



# Truc Lam Zen School In Vietnam: an Analytical Study of the Way of Practice

**Bui Thi Thu Thuy, Phramaha Somphong Khunakaro, Dr.,**

**Asst. Prof. Dr. Sanu Mahatthanadull**

MA in Buddhist Studies, International Buddhist Studies College

Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.

Corresponding Author Email: hue.tu77@gmail.com



## Abstract

This article aims, in general terms, to conduct a qualitative research and express the essence of Truc Lam Zen teaching, which cuts right to the core of the matter and can only be found by oneself, as the best answer itself is “practice”. One of the key points of Vietnamese Zen Buddhism is intuitive understanding. It leads one to break the ice of ignorance and attain Buddhahood naturally. For the first objective, the author would like to go back and take a deep look at the origin and development of Truc Lam Zen school as to understand its past and present. As a result of this study, it was shown that the Truc Lam Zen school has been offering a spiritual way for earnest meditators to reach the higher realm of welfare and revive the golden period of Vietnamese Zen Buddhism for later generations, thus contributing to the Buddhist foundation, making it more universal and thriving.

**Keywords:** the way of practice, Truc Lam Zen School (TLZS), Vietnam, Zen, Buddhism.

## Introduction

Meditation lies in the heart of Buddhism and plays an important and meaningful role in promoting welfare and peace for all human beings. The true happiness of individual has to begin with one's moral and ethics, and meditation is a significant training to help human beings to attain and harvest the sweet and fragrant fruits of Buddhist practice. Vietnamese meditation covers fundamental factors of Buddhist practice such as sitting, walking and lying meditation, providing comments and suggestions in which both daily activities and divine path can lead to enlightenment.

The culmination of Zen Buddhism in Vietnam was the system and doctrine of TLZS, established by Tran Nhan Tong. It became a quintessence of Buddhism in Vietnam at that time. On the other hand, “the threads of the Prajñāpāramitā, Mādhyamaka and Zen with the Buddha himself were completed, no doubt, by Zen Masters themselves. Such attributions are based on the belief that the basic teachings of the Buddha remained unchanged until the time of Zen.”<sup>1</sup> Reflecting on the hearth of Vietnamese meditation, the author decided to work on a thesis entitled “An Analytical Study of the Way of Practice of TLZS in Vietnam”.

“The Way of Practice of TLZS in Vietnam” lets us understand how the national spirit and traditional treasures of the Vietnamese population were cultivated during the times of war and peace. Both this technique of meditation and the way of perfectly skillful living give a foundation not only to the Vietnamese, but also to people from other countries all around the world, who admired the way of a founder of TLZS for the dedication of his life to the Vietnamese nation and its population. These golden pages of history hopefully will stay alive inside of Vietnam forever. TLZS speaks up for the Vietnamese culture, identity and traditions that later generations have been protecting, glorifying and nurturing to make them more beautiful and meaningful.

---

<sup>1</sup>David J. Kalupahana, *Reflection on the Relation on the Relation between Early Buddhism and Zen in Buddhist Philosophy: A Historical Analysis*, (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1976), p. 165.

## The Origin and Development of the Way of Practice in Truc Lam Zen School

After a thousand years of Chinese domination, Vietnamese religion was directly influenced by the philosophy and tradition of that country. According to the view of Professor Tran Hong Lien, China spread Mahayana Buddhism, which literally means the “Great Vehicle”. In the time of Zen schools under the Ly and Tran dynasties (1009-1400), there had been an opportunity to review Buddhism in Vietnam. The Vietnamese king Tran Nhan Tong was said to achieve the Buddhahood. He was a profound king who founded the TLZS – the first form of Vietnamese Buddhism – by the rational combination of Chinese and Indian teachings.

In general, though *Mahāyāna* Buddhism appeared as a new phase of the religion about the 2nd or 1st century B.C. along with a vast literature on the subject, it may be stated that in the *Nikāyas*, dated about 487 B.C. and compiled from Buddha's discourses at the First Buddhist Council, there are definite traces that *Bhagvān* Buddha had the philosophical outlook of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism at the back of his mind. Prof Keith<sup>2</sup> and later Prof Venkataraman<sup>3</sup> and Bhikkhi Jñānānda<sup>4</sup> have drawn attention to this fact.<sup>5</sup> In particular, Vietnamese Buddhism originally spread from India to Khuong Tang Hoi and included the original *Mahāyāna* meditation, called *Dhyāna* in India. From the 6<sup>th</sup> century on, three Chinese Zen schools (Vinitaruci, Vo Ngon Thong and Thao Duong) were established in Vietnam, flourished and developed to the 12<sup>th</sup>. The doctrine of Vietnamese Zen has in itself the essence of the Nikayas and is able to adapt to the current state of affairs. It lasted long period of time in a gorgeous and perfect condition.

The climax of development of Zen schools in Vietnam was the complete formation and perfect spread of TLZS. Later, when Tran dynasty couldn't keep their position and leadership, TLZS decayed as time went by. The formation of TLZS was based on the essence of previous Zen schools. The process of development of TLZS can be divided into following stages: Vinitaruci school (580 CE to 1213 CE), Vo Ngon Thong Zen School (820

---

<sup>2</sup>Buddhist Philosophy, 1950.

<sup>3</sup>The Central Philosophy of Buddhism (1954)

<sup>4</sup>Concept and Reality (1971)

<sup>5</sup>Nalinaksha Dutt, **Mahāyāna Buddhism**, (India: Shantilal Jain at Shri Jainendra Press, 1978), p.71.

CE to 1291 CE), Thao Duong Zen School (1069 CE to 1210 CE) and then the complete formation and development of TLZS.

During more than 700 years of decoration of buildings and physical protection of Vietnam, the TLZS had gone into the spirit of daily life: conducting a honored religious life and fulfilling a citizen's responsibility for the welfare of Vietnam in particular and promoting the spirit of non-violence towards the world in general. Cultural researcher Nguyen Huu Son says: "Tran Nhan Tong opened the Truc Lam Zen sect based on the knowledge he acquired from his grandfather and father. The sect typifies the essence of harmony between religious and secular lives. Buddhism is connected with the country, the nation, the people and the social life. That's the reason why Tran Nhan Tong's ideal always mentioned a secluded life without isolation from the world". Building and consolidating the ideological system of national independence, he built a new spiritual education system with particular identities of Vietnamese Buddhism. The Tran dynasty lasted for 174 years (1226-1400). The first king of the Tran dynasty, Tran Thai Tong, was an earnestly devout Buddhist, but the last king, Tran Thuan Tong, was a follower of Taoism. King Tran Nhan Tong was the founder of TLZS. According to Truc Lam, the land should be under the instruction of religious core. The shortcomings and disadvantages of the economic and political structure led to the reform of Ho Quy Ly. Many lands belonging to noblemen were seized and many bases of TLZS too. The role and duty of Tran dynasty wasn't clear, so the influence of TLZS declined accordingly and dimmed in the soul of people at that time. Although the Tran dynasty collapsed, the huge ideological system of TLZS will influence the spiritual life of people for a long time.

## **The Way Of Practice Of Truc Lam Zen School**

Needless to say, Buddhism did not escape from any of the evils of monasticism. The original ideal of a monk (*bhikkhu*) was very high; his social function was to act as a 'guide, philosopher and friend to the community'.<sup>6</sup> To adapt to the worldly life and bind together the sentient beings, TLZS rose the vows of Bodhisattva and looked through people's nature in a practical and clear way for building better lives and establishing the Pure Land in this world, without a need to wait for the next life.

---

<sup>6</sup>Alan W. Watts, **The Spirit of Zen**, (NY: Grove Press, 1958), p.83.

## Bodhisattva's Insight into the Worldly Life

It is an obvious connection between the personalities of a Bodhisattva and a Noble Man which can produce Buddhist features according to the tradition of practice in the TLZS. The reason why a Bodhisattva's completion of the six Perfections (*Pāramitās*) is also termed *Golra-bhūmi* is that the aspirant who develops *Bodhicitta* and completes the *Pāramitās* is entitled to take up the course of spiritual progress as indicated in the ten *Bhūmis*, and is therefore qualified to take up the *Adhimukti-caryā*, i.e., complete progress in the ten *Bhūmis*.<sup>7</sup> And Buddhism does not include non-Buddhist knowledge of any kind in turn to embrace and overview its own knowledge. Tran Nhan Tong did insist that “mind-precepts” and “form-precepts” were of an “Adorning Bodhisattva”. “Mind-precepts” or “nature-precepts” is a short form of the phrase “the precepts of Bodhi-mind,” or rather, “the precepts of Bodhisattva,” which are of a general type observed by both monastic and lay Buddhist practitioners. “He refrains from killing, lays aside the cudgel and the sword; full of kindness and compassion, he lives for the welfare and happiness of all living beings.”<sup>8</sup> On the way, during the pre-Bodhisattva stage<sup>9</sup>, a general remark is found very often in the *Prajñāpāramitā* and other Mahāyāna works that a being, who has performed meritorious acts (*avaropitakusa-lamūla*), served many previous Buddhas (pūrvajina-kṛtādhikāra), and had many *kalyāṇamitras* (spiritual guides) is destined to attain the Bodhi.<sup>10</sup> This basic foundation for attaining the Buddhahood goes the same way with the following idea: “in the Buddhist world, the word ‘Buddha’ is often synonymous with compassion and loving kindness. The deeds of a preacher are far more eloquent than his words. There are many incidents in the life of the Buddha that illustrate his gentle nature”.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, in the Lotus Sutra, the pure white lotus rises from the waters of a muddy pond. This image illustrates beautifully the states of a pure and beautiful condition in the midst of the sometimes-worldly life which is full of the dust of lust, anger and illusion. The Bodhisattva never tries to escape from life, never leaves suffering people unsaved and overwhelmed by the impure waters of life, but insists on the effort to help each suffering person to get to a great realm of happiness.

<sup>7</sup>Nalinaksha Dutt, op.cit., p. 83.

<sup>8</sup>Dīgha Nikāya I, 63

<sup>9</sup>Nalinaksha Dutt, op.cit., p. 89.

<sup>10</sup>Mtu, I, p.57.

<sup>11</sup>Susunaga Weeraperuma, **Nirvana, The Happiness, Meditations on Buddhist Issues**, (India: Shri Janinendra Press, 1987), p.8.

What may happen to Buddhism in the world cannot be ignored. Should Buddhism meet with any disaster or menace of destruction, its protection would count for Buddhists' sake as well as for all sentient beings. There are many things in being a Bodhisattva, which are present in the spirit of TLZS and fundamental for every step on practice in Mahayana Buddhism, such as trying to be a Bodhisattva's seed, spreading your compassion and practicing the Ten Meritorious Deeds. In short, the Bodhisattva, in contrast to the Arahant, is the ideal of person in Mahāyāna philosophy. The Bodhisattva is not content with the mere attainment of Nirvana; the Bodhisattva feels that he cannot enter eternal bliss while other beings suffer, because he feels that there is no essential difference between them and himself, and his Nirvana cannot be complete if they do not share it. Because he affirms all life as the self he regards all beings as himself, and for him Nirvana is a vanity and selfishness if there is a single creature still unenlightened. Therefore, he's going through countless lives of painful striving, only to renounce the eternal bliss of Nirvana in order that he may work for the enlightenment of every living thing.<sup>12</sup>

### **Humans are Inseparable from Nature**

Humans and nature refer to the complete pattern of a unit that is typical of our species or our kind. All humans grow up and are subject to the rule of nature; they go hand in hand, if we know how to harness nature, we get more convenience to live and enjoy life. In the practice of TLZS, Zen masters never ignore the way of internal and external world, which symbolize humans and nature.

*The mind is Buddha; Buddha is the mind.  
 That profound meaning shines brightly since endless time.  
 When spring comes, the spring flowers blossom naturally.  
 When autumn comes, the autumn waters reflect the sorrow  
 Removing the false mind while keeping the true nature  
 is like searching for the reflections while missing the mirror.  
 You don't know that reflections come from the mirror,*

---

<sup>12</sup> Alan W.Watts, **Eastern Wisdom: Zen in the West & Meditations**, The Alan Watts Foundation. 2009p.28-29.

*and that the false appear from the truth.*

*That the false comes is neither real nor unreal.*

*That the mirror reflects is neither wrong nor right.<sup>13</sup>*

To live is to be nature, to breathe is to be nature, to eat is to be nature and to take a rest is to be nature. We can contribute to the foundation of happiness naturally without effort. The most important point in this case is the development of a strong and intensive desire to achieve the Buddhahood, but if we can't harmonize and settle up the desire, it will be harmful. Though the desire includes the concept of "ego, I, self", it is natural and in fact useful to develop self-confidence, patience and iron-will: "when one is negligent of insight meditation, once becomes negligent of the Buddha's noble message in total<sup>14</sup>". We need a sense of a strong self and "by refraining from busying ourselves unnecessarily, external frictions will be reduced and the internal tensions they bring will loosen up. Greater harmony and peace will pervade the life of every day, bridging the gap between normal life and the tranquility of meditation."<sup>15</sup>

Tue Trung Thuong Si is the teacher of King Tran Nhan Tong. He praised Tue Trung thus:

*"You stand higher for those who try to look high,*

*Become hardwood for those who try to drill*

*And appear suddenly in front then in rear of those*

*Who try to portray you?*

*That is called as the strong Zen*

*From Tue Trung Thuong Si.<sup>16</sup>*

---

<sup>13</sup> Nguyen Giac (tr), Teachings and Poetry of the Vietnamese Zen Master Tue Trung Thuong Si (1230-1291), Song of Buddha Voice, Email: [nguyengiac@yahoo.com](mailto:nguyengiac@yahoo.com) -- California, 2007), p.12.

<sup>14</sup> Venerable Uda Eriyagama Dhammadīva Maha Thero, (tr) Maha-Si Insight Meditation, (Srilanka: Mitirigala Nissarana Vanaya), [www.vipassana.com](http://www.vipassana.com), p2.

<sup>15</sup> Ven. Nyanaponika Thera, **The Power of Mindfulness**, (Penang: Wheel Publication, 2001), p31.

<sup>16</sup> Giac Nguyen (ed), **The Wisdom Within: Teachings and Poetry of the Vietnamese Zen Master Tue Trung Thuong Si**, (California: Thien Tri Thuc Publications), 2010, p.123.

Each of us have our own stories, wishes, perspectives, beliefs and goals in life; and yet they are also same in a vast amount of higher realm and state. For Buddhists, to seek wisdom and Nirvana is the final point. We always try to look forward and struggle with whole obstacles for more happiness, but once we can let them go, let them be, we can throw ourselves into the realm of freedom of mind, a freedom born of wisdom, available to take refuge in every door of Dharma. According to nature, that is the fastest way and the simplest way for us to attain Nirvana.

### **The Voidness and Buddha Nature**

An ancient Chinese book states: “In making things end, and in making things start, there is nothing more glorious than keeping still.”<sup>17</sup> “Voidness” is a core of Mahayana Buddhism, but its true meaning is often misunderstood. This definition has spread alongside Buddhism all over the world. Through the works of Zen masters in Tran’s Dynasty, it is clearly defined and the practice goes without a wrong understanding of its meaning to confuse it and harm it: “in the remaining verses Upasva does not ask how this meditative practice leads to liberation, but instead questions the Buddha about the condition of the person who has attained the state of ‘nothingness’”.<sup>18</sup> And destroying the belief in self (*aṭṭanuditiṭṭhimūmacca*) refers to an intellectual practice: ‘The giving up of this seeing [belief] was very likely done by judging the constituents of a person as nonpermanent and therefore unsatisfactory and therefore non-self ...’,<sup>19</sup> but there is no evidence to support this claim at

---

<sup>17</sup> Ven. Nyanaponika Thera, op.cit., p.25.

<sup>18</sup> Nakamura, Hajime, A Process of the Origination of Buddhist Meditation in Connection with the Life of the Buddha’. In Studies in Pali And Buddhism (A Homage Volume to the Memory of Bhikkhu Jagdish Kashyap), 1979, p 272. ed. Dr A.K. Narain, pp. 270–77, Delhi: B.R.PUBLISHING CORP., this dialogue states that ‘in the primitive Buddhism, non Buddhist thought was adopted and the state of non-existence was a goal’. But the meditative state of nothingness is certainly not the goal in the dialogue with Posha. Nakamura’s view depends upon taking the compound *saññāvīmokkha* in v. 1071–72 as the goal identical to nothingness. In one place he translates this as ‘emancipation by thought’ (p. 272), but in another place (p. 273) he translates it as ‘deliverance from thought’, a translation that implies that the compound *saññāvīmokkha-* refers to a state different from the meditative state of nothingness. It is hard to take Nakamura’s argument seriously considering these conflicting translations of *saññāvīmokkha-*. See p. 80 n. 34 on Nakamura’s reading of the dialogue with Upasava

<sup>19</sup> Vetter Tilmann, **The Ideas and Meditative Practices of Early Buddhism**, (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1990), p39.

all.<sup>20</sup> Abandoning oneself to the instinctive ego, even the tiniest unwholesome thought was refused by Zen master Tue Trung, in the account that this is enlightenment:

“Buddha is Buddha,” replied Tue Trung. “And I am what I am. I don’t need to be the Buddha. And the Buddha doesn’t need to be me. You probably heard the words from old sages, ‘Manjusri is Manjusri; enlightenment is enlightenment.’<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, we want to practice detachment of prejudice of ego to get voidness, but it is important not to misunderstand that ‘detachment’ means to give up desire and wish. Desire must be there because how can we live our life without desire? If desire doesn’t exist, how can we attain the Buddhahood? We can ride our ship of fate forward the wholesome karma because ‘the idea of mind’ is really a mirage. In our everyday lives we have to use words such as “mind” and ‘I’ as it facilitates communication between people, but philosophically speaking, both ‘mind’ and I’ have no real existence as abiding entities”.<sup>22</sup>

### **Looking into the Buddha Nature in Every Human Being**

Every sentient being, even an insect, has a Buddha nature. The seed of Buddhahood inside of them means consciousness, the cognitive power, the seed that can be cultivated towards the attainment of enlightenment because “the practice is simple and you have the Sangha around you.”<sup>23</sup> For this purpose, all defilements must be removed and cleaned from both the surface and the depths of the mind. As each sentient being has such seed, there’s no reason to believe some sentient being cannot attain Buddhahood.

Sinking into the faith of spiritual and mystical aspects is the practice in TLZS. The paradise is now and here, not in a future world. Then, we can say hello to “Buddhas” who live all around us, because there is the ability to see and accept the seeds of Buddhahood inside of us, and it’s so easy for us to see ourselves inside of others. This is also an essential and long process, the struggle we wage in our hearts against our inner delusion or darkness and the negative and chaotic forces within us. To break through the darkness clouding our

---

<sup>20</sup> Alexander Wynne, **The Origin of Buddhist Meditation**, (London: Routledge Taylor and Francis group), p 83.

<sup>21</sup> Nguyen Giac (tr), **Teachings and Poetry of the Vietnamese Zen Master Tue Trung Thuong Si** (1230-1291), **The Wisdom Within**, Email: nguyengiac@yahoo.com -- California, 2007), p.5.

<sup>22</sup> Susunaga Weeraperuma, **Nirvana, The Happiness, Meditations on Buddhist Issues**, (India: Shri Janinendra Press, 1987), p.172.

<sup>23</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, **All in One, One in All, The Nature of Interbeing**, (Taiwan: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation reprinted and donated, 2007), p.25.1

Buddha nature and bringing forth the realm of Buddhahood through is the power of practice and the spirit of TLZS.

### **Sudden Enlightenment**

The phenomenal world and nature as they are are not different or separate: they are one. The biggest problem is the mind. With a calm mind we can see *samsāra* is nirvana; the mind is the Buddha.<sup>24</sup> But with a bustling, unsteady mind we see that birth is birth and death is death. All are one or separated from the mind.<sup>25</sup> As Master Tran Nhan Tong taught: “In the house, there is a gem, no need to look outside; in front of a landscape we have the empty mind; that is Zen mind.”<sup>26</sup> Attaining enlightenment was a process which required overcoming the unfathomably deep chasm and dark hole between the honor states of a Buddha and ordinary people. However, we can actualize the principle of attaining Buddhahood in one’s present form as it is revealed in the Lotus Sutra. This kind of thought is what led us to elucidate the profound teaching of attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime.

## **The Influences of the Way of Practice of Truc Lam Zen School In Vietnam**

Vietnamese Buddhism can be described as exuberant, and TLZS is the most exuberant school in the country. This Zen School gives us the reasons to tell apart right from wrong. In its name, communities were made and also the contribution and building of important value and endless pieces of art, culture, literature, ideas for education and establishing a happy society. Even now, this Zen school still fulfills that role.

### **Influences on Culture**

Culture is the core of the system of human society. Every individual is spending his or her life within a certain cultural community; in that way, frequently, it makes us able to define what kinds of person a man or woman is and what essential values will they hold dear. The cultural environment has a direct effects on the both form and content

---

<sup>24</sup> Record of the lamp’s Transmission from the Jingle Era, vol 28, (**Taisho Tripitaka**, vol 5, no.2076), p.437, c19-20.

<sup>25</sup> Le Ngoc Son, “A Study of the Zhulin Zen School during the Chen Dynasty in Vietnam, (**MA Thesis**, Fo Guang University, 2007), p.59-60.

<sup>26</sup> Giac Nguyen (ed), op.cit., p.55.

aspects within a community for anthropology, psychology and sociology. In addition, in each historical stage, Buddhism has had typical opportunities to change. Buddhism plays an important role in shaping Vietnamese society.

Under the Tran Dynasty, with the support and encouragement of powerful kings and mandarins and the emergence of the Truc Lam Chan sect, Buddhism developed strongly in the capital and rural areas.<sup>27</sup> Material culture includes power, transportation, communication and others. The language itself is a material aspect of culture. Because of its influence, they can be said to have suffered a right and direct reflection of the values and nature of a certain Tran society or Dynasty. It could be said that Vietnamese and Chinese languages coexist in a relation of sub-culturality. The works “Awakened in the dust of life” and “Song of the Realization of the Way” were greatly enjoyed at the time and continued to be popular right up to the present time.<sup>28</sup> Their great contribution to literature and poems in Nom language script have allowed the later generation to enjoy and learn from the history, culture and tradition of that time. On the other hand, these works could support the art and architecture, protected cultural relics in the golden ages and enriched Dai Viet culture. Linguist Nguyen Tai Can remarked:

The appearance of Nom language is considered as an outstanding landmark on the way of progress in history. The hoard of treasure of writing in Nom language, also the Nom language itself, is considered as a highly valuable cultural property of our nation.<sup>29</sup>

### **Influences on Literature**

All literature, whether poems, essays, or novels, help us address human nature and conditions which affect all labor and intelligence. These may be enough for our growth, for the reduction of doubts and fears of success and failure, for bonding friends and family, for the warm inspiration of compassion, empathy and trust, or for the realization of shortcoming and disadvantage. The theory of imperfection states that it isn't always bad and that other way could be tedious. We learn that life must be lived to the extra-prosperous. Literature can help us to connect with our own humanity.

---

<sup>27</sup> Nguyen Thanh Xuan, **Religions in Vietnam**, (Ha Noi, The Gioi Publishers, 2012), p.37.

<sup>28</sup> Sinh Dao (tr), **Tran Nhan Tong- A Biographical Study**, (Ho Chi Minh city: Ho Chi Minh city General Press), p.257.

<sup>29</sup> Institute of History, **Studies on Vietnamese Society under the Ly and Tran Dynasties**, (Ha Noi: Social Sciences Press, 1981), p.515-516.

Tran Nhan Tong combined elements and features of Confucianism and Buddhism, to meet the system for skillful managing and building ideology of national independence. The Pāli word ‘bhāvanā’ has a broader meaning than meditation. It means ‘mental culture’, and includes all efforts to develop the spiritual side of life. Although Vietnamese Buddhism had many different Zen schools, the TLZS is seen as the first which new schools have to learn from and imitate.

### **Influences on Education**

Education, as it is easy to discern, includes the connection and transference of ideas, attitudes, skills and training in certain rules and laws. Moreover, education is seen as an active messenger of cultural and social values. Human beings are introduced to the cultural values by their family, community and, later on, by the school. Moreover, religion offers the best insight (*pañña*) in the human behavior and helps us to answer different complicated questions, for example, why people behave in this way and not in another. It doesn't matter which religion a person belongs to or whether he is religious at all; those who practiced meditation trust in benefits and meanings it brought them. For its nature, meditation more or less leads us to have a happier and healthier life. TLZS itself arose in a golden time for transcendental meditation in Vietnamese history and so does it in a contemporary context. Scientifically, meditation's effects and impacts on brain are still a great topic for scientists to work on. According to P.A. Payutto, meditation means “the base of work for the mind” or the mind's working place. It may also mean the object used for developing meditation and training the mind, the meditation object.<sup>30</sup>

### **Influences on Establishing a Happy Society in Tran Dynasty Time**

Both Theravāda and Mahāyāna meditation are ways we can use to cultivate happiness because “one who practices meditation will be calm, will sleep well and awake happily; he is calm in the senses, calm in mind; endowed with strong faith, noble in intention, he is revered by his fellow beings. If he fails to attain Nibbanā in the present life, he is bound to have a happy destination in the next life.”<sup>31</sup> Nature has harmonic correlations and relationships.

---

<sup>30</sup> P.A. Payutto, **Buddhadhamma Expanded and Revised** (abridged), p. 509.

<sup>31</sup> Bhadantācariya Buddaghosa, **Visuddhimagga: The Path of Purification**, tr. by Nāṇamoli Bhikkhu, p. 320.

According to local circumstance, habits and customs, the relationships between people are established by the community.<sup>32</sup>

This Truc Lam self-regulation technique is quite consistent with the theoretical model of Zen meditation (a behavioral analysis) described by Shapiro and Zifferblatt, where a person learns to observe his or her breathing without a reactive effect and without habituation. This meditative process serves a dual function: of desensitizing the individual to the thoughts (i.e. detached observation of thoughts) and eventually removing those thoughts by the continued focus on the competing response of breathing. In this way, the person feels relaxed, calm and with a “mind emptied of internal chatter”.<sup>33</sup> This is also a common model for a perfect society. Most people in the world have an ultimate dream to live in an ideal society and to have a happy and meaningful life. However, in our minds, we have different ideas about what the perfect society would look like. There are three essential indicators that can operate and complete the perfect structure of a society in the modern world: religious spirit, proper production and suitable plans: ‘in modern science, the most interesting field for psychologists is psycho-physiological approach’.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, Fromm and Suzuki claim that the aim of psychology and Zen is the same: total awareness and self-control: ‘If we would try to express enlightenment in psychological terms, I would say that it is a state in which the person is completely tuned to the reality outside and inside, a state in which one is fully aware of it and grasps it. One is aware of it – that is, not his/her brain, nor any other part of his/her organism, but he/she, the whole person’<sup>35</sup>.

## Conclusion

Zen gradually develops the assertive theory and practice in system of Buddhism. The utmost spirit of adapting to life originated from the teaching on the monastic life for Tran Thai Tong: “In the mountains, there is no Buddha; Buddha is right in our hearts”. This idea leads a Buddhist follower to mind cultivation either far from home or at home.

---

<sup>32</sup> Vien Minh, **Living in the Reality**, (Vietnamese version), (HCM city: Phuong Dong Press, 2001), p.225-226.

<sup>33</sup> D.H. Shapiro, S.M. Zifferblatt, **An Analysis of Variance Test for Normality**, (Oxford University: Biometrika Trust ), 1956, p. 519–532

<sup>34</sup> B.K. Bagchi, M.A. Wenger, Electrophysiological Correlates of Some Yoga Exercises, “**Eletroencephalography and Clinical Neurophysiology**” 1957, no. 7, p. 132–149.

<sup>35</sup> E. Fromm, D.T. Suzuki, R. De Martino, **Meditation and Psychoanalysis**, Nguyen Kim Dan, (trs), ( Ha Noi: Worldly Press), 2011, p. 162

According to Doctor Nguyen Huu Son, the spirit of joining this life has been upheld by generations of Truc Lam Zen sect's disciples: "Truc Lam Zen sect is associated with famous pagodas including Vinh Nghiem, Con Son and Hoa Nghiem. These pagodas and the system of Buddhist books retain their vitality, showing the immortality of the sect. Many pagodas, which were built in Hue and Sai Gon and in the Vietnamese community areas in India and Eastern Europe, follow the TLZS".

Buddhist followers are basically the practitioners who are more able to understand the meaning and rules of life and the truth of the world. TLZS doesn't only give us the flexible techniques and access to beautiful works by late meditative masters. They also spent their lives to support national Buddhist development and assure that Vietnamese Zen Buddhism, by its own, is written in the golden pages of history for later generations to be proud of its superior system and excellent theory.

## **References**

### **I. Primary Sources**

Pāli Text Society, *Dīgha Nikāya (The Dialogues of The Buddha)*, Vol.II, Oxford: Pāli Text Society, 1995.

*Anguttara Nikāya (The Book of Gradual Saying)*, Oxford: Pāli Text Society, 1995.

Taisho Tripiṭaka, *The Mahāyāna Vaipulya Sūtra of Total Retention*, vol 09, no.275.

### **II. Secondary Sources.**

Alan W. Watts, *The Spirit of Zen*, (New York: Grove Press, 1958),

Dao, Sinh (tr), *Tran Nhan Tong- A Biographical Study*, (Ho Chi Minh city: Ho Chi Minh city General Press)

B.K. Bagchi, M.A. Wenger, Electrophysiological Correlates of Some Yoga Exercises, "Electroencephalography and Clinical Neurophysiology" 1957, no. 7.,

Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga: The Path of Purification*, tr. by Nāṇamoli Bhikkhu.

Giac, Nguyen (tr).*Teachings and Poetry of the Vietnamese Zen Master Tue Trung Thuong Si* (1230-1291), Email: nguyengiac@yahoo.com -- California, 2007.

Hanh, Thich Nhat.*All in One, One in All, The Nature of Interbeing*, Taiwan: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation reprinted and donated, 2007.

Institute of History, *Studies on Vietnamese Society under the Ly and Tran Dynasties*, (Ha Noi: Social Sciences Press, 1981).

Kalupahana, David J. *Reflection on the Relation on the Relation between Early Buddhism and Zen in Buddhist Philosophy: A Historical Analysis*, Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1976.

Le Ngoc Son, "A Study of the Zhulin Zen School during the Chen Dynasty in Vietnam, (MA Thesis, Fo Guang University, 2007).

Nakamura, Hajime, A Process of the Origination of Buddhist Meditation in Connection with the Life of the Buddha'. In Studies in Pali And Buddhism (A Homage Volume to the Memory of Bhikkhu Jagdish Kashyap), 1979. ed. Dr A.K. Narain, Delhi: B.R.Publishing Corp. Vetter Tilmann, The Ideas and Meditative Practices of Early Buddhism, (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1990).

Nalinaksha Dutt, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, (India: Shantilal Jain at Shri Jainendra Press, 1978).

Nguyen Giac (tr), *Teachings and Poetry of the Vietnamese Zen Master Tue Trung Thuong Si* (1230-1291), Song of Buddha Voice, Email: nguyengiac@yahoo.com -- California, 2007).

Shapiro, D.H. Zifferblatt, S.M. *An Analysis of Variance Test for Normality*, (Oxford University: Biometrika Trust ), 1956.

P.A. Payutto, *Buddhadhamma Expanded and Revised* (abridged).

Record of the lamp's Transmission from the Jingle Era, vol 28, (Taisho Tripitaka, vol 5, no.2076), p.437, c19-20.

Venerable Uda Eriyagama Dhammadīva Maha Thero, (tr) *Maha-Si Insight Meditation*, (Srilanka: Mitirigala Nissarana Vanaya), www.vipassana.com.

Vien Minh, *Living in the Reality*, (Vietnamese version), (HCM city: Phuong Dong Press, 2001).

Watts, Alan. *Eastern Wisdom: Zen in the West & Meditations*, The Alan Watts Foundation. 2009.

Weeraperuma, Susunaga, *Nirvana, The Happiness, Meditations on Buddhist Issues*, (India: Shri Janinendra Press, 1987).

Wynne, Alexander, *The Origin of Buddhist Meditation*, (London: Routledge Taylor and Francis group).

Xuan, Nguyen Thanh. *Religions in Vietnam*, Ha Noi: The Gioi Publishers, 2012.