitabha and none of his Paradise have been found, China offers an abundance of such images. We do not know the reasons why just Amitabha's Paradise should have stirred the imagination of the Chinese to such an extent. Whatever we say, nowadays Amitabha Buddha and His Paradise have been popular in most of the world Pure Land Schools. According to the doctrine of the Pure Land, the Western Heaven is the residence of the Amitabha Buddha. This sect bases its belief on the formula that salvation is to be attained "through absolute faith in another's power," and lays emphasis on the recitation of the name of Amitabha Buddha, or Namo Amitabha Buddha, which is regarded as a meritorious act on the part of the believer. The recitation of the Buddha's name is looked upon as the expression of a grateful heart. Nagarjuna's Dasabhumis Sutra and

Vasubandhu's commentary on it are the Indian authorities recognized by the Pure Land School because the "easy way" and "power of another" are indicated and elucidated by them. Nagarjuna asserted that there were two ways for entering Buddhahood, one difficult (other sects) and one easy (the Pure Land sect). One was traveling on foot and the other was passage by boat. Amitabha-pietism will be the greatest of all vehicles to convey those who are in need of such means. The idea of being saved is generally considered new in Buddhism. But King Milinda (a Greek ruler in Sagara, about 115 B.C.) questioned a learned priest Nagasena, saying that it was unreasonable that a man of bad conduct could be saved if he believed in a Buddha on the eve of his death. Nagasena replied: "A stone, however small, will sink into the water, but even a stone weighing hundreds of tons if put on a ship will float." While all other schools of Mahayana insist on self-enlightenment, Pure Land Sects teach sole reliance on the Buddha's power. The Buddha of all other exoteric schools is Sakyamuni while the Buddha of the Pure Land Sects is Amita, or Infinite Light (Amitabha), or Infinite Life (Amitayus) whose Land is laid in the Western Quarter, often designated as the Western Pure Land. The Amitabha or Amitayus is a Buddha idealized from the historical Buddha Sakyamuni. According to Prof. Takakusu in *The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy*, if the Buddha is purely idealized, he will be simply the Infinite in principle. The infinite will then be identical with Thusness. The Infinite, if depicted in reference to space, will be the Infinite Light; and if depicted in reference to time, will be the Infinite Life. This is Dharma-kaya or ideal. This dharma-kaya is the sambhoga-kaya or the Reward-body or body of enjoyment if the Buddha is viewed as a Buddha 'coming down to the world.' If he is viewed as a Bodhisattva going up to the Buddhahood, he is a would-be Buddha like the toiling Bodhisattva (Sakyamuni). It is Sakyamuni himself who describes in the *Shukavati-vyuha* the activities of the would-be Buddha, Dharmakara, as if it had been his former existence. The vow, original to the would-be Buddha or even to Sakyamuni Buddha himself, is fully expressed in forty-eight vows in the text. The philosophy of the Pure Land is based on Amitabha's most important vows: Vows 12 and 13 refer to the Infinite Light and Infinite Life. "If he cannot get such aspects of Infinite Light and Life, he will not be a

Buddha.”If he becomes a Buddha he can constitute a Buddha Land as he likes. A Buddha, of course, lives in the “Nirvana of No Abode,” and hence he can live anywhere and everywhere. His vow is to establish the Land of Bliss for the sake of all beings. An ideal land with adornments, ideal plants, ideal lakes or what not is all for receiving pious aspirants. The eighteenth vow which is regarded as most important, promises a birth in his Land of Bliss to those who have a perfect reliance on the Buddha, believing with serene heart and repeating the Buddha’s name. The nineteenth vow promises a welcome by the Buddha himself on the eve of death to those who perform meritorious deeds. The twentieth vow further indicates that anyone who repeats his name with the object of winning a birth in his Land will also be received.

#### ***IV. The Pure Land’s Main Texts:***

***1) An Overview of The Pure Land’s Main Texts:*** The smaller text of Shukavati-vyūha is a resume or abridged text of the larger one. The last of the three texts, the Amitayus-dhyana Sutra, tells us the origin of the Pure Land doctrine taught by the Buddha Sakyamuni. Ajatasatru, the prince heir-apparent of Rajagriha, revolted against his father, King Bimbisara, and imprisoned him. His consort, Vaidehi, too was confined to a room. Thereupon the Queen asked the Buddha to show her a better place where no such calamities could be encountered. The World-Honoured One appeared before her and showed all the Buddha lands and she chose the Land of Amita as the best of all. The Buddha then taught her how to meditate upon it and finally to be admitted there. He instructed her by his own way of teaching and at the same time by the special teaching of Amita. That both teachings were one in the end could be seen from the words he spoke to Ananda at the conclusion of his sermons. “Oh Ananda! Remember this sermon and rehearse it to the assembly on the Vulture Peak. By this sermon, I mean the name of Amitabha.” From this we can infer that the object of the sermon was the adoration of Amita. Thus, we see that Sakyamuni’s teaching was after all not different from that of Amitabha.

***2) Four important texts in the Pure Land Sect:*** Three sutras and one sastra of the Pure Land Sect: Amitabha Sutra, Larger Amitabha Sutra (Longer Amitabha Sutra, Contemplation sutra (Meditation Sutra),

and Vasubandhu's Discourse on the Pure Land. Besides, we should also mention about Bodhisattva Samantabhadra's Conducts and Vows in the Flower Adornment Sutra (Avatamsaka Sutra) and Mahasthama-prapta Bodhisattva in the Lankavatara Sutra.

*i) Amitabha Sutra:* Short form of Amitabha Sutra. One of the three basic sutras of the Pure Land sect. It was translated into Chinese by Kumarajiva. The complete title translated from the Chinese is The Buddha Speaks of Amitabha Sutra. There are two sutras, the large and the small (Sukhavati-vyuha-sutra, large and small), both sutras have the same title "Amitabha Sutra" and take their subject as Amitabha Buddha, his pure Buddhaland to the West. Ultimate Bliss is the name of this land. There is another sutra also describes Sukhavati: the Meditation on Amitabha Sutra or the Meditation on the Infinite Life Sutra. Together, these three sutras comprise the three basic texts of the Pure Land School. The large sutra explains Amitabha Buddha's 48 vows made in His former life and their realization in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. The Meditation on Amitabha Sutra is a guide to cultivation and describes a series of sixteen meditations which lead to various grades of rebirth by transformation in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Both sutras contain Dharmas preached in specific response to the requests of sentient beings. The large Amitabh Sutra, at the request of Ananda, the Meditation on Amitabha Sutra at the request of Vaidehi, queen mother of wicked Prince Ajatasatru. The small Amitabha Sutra, although the shortest of the three, is by no means less important than the other two for the entire sutra belongs to the "self-spoken division." In other words, the Buddha spontaneously preached the Dharma of this sutra, over-stepping the usual practice of speaking Dharma only upon request. The Buddha proclaims in this sutra that in the evil time of the five turbidities, this dharma is extremely difficult to believe. The sutra also explains the causes and circumstances for rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. The essential message of this sutra is to teach us to recite the name "Namo Amitabha Buddha." Amitabha Buddha has a great infinity with living beings in the Saha world. Before realizing Buddhahood, he made forty-eight vows and each vow involved taking living beings to Buddha-hood. At that time, he was a Bhiksu named Dharma-Treasure or Dharmakara. He said: "When I realize Buddhahood, I vow that living beings who recite my name will also

realize Buddhahood. Otherwise, I won't." By the power of his vows, Amitabha Buddha leads all beings to rebirth in his country where they realize Buddhahood. This power attracts living beings to the Land of Ultimate Bliss, just as a magnet attracts iron filings. If living beings do not attain enlightenment, he himself won't realize Buddhahood. What a great vow!

ii) *Sukhavativyuha Sutra*: Sutra of Infinite Life, one of the three basic sutras of the Pure Land school. It exists in two forms: The Longer and the Short Form of Amitabha Sutras. It begins with a dialogue between Sakyamuni Buddha and Amitabha Buddha. Sakyamuni praises Amitabha with his Adorned Pure Land, while Amitabha praises Sakyamuni Buddha that he had achieved unbelievable merits and virtues in the Saha world with the five defilements and all evil worlds. The sutra was translated into Chinese by Samghavarman.

iii) *Amitayurdhyana Sutra*: Meditation Sutra, the sutra on the contemplation of the Buddha Amitabha, the buddha of Boundless Life. This is one of the three sutras that form the doctrinal basis of the Pure Land sect. It gives description of the Pure Land of the Buddha Amitabha and the practice of this school through leading a pure life, observing moral rules and recitation of Amitabha's name to wipe away all unwholesome deeds and attain rebirth in the Pure Land. The sutra also mentioned about the Buddha's preaching to help Vaidehi to attain the Pure Land. Also called the smaller text of Sukhavati-vyuha is a résumé or abridged text of the larger one. The last of the three texts, the Amitayur-dhyana Sutra, tells us the origin of the Pure Land doctrine taught by Sakyamuni Buddha. The reason for the Buddha to preach this sutra was from the following story, Ajatasatru, the prince heir-apparent of Rajagriha, revolted against his father, King Bimbisara, and imprisoned him. His consort, Vaidehi, too was confined to a room. Thereupon the Queen asked the Buddha to show her a better place where no such calamities could be encountered. The World-Honored One appeared before her and showed all the Buddha lands and she chose the Land of Amitabha as the best of all. The Buddha then taught her how to meditate upon it and finally to be admitted there. He instructed her by his own way of teaching and at the same time by the special teaching of Amitabha. That both teachings were one in the end could be seen from the words he spoke to Ananda at the



conclusion of his sermons. "Oh Ananda! Remember this sermon and rehearse it to the assembly on the Vulture Peak. By this sermon, I mean the name of Amitabha." "From this we can see that the object of the sermon was the adoration of Amitabha. Thus, we see that Sakyamuni Buddha's teaching was after all not different from that of Amitabha. The smaller Sakhavati-vyuha is the main text for reciting of the Pure Land Sect. With the Pure Land, the devotional repetition of the Buddha's name is a necessary action of the pious to deepen the faith, without which salvation will never be complete.

*iv) Treatise on the Pure Land:* As we have seen that the Amitabha or Amitayus (boundless, infinite life), or Infinite Light and Infinite Life, is a Buddha realized from the historical Buddha Sakyamuni. If the Buddha is purely idealized he will be simply the Infinite in principle. The Infinite will then be identical with Thusness. The Infinite, if depicted in reference to space, will be the Infinite Light, and if depicted in reference to time, the Infinite Life. Commentary on the Longer Amitabha Sutra (Amitayus-sastropadesa (skt), also called Amitayus-Upadesa sastra, or treatise on gaining rebirth to the Pureland (Rebirth Treatise), composed by Vasubandhu in the fifth century. This is one of important Pure Land works which denotes the basic idea of the other-power teaching.

#### ***V. Vietnamese Pure Land School:***

Unfortunately, we do not have records of lines of transmission of the Vietnamese Pure Land School. Vietnamese Pure Land School was probably originated from the Great Master T'an Heng, a Chinese famous monk in the Liao Sung Dynasty in China. He was one of the earliest outstanding monks who preached the Sukha-vativyuha Sutra of the Pure Land Sect in China. He might be the first Chinese monk who introduced the Pure Land teachings when he came to Jiao-Chou to spread the Buddhadharma there. In the modern times, Most Venerables Thích Tri Tinh and Thich Thien Tam were considered the prominent monks who actively propagated the Pure Land teachings in Vietnam. The Pureland text, "The Road to the Ultimate Bliss World" was first translated into Vietnamese by the Most Venerable Thích Tri Thu, Most Venerable Thich Tri Tinh, and, later, it was translated and explained again by the late Great Dharma Master Thich Thien Tam with the title

“Collection of Lotus Stories.” Biographies of Pure Land Sages and Saints, or Enlightened Saints of Pureland Buddhism, which recorded eleven Patriarchs for the Pureland Dharma Tradition. Eventually, at Linh Nham Congregation, the Great Venerable Master Yin-Kuang had a convention for Pureland Cultivators, both lay people and clergy, to promote Great Venerable Sinh-So as the Tenth Patriarch, Great Venerable Master Sua-Sen as the Eleventh Patriarch, and Great Venerable Master Che-Wu as the Twelfth Patriarch. After the Great Venerable Master Yin-Kuang gained rebirth in the Pureland, Pureland cultivators carefully examined his life and made the following observations: His conduct and practice were pure and adorning. He made significant contributions to the Pureland Buddhism. Thus, after their meeting, they honored him as the Thirteenth Patriarch. According to the tradition of Pureland Buddhism, the Great Venerable Masters followed the path of compassion, wisdom, and benefitting others; therefore, they never proclaimed themselves as Patriarchs. Only after they passed away, leaving behind significant and extraordinary artifacts, such as caris, upon death they were received by Buddha, Maha-Bodhisattvas, etc, or having outward characteristics of gaining rebirth, did future generations, relying on these evidences, bestowed upon them as Patriarchs. The Biographies of Pure Land Sages is a collection of real life stories of Pureland cultivators, lay and ordained Buddhists, who gained rebirth to provide concrete evidence and serve as testimony to the true teachings of the Buddha and Pureland Patriarchs for those who may still have doubts and skepticism. Almost all the virtuous beings recorded in the Biographies of Pureland Sages relied on the dharma door of Buddha Recitation to gain rebirth and earn a place in one of the nine levels of Golden Lotus in the Western Pureland.

Most Venerable Thich Thien Tam, one of the most outstanding monks in Vietnamese Pure Land School. His worldly name was Nguyen Nhut Thang. He was born in 1924 in Go Cong, South Vietnam (some sources said he was born 1924?). When he was 12 years old, his mother got seriously ill, so he went to Vinh Trang Temple in My Tho to search herbals to treat his mother. After his mother recovered from the illness, he continued to go back to Vinh Trang Temple to volunteer to help the temple and to study Buddhadharma. In 1944, he asked his

parents to give him permission to become a monk, but the parents did not allow him to leave home. So he continued to be a lay person who often visited local temples to help for meritorious deeds and to cultivate. In 1945, his parents gave him permission to become a monk, so he became a disciple of Most Venerable Thanh Dao at Linh Thuu Temple at Xoai Hot Village. In 1948, he received ten commandments of a Sramanera (a novice monk) and attended the Intermediate Buddhist Studies. In 1950, he received 250 commandments of a Bhiksu, and completed his Intermediate Buddhist Studies in 1951. In 1954, he completed his Advanced Buddhist Studies. Right after that, he entered and shut off himself up in the room to purify, strengthen his concentration power, and to translate Buddhist books from Chinese into Vietnamese. In 1964, he opened an Intermediate Buddhist Studies Institute at Hue Nghiem Temple, Binh Chanh District. He and Most Venerable Thich Thanh Tu were responsible for the lectures. In 1968, he went to Lam Dong Province to establish a place of training of Pure Land disciples at Dao Ninh Temple. In 1970, he founded Huong Nghiem Pure Land Institute to encourage people to practice Pure Land. Most Venerable Thich Thien Tam passed away in 1992 at the age of 68. During the period of 47 years of being a monk, he translated a lot of books from Chinese into Vietnamese. Here are some major ones: The Sutra of Contemplation of Infinite Life (Amitayur-dhyana-sutra), Letters From the Pure Land, Country of the Ultimate Bliss, Great Compassion Mind Mantra (Mahakarunika-citta-dharani), Pure Land Methods & Regulations, the Unisha Vijaja Dharani Sutra, Collection of Lotus Stories, Ten Core Issues in Buddha Recitation, Fundamental Teachings of the Mind-Only, Biographies of Pure Land Sages and Saints, and so on.



***Part Three***  
***Monks, Nuns & Lay***  
***Buddhists Who Founded***  
***Vietnamese Buddhist Sects***  
***(Phần Ba: Tăng Ni & Cư Sĩ Khai Sáng***  
***Các Tông Phái Phật Giáo Việt Nam)***



## *Chapter Ten*

### *Master Sanghapala: The Monk Who First Brought Buddhism to Vietnam*

Buddhism may have been introduced to Vietnam by sea as early as the first century. By the second century, Tongkin already had several famous monks, especially Sanghapala (?-280). After the first spreading of Buddhism from Sanghapala, later, most of Chinese Buddhist sects were propagated and survived in Vietnam. During the length of almost two thousand years of history, Vietnamese Buddhism has experienced many periods of ups and downs. Sanghapala, a native of Sogdiane, now belongs to China. His parents came to North Vietnam to do business to earn a living. His father passed away when he was only ten years old. After that he left home and became a very famous monk at that time. He thoroughly understood the Tripitaka. He went to Tung-Wu (now Central China) to expand the Buddha Dharma. He also translated many sutras from Sanskrit into Chinese such as the Infinite Life Sutra, the Anapanasati Sutra, etc. In the Anapanasati Sutra, he reminded: “There are three ways of sitting in meditation. First, sit and keep your mind on breathing; second, sit and chant the sutras; and third, sit and happily listen to the preaching of sutras. Sitting has three levels: sit in union, sit in peacefulness, and sit without fetters. To sit in union means our mind becomes one with our body when we sit; to sit in peacefulness means our mind has no thought when we sit; and to sit without fetters means all fetters are destroyed when we sit.” Besides, he always emphasized on the breathing with his disciples during meditation practices: “Breathing in, you feel you are breathing in; breathing out, you feel you are breathing out. Breathing in, you know you are breathing in; breathing out, you know you are breathing out. While you breath, you feel; then, you know. Feeling means you feel the breath long or short. Knowing means you are aware of the breath rising and falling, rough or smooth, slow or fast.” As a matter of fact, wakefulness during inhaling and exhaling, or meditation on the breath, is one of the most important preliminary exercises for attainment absorptions. Breathing meditation helps calm the mind easily. This is the basic meditation method for

beginners. If we are unable to engage in higher forms of meditation, we should try this basic breathing meditation. Meditation or concentration on normal inhalations and exhalations of breath through our nostrils. Just focus our mind on one thing: breathing, we will soon overcome a lot of distractions and unhappy states of mind. Try to calm the body and mind for contemplation by counting the breathing. The Buddha taught, 'there is no certainty that we will have a breath-in after the breath-out or breathing-out not waiting for breathing-in or we can be breathless at any time,' so we should take advantage of any time we have to cultivate. He left a Zen verse to encourage his disciples to live with the very present moment, not to think about the past, and not to worry about the future either. Let's feel our breath and feel our body breathing at this very moment. Remember that the previous thought already vanished and the next thought does not arise yet. In short, he wanted to advise us that 'Let bygone be bygone' and cultivate only with the precious times that we have at this very moment:

“The present is not the past, the past is not the present.  
That means past thoughts vanished,  
And the present thought is not the previous thought.  
That means every act in past lives and now has its own merit  
That means the good deed now is not the bad act done before.  
That means the breath now is not the breath earlier,  
And the breath left previously was not  
the breath sensed presently.”

Zen Master Sanghapala passed away in around 280 A.D.



## *Chapter Eleven*

### *Master Vinitaruci (?- 594) & The Vinitaruci Zen Sect*

#### *I. Zen Master Vinitaruci:*

Zen master Vinitaruci was from South India, from a Brhamin family. After he joined the Sangha, he travelled all over the west and south India to study meditation. However, he didn't encounter any opportunity, so he carried his staff to wander to East Asian countries. During the sixth year of the dynasty title of Ta-Chien, of the Chen dynasty, he arrived at Chang-An, the capital of Northern China, in 574 A.D., right at the time of Buddhist persecution (574-577) during the reign of King Chou Wu-Ti. He then traveled to Yeh, the capital of the Northern Chi. During that time, the Third Patriarch Seng-Ts'an (?-606) had hidden himself in Mount Hsi-k'ung. When Vinitaruci came to meet the Patriarch, he noticed the Patriarch's extraordinary behavior, he admired the Patriarch and came right in front of him to join his palms and bow his head for three times. However, the Patriarch just sat still, eyes closed, and said nothing. While standing and pondering there, Vinitaruci gained some kind of attainment in mind, so he bowed down and prostrated three times. The Patriarch only nodded his head three times. Vinitaruci stepped back three steps and said, "This disciple came here right at the time of troubles, yet I beg you, Most Venerable of the Order, to show compassion and permit me to serve by your side." Seng-Ts'an said, "You should immediately go south to receive disciples; it's not good for you to stay here too long" According to the Most Venerable Thích Thanh Từ in the Vietnamese Zen Masters, after meeting the Third Patriarch in China, Seng-Ts'an, Vinitaruci went to Chi-chi Temple in Kuang-chou. He remained there for six years and translated the Differentiation of Karmic Reward. During the second year of the dynasty title of Chu Dai Tuong, in the third month in 580, Zen master Vinitaruci arrived in Vietnam and settled down at Phap Van Temple. Here he translated the "Dharani Sutra" in one volume. Vinitaruci was the first patriarch of the Vinitaruci Zen Sect in Vietnam, which according to traditional records had an emphasis on ritualism and

asceticism and engaged in public works. Its headquarters was Phap Van Temple in Long Bien area. He spent almost twenty years to expand Buddhism in Vietnam until he passed away in 594. The tradition lasted for over six centuries, but eventually died out after its nineteenth patriarch. Although according to Vietnamese Zen history, it is considered as a Zen sect, but there is little or no fact to prove that Vinitaruci tradition is a Zen tradition, for Zen does not favor rituals nor asceticism.

Although his Zen Sect emphasized on ritualism and asceticism and engaged in public works, he always reminded his disciples about the 'Mind Seal': "Mind seal is mental impression or intuitive certainty. The mind is the Buddha mind in all, which can seal or assure the truth. The term indicates the intuitive method of the Ch'an (Zen) school, which was independent of the spoken or written word. Mind-seal of the Buddha is a sign of the true transmission from a Zen master to his disciple. The most important thing here all of you should know is that the mind seal of Buddha is unfeigned, encompassing the universe, neither deficient nor excessive, neither gaining nor losing, neither one nor difference, neither iternity nor annihilation; having nowhere to arise or vanish, and neither far away nor not far away. It is grudgingly named like that just only because of unreal circumstances." He wanted to remind Zen practitioners that they should always watch their mind to see that thoughts come and go and transform endlessly, but the mind seal is unborn, uncreated, and undying. He also wanted to remind that impermanence is the key nature of all things. From moment to moment, all things in this universe, including human's bodies and minds are in constant transformation. Thought after thought changes and moves on. Thoughts are like waves on the sea. When one thought passes, another takes place. Thoughts come into being and then ceases to be, thoughts never stop. Everything passes through a period of birth, maturity, transformation and destruction. Mind as an abode of mindfulness, or mindfulness of the mind as impermanent, or to contemplate the mind as impermanent. Ordinary mind is impermanent, merely one sensation after another (mind is everchanging. consider the mind to be a constant state of flux). This negates the idea of "Permanence." Here a practitioner abides contemplating mind as mind, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and

fretting for the world. One day, Zen master Vinitaruci called his great disciple, Phap Hien, to remind: “The mind seal of Buddha is unfeigned, encompassing the universe, neither deficient nor excessive, neither gaining nor losing, neither one nor difference, neither iternity nor annihilation; having nowhere to arise or vanish, and neither far away nor not far away. It is grudgingly named like that just only because of unreal circumstances. So all the Buddhas of past, present, and future also rely on this to attain enlightenment, and so do the successive generations of patriarchs. Me too, I also rely on this to attain enlightenment, and so do you, and so do all sentient beings and non-sentient beings; they all rely on this to attain enlightenment. Moreover, after the Third Patriarch Seng-Ts’an transmitted this mind seal to me, he told me to go south as quickly as possible to spread the Dharma, because it was not good for me to remain there too long. It has been a long time since then, and now I have met you. This agrees with my master's prediction. Now you must preserve it well. It's time for me to leave this world.” After speaking these words, Zen master Vinitaruci sat cross-legged, joined his palms, his back was upright, and peacefully passed away. His disciple, Phap Hien, prepared the cremation ceremony, collected his five-colored relics, and built a stupa to house them. It was the fourteenth year of the dynasty title of Khai Hoang in 594, under the Sui Dynasty.

Later, King Ly Thai Tong wrote a poem to praise Zen master Vinitaruci:

“When you first opened road to the South,  
 People heard that you were a good Zen practitioner.  
 You showed clearly the nature of Buddhas  
 So practitioners in future generations  
 Could live with the source of the mind.  
 The moon of Lankavatara is bright,  
 The Prajna flower is sweet-scented.  
 When I can see you face to face,  
 Together we can discuss the profound doctrine of Buddhism.”

## ***II. The Vinitaruci Zen Sect:***

The first Zen Sect was founded in Vietnam by an Indian monk named Vinitaruci, who was one of the great disciples of the third

patriarch, Seng-Ts'an from China. He came to Vietnam at the end of the sixth century. From the first lineage to the twenty-eighth lineage was twenty-eight patriarchs in the Indian Zen Sect (lineages of transmission and patriarchs of the Vinitaruci Zen sect counted From Patriarch Mahakasyapa). The twenty-ninth lineage was Patriarch Bodhidharma. The thirtieth lineage was the the second patriarch Hui K'o (487-593). The thirty-first lineage was the third patriarch Seng-Ts'an (?-606). The thirty-second lineage was the starting point of the Vinitaruci Zen Sect or the first generation of of the Vinitaruci Zen School. The Second Generation of the Vinitaruci Zen School had one person: no recorded biography. The Third Generation of the Vinitaruci Zen School had one person: no recorded biography. The Fourth Generation of the Vinitaruci Zen School had one person with recorded biography: Zen Master Ch'ing-pien (?-686). The Fifth Generation of the Vinitaruci Zen School had one person: no recorded biography. The Sixth Generation of the Vinitaruci Zen School had one person: no recorded biography. The Seventh Generation of the Vinitaruci Zen School had one person: no recorded biography. The Eighth Generation of the Vinitaruci Zen School had three persons, only one person with recorded biography: Zen Master Đinh Khong. The Ninth Generation of the Vinitaruci Zen School had three persons: no recorded biographies. The Tenth Generation of the Vinitaruci Zen School had four persons, among them, three persons with recorded biographies: Senior Venerable La Qui, Zen Master Phap Thuan, and Zen Master Mahamaya. The Eleventh Generation of the Vinitaruci Zen School had four persons, among them, two persons with recorded biographies: Zen Master Thiền Ông Đạo Gia and Zen Master Sung Pham. The Twelfth Generation of the Vinitaruci Zen School had seven persons, among them, five persons with recorded biographies: Zen Master Van Hanh, Zen Master Đinh Hue, Zen Master Đạo Hanh, Zen Master Tri Bat, and Zen Master Thuan Chan. The Thirteenth Generation of the Vinitaruci Zen School had six persons, among them, four persons with recorded biographies: Zen Master Minh Khong, Zen Master Hue Sinh, Zen Master Thien Nham, and Zen Master Bon Tich. The Fourteenth Generation of the Vinitaruci Zen School had four persons, only one person with recorded biography: Zen Master Khanh Hy. The Fifteenth Generation of the Vinitaruci Zen School had three persons, among

them, two persons with recorded biographies: Zen Master Giới Khong and Zen Master Phap Dung. The Sixteenth Generation of the Vinitaruci Zen School had three persons with recorded biographies: Zen Master Chan Khong, Zen Master Tri Nhan, and Zen Master Đạo Lam. The Seventeenth Generation of the Vinitaruci Zen School had four persons, three persons with recorded biographies: Nun Zen Master Dieu Nhan, Zen Master Vien Hoc, and Zen Master Tinh Thien. The Eighteenth Generation of the Vinitaruci Zen School had two persons, only one person with recorded biography: Zen Master Vien Thong. The Nineteenth Generation of the Vinitaruci Zen School had two persons, only one person with recorded biography: Zen Master Y Son.



## *Chapter Twelve*

### *Wu-Yen-T'ung (?-826) & The Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen Sect*

#### *I. Zen Master Wu-Yen-T'ung:*

Wu Yen T'ung was one of the most outstanding Chinese monks, originally from Kuang-chou, his family name was Cheng; however, he was famous in Vietnam in the end of the eighth century. He was the founder of the Vô Ngôn Thông Zen Sect in Vietnam. He respected Buddhism since he was young, and did not care much to the family property. He entered at Shuang-lin Temple in Wu-chou to begin his religious life. According to the Records of the Transmission of the Lamp (Ch'uan-Teng-Lu), Volume IX, he was generous, profound, and a man of few words. He silently comprehended and realized the true nature of things, so his contemporaries called him Wu-Yen-T'ung, which means "Wordless Realization." According to the Records of the Transmission of the Lamp (Ch'uan-Teng-Lu), Volume IX, one day, T'ung paid homage to the Buddha, a Zen master asked him, "Venerable, what are you paying homage to?" T'ung said, "To the Buddha." The Zen master pointed to the Buddha image and said, "But what is this one?" T'ung could not reply. That night he went to meet to Zen master with full formal deportment. After bowing the Zen master, T'ung said, "What was the meaning of what you asked me this morning?" The Zen master asked, "How many summers since you left home?" T'ung said, "Ten summers." The Zen master said, "Have you ever really left home yet?" T'ung became even more confused. The Zen master said, "If you can't understand even this, what is the use of leaving home for a hundred summers?"

Later, this Zen master recommended him to go to see Ma-Tsu; however, when he arrived at Ma-Tsu's Temple in Kiang-hsi, Ma-Tsu already passed away. He came to see Pai-Chang and insisted to be his disciple. When T'ung was at Pai-chang's Temple, there was a monk who asked Zen master Pai-chang, "What is the sudden enlightenment of the Great Vehicle?" Pai-chang said, "When the mind-ground is empty, the sun of wisdom naturally shines." At these words, T'ung

attained awakening. Sometime later, he moved to stay at Hua An Temple in Kuang-Chou. One day, a monk asked Zen master Wu-yen-T'ung: "Are you a Zen master or not?" Wu-yen-T'ung said, "This poor monk has never studied Zen." After a long silence, master Wu-yen-T'ung called out to the monk and the monk responded. Master Wu-yen-T'ung pointed to a palm tree, and the monk had no reply. When Yang-shan was still a novice, one day, Zen master Wu-yen-T'ung called out to him: "Hui-chi, move the bed over here for me." Yang-shan moved the bed over to him. The master said: "Now put it back to its old place." Yang-shan obeyed and did as he was told. The master again ask: "Hui-chi, what is there over here?" Yang-shan said, "Nothing." The master asked again: "What is there over there?" Yang-shan said: "Nothing." The master called out Yang-shan: "Hui-chi!" Yang-shan said, "Yes, master." The master said, "Go away."

In 820, he came to Vietnam and stayed at Kien So Temple. There he sat in meditation with face to a wall for several years, but nobody knew his practice except Cầm Thành, the abbot of Kiến Sơ Temple. Cầm Thành respected and honored him to be his master. He always reminded his disciples: "One does not attain the Eye-Treasure or self-realization by listening to the talks and discourses. On the contrary, practitioner must practice and only through own experience, one can see intimately into the truth and reality of all things in order to attain the Eye-Treasure or self-realization. Thus, the ancient Patriarchs talked a lot about 'Mind-to-mind special transmission'. It is to say, they passed on to the next generations the teachings from mind to mind without writing. Practitioners should always remember that intuition is relating to direct mental vision of the Zen School. According to a Buddhist legend, the special transmission outside the orthodox teaching began with the famous discourse of Buddha Sakyamuni on Vulture Peak Mountain (Gridhrakuta). At that time, surrounded by a crowd of disciples who had assembled to hear him expound the teaching. The Buddha did not say anything but holding up a lotus flower. Only Kashyapa understood and smiled. As a result of his master, he suddenly experienced a break through to enlightened vision and grasped the essence of the Buddha's teaching on the spot. The Buddha confirmed Mahakashyapa as his enlightened student. Mahakashyapa was also the first patriarch of the Indian Zen." As a matter of fact, over



a thousand years ago, Zen master Vo Ngon Thong clearly explained to his disciples about 'the eight fundamental intuitional principles,' which are relating to direct mental vision of the Zen School: Correct Law Eye-Treasury (treasury of the eye of the true dharma), Nirvana of Wonderful and Profound Mind (the subtle mind of nirvana), Reality is nullity (true marks are no marks), the Door of Abhidharma (the extremely subtle dharma gate), no establishment of words and letters (it is not relying on books, or not established on words), the distinct transmission outside of the teachings (it is a special transmission outside the teachings), directly pointing to the mind of man (it points directly to the human mind), seeing the nature is the attainment of Buddhahood (through it one sees one's own nature and becomes a Buddha). Here, the wonderful and profound mind or heart which is beyond human thought. The mind which clings to neither to nothingness nor to actuality. The mind in which all erroneous imaginings have been removed.

Before passing away, he called Cầm Thành to his side and advised: "For the sake of a great cause, the Buddha appeared, for the changing beings from illusion into enlightenment. Before entering into Nirvana, he transmitted the right Dharma eye treasury (something that contains and preserves the right experience of reality) to one of his great disciples, Maha-Kasyapa. Patriarchs continued to transmit generation after generation. When Patriarch Bodhidharma came to China from India, he transmitted the Mind-seal to Hui-K'o, from Hui-K'o to Seng-Ts'an, from Seng-Ts'an to T'ao-Hsin, from T'ao-Hsin to Hung-Jung, from Hung-Jung to Hui-Neng, from Hui-Neng to Nan-Yueh-Huai-Jang, from Nan-Yueh-Huai-Jang to Ma-Tsu, from Ma-Tsu to Pai-Chang. I received the mind-seal from Pai-Chang, and now I just want to transmit it to you. Please keep expanding the Correct Dharma to the next generation." He continued to say: And you should always remember that in old days our ancestral master Nan-yueh Huai-jang taught this when he passed away:

"All phenomena are born from mind  
Once mind is uncreated  
Phenomena have no place to abide.  
If you realized the mind ground,  
Your actions are unobstructed.

Unless you meet someone with goodroots,  
Be careful when admitting anyone to the Dharma."

After finishing these words, he joined his palms together and passed away. That was on the twelfth day of the first month of the year of the Horse, the second year of King T'ang Pao Li of the T'ang dynasty, in 826 A.D.

## ***II. The Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect:***

The Wu-Yun-T'ung Zen Sect was the second branch in Vietnam which was founded by a Chinese Zen master named Wu-Yun-T'ung, a great disciple of Pai-Ch'ang-Huai-Hai from China. Lineages of Transmission And Patriarchs of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect (Counted From Patriarch Mahakasyapa). From the first lineage to the twenty-eighth lineage was twenty-eight patriarchs in the Indian Zen Sect. From the twenty-eighth lineage to the thirty-third lineage were the six patriarchs in China. The thirty-fourth lineage of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect was Zen master Nan Yueh Huai Rang. The thirty-fifth lineage of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect was Zen master Ma Tzu Tao-I. The thirty-sixth lineage of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect was Zen master Pai Chang Huai-Hai. The thirty-seventh lineage of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect was also the Starting Point of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen Sect. The first Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect had one person with recorded biography: Zen Master Cam Thanh. The second Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect had one person with recorded biography: Zen Master Shen-Hui. The third Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect had one person with recorded biography: Zen Master Yun-Feng. The fourth Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect had two persons with one recorded biography: Zen Master Khuông Viet. The fifth Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect had two persons with recorded biography: Zen Master Đa Bao. The sixth Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect had three persons with two recorded biography: Zen Master Đinh Huong and Zen Master Thien Lao. The seventh Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect had 7 persons with 6 recorded biographies: Zen Master Vien Chieu, Zen Master Cuu Chi, Zen Master Minh Tam, Zen Master Bao Tinh, Zen Master Quang Tri, and Zen Master Ly Thai Tong. The eighth Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect had 6 persons with 3 recorded biographies: Zen Master

Ngo An, Zen Master Man Giac, and Zen Master Thong Bien. The ninth Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect had 8 person with 5 recorded biographies: Zen Master Bao Giam, Zen Master Dao Hue, Zen Master Bien Tai, Zen Master Khong Lo, and Zen Master Bon Tinh. The tenth Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect had 12 persons with 10 recorded biographies: Zen Master Giac Hai, Zen Master Tinh Khong, Zen Master Dai Xa, Zen Master Tin Hoc, Zen Master Truong Nguyen, Zen Master Tinh Luc, Zen Master Tri Bao, Zen Master Minh Tri, Zen Master Tinh Gioi, and Zen master Nguyen Hoc. The eleventh Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect had 9 persons with only one recorded biography: Zen Master Quang Nghiem. The twelfth Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect had 7 persons, but with only one recorded biography: Zen Master Thuong Chieu. The thirteenth Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect had 5 person, but only 2 with recorded biographies: Zen Master Than Nghi and Zen Master Thong Thien. The fourteenth Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect had five person with two recorded biographies: Zen Master Tuc Lu and Zen Master Hiện Quang. The fifteenth Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect had one person with recorded biography: Zen Master Ung Thuan Vuong.



## *Chapter Thirteen*

### *Zen Master Ts'ao T'ang & The Ts'ao T'ang Zen Sect*

#### *I. Zen Master Ts'ao T'ang:*

Ts'ao-T'ang, name of a Chinese Zen master, a disciple of Zen Master Trùng Hiển Tuyết Đậu. He was the Dharma heir of the third generation of the Yun-Men Zen Sect. He probably went to Champa to expand the Buddha Dharma. In 1069, king Lý Thánh Tông invaded Champa. Thảo Đường was among hundreds of thousands of prisoners of wars seized by king Lý Thánh Tông. Later, they found out that he was one of the famous monks at that time. The king invited him to the royal palace and honored him as the National Teacher and let him stay at Khai Quốc Temple in Thăng Long Citadel. He founded Thảo Đường Zen Sect with a lot of followers. He passed away at the age of fifty.

#### *II. The Ts'ao-T'ang Zen sect:*

Compared with the kings of Dinh and Le dynasties, kings of Ly dynasty were more advanced in studying. Their devotion to Buddhism was more spiritual and more intellectual. They all studied Buddhist doctrines and usually discussed the doctrines with the Zen masters. In the imperial court there appeared scholars, among them many were trained by Zen masters. In the beginning of the dynasty, the Zen masters organized campaigns to awaken people's national consciousness by employing geomancy and the sibylline utterance of prophets. They directly made plans, compiled imperial documents, received diplomatic delegations, and even discussed military strategy. But later once the imperial court had been established, the Sangha only held moral leading positions and held positions of advisors in the nation's affairs such as economic and political strategies. They did not take on diplomatic posts or compiled royal documents. Nevertheless, while helping with nation's affairs, all Zen masters still kept their monk character. After working at the Palace, they went back to the pagoda. The philosophy of their conduct was similar to that of Zen master Van

Hanh: "To work for the sake of the nation, but never became attached to their work nor strove to become famous. Finally, they turned back to cultivating to attain emancipation in the the Buddhist Way." Ts'ao-Tang Zen Sect, the third branch of Zen in Vietnam, the other two were the Vinitaruci Zen Sect and the Wu-yen-t'ung Zen Sect. Ts'ao T'ang Zen Sect was founded by Zen Master Tsao-T'ang, a disciple of Te-Shan. Trúc Lâm Zen sect was founded by the first patriarch. Lin Chi Zen sect was transmitted directly from China from Lin Chi Patriarch. T'ao-T'ung Zen sect was transmitted directly from T'ao-Tsi, China. In the Đinh dynasty (969-981), king Đinh Tiên Hoàng established a State-sponsored Vietnamese Sangha and initiated the pactice of appointing eminent monks to advisory positions at court, offices formerly filled exclusively by Confucian scholars. In the Early Le dynasty (981-1009), the first complete Chinese Tripitaka was imported from China, establishing the scriptural basis of Vietnamese Buddhism. The Ly dynasty spanned the golden age of Vietnamese independence. In 1069, the Ly dynasty's campaign of southward expansion against Champa reached its farthest extent, the seventeenth parallel. In the course of this campaign, a very significant prisoner of war was brought to Thang Long Capital from captured Champa territory. This prisoner was the Chinese monk Ts'ao-Tang. With the strong support of king Lý Thánh Tôn (1054-1072), Ts'ao-Tang established the Ts'ao-Tang Zen lineage. Besides, most of Chinese Buddhist sects were propagated and survived in Vietnam.

Lineages of Transmission And Patriarchs of the Ts'ao-T'ang Zen sect (Counted From Patriarch Mahakasyapa). Twenty-eight lineages of transmission from Patriarch Mahakasyapa to Bodhidharma. Bodhidharma founded the Zen Sect in China to be the first patriarch there and transmitted to the sixth patriarch Hui-Neng of the thirty-third generation. The thirty-fourth lineage of the Ts'ao T'ang Zen sect was Zen master Ch'ing-yuan Hsing-ssu. The thirty-fifth lineage of the Ts'ao T'ang Zen sect was Shih-t'ou Hsi ch'ien. The thirty-sixth lineage of the Ts'ao T'ang Zen sect was Zen master T'ien-huang Tao-wu. The thirty-seventh lineage of the Ts'ao T'ang Zen sect was Zen master Lung-t'an-Ch'ung-hsin in the ninth century. The thirty-eighth lineage of the Ts'ao T'ang Zen sect was Zen master Tê-shan-Hsuan-chien. The thirty-ninth lineage of the Ts'ao T'ang Zen sect was Zen master Hsueh-fêng I-ts'un.

The forty lineage of the Ts'ao T'ang Zen sect was Zen master Yun-men Wên-yen. The forty-first lineage of the Ts'ao T'ang Zen sect was Zen master Hsiang-lin Ch'êng-yuan. The forty-second lineage of the Ts'ao T'ang Zen sect was Zen master Chih-Mên Kuang-Tso. The forty-third lineage of the Ts'ao T'ang Zen sect was Zen master Chung-Hsien Hsueh-Tou. The forty-fourth lineage was Zen master Ts'ao-T'ang, the first patriarch of the Ts'ao T'ang Zen sect.

After Zen master Ts'ao-T'ang, there were four more generations. The first Generation after Zen master Ts'ao T'ang, there were three persons with recorded biographies: Zen Master Ly Thanh Tong, Zen Master Bat Nha, and Zen Master Ngo Xa. The second Generation after Zen master Ts'ao T'ang, there were five persons with recorded biographies: Zen Master Ngo Ich, Zen Master Thieu Minh, Zen Master Đinh Giac, Zen Master Ly Nhan Tong, and Zen Master Vien Thong (1085-1151). The third Generation after Zen master Ts'ao T'ang, there were three persons with recorded biographies: Zen Master Do Vu, Zen Master Pham Am, and Zen Master Ly Anh Tong. The fourth Generation after Zen master Ts'ao T'ang, there were four persons with recorded biographies: Zen Master Truong Tam Tang, Zen Master Ly Cao Tong, Zen Master Nguyen Thuc, and Zen Master Phạm Phụng Ngự.





## *Chapter Fourteen*

### *Zen Master Tue Trung Thuong Si (1230-1297)*

His real name was Trần Tung, he was born in 1230, the eldest son of Trần Liễu. He was a nephew of King Trần Thái Tông. He was intelligent and well-behaved when he was very young. During the war time with the Mongolian, he had been a general twice, leading his troops against the invasive Mongolian army to the the victory. During the peace time, he retired to Van Nien hamlet, the land rewarded by the king. He practiced meditation under the instruction of Zen Master Tiêu Dao and was enlightened. He led a simple life, not engaging in any competition for political power. He lived freely in his world and did not have any idea of clinging to anything. To him, no greed involved, no sins committed. Thus, laity and monks from all over came to study Zen with him. King Trần Thánh Tông honored him with the respected title “Tuệ Trung Thượng Sĩ” (a highest intellect who always lives within his wisdom). The king also sent his young prince Trần Kham (later became King Trần Nhân Tông) to come to study Zen with him. He always emphasized on “From mind is Buddhahood. The mind of all phenomena is the Buddha-mind. The Buddha mind and our mind are just one. Therefore, we must practice Zen at all times, walk in Zen, stand in Zen, sit in Zen, lie down in Zen. Be mindful at all times!” Below is one of his famous Zen poems:

“Buddha! Buddha! Buddha! Cannot be seen!  
Mind! Mind! Mind! Cannot be told!  
When the mind is born, Buddha is born.  
When Buddha is gone, the mind is gone too.

It is impossible where the mind is gone while Buddha remains.  
It is impossible when Buddha is gone while the mind remains.  
If you want to know the mind of Buddha,  
and the mind of ‘birth and death’,  
Just wait for Maitreya and ask Him.

Once upon a time, there was no mind; there is no Buddha now.

All the unenlightened, the saints,  
 human beings, heavenly beings  
 are just like flashes of lightning.  
 The mind nature is neither right nor wrong.  
 The Buddha nature is neither real nor unreal.

Suddenly arising, suddenly ceasing,  
 Formerly leaving, now coming,  
 You all waste your time thinking and discussing.  
 In that way, you would bury the Vehicle of the Patriarchs,  
 And also cause the devils to appear in the house.

If you wish to find the mind, stop seeking outward.  
 The nature of the mind is naturally empty and still.  
 Nirvana and 'birth and death' are hollow bonds.  
 Afflictions and Bodhi are empty opponents

The mind is Buddha, Buddha is the mind.  
 The profound meaning shines bright  
 since the beginningless time.  
 When spring comes, the spring flowers blossom naturally.  
 When autumn arrives, the autumn waters  
 reflect the sorrow clearly.

Leaving the false mind, and keeping the true nature is similar  
 to a person who looks for the reflections without the mirror.  
 He does not know that reflections come from the mirror,  
 and that the false appear from the truth.

That the false come is neither real nor unreal,  
 that the mirror reflects is neither wrong nor right.  
 There is neither sinfulness nor blessedness.  
 Do not mistake wish-fulfilling gem with white jewel.

Gems could have scratches, while Jewels could have defects.  
 The mind nature is neither pink nor green,  
 neither gained, nor lost.

Seven times seven is forty-nine.

The three poisons, the nine kinds of beings,  
and the sun in the sky.  
The six paramitas and ten thousand conducts  
are waves in the ocean.  
Be still, be still, be still. Sink, sink, sink.  
The essence of all phenomena is the Buddha mind.

The Buddha mind and your mind are also one.  
This is natural the profound meaning  
since the beginningless time.  
Walk in Zen, sit in Zen,  
then you will see the lotus in a brilliant fire.

When your will becomes weak, just strengthen it.  
When your place is peaceful and comfortable, just stay there.  
Ah! Ah! Ah! Oh! Oh! Oh!  
Bubbles floating and sinking in the ocean are all empty.

All conducts are impermanent; all phenomena are empty.  
Where can you find the sacred bones of your late master?  
Be mindful, be mindful, be awake.  
Be awake, be mindful, be mindful.  
Keep four corners in contact with the ground;  
do not let things tilt.

If someone here trust this,  
He can start walking from the crown of Vairocana Buddha.  
Kwats!

There is one problem of human life that cannot be solved through human knowledge and endeavor, this is the problem of life and death. No matter who we are or what we are, death invariably comes to us all. We instinctively feel death to be undesirable and frightening. Young people do not feel so horrified by death because they are so full of vitality and strong feelings that they do not think of death as it really is. They are not afraid of death because they do not think about it. If they

gave it serious consideration, they would probably tremble with fear. Birth and death is a grove for Enlightening Beings because they do not reject it. Enlightening Beings who abide by these can achieve the Buddhas' unexcelled peaceful, happy action, free from sorrow and affliction. Besides, birth-and-death is a weapon of enlightening beings because they continue enlightening practices and teach sentient beings. Enlightening Beings who abide by these can annihilate the afflictions, bondage, and compulsion accumulated by all sentient beings in the long night of ignorance. There is one way to be free from the threat of death as Zen master Tuệ Trung Thước Sĩ has said: 'When the mind arises, birth and death arise; when the mind vanishes, birth and death vanish.' Zen practitioners should see that we do not die, our lives only change in form. When we can perfect our consciousness through meditation, we will be truly free from the terror and suffering of death. Zen practitioners should always remember to make the self your light, make the Law your light. These are the words the Buddha spoke to Ananda, one of his ten great disciples, before dying. Ananda felt anxious, reflecting: "When the World Honored One, who is unparalleled leader and teacher, dies, who on earth should we depend upon in our practice and life?" In response to Ananda's anxiety, the Buddha taught him as follows: "Ananda! In the future, you should make yourself your light and depend upon your own self. You must not depend upon other people. You should make the Law your light and depend upon the Law. You must not depend upon others. Now, let's listen to one of his famous Zen poems 'At Ease with Birth and Death':

"When the mind arises, birth and death arise;  
 When the mind vanishes, birth and death vanish.  
 Birth and death are originally empty in nature,  
 This unreal body will someday be gone,  
 When you see affliction and Bodhi fading,  
 Hell and heaven will themselves wither.  
 The fire and the boiling oil will soon cool down,  
 The tree of swords and the mountain of knives will break all.  
 The Sound hearers meditate; I don't.  
 The Bodhisattvas preach dharma; I tell the truth.  
 Life is itself illusory, and so is death.  
 The four great elements are originally empty;

Where did they emerge from?  
Do not behave like a thirsty deer chasing the mirage,  
And searching east, then west endlessly.  
The Dharma Body neither comes nor goes.  
The True Nature is neither right nor wrong.  
After arriving home,  
you should not ask for the direction anymore.  
After seeing the moon, you need not to look for the finger.  
The unenlightened erroneously fear of birth and death,  
The enlightened have fully insight, and live at ease.”



## *Chapter Fifteen*

### *Zen Master Tran Nhan Tong & The Tsu-Lin Zen Sect*

#### *I. Zen Master Tran Nhan Tong (1258-):*

According to the Vietnamese Zen Masters written by Zen Master Thích Thanh Từ, he was born in 1258 A.D., son of King Trần Thánh Tông. When he was young, his father sent him to practice Zen with Zen Master Tuệ Trung Thượng Sĩ. One day he asked his Master about the obligation of a Zen practitioner. Tuệ Trung responded: “Looking inward to shine up oneself is the main duty, not following anything outward.” Since then, he thoroughly understood his duty as a Zen practitioner and honored Tuệ Trung as his master. He became King when he was twenty-years of age. In 1283, confronting with the extremely strong forces of the Yuan, king Tran Nhan Tong called the Dien Hong Conference to discuss the national affairs. The participants were not members of aristocracy but were the elderly people in the communities. When the Mongolian invaded Vietnam in 1283 and 1287, he led his armed forces to bravely defeat the Mongolian aggressors. When the peace restored, he relinquished the throne to his son in 1293, and spent more time to practice Zen with Tuệ Trung Thượng Sĩ. However, he still tutored his son, the young king Trần Anh Tông.

According to Buddhism, man being composed of elements and disintegrated when these are dissolved. In the Four Noble Truth, Sakyamuni Buddha taught that “attachment to self” is the root cause of suffering. From attachment springs grief; from grief springs fear. For him who is wholly free from attachment, there is no grief and much less fear. If you don’t have attachments, naturally you are liberated. Zen practitioners should have a correct understanding of the body, that it consists of the five elements or skandhas, which together represent body and mind, and there is no such so-called “self.” Elements exist only by means of union of conditions. There is no eternal and unchangeable substance in them. When these come apart, so-called “body” immediately disappears. Since the form which is created by the four elements is empty and without self, then the human body, created

by the unification of the five skandhas, must also be empty and without self. Human body is in a transforming process from second to second. According to Zen master Tran Nhan Tong, practitioners should try to practice until they can see there is not an 'I' being tied and all the thoughts disappear like the flowers falling off in the morning. Let's learn the working of the mind through one of Zen master's famous Zen poems:

“Nobody ties you; why do you ask for liberation?  
 If you don't cling to your ordinary thought,  
 Then you don't need to search for the holy one.  
 The monkeys are relaxed; the horses tired; and the men old.  
 The Zen stupa is still in the same old cloudy cottage.  
 Right and wrong thoughts are falling  
 just like flowers in the early morning.  
 Fame and wealth are chilled in a cold night rain.  
 After the rains are gone, the flowers are dying and  
 the mountain is serene.  
 A bird chirps a sound, and the spring is leaving again.”

In 1299 he left the royal palace to go to Yên Tử Mountain, living and practicing as an ascetic monk. Here he organized the Sangha and advised them to follow the advice of Tuệ Trung Thượng Sĩ to lead their life of cultivation. He was honored as the First Patriarch of Trúc Lâm Yên Tử Zen Sect. It was king Tran Nhan Tong who was able to utilize the potential of Buddhism to serve his country and people. The fact of king Tran Nhan Tong's renunciation and his years of practicing meditation and spreading Buddhism all over the country made the Truc Lam Zen Sect strong enough to support the entire dynasty. For Zen master Trần Nhân Tông, the secret of happy, successful living lies in doing what needs to be done now; when hungry, just eat; when thirsty, just drink; when tired, just sleep; and not worrying about the past and the future. We cannot go back into the past and reshape it, nor can we anticipate everything that may happen in the future. There is one moment of time over which we have some conscious control and that is the present. He always reminded his disciples with the following verses:

“Living in the world, happy with the Way.  
 We should let all things take their course.



When hungry, just eat; when tired, just sleep.  
 The treasure is in our house; do not search any more.  
 Face the scenes, and have no thoughts,  
 Then we do not need to ask for Zen.”

In fact, if we can completely live with the teachings of Zen master Trần Nhân Tông, we are able to live with the water, not with the waves rising and falling; live with the nature of mirror to reflect, not with the images appearing and disappearing; and live with the essence of the mind, not with the thoughts arising and vanishing. Therefore, what can we call our life if not a Nirvana? The world we are living now is the Saha World, where we physically see all phenomena born and passed away, how can we say ‘all phenomena are unborn and undying’? Zen practitioners should always remember once we make up our mind to follow the Buddha’s Path, we should listen to the Buddha’s and Patriarchs’ teachings; we should look inward to see our real mind, then we will have the ability to see that ‘all phenomena are unborn and undying’. Let’s look into our mind and be honest with ourselves, then we can see the real nature of everything: emptiness, unborn and undying. The thoughts coming and going, but the nature of ‘seeing and knowing’ of the mind is unmoved. Let’s listen to another famous verse from Zen master Trần Nhân Tông:

“All phenomena are unborn.  
 All phenomena are undying.  
 If we see that constantly,  
 All Buddhas are before our eyes constantly.”

## ***II. The Tsu-Lin Zen sect:***

Compared with the kings of Đinh, Lê, and Lý dynasties, kings of the Trần dynasty were more advanced in studying. Their devotion to Buddhism was more spiritual and more intellectual. They all studied Buddhist doctrines and usually discussed the doctrines with the Zen masters. In the imperial court there appeared scholars, among them many were trained by Zen masters. In the beginning of the dynasty, the Zen masters organized campaigns to awaken people's national consciousness by employing geomancy and the sibylline utterance of prophets. They directly made plans, compiled imperial documents, received diplomatic delegations, and even discussed military strategy.

But later once the imperial court had been established, the Sangha only held moral leading positions and held positions of advisors in the nation's affairs such as economic and political strategies. They did not take on diplomatic posts or compiled royal documents. Nevertheless, while helping with nation's affairs, all Zen masters still kept their monk character. After working at the Palace, they went back to the pagoda. The philosophy of their conduct was: "To work for the sake of the nation, but never became attached to their work nor strove to become famous. Finally, they turned back to cultivating to attain emancipation in the the Buddhist Way." In the Tran Dynasty, Buddhism reached the pinnacle and entered into the details of nations; affairs through the kings and their staff. The kings, who became monks or were reigning were all profound students of Buddhist doctrines. The kings were always given advice on ruling over the nation by National Teachers or Zen masters. According to "A Complete History of the Great Viet", the Tran's Buddhism, the Truc Lam (Bamboo Forest) Buddhism, which was a special Zen Sect founded by King Tran Nhan Tong, became a Buddhist ideology being attached to the people. Zen masters in the Tran Dynasty did not directly take part in politics, but Buddhism was an important factor that linked people's minds. The Buddhist spirit made kings employed a golden means to govern the nation. As a matter of fact, it was King Tran Nhan Tong that employed the potential of Buddhism to serve politics. His entering monkhood and his years of proselytizing all over the country made the Truc Lam Zen Sect strong and it became a religious force to support the imperial court. It should be noted that although the kings in the Tran Dynasty employed Buddhist potential to link up people's minds they were never in disguise. In fact, they were genuine monks and Buddhists. They only wished to devote their abilities to Buddhism as well as to the nation and their reign. Bamboo Grove Zen school was one of the earliest Ch'an schools in Vietnam. It was founded by King Trần Nhân Tông, the third king of the Trần dynasty (1226-1400). It originated from Lin-Chi tradition from China, and probably the first distinctively Vietnamese Zen tradition. However, it only survived as a distinguishable lineage until the death of its third patriarch, Huyền Quang. According to history, Tran's Buddhism, or the Truc Lam (Bamboo Forest) Buddhism, which was a special Zen sect developed

by King Tran Nhan Tong, became a Buddhist ideology being attached to the people. The mass Buddhist Movement, built by the king, was participated in by all the people. In a different way in the Ly Dynasty, the monk's lives and the people's lives were spiritually and temporarily linked together in the Tran Dynasty. A head of a Buddhist Congregation was sometime a Zen master, and at other times a king's father. Especially, in these dynasties the kings were likely to hand over the throne to their sons very early in order that they could become a monk. However, they still held a key position of leadership in the imperial court. King Tran Nhan Tong who won against the Yuan invaders, became a monk in 1299. He was the founder of the Bamboo Forest Zen Sect. He chose the position on top of Mount Yen Tu for his cultivation, but also at the same time from there he could have a good view of battlefield whenever northern invaders came. In recent decades, Zen master Thích Thanh Từ has tried to revive the school. He built a big Zen Center named “Trúc Lâm Yên Tử Zen Monastery” in Dalat, South central Vietnam. And in recent years, he traveled to Mount Truc Lam in North Vietnam, with the forefront efforts to restore the original “Truc Lam Yen Tu” Temple.

The Tsu-Lin Zen sect was the fourth branch in Vietnam which was founded by Zen master Tran Nhan Tong (1258-1308), a great disciple of Zen Master Tue Trung Thuong Si. Lineages of Transmission And Patriarchs of the Tsu Lin Zen sect (Counted From Patriarch Mahakasyapa). From the first lineage to the twenty-eighth lineage was twenty-eight patriarchs in the Indian Zen Sect. From the twenty-eighth lineage to the thirty-third lineage were the six patriarchs in China. The thirty-fourth lineage of the Tsu Lin Zen sect was Zen master Nan Yueh Huai Rang. The thirty-fifth lineage of the Tsu Lin Zen sect was Zen master Ma Tzu Tao-I. The thirty-sixth lineage of the Tsu Lin Zen sect was Zen master Pai Chang Huai-Hai. The thirty-seventh lineage was Zen master Wu-Yen T'ung.

From the thirty-eighth lineage to the forty-seventh lineage were equivalent to from the first to the tenth lineages of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect: The first Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect had one person with recorded biography: Zen Master Cam Thanh. The second Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect had one person with recorded biography: Zen Master Shen-Hui. The third Generation of the

Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect had one person with recorded biography: Zen Master Yun-Feng. The fourth Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect had two persons with one recorded biography: Zen Master Khuông Viet. The fifth Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect had two persons with recorded biography: Zen Master Đa Bao. The sixth Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect had three persons with two recorded biography: Zen Master Đình Huong and Zen Master Thien Lao. The seventh Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect had 7 persons with 6 recorded biographies: Zen Master Vien Chieu, Zen Master Cuu Chi, Zen Master Minh Tam, Zen Master Bao Tinh, Zen Master Quang Tri, and Zen Master Ly Thai Tong. The eighth Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect had 6 persons with 3 recorded biographies: Zen Master Ngo An, Zen Master Man Giac, and Zen Master Thong Bien. The ninth Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect had 8 person with 5 recorded biographies: Zen Master Bao Giam, Zen Master Dao Hue, Zen Master Bien Tai, Zen Master Khong Lo, and Zen Master Bon Tinh. The tenth Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect had 12 persons with 10 recorded biographies: Zen Master Giac Hai, Zen Master Tinh Khong, Zen Master Dai Xa, Zen Master Tin Hoc, Zen Master Truong Nguyen, Zen Master Tinh Luc, Zen Master Tri Bao, Zen Master Minh Tri, Zen Master Tinh Gioi, and Zen master Nguyen Hoc.

The forty-eighth lineage was Zen master Zen master Quang Nghiem in the Eleventh Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung. The heir of the forty-nine lineage was Zen master Thuong Chieu in the Twelfth Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung. The heir of the fiftieth lineage was Zen Master Tri Thong, but we have no records of this Zen master. The heir of the fifty-first lineage was Zen master Hien Quang in the Fourteenth Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung. The heir of the fifty-second lineage was Zen master Dao Vien Vien Chung, but we have no records of this Zen master (the fifteenth Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect). The heir of the fifty-third lineage was Zen master Dai Dang National Teacher, but we have no records of this Zen master (the sixteenth Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect). The heir of the fifty-fourth lineage of the Tsu Lin Zen sect was Zen master Tieu Dao at Phuc Duong temple, but we have no records of this Zen master (the seventeenth Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect). The heir of

the fifty-fifth lineage was Zen master Tue Trung Thuong Si (the eighteenth Generation of the Wu-Yen-T'ung Zen sect). After Zen master Tue Trung Thuong Si was the starting point of the Ts'u-Lin Zen Sect which was founded by Zen master Tran Nhan Tong. Zen Virtues in the Tsu-Lin Zen Sect: Zen Master Phap Loa, Zen Master Huyen Quang, Zen Master Vien Chung, National Teacher Truc Lam, and Zen Master Nhu Duc.



## *Chapter Sixteen*

### *Venerable Master Minh Tri & Vietnamese Pure Land For Lay Buddhists Association*

Venerable Master Minh Tri's worldly name Nguyen Van Bong. He was born in 1886 in Tan My Village, An Thanh Thuong (Rach Vong) Canton, Vinh Long Province, now in Sa Dec City, Dong Thap Province. He was the seventh child of Mr. Nguyen Van Binh and Mrs. Nguyen Thi An. His parents passed away when he was very young. He then was raised by his eldest sister. At the age of nine or ten, he attended at a village school to study Chinese. When he grew up, his sister sent him to a provincial school to study Vietnamese and French. Even when he was young, he spent a lot of time to study Buddhist, Confucius and Taoist teachings. He also studied Herbal Medicines. In 1905, he followed his brothers' and sisters' instruction to get married, but he continued to studied Buddhist teachings compassion, loving-kindness, benefits to self and others, enlightening self and others. In 1915, after comprehending the core teachings of Buddhism, he travelled all over the region of the Seven Mountains to seek masters to study more on Buddhism. After a short period of time of cultivation in Nui Cam, he attained a sudden enlightenment of Truth. Since then, he continued to spread Buddhist teachings. He, then, founded the Vietnamese Lay Pure Land in late 1916 in Nui Cam, Seven Mountains in the Southeastern part of Vietnam. The teachings of the Vietnamese Lay Pure Land Sect based on the Sutra of the proper way to pay homage to the six directions or the Sigalovada-sutta (Sigalaka Sutra) is the Sutra that the Buddha preached to Sigalovada, son of an elder of Rajagrha, Digha Nikaya 31. This sutra is also known as the Sutra of Advice to Lay People that encourages lay Pure Land Buddhists to recite Buddha names and to pay homage to the six directions. In 1919, he renounced his worldly life to become a wandering monk who travelled all over the South of Vietnam. From 1919 till 1933, he continued to help people in the South to build roads and bridges. In 1933, he settled down in Cholon, built Hung Long Temple and officially founded the Vietnamese Pure Land For Lay Buddhists Association. In 1951, he

started to teach his disciples to begin the Path of Simultaneous Cultivations of Blessings & Wisdom, and eliminated the name of Paying Homage to the Six Directions. He always reminded his disciples that in Buddhist cultivations, there are several different dharma doors, but there are only two ways of cultivation: Cultivation of merits and cultivation of wisdom. Cultivate to gather merits includes various practices for a Buddhist such as practicing charity, distributing free sutras, building temples and stupas, keeping vegetarian diet and precepts, etc. Merit is the result of the voluntary performance of virtuous actions, also means field of merit, or field of happiness. All good deeds, or the blessing arising from good deeds. The karmic result of unselfish action either mental or physical. The blessing wealth, intelligence of human beings and celestial realms; therefore, they are temporary and subject to birth and death. Practices of blessing or sundry practices are various practices for a Buddhist such as practicing charity, distributing free sutras, building temples and stupas, keeping vegetarian diet and precepts, etc. Merit is the quality in us which ensures future benefits to us, material of spiritual. It is not difficult to perceive that to desire merit, to hoard, store, and accumulate merit, does, however meritorious it may be, imply a considerable degree of self-seeking. It has always been the tactics of the Buddhists to weaken the possessive instincts of the spiritually less-endowed members of the community by withdrawing them from such objects as wealth and family, and directing them instead towards one aim and object, i.e. the acquisition of merit. But that, of course, is good enough only on a fairly low spiritual level. At higher stages one will have to turn also against this form of possessiveness, one will have to be willing to give up one's store of merit for the sake of the happiness of others. In Buddhist cultivations, merits and wisdom are two feet of a practitioner who is walking toward the Buddha-Land. If lack just one, that person immediately becomes disabled and will never be able to reach the Buddha-Land. Owing to the practice of wisdom, practitioners will attain a number of virtues that contribute a considerable part in the process of going beyond the six paths of the samsara. Virtue is practicing what is good like decreasing greed, anger and ignorance. Virtue is to improve oneself, which will help transcend birth and death and lead to Buddhahood. Merit is what one established by benefitting others, while



virtue is what one practices to improve oneself such as decreasing greed, anger, and ignorance. Both merit and virtue should be cultivated side by side. He passed away on August 23, 1958, at the age of 73. Vietnamese people, especially people in the South will forever remember all his contributions in both wordly life and in religion.



## ***Chapter Seventeen***

### ***Virtual Master Huynh Phu So & Hoa Hao Buddhism***

#### ***I. Virtual Master Huynh Phu So:***

Master Huynh Phu So was born in 1920 at Hoa Hao Village, An Giang Province. He was the son of a moderately wealthy peasant family. Right after he was born, he possessed a very weak body with illnesses. He could not attend school on a regular basis as other children in the village. Around 1935, his father sent him to Nui Cam in the Seven Mountains to learn with a hermit. In 1939, he returned home after his master's death. Villagers observed that he was so healthy when returning home. They also witnessed that he had the ability to speak for several hours spontaneously with eloquence about the sublime doctrines of Buddhism. After witnessing this miracle, they were deeply impressed by the strange scene and volunteered to become his first converts. His simplified teachings were designed to appeal the majority of the poor and the peasants. He also cut down on ceremonies and complex rituals in pagodas. For these reasons, within a month, he gained more than a hundred thousand followers. Some years later, the number of his followers reached a million. In 1947, he went to a meeting with Viet Minh to discuss the cooperation of Hoa Hao and Viet Minh in fighting against the French Colonials, but he disappeared since that time. Only in a short period of eight years, from 1939 to 1947, Virtual Master Huynh Phu So founded and strengthened Hoa-Hao Buddhism, one of the major religions in South Vietnam.

#### ***II. Hoa Hao Buddhism:***

Hoa-Hao Buddhism was founded in 1939 by Prophet Huynh Phu So. The main teachings emphasize on the followings: *First, the Four Debts of Gratitude:* 1) Be thankful to our ancestors and parents. 2) Be thankful to our country. 3) Be thankful to the Three Treasures (Buddha, Buddha-Law, Sangha). 4) Be thankful to our fellow-countrymen and all other sentient beings. *Second, the Three Karmas of the Body, the Mouth*

*and the Mind:* 1) The karmas of the body or physical karma comprises of the followings: Not to kill, not to steal, not to commit adultery, and not to abuse power. The karma operating in the body. The body as representing the fruit of action in previous existence. Body karma is difficult to form than thought and speech karma, for there are times when we wish to use our bodies to commit wickedness such as killing, stealing, and committing sexual misconduct, but it is possible for theories, virtues as well as our parents, siblings, teachers, friends or the law to impede us. Thus we are not carry out the body's wicked karma. The other two karmas are the karma of the mouth and of the mind. 2) The karma of the mouth or verbal karma comprises of the followings: Not to speak double tongue, not to speak vicious tongue or not to defame others, and not to tell lie. Vaca-karman means the work of the mouth or karma of the mouth (talk, speech) According to the Buddha's teachings, the karmic consequences of speech karma are much greater than the karmic consequences of the mind and the body karma because when thoughts arise, they are not yet apparent to everyone; however, as soon as words are spoken, they will be heard immediately. Using the body to commit evil can sometimes be impeded. The thing that should be feared is false words that come out of a mouth. As soon as a wicked thought arises, the body has not supported the evil thought, but the speech had already blurted out vicious slanders. The body hasn't time to kill, but the mind already made the threats, the mind just wanted to insult, belittle, or ridicule someone, the body has not carried out any drastic actions, but the speech is already rampant in its malicious verbal abuse, etc. The mouth is the gate and door to all hatred and revenge; it is the karmic retribution of of the Avichi Hell; it is also the great burning oven destroying all of one's virtues and merits. Therefore, ancients always reminded people: "Diseases are from the mouth, and calamities are also from the mouth." If wickedness is spoken, then one will suffer unwholesome karmic retributions; if goodness is spoken, then one will reap the wholesome karmic retributions. If you praise others, you shall be praised. If you insult others, you shall be insulted. It's natural that what you sow is what you reap. We should always remember that the "theory of karmic retributions" is flawless, and then courageously take responsibility by cultivating so karmic transgressions will be eliminated gradually, and never blame Heaven nor blaming

others. 3) The karma of the mind or Mental Karma comprises of the followings: Not be greedy, not be angry, and not be ignorant. Mental action means the function of mind or thought. Compared to the karma of the mouth, karma of the mind is difficult to establish, thought has just risen within the mind but has not take appearance, or become action; therefore, transgressions have not formed. *Third, the Teachings on the Noble Eightfold Paths (which are similar to that of the Buddhism):* The eightfold noble path consists in right view, right thinking, right speech, right action, right living, right endeavor, right memory, and right meditation. The term “Correct” in Buddhism means any thinking or action that does not cause troubles, afflictions and sufferings for oneself and others; on the contrary, this thinking or action will bring to oneself or others peace, mindfulness and happiness. Right view means to abandon a self-centered way of looking at things and to have a right view of the Buddha, that is “Nothing has its own self; everything exists due to temporary combination. If this exists, the other exists; if this ceases to exist, the other is in no way to be able to exist.” Right thinking means not to include toward a self-centered attitude toward things but to think of things rightly. Right view teaches us to abandon the three evils of the mind such as covetousness, resentment, and evil-mindedness; and to think of things rightly, with as generous a mind as the Buddha: not to have greedy mind (covetousness) or not to think only of one’s own gain; not to have the angry mind (resentment) or not to get angry when things do not turn out as one wishes; not to have the evil mind (evil-mindedness). Right speech teaches us to use right words in our daily lives and to avoid the four evils of the mouth such as not to lie (to use false language), not to speak with a double tongue, not to commit ill-speaking, and not to use improper language (careless language). Right action means daily conduct in accordance with the precepts of the Buddha. It is to say one must refrain from the three evils of the body that hinder right action such as needless killing, stealing, and committing adultery or other sexual misconduct. Right living means to gain food, clothing, shelter, and other necessities of life in a right way. Right living teaches us not to earn our livelihood through work that makes trouble for others or through a career useless to society, but to live on a justifiable income that we can obtain through right work and a vocation useful to others. Right endeavor means to

engage constantly in right conduct without being idle or deviating from the right way, avoid such wrongs as the three evils of the mind, the evils of the mouth, and the three evils of the body. Right memory means to practice with a right mind as the Buddha did, that is, we must address ourselves to all things in the universe with a fair and right mind. And finally, right meditation means not to be agitated by any change of external circumstances. According to Master Huynh, the founder of Hoa Hao Buddhism, practicing the Noble Eight-fold Path can bring about real advantages such as improvement of personal conditions. It is due to the elimination of all evil thoughts, words, and actions that we may commit in our daily life, and to the continuing practice of charitable work; improvement of living conditions. If everyone practiced this noble path, the world we are living now would be devoid of all miseries and sufferings caused by hatred, struggle, and war between men and men, countries and countries, or peoples and peoples. Peace would reign forever on earth; attainment of enlightenment or Bodhi Awareness. The Noble Eight-fold Path is the first basic condition for attaining Bodhi Consciousness that is untarnished while Alaya Consciousness is still defiled. *Fourth, Worshipping:* 1) Not trying to defame the worshipping in the temples or pagodas; however, there is no need to create any more statues or images at home. For those who have Buddha's statues in the house, it is alright to keep it that way; however, paper images of Buddhas should not be kept and should be burned. 2) The belief comes from the heart, not from outside appearances. 3) The inside altar only needs a Brown-coloured flag, symbol of mankind harmony without distinction of races or individuals because brown color is the association of all other colours. 4) If there is no room for decorating an altar inside the house, a "Heaven Altar" with an incense-brazier should be sufficient. 5) Hoa-Hao Buddhism emphasizes in improving oneself rather than in apparent worshipping. 6) As regards the way of worshipping Buddha, only fresh water, flowers and incense sticks should be used. For fresh water represents "cleanliness," flowers represent "purity," and incense is used to freshen the air. As for offering of food, they can use any available food for the worshipping of their ancestors. 7) Beside the altar of the Buddha, followers of Hoa-Hao Buddhism can place altars of parents or ancestors, or any national heroes; however, they should

not worship any spirit whose origins they do not know well. *Fifth, Religion Performance:* 1) Followers of Hoa-Hao Buddhism only prostrate themselves before the Buddhas, ancestors, parents, and national heroes, no prostration before any living beings. Even to the master, they only bow, not prostrating. 2) Followers of Hoa-Hao Buddhism should not merely rely on the help of saints and gods. 3) Followers of Hoa-Hao Buddhism should not merely depend on the support of their master. 4) Followers of Hoa-Hao Buddhism should never blame the Buddhas, gods or masters for not having saved or blessed them. They always remember the Buddha's Law of "Cause and Effect," if the cause is good, the effect is then good too. 5) Followers of Hoa-Hao Buddhism should always clearly understand the religion's principles and the teachings of Prophet Huynh, and not blindly rely on belief. *Sixth, Funeral:* 1) Funeral ceremony will be kept as ancient mourning customs; however, not to perform any surplus and unnecessary ceremonies. 2) Not to burn votive paper because this is only a waste of money. 3) Followers of Hoa-Hao Buddhism should always remember that the body is destructible and it should be buried discreetly without letting it decompose because this is harmful to the living. 4) Only set up an altar in the middle of the house or in the open air for the praying and so on burying the dead (speedily and discreetly). 5) As regards to offerings of food, one can offer anything available, but try to keep the funeral simple and not money wasting. 6) Neighbors can come to help out with the funeral services, but this is not a chance for playing or enjoying musics. *Seventh, Marriage:* 1) The parents' duty is to choose a suitable spouse for their child by careful observation of the couple's character. 2) The custom of demanding matrimonial dowry deposit from the bridegroom's family should be wiped off. 3) The parents of the two parties should not act difficult towards each other regarding the wedding ceremonies. 4) Try to keep the wedding ceremony the simpler the better, not to waste money. *Eighth, Things followers should avoid:* 1) Not to drink; however, during some special events which do not fall on fast days, one can have a little of a very light liquor. Remember that to become drunk is equal to committing a sin. 2) Not to smoke opium. Exception to only sick people advised by physicians may take a little in combination with other medicines. 3) Not to gambling. No exception!!! *Ninth, Behaviour towards monks,*

*temples or pagodas, other religions and individuals:* (a) *Behaviour towards monks and nuns:* i) All followers of Hoa Hao Buddhism should always respect decent monks and nuns. ii) Followers of Hoa-Hao Buddhism should always listen and obey right things taught by the monks and nuns. iii) For those who known to be false monks and nuns, followers of Hoa-Hao Buddhism should warn and advise them to return to the right path of Buddhism. If they continue with their evils, followers of Hoa Hao Buddhism should take a positive action by explaining to the people as well as to the local Buddhists so that they could stay away from those wizards. (b) *Behaviour towards temples and pagodas:* i) Hoa Hao Buddhism does not prohibit its followers from going to temples or pagodas to worship Buddhas, especially on important Buddhist events such as the Buddha's Birthday (on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the Vesak month) or the Ullambana Basins (on the 15 of the seventh lunar month). ii) Hoa Hao Buddhism does not agree or emphasize on the worshipping of statues or images; however, it prohibits its followers to defame this form of worship in any way. (c) *Behaviour of followers towards other religions:* i) Followers of Hoa-Hao Buddhism always respect, and not talk about the way of worshipping of other religions. ii) Followers of Hoa-Hao Buddhism never speak ill about the teachings of other religions. iii) Followers of Hoa-Hao Buddhism should always behave correctly towards other religions even if they do wrong to Hoa-Hao Buddhism. (d) *Behaviour towards other individuals:* i) Followers of Hoa-Hao Buddhism should always be on good terms with others so that mutual sympathy may be strongly developed. ii) Followers of Hoa-Hao Buddhism always show love and care for others whenever they are in need. iii) Followers of Hoa-Hao Buddhism should always try their best to help neighbors. *Tenth, Letting the hair growing long:* 1) The Master Huynh Phu So let his hair growing long because he tried to keep a remembrance of our ancestors' ancient custom and to show us that he is not influenced by the western civilization, not a means of leading a religious life. 2) The Master Huynh did not compel nor prohibit his followers to grow their hair long. 3) If one grows long hair without improving oneself, one is in no way a follower of Hoa-Hao Buddhism. 4) Master Huynh allowed his followers to make reforms according to the contemporary evolution of the country so as to be in accord with the people. *Eleventh, Education and Hoa Hao Buddhism:*



1) Master Huynh always emphasized that education would help wider our knowledge in science and sociology. 2) Education helps us prevent errors and wipe out superstitions. 3) Education helps us study Buddhism more efficiently. 4) Education is not a hindrance to morality or religious life. *Twelfth, Hoa Hao Buddhism and Business:* Master Huynh Phu So encouraged his followers to do business to enrich the family economy and to strengthen the society as well as the country with the following conditions: 1) All followers of Hoa-Hao Buddhism should always comply with the rules as outlined in the “Noble Eightfold Path.” 2) Get rid of dishonest deeds by not performing weight cheating, bushel substituting, smuggling, liquor trading, and sales of opium. 3) Exercise honest professions without cheating anyone, get rid of dishonest habits. *Thirteenth, Concepts of Hoa-Hao Buddhism on Food and Housing:* 1) Eat and drink moderately. 2) Avoid food prepared with ingredients that are bad for our body and which may cause us illness. 3) Always keep our body clean and observe the rules of hygiene. 4) Get rid of the habit of living in unhealthy conditions because when the body is dirty, the mind cannot develop.



## *Chapter Eighteen*

### *Venerable Master Minh Dang Quang & The Vietnamese Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Sect*

#### *I. The Life & Acts of Honorable Master Minh Dang Quang:*

Venerable Master Minh Dang Quang was an important Vietnamese Monk in the first half of the twentieth century. He was born in 1923 and considered missing on the way to preach in 1954. When moral and traditions of Vietnamese Buddhism were in rapid decline, he was one of the key monks in the revival and reformation of Vietnamese Buddhism during that time; he was also the founder of the Vietnamese Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist school. Most Honorable One Minh Đăng Quang cleverly combined both doctrines from Mahayana and Theravada (Hinayana) to make the doctrine for the Vietnamese Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Sect. Not long after the day he founded the school, millions of followers followed him to practice. In mid 70s, one of his great disciples, Most Venerable Thích Giác Nhiên, founded the International Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Association in the United States of which followers are all over the world nowadays. Venerable Master Minh Dang Quang was born and raised in a family with Confucian tradition. He was much imbued with the lofty principles of Confucianism since he was very young so that He was always sincerely respect the main principles of Confucius-Mencius although he deeply devoted to the Triple Gem. Even though his time of propagation of the Dharma was only ten years, he had contributed so much to Vietnamese Buddhism and to Buddhism in general. Venerable Master Minh Dang Quang had come and gone. Seventy years had elapsed since his magnificent propagation of the Buddha-dharma adorned the historical background of Vietnam at that time, especially the Southern parts. From a lonely shadow of his during the most chaotic time of Vietnamese history, he opened a new era for Buddhism in Vietnam, an era of a real Buddhism, an era of an orthodox Buddhism, a Buddhism that indeed deeply infiltrated Vietnamese people after years of suffer under the policy of religious destruction implemented by the French colonists. More than half a century had passed, Venerable Master Minh

Dang Quang, his life and his religious works never lose their powerful impact upon not only his disciples, but also those who come across them. As a matter of fact, time seems to have no impact on his memory and the law of impermanence also seems to refuse to imprint its miserable seal on the great fame of this outstanding master. His shining personality and supernatural character, in addition to his determined will to carry out his noble mission had helped his ability to found a famous Buddhist tradition in Vietnam. He started his mission even when he was very young. His vigor and his unceasing search for and propagation of the Buddha-dharma always inspire our respect and encourage us to continue to follow his footsteps and his gorgeous example to serve the Correct Dharma.

## ***II. Honorable Master Minh Dang Quang and the Vietnamese Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Sect:***

Vietnamese Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Association, founded in 1944 by the Late Most Honourable One Minh Đăng Quang. The school was established during declined period of the Vietnamese Buddhism. Most Honourable One Minh Đăng Quang cleverly combined both doctrines from Theravada (Hinayana) and Mahayana to make the doctrine for the Vietnamese Sangha Buddhism. Not long after he founded The Vietnamese Sangha Buddhism, millions of followers followed him to practise. He was so famous; however, he suddenly disappeared in 1954. He was officially considered missing in 1954. After he disappeared, the Vietnamese Sangha Bhikshu Buddhism developed more quickly on a larger scale from all over the South Vietnam to North of Central Vietnam with millions more followers. Missionaries of Vietnamese Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Association At this time, in Vietnam, there are six Missionaries of Monks and three Missionaries of Nuns: *Missionaries of Monks*: The first Missionary of Monks led by Most Venerable Giac Chanh and its headquarters is Ngoc Vien Monastery in Vinh Long Province. The second Missionary of Monks led by Most Venerable Giac Tanh and its headquarters is Ngoc Trang Monastery in Nha Trang Province. The third Missionary of Monks led by Most Venerable Giac An and its headquarters is Ngoc Tong Monastery in Nha Trang Province. The fourth Missionary of Monks led by Dharma Master, Most Venerable Giac Nhiên and its

headquarters is Minh Dang Quang Dharma Institute in Bien Hoa Province. The fifth Missionary of Monks led by Most Venerable Giac Ly and its headquarters is Central Monastery in Saigon. The sixth Missionary of Monks led by Most Venerable Giac Hue and its headquarters is Loc Uyen Dharma Hall in Saigon. *Missionaries of Nuns:* The first Missionary of Nuns led by Venerable Nun Huynh Lien and its headquarters is Ngoc Phuong Monastery in Saigon. The second Missionary of Nuns led by Venerable Nun Ngan Lien and its headquarters is Ngoc Tien in Ha Tien, Rach Gia Province. The third Missionary of Nuns led by Venerable Nun Tri Lien and its headquarters is Ngoc Hiep Monastery in My Tho Province. *Leaders of Vietnamese Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Association:* Vietnamese Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Association led by Most Honorable One Minh Dang Quang from 1946 till 1954. From 1954 to 1975, led Most Venerable Giac Chanh. After 1975, Most Venerable Giac Chánh continued to lead the Vietnamese Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Association in Vietnam. Meanwhile, Dharma Master Thich Giac Nhien, leader of the fourth Missionary of Monks went oversea and established the International Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Association in California, the United States of America. Most Venerable Giac Chanh passed away in 2004. At this time, Vietnamese Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Association and International Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Association led by Dharma Master, Most Venerable Thich Giac Nhien. However, Vietnamese Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Association in Vietnam is directly led by Venerable Thich Giac Toan, and its headquarters is Central Monastery in Saigon.



## *Chapter Nineteen*

### *Lay Buddhist Tam Minh Le Dinh Tham & The Association of An Nam Buddhist Studies*

Doctor Minh Tam Le Dinh Tham (1897-1969) was born in 1897 in Dong My Village, Phu Khuong Canton, Dien Ban District, Quang Nam Province. His father, Mr. Le Dinh, held the position of Minister of Military Department (Minister of Defense) during the time of King Tu Duc. When he was young, he and his brother (three years older than him) studied directly under his father. Both of them proved to be extraordinarily intelligent. When he grown up, Mr. Le Dinh Tham proved to be excellent and famous on his hometown.

From elementary to university, he was always at the top of all his classes and was ranked number one in almost all of his examinations. Mr. Le Dinh Tham graduated as valedictorian medicine in Hanoi in 1916. At that time, it was the dream of many people who wanted success and fame, but for the young Doctor Le Dinh Tham, success and fame were not his goal. From 1916 to 1925, he was assigned to many hospitals from Binh Thuan, Song Cau, Quy Nhon, Tuy Hoa, etc. In 1926, he was transferred to Hoi An, Quang Nam. After hearing the news that he and a group of young people in Hoi An held a ceremony to commemorate Mr. Phan Chu Trinh, the French immediately transferred him to Ha Tinh province. In 1928, he was transferred to Hue to hold a chief physician position of Pasteur Institute of Apothecology and Microbiology. In 1930, Mr. Le Dinh Tham passed the French Medical Doctor's Degree. In 1933, he was the Director of Hue Hospital. In 1945, Prime Minister Tran Trong Kim invited him to hold the position of Central Medical Director. In 1946, Dr. Le Dinh Tham returned to his hometown, Quang Nam, to join the resistance forces against the French. In 1947, he held the position of Chairman of the South Central Resistance Committee at Inter-Zone V. In the summer of 1949, he was invited to the North and was promoted to hold the position of Chairman of the World Peace Movement of Vietnam.

While working at Hoi An Hospital in 1926, one day, he visited Non Nuoc Pagoda in Da Nang, he accidentally read a verse of the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng, carved on the temple wall:

The Bodhi is not like the tree,  
 (Bodhi tree has been no tree)  
 The mirror bright is nowhere shining,  
 (The shining mirror was actually none)  
 As there is nothing from the first,  
 (From the beginning, nothing has existed)  
 Where can the dust itself accumulate?  
 (How would anything be dusty?)

Since then, this verse had always been deeply ingrained in his mind, making him think and urged him to learn more about this religion. In 1928, when he transferred from Ha Tinh to Hue as the Chief Physician of the Pasteur Institute of Apothecology and Microbiology, he often went to Truc Lam Pagoda and became a lay disciple of Most Venerable Giac Tien, who gave him the Dharma name of Tam Minh. From this point in time, his life was attached to Buddhism and dedicated to serve the Dharma. From 1929 to 1933, he also learned a lot from Most Venerable Phuoc Hue from Thap Thap Pagoda in Binh Dinh Province. During this period of time, in China, Most Venerable T'ai Hsi was launching a Chinese Buddhist Revival. In Vietnam, Mr. Minh Tam Le Dinh Tham also launched a movement to revive Vietnamese Buddhism. It should be reminded that Vietnamese Buddhism was considered dead since the time the French Colonials invaded and occupied the whole Vietnam in 1883 (in a Peace Agreement signed by Nguyen Van Tuong and Patrenôte). In 1932, Doctor Le Dinh Tham worked with a group of Monks (Thien Duc, Phuoc Hue, Giac Tien, Giac Nhen, Tinh Hanh, Tinh Khiet... ) and other devout lay Buddhists (Ung Bang, Nguyen Dinh Hoe, Nguyen Khoa Tan...) to establish Association of An Nam Buddhist Studies (An Nam Phật Học). It should be noted that under the French domination, the central region from Thanh Hoa to Binh Thuan was called An Nam. The Southern Buddhist Studies was chaired by Dr. Le Dinh Tham and had its headquarters at Truc Lam Pagoda. Later, when Tu Dam Pagoda was restored, the Association moved its office to Tu Dam. In the next few years, the Association of An Nam Buddhist Studies expanded its



organization system to branches that scattered all over the Central and South Vietnam. The main goal of the Association of Southern Buddhist Studies was to train talented monks. In 1933, opened the An Nam Buddhist Studies at Van Phuoc Pagoda, then moved to Bao Quoc Pagoda led by Most Venerable Tri Do with the name Son Mon School of Buddhism. In the same year, 1933, the Buddhist University class was opened at Truc Lam Pagoda, led by Most Venrable Giac Tien (as Director), a high school class was opened at Tuong Van Pagoda, led by Most Venerable Tinh Khiet. Doctor Le Dinh Tham was invited to teach at these schools and became the first layparson in the twentieth century to have participated in the training of Buddhist monks in Vietnam. Despite having a great knowledge of life and religion, but Dr. Le Dinh Tham was very humble and respectful. He always wore a Buddhist dark brown robe (for lay people) and bowed to the monks before going up to the podium.

It should be noted that among those who graduated from the first class of Buddhism at Bao Quoc School, there were some typical monks such as Thien Sieu, Tri Quang, Thien Minh, Thien Hoa, Tri Tinh, Nhat Lien, etc. They later became high-ranking leaders of Vietnamese Buddhism. Besides efforts of reviving Vietnamese Buddhism, Dr. Le Dinh Tham also concerned and thought of the youth who follow this generation. In 1940, he established the Youth Union of Buddhist Studies Duc Duc, led by himself. Team leader Mr. Pham Huu Binh, Deputy Youth Union Mr. Dinh Van Nam (later became Most Venrable Minh Chau), Secreatry Mr. Ngo Dien, and other members Ngo Thua, Vo Dinh Cuong, Dinh Van Vinh, Nguyen Huu Quang, Nguyen Khai, Le Kiem, Pham Quy, Hoang Ngoc Phu, Le Dinh Duyen... In 1948 the United Vietnamese Buddhist Association was established in Hanoi. Many Buddhist magazines and translations were issued. In Hue, Most Venerable Thich Giac Nhien and Upasaka Minh Tam Le Dinh Tham have tried their best to contribute to the Buddhist restoration by preaching the Buddha's Teachings in Vietnamese, founding several Buddhist youth organizations and translating the Surangama Sutra into Vietnamese. In 1951, a National Buddhist Conference was held in Hue, aimed at unifying all Buddhist associations and reorganizing the Sangha's activities. It approved the participation of Vietnamese

Buddhist in the World Fellowship of Buddhists which was founded in Colombo, Ceylon in 1950.

Dr. Le Dinh Tham was one of the most brilliant lay man of Vietnamese Buddhism in the modern time. In 1930s, he made great contributions in reviving Buddhism in Central Vietnam. He was the only layperson in Vietnamese Buddhism who earned the great honor from the Sangha that they erected a memorial statue to honor his contributions to Buddhism. He had not only contributed so much to the revival of Buddhism in Central Vietnam, but he also pioneered in founding of Vietnamese Buddhist Youth and Youth Educational Organizations. He passed away on April 23, 1969, at the age of 73 with 42 years serving and supporting Buddhism. Lay Buddhist Tam Minh Le Dinh Tham was really one of the brilliant stars in the vault of the sky of Vietnamese Buddhism. During this period of 42 years, he spent a lot of time to study and research on Buddhism and contributed a lot in reviving and spreading the Buddha-dharma in Vietnam. He translated and composed the following books: 1) The Surangama Sutra. 2) Nyayapravesa Sastra, the sastra was composed by Sankarasvamin, written on "Introduction to Logic." 3) Mahayana-Sraddhotpada-Sastra, the sastra was composed by Asvaghosa, basic doctrines and practices in Mahayana. 4) Standard Recitation on the Eight Consciousnesses (Pa Shih Kuei Chu Sung), a Commentary written by Hsuan-Tsang (600-664) in the seventh century, that explains the standards of eight consciousnesses. 5) Heart Sutra (the Prajnaparamita Hridaya Sutra, the Sutra of the Prajnaparamita). Besides, he also composed the following works: 1) General Knowledge on Buddhism. 2) History of Vietnamese Buddhism & Sakyamuni Buddha. 3) Tam Minh Le Dinh Tham's Selective Books (4 volumes).

## *Chapter Twenty*

### *Lay Man Chanh Tri Mai Tho Truyen & The Association of Southern Buddhist Studies*

Lay man Mai Tho Truyen was born on April 1, 1905 at My Long Village in Ben Tre Province in a middle-class family. When he was young, he attended Vietnamese-French Elementary school in Ben Tre. Then he went to high school in My Tho and Lycée Chasseloup Laubat in Saigon. In 1924, he passed the Administrative Secretary Examination and was assigned to work in Saigon, Ha Tien and Cholon. In 1931, he passed the District Chief Examination and was assigned to work in Saigon, Tra Vinh, Long Xuyen, and Sa Dec. He was virtuous and famous for his honesty, non-corruption, that was why he received so much respect and love from all the people where he served. In 1945, he was the District Chief in Cau Ngang District when Japanese troops made a coup d'état to get rid of the French Colonials. He was invited to hold the post of Assistant to the Province Chief in Tra Vinh. In June 1945, Prime Minister Tran Trong Kim assigned him to the District Chief in Thot Not, Long Xuyen. After the Revolutionary in August 1945, he was assigned to the post of Assistant to the Revolutionary Committee District Chief in Chau Thanh District, Long Xuyen Province, then Chief of Office and Financial Commissioner of Long Xuyen Province.

After the French troops reoccupied Long Xuyen in 1945, he and the Revolutionary District Committee moved to Nui Sap. There, the Committee dissolved to give the leadership of the Revolutionary District Committee to the combat troops. Under Prime Minister Nguyen Van Thinh, he was assigned to the District Chief of Sa Dec District, then promoted to Deputy Chief of Province of Sa Dec. Witnessing French troops caused so much harm to Vietnamese people, he resigned his post, but his resignation was rejected. In the beginning of 1946, he feigned illness and asked to let go for treatment. In 1947, he was transferred to Saigon to hold the post of Chief of Prime Minister Nguyen Van Xuan's Office, then assigned to Chief of Office of the Department of Economy, Administrative Director of the Department of

Foreign Affairs, then Cabinet Director of Office of Vietnam Governor, then Assistant to Cabinet Director of Office of Prime Minister Buu Loc. In 1955, he transferred to the class of Administrative Inspector, and retired in 1960. After the Coup D'état in 1963, he joined the Council of Intellectuals to support the Military Revolutionary Council. In 1967, Mr. Tran Van Huong and he competed in an election for President and Vice President positions, but failed. In 1968, he was assigned to the post of Secretary of State and Director of the Institute of Supervision, then Secretary of State and Cultural Affairs until he passed away in 1973.

It should be reminded that in the 1920s, there was a Buddhist revival in Vietnam, and beginning in 1931 a number of new Buddhist organizations were founded throughout the country. From 1931 to 1954, lay man Chanh Tri Mai Tho Truyền in Southern Vietnam and lay man Tam Minh Le Dinh Tham in Central Vietnam opened many Vietnamese Buddhist Learning Centers and he tried to gradually restore Vietnamese Buddhism. For Vietnamese Buddhism, in the 1930s, the tasks of establishment an educational system have been initiated. However, due to lack of a unified organization, three regions North, Central and South established their own facilities and associations. After 1954, Buddhists in Southern Vietnam established many Buddhists Associations, such as The An Nam Buddhist Study Association, The Southern Buddhist Research, and so on. In 1964, lay man Mai Tho Truyen composed a Charter to prepare Buddhism in the South to restore with the formation of the United Buddhist Order. Thus, after almost 50 years of revival and development, even though the country was still in the war time, and even the Buddhist educational system has not yet perfected, Vietnamese Buddhism has been considered revived.

From 1931, during the times he worked in the Southwest Cochinchine, lay man Mai Tho Truyen had a great opportunity to come to Buddhism and to study on both Buddhism and Confucianism. When he worked in Sa Dec, he visited Long An Pagoda and became a ly disciple of Most Venerable Thich Hanh Tru who gave him the Dharma name of Chanh Tri. From that time, he wholeheartedly supported Buddhism. He contributed so much in the Movement of Revival of Buddhism. In 1950, he campaigned to form Association of Southern

Buddhist Studies, headquarters was placed at Khanh Hung Pagoda, then moved to Phuoc Hoa Pagoda. A year later, he campaigned to build Xa Loi Pagoda in Saigon which was chosen to be headquarters for the Association of Southern Buddhist Studies in 1958. From 1955, he held the post of Chairman of this association until he passed away in 1973. Besides, the Association of Southern Buddhist Studies also continuously published Tu Quang Buddhist Magazine from 1951 till 1975. Lay man Mai Tho Truyen was the director and editor of this magazine helped a lot in spreading Buddhist teachings in South Vietnam. He also helped opened 40 more provincial and district branches of the Southern Buddhist Studies in many provinces in South Vietnam. In the period of time from 1954-1963, under the policies of suppression of Buddhism from President Ngo Dinh Diem, lay man Mai Tho Truyen held the post of general secretary for the Protection of Buddhism Committee, headquarters was placed at Xa Loi Pagoda.

From 1955, he was elected to hold the post of Chairman for the Association of Buddhist Studies in Southern Vietnam until the year he passed away in 1973. Also in 1955, the Buddhist Studies in Southern Vietnam opened many classes of general knowledge on Buddhist teachings, lectured by Most Venerables Thien Hoa, Tri Huu, Thien Hoa, Quang Minh, and lay man Mai Tho Truyen at Xa Loi Pagoda. It should be noted that from 1955 till 1963, Ngo Dinh Diem's regime misused the political power to brutally suppress Buddhists. In 1963, almost all monks and nuns in the South took part in the Buddhist struggle against religious discrimination, calling for the abrogation of the Tenth Colonial Decree. This decree, adopted by the French Colonists and maintained by President Ngo Dinh Diem, which recognized only Roman Catholicism as a "Church", while Buddhism and all other religions were reduced to the status of a mere "association". On the night of August 20, 1963, in a massive police sweep launched by the Ngo Dinh Diem Government in Hue and Saigon to terrorize and arrest a lot of monks and nuns. In order to safeguard Buddhism, Most Venerable Thich Quang Duc together with some other monks and nuns burnt themselves for the cause of Buddhism. After this calamity, the United Buddhist Order became even stronger. The power of the Sangha of the United Buddhist Order in particular, and the power of Buddhism in general were demonstrated by a decisive role in

bringing down the regime of President Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963. After 1963, Buddhism in the South restored with the formation of the United Buddhist Order in 1964.

United Buddhist Order, founded in the end of 1963 and beginning of 1964. Lay man Mai Tho Truyen actively participated in composing its Charter and was elected to the position of Deputy Director for the Organization, but a month later, he resigned the post and went back to his leading position for the Association of Buddhist Studies in Southern Vietnam. According to the Vietnamese Buddhist Association, Buddhism does not only believe in compassion and love, but also in class struggle as did the Buddha more than twenty-five hundred years ago. The organization publishes a monthly magazine called “Giac Ngo” (Enlightenment), which informs Buddhist activities as well as reflects current government policies regarding to represent 100,000 monks and nuns, and 60,000,000 lay Buddhists, but these figures are questionable. When Van Hanh University was built in Saigon, its headquarters was placed at Xa Loi Pagoda, and lay man Mai Tho Truyen was one of its first professors. Later, he was assigned to be Deputy Director for the University, at the same time, he was also head of the financial office and general secretary from 1967 to 1968. It should be reminded that before 1975, there was Van Hanh University in Saigon which was so famous with its five departments: Buddhist Studies, Humanity, Social Science, Applied Science and the Linguistic Department. Especially the Department of Buddhist Studies, there were around 400 students each year.

Lay man Mai Tho Truyen did make great contributions in helping reviving Buddhism in Southern Vietnam in the modern time. It should be reminded that in the second half of the nineteenth century, though Buddhism remained popular among the masses, but encountered a setback during the age of French colonists’ domination over Vietnam, they supported Catholicism and cruelly suppressed Buddhism. The French were only expelled in the twentieth century. By the mid-twentieth century, there were more than eighty percent of Vietnamese population were Buddhists; however, the majority of the so called Buddhist had very vague ideas of true Buddhism. In the 1920s, there was a Buddhist revival in Vietnam, and beginning in 1931 a number of new Buddhist organizations were founded throughout the country.

Many Buddhist magazines and translations were issued. While in Hue, Most Venerable Thich Giac Nhien and Upasaka Minh Tam Le Dinh Tham have tried their best to contribute to the Buddhist restoration by preaching the Buddha's Teachings in Vietnamese, founding several Buddhist youth organizations and translating the Surangama Sutra into Vietnamese. In 1951, a National Buddhist Conference was held in Hue, aimed at unifying all Buddhist associations and reorganizing the Sangha's activities. It approved the participation of Vietnamese Buddhist in the World Fellowship of Buddhists which was founded in Colombo, Ceylon in 1950. During that time, in Southern Vietnam, in 1950, lay man Mai Tho Truyen helped forming the Association of Buddhist Studies in Southern Vietnam, he was the first general secretary for this organization, headquarters was placed at Khanh Hung Pagoda, later moved to Phuoc Hoa Pagoda. Around 1951, lay man Mai Tho Truyen campaigned to build Xa Loi Pagoda. In 1958, Xa Loi Pagoda was chosen to be the headquarters of the Association of Buddhist Studies in Southern Vietnam.

Lay man Mai Tho Truyen was one of the most brilliant lay man of Vietnamese Buddhism in the modern time. In 1940s, he made great contributions in reviving Buddhism in South Vietnam. He was one of the rare laypeople in Vietnamese Buddhism who earned the great honor and respect from the Sangha for his contributions to Buddhism. He had not only contributed so much to the revival of Buddhism in South Vietnam, but he also pioneered in founding of Vietnamese United Buddhist Order. In 42 years serving and supporting Buddhism. Lay Buddhist Chanh Tri Mai Tho Truyen was really one of the brilliant stars in the vault of the sky of Vietnamese Buddhism. During this period of 42 years, he spent a lot of time to study and research on Buddhism and contributed a lot in reviving and spreading the Buddha-dharma in Vietnam. He composed the following valuable Buddhist books: 1) Mind & Nature (publisher Duoc Tue, Hanoi 1950). 2) The Meanings of Nirvana (1962). 3) An Unselfish Life (1962). 4) Heart Sutra Explained In Vietnamese (1962). 5) Buddhism In Vietnam written in French "Le Bouddhisme au Vietnam" (1962). 6) Wonderful Meanings of the Lotus Sutra (1964). 7) Esoteric Meanings of the Ksitigarbhapranidhana-Sutra (Earth Store Sutra) (1965). Besides, he still had some unpublished sets of books at the time of his passing away: 1) The Essentials of the

Truth of Mind-Transmission. 2) Journey to the West. 3) Old Most Venerable Hsu-Yun (1840-1959). 4) Sutra of Infinite Life (Sukhavativyuha Sutra). 5) Sutra of the samadhi of contemplation of the Buddha (Sutra of the meditation on Amitayus). 6) Fifteen Days In Japan. 7) Making the Circuit of the World of Buddhism. 8) Life & Religion. 9) Studies of the Pure Land. 10) Tantric Buddhism (Mantrayana). He also had an uncompleted book on the Surangama Sutra.



## ***Chapter Twenty-One***

### ***Most Venerable Thich Giac Nhien & The International Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Order***

#### ***I. Dharma Master Thich Giac Nhien:***

Dharma Master Giac Nhien, given name Nguyen Thanh Duoc. He is the little son in a family of five brothers and sisters. His father named Nguyen Huu Huon and mother Ngo Thi Sang. He is one of the most famous monks of Vietnamese Buddhism, a Tripitaka teacher of dharma. He was born in Cantho, South Vietnam in 1923, left home and became a novice at the age his young age. First, he received his Buddha name Minh Chau and studied with Master Minh Tri. In 1939, he was ordained by Great Master Thich Minh Phung with another Buddha name Thich Minh Tam and title Tanh Chon. In 1944, Great Master Minh Phung passed away, he continued to cultivate until he met Honorable Great Master Minh Dang Quang in 1951, he then became one of the most imminent disciples of Most Venerable Master Minh Dang Quang (Founder of the Vietnamese Mendicant Order). Honorable Great Master Minh Dang Quang granted him another Buddhist name Thich Giac Nhien. In 1954, after the secret absence of Master Minh Dang Quang, he headed the Fourth Mendicant Missionary, one of the six main missionaries of Vietnamese Mendicant Order. In 1958, he was the director of affairs and director of propagation of the Dharma for the Vietnamese Mendicant Order. He guided monks in the Order to travel all over the South and central Vietnam to expand the doctrines of the school and to build over 30 monasteries. In 1960, he was assigned to the general director of affairs, general director of monk affairs, general director of propagation of the Dharma, and general director of social welfare for the Vietnamese Mendicant Order. In 1964, he was also responsible for the Head of the Central Institute of the Vietnamese Mendicant Order. In 1965, he opened the Institute of propagation of the Dharma to train new monks and nuns for the Order. From the time of the absence of the Great Master Minh Dang Quang until 1975, he wandered all over the South and Central Vietnam to propagate the Dharma and to compose a lot of

Buddhist books. He was the one who collected and printed 69 books titled “The True Principles” of Great Master Minh Dang Quang. He came to the United States of America in 1978, there he founded the International Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Order in the same year (ISBBA). After the passing away of the second patriarch Giac Chanh in 2004, he became the Third Patriarch of the Vietnamese Mendicant Buddhist Order. During more than seven decades of propagation of the Buddha-dharma, he admitted more than a million of followers, and he also built hundreds of monasteries from all over Vietnam and all over the world. To this day, at the age of 86, he is still traveling all over the world (all over the U.S.A., Canada, Australia, France, England, Belgium, Russia, Vietnam, etc.) to preach the dharma.

## ***II. The International Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Association:***

The International Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Association, founded in 1978 in the United States by Most Venrable Thích Giác Nhiên, a Tripitaka teacher of dharma. ISBBA was originated from the Vietnamese Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Association whose founder was late Great Venerable Minh Đăng Quang in 1944. Most Venerable Thich Giac Nhen was one of the most famous monks of Vietnamese Buddhism, a Tripitaka teacher of dharma. He was born in Cantho, South Vietnam in 1923, left home and became a novice at the age of 8. In 1944 he met and became one of the most imminent disciples of Most Venerable Master Minh Dang Quang (Founder of the Vietnamese Mendicant Order). In 1954, after the secret absence of Master Minh Dang Quang, he headed the Fourth Mendicant Missionary, one of the six main missionaries of Vietnamese Mendicant Order to travel all over the South and central Vietnam to expand the doctrines of the school. He came to the United States of America in 1978, there he founded the International Sangha Bhikshu Buddhist Order in the same year (ISBBA). After the passing away of the second patriarch Giac Chanh in 2004, he became the Third Patriarch of the Vietnamese Mendicant Buddhist Order. During more than seven decades of propagation of the Buddha-dharma, he admitted more than a million of followers, and he also built hundreds of monasteries from all over Vietnam and all over the world. At the age of 86, he was still traveling all over the world (all over the U.S.A., Canada, Australia, France,

England, Belgium, Russia, Vietnam, etc.) to preach the dharma. He passed away on August 3, 2015, at the age of 93.



## ***Chapter Twenty-Two***

### ***Most Venerable Thanh Tu: The Monk Who Has Restored the Truc Lam Zen Sect***

Most Venerable Thich Thanh Tu was born on July 24, 1924 in Cantho City, South Vietnam with the birth name of Tran Huu Phuoc. He was born in a family that followed Caodai Religion, but when he grew up, at the age of 25, he decided to become a Buddhist monk. After almost twenty years of meditation practices, Most Venerable Thanh Tu began his teachings in 1971 with about ten disciples. In 1974, he opened three new monasteries which included Linh Quang, Chan Khong, and Bat Nha. By this time, he was so much famous, and had thousands of disciples included Monks, Nuns, and lay people. Also in 1974, he opened Thuong Chieu Monastery in Long Thanh, which later became the headquarters of all other monasteries. Most Venerable Thanh Tu often emphasized that his teachings originated from the Truc Lam Zen School. Most Venerable Thanh Tu has been most successful to restore the Truc Lam Zen School. In recent years, he also built a monastery on Mount Yen Tu. It should be noted that all his efforts to revive the Truc Lam Zen School had a very positive impact on the reform of Zen, and the revive of a long-time lost Zen School in Vietnam.

According to Most Venerable Thich Thanh Tu, there are four serious matters in a cultivator's life. These are: Mind, Karma, Cause and Conditions. The Buddha taught: "When the mind is still, all realms are calm." Therefore, the issue of certainty is a determination of our future Buddhahood. Karma can be previous or present karma. However, Most Venerable Thích Thanh Từ, a famous Zen Master in recent Vietnamese Buddhist history confirmed that: "Cultivation means transformation of karma." Therefore, no matter what kind of karma, from previous or present, can be transformed. For cause, practitioners should try to zealously cultivate so that we establish no causes. Ancient sages always reminded that "Bodhisattvas fear causes, ordinary people fear results." Even though we are still ordinary people, try to know to fear "causes" so that we don't have to reap "results." Conditions are

external circumstances. If our cultivation power is weak, we can be attracted by external conditions; however, if our cultivation power is strong, no external environments can attract us. The sixth patriarch told the monks in Kuang Chou that: “It is not the wind moving, and it is not the flag moving, it is our mind moving.” So if we follow the teachings of the sixth patriarch, no external environments can be fertilizers to our cycle of births and deaths.

Do we all know who we are? How do we define the “Self” or the “I” that we often use to identify ourselves? The “Self” or the “I” is sometime referred to as the physical being sometimes as the mind. We have always been engrossed in the illusion of the “Self”. Which one is our true self: the physical being or the mind? If it is the physical being, will it always stay with us? For example, the arms are parts of our body. If for some reasons, one of the arms is badly injured and must be imputed and replaced with an artificial arm. Then, can we still consider this borrowed portion as our body? Furthermore, if this physical being is the self, it will probably exist in this world for about 80 or 90 years. Eventually, it will decay and become ashes; then are we satisfied with it? Can we accept the thinking and discriminating mind which is invisible as our “self”? Everyday, thousands of thoughts pop up in our mind; they come and go, i.e., joy, sadness, love, anger, like, dislike, etc. Sometimes we think about good deeds like Buddha; sometimes we cherish wicked ideas like tigers or panthers. Then, which is our true “self”? The good one? The bad one? Or both? Can we be comprised of both the good and the evil? In our daily activities, we often confine ourselves to the “self”, but if someone asks which one is our self, we will be confused. We cannot tell whether it is the body or the mind. We declare that we know about the universe, yet we are ignorant of our own physical body. Just like a man knows everything about his neighbor's affairs but is not aware of his own. What do we think about that man? He is really uprooted when he knows everything except his own.

According to Most Venerable Thich Thanh Tu, the main purpose of a Buddhist practitioner is the search for truth, the search for awakening. On our journey of cultivation, if we move one step, we are one step closer to the truth, one step closer to awakening. The Buddha is the Awakened, so practicing the Buddha's teaching is practicing about his

methods of awakening. Thus, on the way to enlightenment, the more we move forward, the closer we come to awakening. Now, let me ask all of you here this question: “Has anyone of you, laypeople, monk and nun, attained enlightenment?” It would really be a great loss if we could not attain it while practicing the Buddha's teachings. Thus, we have to clearly ascertain our position that Buddhist practicing is the practicing of awakening. We must make great headway in the path of enlightenment even if it takes us months or years. On the way to enlightenment, do we get sidetracked by the forces of ignorance? Let review this analogy: How does a torch brighten up the dark night? Obviously, we must find essential elements to build the torch, such as materials saturated by kerosene or dry sprigs. We certainly cannot use water or wet grass to light the torch. Similarly, to advance in the path of enlightenment, we must develop our knowledge as a prerequisite. In Buddhism, wisdom is compatible with enlightenment. If we come to Buddhism with belief and not wisdom, we are not equipped with the principal factor for enlightenment. We must forsake all personal concepts and come to Buddhism with the sole desire to search for truth. If our acquisition of the Buddha's teachings is based upon our personal beliefs, we cannot go further on our way to self-realization. We must sincerely long for the truth and earnestly search for it; then we are walking on the right path to enlightenment. Buddhist practitioners must use their learned knowledge and wisdom to find the truth, to follow the Bodhisattvas to cultivate themselves in this very life to become Buddhas. They travel from place to place, experience the same things laypeople go through in daily life, and live their life in simplicity, but endure no sufferings and afflictions. Meanwhile, some people work very hard to cultivate the seed of good karma to improve their daily life, yet they cannot eliminate all sufferings. Why? It is because they do not come to Buddha with their wisdom, with their striving for enlightenment, but with a belief. They diligently attend services at the temple with the hope that the Buddha will bless them the things they wish for. They will lose their faith in the Buddha and stop coming to the temple once they cannot get what they wish for. Hence, belief without wisdom is faulty.

One day, Zen Master Thich Thanh Tu entered the hall and addressed the assembly, saying: “Today, I will discuss with all of you

the subject 'Recognizing the Owner'. This is the most difficult subject for both master and disciples. I hope you will pay close attention to listen to the teaching, and I will try to find every possible means to help you comprehend it. We should not waste this precious moment. Let's review our present being or the concept of 'self'. Everyday, we say: 'I must do this and that; I'm thinking about this and that; I'm planning to do this and that; etc.' But who am 'I' really? Am I this human body that is composed of the four elements: earth, water, fire, and wind? These four elements, however, must co-exist; they depend on one another to create our body. Without one, there will be a corruption. Thus, these elements are not absolute. Then am I this mind that provides me with knowledge and thinking? But the mind is ever changing and invisible. It has complex oppositions between positive and negative thoughts. And when we need to find it, we cannot locate it. Both positive and negative thoughts are impermanent and formless. Everyday we go through life planning and doing all the things for us, yet sadly we cannot identify our 'self'. Therefore, it is my intention to show you the self within the nonself that is 'Recognizing the Owner' or 'To Show the Lord of the House'. Did I title this subject appropriately? To point out something, it must have a form or shape for the eyes to perceive and recognize. Just like the vase. It has the shape of a vase and can be perceived by our eyes, so I can point it out to you. But 'The Owner' is formless and is within each of us; it cannot be seen by the naked eyes, so how can I point it out to you? I have just told you that the self is empty, and now I say I will point it out to you. Am I contradicting my thoughts? Surely, I am using the wrong word. Why? Because the ultimate truth is inexpressible. We cannot use words to express the truth. Nevertheless, we should not let people stay submerged in the well of ignorance and thus must share this knowledge. Though I may be wrong in using words to explain to you, I sincerely hope that you will be able to find what you are looking for. Applying the same technique of oppositions, if I am talking about the East, you should look at the West to perceive your knowledge. Don't be mistaken and look to the East. And if I am talking about the external, you should look deep inside you to fully understand the concept. This is the key to understanding this concept. Let's study the origin of the word 'the owner', I will begin it by using the Buddha's teachings in the Surangama Sutra in which he defined the term 'guest



and dust'. He explained it as follows: 'In the space around us, every morning at sunrise, we can see tiny grains of dust floating and dancing in the sunlight. Space is motionless while dust is always moving. Space is unborn and not dying; dust is subject to birth and death. Therefore, dust is an object in space.' Similarly, guest conveys the same concept. A traveling guest checks into a lodge overnight and leaves the next morning. Just like the dust, the guest came and went. What remains is only the lodge owner. Needless to say 'guest' represents that which is impermanent, and 'the owner' represents that which is absolute or permanent. Let's study the origin of the word 'the owner', I will begin it by using the Buddha's teachings in the Surangama Sutra in which he defined the term 'guest and dust'. He explained it as follows: 'In the space around us, every morning at sunrise, we can see tiny grains of dust floating and dancing in the sunlight. Space is motionless while dust is always moving. Space is unborn and not dying; dust is subject to birth and death. Therefore, dust is an object in space.' Similarly, guest conveys the same concept. A traveling guest checks into a lodge overnight and leaves the next morning. Just like the dust, the guest came and went. What remains is only the lodge owner. Needless to say 'guest' represents that which is impermanent, and 'the owner' represents that which is absolute or permanent. Further, the Buddha also used the following terms to describe the Owner: Buddha-nature, Dharmakaya, Tathagata, True Mind, Buddha's Wisdom, Buddha-knowledge, Original Face, etc. Why are there so many terms used to define the 'Owner'? Because the 'Owner' is something we cannot give a name to. By the same token, we naturally give a name to an object or person that we can identify. That object or person must be a fixture that we are familiar with. Otherwise, we will have to use a thousand terms to describe that unknown. For example, there is a newcomer who joins in this hall today. Suddenly, he stands up and asks me a question. Now, all of you will acknowledge this stranger's existence by his look; he may be tall, dark, and a bit heavy. When you get home and relate the story to your family, not knowing his name, you will refer to him by your description of his physical traits. Some of you may say that he is tall; some may say he is dark; and others may say he is a heavy man. It is human nature that we create the various terms to describe the unknown. Likewise, the 'Owner' who is the ever-awakening, unborn

and impersihable is called Buddha-wisdom. This 'Owner' is the constant knowledge of worldly beings which is called Buddha-knowledge. This 'Owner' who stores supreme knowledge is called Tathagata store. This 'Owner' is the mind that is neither born nor extinct and is called 'True Mind'. This 'Owner' who represents the immutable nature is called 'Dharmakaya'. This 'Owner' who represents the inherent nature is called 'Original Face'. Though we can give the 'Owner' a name to identify or recognize him, we really cannot point him out. In Zen, we often use the phrase 'We stir up the grass in oder to scare away the snakes. And if we stir up the water in the pond, we might hurt the fish.' Obviously, we cannot see the fish in the pond, but if we use a large board and bounce it on the water, the vibration and the force can cause pressure to hurt the fish. In the field, we might not be able to see the snakes, but if we forcefully stir up the grass, we can intimidate and scare them away. Though we can't see them or point them out, through right actions, we can create the effective impact. This is indeed the technique we are using to show you the 'Owner'. Let me relate a few parables about the 'Owner' told by several Zen masters. The first story: During the T'ang dynasty, there was a Zen master named Chao Chou. Upon his first meeting with Nan Ch'uan, Nan-Ch'uan, who was lying down and resting, asked Zhao-Chou: "Where have you come from?" Zhao-Chou said: "I've come from Rui-Chuan (Omen Figure). Nan-Ch'uan said: "Did you see the standing omen's figure?" Zhao-Chou said: "No, but I've seen a reclining Tathagata." Nan-Ch'uan got up and asked: "As a novice monk, do you have a Boss or not?" Zhao-Chou replied: "I have a Boss." Nan-Ch'uan said: "Who is your Boss?" Zhao-Chou stepped in front of Nan-Ch'uan, bowed and said: "In the freezing winter-cold, a prostrate monk only asks for the master's blessings." Nan-Ch'uan approved Zhao-Chou's answer and permitted him to enter the monk's hall. The second story is about Yang-Shan Hui Chi. When he was still a novice monk, Yang-Shan went to practice under Wei-Shan. Kuei-Shan asked Yang-Shan: "As a novice monk do you have a host or not?" Yang-Shan said: "I have one." Kuei-Shan asked: "Who is it?" Yang-Shan walked from west to east and then stood there erect. Kuei-Shan realized that Yang-Shan was extraordinary. The third story is about Zen master Jui-yen-Shih-yen. He appears in a famous koan, recorded as example 12 of the Wu-Men-Kuan: Jui-Yen went to live at

Jui-Yen Monastery in Taizhou where he sat on a large rock. Each day he would call out, "Master!" Then he himself would answer, "What?" Then he said, "Stay alert!" Then he would answer, "Yes! And in the future don't be deceived by anyone!" Then he would answer, "Yes! Yes!" According to Wu Men Hui-Kai in the Wu-Men-Kuan, Zen practitioners should always remember that Zen master Jui-yen buys himself and sells himself. He brings forth lots of angel faces and demon masks and plays with them. Why? Look! One kind calls, one kind answers, one kind is aware, one kind will not be deceived by others. We meditate or chant the sutra to calm our mind and to live with our Owner. Yet, we often let the 'guest' distract us and take us away from our own being. We remember things of the past and worry about the future, and don't even realize that those wandering thoughts have taken us farther and farther away from our Owner. With our clear and focused mind, we can easily dissolve any thought arising during our meditation. We need to remind ourselves of the direct experience while meditating, and that is the ultimate technique. Now we shall enter the process of pointing directly at the mind or the Owner. I will not point at him with my finger but with words. Though these words may sound simple and illogical, with the clear perception, you will be able to see your Owner. When you can recognize your Owner, your practice will be easy and successful. To point directly at the Owner, I will use a gatha from the Surangama Sutra to illustrate. It says 'The source is just one illuminating essence, which divides itself into six functioning units'. Imagine a little house that is brightened by a neon light. The house has six wide opened doors surrounding it. At night, we look at the rays dispersed through the doors and can tell whether that house has lighting or not. In reality, we never see the neon light in its physical form; we only see a distribution of its beams from the doors. The essential meaning in the Surangama Sutra emphasizes that true mind, or the Tathagata Store is inherent in each of us. Ultimately, the six functioning units are none other than the six sense organs: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. The light is inherently present through these six sense organs. We neither recognize nor perceive it truthfully. To demonstrate this to Ananda and the assembly, the Buddha raised his hand with fingers spread out, then slowly folded them to form a fist, and repeated the action. he then asked Ananda, 'Did you see that?'

Ananda responded, 'Yes, Master.' The Buddha asked, 'What did you see?' Ananda responded, 'I saw that you raised your hand with fingers spread out, then folded them into a fist.' The Buddha asked, 'Then, was my hand moving or your seeing arising?' Ananda responded, 'Your hand was moving. My seeing conveys no calmness nor is it subject to arising.' Seeing is seeing; it does not constitute motion or stillness. Let's return to the example of 'guest and dust'. Dust is what is traveling about in the sunlight; space is space and tranquility. Dust is thus subject to birth and death; space remains unchanged and does not experience such process. In the same way, the Buddha raising hand represents the sense object, so it endures the same process as dust in the example of 'guest and dust'. Ananda seeing possesses neither motion nor stillness. Now, do you have that kind of seeing? Then you must possess that Owner. Look at the vase; do you see it? Obviously, you will say 'Yes'. Now, if I take that vase away, do you still see it? The answer is obviously 'No'. That is our mistake. We let our seeing depend on the sense objects. We follow the impermanent and act only on its commands. We forget our true self and run after the false image. We have lost our self, so to speak. Sadly, this is indeed our biggest mistake. After testing Ananda with the hand, the Buddha used his halo. He sent forth his body ray to Ananda's left, and Ananda's head turned to the left. In the same motion, the Buddha sent another to the right, and Ananda's head turned to the right. The Buddha then asked, 'Why is your head moving a lot today?' Ananda responded, 'I was following the halo rays.' The Buddha asked, 'Then is your head or your seeing moving?' Ananda responded, 'My head is moving; my seeing remains still.' Again, the head is part of the body. It is a material being, so it is subject to birth and death. The seeing is still motionless, so it is unborn, and not dying. Do you realize you have that which is unborn and not dying? Then, you must have the Owner. This is the first stage in searching for the Owner. We now enter the second stage in our search for the Owner. Upon hearing the Buddha's comment that we all possess the unborn and imperishable mind, King Pasenadi asked: 'The heretics say that our life ends after we die. Why now do you state that this body also possesses the unborn and imperishable?' The Buddha then asked, 'Is your body perishable or not?' King Pasenadi responded, 'It is perishable.' The Buddha asked, 'You are still here, why do you say

your body will perish?' King Pasenadi responded, 'Though my body has not yet perished, it is gradually dying. It is deteriorating over the years. My body at sixty is totally different from when I was ten years old.' The Buddha asked, 'Then, right in this perishable body, have you ever witnessed that which is unborn and imperishable?' King Pasenadi responded, 'No, I have not.' The Buddha asked, 'How old were you when you first saw the Ganges River?' King Pasenadi responded, 'When I was three years old. On my visit to Ky Ba Thien temple with my mother, we rode across the river.' The Buddha asked, 'Does your seeing of the Ganges River at the age three different from the seeing at age ten, twenty?' King Pasenadi responded, 'Even at sixty, the seeing has not changed.' The Buddha concluded: 'You are concerned about your deteriorating body, but within you there still exists the absolute self. Those that are changing will obviously be perished. Why worrying about this body after death while it still possesses something imperishable?' Now, do we understand clearly the seeing nature inherent in each of us? It never ages. Of course you may contend that if true seeing never age, why do we have to wear glasses when we get older? That is because of our physical being needs assistance; the physical eyes, not our seeing. Just like we have to replace the light bulb when it loses its brightness, not because of the power of the electricity. In the third stage, the Buddha guided us in the process of listening to the sound of the bell. The Buddha instructed Rahula to strike the bell once and asked Ananda and the assembly, 'Did you all hear that?' Everybody replied, 'Yes.' When the sound ended, the Buddha asked, 'What about now? Are you still hearing?' The answer was 'No.' The Buddha asked again, 'How can you hear it and then not hear it?' Ananda explained, 'When we strike the bell, the sound vibrates causing us to hear the sound. When the sound stops, we can't hear it.' The Buddha instructed Rahula to strike the bell again and asked Ananda and the assembly, 'Is there a sound?' The answer was 'Yes'. When the sound ceased, the Buddha asked, 'Is there the sound now?' The answer was 'No sound.' The Buddha asked again, 'How do we recognize the sound and no sound?' The assembly replied, 'The sound exists when we strike the bell, and when we don't strike the bell, the sound ceases.' The Buddha scolded them, 'Why are you all so foolish today?' If we provided the Buddha with the same answers, we

would be reprimanded, too. Why? Again the sound is an outer existence, but hearing is our very own possession. Here, we incorporated the sound and our hearing into one function. Is that crazy or not? Everyday, we live with an up-side-down mind. The sound is perishable, it comes and goes; while the hearing is permanent; when there is the sound or not, the hearing capacity remains the same. Furthermore, to help recognize the Owner, Zen masters often used the following parable: A guest came to a Zen master and asked, 'Your Venerable, how do we define Buddha?' The Zen master responded, 'Riding the ox to find it.' Now what kind of answer is that? If we understand that the Owner possesses the capacity of seeing, hearing, speaking, smelling, we should comprehend that the Owner is also the Dharma body, the Buddha-nature. Instead of acknowledging our true nature, we are engrossed in the search for the Buddha outside; that is indeed riding the ox to find the ox. The Zen master's response might sound irrelevant, but in Zen, it is the perfect answer. Knowing how to provide this type of answer requires wisdom, for it could leave a detrimental impact on the recipient."

According to Most Venerable Thanh Tu, sudden enlightened Zen is the practice where a practitioner becomes suddenly enlightened when realized his Buddha-nature. There are no road maps, no strategies, no steps by steps to attainment. There is only one thing to be considered: when one's mind is still clouded, he is a common being; but when one's mind is clear, he is enlightened and is a Buddha. In the practice of Sudden Enlightened Zen, the practitioner directly recognizes his true mind, knowing that he possesses something which is not changing, never born or extinct. Only because for so long a time he did not realize this truth, he had been going after an ever changing mind which is prone to produce evil karmas and consequently, keeps him wandering in the six realms. As a matter of fact, when the practitioner feels that he has already seen his true nature, interacted with life with no-mind mind, kept the three poisons away, accepted things the way they are without discrimination... for a long period of time, he can be sure that he is enlightened, that his karma is clear, that he is living in the Nirvana. In short, this sound easy to many people. However, in reality, there are no short cuts at all. A practitioner should be careful in the assessment who he is and what is his capacity. This Sudden Enlightened Zen has been called the Supreme Zen, in the sense that this Zen has been applied only by Patriarchs and Buddhas.

***Part Four***  
***Monks, Nuns & Lay***  
***Buddhists Who***  
***Helped Maintaining***  
***Vietnamese Buddhism***  
***(Phần Bốn: Tăng Ni & Cư Sĩ Có Công***  
***Duy Trì Phật Giáo Việt Nam)***





## *Chapter Twenty-Three*

### *Scholar Monks & Nuns Who Had Helped Maintaining Buddhism In Vietnam*

#### *1. Master Cầm Thành (?-860)*

Zen Master Cầm Thành, a Vietnamese monk from Tiên Du, North Vietnam. He previously practiced Buddhism at Phật Tích Temple. He was the first lineage of the Wu-Yun-T'ung Sect. When he left home to become a monk, he focused in reciting sutras. There was a patron of Buddhism, whose last name was Nguyễn, a rich landlord from Phù Đổng hamlet, donated his land for him to build a temple. First, he was reluctant to accept it because he did not want to be attached to anything; however, later in his dream, he met someone who recommended him to accept the land to build a temple for the benefits of other people. In fact, not long after the Kiến Sơ Temple was built, in 820, under the T'ang dynasty in China, Zen Master Vô Ngôn Thông, used to be Head of Hòa An Temple in China, arrived in Vietnam and stayed at Kiến Sơ to practice "face-to-a-wall" meditation for several years. Later he founded the Wu-Yun-T'ung (Vô Ngôn Thông) Zen Sect right at the Kiến Sơ Temple and became the First Patriarch, and Cầm Thành became his disciple. When he passed away, Zen Master Cầm Thành became the second Patriarch.

One day, Zen master Wu-yen-t'ung said to Cam Thanh: "In the old days, the Buddha appeared in the world for the sake of a great cause. After finishing his teaching on the transformation of the living, he entered Nirvana. Such wondrous mind is called treasury of the eye of the true dharma (correct law eye-treasury), true marks are no marks (reality is nullity), the method of samadhi. The Buddha personally entrusted it to Mahakasyapa, who became the first patriarch of Zen. It was handed on generation after generation until it reached the twenty-eighth patriarch Bodhidharma. Bodhidharma, then, went to China to transmit this Dharma. It was passed along until it reached the Sixth Patriarch Hui-neng, who received it from the Fifth Patriarch. When Bodhidharma first came to China, people did not recognize him, so he

started the practice of transmitting the patriarchal robe and bowl to the successor who had received the Dharma. Later, when people's faith had been solid, the robe and bowl became an object of contention, so the Fifth Patriarch told the Sixth Patriarch to let it stop with him and not to pass down robe and bowl any more. Thenceforth it became a direct transmission from mind to mind without handling down the robe and bowl. Zen master Nan-yueh Huai-jang (677-744) first got the Sixth Patriarch's transmission. Nan-yueh passed it along to Ma-tsu Tao-i. Ma-tsu transmitted it to Pai-chang Huai-hai. I received this Mind-Dharma from my late master Pai-chang. I had long heard that in the South people respected the Great Vehicle. Therefore, I came to the south to search for people who I could entrust and transmit the Dharma. Now I have met you, this is due to previous conditioned kinks. Listen to my verse:

“People elsewhere rumor,  
Falsely say our Patriarch came from the West.  
To transmit the Eye-Treasure Dharma and to name it Zen.  
A flower with five petals, and countless seeds.  
People have fathomed the secret words,  
With thousands of auspices,  
Practiced the teachings of mind,  
And realized the originally spontaneous purity.  
The West is this land, this land is the West,  
Formerly and now, the sun and the moon;  
Formerly and now, the mountain and the river.  
It is wrong to touch the mind,  
Thus the Buddha will be misunderstood,  
Such a tiny mistake,  
Leads to hundreds, thousands of losses.  
You should observe skillfully,  
Not to deceive future generations, even you ask me,  
I originally have no words.”

As a matter of fact, the name ‘Vo Ngon Thong’ itself means ‘Understanding without any words’. Devout practitioners try not to say anything, try not to say a word, but try to practice and try to attain a self-realization. That’s all we need to do!

A monk came to Zen master Cam Thanh, a ninth-century monk of the Vo Ngon Thong Sect, and asked, 'What is Buddha?' Cam Thanh said, 'Everything.' The monk continued, 'What is the mind of Buddha?' Cam Thanh replied, 'Nothing has been hidden.' The monk said, 'I don't understand.' Cam Thanh responded, 'You missed!'" Zen practitioners should always remember that each time a staff is held out to us, we either grab it or miss it. There is no alternative. Hesitation shows that we are not yet ripe. But each time we fail, we must not regret. We can only go back to our daily work of carrying water, cooking, and cultivating the earth, striving anew with increased mindfulness. In 860, Zen master Cầm Thành passed away quietly.

## ***2. Master Phap Thuan (914-990)***

His given name was Do Phap Thuan, was born in 924, died in 990. He left home since he was very young. Later he received precepts from Zen Master Long Thọ Phù Trì. After attaining the essential meaning of Zen, he became the Dharma heir of the tenth lineage of the Vinitaruci Sect. He was always invited to the Royal Palace by King Lê to discuss the national political and foreign affairs. King Lê always considered him as the National Teacher. Under the Pre-Le dynasty, king Le Dai Hanh usually invited him to the imperial court to consult about national affairs. Especially, the king always asked him to compile diplomatic documents. When the country gained independence, he did not want to receive any reward, nor did he want to hold any post in court. Therefore, King Le Dai Hanh respected him very much. The king never called him by his name, but always referred him as "Dharma Master Do."

In the seventh year of the dynasty title of T'ien-Fu, 986, the Sung sent Ambassador Li Jue to Vietnam to confer with king Le Dai Hanh. He was assigned to disguise as a boatman to pick up the ambassador. When crossing the river in a boat, Ambassador Li Jue saw a couple of swans swimming, he suddenly improvised a pair of poetic sentences:

"A couple of swans side by side,  
Look up to to the sky.

Rowing the boat the Master immediately improvised another pair of parallel sentences:

“Their white plumage displays on the blue stream.

In a green wave, their pink feet swim.”

These lines really made a strong impression on the ambassador. After going back home he sent the Master a poem that contained a meaning of his respect for king Le Dai Hanh as his own majesty. According to Thien Uyen Tap Anh Zen Records, he did his best to help king Le Dai Hanh from the beginning of the Earlier Le Dynasty. However, when the country was in peace, he refused to receive any award from the king. During the Earlier Le Dynasty, he was an important advisor who help cause the Sung in China to gain respect for both king Le Dai Hanh and the nation’s sovereignty. In the second year of the dynasty title of Hung Thong, 990, Zen master Phap Thuan passed away at the age of senty-six. He had composed a one-volume work entitled “A Bodhisattva’s Words of Repentance,” which still circulated widely at this time.

### ***3. Master Khuong Viet (933-1011)***

Zen Master Khuong Viet, given name was Ngo Chan Luu, the fourth dharma heir lineage of the Wu-Yun-T’ung Sect, a Vietnamese Zen master from Cát Lợi, Thường Lạc district. He was a descendant of Ngo Thuan De. He had an imposing appearance and a handsome face with a generous nature and an untrammelled intent. When he was young, he studied Confucianism, but when he grew up he turned to Buddhism. He came to Khai Quoc Temple to receive ordination from Zen master Van Phong and later became one of the most outstanding disciples of Zen Master Vân Phong. He studied widely in the Buddhist scriptures and profoundly comprehended the essential teachings of Zen. When he was 40 years old, his reputation spread all over the place. King Đinh Tiên Hoàng always invited him to the Royal Palace to discuss the national political and foreign affairs. King Đinh Tiên Hoàng honoured him with the title of “Khuông Việt Great Master.” And he was also appointed the Supreme Patriarch of the Sangha Council (Chief of the Buddhist Clergy). He often visited Mount Ve Linh in Binh Lo District, and liked the magnificent and serene scenery there. He wanted to build a hermitage and settle down there. One night he had a dream in which he saw a spirit wearing golden armor, holding

a golden lance in his right hand and a jewel stupa in his left hand. He was accompanied by ten or more fearsome-looking guardians. The spirit came and told him: “I am the Vaisravana (guardian of the north, king of Yaksha), and my guardians are all yaksas. The Lord of Heaven has ordered us to come to this country to protect its border and enable the Buddha-dharma to flourish. I have a conditioned link with you, so I have come to entrust this task to you.” He woke up in astonishment, and was surprised when hearing the sound of shouting in the mountains. In the morning, he went into the mountains and saw a great tree *một* than a hundred feet high, with many branches and luxuriant foliage. Above it was an auspicious cloud. He had some workmen cut the tree down and had it carved into the image of the spirit that he had seen in his dream. Since then, the statue was placed in the main shrine for worshipping.

In 981, the Sung army invaded Dai Viet. The emperor Le Dai Hanh had heard of the Vaisravana episode, so the king ordered Khuong Viet to go to that shrine and pray for national salvation. The enemy feared and fled to the Ninh River in Bao Huu. There, wild waves arose, raised by the wind, and flood-dragons appeared leaping and prancing about. All the Sung army fled in fear. Under the Pre-Le dynasty, he assisted king Le Dai Hanh in the role of consultant on diplomacy with the Sung dynasty in China. In 980, he was asked by king Le Dai Hanh to write the farewell poem for the ambassador as follows:

In a warm spring wind, hoists a sail.  
I see my saint going back home,  
An arduous journey would be ahead,  
And your way would be long.  
Being attached, giving a farewell drink,  
I will miss you, my heavenly messenger.  
For our relationship,  
Please report skillfully to the king.

His remarkable talent was what he used to assist king Le Dai Hanh on diplomacy with the Sung dynasty, and the Sung paid great compliments to the Vietnamese intellectual faculties.

He always reminded his disciples: “Buddha-nature, which refers to living beings, and Dharma-nature, which concerns chiefly things in general, are practically one as either the state of enlightenment (as a

result) or the potentiality of becoming enlightened (as a cause). Buddha-nature is the true, immutable, and eternal nature of all beings. All living beings have the Buddha-nature. The Buddha-nature dwells permanently and unalterably throughout all rebirths. It is similar to 'Fire exists in the wood; the fire is there, but we must ignite it to get fire. If you say the wood has no fire, how could you make fire by friction?' That means all can become Buddhas. However, because of their polluted thinking and attachments, they fail to realize this very Buddha-nature. The seed of mindfulness and enlightenment in every person, representing our potential to become fully awake. Since all beings possess this Buddha-nature, it is possible for them to attain enlightenment and become a Buddha, regardless of what level of existence they are. All living beings have the Buddha-Nature, but they are unable to make this nature appear because of their desires, hatred, and ignorance. In other words, all sentient beings have the Buddha-nature innately, and our entire religious life starts with this teaching. To become aware of one's own Buddha-nature, bringing it to light from the depths of the mind, nurturing it, and developing it vigorously is the first step of one's religious life. If one has the Buddha-nature himself, others must also have it. If one can realize with his whole heart that he has the Buddha-nature, he comes spontaneously to recognize that others equally possess it. Anyone who cannot recognize this has not truly realized his own Buddha-nature." When he was old, he moved to Mount Du Hỷ to build Phật Đà Temple and stayed there to revive and expand Buddhism; however, he continued to help the Đinh Dynasty until he died in 1011, at the age of 79.

#### ***4. Master Van Hanh (?-1018)***

Van Hanh was the name of a famous Vietnamese Zen master from Cổ Pháp, North Vietnam. Zen Master Vạn Hạnh's date of birth was unknown. At the young age, he was extraordinarily intelligent. He left home at the age of 21 and became one of the most outstanding disciples of Zen Master Thiền Ông. He was an eminent monk who was not only intelligent in worldly education, but he was also well-versed in the doctrines of three religions: Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. Therefore, he was greatly respected by king Lê Đại Hành. When Zen

Master Thiên Ông passed away, he continued to cultivate at Lục Tổ Temple in Thiên Đức. He devoted himself to the practice of Dharani on absolute control over good and evil passions and influences. From then on, every word he uttered became prophecy for the people. King Le Dai Hanh also heartily revered him. In 980, the Sung in China invaded Great Viet, the king asked him: "What do you think about our forces? Will we win or lose?" He said: "Under the Majesty's leadership, maybe after only three or seven days the enemy will have to withdraw." In fact, the Sung army was defeated in a very short time later.

At that time, a wicked person named Do Ngan wanted to plot against him, master Van Hanh knew about the matter before hand, so he sent Do Ngan a verse that said:

"Wood and earth are mutually produced,  
Why do you keep plotting against me?  
When I know it, the sadness is ended,  
In the future, I will bear no grudge on you."

After reading the verse, Do Ngan was afraid and stopped his plot. There were many similar instances regarding his ability to predict future incidents and insight into the past.

During the time of king Le Long Dinh, people extremely detested this tyrant, so the Master and Master Dao Cam Moc had planned to raise Ly Cong Uan for the next throne. During those years, strange omens kept appearing in different forms: a white dog with hair in his back that looked like the characters "Son of Heaven." In the Ham Toai Hall, Ung Thai Tam Temple in Co Phap Prefecture, a lightning struck the kapok tree and left characters on its trunk; sounds of chanting at night were heard around the grave of Great Lord Hien Khanh; a banyan tree at Song Lam Temple was gnawed by insects and formed the character "Kuo." In general, everything was explained as omens that Former Le Dynasty was going to collapse and the Ly was going to flourish. According to "A Complete History of the Great Viet", after King Le Dai Hanh died, his oldest son Le Long Viet came to the throne. After only three days he was killed by his brother Le Long Dinh, Long Viet's body-guard, Ly Cong Uan, held Long Viet's corpse crying. Knowing Long Dinh's savagery, Van Hanh nursed the feeling of raising Ly Cong Uan to the royal throne. After the death of Le Long

Dinh, the Master wrote these verses to encourage people to support Ly Cong Uan:

“To Northern sea King Le sinks  
Over southern sky Ly reign rules  
In the four directions war stops  
Everywhere safeness adorns.”

Ly Cong Uan came to the throne and founded the Ly dynasty. Throughout three dynasties of Dinh, Le, and Ly, Master Van Hanh had devoted his knowledge to serve the country and the people. He died on the full moon night of 1018. He always reminded his disciples about ‘impermanence’: “Impermanence (anitya) is the state of not being permanent, of lasting or existing only for a short time, of changing continually. Physical changes operating from the state of formation, to that of development, decay and disintegration are exact manifestations of the law of transformation. All things in the universe, from the small grain of sand, the human body, to the big one such as the earth, moon and sun are governed by the above law, and as such, must come through these four periods. This process of changes characterizes impermanence. All things are impermanent, their birth, existence, change, and death never resting for a moment. All things in this world, including human life, mountains, rivers, and political systems, are constantly changing from moment to moment. This is called impermanence in each moment. Everything passes through a period of birth, maturity, transformation, and destruction. This destruction is called impermanence in each cycle. To see the impermanent nature of all things, we must examine this closely. Doing so will prevent us from being imprisoned by the things of this world.” Impermanence of the body means that the body withers rapidly, soon grows old and debilitated, ending in death. The ancients have lamented: “Oh, that time when we were young and would ride bamboo sticks, pretending they were horses, in the twinkling of an eye, our hair is now spotted with the color of frost.” What happened to all those brave and intelligent young men and those beautiful and enchanting women of bygone days? They ended as in the following poem: “Rosy cheeks have faded, heroes have passed away; young students’ eyes, too, are weary and sad.” He also reminded his disciples about the verse of impermanence that monks and nuns in most monasteries often chant at



the end of ceremonies: 'This day is already done; our lives are that much less; we're like fish in a shrinking pond; what joy is there in this? We should be diligent and vigorous, as if our own head were at stake. Only be mindful of impermanence, and be careful not to be lax.' To him, this body grows old and decays, but the Correct Dharma does not. If we always practice the Correct Dharma every day with our whole body and mind, we will have true happiness. In other words, if we always shower our whole body and mind with the Correct Dharma, we will have no fear of the rise and decline of our own life for at that time, we have the ability to see the rise and decline just like a drop of dew on a blade of grass, no more no less!

Before passing away, he composed one of his famous Zen poems about the 'impermanence of the body' below:

Our life is a simple lightning which  
Comes and goes (appears then disappears).  
As springtime offers blossoms,  
Only to fade (wither) in the fall.  
(Earthly flourish and decline,  
O friends, do not fear at all.  
They are nothing, but  
A drop of dew on the grass of morning!)

Zen practitioners should look at the body as a shadow, an image, an illusion; as it's there one moment and disappears in no time. Just like trees and foliage, their life circle evolves around the four seasons. Let our body, our surroundings, and our life flow like driftwood. The ups and downs, the good and the bad that we accumulate throughout our life are like the morning dew; they are impermanent. Thus, we shall feel no fear, and that is the real spirit of Zen. In order to have the Zen master's attitude, Zen practitioners should always have this attitude 'Looking but not seeing, hearing but not listening, smelling but not noticing the scent.' Why is it described as 'looking, but not seeing?' Because the person is returning the light to shine within, and introspecting. Why is it 'hearing, but not listening?' Because he is turning the hearing to listen his own nature. Why does it say, 'smelling, but not noticing the scent?' Because he has gathered back his body and mind, and is not disturbed any longer by scent. At this time, the cultivator's eyes contemplate physical forms, but the forms do not exist

for him. His ears hears sounds, but the sounds do not exist for him. His nose smells scents, but those scents do not exist for him. His tongue tastes flavors, but for him, those flavors do not exist. His body feels sensations, but does not attach itself to those sensations. His mind knows of things, but does not attach to them. If we can sit in meditation until our state is such that ‘inside we have no body and mind,’ ‘outside we have no world,’ and ‘afar there are no objects’, then we reach the stage of nonattachment, or the state of “no trace of self, no trace of others, no trace of living beings, and no trace of life span.” This is also the stage described as, “Thoughts of the past cannot be obtained, thoughts of the present cannot be obtained, and thoughts of the future cannot be obtained.” This is also called the wonderful stage of lightness and ease in meditation. If we continue to meditate profoundly, we will approach wonderful stages in meditation: the stage of happiness that leaves living beings behind; it means that we have reached a stage of happiness beyond that which living beings enjoy. The stage of happiness that brings concentration, it means happiness in concentration which is completely unparalleled and indescribable. The stage of bliss beyond happiness, it means we leave coarse happiness behind and reach a level of subtle bliss that is most wonderful. The pure stage free of thoughts, where the mind is totally pure without any thoughts. Zen practitioners should also remember ‘Anything with shape or form is considered a “dharma born of conditions.” All things born of conditions are like dreams, illusory transformations, bubbles of foam, and shadows. Like dewdrops and lightning, they are false and unreal. By contemplating everything in this way, we will be able to understand the truth, let go of attachments, and put an end to random thoughts.’

On the fifteenth day of the fifth month during the sixteenth year of the dynasty title of Thuan Thien, 1025, right before the time of passing away, he taught his disciples, saying: “Where do you want to dwell? I dwell at a non-abiding place, but do not depend on the non-abiding place to dwell.” Right after that moment, he peacefully passed away. The king, mandarins and common people prepared the cremation ceremony, collected his relics and built a stupa to house and worship them. King Ly Nhan Tong also made a verse to commemorate him:

“Van Hanh penetrated present, past, and future,  
He matched the ancient prophecies.

His native village named Co Phap,  
There he leaned on his staff to guard the capital.”

### ***5. Master Vien Chieu (999-1090)***

Zen master Yien-Zhao was one of the most famous Vietnamese Zen masters during the Ly dynasty. He was from Long Đàm, North Vietnam. His worldly name was Mai Truc. He was the son of one of elder brothers of Empress Linh Cam. As a young boy, he was very intelligent and industrious. He left home and became a disciple of Zen Master Định Hương in Tiêu Sơn hamlet. He stayed there to serve his master for several years. During this time, he investigated Zen studies. He always recited the Sutra Of Perfect Enlightenment, and he thoroughly understood the Three Methods of Contemplation (contemplation through calming, contemplation through concentration, and contemplation through meditation). One night, while he was in deep meditation he saw Manjusri Bodhisattva cut open his stomach with a knife and dragged out his guts. Then Manjusri gave him wonderful medicine to treat the wound. After this incident, whatever he practiced and whatever he contemplated in his mind seemed harmonious with reality. He had deep understanding in the Samadhi, and he expounded the Dharma most eloquently. Later he went to Thăng Long Citadel to build a temple named Cát Tường, which was located on the east side of the Citadel. So many students gathered there to study Zen with him. He stayed there to expand the Buddha Dharma for many years.

One day, a monk asked Zen master Vien Chieu, “What is the meaning of Buddha and Sage?” The master replied, “At the autumn festival, chrysanthemums are blooming under the hedge. In the pure air of spring, orioles are singing in the branches.” The monk continued to ask, “Master, thank you much for your answer, but I don't understand. Please instruct me again.” The master said, “By day the sun shines, by night the moon is bright.” The monk said, “I already grasped your idea, but how does the mystic mentality work?” The master said, “You bring a full wash-bowl of water without being careful, what is the use of being sorry when you slip?” The monk said again, “Master, thank you much for your instructions.” The master reminded the monk, “Don't

jump into the river and drown, you come in and sink yourself.” A monk asked, “Bodhidharma and the Sage of Magadha (Sakyamuni) are the supreme adepts, until now who have succeeded to them as masters?” The master said, “Day and night, the aspects of heaven, depend on sun and moon, convex and concave, the lines of earth become mountains and rivers.” The monk asked again, “What is the Great Path, the road that leads to the source?” The master replied, “In the strong wind, we know which plants are sturdy on high cliffs. When the country is in chaotic times, we know which mandarins are loyal.” The monk asked, “Where do all sentient beings come from and where will they go after they die?” The master replied, “A blind turtle pierces a rock wall; a lame tortoise climbs a high mountain.” The monk asked again, “The greenish bamboo are all Thusness. What is the function of True Thusness?” The master replied, “I offer to you a thousand miles away, as I smile and hold a cup of tea.” The monk continued to ask, “What have I come here in vain for?” The master said, “Who knew that on the way to the eastern mound, just half way through, one's hair would already turn white.”

One day, a monk asked Zen master Vien Chieu, “The house is deep in the wilderness and the penthouse is empty. Who knows someone would come knocking at its door in a free and easy way?” The master said, “The Golden Valley is deserted, and flowers and weeds grow wild; day and night cows and goats are free to enter it.” The monk asked, “Why is it like this?” The master said, “Those who are rich but luxury should know that richness collapses and completely destroyed.” The monk asked, “The Dragon-maid offered her pearl and attained Buddhahood. What would be the blessing of an almsgiver?” The master said, “Cinnamon trees in the moonlight forever, thick and thin in the light of a single disc.” The monk asked, “What does it mean by 'labor without effect'?” The master said, “Just as when we hang a mirror in the sky, every people will reflect in it (we can see every place in the world).” The monk asked, “To cross a river we must use a raft, when we reach the shore, it is no longer needed. What if we don't cross the river?” The master said, “When the pond dries up, the fish are exposed on dry land, but they would survive for ten thousand springtimes.”

On another day, a monk asked, "What does it mean by 'following the stream to attain the wondrous principle'?" The master said, "I've heard that once Ching-k'e left for Chin, he never returned again." The monk asked, "Gold and ore are mixing together, but originally they are one single matter. Master, please utilize your skilful means to make them just one pure form." The master said, "If you've never been the guest of the King of Chi, how could you know of a giant fish in the ocean?" The monk asked, "What happens if Kuo Kung does not take the advice?" The master said, "If you first wish to drink, try not to draw feet on a snake." The monk asked, "The snake is going to die on the road, Master, please save it." The master said, "Where are you from?" The monk said, "I am originally from the mountains." The master said, "Go back your old mountain to live in seclusion, and try not to meet Mister Hsu-Jen." The monk asked, "We don't ask about the immense water in the ocean store, but what about drop by drop from the stream of Tsao-Chi?" The master said, "A cool rhythm of the blowing wind under the pine forest. After the rain, the road is soaked with mud." The monk asked, "What does it mean by 'it is no different from nowadays'?" The master said, "The chrysanthmums under the hedge. On the ends of the branches, orioles in the shining sun." The monk asked, "It is obvious in the mind's eye and clear in the form-body. But principle cannot be discriminated and perception cannot be seen. Why can't it be seen?" The master said, "The flowers in the garden are gorgeous, the grass is spreading on the bank." The monk asked, "When it turns cold, the young sprouts fall, what can we show?" The master replied, "I am pleased that you realize it yourself. How happy it is!" The monk said, "Today, I'm fortunate to hear your interpretations. So, from now on I'll be no more confused." The master said, "I've just pulled you out of the shallow water, but you turn right back and jumped into a bottomless pond."

Once, a monk asked Zen master Vien Chieu, "Even in the Nirvana city it is still perilous. Is there anywhere that is not perilous?" The master replied, "Build your nest on a curtain of affliction, your hair and beard are like reed flowers." The monk asked, "When it is urging at the juncture of two roads, which direction should I take?" The master said, "A zealous disciple should go along with circumstances, and freely wander under the moon and wind." A monk asked, "It is said that all

sentient beings are Buddhas, but I'm not clear about this teaching. Master, please instruct me." The master said, "I advise you to farm your own farmland. Do not imitate others, it's only a waste of your energy and time waiting for a rabbit." The monk asked, "I'm fortunate to receive your clear interpretations. Master, I will not ever again seek from anyone else." The master said, "What a pity! with just one choking, you sit here hungry but forget to eat." The monk asked, "Master, I have stored the precious jewel in my pocket for many years, but have never seen it. Today, I see it clearly right before my eyes." The master said, "I have been waiting for the mid-autumn moon, but instead I get caught in clouds and rain." The monk asked, "Master, though I hear your teaching, but I'm not clear about its principle." The master said, "I laugh at someone who uselessly holds on to the bridge pillar, then drowned in midstream!"

A monk asked, "What is the One Dharma?" The master said, "Autumn ripening and winter harvest come right after spring sowing and summer growth." The monk asked, "Many people become Buddha, what does it mean?" The master said, "Let Tzu-lung (special name for king Chin-Sui-Huang) stop bustling around, because Tsu-fu worked hard in vain in far away places." The monk asked, "Seeing one's own nature and becoming a Buddha, what does it mean?" The master replied, "When spring comes the withered trees are blossoming with flowers, the wind blows divine fragrance to a thousand miles far off." The monk asked, "I don't comprehend. Master, please instruct me again." The master said, "This egg-fruit plant has been around for ten thousand years; its greenish branches reach to the sky-line clouds."

A monk asked, "The mani pearl and all colors are neither together nor apart." The master said, "Spring flowers and butterflies, sometimes are fond of each other, sometimes are not." The monk asked, "To follow people and mix in, what does it mean?" The master replied, "If you do not have the eyes of the Barbarian Monk (Bodhidharma), you work in vain offering the pearl of Pien (a person of Ch'u Kuo who offered 'Fo' Pearl to two Ch'u kings and each time he was cut off one leg)." The monk asked, "To touch the Eye of Bodhi, what does it mean?" The master said, "The bird once shot by a bow will forever fear, the man who was once burned by hot soup will keep blowing on his cold vegetable." The monk asked, "I don't comprehend. Master,

please give another metaphorical example.” The master said, “A deaf man listens to the sound of the musical instrument and a blind man looks up at the moon.”

A monk asked Zen master Vien Chieu, “Inherently what has form also has shadow. Is the shadow sometimes separate from the form?” The master replied, “Hundreds of rivers flow to the East Ocean, where ten thousand currents flow together. Thousands of stars bow to the North Star, where for a thousand ages all turn to the mind.” The monk asked, “What is a single phrase of 'Clear realization' that transcends thousands of millions of other phrases?” The master replied, “From afar, one tucks Mount T'ai under his arm and steps across the North Sea. Then turning his face upward, he throws his staff up to the moon.” The monk asked, “Only this one is real, the rest are not. What is real?” The master replied, “The wind moves easily on the tip of the staff; rain causes mud on the road.” The monk asked, “Do not aim at the wondrous treasury to the Tathagata; do not ask fire from the patriarchs to keep the lamp lit. What is the purpose?” The master replied, “The paddy makes noise in autumn; in a snowy scene, red peonies blossom.” A monk asked, “What is the most wondrous phrase?” The master replied, “One person turns to face the corner, the whole feast has no joy.” The monk asked, “I don't ask about the great events of the past and present; I only want to know the meaning of coming out of the west?” The master replied, “Some are with clever speech and pretty appearance; some are drilling turtle shell and striking tiles.” The monk asked, “When mind and dharma are both forgotten, nature is real. What is real?” The master said, “The wind hit the bamboo in the courtyard is the sound of Po-ya's lute; the raindrops on the cliffside flowers are the tears of a goddess.”

Another monk asked, “What is the most wondrous phrase?” The master replied, “You will not live very happily while your throat is still chocking.” The monk asked, “With cultivation and realization, the four kinds of illness are revealed. Transcending them, is one able to be free from the red dust (world)?” The master said, “The extremely high mountain is able to contain all things; the immense ocean is able to accommodate ten thousand rivers.” The monk asked, “Only Buddhas understand that. What does 'that' mean?” The master said, “In a narrow road with thick bamboos, a tune forms by itself when the wind blows.”

The monk asked, “No need for ordinariness, no need for naturalness, no need for function, what are we supposed to do now?” The master said, “In the thick grass the swallows build nest, in the immense ocean the whale hides.” A monk asked, “I have carried along the four elements for immeasurable kalpas. Master, please skilfully show me the means to get of of the cycle of birth and death.” The master said, “Among the animals in the world, the rhinoceros is most precious, it feeds on thorns and sleeps in mud.” The monk asked, “All attachments and detachments still lie within the cycle of birth and death, what is it like when there is neither?” The master said, “The purple plant has always been beautiful in its color, it has uneven leaves but no flowers.” A monk asked, “Cutting off the route of speech, what does it mean?” The master replied, “Following the wind the sound of the horn comes through the bamboo groves, the moon atop the mountain ridge comes over the wall.” The monk asked, “The Buddhas preach in order to teach and to convert beings. If comprehending to their original intention is called transcending the world. What does 'original intention' mean?” The master replied, “Spring weaves flowers like brocades, when autumn comes the leaves look like gold.”

A monk asked, “What is the one direct path?” The master replied, “Horses and carriages travel east and west, dust flies in the morning and evening.” The monk asked, “When there exist dharma and mind, false consciousness arises. How do I eliminate both dharma and mind (object and subject)?” The master replied, “When you are equal to lofty green towering pine, how can you still be worrying about heavy falling snow and frost?” A monk asked, “What is the relationship between the patriarch's intention and the meaning of the scriptural teaching?” The master said, “When I like, I lean on my staff to promenade to the clouds; when I'm tired, I let down the blinds and sleep on my bamboo bed.” The monk asked, “Patriarchs transmit to patriarchs. What do they transmit?” The master said, “When you're hungry, find something to eat; when you're cold, look for clothes.” The monk asked, “Everyone rents a house, where does a leaking man stay?” The master said, “It is difficult to tell the fullness and the wane of both the sun and the moon.” The monk asked, “What is the one path to Tsao-Chi?” The master replied, “How pitiable the man who makes a



mark on the boat (where things dropped in the sea), he has been confused all the times.”

He composed “Bhaishajya-Guru’s Twelve Vows” and presented to king Ly Nhan Tong. The king gave a copy to the envoy from the Sung Court, who sent it along to the Chinese Emperor Sung Je-tsung (1086-1100). Emperor Je-tsung summoned the Abbot of Hsiang-kuo Temple to interpret the text. After reading the text, the Abbot joined his palms and bowed in homage, saying: “In the south a flesh and blood body of a Bodhisattva has been born in the world, and he is well able to expound the Dharma. How dare this poor monk add or subtract anything?” The Chinese Emperor then had his court to rewrite another copy and returned the original. When the envoy to Chinese returned to Dai Viet and reported this to king Ly Nhan Tong, the king was very pleased with master Vien Chieu and rewarded him richly.

On one day of the ninth month of the year of Quang Huu Era, in 1090, without any illness, Zen master Vien Chieu convened his assembly to bid farewell, saying: “In my body, bones, joints, sinews and veins are a combination of the four elements; all are impermanent. It is just like a house that is about to collapse, when all the beams tumble down. I bid you all farewell. Now listen to my verse:

Our body is like a shaking old wall,  
 Pitiful people worried about it days in and days out.  
 If they could hold a mindless attitude of no form and no sign.  
 They would no longer worry about form and  
 no form, appearance and disappearance.”

After finishing the verse, the master sat upright and passed away. He was ninety-two years old and had been a monk for fifty-six years. His writings now in circulation and were put in one volume, include in the Praising of the Sutra Of Perfect Enlightenment, Enlightenment Attained by the Twelve Bodhisattva Practices, and Revelation of the Decisive Secret for Students. The Zen master wants to remind his disciples that all the forms that they see, all the sounds that they hear, all the odors they smell, all the flavors they taste, all the senses they feel, all thoughts they have are changing so fast and nothing has a self. Look at the body, it is only a shadow, an image, an illusion; as it's there one moment and disappears in no time. Zen practitioners, by all means, must attain the mind of emptiness and formlessness. As a

matter of fact, the mind essence is empty and formless. Everything in this world appears and disappears in the mind just like the clouds formed and dissolved in the sky, or just like the images emerged and vanished in a mirror. Zen practitioners should always remember that all things that come and go are governed by the principle of dependent arising without any exceptions. Practitioners who are able to realize this will be freed from the world of coming and going.

### ***6. Nun Master Diệu Nhân (1041-1113)***

Dieu Nhan was a Vietnamese famous nun from Thăng Long, North Vietnam. According to “Thiền Uyển Tập Anh,” her worldly name was Ngọc Kieu. She was the eldest daughter of Phung Loat Vương. King Ly Thanh Tong adopted and raised her in the royal court since she was young. When growing up she got married to a man whose last name was Le, an official of Chau Muc rank in Chan Đàng. After her husband’s death, she remained the life of a widow. One day, she lamented, “I see all things in the world are like dreams and illusions, how much more so are these drifting glories! How can I rely on them?” Then, she gave away all her personal belongings, renounced the world, and became a disciple of Zen Master Chan Khong in Phu Đông. She became the Dharma heir of the seventeenth generation of the Vinitaruci Zen Sect.

Everyday, she kept precepts and practiced meditation and attained right concentration (samyak-samadhi). She was an honoured and advanced nun at that time. Those who came to seek studying, she urged them to practice the Great Vehicle and told them: “Only when you can return your own nature to its original source, then you can enter freely through either sudden or gradual gate.” She liked to keep silent all day long; she was averse to sound and form, words and speech. A student came and asked, “I’m sick because all sentient beings are sick. Why don’t you like sound and form?” She quoted the Diamond Sutra, replying:

“He who identifies me with appearance  
And seeks me in sound,  
Has walked off the path,  
Can never find the Tathagata.”

The student continued to ask, “What is the benefit of sitting in meditation?” She replied, “It's originally without going.” The student continued to ask again, “Why do you not speak?” She replied, “The Way is fundamentally without words.”

She stayed at nunnery Hương Hải in Tiên Du to expand Buddhism until the end of her life. It should be noted that Hương Hải nunnery was considered the first Buddhist Institute for nuns in the Lý Dynasty. Bhikkhuni Diệu Nhân was once Head of the nunnery. Nun Zen master Diệu Nhân always taught her disciples about the real appearance: “Reality is the absolute fundamental reality, the ultimate, the absolute; the Dharmakaya, or the Bhutatathata; in contrast with unreal or false. Reality is the absolute, the true nature of all things which is immutable, immovable and beyond all concepts and distinctions. Dharmata (pháp tánh) or Dharma-nature, or the nature underlying all things has numerous alternative forms. Reality also means the appearance of nothingness (immateriality), bhutatathata, tathagatagarbha. Reality is always immutable and beyond thought. Therefore, do not seek a Buddha by his form or his sound because neither the form nor the sound is the real Buddha. Those who seek Buddha by form and sound are on the wrong path. The true Buddha is Enlightenment and the true way to know Buddha is to realize Enlightenment by tightening the lips and saying no words, or by not clinging to any dharma, including the meditation.”

On the first day of the sixth month in the fourth year of the dynasty title of Hoi Tuong Dai Khanh, 1113, before passing away, she made a poem saying that the truth should be said without words:

“Birth, aging, illness, death  
are natural since infinite time.  
If you wish liberation and trying to untie,  
You only make it tighter.  
When you wish to search for Buddha,  
You delude yourself even more  
If you seek liberation through meditation,  
You only mislead yourself.  
So, do not pursue Buddha and Zen.  
Just close your mouth and be wordless.”

After finishing the verse, she sat cross-legged and peacefully passed away at the age of 72.

### ***7. Master Mãn Giác (1052-1096)***

Man Giac, a Famous Vietnamese Zen master from Thăng Long, Hanoi, North Vietnam. His worldly name was Nguyen Truong. He was a disciple of Quảng Trí. When king Ly Nhan Tong was still a prince, the court selected children of notable families to come to the royal court to attend upon the prince. Since Nguyen Truong (later became monk Man Giac) was broadly learned and thoroughly comprehended Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, so he was among those who were selected to participate. Whenever he had free times, he often concentrate his mind in meditation. After Ly Nhan Tong ascended the throne, he bestowed Nguyen Truong with a special name “Full of Faith.” During the reign of Anh Vu Chieu Thang, Nguyen Truong asked the king for permission to become a monk, then he studied Zen with Zen master Quang Tri. After receiving the mind seal to become the Dharma heir of the eighth generation of the Wu-Yun-T’ung Zen Sect, he often wandered everywhere with just his bowl and staff in order to look for good-knowing advisors. Wherever he went, students gathered around him. Later, he read the Great Collection of Buddhist Sutras and attained the teacherless wisdom. Since then, he became one of the most famous Buddhist leaders of his time. King Ly Nhan Tong and the Empress Dowager Y Lan (Cam Linh Nhan) were trying to practice meditation, so the king built Giac Nguyen Temple next to Canh Hung Palace, and invited Monk Man Giac to dwell there, so that they can easily come to see him for questions and answers on Zen.

One day, he told king Ly Nhan Tong, “When extremely benevolent people appear themselves, they aim at saving beings. There is no conduct for which they are not fully practiced, nothing that they do not cultivate. Not only do they have the power of concentration and wisdom, but they also have the merits that are beneficial. So we should respectfully acknowledge.” Then he gave the king the teachings of his school and the mind-seal of the patriarchs beyond cultivation and realization. After this conversation, king Ly Nhan Tong summoned him to the court palace and conferred him the rank of “Inner Palace

Teacher of Enlightenment” and the special title of “Purple Robed Great Sramana.” He was also given the rank of “Advisor of the Three Bureaus” with tax exemption for fifty family members. He spent most of his life to expand Buddhism in Thăng Long. At the end of the eleventh month of the fifth year of the reign of Hoi Phong, in 1096, he told his assembly that he was ill, so he composed a verse for his disciples. This is one of his famous Zen poems, “A Branch of Mai Flowers”:

“When spring goes, all flowers die.  
 When spring comes, all flowers smile.  
 Before the eyes, all things flow endlessly.  
 Over the head, old age comes already.  
 Do not say that with the spring gone, all flowers fall.  
 Last night, in the front yard,  
 A branch of mai flowers was still there.”

Zen practitioners should always look at our own mind to see that thoughts coming and going, arising and vanishing. The mind is just like a mirror that shows us the images of all things reflected. All images come and go, but the reflectivity of the mind is still there, unmoving and undying.

He passed away in 1096, at the age of 45 with nineteen years as a monk. The king provided a solemnly ceremony, and all the court mandarins came to offer incense. After the cremation ceremony, his relics gathered in a stupa at Sung Nghiem Temple in An Cach Village. The emperor granted him the posthumous title “Perfect Enlightenment.”

### ***8. Master Tu Dao Hanh (?-1115)***

Dao Hanh was a Vietnamese Zen master from North Vietnam. His worldly name was Tu Lo. He was one of the sons of Tu Vinh, who held the office of General Superintendent of Director of Monks. He left home and became a disciple of Zen Master Kiều Trí Huyền, but could not achieve his enlightenment. Later, he came to the Dharma assembly of Zen Master Sùng Phạm at Pháp Vân Temple. After receiving the mind-seal, he became one of the latter’s one of the most outstanding disciples. He was also the Dharma heir of the twelfth generation of the

Vinitaruci Zen Sect. As a young boy, he was fond of amusement, but he had a generous nature and a great aspiration. People could not measure his noble acts and profound speeches. He always frequented a Confucian scholar named Phi Sinh, Taoist master named Le Toan Nghia, and an actor name Vi At. At night, he devoted himself in readings books; but during the daytime, he would play the flute, play at shuttlecock, gamble and enjoy himself with other entertainments. His father often scolded him for his laziness. One night, his father sneaked into his room to see what he was doing. The father saw the lamp was almost burned out, books piled up by his side, and Dao Hanh was leaning on his desk sleeping with a book was still in his hand. Seeing this, his father stopped worrying about him. Later on, Dao Hanh passed the Pai-lien Royal Examination for the post of Director of Monks.

He wandered to all Buddhist monasteries to search for “Seal of approval.” When he heard that master Kieu Tri Huyen was teaching at Thai Binh, he came for instruction and presented a verse to inquire about the true mind:

“I have long been mixing with the dusts of secular world,  
I'm still unable to recognize pure gold.  
I do not know where the true mind is,  
Please use your skilful means to show it to me,  
So that I can see Thusness and stop my hard search.”

Zen master Tri Huyen also responded with a verse:

“The hidden sounds in the pearl silently reveal  
The wonderful voice of awakening,  
In it the mind of Zen appears filling the eyes.  
A vast number of realms are realms of enlightenment,  
Yet if you try to seek for enlightenment,  
It's a thousand miles far away.”

Dao Hanh was confused and could not understand, so he went Zen master Sung Pham at Phap Van Temple and asked, “What is true mind?” Zen master Sung Pham said, “What is not true mind?” At these words, Dao Hanh was suddenly awakened and asked, “How can I preserve it?” Zen master Sung Pham said, “Eat when hungry, drink when thirsty.” Dao Hanh bowed down to prostrate the master and then left. From then on, his Dharma power increased and his Zen conditions matured. He could tame mountain snakes and wild beasts. It's said that

he burned his finger to pray for rain; and invoked water with mantras to cure diseases. Everything he did was immediately effective.

Later on, he stayed at Thiên Phúc Temple to expand Buddhism until the end of his life. He left his whole body relics. Later, when the Ming Dynasty invaded Vietnam, they burnt his body relics. At that time, king Ly Nhan Tong had no heir. In the second month of 1112, in the third year of the dynasty title of Hoi Tuong Dai Khanh, local officials of Thanh Hoa Prefecture reported: "At the seaside, there is a three-year-old child who can speak fluently and calls himself son of king Ly Nhan Tong. He also has given himself the name Enlightened Emperor. He knows about all things that Your Majesty has done at the royal court." The king sent an envoy to come to the place to investigate. The envoy found that it was exactly as reported, so they took the child back to the capital and lodged him at Bao Thien Temple. King Ly Nhan Tong loved the child for his unusual intelligence and wanted to install him as Crown Prince. All court officials tried to persuade the king. Some said that this should not be done and said, "If that child was really supernatural, he must reincarnate himself in the royal family before he could be made Crown Prince." King Ly Nhan Tong agreed with this solution, so the king ordered an organization of a great reincarnation ceremony, which lasted for seven days and nights. Dao Hanh heard about it and said, "That child is a devil who has gone too far in deceiving people. How can I just sit here and watch without helping, and let him dechant people's minds and disturb the Correct Dharma?" He then asked his sister to disguise herself as a spectator and secretly hung some of his magic pearls which were already invoked with mantras on the eaves. After three days of the ceremony, Giac Hoang felt ill and said, "The whole country has been covered with iron net. Although I wish to be reincarnated, I'm afraid that all the paths are obstructed." The king suspected that Dao Hanh had invoked his mantras to block the ceremony, so the king sent investigators to talk with him, Dao Hanh admitted what he had done. King Ly Nhan Tong had him confined in Hung Thanh Palace and assembled court mandarins to discuss his guilt. When the Marquis of Sung Hien passed by, Dao Hanh pleaded, "Marquis, please try to help me. If I'm fortunate enough to get out of the danger this time, I will certainly be reincarnated in the imperial palace and pay back your favour." The

Marquis agreed. When the court officials were in session of Dao Hanh's case, they all said, "Since Your Majesty has no son, Your Majesty expected Giac Hoang to be reincarnated as your son. Now, Lo wrongly invoked his mantras to spoil it. He would face the sentence of execution of his entire family as an example for all people." The Marquis of Sung Hien calmly petitioned: "If Giac Hoang really had supernatural power, even a hundred of Lo's mantras couldn't do anything to harm him. Now, it clearly shows that Lo is far superior to Giac Hoang. I humbly think that it is better not to let him reincarnate." After hearing these words, the king forgave Dao Hanh.

Later on, Dao Hanh knew that the Marquis' wife was pregnant. He reminded the Marquis: "Please, let me know just before the baby is due." When the Marquis informed him of the exact time, date and month, master Dao hanh took a bath, changed his robe, and instructed his disciples: "My karmic cause in previous existence has not terminated; therefore, I have to be reborn in this world again as an emperor. After that lifespan is over, I will again be reborn as a son of heaven king in the thirty-three Heaven (Traiyastrimsa). When you see my physical body decay, it means I have entered Nirvana, no longer dwell in the samsara any more." Hearing these words, all his disciples were moved to tears. Zen master Dao Hanh recited a verse:

"Autumn comes without informing  
the wild geese to return together,  
A tasteless smile for a pitiful life of men.  
I want to recommend my disciples not to be attached to me,  
How many times have the old teachers  
reincarnated as the teacher of today!"

After finishing the verse, he peacefully passed away. His physical body still exists today.

While still alive, he always emphasized that both 'Existence and non-existence' are wrong views for Zen practitioners. Existence or non-existence, Being or non-being; these two opposite views, opinions or theories are the basis of all erroneous views. One day, a monk came and asked, "Walking, standing, lying, and sitting are all Buddha's mind. What is Buddha's mind?" The master replied with a verse:

"Existence, there you see all things existing.  
Emptiness, there you see all things empty.



Existence and emptiness are just  
like the moon underwater.  
Do not cling to existence nor emptiness.”

He also said,

“The sun and the moon are on the high peak,  
Everyone loses the pearl.  
Like a rich person has a good horse,  
Yet he walks and does not ride it.”

### ***9. Master Thường Chiếu (?-1203)***

Zen master Thuong Chieu's last name was Pham, he was from Phù Ninh, North Vietnam. He was a mandarin of the royal court before he left home and became a disciple of Zen master Quảng Nghiêm at Tịnh Quả Temple. After many years of studying Zen under master Quang Nghiêm, Thuong Chieu received the mind seal and became the dharma heir of the twelfth generation of the Wu-Yun-T'ung Zen Sect. Later, he went to Ông Mạc village and stayed at an old temple for some years. He spent the rest of his life to expand Buddhism at Lục Tổ (Sixth Patriarch) Temple in Dich Bang Village, Thiên Đức District. One day, a monk asked, “What is it like when subject and object condition each other?” The master replied with a verse:

“Forget both subject and object  
For the nature of mind is impermanent.  
Easily arises and easily extincts.  
Never ceasing for a ksana,  
So which conditions which?  
Arising is things arise,  
Extinction is things extinct.  
The Dharma one attains  
Never has arising and extinction.”

The monk said, “Master, I still don't understand, please instruct me.” The master said, “Once you have realized the nature of mind, it's easy to succeed in the power of abstract meditation. If you have not completely realized the nature of mind, you only waste your energy for nothing.”

The monk asked, “What is the Dharmakaya that pervades everywhere?” The master replied, “Just as one pore contains the whole dharma realm (Dhammadhatu), so do all pores. You should know that when the mind is empty, there is not a smallest place is not Buddha-body. Why is that? Because there is no place that the Dharmakaya does not reach (responsive incarnation or manifestation into Buddha-body everywhere in accordance with the nature or needs of different beings). Thus, you should know exactly like that. The Tathagata, through the power of unimpeded mind without revolution, turns the Dharma Wheel. The Tathagata knows that all dharmas are not originated, so he uses three dharmas to preach annihilation; yet without relying on annihilation, He turns the Dharma Wheel. The Tathagata knows that all phenomena are free from one-sided views, so He dwells in the realm that is free from desire, not its annihilation, but to turn the Dharma Wheel. The Tathagata enters the realm of emptiness of all phenomena; so without relying on words, He turns the Dharma Wheel. The Tathagata knows that all Dharma-natures are the nature of Nirvana. So, it is called “The formless true nature, inexhaustible true nature, unborn, undestroyed, egoless, not an egoless true nature, not sentient beings, not non-sentient beings, not Bodhisattva true nature, not dharma realm, not emptiness, and nature in which no Buddhahood is attained.” After speaking, the master recited a verse:

“To become a human being in this world,  
In the mind, it is Tathagatagarbha (Store)  
It is luminescent everywhere,  
Searching for it, seeing the vast and empty space.”

For Zen Master Thuong Chieu, being in this life, having human body, you have in your mind the Tathagata Store that illuminates profoundly in all places; however, when you start searching for the mind, you will only find emptiness. Zen practitioners should see that the Tathagata is the source of all things(all created things are in the Tathagatagarbha, which is the womb that gives birth to them all), whether compatible or incompatible, whether forces of purity or impurity, good or bad. He always reminded his disciples: “The Way in Zen means the way of bodhi or enlightenment leading to nirvana through spiritual stages. The Way originally has neither form nor sound. Those who want to tread on this path have no other choices but

trying and trying to practice until obtaining a liberated mind. A liberated mind calmly reflects, but does not cling to anything (mind abides nowhere). Our mind is like a monkey, let it moves wherever it will; however, the Diamond Sutra suggests: “Cultivate the mind and the awareness so that your mind abides nowhere.” In other words, let our mind work as usual without resting place or a mind which does not abide anywhere, a mind which let “bygone be bygone.” The mind without resting place (mind abides nowhere), detached from time and space, the past being past may be considered as a non-past or non-existent, so with present and future, thus realizing their unreality. The result is detachment, or the liberated mind, which is the Buddha-mind, the bodhi-mind, the mind free from ideas or creation and extinction, of beginning and end, recognizing that all forms and natures are of the Void, or Absolute. If your mind abides nowhere, is it always anew? Be aware of everything, from hearing the bird singing, seeing the bird flying, to the sound of a falling leaf. Let your mind naturally manifest everything, such as the image of birds flying, and the sound of birds singing. At that very moment, you will feel anywhere is your home.”

During the second year of the dynasty title of Thien Gia Bao Huu, on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, 1203, he felt stomach ache, so he convened his assembly and spoke this verse to them. This is one of his famous Zen poems:

“The Way originally has no color,  
It shows its freshness everyday,  
Look at all the universes out there,  
Where is not our home?”

After speaking the verse, he sat cross-legged and peacefully passed away. His major disciple Than Nghi and others prepared his cremation ceremony, collected his relics, and built a stupa to house them. Zen master Thuong Chieu composed a Zen book titled “Diagram of the Dharma Succession of the Southern School” which has been in circulation in Vietnamese Buddhism.

### ***10. Master Chan Nguyen (1647-1726)***

Chan Nguyen, a Vietnamese famous monk from Hải Dương. When he was young, he was very intelligent. He left home and became a

monk at the age of 16. When he was 19, he went to Hoa Yên Temple to meet Zen Master Tuệ Nguyệt and became his disciple with the Dharma name Tuệ Đăng. After his master passed away, he became a wandering monk who practised ascetics. Later, he stayed at Cô Tiên Temple to expand the Buddha Dharma. One day he visited Vĩnh Phúc Temple, there he met and became the disciple of Zen Master Minh Lương with the Dharma name Chân Nguyên. He passed away in 1726, at the age of 80. He always reminded practitioners: “Seeing one’s own nature and becoming a Buddha or to behold the Buddha-nature within oneself or to see into one’s own nature. That nature is the same for both the enlightened and the unenlightened, but because of the coverage of ignorance that causes here ordinary people and there the saints. Once the curtain of ignorance is eliminated, all things will be the same with that same nature. Similarly, you cannot see the moon in the rivers because the water is so disturbed; however, once the water becomes still, the moon will immediately appears in the water. Semantically ‘Beholding the Buddha-nature’ and ‘Enlightenment’ have virtually the same meaning and are often used interchangeably. In describing the enlightenment of the Buddha and the patriarchs, however, it is often used the word ‘Enlightenment’ rather than “Beholding the Buddha-nature.” The term ‘enlightenment’ implies a deeper experience. This is a common saying of the Ch’an (Zen) or Intuitive School. Through it one sees one’s own nature and becomes a Buddha. This is one of the eight fundamental principles, intuitional or relating to direct mental vision of the Zen School. Zen practitioners should not seek a Buddha by his form or his sound because neither the form nor the sound is the real Buddha. Those who seek Buddha by form and sound are on the wrong path. The true Buddha is Enlightenment and the true way to know Buddha is to realize Enlightenment. For Zen Schools, there are eight fundamental intuitional principles that relate to direct mental vision of practitioners. First, the Correct Law Eye-Treasury or Treasury of the eye of the true dharma. Second, Nirvana of Wonderful and Profound Mind or the subtle mind of nirvana. This is the wonderful and profound mind or heart which is beyond human thought. The mind which clings to neither to nothingness nor to actuality. The mind in which all erroneous imaginings have been removed. According to the Differentiated

Teaching of the T'ien-T'ai school, limited this to the mind of the Buddha, while the Perfect teaching universalized it to include the unenlightened heart of all men. Third, reality is nullity or true marks are no marks. Fourth, the Door of Abhidharma or the extremely subtle dharma gate. Fifth, it is not relying on books, or not established on words or no establishment of words and letters. Sixth, it is a special transmission outside the teachings or the distinct transmission outside of the teachings. Seventh, it points directly to the human mind or directly pointing to the mind of man. Eighth, through it one sees one's own nature and becomes a Buddha or seeing the nature is the attainment of Buddhahood. Finally, practitioners should remember that all phenomena are just the one mind. The Buddha says Nirvana is the extinction of desire, hatred and illusion. You all must see this true nature, because if you don't, you can never extinguish the fire of desire, hatred and illusion." Below is one of his famous Zen poems on 'Seeing the Nature':

"It is originally an empty spot in nature,  
All things would have the same  
nature of emptiness.  
Beyond the sky and earth,  
so vast is the universe,  
The cold light is so serene though  
it is shining through countless worlds.  
It neither increases at the enlightened,  
nor does it decrease at the unenlightened,  
It appears square or round in  
receptacles at ease.  
When the water is still,  
the moon appears in thousands of rivers,  
As the flower blossoms ,  
the whole universe glows in red."

He always emphasized on this 'mind': "All things are inside the mind, nothing exists apart from mind. This single mind encompasses the four kinds of lands in their totality. From the Six Common Dharma Realms to the Four Dharma Realms of the Sages are not beyond the present thought in the Mind. The mind can create the heavens as well as the hells. The mind can achieve Buddhahood, but it can also turn into a

hungry ghost or an animal, or fall into the hells. It can be a Bodhisattva, a Pratyekabuddha, or a Sravaka. Since everything is made from the mind, nothing goes beyond the mind. If we want to create Buddhas in our minds, we become part of the retinue of the Dharma Realm of the Buddhas. The other Dharma Realms are the same way. However, remember even when you see it, you still have no words to say about it! Devout practitioners should always see this and pay attention to all daily activities from walking, standing, lying down, or sitting... We must regulate ourselves in accord with propriety of a true Buddhist. When you ask me, that is the manifestation of your mind. When I reply you, that is the manifestation of my mind. If you have no mind, how can you know to ask me? If I have no mind, how can I know to reply you? Your mind is manifesting right at the time you are asking me. Since the beginningless time, this mind has manifested in all your actions all the time. This mind is manifesting in accordance with circumstances. It is manifesting while you are facing me, talking and asking me. This mind is the true nature. What is asking here? What is talking here? What is having the ability to put a question here? Practitioners should also remember that we create more and more karmas and commit more and more sins because we are not concentrated and determined. We get dragged into situations until we forget what we want to do. We forget our goal is to cultivate to become a Buddha, a Bodhisattva, or any of the four kinds of the sages. Instead, we only know how to create hells, hungry ghosts, and animals, etc. Thus, Buddhas and demons are only a single thought apart. Buddhas are kind and compassionate, while demons are always competitive with unwholesome thoughts. The whole triple world is no more than the creation of the citta, manas, and mano-vijnana, that it is brought forth by falsely discriminating one's own mind, that there are no signs of an external world where the principle of multiplicity rules, and finally that the triple world is just one's own mind." Below is one of his famous Zen poems on the 'lamp of mind':

"From the lamp of mind,  
the Buddha's eyes manifest,  
And the four eyes gaping  
clearly pass on the way.  
Keep the transmission of the lamp

shinning endlessly,  
 And empower the Zen rangers  
 to teach human beings.”

As a matter of fact, the lamp of the mind is the inner light or intelligence. In Contemplation of the Mind Sutra, the Buddha taught: “All my tenets are based on the mind that is the source of all dharmas.” The mind has brought about the Buddhas, the Heaven, or the Hell. It is the main driving force that makes us happy or sorrowful, cheerful or sad, liberated or doomed. From the standpoint of Zen experience, “mind” means total awareness. In other words, just listening when hearing. It consists of fleeting mental states which constantly arise and perish with lightning rapidity. “With birth for its source and death for its mouth, it persistently flows on like a river receiving from the tributary streams of sense constant accretions to its flood.” Each momentary consciousness of this everchanging lifestream, on passing away, transmits its whole energy, all the indelibly recorded impressions, to its successor. Every fresh consciousness therefore consists of the potentialities of its predecessors and something more. As all impressions are indelibly recorded in this everchanging palimpsest-like mind, and as all potentialities are transmitted from life to life, irrespective of temporary physical disintegrations, reminiscence of past births or past incidents become a possibility. Mind is like a double-edged weapon that can equally be used either for good or evil. One single thought that arises in this invisible mind can even save or destroy the world. One such thought can either populate or depopulate a whole country. It is mind that creates one’s paradise and one’s hell. However, with meditation, you can train the mind to keep calm and be free from disturbances either from within or outside. Apply concentrated awareness to the internal confusions and mental conflicts, and observe or pay attention to all the changing states of your mind. When the mind is properly developed, it brings happiness and bliss. If the mind is neglected, it runs you into endless troubles and difficulties. The disciplined mind is strong and effective, while the wavering mind is weak and ineffective. The wise train their minds as thoroughly as a horse-trainer train their horses. He always reminded his disciples: “A person awakens the true nature of the all things means he awakens to a oneness of emptiness. The emptiness experienced here here is no

nihilistic emptiness; rather it is something unperceivable, unthinkable, unfeeling for it is endless and beyond existence and nonexistence. Emptiness is no object that could be experienced by a subject, a subject itself must dissolve in it (the emptiness) to attain a true enlightenment. In real Buddhism, without this experience, there would be no Buddhism. However, a being who has attained perfect complete enlightenment, or a fully awakened one, should always be attentive to the activities of the body with the practice of concentration on breathing; be aware of all forms of feelings and sensations, pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral, by contemplating their appearance and disappearance within oneself; be aware whether one's mind is lustful, hatred, deluded, distracted or concentrated; and contemplate the impermanence of all things from arise, stay, change and decay to eliminate attachment. Let watch your mind in order to be mindful of any coming false thoughts, and not continue to wander with them anymore. You all should live with this realization all day and night; it is to say you are living with 'seeing the true eternity and complete enlightenment.'" Below is one of his famous Zen poems:

“Appearing clearly all day and night,  
The self nature manifests comfortably.  
Seeing the true eternity applying through the six senses,  
You will move horizontally and vertically  
Among all phenomena with complete enlightenment.”

### ***11. Master Nguyen Thieu (1648-1728)***

A Chinese Zen Master from Kuang-Tung. He was born in 1648, left home at the age of nineteen and became a disciple of Zen Master Bồn Khao Khoáng Viên at Báo Tư temple in Kuang-T'ung, China. He was the Dharma heir of the thirty-third generation of the Linn-Chih Zen Sect. In 1665, he went to Cental Vietnam and stayed in Qui Ninh, Bình Định, where he established Thập Tháp Di Đà Temple. The temple is situated on Long Bích hill, about 25 kilometers from Qui Nhơn City, across Đập Đá town, in Vạn Xuân hamlet, Nhơn Thành village, An Nhơn district. Later, he went to Thuận Hóa to build Hà Trung Temple, then to Phú Xuân to build Quốc Ân Temple and Phổ Đồng Stupa. At one time, he obeyed order from Lord Nguyễn Phức Thái to return to



Kuang-Chou to invite more high-rank Chinese monks to Vietnam, and to obtain more statues of Buddhas as well as religious ritual instruments in preparation for a great Vinaya-affirming ceremony at Thiên Mụ temple. Later on he received an edict to be headmonk of Hà Trung temple. At the end of his life, he moved to Quốc Ân temple. In 1728, after being slightly ill, he summoned all his disciples and delivered a discourse on the wonderful truths of Buddhism. After giving his instructions to the disciples, he wrote his last poem:

“The image in the mirror,  
The latter tranquil in itself,  
Should not be considered as real.  
The reflection from a gem,  
The latter perfectly clear in itself,  
Should not be taken as true.  
Things existing to you do not really exist.  
What is non-existent to you is truly non-Existent.”

Having finished this poem, he peacefully breathed his last breath, at the age of 81. His disciples built a stupa in his memory at Thuận Hóa hamlet, Dương Xuân Thượng village. Lord Nguyễn Phước Châu himself wrote the eulogy for his tomb, and honored him with posthumous title “Hạnh Đoan Thiền Sư.” The stele now remains in front of Quốc Ân temple.

Through this verse, we see the master wanted to remind us that when we speak of mind, we usually think of psychological phenomena, such as feelings, thoughts, or perceptions. When we speak of objects of mind, we think of physical phenomena, such as mountains, trees, or animals. Speaking this way, we see the phenomenal aspects of mind and its objects, but we don't see their nature. We have observed that these two kinds of phenomena, mind and objects of mind, rely on one another for their existence and are therefore interdependent. But we do not see that they themselves have the same nature. This nature is sometimes called “mind” and sometimes called “suchness.” Whatever we call it, we cannot measure this nature using concepts. It is boundless and all inclusive, without limitations or obstacles. The mind nature is serene and luminous; however, the mind nature is not a thing, and not nothing. From the point of view of unity, it is called Dharmakaya. From the point of view of duality, it is called “mind without obstacle”

encountering “world without obstacle.” The Avatamsaka Sutra calls it unobstructed mind and unobstructed object. The mind and the world contain each other so completely and perfectly that we call this “perfect unity of mind and object.”

## ***12. Sư Lieu Quan (?-1743)***

A Vietnamese Zen Master from Song Cầu, Phú Yên. He was born in Song Cầu town, Phú Yên province. His family moved to Thuận Hóa province in the late seventeenth century. When he lost his mother at the age of six, his father brought him to Hội Tôn Temple to become a disciple of Most Venerable Tế Viên. Seven years later, Tế Viên passed away. He went to Bảo Quốc Temple to study with Most Venerable Giác Phong Lão Tổ. He was the Dharma heir of the thirty-fifth generation of the Linn-Chih Zen Sect. In 1691 he returned home to take care of his old father. In 1695, he went to Thuận Hóa to receive Samanera’s precepts with Most Venerable Thạch Liêm. In 1697, he receive complete precepts with Most Venerable Từ Lâm at Từ Lâm Temple. In 1699, he studied meditation with Most Venerable Tử Dung. He was the Dharma heir of the thirty-fifth generation of the Linn-Chih Zen Sect. Lord Nguyễn Vương greatly appreciated his virtues and often invited him to preach Dharma in the Royal Palace. He spent most of his life to revive and expand Buddhism in Central Vietnam. He was the founder of Bảo Tịnh Temple in Phú Yên in the late seventeenth century. During the time when he came to Huế for the second time to seek the truth, he built Viên Thông temple in 1697. In 1741, he held a Vinaya-affirming ceremony at Viên Thông temple.

He always reminded his disciples: “Even though Zen practitioner should always practice meditation on the emptiness of all things, but in real life practitioners must see that emptiness and existence are inseparable. Whoever can live harmoniously with emptiness and existence is indeed living with the realization of the nature of emptiness. Practitioners contemplate the emptiness to be able to see the nature of emptiness in the assembly of the five aggregates: bodily form, feeling, perception, mind functionings, and consciousnesses. Pass from considering one aggregate to another. See that all transform, are impermanent and without self. The assembly of the five aggregates is

like the assembly of all phenomena: all obey the law of interdependence. Their coming together and disbanding from one another resembles the gathering and vanishing of clouds around the peaks of mountains. We should practice the contemplation on Emptiness so that we will have the ability to neither cling to nor reject the five aggregates. To contemplate on emptiness to know that like and dislike are only phenomena which belong to the assemblage of the five aggregates. To contemplate on emptiness so that we are able to see clearly that the five aggregates are without self and are empty, but that they are also wondrous, wondrous as is each phenomenon in the universe, wondrous as the life which is present everywhere. To contemplate on emptiness so that we are able to see that the five aggregates do not really undergo creation and destruction for they themselves are ultimate reality. By this contemplation we can see that impermanence is a concept, non-self is a concept, and emptiness is also a concept, so that we will not become imprisoned in the concepts of impermanence, non-self, and emptiness. We will see that emptiness is also empty, and that the ultimate reality of emptiness is no different from the ultimate reality of the five aggregates.”

He also emphasized: “The Buddha in Nirvana has a perfect freedom to live any where he pleases; he can act in whatever way he wishes and on that account he has no fixed abode and his Nirvana is called the ‘Nirvana of No Abode.’ The purpose of practicing is to extinguish or liberate from existence by ending all suffering. So Nirvana is the total extinction of desires and sufferings, or release (giải thoát). It is the final stage of those who have put an end to suffering by the removal of craving from their mind. Nirvana means extinction of ignorance and craving and awakening to inner Peace and Freedom. Nirvana stands against samsara or birth and death. Nirvana also refers to the state of liberation through full enlightenment. Nirvana is also used in the sense of a return to the original purity of the Buddha-nature after the dissolution of the physical body, that is to the perfect freedom of the unconditioned state. In other words, Nirvana is the homeland of any practitioners where they return after their lives are expired. Once the vow is done, just return home at will, and do not need to wander around to ask for the patriarchs. The ultimate state is the Nirvana of No Abode (Apratisthita-nirvana), that is to say, the attainment of

perfect freedom, not being bound to one place. In the Lankavatara Sutra, the Buddha told Mahamati: ‘Oh Mahamati, Nirvana means seeing into the abode of reality in its true significance. The abode of reality is where a thing stands by itself. To abide in one’s self-station means not to be astir, i.e., to be eternally quiescent. By seeing into the abode of reality as it is means to understand that there is only what is seen of one’s own mind, and no external world as such.’”

Below is one of his famous Zen poems on ‘form and formlessness’ and the ‘state of going home’ of a Zen practitioner:

“Over seventy years in this life,  
Living harmoniously with emptiness and existence.  
I now fulfill the vow and prepare to go home,  
Why do I need to ramble around for  
the way of Patriarchs?”

He passed away in 1743. Before his death, he left a versified text to his Dharma offsprings to give the first word of the religious name.

### ***13. Most Venerable Nhat Dinh's Filial Piety***

Nhat Dinh, a Vietnamese monk from Quảng Trị. When he was very young, he left home and became a disciple of Zen Master Phổ Tịnh at Thiên Thọ Temple. Later he received complete precepts with Most Venerable Mật Hoằng at Quốc Ân Temple. He stayed at Thiên Thọ Temple. Then obeyed an order from King Tự Đức, he went to Linh Hựu temple. In 8143 he became a wandering monk. He stopped by Hương Thủy and built Dưỡng Am to serve his mother and stayed there to expand Buddhism until he passed away in 1874. It is said that “Dưỡng Am” was first built by Most Venerable Nhất Định as a thatch hut to serve his old mother. At one time, his mother was too sick so she was advised by the doctors to eat fish and meat for health recuperation. Every morning the Most Venerable went to the market place to get some fish and meat by himself to feed his ill mother. Therefore, he received a lot of bad comments from the local people. However, King Tự Đức appreciated him as a dutiful son so he gave the temple an escutcheon named Từ Hiếu (Filial Piety).

#### ***14. Master An Thien***

A Vietnamese famous Zen master in the early nineteenth century. He was the author of “A Thorough Study on the Three Religions” composed in the middle of the nineteenth century. Probably printed in 1845. He spent most of his life at Đại Giác Temple in Bồ Sơn, Bắc Ninh to expand Buddhism. Master An Thiền composed a book titled “A Thorough Study in the Three Religions”. The book was composed in the middle of the nineteenth century. Probably printed in 1845. The book included three divisions: *First volume: Buddhism*, which comprises the followings: 1) The travel in seeking the Buddha Dharma of Zen Master Tinh Tuyen Tram Cong. 2) Sutras printed in Vietnam. 3) The beginning of Zen in Vietnam. 4) Buddha stupas in Vietnam. 5) Wu-Yun-T’ung Zen Sect. 6) Famous monks at the Royal Palace. 7) Famous monks during the Tiền Lê Dynasty. 8) Famous monks during the Lý Dynasty. 9) Famous monks during the Trần Dynasty. 10) Vinitaruci Zen Sect. 11) Thao Duong Zen Sect. 12) Mystic things involving Vietnamese Zen masters throughout all dynasties. 13) Buddhist terms and mythological stories about Buddhism in China and Vietnam. *The Second volume: Confucianism. The Third volume: Taoism.*

#### ***15. Most Venerable Thien Hoa***

Thien Hoa, name of a Vietnamese Zen master, who lived during the twentieth century. He was born in Vinhlong Province, South Vietnam. He was the author of several outstanding Buddhist books: Eight Precious Books, Popular Buddhist Studies, etc. He spread the Zen teachings in South Vietnam most of his life. Most Venerable Thien Hoa did not only spread Buddhist teachings to save beings, but he also helped maintaining and developing Buddhism during the time Vietnam was occupied by the French.

### ***16. Most Venerable Huyen Vi***

Most Venerable Thích Huyền Vi, one of the most outstanding Vietnamese monks in the modern era. In 1970, he obtained his Ph.D. at Magadha University (Patna-India) for a critical study of the Life and Work of Sariputra. He established Linh Son Monastery in Paris, France in late 1970s and currently directing the system of Linh Son Monasteries in the world, including many temples in France, Canada, and the United States. His works include 'The Four Abhidharmic Realms,' 'La Vie de Bouddha Sakyamuni,' 'Dharma talks,' etc. In keeping his vows to expand Buddhism in the West, Dharma Master Thích Huyền Vi established a record of 46 temples worldwide, among which 32 are in North America and Europe, while others are located in such far away places as Nepal and Republic Zaire (Congo).

### ***17. Most Venerable Thich Quang Duc***

Most Venerable Thich Quang Duc was a Vietnamese Buddhist monk whose public self-immolation in 1963 became one of the eminent images of the Vietnam War. He took this desperate measure in protest at the jailing of hundreds or thousands of monks and nuns without trial by the regime of President Ngo Dinh Diem of the first Republic of South Vietnam, and he is widely credited with helping to restore religious freedom in Vietnam as a result of his self-sacrifice.

### ***18. Most Venerable Thich Thien An***

Most Venerable Thích Thiên Ân, one of the most outstanding Vietnamese monks in the United States in the modern era. He was trained in the Lin-Chi Lineage. He came to the USA in 1966 to lecture at UCLA. In 1967, he began to teach at Hollywood Founded International Buddhist Meditation Center, later in 1973 it became a college and University of Oriental Studies in Los Angeles. After the political change over in Vietnam in 1975, he was active in helping Vietnamese refugees in the USA.

### ***19. Most Venerable Thich Duc Niem***

Most Venerable Thích Đức Niệm, one of the most outstanding Vietnamese monks in the modern era. In 1978, he obtained his Ph.D. in Buddhist study at Taiwan University. In the same year, he was also the President of the Refugee Relief Association in Taiwan. In 1981, he founded the International Buddhist Monastic Institute in the United States to train monks and nuns as well as to translate and publish Buddhist sutras, vinaya, and commentaries. In 1992, he was head of the Leadership Council Vietnamese-American Unified Buddhist Congress, an umbrella organization covering several Buddhist organizations in the United States. He also wrote and published several Buddhist books including A Commentary On Mahayana Pureland Thought, Thích Đức Niệm's Dharma Talks, etc..

### ***20. Most Venerable Thich Thien Tam & Vietnamese Pure Land School***

Most Venerable Thich Thien Tam, one of the most outstanding monks in Vietnamese Pure Land School. His worldly name was Nguyen Nhut Thang. He was born in 1924 in Go Cong, South Vietnam (some sources said he was born 1924?). When he was 12 years old, his mother got seriously ill, so he went to Vinh Trang Temple in My Tho to search herbals to treat his mother. After his mother recovered from the illness, he continued to go back to Vinh Trang Temple to volunteer to help the temple and to study Buddhadharma. In 1944, he asked his parents to give him permission to become a monk, but the parents did not allow him to leave home. So he continued to be a lay person who often visited local temples to help for meritorious deeds and to cultivate. In 1945, his parents gave him permission to become a monk, so he became a disciple of Most Venerable Thanh Dao at Linh Thuu Temple at Xoai Hot Village. In 1948, he received ten commandments of a Sramanera (a novice monk) and attended the Intermediate Buddhist Studies. In 1950, he received 250 commandments of a Bhiksu, and completed his Intermediate Buddhist Studies in 1951. In 1954, he completed his Advanced Buddhist Studies. Right after that, he entered and shut off himself up in the room to purify, strengthen his

concentration power, and to translate Buddhist books from Chinese into Vietnamese. In 1964, he opened an Intermediate Buddhist Studies Institute at Hue Nghiem Temple, Binh Chanh District. He and Most Venerable Thich Thanh Tu were responsible for the lectures. In 1968, he went to Lam Dong Province to establish a place of training of Pure Land disciples at Dao Ninh Temple. In 1970, he founded Huong Nghiem Pure Land Institute to encourage people to practice Pure Land. Most Venerable Thich Thien Tam passed away in 1992 at the age of 68. During the period of 47 years of being a monk, he translated a lot of books from Chinese into Vietnamese. Here are some major ones: The Sutra of Contemplation of Infinite Life (Amitayur-dhyana-sutra), Letters From the Pure Land, Country of the Ultimate Bliss, Great Compassion Mind Mantra (Mahakarunika-citta-dharani), Pure Land Methods & Regulations, the Unisha Vijaya Dharani Sutra, Collection of Lotus Stories, Ten Core Issues in Buddha Recitation, Fundamental Teachings of the Mind-Only, Biographies of Pure Land Sages and Saints, and so on.

Nowadays, we do not have records of lines of transmission of the Vietnamese Pure Land School. Vietnamese Pure Land School was probably originated from the Great Master Tan Heng, a Chinese famous monk in the Liao Sung Dynasty in China. He was one of the earliest outstanding monks who preached the Sukhavatvyuha Sutra of the Pure Land Sect in China. He might be the first Chinese monk who introduced the Pure Land teachings when he came to Jiao-Chou to spread the Buddhadharma there. In the modern times, Thich Thien Tam and Senior Most Venerables Thich Tri Tinh and Thich Tri Thu were considered the prominent monks who actively propagated the Pure Land teachings in Vietnam. The Pureland text, "The Road to the Ultimate Bliss World" was first translated into Vietnamese by the Most Venerable Thich Tri Thu, Most Venerable Thich Tri Tinh, and, later, it was translated and explained again by the late Great Dharma Master Thich Thien Tam with the title "Collection of Lotus Stories." Biographies of Pure Land Sages and Saints, or Enlightened Saints of Pureland Buddhism, which recorded eleven Patriarchs for the Pureland Dharma Tradition. Eventually, at Linh Nham Congregation, the Great Venerable Master Yin-Kuang had a convention for Pureland Cultivators, both lay people and clergy, to promote Great Venerable



Sinh-So as the Tenth Patriarch, Great Venerable Master Sua-Sen as the Eleventh Patriarch, and Great Venerable Master Che-Wu as the Twelfth Patriarch. After the Great Venerable Master Yin-Kuang gained rebirth in the Pureland, Pureland cultivators carefully examined his life and made the following observations: His conduct and practice were pure and adorning. He made significant contributions to the Pureland Buddhism. Thus, after their meeting, they honored him as the Thirteenth Patriarch. According to the tradition of Pureland Buddhism, the Great Venerable Masters followed the path of compassion, wisdom, and benefitting others; therefore, they never proclaimed themselves as Patriarchs. Only after they passed away, leaving behind significant and extraordinary artifacts, such as caris, upon death they were received by Buddha, Maha-Bodhisattvas, etc, or having outward characteristics of gaining rebirth, did future generations, relying on these evidences, bestowed upon them as Patriarchs. The Biographies of Pure Land Sages is a collection of real life stories of Pureland cultivators, lay and ordained Buddhists, who gained rebirth to provide concrete evidence and serve as testimony to the true teachings of the Buddha and Pureland Patriarchs for those who may still have doubts and skepticism. Almost all the virtuous beings recorded in the Biographies of Pureland Sages relied on the dharma door of Buddha Recitation to gain rebirth and earn a place in one of the nine levels of Golden Lotus in the Western Pureland.

## ***21. Master Nhat Hanh***

Nhat Hanh, name of a Vietnamese monk who was ordained in 1942, and during the 1950s and 1960s helped found the Engaged Buddhism movement. He is also credited with coining (đặt ra) the term “Engaged Buddhism,” and has been one of its most influential theoreticians. Following studied at Princetone University and a teaching stint (hạn chế) at Columbia University. He returned to Vietnam to engage in anti-war agitation (sự khuấy rối) following the fall of the Diem regime. He was one of the leaders of a non-violent protest movement based on Gandhian principles. In 1964, he founded the School of Youth for Social Service, which sent teams of youth people into the countryside to help war victims, establish schools and

health clinics, and later rebuilt villages that had been bombed. By the fall of Saigon, the organization had over 10,000 volunteers, including monks, nuns, and laypeople. Because of his anti-war activities, he was forced into exile by the South Vietnamese government, and now lives in France. In 1967 Martin Luther King, Jr. was so impressed by his efforts on behalf of peace that he nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize. In 1982, he founded Plum Village, a monastery and retreat center in southwestern France, which now is his main residence. He has authored more than ninety-five books, mainly on Buddhist topics and peace, in Vietnamese, French, and English, including the best-selling "Being Peace." In January 2005, he and his followers from the Plum Village were allowed by the Communist government to come back to Vietnam for the first time since 1964. He stayed in Vietnam for three months, but received an indifferent welcome from the Vietnamese Unified Buddhist staff.

According to Zen Master Nhat Hanh, in Buddhism, mindfulness is the key. Mindfulness is the energy that sheds light on all things and all activities, producing the power of concentration, bringing forth deep insight and awakening. Mindfulness is at the base of all Buddhist practice. According to Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh in *The Zen Keys*: "Mindfulness helps us focus our attention on and know what we are doing. Usually we are a prisoner of society. Our energies are dispersed here and there. Our body and our mind are not in harmony. To begin to be aware of what we are doing, saying, and thinking is to begin to resist the invasion by our surroundings and by all of our wrong perceptions. When the lamp of awareness is lit, our whole being is lit up. Self-confidence is re-established, the shadows of illusion no longer overwhelm us, and our concentration develops to its fullest. We wash our hands, dress, perform everyday actions as before, but now we are aware of our actions, words, and thoughts." Mindfulness does not fight anger or despair. Mindfulness is there in order to recognize. To be mindful of something is to recognize that something is the capacity of being aware of what is going on in the present moment. According to Most Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh in "Anger," the best way to be mindful of anger is "when breathing in I know that anger has manifested in me; breathing out I smile towards my anger." This is not an act of suppression or of fighting. It is an act of recognizing. Once we

recognize our anger, we are able to take good care of it or to embrace it with a lot of awareness, a lot of tenderness. Mindfulness recognizes, is aware of its presence, accepts and allows it to be there. Mindfulness is like a big brother who does not suppress his younger brother's suffering. He simply says: "Dear brother, I'm here for you." You take your younger brother in your arms and you comfort him. This is exactly our practice.

Zen Master Nhat Hanh often taught his disciples: "When Zen practice is carried on in the midst of activities, we don't waste your life, but on the contrary, we truly live in each minute, each moment of our life. Also according to Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh in 'Being Peace': "On the wooden board outside of the meditation hall in Zen monasteries, there is a four-line inscription. The last line is, 'Don't waste your life.' Our lives are made of days and hours, and each hour is precious. Have we wasted our hours and our days? Are we wasting our lives? These are important questions. Practicing Buddhism is to be alive in each moment. When we practice sitting or walking, we have the means to do it perfectly. During the rest of the day, we also practice. It is more difficult, but it is possible. The sitting and the walking must be extended to the non-walking, non-sitting moments of our days. That is the basic principle of meditation."

According to Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh in Zen Keys: "Kung-ans (koans) are not to study or research material. Each kung-an must be considered a finger pointing to the reality of our own true nature as well as the reality of the world. This finger can only fulfill its role as pointer if you are aware that it is pointing directly at you." Also according to Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh in Our Appointment With Life, to live alone does not mean to reject the world and society. The Buddha said that living alone means living in the present moment deeply observing what is happening. If we do that, we will not be dragged into the past or swept away into thoughts about the future. The Buddha said that if we cannot live in the present moment, even if we are alone in the deepest forest, we are not really alone. He said that if we are fully alive in the present moment, even if we are in a crowded, urban area, we can still be said to be living alone. Buddhist meditators know the importance of practicing in a community. That is the meaning of the phrase, "I take refuge in the Sangha." A Vietnamese proverb goes: "Soup is to a meal

what friends are to be practiced." To be in touch with a community, to learn from its members, and to take refuge in a community is very important. But to discover the way of being alone in a practice community is something we need to do.

Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh wrote in 'The Diamond That Cuts Through Illusion': "It is true that once we put an end to the causes of suffering and transform them, we will not bring about new consequences of suffering in the future. But what has existed for a long time, even after it is cut off, still has momentum and will continue for a while before stopping completely. When an electric fan is switched off, although the current has been cut, the blades keep moving for a while longer. Even after the cause has been cut off, the consequence of this past cause continues for a while. The residue of afflictions is the same. What comes to a stop is the creation of new causes of suffering, not the body of the five aggregates. One day, Devadatta threw a rock at the Buddha, and his foot was wounded. The Buddha was no longer creating new karma, but he experienced this karmic consequence as the result of past action that had some energy left over before it could stop. This does not mean that the Buddha had not realized complete extinction after he passed away." Also according to Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh in *The Diamond That Cuts Through Illusion*, we put a lot of energy into advancing technology in order to serve our lives better, and we exploit the non-human elements, such as the forests, rivers, and oceans, in order to do so. But as we pollute and destroy nature, we pollute and destroy ourselves as well. The results of discriminating between human and non-human are global warming, pollution, and the emergence of many strange diseases. In order to protect ourselves, we must protect the non-human elements. This fundamental understanding is needed if we want to protect our planet and ourselves.

According to Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh in 'Peace Is Every Step', hope is important, because it can make the present moment less difficult to bear. Buddhism believes in the present. With the present as the basis it argues the past and future. The present is the offspring of the past, and becomes in turn the parent of the future. The actuality of the present needs no proof as it is self-evident. If we believe that tomorrow will be better, we can bear a hardship today. But that is the most that hope can do for us: to make some hardship lighter. When I

think deeply about the nature of hope, I see something tragic. Since we cling to our hope in the future, we do not focus our energies and capabilities on the present moment. We use hope to believe something better will happen in the future, that we will arrive at peace, or the Kingdom of God. Hope becomes a kind of obstacle. If you can refrain from hoping, you can bring yourself entirely into the present moment and discover the joy that is already here. Enlightenment, peace, and joy will not be granted by someone else. The well is within us, and if we dig deeply in the present moment, the water will spring forth. We must go back to the present moment in order to be really alive. When we practice conscious breathing, we practice going back to the present moment where everything is happening.

Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh wrote in *The Miracle of Mindfulness*: "Our breath is the bridge from our body to our mind, the element which reconciles our body and mind and which makes possible one-ness of body and mind. Breath is aligned to both body and mind and it alone is the tool which can bring them both together, illuminating both and bringing both peace and calm." Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh also wrote in *'Present Moment, Wonderful Moment'*: "If you look deeply into the palm of your hand, you will see your parents and all generations of your ancestors. All of them are alive in this moment. Each is present in your body. You are the continuation of each of these people. To be born means that something which did not exist comes into existence. But the day we are 'born' is not our beginning. It is a day of continuation. But that should not make us less happy when we celebrate our 'Happy Continuation Day.' Since we are never born, how can we cease to be? This is what the Heart Sutra reveals to us. When we have a tangible experience of non-birth and non-death, we know ourselves beyond duality. The meditation on 'no separate self' is one way to pass through the gate of birth and death. Your hand proves that you have never been born and you will never die. The thread of life has never been interrupted from time without beginning until now. Previous generations, all the way back to single-celled-beings, are present in your hand at this moment. You can observe and experience this. Your hand is always available as a subject for meditation." In another passage, Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh continued to write: "When we are driving, we tend to think of arriving, and we sacrifice

the journey for the sake of the arrival. But life is to be found in the present moment, not in the future. In fact, we may suffer more after we arrive at our destination. If we have to talk of a destination, what about our final destination, the graveyard? We do not want to go in the direction of death; we want to go to in the direction of life. But where is life? Life can be found only in the present moment. Therefore, each mile we drive, each step we take, has to bring us into the present moment. This is the practice of mindfulness. When we see a red light or a stop sign, we can smile at it and thank it, because it is a Bodhisattva helping us return to the present moment. The red light is a bell of mindfulness. We may have thought of it as an enemy, preventing us from achieving our goal. But now we know the red light is our friend, helping us resist rushing and calling us to return to the present moment where we can meet with life, joy, and peace."

Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh wrote in 'The Heart of Understanding': "If I am holding a cup of water and I ask you, 'Is this cup empty?' You will say, 'No, it is full of water.' But if I pour the water and ask you again, you may say, 'Yes, it is empty.' But, empty of what? My cup is empty of water, but it is not empty of air. To be empty is to be empty of something... When Avalokitesvara (Kuan-yin or Kannon, the Bodhisattva who embodies Compassion) says (in the Heart Sutra) that the five skandhas are equally empty, to help him be precise we must ask, 'Mr. Avalokitesvara, empty of what?' The five skandhas, which may be translated into English as five heaps, or five aggregates, are the five elements that comprise a human being... In fact, these are really five rivers flowing together in us: the river of form, which means our body, the river of feeling, the river of perceptions, the river of mental formations, and the river of consciousness. They are always flowing in us... Avalokitesvara looked deeply into the five skandhas..., and he discovered that none of them can be by itself alone... Form is empty of a separate self, but it is full of everything in the cosmos. The same is true with feelings, perceptions, mental formation, and consciousness."

According to Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh in *Our Appointment With Life*, some day we may feel hollow, exhausted, and joyless, not really our true selves. On such days, even if we try to be in touch with others, our efforts will be in vain. The more we try, the more we fail.

When this happens, we should stop trying to be in touch with what is outside of ourselves and come back to being in touch with ourselves, to "being alone." We should close the door onto society, come back to ourselves, and practice conscious breathing, observing deeply what is going on inside and around us. We accept all the phenomena we onserve, say "hello" to them, smile at them. We do well to do simple things, like walking or sitting meditation, washing our clothes, cleaning the floor, making tea, and cleaning the bathroom in mindfulness. If we do these things, we will restore the richness of our spiritual life.

According to Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, defiled or immaculate. Dirty pure. These are concepts we form in our mind. A beautiful rose we have just cut and placed in our vase is pure. It smells so good, so fresh. A garbage can is the opposite. It smells horrible, and it is filled with rotten things. But that is only when we look on the surface. If we look more deeply we will see that in just five or six days, the rose will become part of the garbage. We do not need to wait five days to see it. If we just look at the rose, and we look deeply, we can see it now. And if we look into the garbage can, we see that in a few months its contents can be transformed into lovely vegetables, and even a rose. If you are a good organic gardener, looking at the garbage you can see a rose. Roses and garbage inter-are. Without a rose, we cannot have garbage, and without garbage, we cannot have a rose. They need each other very much. The rose and the garbage are equal. The garbage is just as precious as the rose. If we look deeply at the concepts of defilement and immaculateness, we return to the notion of interbeing."

Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh wrote in *The Miracle of Mindfulness*: "Often it helps to meditate on the image of a pebble thrown into a river. How is one helped by the image of the pebble? Sit down in whatever position suits you best, the half lotus or lotus, back straight, the half smile on your face. breathe slowly and deeply, following each breath, becoming one with the breath. The let go of everything. Imagine yourself as a pebble which has been thrown into a river. The pebble sinks through the water effortlessly, finally reaching the bottom, the point of perfect rest. You are like a pebble which has let itself fall into the river, letting go of everything. At the center of your being is your breath. You don't need to know the length of time it takes before reaching the point of complete rest on the bed of fine sand beneath the

water. When you feel yourself resting like a pebble which has reached the riverbed, that is the point when you begin to find your own rest. You are no longer pushed or pulled by anything. If you cannot find joy in peace in these very moments of sitting, then the future itself will only flow by as a river flows by, you will not be able to hold it back, you will be incapable of living the future when it has become the present."

According to Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, the Buddha always told his disciples not to waste their time and energy in metaphysical speculation. Whenever he was asked a metaphysical question, he remained silent. Instead, he directed his disciples toward practical efforts. Questioned one day about the problem of the infinity of the world, the Buddha said, "Whether the world is finite or infinite, limited or unlimited, the problem of your liberation remains the same." Another time he said, "Suppose a man is struck by a poisoned arrow and the doctor wishes to take out the arrow immediately. Suppose the man does not want the arrow removed until he knows who shot it, his age, his parents, and why he shot it. What would happen? If he were to wait until all these questions have been answered, the man might die first." Life is so short. It must not be spent in endless metaphysical speculation that does not bring us any closer to the truth.

According to Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh in *The Heart of Understanding*, understanding is like water flowing in a stream. Wisdom and knowledge are solid and can block our understanding. In Buddhism worldly knowledge is regarded as an obstacle for understanding. If we take something to be the truth, we may cling to it so much that even if the truth comes and knocks at our door, we won't want to let it in. We have to be able to transcend our previous knowledge the way we climb up a ladder. If we are on the fifth rung and think that we are very high, there is no hope for us to step up to the sixth. We must learn to transcend our own views. Understanding, like water, can flow, can penetrate. Views, knowledge, and even wisdom are solid, and can block the way of understanding.

According to Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh in the explanation of the first Awakening in the *Sutra On The Eight Realizations of the Great Beings*, the first awakening explains and clarifies the four basic subjects of Buddhist meditation: impermanence, suffering, no-self, and



impurity. If we always remember and meditate on these four principles of reality, we will gradually be released from the round of birth and death (samsara). The first basic subject of Buddhist meditation is impermanence or the impermanent nature of all things. All things in this world, including human life, mountains, rivers, and political systems, are constantly changing from moment to moment. This is called impermanence in each moment. Everything passes through a period of birth, maturity, transformation, and destruction. This destruction is called impermanence in each cycle. To see the impermanent nature of all things, we must examine this closely. Doing so will prevent us from being imprisoned by the things of this world. The second basic subject of Buddhist meditation is suffering. The ancient people of India said that all things are composed of four elements: earth, water, fire, and air. Acknowledging this, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas understand that when there is a harmonious relationship among the four elements, there is peace. When the four elements are not in harmony, there is suffering. Because all things are created by a combination of these elements, nothing can exist independently or permanently. All things are impermanent. Consequently, when we are caught up in the things of the world, we suffer from their impermanent nature. And since all things are empty, when we are caught up by things, we also suffer from their emptiness. Awareness of the existence of suffering leads us to begin to practice the way of realization. This is the first of the Four Noble Truths. When we lose awareness of and do not meditate on the existence of suffering in all things, we can easily be pushed around by passions and desires for worldly things, increasingly destroying our lives in the pursuit of these desires. Only by being aware of suffering can we find its cause, confront it directly, and eliminate it. The third basic subject of Buddhist meditation is selflessness. The nature of our bodies. Buddhism teaches that human beings' bodies are composed of five aggregates, called skandhas in Sanskrit. If the form created by the four elements is empty and without self, then human beings' bodies, created by the unification of the five skandhas, must also be empty and without self. Human beings' bodies are involved in a transformation process from second to second, minute to minute, continually experiencing impermanence in each moment. By looking very deeply into the five skandhas, we can experience the

selfless nature of our bodies, our passage through birth and death, and emptiness, thereby destroying the illusion that our bodies are permanent. In Buddhism, no-self is the most important subject for meditation. By meditating no-self, we can break through the barrier between self and other. When we no longer are separate from the universe, a completely harmonious existence with the universe is created. We see that all other human beings exist in us and that we exist in all other human beings. We see that the past and the future are contained in the present moment, and we can penetrate and be completely liberated from the cycle of birth and death. The fourth basic subject of Buddhist meditation is impurity. Impurity is the nature of our bodies and minds. Impurity means the absence of an immaculate state of being, one that is neither holy nor beautiful. From the psychological and physiological standpoint, human beings are impure. This is not negative or pessimistic, but an objective perspective on human beings. If we examine the constituents of our bodies from the hair on our head to the blood, pus, phlegm, excrement, urine, the many bacteria dwelling in the intestines, and the many diseases present waiting for the opportunity to develop, we can see clearly that our bodies are quite impure and subject to decay. Our bodies also create the motivation to pursue the satisfaction of our desires and passions. That is why the sutra regards the body as the place where misleads gather. Let us now consider our psychological state. Since we are unable to see the truth of impermanence, suffering, and the selfless nature of all things, our minds often become the victims of greed and hatred, and we act wrongly. So the sutra says, "The mind is the source of all confusion."

Phenomenal identity, i.e. the wave is water and water is the wave; or matter is just the immaterial, the immaterial is just matter. We, Zen practitioners should always see that each moment of consciousness includes the whole universe. This moment might be a memory, a perception, a feeling, a hope. From the point of view of space, we can call it a "particle" of consciousness. From the point of view of time, we can call it a "speck" of time. An instant of consciousness embraces all past, present and future, and the entire universe. According to Zen Master said in *The Heart of Understanding*: "If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow; and

without trees, we cannot make paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist. If the cloud is not here, the sheet of paper cannot be here either. So we can say that the cloud and the paper are interdependent. If we look into this sheet of paper even more deeply, we can see the sunshine in it. If the sunshine is not there, the forest cannot grow. In fact, nothing can grow... And if we continue to look, we can see the logger who cut the tree and brought it to the mill to be transformed into paper. And we see the wheat. We know that the logger cannot exist without his daily bread, and therefore the wheat that became his bread is also in this sheet of paper. And the logger's father and mother are in it too. When we look in this way, we see that without all of these things, this sheet of paper cannot exist. Looking even more deeply, we can see we are in it too. This is not difficult to see, because when we look at a sheet of paper, the sheet of paper is part of our perception. Your mind is in here and mine is also. So we can say that everything is in here with this sheet of paper."



## ***Chapter Twenty-Four***

### ***Typically Outstanding Lay Buddhist Scholars In Vietnam***

#### ***1. Zen Master Ly Thai Tong (1001-1054)***

When king Ly Thai To died in 1028, his sons started fighting for the crown. Eventually, Prince Phat Ma came out victorious and became Emperor Ly Thai Tong. Although he pardoned his brothers, he set a new rule to force all official to come to Thanh Long every year to renew their allegian to the throne. Those who failed to attend the ceremony were subjected to fifty strokes of the cane. Ly Thai Tong appears to have a good warrior-king. On the fighting horse's back, the king fought in the south and facified in the north. He also spent his time repressing many revolts. Power was decentralized and each region was under a local chief, a situation that invited nothing but troubles, mostly among the tribes of Muong and Nung in the mountaineous areas. Champa and Laos also maintained pressure on Vietnam. In 1038, the chief of the Nung Tribe, Nung Ton Phuc, called himself Emperor Chieu Thanh Hoang De, his wife Queen Minh Duc Hoang Hau, and their region the kingdom of Truong Sinh Quoc. The following year, he was put to death by Ly Thai Tong. But one of his sons, Nung Tri Cao, escaped with his mother. In 1041, Nung Tri Cao came back to seize the district of Quang Nguyen Province. He then proclaimed it the state of Dai Lich. However, not too long later, he was captured, but was pardoned because he was the only survivor of the family. Furthermore, king Ly Thai Tong not only decided to preserve his lineage, but also appointed him prince of Quang Nguyen. In 1048, Nung Tri Cao revolted again, this time calling himself Emperor Nhan Hue of Dai Nam. Having petitioned in vain for recognition from the Sung, he set out with a vengeance to invade China and succeeded in seizing eight districts. Unable to dislodge him, the Sung emperor was prepared to ask Vietnam for help, but was dissuaded from doing so by his general, Dich Thanh, who, as a matter of national pride, preferred to send in his own troops. Nung Tri Cao was finally defeated and took refuge in Ta

Li (Yunnan), where he was murdered by the natives. Actually, the action of the Nung was not a claim to independence but a claim to the throne. They believed they shared a common ancestor with the Vietnamese and therefore Vietnam also belonged to them. As for Champa, not only had it ceased to pay annual tribute but also it had resumed its murderous raids. Ly Thai Tong retaliated with a sweeping operation, taking over 5,000 men prisoner and capturing thirty elephants. The Champa commander surrendered by offering the head of his king. But the Viet had stormed the Champa capital of Phat The in Thua Thien Province and captured the Champa consort Mi-E. On the way back to Vietnam, Mi-E drowned herself in the river. Beside winning wars, Ly Thai Tong also credited for having created the postal service. He gave tax break to veterans and the poor. He forbade the sale of minor slaves and humanized the penal code by regulating arrest and interrogation procedures. Penalties had to match the nature and magnitude of the crimes committed. As for the inner palace, he limited the number of concubines and consorts to thirteen, attendants to eighteen, and musicians and dancers to one hundred. Furthermore, to make sure the ladies had no time to devote to palace intrigue, he ordered them to keep busy practicing the art of silk-culture and silk weaving.

At that time, king Ly Thai Tong often came to seek to study Zen with Zen master Thien Lao on Mount Thien Phuc. Only after on phrase, the king comprehended the essential meaning of Zen. When he had free times, he often took the joy of the mystic trance. At the same time, the king and extraordinarily honored monks from all over the country gathered together to interpret the differences in their comprehension. The king went ahead to say first, "I think of the source of mind of the Buddha and Patriarchs, from ancient times, the sages still could not prevent from being ridiculed. How can we, younger generations, avoid any kind of ridicule? Now, I, together with all great virtues here, preliminarily show our own thought, and each one of us will submit a verse that shows the function of the mind." All of the great virtues bowed to receive the order. While everyone was still thinking, the king presented his verse:

"Prajna is the Sunya Sect (Sunyavadin),  
Person is empty, ego is empty too.

Buddhas of past, present and future times,  
The Dharma-nature of everything  
originally the same.”

Everybody praised and admired the king's quick-witted mind. In 1054, he peacefully passed away at the age of 54. He was not only a good king in administration and ruling of the country, but he was also a devoted Zen practitioner. Thanks to his military skills, he succeeded in gaining the respect of the Sung emperor. In general, king Ly Thai Tong gave Vietnam a period of relative prosperity in the history.

## ***2. Zen Master Ly Thanh Tong (1054-1072)***

Prince Nhat Ton succeeded Ly Thai Tong as Ly Thanh Tong, and Vietnam was renamed Dai Viet. He was a superior scholar and was credited for having built the famous Confucian Temple of Literature. In addition, he was responsible for the organization of the army. He equipped special units with catapults. In 1069, he subdued the Champa and this time captured their king, Che Cu. For his ransom, Che Cu had to give away the three regions (chau) of Dia Ly, Bo Chinh, and Ma Linh, which are now the provinces of Quang Binh and Quang Tri. This was the first time Dai Viet had annexed a part of Champa territory, and marked the beginning of the March to the South. Ly Thanh Tong was venerated for his benevolence and his contribution to the country culture. In winter, he always made sure that prisoners had enough to eat and to keep warm. One winter day in the year of 1055, during a court audience, he pointed to his daughter and said "I love my people as I love my daughter. Because they are not educated, they have committed offenses against the Law. From now on, please do not be too harsh on them." During the war with Champa in 1069, king Ly Thanh Tong captured hundreds of thousands of prisoners of wars, Zen master Ts'ao T'ang was among them. After the conversation with Zen master Ts'ao-T'ang, king Ly Thanh Tong became one of the most outstanding disciples of this Zen master. Later, king Ly Thanh Tong invited Zen master Ts'ao T'ang to the royal palace and honored him as the National Teacher and let him stay at Khai Quốc Temple in Thăng Long Citadel. This Zen master founded Thảo Đường Zen Sect with a lot of followers.

### ***3. Zen Master Ly Nhan Tong***

Seven-year old Prince Can Duc succeeded King Ly Thanh Tong in 1072 and became King Ly Nhan Tong. He was strongly and capably assisted by a relative, the high counselor Ly Dao Thanh. Fearing the Queen Duong's influence over the young emperor, Lady Linh Nhan, the king's mother, advised Ly Nhan Tong to suppress the queen together with seventy-six of her attendants in Thuong Duong Palace. This mass murder triggered a tremendous reaction from the court. Only the prestige of Ly Dao Thanh could prevent further catastrophe. Can Duc took the title of Ly Nhan Tong. Thanks to the loyalty of his high counselor, Ly Nhan Tong was able to rule his country successfully. His contribution to national education was exceptional. In 1075, he created his first mandarin examination. The next year, he founded the National Institute for the Recruitment of Superior Teachers. In 1086, he opened the National Academy Institute after a national examination. So far, the entire administration was then staffed with scholars who had graduated from these institutions or with the laureates of government-run competitive examinations. In the field of public works, Ly Nhan Tong began construction of the famous Co Xa Dike to protect the capital against flooding. In military field, those subject to the draft could pay for deferments and allow the government to hire peasants as their replacements. This led to the formation of peasant-soldiers in villages and districts. Ly Nhan Tong's economic policy was inspired by the Wang Mang reforms of the end of the early Han. Ly Nhan Tong reorganized finance system by promoting the concept of government loans with some kind of fixed interest. The government lent to peasants who would pay back their loans with their rice at harvest time. For merchants, he had a special office in the capital which not only lent them money but also bought back unsalable products. These protectionist measures hurt the Chinese merchants, and in protest, they stopped all trade with Vietnam. In retaliation, and in the first time in history, a Viet army invaded southern part of China under the pretense of protecting the Chinese merchants from their own emperor's decision. In 1075, the Viet general Ly Thuong Kiet attacked Kuang-tung, where he killed more than 8,000 Chinese soldiers. Another Dai Viet general,



Ton Dan, assailed the district of Ung Chau whose chief, Tsu-chien, committed suicide after having forced thirty-six members of his family to kill themselves. The entire citadel refused to surrender to the Viet army, so eventually they were all killed, maybe around 58,000 people. According to some other reports, the Dai Viet troops killed a total of around 100,000 Chinese, including the Kuang-hsi governor, Truong Thu Tiet. The Sung emperor's response was unequivocal. In 1076, for the first time, a Sino-Champa-Lao coalition invaded Vietnam, but it was immediately stopped by Marshall Ly Thuong Kiet. In that protracted campaign, the Chinese lost around 400,000 men. Thus when the Viet offered a cease-fire, the Sung emperor readily accepted, leaving only a few troops as garrison in the provinces of Cao Bang and Lang Son. He renounced the occupation two years later, when he had to face the Kim invasion. However, at the same time, Dai Viet was not free of troubles with Champa. It had become a pattern for Dai Viet to periodically enforce authority over that impossible neighbor, and in 1075, Ly Nhan Tong decided to set up administrative system in the three provinces once yielded by Che Cu. But later helped by a former renegade Viet named Ly Giac, the Champa rulers again revolted and took back these provinces. In 1104, seventy-year old Marshall Ly Thuong Kiet was sent to crush the Champa King Che Ma Na. Until he died in 1127, Ly Nhan Tong enjoyed peace, having secured his position as the overlord of the south without any opposition from the Northern Sung, who were still preoccupied with the invasion of the northern barbarians. King Ly Nhan Tong heartfully venerated Buddhism. The king respectfully invited Zen Master Viên Thông twice to the imperial court to grant him the title of National Teacher, but he refused. In 1130, king Ly Nhan Tong asked him about the nation's affairs, he said: "Whether safe or dangerous people are like things that are predictable. It is a virtue that a king use to rule over his nation. The king's compassion should penetrate everyone. Then the people will love him as they love their parents, and respect him as they respect the sun or the moon. That means that people are put in a safe place. As for the mandarins, they should win the people's heart because the existence of the nation is based on the people's will. All good kings, no one uses narrow-minded mandarins or mean people to make the country prosperous. The weather can hardly be cold or hot immediately, but it

goes from Spring to Summer, Summer to Autumn, Autumn to Winter, etc. Like this, a king is not able to suppress a rebellion right away, but he has to improve the situations day in and day out. Holy kings in the old time had much experience of this natural law, so they had to practice their virtue in order to rule over the nation in peace. If the king can do that there is nothing to worry about the nation's future. If not, the nation can hardly avoid coming to decay. That is the cause of the gradual decline or gradual prosperity of a nation.” From that time on, after meetings in the royal court, the king always spent time to read sutras and to sit meditation.

#### ***4. Zen Master Tran Thai Tong (1218-1277)***

King Tran Thai Tong was born in 1218, was enthroned as the first king of the Trần Dynasty. He grew up in the Buddhist culture. As the child-king, he was deeply sorrow when he witnessed his uncle as well as his chief political advisor, Trần Thủ Độ, conducted a total massacre towards all political opponents, including the king's in-law, in order to consolidate the new dynasty. When he was twenty years old, his uncle, Thủ Độ, once again ordered him to degrade Lý Chiêu Hoàng because she could not conceive, to remarry his sister-in-law Thuận Thiên who was marrying and pregnant with his elder brother Trần Liễu. He was so disappointed. One night in 1238, he fled the palace to the Hoa Yên temple on Mount Yên Tử. Zen Master Viên Chứng, the abbot of the temple, asked the king of what he was looking for by saying: “As an old monk living too long in this wild mountain, I am bony and skinny, my life is simple and my mind is peaceful as a piece of cloud floating with the wind. And Your Majesty, as a king deserting the throne and coming to this poor temple in the wilderness, what is your expectation?” The king replied: “As young age, my both parents were passed away. I'm now so lonely of being above of the people, without places for refuge. Also thinking of the past that no kingdom remains as long as expected. I'd like to come here and practice to become a Buddha rather than anything else.” With compassion, the master advised: “There is no Buddha in this mountain. Buddha is only existed in one's mind.” If the mind is calm and free of bondage, wisdom will display, and that is the true Buddha. When Your Majesty realizes it,

you're a Buddha immediately. Don't waste your time and energy of looking for it from the outside world." The next day, Thủ Độ and his entourage came up and requested that the Majesty return to the throne. The king again turned to the master for advise. The master replied: "Generally, being a sovereign, one must consider people's wishes as his, as well people's mind as his. Now the people request Your Majesty return, you can't respond negatively. My only wish that Your Majesty continue to study the Buddha teaching." The King had no choice but returned to his throne. In 1257, the king led his armed forces to fight against and defeated the invasive Mongolian. After the war, he realized that tens of thousands of lives of the enemy had been annihilated, thus he consistently practiced "Repentance six times a day."

He also wrote a "Guide to Six Times of Repentance" with all rituals for everyone to practice. In 1258, the king stepped down and relinquished the throne to his son Thánh Tông with one advice: "A politician should always bring Buddhism to society." In the Book of Emptiness, the king explained why one should observe five precepts and cultivation of repentance. He emphasized the importance of repentance in His Book of Emptiness as follows: "To move conveniently on the road or along the river, one needs utilize a wagon or a boat. To effectively cleanse the body and mind, one must exercise repentance. As said the sutra, 'Though a dress be dirty for hundreds of years, if cleansed, it would be clean within one day. Similarly, if one suffers a bad karma accumulated over a hundred or thousand lifetimes, with earnest repentance one could clear up within an hour or a day.'" He passed away in 1277.

He always reminded his disciples: "Whenever we do anything in our daily life, we always set ourselves a goal which gives to our activities. In meditation practices, we also set goals for our cultivation, but we do not greed for the results and forget we are Buddhists. In meditation practices, there are three stand-out goals for any Buddhist; they are: precepts, concentration, and wisdom. "Disciplines-Meditation-Wisdom" is a threefold training, or three studies or endeavors of the non-outflow, or those who have passionless life and escape from transmigration. If we do not hold the precepts, we can continue to commit offenses and create more karma; lacking trance

power, we will not be able to accomplish cultivation of the Way; and as a result, we will not only have no wisdom, but we also may become more dull. Thus, every Buddhist cultivator (practitioner) must have these three non-outflow studies. Discipline wards off bodily evil, meditation calms mental disturbance, and wisdom gets rid of delusion and proves the truth. Without purity of conduct there will be no calm equipoise of thought; without the calm equipoise of thought there will be no completion of insight. The completion of insight (prajna) means the perfection of intellect and wisdom, i.e., perfect enlightenment. It is the result of self-creation and the ideal of the self-creating life. Obviously, all these three are needed for any Buddhist. But after the Buddha, as time went on, the Triple Discipline was split into three individual items of study. The observers of the rules of morality became teachers of the Vinaya; the yogins of meditation were absorbed in various samadhis and became Zen Masters; those who pursued Prajna became philosophers or dialecticians. In short, you all become monks and nuns because you are tired of birth and death; leaving parents, wives and husbands and children. You depart home to seek the Way and revere the Buddha as the holy teacher. You follow the shortcut path of Buddhas by taking teachings from the sutras. Nevertheless, sutras teach only the three studies of discipline, concentration and wisdom. The Commentary on Liberation says: ‘The practice of discipline, concentration and wisdom is called the Way of Liberation.’ Discipline means to abide in noble postures; concentration means to be undisturbed; wisdom means to be enlightened.”

In the ‘Universal Encouragement of Awake the Thought of Enlightenment’, he taught: “Some people enjoy eating and drinking, and waste their life away. Some practice the Way incorrectly, and cannot attain enlightenment. They don’t know that in everyone the Bodhi Mind is already perfect, and the virtuous Prajna is already complete. Despite being a small hermit or a great hermit ; a lay person or a monk, you will attain enlightenment if you realize the original mind. That mind is originally not male nor female, so you do not need to cling to the appearance. Those who do not understand falsely turn into three teachings; those who already understand know that they have realized the same one mind: constantly reflecting inwardly will all see the self-nature and become buddhas.”

As a matter of fact, the original mind is the source of all phenomena, the mind which is in all things. This is the primal mind behind all things. Self-nature is self-knowledge; it is not mere being but knowing. We can say that because of knowing itself, it is; knowing as being, and being is knowing. This is the meaning of the statement made by Hui-Neng that: “In original nature itself, there is Prajna knowledge, and because of this self-knowledge. Nature reflects itself in itself, which is self-illumination not to be expressed in words. Zen practitioners should see this clearly, so that we don’t dream or think unpractically. Let’s turn inwardly to reflect and to practice ourselves.

### ***5. Zen Master Tran Thanh Tong (1240-1290)***

King Tran Thanh Tong was born in 1240 A.D., son of the first King of the Tran Dynasty, King Trần Thái Tông. He studied Zen with Zen Master Đại Đăng, who was the National Teacher under his father. King Thánh Tông penetrated the essence of Zen doctrine and enlightened while he was still a king. He needed not travel to a remote area on a mountain or in the jungle to practice Zen. In the King’s Book of Records, he said: “After thirty years of breaking tiles and drilling tortoise, being perspired for many instance of Zen practicing; once penetrated and realized the original face, the two nostrils in the past suddenly lost one.” Through this, we see that the king as well as some other Zen practitioners in the past, had tried all possible ways including breaking tiles and drilling turtle shells in order to seek the Buddha nature. However, after the penetration of the Way, only one nostril was left. Regarding the meditation, King Thanh Tông said in his King’s Book of Records: “The manifestation of the true mind is always calm and quiet. It is not going or coming; not increasing or diminishing. It fits everywhere no matter how large or small. It satisfies everyone, friend or foe. It might move on as fast as a piece of cloud, or stand still as solid as a wall. It can be as light as a feather, or as heavy as a chunk of rock. It may display itself completely, or conceal itself without leaving a trace. To the king, apparently, the practice of meditation does not interfere with any activities in daily life. To the contrary, it helps people accomplish their duties and fulfill their lives in a much better way.



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***Part Five***  
***Appendices***  
***(Phần Năm: Phụ Lục)***





## ***Appendix A***

### ***Teachings & Faith of Taoism At A Glance***

Thirty nine years before the Buddha's Birthday, in China, Lao-Tzu was born. Lao-Tzu himself established a philosophy of leading a peaceful and happy life which later people called Taoism. Though Lao-Tzu is commonly regarded as one of China's greatest sages, little is known about his actual life. He is said to have been born in about 604 B.C. and to be the author of the Tao-Teh-Ching (The way and Its Power), which is the bible of Taoism, as the religion which grew up around the above mentioned book. The Tao has been defined as the ground of all existence, or as the power of the universe. Taoism, a Chinese religion founded by Lao Tzu several thousand years ago. This religion based on Tao or way of nature. Taoist practitioners traditionally strive for immortality, which in Buddhism is a classic example of deluded attachment to the body and the mind.



## ***Appendix B***

### ***Teachings & Faith of Confucianism At A Glance***

Seven years after the Buddha's Birthday, in China, Confucius was born. Confucius himself founded an educational system which later people called Confucianism. Confucianism is the system of morality growing out of the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Confucius, which stressed on filiality, respect for the elderly, loyalty, propriety, faith, justice, decency and shame. In other words, Confucius taught people to practice love and respect toward their parents and to be loyal to King. Nowadays, Confucius' teachings remain some are still concordant, but a lot of them have been outdated and are no longer concordant with nowadays societies, for instance, love and respect toward their parents and the elders will forever be concordant with any kind of societies, but obeying parents in the manner of "When a son is ordered to die by his father but refuses to do so, he is an unfilial son" is no longer acceptable. Besides, being blindly loyal to kings or dictators with the concept of "If an official is ordered to die by the King, but refuses to do so, he is a disloyal official" is no longer concordant with today civilized societies with freedom, democracy, and human rights. According to Confucianism, even in the same family, there still exists the concept of discrimination between male and female: "One Boy means everything, while ten Girls means nothing. That's to say with just one son, a man can surely claim to have posterity, while with ten daughters, he is still without descendants. In addition, the concept of Confucius' teaching of "The Husband orders and the Wife follows these orders" is no longer concordant with modern societies. According to Confucius' teachings, a woman must always follow these rules: "A woman must obey her father when she is living at home; she must follow her husband after she gets married; after her husband's death, she must follow her oldest son," and so on. In short, some basic Confucius' teachings from families to societies can be called the three net-ropes (the duties of officials to their kings, the duties of children to their father, and the duties of a wife to her husband) and the five

constant virtues (benevolence, righteousness, propriety, knowledge, and sincerity). In my humble opinion, the five constant virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, knowledge, and sincerity, may still be needed in any good society. On the contrary, the teachings on the three net-ropes can never be acceptable in nowadays societies. And there are still many similar issues, but in the limitation of this chapter, we can only raise some typically basic teachings.

Confucius (557-479) was born in the state of Lu. He lived in the time when the moral and cultural tradition of Chou were in rapid decline. In attempting to uphold the Chou culture, he taught poetry, history, ceremonies and music to about 3,000 disciples. He was the first Chinese Great Educator that Chinese people still give him the title “Master of Ten Thousand Years.” However, Confucianism and Buddhism are totally different. Confucianism emphasizes on the ideas of family and society. Confucianism emphasizes on teaching children to grow up, to get married, to bear children and grandchildren, to continue the family line, to be a productive member in society. In contrast, Buddhism is founded on the essence of ‘abandoning worldly ways,’ to leave home, to detach from family, parents, wife, husband, children, relatives, friends, etc. Therefore, Confucian scholars considered Buddhism as wicked and false teachings. That was why when Buddhism was first introduced into China, it was strongly opposed by Confucian scholars.

## *Appendix C*

### *Teachings & Faith of Catholicism At A Glance*

Around 563 years after the Buddha's Birthday, in Israel, Jesus Christ was born. Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity and regarded by Christians as the son of God, reformed an old Hebrew religion according to which God is the only creator of the universe and sentient beings. From the Old and New Testaments, it is said that the universe at the start was a dark and immense expanse. God with His supernatural powers and magic created within seven days the sun, moon, stars, earth, water, mountains, vegetation, man, and animals. On the seventh day of creation, God breathed into the dust of the earth to create Adam. He also created Eve by breathing into some dust mixed with the rib of Adam. They were told to dwell in the Garden of Eden as husband and wife. But after they had eaten the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, they were evicted from the Garden and condemned to live on earth as originators of mankind. From that time, mankind had to suffer from the original sin. In short, the doctrines of Catholicism include absolute faith in God, not to commit wrongs, devoutly practice all kinds of good, and always respect, venerate and obey God. According to the Catholic doctrine, whoever knows how to respect, venerate and obey God will be saved to live happily in Heaven forever; those who do not will be banished into Hell.



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