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The formation and development of the TRUC lam meditation sect in Vietnam and its prominent thoughts

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Abstract

This study mainly focused on founding and development of Truc Lam (Bamboo Forest) meditation sect of the Tran Dynasty in Vietnam. It was formed with combination of three Zen schools and later absorbed the indigenous beliefs also. The great Zen masters came forward to form this Zen school with great support of royalties in Dynasties around 12th century AD. The Truc Lam meditation sect is a popular place for meditation studies which is based on Zen teachings. Zen masters have been working hard for centuries to promote Buddhism in Vietnam. This research chiefly concerned its influence in administration, education and dedication of building an ethical society. Further revealed that the role of Truc Lam meditation sect is to protect and spread the Zen Buddhism in the history of Vietnam. Moreover, the contribution of Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism are also discussed to reveal the religious harmony in the period of Tran Dynasty. Finally, emphasized the involvement of Zen Masters of Truc Lam meditation sect to implant the deep Buddhist concepts to promote the livelihood of Dai Viet people.

Keyword: Truc Lam meditation sect, Tran dynasty, Zen Buddhism, Zen Masters

Introduction

Zen Buddhism is said to be a latter development of Mahayana Buddhism, especially in Tantric Buddhism. It is introduced as an esoteric Buddhism which was transmitted from southern and central India to the East Asian countries, it was primarily seen in China. This new intensification made a major change in the Buddhist history as well as in the Chinese Buddhism. The transmission of Zen Buddhism to Vietnam might be happened from China because Vietnam is the back of the Indo-Chinese peninsula, the location of this peninsula lies between India and China and therefore, Vietnam was being influenced by Chinese religion and culture. It is witnessed that one person called Khuong Tang Hoi who laid the foundation in propagating Zen Buddhism in Vietnam and he continued introducing Zen Buddhism in various regions of country.

Generally, Zen Buddhist teachings were strike rooted in the Vietnam soil intermingling them with indigenous beliefs and then it became a form of Buddhist teaching with a Vietnamese cultural style. However, meditation methods in Zen Buddhism were purely leading to enlightenment and attaining to supreme bliss of Nirvana, further, it directly points out that the human mind to enable people to search their true nature and become Buddha. As a result of wide spreading of Zen Buddhism, there seemed a need of teaching center of Zen Buddhism in Vietnam. In this respect, the Truc Lam meditation sect was arisen in the twelfth century AD. (also known as Truc Lam Zen, Truc Lam Yen Tu, Tran Dynasty Zen), Vietnam at that time called Dai Viet. Vo Ngon Thong, Thao Duong and some ethnic beliefs. Truc Lam's monastic activities have made an important contribution in creating the synergy of the great unity of the whole people, solving the tasks of the times, moving the country forward, firmly defending the independence of the people Dai Viet's autonomy.

Zen Buddhism is basically the meditative tradition which is enriched with the esoteric views. But Zen did not introduce any innovations into the early Buddhism and its practice was helpful to improve the original face of Buddhism. Zen teaching indeed initiated a new look in Vietnam culture and influenced the shapes of the various strata of the society. The number of devotees who studied Zen Buddhism gradually increased over the generation and the peak time of spreading Zen Buddhism was said to be the period of the Tran Dynasty. Meditation-Pure Land-Mantra, are the same, which have brought meditation to positive applications in life,

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entered the world, achieved to higher level and generated practical effects. Meditation methods of Truc Lam sect based on the characteristics and features of Zen Buddhism.

Zen studies in the Tran Dynasty became one of the major streams of Vietnam thought and received many sources of sects and different practices in the spirit of harmony and coherence; advocates to purify one's mind. Zen Buddhism led and guided Vietnam society to practice selflessness, altruism, freedom, courage, indifference, equality, etc. created the Dai Viet model of the Tran dynasty who adopted Buddhism as the national religion. And fusion is the distinctive feature of Vietnamese Buddhism.

1. The establishment and development of Truc Lam meditation sect as a Zen school under the Tran Dynasty

It is recorded that there were several Zen schools prior to arise of Truc Lam meditation sect and latterly, Truc Lam meditation sect was founded on the basis of those earlier Zen schools. Vinitaruci Zen school, Vo Ngon Thong Zen school and Thao Duong Zen school were said to be leading Zen schools prevailing at that time and therefore, Truc Lam sect was formed to flourish the Zen Buddhism further under the Tran Dynasty.

1.1. The initiation and development of Truc Lam meditation studies in the Buddhist history of Vietnam

The founder of Truc Lam sect is Master Tran Nhan Tong who followed his predecessors such as Zen Master Thuong Chieu who marked the transition of Buddhism between the Ly and Tran Dynasties. Accordingly, he is a forerunner who laid the foundation for the unification of Buddhism. King Tran Nhan Tong brought Dai Viet Buddhist sects into one school which led to establish Truc Lam Yen Tu meditation sect. Tran Nhan Tong called himself Truc Lam, so this school has the same name, Truc Lam and Master Hien Quang also did a great contribution to found the Yen Tu sect. Thereafter, great masters such as the National Master Dao Vien (Vien Chung, National Master Truc Lam), National Master Dai Dang, Zen Master Tieu Dao (Phuc Duong), Tue Trung Thuong Si, Tran Nhan Tong who involved in unification of Vietnam Buddhism.

Particularly, the role of Tue Trung Thuong Si in the Tran Dynasty is very significant in representing liberal thinking which is inherited by the spirit of Zen Buddhism. Those masters were not only specialized in performing religious teachings but they unified and made strengthen the Vietnamese community and therefore Tran Dynasty was able to defeat the Nguyen Mong three times in the Vietnam history. Phap Loa, the second Partiarich was granted the rank of Sangha by King Tran Anh Tong first time in the history. At the same time, Partiarich Phap Loa was able to congregate about fifteen thousand monks and nuns into Sangha community showing his efficient management. As for the relatively more learned and mighty kings like Tran Thai Tong, Tran Nhan Tong received ordination and in the year of 1293, King Tran Nhan Tong retired from the throne and became a monk in Vu Lam village temple, Gia Khanh district (Ninh Binh). Later, he returned to Thien Truong and opened a Dharma assembly at Pho Minh pagoda to propagate the Dharma by making Buddhism more and more popular in the world. The turning point of his mission was founding the Truc Lam Yen Tu meditation lineage with the unification of the three Zen sects successfully in 1298 (Vinaturuci, Vo Ngon Thong, Thao Duong), "establishing a unified Buddhist Sangha: Buddhism of the One Sect" [2013, 9] [29].

The first Zen Masters Tran Thai Tong, Tue Trung Thuong Si, and Tran Thanh Tong who contributed to build the Truc Lam Zen sect. Afterwards, there was an eminent lineage of Zen Masters based on Truc Lam Zen sect in Vietnam Buddhist history, including 1. Hien Quang is the first Patriarch in Truc Lam; 2. National Master Vien Chung; 3. Great Master Dai Dang; 4. Tieu Dao as the Fourth Patriarch (He is not Chinese, but in the preface of Zen Master Hue Nguyen, he is Chinese, which is wrong); 5. Hue Tue Patriarch; 6. Nhan Tong Patriarch (First Patriarch Truc Lam); 7. Phap Loa Patriarch; 8. Huyen Quang Patriarch; 9. An Tam National Master; 10. Phu Van (i.e. Tinh Lu National Master); 11. Vo Truoc National Master; 12. Quoc Nhat National Master; 13. Vien Minh Patriarch; 14. Dao Hue Patriarch; 15. Vien Ngo Patriarch; 16. Tong Tri Patriarch; 17. Khue Tham National Master; 18. Son Dang National Master; 19. Huong Son Great Master; 20. Tri Dung National Master; 21. Tue Quang Patriarch; 22. Chan Tru Patriarch; 23. Master Vo Phien, 24. Zen Master Phuc Dien (19th century). Truc Lam Zen schools had been encompassed with complex of Yen Tu scenic spots, Vu Lam palace, Con Son pagoda, Yen Tu pagoda, Quynh Lam pagoda, Ba Vang pagoda, Vinh Nghiem pagoda in Bac Giang, Pho Da Pagoda during the medieval period. In addition, the training centers affiliated to the Truc Lam Zen sect were founded by Venerable Thanh Tu, They are Truc Lam Yen Tu Zen Monastery, Truc Lam Bach Ma Zen Monastery, Truc Lam Giac Tam Zen Monastery, and Truc Lam Phuong Hoang Zen Monastery, Truc Lam Tay Thien, Truc Lam Chanh Giac, Truc Lam Phuong Nam, Truc Lam Dalat, Truc Lam Sung Phuc, Truc Lam Ham Rong, Truc Lam Tue Duc, Truc Lam Tue Quang Zen Monastery, Truc Lam Chinh Phap Zen Monastery, Truc Lam Ho Quoc Zen Monastery, Truc Lam Tra Vinh Zen Monastery, Truc Lam Nam Thien Zen Monastery, Truc Lam Ca Mau Zen Monastery, Truc Lam Tu Quang Zen Monastery, Truc Lam Dai Dang Zen Monastery, Truc Lam Tri Duc Zen Monastery. Those centers that placed outstanding studying of Zen teachings, enhancing the glory of Zen Buddhism in Vietnam.

Truc Lam meditation sect is still continuing its missionary movement in promoting the Zen practice throughout the Vietnam Buddhist community and brings stability and development into the society. On the other hand, Truc Lam meditation sect made a new interest in practicing Zen thought in the Vietnam society and its influence caused to change the thinking pattern of the community.

1.2 The introduction of Buddhism to Vietnam and the role of Tran Dynasty in promoting the Buddhism

Buddhism has been introduced to Vietnam in the first century AD and it is said to be happened through the Indian merchants who helped Buddhist monks to travel with them to spread Buddhism Southeast countries. Professor Le Manh mentioned That Indian Zen Masters brought Buddhism to Vietnam at first. It is interesting to mention that some Buddhist concepts were integrated with indigenous beliefs and made a distinct culture in Vietnam. On the one hand this combination was able to make Buddhism firmly established on the ground of Vietnam and on the other hand, the intelligentsia who were interested in Zen also gradually came to accept the Buddhist way of thinking. In this context, Giao Chau was the main center in teaching and spreading the Buddhist views, it is like a place of Pengcheng and Luoyang in China. Giao Chau was a cultural, economic, political and religious center at that time.

In the period of the 4th and 5th centuries, Vietnamese Buddhism was strongly influenced by Chinese Buddhism, early in the 6th century AD, thought of Zen consistently combined with Tantric Buddhism with the support of Vinaciruci lineage. Buddhism spread very quickly in Vietnam society integrating with ancient traditions of the country. Moreover, the Buddhist teachings made people unite in order to fight against invasions from the outside of the country. The victory of Ngo Quyen on Bach Dang in 939 AD a significant and tremendous turning-point in the history of the nation under the Dinh, Le and Ly-Tran Dynasties.

Zen Buddhism does not focus on clinging to the words of the scriptures but directing the mind, seeing the nature of becoming a Buddha. Chinese Zen Buddhism really flourished for almost two centuries, meantime Bodhidharma arrived to China. Through five generations of Patriarchs, until the sixth patriarch, Hui Neng (638-713), Zen Buddhism really became one of the most powerful schools of Chinese Buddhism. With the relation of the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng in the land of Tao Khe, Zen Buddhism spread throughout the country and caused to develop five schools: Lin Te, Guiyang, Cao Dong, Yunmen and Phap Nhan. Great Zen Master Tran Thai Tong extended his Buddhist missionary movement efficiently under Tran Dynasty and his harmonious manner made him to deal with Confucianism and Taoism peacefully. These three religions became three pillars of the Vietnam culture which made the greatest contribution and have been the greatest influence on Vietnam civilization for centuries.

The certain features of Buddhism were mixed with local beliefs and built a new form of living pattern in Vietnam community, basically, its achievements were numerous appeared in politics, in economics, in national security, in literature, in social organizations and even in the art of living in the Vietnam people. Indeed, the impressions of Zen Buddhism were seen in every facet of Vietnam culture especially in 7th and 14th centuries. The landmark work was done during the time of King Anh Tong, a great Zen Master named Phap Loa who printed the Buddhist canon including scriptures such as : Đại Nam Thiên Uyển Truyền Đăng Lục, Liệt Tổ Truyện, Nam Minh Thiên Lục, Thánh Đăng Thực Lục, Liệt Tổ Yếu Ngữ, Kế Đăng Lục, Tam Tổ Thực Lục, Tam Tổ Hành Trạng, Nam Tông Tự Pháp Đồ, etc. It was an excellent literary work done by an eminent monk for the development of Zen Buddhism.

“The Tran Dynasty, is the era of national reunification and community renaissance, the renaissance of the nation's traditional cultural values for the development of the country, and the era of tolerance, peace, and humanity, open and democratic” [1997, p.9]. After the end the Tran Dynasty, the Ho Dynasty (1400-1407) came into power in the meantime the Ming invaders (1414-1427) invaded the country, confiscated sacred books, Buddhist scriptures, and burned Buddhist temples, the fate of Buddhism was very bad and not glorious as in previous periods.

Vietnam people had to face much hardships during the Ngo, Dinh, Tien Le, Ly, Tran, and Ho Dynasties, they all were engaged in warfare to defeat invaders. The great Zen masters did their duty against the enemies by gathering people, advising and encouraging them unto victory. King Tran Nhan Tong was greatly prompted by his father and Tue Trung Thuong Si during his reign. Then Zen school of Truc Lam Yen Tu bestowed to Zen Master Huong Hai (18th century). However, more evidences about great Zen masters are very difficult to find and their very few works have been found in some documents.

Buddhism became the national religion in the Tran Dynasty and its influence was seen in every corner of Vietnam society, it had extended towards the Nguyen Dynasty in the Southern land. The glorious phase of Buddhism is said to be in the time of the Tran Dynasty, on the basis of Zen Buddhism, the glory and prosper of the country continued until the French colonized Vietnam. There has been spreading western culture gradually and under the impact of new movements of times, the fate of Buddhism was greatly pressured. Latter, Japanese were occupied in the country and Vietnamese had to engage in war continuously. From this point on, Buddhism lost much its original energy and was unable to recover for long time. It is found that more valuable Buddhist documents and historical documents of Vietnam have been taken away by French and Japan invaders to their countries. Therefore, Vietnam lost an important and historical literary works of Zen Masters which have been protected by Vietnam people for centuries. Nevertheless, Zen Buddhism has already restored its prestige currently throughout the country and reached many achievements nationally and internationally.

2. Outlines of Zen thought of Truc Lam Meditation Sect

“The Zen teaching was a separate transmission outside the scriptural teachings that did not posit any written texts as sacred; Zen pointed directly to human mind to enable people to see their real nature and become Buddha” [2003: 92p.]. Thus, Truc Lam meditation sect generally absorbed the above core essence of Zen Buddhism in spreading Dharma in Vietnam. Moreover, Truc Lam meditation sect was a descendant of former sects of Zen Buddhism and Zen schools. “Buddhism in Vietnam is emphasized in inclusion. If the original Buddhism advocated living asceticism, alienating the world, abstaining from desire, then in Vietnam, that thought was still upheld, but for some people, especially with Truc Lam sect, practice does not mean to be far away from the worldly things but still care about the national destiny and the community's death. The thought of Truc Lam meditation is independent, less influenced by primitive Buddhism as well as some sects from China” [2003, 33114]. Zen Buddhism always reiterates the highest philosophical advancement which should be acquired through practicing meditation such as Buddha in the mind, equality, cognizance of nature, discernment of mind, non-attachment to signs, harmonious life style.

2.1 The distinctions of Truc Lam Meditation sect on the basis of Zen Buddhism

The Truc Lam Zen School is reflecting that there is no distinction between Sangha, male and female and practicing meditation is not a gender base activity according to the spirit of Zen Buddhism. In fact, it emphasizes that the discernment of mind is an essential part of practicing meditation. Zen Buddhism under Tran dynasty did not giving priority to chanting or recitation, but concerned the importance of opening up the wisdom of human beings, emphasizing the ability of each person to become a Buddha in very life, not to seek Buddha outside. This spirit of Zen Buddhism helps people to believe on their own strength, to follow a happy life. The Tam Ban theory based on Lotus sutra which was applied and unified by Zen Master Ngo An, it is the full enlightenment sutra in Dai Viet society, creating the value of compassion and wisdom. Similarly, find answers to the questions of what is Buddha, what is Dharma, and what is Zen?

“The unsurpassed Dharma King is in the Buddha's body, in the Dharma's mouth, in the Zen mind. It means that the Supreme Dharma King is Buddha in body, Dharma in mouth, Zen in mind. Although they are three boards, they all refer to one term, just like the water of three river tributaries, depending on the locality, but the nature of the water is one” [2008, 377]. Zen master Ngo An said that the Buddha-Dharma and Meditation symbolized body, speech and mind, this theory was applied flexibly and dynamically, making people's hearts and minds conquered. According to Nguyen Cong Ly: “It can be considered that Ngo An's Tam Ban theory is a complete and unique “unified practice” policy of Ly-Tran meditation studies, because it has shown the idea of absolute balance and originality of the nation who wanted to reconcile the contradictions at that time. On the one hand, it is the tendency to transcend the demands of individual freedom, on the other hand, it indicates the tendency to enter the world according to the demands of the organizational life of a people that has just been revived” [2008, 379].

The Zen masters of the Tran Dynasty, who relied on the scriptures to teach sentient beings, but strongly advocated non-attachment, abstaining from using texts, and abstaining from verbal acts. In this context, mainly used the Pragjna Paramita sutra which is available in Mahayana. It is obvious that the Zen Buddhism and its teachings were widely abided in the period of Tran Dynasty. “Bhikkhus, you should know that I say Dharma like an enticing raft, the Dharma must be abandoned, let alone the troubled Dharma” [2003, 170].

The Zen masters of the Tran dynasty, in spite of being aware of the body as impermanent, temporary, made up of the four elements and the five aggregates, knew how to make use of this temporary false body to practice and bring happiness to themselves and others, turning mortals into saints; Therefore, Zen studies in the Tran Dynasty did not turn their backs on life, and did not immerse themselves in the “five desires”. Buddhism is not separated from the world, it is the reality of the world., Tran Thai Tong said by capturing the essence of meditation in the course of the sage: “Phew! the usages, the dynamic and the static, all are intricate issues in which be mindful in speaking, silence, and movement thought in Buddhism, eating, sleeping, and waking and even defecation is to be mindful” [2003, 370].

The thoughts of Master Phu Van (Vien Chung) made to enlighten the period of Tran Dynasty completely. “This is the first time that the Buddha's view of the mind has been specifically stated in the Vietnamese mind” [2013, 106]. The national Masters expounded thoughts that are depicted in texts. “The quietness of mind is the true name of the Buddha” [1982, 27.] “Our body dedicated to Buddha, there are no two bodies and two marks” (“Reciting the Buddha's Commentary”-Tran Thai Tong) [1982, 84]. “Buddha is at home, no need to look far away, people stir the village, so we look for the Buddha, go to refuge the Buddha, he is in me” (“Cu Tran Lac Dao”-First Patriarch Tran Nhan Tong) [1982, 506]. “The middle-age family protects the deep silence, meditates the mindfulness” treasures available in the house no need to search out side, it is your mind and do meditation” (“Cu Tran Lac Dao”-First Patriarch Tran Nhan Tong) [1982, 510]. “Buddhist learners need to see the nature first” [1982, 663-665]. Sometimes they used similes to expound the Buddhist teachings. “The cup is counted, afraid to spend a long time in the water, one should become real Buddha” [1982, 712]. “Regardless of living in the world or hiding in the forest, not knowing whether to leave home or stay at home, only for the sake of discernment” [1982, 62-65].

And he further explains that all Dharma are depending on the level of empty, that the Buddha and all living beings have no distinction, and then thoughts arise in one's mind that: “My body is the Buddha's body, there are no two signs”. With the same thought, stated by Tue Trung also “When I am ignored I do not know I am in Buddha”, Tran Nhan Tong said that “Buddha is in the house”. Zen masters of the world consider samsara as taking off one's shirt, movement and stillness as one, worldly and mundane interdependence like lotus flowers in mud. The works of First Patriarch Tran Nhan Tong clearly shows the style and spirit of Truc Lam Zen: “Whenever I'm hungry, I immediately sleep when I'm hungry, I have pearls at home, and I stop searching and be quiet in the face of Zen” [2003, 167].

Truc Lam meditation sect breaks down attachment towards signs, rationality, and advocates that all Buddhists need to be in harmony with the Dharma, be happy with their position and good life is beautiful, secular and spiritual life are blended in the knowing nature, there is no magical existence. It is worth to mention that the influence of Zen Buddhism and the sense of duty of Truc Lam sect made to enlighten kings in the Tran Dynasty. “King Tran Nhan Tong was enlightened at his supreme leadership, amidst the chaos of worries and dealing with the war in 1287 waged by Phat Tat Liet and especially at the time when the mother of king Tran Nhan Tong died” [1982, 648]. The king was free from suffering and bound to practice the path of the Buddha, this meaning has portrayed Phap Loa in his verse, named “Passing Away”:

“A leisurely body ends all charms
More than forty years of miracles
Telling people not to ask questions
The other side of the moon and wind is boundless” [1997, 204].

The life force of Zen has been inherited by the Truc Lam school and continues it with developing up to present. The Truc Lam Schools were able to implant the principles of Zen Buddhism in Vietnam society, made people acknowledge promoting the Buddha nature, equanimity, mental readiness of enlightenment in this very life instead of seeking the Buddha nature outside or wondering on mountains. First Patriarch Tran Nhan Tong has introduced good principles that are to adhered in one's life; they are, to be followed a happy life by practicing meditation; depending on the conditions, depending on the root, depending on the time and live with the Dharma [1994, 90-91].

The Truc Lam meditation sect was the chief foundation in transmission of the Zen Buddhism in Vietnam never declined. In reality, the honor of cultivating realization of Zen Buddhism throughout the Vietnam history must be assigned to the Truc Lam sect and on the other hand, must be credited to the Tran Dynasty who gave the fullest support to success the Truc Lam mission.

2.2 Thoughts of depending on conditions, the nature of perfections and entering to the world

The Buddha has taught Dharma from direct knowledge, for purification of beings, for surmounting sorrow and lamentation, for ending pain and grief, for attainment of the true goal, for realizing supreme bliss of Nirvana. In this context, the three main concepts of Buddhism named, understanding of depending on conditions, practicing perfections and entering to the world are essential to be

followed. The causation, practicing perfections and entering to the world are the main concepts in Zen Buddhism. The Mahayana conceives the cause of this cyclic manifestation to be the presence of ignorance or non-awareness, the suggestion being that manifestation is the means whereby the elite one becomes more and more aware of itself. According to the Lankavatara Sutra, There is no Nirvana where is Samsara; there is no Samsara except where is Nirvana; for the condition of existence is not of a mutually-exclusive character. Therefore, everything is conditioned, relative and interdependent and the existence or continuity of life and its cessation is also based on conditioned genesis. The monastic is highly appreciated self-cultivation and saving sentient beings: "As a monastic, one takes one step over the high and wide horizon, his mentality and his appearance is different from the worldly people, making the holy way, conquering the desire, and cessation of suffering and attain enlightenment" [1970, 32]. Many Zen masters who endowed with the absolute wisdom under the Tran Dynasty and understood the noble truth. They adhered the right teachings in the spirit of wisdom, compassion, and selflessness which made them to achieve high efficiency in both religious practice as well as in world affairs, as mentioned that the Buddhism does not serve for the enlightenment only. Apart from spiritual attainments, the Zen studies of the Truc Lam meditation sect under the Tran Dynasty were therefore closely associated with politics, culture, and society. I sit in the city but habit in the mountain forest.

"All occupations are peaceful,
Easy and carefree in true nature
Half a day in self-esteem of mind and body
We understand that life is the city,
The religion is the mountain forest" [1998, 58].

Perfections are unique practice in Buddhism, it shows that to work for all rather than for oneself and its welfare work is symbolized by the character of Bodhisattva. It is obvious that the Zen masters of the Tran Dynasty who practiced perfections and served the country showing the Bodhisattva ideal thought in Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. According to the Great Dictionaries of the Buddha Light, Bodhisattvas, along with Shravakas and Pratyeka Buddhas, are collectively known as the Three Vehicles. The concept of a bodhisattva has been conceived in ancient Indian society, especially in Pali canon and the Jataka stories are the lives of Bodhisattva who was finally born as Shakyamuni Buddha. The Bodhisattva endeavored for Bodhi, universal wisdom, He is charming, gentle and compassionating towards living being, made every effort for the duties of his high calling and his thoughts are full of pure and serene. "The bodhisattva is for those who cultivate on the bridge of Unsurpassed Bodhi with wisdom, serves for sentient beings with compassion, practice the perfections, and in the future will attain Buddhahood. It is also the person who courageously seeks Bodhi and fulfills both his own and others' interests" [1999, 667].

Theravada Buddhism has been manifested ten perfections that are to be followed by Bodhisattva such as generosity, morality, renunciation, wisdom, diligence, forbearance, sincerity, determination, loving-kindness and equanimity. Bodhisattva has been accumulating merits for many eons by practicing the above ten perfections not just in one lifetime, a hundred, or a thousand lifetimes. Similarly, Mahayana Buddhism also instructed to practice of splendid virtues, the

six perfections, which are giving, morality, patience, energy, meditation and supreme wisdom.

In particular, Zen Masters of Truc Lam sect are engaged in perfections to benefit the community throughout the history. However, they did not fulfill worldly responsibilities and they first practiced to gain spiritual advancement and secondly carried out welfare activities. It is obvious that the Bodhisattva doctrine is a magnificent teaching in the Buddhism which produced an ideal character who is full of higher qualities acquired by great effort in practicing perfections.

Entering the world, according to the definition of the Vietnamese Great Dictionary, is to shoulder the work of life, not to avoid life. For example, the Confucians entered the world, the monks entered the world [1998, 132]. The spirit of entering the world has existed since Buddhism was introduced to Vietnam, it is evident in the work of "Ly Hoac Luan" of Mau Tu, who introduced the concept of engaged Buddhism. Buddhism in the Tran Dynasty in Vietnam instructed to obtain inner peace as well as cultivating good by entering the world. Therefore, under the guidance of the National Master, Tran Thai Tong who employed in practicing Zen and same time instructed to protect the country.

"That's why the early kings of the Tran Dynasty took the people's will as their own. The country needs to be able to mount an army to fight in battle, to save the people and the country" [1992, 239]. The concept of entering the world is to save others and walking on the path leading to Buddhahood, requires compassion, wisdom, with the readiness of bearing all sufferings of the sentient beings, dedicate merits for others. Zen masters of the Tran dynasty followed this path, self-satisfaction, forgiveness, and actively entered into the world. Thus, the fact that the Zen masters of the Tran Dynasty attained enlightenment. Their series of meritorious deeds, proved that of enlightenment; like the Sixth Patriarch Hui Neng, he was enlightened when he heard a sentence from the Prajna paramita Sutra, "Live with a mind without any attachment", he realized the way even though he is not much literate in this life. The Buddha vehicle is the procedure of the Zen sect, becoming a Buddha right in this life.

Therefore, Tran Thai Tong accepted the advice of the National Master Vien Chung to continue to stay on the throne, not leaving palace while practicing Buddhist values, cultivating virtue and practicing compassion, helping hundreds of people in the commune. Most of the Zen masters are "invariably dependent", engaged in instructing, worshipping, preaching, teaching, directing sentient beings to find their salvation. Buddhism under Tran Dynasty promoted to adhere non-attachment, "entering the world", and advocated people to believe on their ability to become a Buddha, without going up to the mountain. The practicing of Zen does not exist only in the temples, but can do anywhere, possibly on the battlefield against foreign invaders. The view of Zen studies depending on the immutable level, because the truth is never changed and its appearance are united, the active entry into the world has strongly influenced by minds of Dai Viet people, they are ready to sacrifice themselves to serve the country, disregarding life and death, and living meaningfully in the present moment with Dharma and non-attachment.

2.3 Expression of Three Teachings in the sphere of Zen Buddhism

It is evident that the Truc Lam meditation sect was the main center in transmitting Zen thought in the period of Tran

Dynasty. It was able to bring Buddhist teaching into social life of Vietnam and strengthened the spiritual and physical atmosphere in Dai Viet society. In this respect, the former Ly Dynasty has been laid the foundation for Truc Lam meditation sect by providing numerous facilities to spread the Zen Buddhism. Ly Dynasty harmoniously supported to the Zen, Tantra and Pure Land to promote their teachings in the society. Similarly, Truc Lam Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism were commonly accepted by the Tran Dynasty for the wellbeing of Dai Viet people and therefore, Truc Lam Buddhism in the Tran dynasty was colorful, flexible, and became an easily approachable doctrine at that time.

Tran Thai Tong's book showed the doctrinal development of Zen Buddhist scriptures in the Tran Dynasty. It contains the guidance of Zen meditation and basically, practitioner's routines are largely included to practice the mindfulness in the meditation sessions. In addition to the guidance, the concepts of meditation has been expounded in the book, more importantly depicted how to liberate from the eternal suffering by practicing mindfulness and awareness of the momentary of existence. It is worth to mention that some conceptions of Zen meditation have been blended with Confucianism and Daoism teachings and therefore, Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism were harmoniously instigated to dignify the meditation methods in the time of Tran Dynasty.

Tue Trung's poems have clearly demonstrated the features of Life and Death on accordance with Dharma. Tran Nhan Tong in his "Late Spring" also expresses the thought of equality of mind and Dharma (Mindfulness of Dharma in suchness), which integrates the methods of Zen-Pure Land-Mantra, discernment of mind, flexibility:

"Youth is not clear in truth of emptiness,
Spring comes, flowers bloom, heart fluttering.
This spring has become familiar,
The grass mattress sat still, looking at pink" [2003, 376]

King Tran Anh Tong of the Tran Dynasty sent a group of envoys to China to bring the Buddhist canon (Tripitaka) to the country and it was a memorable incident in the Vietnam Buddhist history. Apart from promoting meditation in the Tran Dynasty, infused Buddhist principles into the people minds through the education, in this way Zen Buddhism became an integral part of the life of Dai Viet people and such it has been within living memory. A distinct part of meditation training is to hold onto the concentration in mind and from the concentration that gives birth to wisdom to reach the full enlightenment in this very life. Zen master Phap Loa has mentioned that observing the precepts is the first step to hold the mind motionless, it is important to do it in a moment for a day and then need to disregard the external conditions to reach the realm of leisure, the eye is not contacted with the consciousness outwards, the consciousness is not pulled by the scene, able to feel the freedom of mind.

Abiding the pure precepts is said to be the main strategy to practice meditation with calm and quiet mind and it is not only for novice monks but great monks also. Concentrating the stillness of mind and body is the approach of realizing the nature of the Buddha because everyone has Buddha nature. It helps the practitioner to reach enlightenment. The Diamond Sutra extends that "Necessarily *tu-dala* is like the moon-pointing: all the sutras taught are like a finger pointing to the moon. The finger is the means, the moon is the truth. Is the truth that the Buddha has realized. Self-declaration of the

Dharma is like a hypocrite, the law of the upper reaches to discharge the illegal law: the Dharma is like a raft crossing the river, it should be left behind after crossing over, the dharma is the same not to catch up with, even it is illegal" [2003,173].

Zen masters of the Tran Dynasty used various techniques to convey the message of the Buddha, they worked hard to make understanding ordinary people about Buddhist teachings such as theory of cause and effect, true emptiness, nature-signs, reality of existence and immortal beings. Therefore, ordinary people were able to judge about their mistakes when accepting signs, only those who have attained the path and possessed the authority to talk about the world they have witnessed. The education curriculum had been designed including three religious concepts under the Tran Dynasty. The knowledge of three religions of students was tested in the examination in the end of the course. King Tran Kham (1272 AD) released a command to test the level of knowledge of religious scriptures and further, inquiry the meanings of four books and five classics belong to the three religions.

In the time Ly-Tran Dynasty, kings and princes were also engaged in reading and studying sacred books of three religion and the knowledge of three teachings is said to be a higher qualification to serve the country, Buddhist education is considered to be very important in this regard. It is obvious that the government policy and support to improve the education level in the country was made to give education for all and encourage children to have education in every corner of the country. Master Phap Loa paid special attention to prepare special curriculum including compiling publications, writing chants, commenting, explaining and printing the works of other teachers, such as Thuong Si Ngu Luc of Tran Tung, Thach That Mi Ngu, Tran Nhan Tong's Thien Lam Chuy Ngu Luc. This shows that the kings and eminent monks of the Tran Dynasty were very conscious of entering the world in the spirit of Dharma expanding Buddhist education from the point of the right path and continues it in the present also with adaptation in the country.

Apart from the Confucianism and Daoism, Buddhism played a leading role in regulating the education system in the Tran Dynasty. Similarly, Confucianism made a contribution to build a strong leadership for the nation and these two religious convictions harmoniously combined to build the nation as well as develop the country completing historical requirements. In this respect, role of Truc Lam meditation sect was very significant that made integrate both Confucianism and Daoism to help people to improve their livelihood comprehensively. Because the vision of the Truc Lam meditation sect was able to mix with indigenous Vietnamese faiths pleasantly and regulated the way of thinking in the Dai Viet society from all walks of life and made Buddhism alive everlastingly.

Conclusion

The rising interest and practice of Zen has been greatly influenced in every corner of Vietnam. The Truc Lam Zen meditation sect is still extending its integrity all over Vietnam. The Truc Lam Zen meditation sect is heavily continuing its duty for the entire world. The great meditation sect of Truc Lam in Vietnam has been initiated and developed by eminent Zen Masters such as First Patriarch Tran Nhan Tong, Second Patriarch Phap Loa, Third Patriarch Huyen Quang and so on. Patriarch Tran Nhan Tong who made a great effort to combine all three Zen sectors Vinaturuci, Vo Ngon Thong and Thao Duong, into one in the Tran dynasty. While the

glorious Truc Lam Yen Tu meditation sect imbued with Vietnamese national character and instructed to stay away from the mountains and forests. The First Patriarch applied the Zen method of Buddhism to adapt and promote Dai Viet Buddhism identically. The determination of the First Patriarch was to liberate people to lead the holy life for the complete ending of suffering. And further instructed to cultivate the loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity, non-attachment, and no-self to purify the mind.

It is mentioned that the Truc Lam Zen School has a distinct style that is different from other Zen sects. The kings and Zen Masters of Tran Dynasty possessed a superb intellect and led the country on the basis of Buddhist teachings. Therefore, the Truc Lam sect was bound with Dai Viet people and constantly contributed in assisting people with their activities. Exceptional dignitaries those of kings, mandarins, Zen masters, and intellectuals worked hard to develop the Truc Lam Yen Tu meditation lineage-representing Vietnamese Buddhism and Zen Buddhism in Vietnam. Three religions of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism were inter-related, showed co-existence and unification to build the nation in all the time. In this context, Truc Lam Buddhism under Tran Dynasty created a heroic era bringing Dai Viet towards a comprehensive development in all fields. In the present, Buddhism in Vietnam is being revived and developed, still inheriting the quintessence of Buddhism inherited by the Tran Dynasty, especially with the spirit of harmlessness, compassion, selflessness, and integration.

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