CHAPTER III
CRITICAL EVALUATION OF BUDDHISM
UNDER THE LY DYNASTY (1010-1225 C.E.)

During the Ly dynasty (1010-1225), as the centralized state apparatus was integrated and consolidated, Vietnamese society became progressively more stable. The first written law, its criminal code was promulgated. Through a set of policies, including support for irrigation, the country experienced rapid agricultural, industrial, and domestic and foreign commercial development. Successful military resistance against the Chinese Song dynasty contributed to heighten national consciousness among the Vietnamese people. At that time, and particularly towards the end of the eleventh century, all ideological and spiritual life came increasingly under the influence of Confucianism. Nevertheless, instead of losing in stature to Confucianism, Buddhism rose to unprecedented levels.

1. The Ascendance of Buddhism

The founder of the Ly dynasty, Ly Cong Un (also known by his imperial name Ly Thai To) was raised in a pagoda and enjoyed support throughout his reign from such influential Buddhist circles as monk Van Hanh of the Vinñārāci sect and monk Da Bao of the Wu Yan Tong sect. Immediately after ascending the throne until the end of his rule, Ly Cong Uan supported policies favorable to the development of Buddhism. He sponsored the construction of pagodas throughout the country, assisted those who wished to become monks, and sent messengers to China to ask for the copies of the Tripitaka. The growth of Buddhism under the patronage of Ly Thai to be able to take place as Buddhist practices had already existed under the Dinh and Early Le dynasties.

All the Ly Kings venerated Buddhism. Ly Thai Tong belonged to the seventh generation of the Wu Yan Tung (Vo Ngon Thong) sect. Ly Thanh Tong belonged to the first generation of Thao Duong sect, Ly Anh Tong belonged to the third generation, and Ly Cao Tong to the fifth generation of the same sect. And Ly Hue
Tong, after abdicating the throne to Princess Chieu Hoang, took the Buddhist name Hue Quang and entered the monkhood.

When a king follows Buddhist practices, it is natural that the whole royal bureaucratic strata do the same, a point brought out in the Linh Zuang pagoda stele erected in 1126: “The high ranking dignitary Ly Thuong Kiet, although committed to solving worldly problems, venerated Buddhism. Was this due to the fact that the King and his mother patronized a Buddhist cult? Perhaps high ranking dignitaries were merely obeying royal orders in their support of Buddhism.”

According to Thien Uyen Tap Anh, it appears that royal bureaucrats vied with each other to curry favor with monks. The capital’s tutelary governor Nguyen (or Ly?) Tuan reportedly respected the virtues and reputation of monk Dinh Huong such that the monk was invited to reside at the Cam Ung pagoda.

The bonze superior Cuu Chi received three personal visits by the King Thai Tong. The King’s advisor Luong Nham Van was known to hold great respect towards him. Around the era Long Thuy Thai Binh (1054-1058), the Prime Minister Duong Dao Gia invited bonze superior Cuu Chi to come and reside at the Dien Linh Pagoda. Cuu Chi, who died in 1063, was frequently consulted by many royal dignitaries including the grand duke Phung Can, Uy Vu, Hi Tu, Thien Hue, the price Hien Minh, the general Vuong Tai, the greatest advisor Luong Nham Van, the great tutor Dao Su Trung, and the chief dignitary Kieu Bong.

The bonze superior Dai Xa (1120-1180) was highly esteemed by Prince Kien Vinh and Princess Thien Cuc. The Defence Minister Phung Giang Tuong showed great respect for monk Quang Nhiem (1122-1190) whom he invited to come and reside at the Tinh Qua pagoda. “The monk Tri Thien who lived during the Anh Tong and Cao Tong periods was also considered a master by the official To Hien Tanh and

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1 Lecture under Ly, Tran’s reigns, Book 1, Hanoi, 1977, p. 362.
2 This people are located at Ba Son Mountain, i.e. Tien Son, Ha Bac.
3 i.e. Doi pagoda, Duy Tien district, Ha Nam Ninh
4 i.e. Ly Nhat Trung, King Ly Thai Tong’s son.
advisor Ngo Hoa Nghia.”

Many monks descended from royal bureaucratic families. For example, the bonze superior Vien Chieu (999-1090) was the son of the queen mother’s brother (Ly Thanh Tong’s mother). The monk Quang Tri (died about 1082-1092) was the brother of imperial concubine Chieu Phung. The monk Hue Sinh (died in 1036) was the Vice–Minister of Defence Lam Tuong’s younger brother. The monk Mau Giac (1052-1096) was high ranking dignitary To Hien Thanh’s uncle. The nun Dieu Nhan (1042-1113) was the grand duke Ly Nhat Trung’s daughter who was himself Ly Thai Tong’s son. Big pagodas and towers were built under the Ly dynasty at the expense of the kings or their families. The stele of the Ling Xung Pagoda reads:

More than two thousand years have gone by since the existence of Buddhism, the cult of that religion scored new developments from day-to-day. The people exploited every place to find beautiful sites to build pagodas; without any help of royal family members they would have done nothing. Owing to the support from kings and mandarins, Buddhism obtained an important social position. Its influence spread in every region of the country. In 1010, immediately after the transfer of the capital to Thang Long (present–day Hanoi), Ly Thai To ordered the building of a series of pagodas and promulgated a decree encouraging citizens to become monks.

Following his order, pagodas and temples were built throughout the kingdom, even in remote regions. Previously under the Dinh and Early Le dynasties many pagodas were built in Thanh Hoa. Nevertheless, a series of new pagodas were built in that province particularly following Ly Thuong Kiet’s nomination as its governor. To carry out the king’s exploration and exploitation policies in Nghe an province, many royal ministers as Ly Nhat Quang (Ly Thai To’s eighth son) and Luu Khanh Doan came and governed that region and ordered the building of many pagodas. Surprisingly, under the Ly, pagodas were built in ethnic minority regions. For example, the Bao Ninh Sung Phuc Pagoda, was built about 1107 in the Vi Long mountainous district (Ha Tuyen) in a region inhabited by the Tay ethnic minority.

5 Sentences in quotation marks are excerpts from Thien Uyen Tap Anh (TUTA)
6 In Nghi Xuan district, Nghe Tinh, archaeologists have found the vestiges of a pagoda and its foundations of the Ly period, near the temple dedicated to Ly Nhat.
The campaign to fill these new pagodas was no less active. In 1014, the King approved the chief monk Tham Van Uyen’s report asking to set a fasting altar in the Van Tue pagoda in Thang Long citadel to train followers. Two years later, in 1016, more than a thousand Thang Long inhabitants were promoted to Buddhist instructors. In 1019, Ly Thai To signed another decree encouraging the people in the whole country to become monks.

The number of Buddhist followers consequently increased. *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* gives some indication of the number of followers in the pagodas. For example, the monk Da Bao is said to have had more than one hundred followers in his Kien So Pagoda located in Phu Dong, Hanoi. During the mid-eleventh century in the Trng Minh pagoda located ion Thien Phuc Mountain (Tien So, Ha Bac) where Thien Lao was the resident monk, “there were more than a thousand believers who transformed his pagoda into an animated Buddhist gathering.”7 The monk Nguyen Hoc (died 1175) had more than one hundred followers in his Quang Bao pagoda (Ha Bac). Monk Dao Hue (died 1172) had more than one thousand followers in his Quang Minh pagoda. And in the Thanh Tuoc pagoda located on Du Hy mountain (Ha Bac) where the monk Tri Bao (died 1190) cloistered, follower-inhabitants were so numerous that the pagoda “seemed to be a market.”8

In order to feed such great numbers of monks, pagodas under the Ly controlled rice fields, many of which were royal donations of public land. There were other royal donations as well. According to the stele in the Van Phuc pagoda (present-day Phat Tinh pagoda in Tien Son, Ha Bac) in the fourth year of Long Thuy Thai Binh era (1057), the King ordered the construction of more than one hundred rice fields. The stele in the Bao an pagoda (Me Linh, Hanoi) erected in 1209 mentions that a man with the family name Nguyen granted to the pagoda many rice fields: “In all 126 acres, rice was grown to make Oan rice-cakes to feed monks, three acres were given to pagoda keepers, and the remaining part was given to the inhabitants for pagoda festivities, and for alms to forsaken spirits.”9 The inscription on the bell in the

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7 *Literature under Ly, Tran ... op. cit.,* p. 545.
Thang Quang pagoda (the today Keo pagoda in Vu Thu, Thai Binh), estimates in all the Ly kings offered pagodas 1,371 Vietnamese acres.

These pagoda rice fields were sometimes located very far from the pagodas, as a stele in the Sung Thien Dien Linh tower (Doi pagoda, Ha Nam Ninh) relates:

The Queen mother Linh Nham offered seventy-two contiguous Vietnamese acres of rice fields, situated in the Man De region belonging to the two hamlets of Cam Truc and Thu Lang in Cam Giang district. The inhabitants enjoyed their harvests for generations. Those rice fields were offered to the cult of Buddha and were exempt from taxation. The pagodas were located in Duy Tien, Ha Nam Ninh province and the rice fields were in Cam Binh, Hai Hung province. This indicates that the pagoda possessed a lot of rice fields which were scattered over many places.

Pagoda rice fields were primarily farmed by sharecroppers. Some pagodas under the Ly even used slaves in their fields. *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* mentions that, “pagodas had slaves and wealth stored in warehouses.” A certain number of monks were provided by the Ly with Tuc ho, meaning those people were allowed to charge rent and tax peasants. For example, according to *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, the monk Mau Giac residing in the Giao Nguyen pagoda in the Thang Long citadel was allowed by the Ly to tax the wealth of 50 families. After the monk Khong Lo’s death (1110), the Ly Emperor signed a decree permitting pagoda expansion and exempting 20 families from rent and taxes which could be used to make ceremonial offerings. Both *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* and *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* tell of monks Minh Khong who after having successfully cured the King Ly Than Tong, was allowed to charge rent and tax two hundred families and exempted him from having to pay rent and taxes himself.

After the monk Giac Hai’s death, King Ly Than tong exempted twenty families from taxes and rend provided they worship the monk. Monk Gioi Khong enjoyed the same arrangement with ten families. Pagodas had large quantities of wealth donated by the believers i.e. kho vat, wealth keep in warehouses as was written in the *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan. Thien Uyen Tap Anh* also wrote that the monk Tinh

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10 *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu (DVSKTT)*, Ban Ky, Bk. 3, p. 12a.d.
11 *Id*, p. 39b; *TUTA*, lower book.
Khong (died in 1170) residing in the Khai Quoc pagoda in Thang Long was offered so much wealth and offering that thieves followed him around the pagoda. Similarly, the monk Tri Thien living under Ly Anh Tong and Ly Cao Tong’s reigns in the Phu Mon pagoda was given many offerings by Buddhist believers from many regions, according to a text on Buddhist believers from many regions. According to a text on the stele written in 1157, the Dien Phuc pagoda located in the Co Viet hamlet (Hai Hung) reserved a whole courtyard to store its rice harvest. Due to the possession by pagoda of many rice fields, lands and wealth, in 1088, King Ly Nhan Tong authorized high-ranking officials to function as de cu i.e. pagoda wealth managers. In short, under the Ly, the economic influence of pagodas further strengthened Buddhism’s position in Vietnamese society.

The Ly Dynasty also maintained the hierarchic system of Buddhism that had existed under the Dinh and Early Le, a system comprised of chief monks and common monks. Their functions were divided into two degrees: left side chief monks and right side chief monks; left side common monks and right side common monks. A certain number of monks commanding great prestige were promoted to state advisors by the kings. And many State advisors performed the duties of a chief monk, for instance, the monk Vien Thong (1080-1151). There were also many chief monks that were not state advisors, such as the monk Vien Thong (1080-1151). There were also many chief months that were not state advisors, such as the monk Khanh Hy (1067-1142) and many state advisors who failed to work as chief monks, such as the monk Minh Khong (1099-1174). In many regions, a certain number of monks were appointed to look after Buddhist affairs in the region. For example, the texts of a stele in the Sung Nghiem Dien Thanh pagoda erected in 1118 and a stele in the Linh Xung pagoda erected in 1126 describe that while monk Phap Bao stayed in the Phuc Dien Tu Thanh pagoda (Thanh Hoa) he was also in charge of common religious affairs in the district of Cuu Chau, Thanh Hoa.

A certain number of monks participated in the Ly Cong Uan’s enthronement. Monk Van Hanh and the monk Da Bao both played important roles in politics. Thien

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12 Id, p. 12a.
Uyen Tap Anh gives further evidence of the connection between Buddhism and the State:

After having been enthroned, Ly Thai To often invited the monk Da Bao to the imperial palace for consultation on religious problems and generously remunerated him. Even during discussions of political affairs, the monk was allowed to take part. But after the Ly’s state apparatus was consolidated, monks no longer took part in political affairs. The state’s advisors were the nation’s masters on religion and not advisors on political concerns. A certain number of monks were invited by the Kings to come to the imperial palace by the side gate only for consultation on the Buddhist doctrine. They became limited to roles in the religious sphere and not in handling life problems.

Sometimes, the monks even formulated the country’s governing policy. The imperial preceptor Vien Thong gave the following advice to Ly Than Thong:

The people are like material things. If they are put in a peaceful place, they will be peaceful. If they are put in a dangerous position, they will become dangerous. All depends on their master’s behavior. If the master’s love conforms to men’s hearts, he will be beloved as their parents, admired as the sun and the moon and so he will put his people in a peaceful position. Whether the country is at peace or in trouble, it depends on its public officials. If the latter are good public servants, the country will live in peace. If not, the country will live in trouble. By experience, it can be seen that among the previous rulers, none had made the country rise without employing great men, nor made the country fall without employing little men. But the origin of a country’s rise or fall is not a pretext that comes instantly but only gradually. The universe cannot be suddenly cold or hot to the season spring or autumn. It is the same for the kings. They are powerful or crumble gradually on condition that they have performed good or evil actions. The last time kings have known all that, so they imitated Heaven in incessantly cultivating their virtues aimed at bettering themselves or they imitated Earth in incessantly cultivating their virtues aimed at pacifying the people. To correct oneself, one must be careful in his heart, be afraid as he is walking on thin ice. To pacify the country, one must respect his inferior, must be afraid as he
holds worn reins. Doing so, one will inevitably be powerful. Doing the contrary, one cannot avoid failure. Power or crumbling comes progressively.\textsuperscript{13}

Although these words refer to national policy, they reflect no more than a general view. Indeed, as was the situation of Buddhism at the time, the doctrine’s belief in benevolence more or less influenced royal policies as has been amply recorded in ancient historical records.

Buddhist spirit during the Ly period was manifested through Buddhist activities as well as through its celebrations, both of which created unique cultural characteristics. Festivities were other held for the inauguration of new pagodas and towers. Large Buddhist functions were organized by the kings as many pages in history refer to those Ly festivities. For example, in 1118, the Festival of the Thousand Buddhas was held at the time of the inauguration of the Thang Nghiem Thanh Tho pagoda. In 1119, a celebration took place to mark for the completion of the Tinh Lu pagoda. In 1123, an inauguration festival was held for the Phung Tu pagoda and another one for the Quang Giao pagoda in Tien Du. In 1124 a ceremony for the inauguration of the Sung Thien Dien Linh Tower in Doi Son (Doi Mountain) was held.\textsuperscript{14} In 1127, the Trung Hung Dien Two pagoda was inaugurated.

We can gauge an impression of the atmosphere at these inaugural ceremonies from two paragraphs of the stele on the Sung Thien Dien Linh Tower (1121):

Before the inauguration, pagoda servants always embellished palanquins and vehicles and swept dust. Sandal smoke hovered above the country like clouds. Flags and gonfalons flew everywhere in all directions. Bells and tom-toms resounded loudly. Gongs and cymbals echoed noisily. In front of the procession, there was the rattan vehicle of the Buddhist altar and in the rear; there was the imperial palanquin, monks, nuns…

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{DVSKT}T mentions the chief monk Tham Van Uyen in the year 1014. \textit{TUTA} relates that the monk Hue Sinh (died 1063) had been promoted chief monk from an assistant chief monk; the monk Vien Thong being promoted assistant chief monk in 1130, thereafter chief monk in 1143.

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{TUTA}, lower book.
The King seriously read the litany and at the end bowed his head in thanks to Heaven. The palace women stood with a shy air. After the prayers they offered milk for dancing and singing. Vegetarian food with white rice was offered to hungry passers-by. Money was distributed generously to poor people from everywhere.\footnote{Literature under Ly. Tran, op. cit., p. 40.}

Festivals existed during the construction of pagodas and statuary as well as the casting of bells. Historical records reveal that in 1036 the Long Tri Festival commemorated the erection of the Buddha Dai Nguyen statue. In 1040 during the La Han Festival, more than a thousand statues and paintings of Buddha and ten thousand gonfalons were inaugurated. Festivals were also organized to encourage people to join the monkhood as \textit{Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu} reports occurred in Nghenh Tien Dong. These Buddhist festivals were organized both by kings and common folk.

In addition to the festivities marking the inauguration of pagodas, towers, statues, and bells, other annual Buddhist festivities took place. Historic books and Buddhist annals recall the annual festivities organized under the Ly as the Buddha’s bath, the Buddha’s birthday (8$^{\text{th}}$ day of the 4$^{\text{th}}$ lunar month), the Wandering manners day (15$^{\text{th}}$ day of 7$^{\text{th}}$ lunar month). It was at this time that monks began their practice of the \textit{vassa} three month summer retreats. \textit{Thien Uyen Tap Anh} recalls in the story of the monk Tuc Lu the evading from summer day, the 15$^{\text{th}}$ day of the 7$^{\text{th}}$ lunar month.

In the localities of many pagodas and monks, the number of male and female believers was also very great. And many of these believers organized associations aimed at helping monks, particularly with ceremonial celebrations. The stele in the Bao An pagoda, erected in 1209 in Me Linh, Hanoi, mentions one such association named Hoi Thich Giao (“The Buddhist Association”), founded with ten members.

Under the Ly, pagodas were not only places for monks and Buddhist worshipers; they were also centers for cultural activities and studies. Large pagodas also functioned as schools for aspiring monks. Many pagodas provided schooling for children.

With respect to the canon, during the previous Dinh and Early Le dynasties
(refer to the preceding chapter), only prayer books imported during Chinese control continued to be used, especially texts obtained during the Song dynasty. By 1007, King Le Ngoa Trieu had sent his brother Minh Xuong, accompanied by Hoang Thanh Nha, to ask the Song Emperor for a copy of the Tripitaka (known as Dai Tang in Vietnamese) prayers which were brought back to Vietnam only in 1009. This copy had been published in 983 but carved and printed since 972 on the order of Emperor Taizu of the Song dynasty.

After having transferred his capital to Thang Long, Ly Thai To ordered the construction of the Tran Phuc prayer repository. In 1018, once again, Ly Thai To sent Nguyen Dao Thanh\(^\text{16}\) and Pham Hac to ask the Song Emperor for the Tripitaka. Up to 1020, Nguyen Dao Thanh brought the prayers back to Guangzhou and was welcome by the chief monk Phi Tri sent by Thai To. One year later, Thai To again ordered the construction of Bat Giac repository, to store the prayers obtained the year before. In 1023, the King ordered another Tripitaka copy to be kept in the Dai Hung repository. In 1027, Thai To again ordered another copy of the Tripitaka to be made.

In 1034, King Thai Tong ordered the construction of the Trung Hung prayer repository in the Trung Quang pagoda located on the Tien Du Mountain. In the same year, Ha Thu and Do Khoa were sent as ambassadors to the Song Empire and were offered by Song Emperor another Tripitaka prayer collection. Two years later, once again, Ly Thai Tong mandated another copy of the prayers to be kept in the newly built Trung Hung repository.

Under King Ly Nhan Tong’s reign, as historic records show, ambassadors Luong Dung Luat in 1081 and Nguyen Van Tin in 1098 made two trips to China seeking the Tripitaka from the Song Emperors.\(^\text{17}\)

As a consequence of this activity, by the eleventh century in Vietnam there were many printed or hand written Tripitaka books. Those sutras were bases on Song’s first printed Tripitaka and not the second version completed in 1176 known as

\(^{16}\) \textit{DVSKTT}, book 2, p. 5b, says Nguyen Dao Thanh while \textit{VSL} (book 2, p. 3b) says Nguyen Thanh Dao.

\(^{17}\) These two trips are recorded in \textit{VSL}. 
Sung Ninh Van Tho Dai Tang. According to Thien Uyen Tap Anh, the sūtras used under the Ly dynasty were variously called Phap Hoa, Vien Giac, Hoa Nghiem, Duoc Su, Kim Cuong, and Tini. Dai Viet Su Luoc also related that in 1179, children of Buddhist dignitaries read the Prajñā prayers. A certain number of Buddhist documents as Tuyet Dau Ngu Luc were also propagated. A certain number of generally used sutras were also printed. According to Thien Uyen Tap Anh, the monk Tin Hoc (died, 1190) born from into a carver’s family, also printed sutras. Under the Ly, many monks wrote many important texts on Buddhist ideology, which include:

- Phap Su Trai Nghi by Hue Sinh (died, 1063)
- Chu Dao Trang Khanh Tan Van by the name monk.
- Tan Vien Giac Kinh by Vien Chieu (died, 1090)
- Duoc Su Thap Nhi Nguyen Van by the same monk.
- Thap Nhi Bo Tat Hanh Tu Chung Dao Trang by the same monk
- Tha Do Hien Quyet by the same monk
- Chieu Doi Luc by Bien Tai
- Tang Gia Tap Luc, containing more than 50 chapters, by the monk Vien Thong (died, 1151).
- Chu Phat Tich Duyen Su containing more than 30 chapters by the same monk.
- Nam Tong Tu phap do by Thuong Chieu (died in 1203),

Unfortunately, all these primary works have been lost. Only a scattered collection of poems, litanies, speeches to the followers remain with us from monks who lived under the Ly. It is only on the basis of these few documents that historians can discern the ideology of various Buddhist sects during that period.

Below is a summary of the Vintarūci and Wu Yan Tong sects which survived

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VSL, bk. 3, p. 10.
throughout the Ly dynasty. Following which is an introduction to the Thao Duong sect which surfaced during the Ly period.

2. The Vinitarūci Chan Sect during the Ly dynasty

According to the genealogy given in *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, the Vinitarūci Buddhist sect’s eleventh to nineteenth generations fell under the Ly period.

- The Eleventh generation comprised four monks: Thien Tong (902-979), Sung Pham (1004-1078)\(^{19}\) and two unrelated monks; among them could have been Tri Huyen, the monk to whom Dao Hanh had paid a visit.

- The Twelfth generation comprised seven monks: Van Hanh (?-1018), Dinh Huc (?-?), Tu Dao Hanh (?-1117), Tri Bat (1049-1018), Thuan Chau (?-1101)\(^{20}\) and two others not mentioned in any book.

- The Thirteenth generation comprised six monks: Huc, Sinh (?-1063), Thien Nham (1093-1163), Minh Khong (1066-1140) and two unrelated monks who were Phap Thong and Hue Sinh’s disciples.

- The Fourteenth generation comprised four monks: Khanh Hy (1067-1140) and three others who could have been Tinh Nhan, Tinh Nhu, in addition to Khanh Hy’s two disciples and Quang Phuc, Gioi Khong’s master belonging to the following generation.

- The Fifteenth generation comprised three monks: Gioi Khong (?-?), Phap Dung (?-1174) another who could have been Thao Nhat, the monk Chan Khong’s master belonging to the following generation.

- The Sixteenth generation was made up of three monks: Tri Thien (?-?), Chan

\(^{19}\) In this generation, Thien Ong did not survive until Ly reign, meanwhile Sung Pham, whose birthday and death day mentioned doubtful as mentioned in the previous chapter, did live under the Ly region. He was a teacher of the more Tri Bat, the latter was born only in 1049.

\(^{20}\) According to *TUTA*, Thuan Chau was in the same generation with Tri Bat, and always *TUTA* recorded that Thuan Chau together with two other namely Tinh Hanh and Phap Nhon, were disciples of Tri Bat.
Khong (1046-1100), and Dao Lam (?-1203).

- The Seventeenth generation comprised four monks and nuns: the nun Dieu Nhan (1042-1113), Vien Hoc (1050-1113), Tinh Thien (1121-1193) and possibly Tinh Khong, Tinh Thien’s disciple.

- The Eighteenth generation comprised two monks: Vien Thong (1080-1151) and possibly Phap Ky, Tinh Thien’s follower:

- The Nineteenth generation comprised two monks: Y Son (?-1213) and another.

If historians merely relied on the explanations of monastic training, speeches, and litanies that appear in Thien Uyen Tap Anh, they would find it difficult to isolate the particular characteristics of every Buddhist sect under the Ly. They are usually resigned to only speaking about dominant tendencies due to the co-existence and reciprocal influence of the various sects over centuries. In fact, until the Ly, Buddhist sects had not fixed centers. Wub Yan Tong sect monk Thuong Chieu (died 1203) cloistered in the Luc To Pagoda located in Dich Bang (i.e. Dinh Bang today) which had been a center for the Vinitaruci sect. According to the Thien Uyen Tap Anh, he was not unique in this respect.

By the end of the eleventh and the beginning of twelfth centuries, both the twelfth generation Wu Yan Tong monk Thuong Chieu and the monk Bien Tai belonging to the Vinītarūci sect came to cloister in the Van Tue pagoda in Thang Long although the latter had been in the palace where Hue Sinh, belonging to the Vinītarūci sect, was the resident monk. Moreover, Khanh Hy, a well-known Vinitarūci sect monk under the Ly once came and paid a Buddhist consultation visit to Bien Tai in the Van Tue pagoda. In front of Khanh Hy, Bien Tai praised Ban Tich, Khanh Hy’s master, as a proficient monk. Adding to the confusion, there were a number of similarities between the Vinitarūci and Wu Yan Tong sects in ideology and monastic training.

Nevertheless, the former has a clearer propensity towards Tantrism. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this tendency developed under the Dinh and Early
Le dynasties. In fact, up until the Ly period, many monks of this sect practiced Tantrism. The most represent was bonze superior Tu Dao Hanh, a contemporary of Van Hanh.

Tu Dao Hanh’s biography was full of a series of mystic and strange stories as “commanding the sylphs, dancing with magic sticks, being reincarnated, and escaping from the body.”21 This monk often caught forest snakes and wild animals and ordered them to come and lie around him. He burnt his fingers to pray for rain, used magic water to cure diseases, all his work was magical.22 Similar to monk Ma Ha who lived during the Le period, Tu Dao Hanh’s training methods bore the character of the Tantrism: “The monk came and lived as a hermit in the Tu Son Mountain, recited Mahakaruna and Datyadharani prayers everyday one hundred and eight thousand times.”23

Tu Dao Hanh’s contemporary Tri Bat also practiced Tantrism. In his litany on life and death of the Buddhist character compiled before he died in 1117, Tri Bat ends with the following magical words: um to ro to ro tat ri. Tri Bat was monk Sung Pham’s disciple in the Phap Van pagoda. Before coming to cloister in the Phap Van pagoda, Sung Pham studied in India for 9 years. Tu Dao Hanh had also come to that pagoda to consult Sung Pham on religious problems. Perhaps due to the influence of Tantric monks such as monk Dao Hanh, Tri Bat’s practices were nothing but the continuation of a tradition having existed long before. It is also very probable that Tantric tendencies were reinforced by Sung Pham as Indian Buddhism contained a Tantric character during Sung Pham’s visit there.

Bonze superior Minh Khong, Dao Hanh’s disciple who also practiced Tantrism was reputed for having cured King Than Tong with magic methods. Likewise, Thien Nhan, a Minh Khong contemporary, was a Tantrist who fully consecrated himself to the studying of the Tong Tri Dalani prayers, learning them by heart without missing a word. Bonze superior Gioi Khong who belonged to the fifteenth Vinītarūci generation was reputed to have commanded angels and demons,

21 TUTA.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
to have tamed wild beasts, and to have used magic water to cure diseases. His
disciple, a monk named Tri Thien, was recognized as a master by the high ranking
dignitary To Hien Thanh, and once compelled a tiger to bow before him on the Tu son
mountain.

More so than other sects, Vinītarūci Buddhism seemed to cultivate Tantrism.
Nevertheless, monks belonging to the Vinītarūci Buddhist sect were interested in
dilemmas in the Buddhist ideology, especially those in the whole Chan School. Once
of those problems was the issue of existence. Monks belonging to the Vinītarūci sect
hoped to overcome this problem by examining the concepts of “to be” and “not to be”, Bonze superior Hue Sinh presented this dilemma when answering King Ly Thai
To’s litany this way:

It is evident that the Prajna has no origin.

You are nothing, I am nothing too.

In the past, in the present as well as in the future

All Buddhist have the same Buddhist nature.

In his litany, Ly Thai Tong had presented the conception of the void (Śūnyatā)
according to the Mādhyamika sect. Hue Sinh’s answer to the king with respect to
this issue was:

To be religious is alike not to be religious

Not to have is also not to have

If the men are well aware of that truism

The living beings will resemble Buddha.

The Lang Gia moon is solitary and quiet.

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24 Ibid.
25 i.e. the Mādhyamika.
The junk crosses the sea with nothing inside

To know not to have and to understand as to have

And one will understand everything.

Through his poem, the monk Hue Sinh wished to discredit this dilemma advising King Ly Thai Tong to detach himself from these concepts. A similar recommendation can be weaned from the Lang Gia prayers (Laṅkāvatāra). These prayers show the Samadhi helped to accurately prove the real character of magic without paying any attention to the surroundings and committing an error based on committing to one of the ontological extremes.

The conception “the evil living beings resemble Buddha” probably came from the explanation of equality (samatā) already presented by Laṅkāvatāra. But Hue Sinh had already expressed this idea in a concise litany using the magnificent image: “an empty, junk, silently gliding under the quiet moonlight.”

Even the Tantrist Tu Dao Hanh wrote a marvelous litany about the problem of to be or not to be:

To be is a very little thing

Not to be, everything is nothing

The moon reflects its bright light on the river water

Do not say whether they exist or not.²⁶

The concluding sentence’s counsel constitutes a clear principle: never begin as a premise with a conception of existence for the relation between to be and not to be is equal to the Buddhist image of the moonlight on the river water.

In reality, this existence dilemma was not limited to the Vinītaruci sect. It confronted all Buddhist sects under the Ly. The same thought was discovered in

²⁶ Based on the Vietnamese translation reported to be by the monk Huyen Quang under the Tran dynasty, See Literature under Ly, Tran. op. cit., p. 345.
Queen Mother Y Lan’s litany:

Existence means nothing, nothing means existence

Nothing is existence, existence means nothing

Existence, nothing one must not mind it

That will conform to Buddhist truth.27

Equipped with their view of being and nothingness, monks belonging to the Vinītarūci sect studied the problem of human life and death an issue closely linked with the infinite that the living beings must overcome. Tri Bat expressed his conception in a short litany:

If there is death, there is life

If there is life, there is death

Death causes affliction to the living beings

Life gives them joy

Affliction and joy are infinite

And oppose themselves each other

Everything about life and death does not deserve our interest

Om! Suru, suru, sri!

Thuan Chau, a Tri Bat contemporary, before dying read to his disciple Ban Tich the following litany on life and death:

The true nature often has no nature

It never lives nor never dies,

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27 Based on the Vietnamese translation by Hon Bang, *Id.*, p. 353.
The body is a means for life or death

The nature of that means remains unchanged.

In his litany, Thuan Chau stressed that the body is nothing but a means among other means in the phenomenal world where there is life and death, only the Invariable Truth (tathātā) and dharma are eternal, without life or death.

Confronting the life and death dilemma, nun Dieu Nhan (1012-1113) expressed an original point of view in the following litany:

Life, aging, disease, death

Are natural laws?

The more one begs escaping from all those things

The more he will be attached to them

If one gets passions, he must beg Buddha

If one gets bewitched, he must pray to religion

If he does not beg Buddha or religion

He must sit quiet and smiling.28

Dieu Nhan considered life, aging, disease, and death as natural laws. The desire to escape them constitutes nothing but the desire to untie oneself and at the same time to fasten oneself down more. If one needs Buddha or religion, that means he needs his own force that will be nothing but his bewitchment, his ignorance.

With respect to a certain number of other philosophical quandaries, the position of the Viññārūci sect coincided with the Wu Yan Tong Buddhist sect.

28 Based on the Vietnamese translation by Nguyen Duc Van and Dao Phuong Binh, Id., p. 340.
3. The Wu Yan Tong Sect under the Ly

According to the genealogy in the Thien Uyen Tap Anh, the Wu Yan Tong Buddhist sect developed under the Ly reign from its fifth to fifteen generations:

- The Fifth generation comprised two monks, but only the bonze superior Da Bao was mentioned. He was the great monk Khuong Viet’s disciple. His lifetime remains unknown. We know only Da Bao’s participation in political affairs during Ly Thai To’s throne.

- The sixth generation was made up of three monks: Dinh Huong (?-1051), Thien Lao (?-?) and a not mentioned monk.

- The Seventh generation comprised seven monks: Vien Chieu (999-1090), bonze superior Cuu Chi (died between 1059-1066), Bao Tinh (?-1034), Minh Tan (?-1034), Quang Tri (died between 1085-1092), King Ly Thai Long (1000-1054) and an unmentioned monk.

- The Eighth generation comprised six monks: Thong Bien (?-1134), Man Giac (1052-1096), Ngo An (1020-1088) and three monks not related among whom there was perhaps the monk of the Bao Phuc pagoda, the master of Bao Giam who belonging to the next generation.

- The Ninth generation comprised eight monks: Dao Hue (?-1172), Bien Tai (?-?), Bao Giam (?-1173), Khong Lo (?-119), Bao Tinh (1100-1176) and three not mentioned monks among whom there was the monk Bao Giam, Tinh Gioi’s master who belong to the next generation and the monk Vien Tri whose student Nguyen Hoc belonged to the following generation.

- The Tenth generation comprised 12 monks: Minh Tri (?-1196), Tin Hoc (?-1190), Tinh Khong (?-1170), Dai Xi (1120-1180), Tinh Luc (1112-1175), Tri Bao (?-1190), Truong Nguyen (1110-1165), Trinh Gioi (?-1207), Giac Hai (?-?), Nguyen
Hoc (?-1175) and two others not mentioned.²⁹

- The Eleventh generation comprised nine monks but only one—the monk Quang Nghiem—was related (1122-1190) while the eight others were not.

- The Twelfth generation comprised seven monks but only one—the monk Thuong Chieu (?-1203) was mentioned while the six others were not.

- The Thirteenth generation comprised five monks: Thong Su or Thong Thien (?-1128), Than Nghi (?-1216) and three other not related among whom was monk Tri Thong, master of Hien Quang who belonged to the next generation.

- The Fourteenth generation comprised five monks: Hien Quang (?-1220), Tuc Luc (?-?) and three others not related among whom was the monk An Khong, Than Nghi’s disciple.

- The Fifteenth generation comprised seven monks: but only one was related, that was Ung Vuong or Ung Thuan while the six others were not mentioned, among whom was Dao Vien, Hien Quang’s disciple.³⁰

Based on historical evidence it may be said that Wu Yan Tong Buddhist sect was founded in Vietnam in the ninth century. When Wu Yan Tong was in China, he was the monk Bach Truong Hoai Hai’s (Bai Zhang Huaihai) disciple and the monk Nguong Son Tue Tich’s master.³¹ The Wu Yan Tong Buddhist sect has its origins in Hui Neng’s southern China sect (Linji). In his lessons to his disciple Cam Thanh, Wu Yantong expressed his recognition of the history of Buddhism in China as presented by Hui Neng and his followers. According to them, Buddhism had 28 Indian ancestors from Mahākaśyapa to Buddhism in China. Buddhism from Bodhidharma transmitted through four Chinese ancestors to Hui Neng who was the sixth ancestor.

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²⁹ TUTA recorded that the monk Quang Nghiem (eleventh generation) is a disciple of the monk Tri Thien who cloistered in Phuc Thanh pagoda, but the name of Tri Thien did not appear in the 10th generations. It must be that Tri Thien mentioned here is not Tri Thien who belonged to the Vinīṭarūci sect and cloistered at Phu Mon pagoda. May be that TUTA had wrongly recorded the monk Thien Tri instead of Tri Thien. Thien Tri is another name of the monk Minh Tri (10th generation) also cloistering at Phuc Thanh pagoda.

³⁰ In fact, Ung Vuong had been monk under the Tran reign. See next chapter.

³¹ Tue Tich would later be the founder of the Chan sect Qui Nguong.
From that date, Buddhism was divided in two sects – Northern and Southern.

According to Hui Neng’s disciples, only the southern sect was orthodox. Hui Neng handed his mantle to Nam Nhac Hoai Nhuong who passed it to Ma To Dao Nhat. The latter did the same with Bach Truong Hoai Hai, who was Wu Yan Tong’s master. Hoai Nhuong set up the Cao Qi sect and was the founder of the Buddhism in the south.32 Thus, Wu Yantong can be considered as belonging to the Cao Qi sect as Buddhism in southern China had an obvious influence on his monk and his Wu Yan Tong sect. Up until the Ly, monks belonging to the Wu Yan Tong sect in Vietnam had an ideology similar to Buddhists in southern China.

One of the important views of Buddhism in southern China was don ngo (immediate enlightenment). The southern China Chan sect “promoted this point of view to oppose the Tiem ngo promoted by the northern sect. Tiem ngo means progressive enlightenment obtained step-by-step through education, reciting prayers, listening to Buddhist lessons, meaning needing the help of written documents. Don ngo is prompt enlightenment which comes in a minute, when the Intellect-Prajñā light blazes and so there was no need of languages and written documents. The name Wu Yan Tong means “to understand without speech” (literally, “not through language”) took its origin from that meaning.

Reflecting this sentiment, Thien Lao, a monk belonging to the Wu Yan tong sect and from the sixth generation once said to Ly Thai Tong. ‘Many words have no use.” Likewise denying the communicative capacity of languages, Tinh Gioi, monk of the tenth generation of that sect, angrily uttered:

It is ridiculous for an ignoramus of Buddhism who uses languages to propagate the religious family?!

Reading carefully stories on the monks in Thien Uyen Tap Anh, we can see the

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32 Besides the Tao Khe sect, there was the Thanh Nguyen sect that began with the monk Hanh Tu. To the second half of the ninth century, Tao Khe sect was split into Lam Te and Qui Nguong sects. By the end of the ninth century, Lam Te sect was split into Hoang Long, Duopng Ky sects. And Thanh Nguyen sect also split into Tao Dong, Van Mon and Phap nhan sects.
use of both the Vinītarūci and Wu Yan Tong sects under the Ly’s reign of a certain number of prayers as Dieu Phap Lien Hoa and Kim Cuong Bat Nha. Only the Vien Giac prayers learned by many monks of the Wu Yan Tong sect ignored by the monks of the Vinītarūci sect. A series of monks of the Wu Yan Tong sect as Vien Chieu, Ngo An, Minh Tri, Tin Hoc, and Tinh Luc, however, patiently used the Vien Giac prayers.

Bonze superior Vien Chieu even wrote a book called the Tan Vien Giac prayers in which he presented and analyzed the thoughts contained in the Vien Giac prayers. The latter were the Mahāyāna prayers dealing with prompt enlightenment. It was written in those prayers: “These prayers contain the dogma on immediate enlightenment of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Living beings have a character which he enlightened with the help of these prayers. Prompt character is the intelligence ability to lead to consciousness prompt awakening.”

*Thien Uyen Tap Anh* mentions that bonze superior Vien Chieu understood very well the three main magic penetrations in the Vien Giac prayers which monk Tin Hoc also patiently studied. The three penetrations in the Vien Giac prayers were Sāmatha, Samāpati, Dhyāna, all three forms of meditation.

In fact, the monks under the Ly highly appreciated consciousness prompt enlightenment without denying progressive enlightenment. *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* tells that the monk Ban Tich (died in 1140) who belonged to the thirteenth generation of the Vinītarūci Sect deeply understood the magic of prompt enlightenment and progressive enlightenment. Surely his position was not unique here. Even the stele of Sung Nghiem Dien Thanh pagoda erected in 1118 mentions: “Although there are prompt enlightenment and progressive enlightenment, all depends on whether enlightenment is deep or superficial”. Towards the men who have no prompt character or prompt motive, we must educate them by other ways. As we see shall see in the next chapter, this view continued to hold sway under the Tran’s reign.

The point of view on prompt enlightenment was established on the basic of the southern China Sect and also was that of the Wu Yan Tong sect. After those sects,
every Phap (Dharma) i.e. the universe of phenomena is by itself “nothing”, it appears in front of us like an illusion and is nothing but an “illusion”. This ontology was the Śūnyatā doctrine of the Mādhyamika Indian Sect and the canon belongs to the Prajñā system recalled repeatedly by many monks of the Wu Yan Tong sect.

The monk Dinh Huong (?-1051) belonging to the sixth generation said as follows:

"From the old time, there is no country,
Country is the true family.
The true family is also an illusion"

“To be” is illusion, so “not to be” is “not to be”

“Not to be” is “not to be” was a concept developed in the Mahaprajnaraniṣṭha, a fundamental work of the Madhyamika Sect.

As is mentioned above, King Ly Thái Tong of the seventh generation of the Wu Yan Tong sect had once said: “You are nothing, I am nothing too.” The monk Dao Hüe (died in 1172), of the ninth generation wrote a litany on the “nothing” point of view:

Soil, water, fire, wind and conscience
All are nothing from the very first
Like the clouds, they gather and disperse
Only Buddha’s Sun shines indefinitely.

Bonze superior Dai Xa (1120-1180) of the tenth generation, in presenting the same intention, the elements soil, water, fire, wind “making the heart of my body can

33 The Sino-Vietnamese word ao must be rightly pronounced as huyen. But in this text, we keep its traditional use as ao.
34 Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra explains the concept of “not to be is not to be” as follows: “Every phap is nothing. Thus the “not to be” is also nothign, so not to be is not to be”.

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be compared to four snakes put in the same basket, in fact that’s nothing.”

    The body is nothing and when it appears, it is nothing but an illusion. The monk Ban Tich (1100-1176) belonging to the ninth generation gave the image of a shadow in a looking glass to compare with the self illusion:

    The self illusion is originally born from nothing

    Like the images which appear on the looking glass

    If one knows all those images is nothing

    The self illusion will instantly prove their true physiognomy.

    The essence of oneself is an illusion and originally has no shadow, no image. The monk Minh Tri (died 1196) belonging to the tenth generation described that character of the essence of oneself in the following litany:

    The wind blows in the pine-tree,

    The moon shines on the water surface,

    There is neither shadow nor image.

    The essence of oneself is like that

    Looking for it is like looking for the echo in the nothingness.

    Speaking about the illusory character of the Phap of the phenomena universe, the monk Giac Hai belonging to the same generation with Minh Tri composed a beautiful poem:

    Spring comes: flowers and butterflies know very well that season.

    Butterflies fly, flowers smile: that happens in accurate time.

    One must know that butterflies and flowers are illusory

    He must not bother about butterflies or flowers
What for to pay attention to them?35

While the *Phap* (Dharma) is regarded as nothing and illusion, the Wu Yan Tong sect as well as the others, paid a particular interest to the Heart considered as the source of any *Phap*, of the phenomenal universe. The relation between the Heart and the *Phap* was perfectly explained by the bonze superior belonging to the seventh generation of the Wu Yan Tong sect:

All the *Phap* take their origin from one’s character, all the *Phap* take their origin from the Heart. The Heart and the *Phap* are one and not two. Ties and grieves, all are nothing. Sin, happiness, right and wrong things, all are nothing. Nothing is not the effect, nothing is not the cause. One must not separate revenge from Karma or must not separate Karma from revenge. Any separation would mean no possibility of existence. Although he pretends to see all *Phap*, he sees nothing. The origin is to know that all *Phap* lie in the predestined affinities and the source is to know that *Phap* lie in real truth.36

Although living among the genuine realities37 one must know that the universe is in perpetual evolution. Oneself as a living being belongs to a single religion and not two. One must not live away from Karma for that is a mastery means for doing good things. In the universe of life and death evolution, using only the *Phap* of that universe without any distinction from the no life no death universe38 would mean to break off with his conception of “Oneself”. At the end, bonze superior Cuu Chi summarized with the following litany:

To understand deeply one’s inner heart means to remain quietly contemplative.

To materialize all *phap* into real phenomena.

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35 Based on the Vietnamese translation by Ngo Tat To. See Literature under Ly, Trans., *op. cit*, p. 445.
36 i.e., invariable truth.
37 “Reality” here is to be understood as “true physiognomy”.
38 The opposition between the phenomena universe in one side and the void universe in the other.
The universe of life and death and that no life no death take their origin from these phenomena are as uncountable and numerous as the sand of the Ganges.

Although they fill the Nothingness

They are in reality of no form

In the everlasting universe, nothing could be compared with that inner heart.

And it always is bright everywhere.

Thus, according to Cuu Chi, despite its multiform aspect, the universe of phenomena comes out from evolution of the heart. The heart is full of nullity and has no firm.

One hundred years after Cuu Chi the monk Nguyen Hoc (died in 1075) belonging to the tenth generation, composed also a litany about the heart which comprised some sentences repeating many Cuu Chi’s thoughts:

Enlightens the heart and opens the intelligence eyes,

Transforms the soul, reveals the true physiognomy.

Walking, standing, lying, sitting are naturally easy.

No one can foresee its appearing or disappearing evolution.

Although it is full of nullity, in fact it does not have any physiognomy.

Anything in this universe could be compared to it. The divine sense eternally appears and illuminates very brightly.

Despite its daily and tireless speeches on the physiognomy

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39 We do not know exactly the year when the monk Cuu Chi died, except only that he died around the Chuong Thanh gia Khanh era (1059-1066).
It has no word to express, that satisfactory heart.\textsuperscript{40}

Bonze superior Thuong Chieu (died in 1203) belonging to the twelfth
generation wrote the following short litany on the Heart:

The man body exists in this life

While the Heart is of Buddha’s nature

It illuminates everywhere

But no one can find it because of immensity and obscurity.

Regarding the Heart as Buddha’s nature originates from Chinese Buddhism
before Hui Neng with its basis on the \textit{Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra}. Those prayers asserted that
the Heart of \textit{alayavijñāna} was Tathāgatagarbha or The Buddha’s nature.\textsuperscript{41}

We know that seeking Buddha’s nature in the heart is the fundamental
principle of Buddhism.

From the “all the Buddhist characters come from the heart” conception, as the
bonze superior Cuu Chi said, monks of the Wu Yan Tong sect as well as a certain
number of the monks of the Vinītarūci Sect paid particular attention to what was
called Tathatā (invariable truth). It was called by different names as “True
physiognomy Buddhist nature miraculous substance … it considered as the universal
inner substance, is hidden in every \textit{phap} of the phenomenal universe and lasts forever
unchanging.\textsuperscript{42}

Describing this inner substance, the monk Truong Nguyen (1160-1165) wrote

\textsuperscript{40} Someone translated this sentence as “not speech could be compared with the Vo Dac”,
considering Vo Dac as a method of meditation not aiming at the enlightenment (Nguyen

\textsuperscript{41} This point of view is that of the \textit{Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra} version by \textit{Guṇabhadra}, the 4-volume
version. There is some difference in the 10-volume, version. It is to be noted that the 4-
volume version was rather popular in Vietnam. The monk Phap Loa (Tran dynasty) had
written a book called \textit{Explaining the 4-volume Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra}.

\textsuperscript{42} Thus the concept of Tathatā had its root from the Yogācāra sect. The Chinese book
\textit{Weishi lun} (On Yogācāra) explained: “Truth is not the wrong, it is the eternal. So it can be
considered as invariable truth”.

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the beautiful litany:

It exists in the light, in a fleck of dust

But does not live in the light or the dust.

The heart and the mind are crystal-clear

It has affinity with nothing

It is the natural substance.

It penetrates in everything without any exception

It is the clever worker who creates the universe.

It would be the mankind morality,

And creates the Nature

And remains fresh as the Nature

It resembles a dancing iron girl

And a wooden drummer.

That invariable truth appears in everything is the though in monk Thien Lao’s following poem:

The green bamboo, the yellow flower are not external things

The while cloud, the bright moonlight appear clearly in the full truth.

This Invariable truth which remains fresh as spring with the nature became the inspiration for many poet monks under the Ly. Bonze superior Man Giac (1052-1096) belonging to the eighth generation of the Wu Yan Tong sect had a well-known poem called “Proclamation on the living beings defects:”

When spring goes away, every flower falls.
When it comes, every flower smiles.

Before one’s eyes, things pass for ever,

And oldness arrives on our head.

Do not think all the flowers fall when spring ends.

Last night, on the front courtyard,

An apricot branch stayed on.\textsuperscript{43}

Even to this day we can still feel the beauty of this poem with an apricot branch images symbolizing the vitality of nature and the monks who had regarded the invariable truth as the strength hidden in nature.

The monk Chan Khong (1016-1100) belonging to the Vinītarūci sect also wrote a litany bearing the thoughts of Man Giac’s poem:

Spring comes, a spring goes away, we doubt that spring ends

Flowers fade, flowers, blossom, it’s always spring.

So, despite its root in the Heart (the heart means Buddha’s nature “all the Buddhist natures come from the heart”) after the explanation of the monks under the Ly’s reign, it hides itself deeply in the nature or in today’s vernacular, it objectifies itself. According to the monks of the Wu Yan Tong sect, enlightenment consists in the perception of the invariable truth, the miraculous substance. But how to perceive that invariable truth specially when all “\textit{Phap} are nullity after the point of view” the nature of nullity that had recognized.

Thus, the nature of nullity or the invariable truth is also nullity. The monk Bao

\textsuperscript{43} Based on the Vietnamese translation by Ngo Tat To, \textit{Literature under Ly, Tran., op. cit.}, p. 299.
Giac (died 1173)\(^{44}\) deals with this problem in the following litany:

> All the Phap return to nullity, unable to lean against anything, anywhere.

> But returning to nullity, the invariable truth will become a plain sight opportunity for being enlightened.

> But the perfect enlightenment of the heart cannot be shown externally.

> Considering the heart as the moon upon the water surface would be a way to destroy it. Nevertheless, the last sentence of this litany is actually rather obscure. Did Bao Giac want to mean by the words “to destroy the heart” as “to lead the heart to nullity?” On that problem, the monk Ngo An (1020-1088) belonging to the eighth generation provided a more lucid explanation.

> Miraculous nature i.e., the Invariable Truth is nullity, upon which we cannot rely. But with the nullity of the heart, we can easily awake the miraculous nature. The pearls burnt in the mountain keep their brilliant colors. The lotus blossoming in the fire remains always, wet, it never gets dried.

> Obviously, if we want to perceive the Invariable truth of nullity, we must get the heart of nullity that also means the Heart nullity. On the Heart nullity, the imperial preceptor Vien Chieu (999-1090) belonging to the generation before Ngo An had clearly said;

> The man body resembles a wall near to crumble

> All the living beings are in a hurry, who is not in sadness?

> If one gets the Heart nullity without a religious physiognomy,

> Religion and nullity, sometimes appearing, sometimes disappearing do not matter their change.

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\(^{44}\) *TUTA* did not record the monk Bao Giac in a separate story. However as he was the teacher of Tinh Gioi (tenth generation) belonging to Wu Yan Tong sect, we can guess he belonged to the 9th generation.
To get the heart awaked with the invariable heart, we cannot perceive it with our daily experience. That perception can only be a super-experience, or intuition. Thus we have no need of written language as it was said above. Language is an instrument of discernment away. Any analysis learnt on reason would damage the awaking to religion (the heart awaking, the invariable truth).

The monks of the Wu Yan Tong sect under the Ly’s reign took precisely this point of view. For example, the monk Minh Tri (died in 1196) belonging to the tenth generation was against what was called arguing i.e. analysis and distinction.

Educating on religion (Chan Buddhism) must be made in special manner.

Ancestor and Buddha’s source is invisible and voiceless.45

If anyone wants to argue (to analyze) on that matter,

He will do something like to look for smoke in the illusory light.

Before Minh Tri, the monk Bao Giam (died in 1173) belonging to the ninth generation, had praised “the intelligence has no distinction” point of view, in the following litany:

The intelligence is like the moon that shines in the sky.

Its light covers the whole universe,

Does not let any corner in darkness

If anyone wants to know, it will be nullity without distinction.

It resembles the vegetation which is ever green on the mountain with dispersing evening smoke.

In this context, nullity without distinction comprises many aspects: no distinction of opposite concepts, no distinction object and subject perception, no partiality, no prejudice.

45 See explication below in the text for the words “invisible” and voiceless.”
To reach enlightenment is to wait for the appearance of light of the Prajñā. For this the Buddhist follower does not need any form of complicated training, any assistance from exterior Tong sect under the Ly period:

Only a few people can get veritable enlightenment through cloistering for cloistering is nothing but imprisoning the intelligence for perfection.

When one gets the marvel of the invariable truth.

The sun appears brilliant in the sky.\textsuperscript{46}

The intelligence light will appear like the sun, the sun of intelligence.

In his \textit{Tham Do Hien Quyet} the monk Vien Chieu (999-1090) quoted a part of the following dialogue:

An aspirant monk asked a monk about the idea of the two following sentences:

Why not follow Buddha to open the stock of marvels?

Why not to ask one’s Ancestor for fire for keeping the lamp lighted?

The monk answered:

The oriole sings in the sky in autumn.

Peonies blossom in the snow.

This answer affirms the questioning of some practices. One should not beg to Buddha nor to one’s ancestors; must one rely on himself and be firm in every instance and condition. “Peonies blossom in the snow” corresponds to “lotus blossom in the furnace”, Ngo An’s idea expressed in the above mentioned poem.

Monk Giac Hai of the tenth generation likewise pointed out:

If someone asks where the Buddha-land is, he will be like the carp in a jumping competition at Long Mon being touched in the forehead, [meaning he will

\textsuperscript{46} i.e. the invariable truth.
fail to know where it is]

Monk Quang Nghiem (1122-1190) a generation after Giac Hai, returned to the “not to follow Buddha” point of view:

The young men have in themselves a willful and raging spirit; they must not follow Buddha’s way.

A resemblance to Vinitaruci nun Dieu Nhan’s “Not to beg to Buddha’s above.

The Wu Yan Tong was influenced by Tantrism during the Ly period, albeit not as deeply as the Viṅḷḷāruci sect was. According to *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, monk Khong Lo (died 1119) devoted himself to studying Dalani, which allowed him “to fly in the air, to walk on the water so well that nobody could anticipate it.” 47 Khong Lo composed a marvelous poem in which he expressed his conceptions about geomantic omens and Taoist practices:

I have chosen a land full of dragons and snakes.

But the feelings for my native village have never diminished.

Sometimes I rush straight on the mountain.

A sounding cry cools down the sky.48

The monk Giac Hai, Khong Lo’s disciple, was shown to have been influenced by Tantrism with the mention of his magical practices related in *Thien Tap Anh*. This same book, however, tells that Khong Lo and Giac Hai both belonged to the Thao Duong sect.49

Nevertheless, we cannot deny the influence of Tantrism on the Wu Yan Tong

49 According to *TUTA*, upper book, both Khong Lo and Glac Hai were the monk Ha Trach’s disciples; but afterwards, Glac Hai became Khong Lo disciple, so he belonged to the 10th generation, while Khong Lo the 9th one Surprisingly *TUTA* lower book recorded that Khong Lo and Giac Hai had belonged to the 2nd generation of the Thao Duong sect and both were Ngo Xa’s disciples.
sect during the Ly period. Again according to *Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, monk Nguyen Hoc (died 1175) belonging to the tenth generation of this sect” often used the Dalani magical words to cure diseases or to beg for rain, always betting immediate positive results. King Ly Anh Tong allowed him to enter the forbidden palace with the intention of using his magical words to overcome any eventuality.” Another monk, Tinh Gioi (died 1207) was dubbed the “Rain Monk” by Ly Cao Tong for his ability to pray for rain or good weather. The Tantric character of Wu Yan Tong became even more accentuated between the middle of the twelfth century and the beginning of the 13th, during the reigns of Ly Anh Tong and Ly Cao Tong.

The philosophies of Laozi and Zhuangzi also had some persuasion over the Wu Yan Tong sect under the Ly. The way of presenting the Invariable Truth or the marvelous nature of the monks of this sect closely resembled Zhuangzi’s and Laozi’s way of presenting the Tao. Even the words *hy* *di* (meaning invisible), were borrowed from them. In Laozi, “the Tao is looked at but not seen—that is why it is called *di* (“invisible”) – listened to but not heard—that is why it is called *hy* (“voiceless”).”

Laozi and Zhuangzi’s language and spirit can be found in the poem by Monk Hieu Quang (died 1221):

The main thing is to get Hua Do morality.

One must not mind how many springs have passed in his life.

May he be free and untroubled in the countryside?

Idleness is the morality of the free.50

Many monks of the Wu Yan Tong sect were keenly interested in elaborating the history of the various Buddhist sects in Vietnam. The originator of such work was monk Thong Bien (died 1134) belonging to the eighth generation of this sect. He originally had the name Tri Khong, and was imperial preceptor Vien Chieu’s disciple. Thanks to his broad and in-depth knowledge on Buddhist history, he could answer the

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50 Based on the Vietnamese translation by Pham Tu Chau and Hoang Le *Literature under Ly, Tran.*, op. cit, p. 554.
Queen Mother Linh Nhan’s questions on the origins of different orders and sects and was thus bestowed with one of the ten titles of a Buddha, the Great teacher Thong Bieu. Historic documents on the orders and sects elaborated by Thong Bieu were later rewritten by his disciple Bien Tai as *Chieu Doi Luc*. This work was passed down to the twelfth generation monk Thuong Chieu (died 1203) who further elaborated the text in turn calling his version *Nam Ton Tu Phap*. This book contains diagrams representing different generations of the various Buddhist sects in Vietnam.

*Thien Uyen Tap Anh* contains reference to Than Nhi (died 1216). This disciple of Chieu once said to his master: “I have served you for years but do not know who the first propagator of this religion is. Now I wish to be instructed on the propagating order of Buddhism to allow contemporary scholars to know origin of its sects and orders.”

Praising Tham Nhi for his faithful dedication to him, Thuong Chieu gave his disciple Thong Bieu’s *Chieu Doi Luc* that explains the various phap (dharma) of all the Vietnamese Buddhist sects. After having read the text, Than Nhi wondered why the sects led by monks Nguyen (on Ly?) Dai Dien and Nguyen (or Ly?) Bat Nha did not appear. Thuong Chieu explained that Thong Bieu must have omitted them on purpose. The reason may be that according to Thien Uyen Tapb Anh, monk Bat Nha’s sect belonging to the Thao Duong sect. some time later, Tran Nhi himself passed various documents onto his student, monk An Khong also known as great monk Na Ngan.

*Thien Uyen Tap Anh*, which was largely compiled during the later Tran period, is a valuable document for the study of Buddhism under the Ly. Its compilation was gradually completed by monks in the Wu Yan Tong sect above.

4. The Thao Duong Chan Sect Under the Ly Dynasty

In contrast to the already developed Vinītarūci and Wu Yan Tong sects, the Thao Duong was particular to the Ly. It is, however, unfortunate that only a handful of documents remain about this sect. In *Thien Uyen Tap Anh’s* appendix is a list of this sect’s generations.
The monks Thao Duong, who was cloistered in Thang Long’s Khai Quoc pagoda, inaugurated the sect that bears his name. This pagoda had been the place for Wu Yan Tong sect monks like Van Phong, Khuong Viet, and Thong Bien. Only few references are made to Thao Duong in Le Trac’s *An Nam Chi Luoc*. One of these, “Thao Duong followed his master in Champa. In the war against that country, Ly Thanh Vuong (i.e. Thanh Tong) captured that monk from whom he made a slave for lessor monks.”

One day a lesson monk wrote a collection of aphorisms. He put them on the table and came out. Thao Duong stealthily entered and corrected them. Surprised by what the slave did, the lesser monk reported to the king who named the slave monk the state monk.

Cao Hung Trung’s books *An Nam Chi* relates: “The monk Thao Duong was a very virtuous man who know Buddhist classics perfectly. The Ly emperor honored him as a master. Afterward, he died in a quiet sitting position.” Thien Uyen Tap Anh notes that Thao Duong belonged to the Tuyet Dau Minh Giac sect. The monk Tuyet Dau (980-1052) belonged to the Yun Men (Cloud-gate) sect founded by the monk Van Yen and split from the Southern China Tanh Nguyen sect, cloistered in the Tu Khanh pagoda located in the Xuedou (“Snow bean”) mountain of Zhejiang province. He was given by the Song Emperor the title of Minh Giac, the great monk, and thus was often called Tuyet Dau Minh Giac.

Thao Duong was a Han Chinese. Ly Thanh Tong came back from the war against Champa in 1069. Ly Thanh Tong came back from the war against Champa in 1069. And it evidently was that Thao Duong arrived in Thang Long that year. The various generations of the Thao Duong sect as related in *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* are;

- The First generation comprised three monks: King Ly Thanh Tong (1023-1072), the monk Bat Nha and the hermit Ngo Xa.
- The Second generation comprised four monks: the official Ngo Ich, the monk

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51 Those monks looked after the Buddhist affairs under the chief monk direction.  
52 See *An Nam Chi Luoc*, bk 14, Phuong Ngoai.  
53 *An Nam Chi*, Tien Thich
Hoang Minh (also known as Thieu Minh), the monk Khong Lo and the monk Giac Hai (also named Dinh Giac).

- The Third generation comprised four monks: Vice advisor Do Vu, the monk Pham Am, King Ly Anh Tong (1136-1175) and the monk Do Do.

- The Fourth generation comprised three monks: the monk Troung Tam Tang, the monk Chan Huyen and the vice advisor Do Thuong.

- The Fifth generation comprised four monks: The monk Hai Tinh, King Ly Cao Tong (1173-1210), Nguyen Thuc and the royal servant having the family name of Pham.

Through an examination of the various generations of the Thao Duong sect, it is evident that many of its members were in the same families as the King Thanh Tong, Anh Tong, and Cao Tong and many officials and dignitaries. It is safe to conclude that although this sect enjoyed great power under the Ly, its circle of followers remained small.

Unfortunately, due to a lack in documents, historians know little of the Buddhist ideology of this sect. They can, however, surmise that many monks in this sect practiced Tantrism. Two such monks, Khong Lo and Giac Hai, were discussed above. When investigating the Buddhist sects during the Ly period, the monk Thong Bieu of the Wu Yan Tong sect omitted any reference to the sects led by monks Dai Dien and Bat Nha. Dai Dien was a monk specialized in magic. It is likely that the monk Bat Nha (“Prajna”) also practiced Tantrism.

Some argue that the discussion of Avalokiteśvarya, Amitābha, The Land of Bliss, and Buddhist prayer methods found in his article “Truy to Canh Sach” suggests that Thao Duong was strongly influenced by the Pure Land sect. Unfortunately, lack of concrete evidence prevents us from firmly establishing whether Thao Duong actually authored the article. Nevertheless, the ideas of the Pure Land Sect and the cults of Avalokiteśvara and Amitabha were widespread during the Ly period and exerted an important influence on various Chan sects even before the establishment of
the Thao Duong sect.

Others draw links between Thao Duong and the Chinese Tuyet Dau Minh Giac sect, pointing to ideological affinities between the two. While a case can be made for such a hypothesis, it would certainly be wrong to claim that Thao Duong was actually a disciple of Tuyet Dau. As noted in the Annam Chi Luoc, Thao Duong’s master, whom he accompanied on a journey to Champa, was not Tuyet Dau. On the other hand, evidence that Tuyet Dau died in 1052 and that Thao Duong arrived in Thang Long in 1069 suggests that the two monks lived during roughly the same period.

As Bonze Superior Tuyet Dau Minh Giac and his Yun Men (Cloud-gate) sect supported a degree of reconciliation between Buddhism and Confucianism, his thought proved influential among Confucian circles. It is perhaps because of this that in Vietnam, the Thao Duong sect spread among the aristocratic bureaucratic classes who eschewed monastic life. Tuyet Dau’s important work was the *Tuyet Dau Ngu Luc* was a popular text among Ly Buddhist sects. For example, Bonze superior Quang Nghiem (1122-1190) of the Wu Yan Tong heard Bonze Superior Thien Tri preach from the *Tuyet Dau Ngu Luc* at the Phuc Thanh pagoda. This perhaps suggests the influence of Thao Duong. However, it is unlikely that dishonest and greedy luminaries such as Ing Ly Cao Tong or the influential aristocrat Do Anh Vu followed Buddhist precepts for reasons other than religious faddism, and certainly not as a genuine expression of religious devotion or as an earnest search for inner peace.

5. **Towers and Pagodas under the Ly**

Any treatment of the religious and cultural dimensions of Ly Buddhism would be incomplete without a consideration of Buddhist towers and pagodas.

Ancient history texts from the *Viet Su Luoc* to the *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu*, note that Ly kings from virtually every reign built and patronized pagodas and towers. These histories record that while kings dipped into state revenues to finance pagoda and tower construction, countries smaller temples were built and supported by local officials and communities.
Immediately after transferring the royal capital to Thang Long, King Ly Thai To ordered the construction of the Hung Phap pagoda within the walls of the citadel and the Thang Nghiem pagoda outside. In 1011, the Van Tue pagoda was also built inside the capital and other temples such as the Tu Dai Thien Vuong, the Cam Y, and the Long Hung Thanh Tho were erected in the neighboring countryside. In 1024, another pagoda, the Chau Giao, was built within the royal citadel to allow the king to attend prayer recitals.

After succeeding to the throne in 1031, Ly Thai Tong financed the construction of 150 village pagodas. In 1041, he built the Tu Thi Thien Phuc monastery in Tien Du Mountain and in 1049, he erected the Dien Huu pagoda, better known as the Chua Mot Cot or One–Pillar Pagoda, in Thang Long. In 1056, during the reign of Ly Thai Tong, the Sung Khanh Bao Thien pagoda (known as the Bao Thien pagoda) was built on the site where the Hanoi cathedral stands today. In 1057, the Thien Phuc and Thien Tho pagodas and the Dai Tang Tu Thien tower was built at Do Son. In 1059, the Sung Nghiem Bao Duc pagoda was built on the Tien Du Mountain, in 1070, the Nhi Thien Vuong pagoda was built in Thang Long.

Under the reign of King Ly Nhan Tong, scores of pagodas and temples were erected throughout the country. The king’s mother, Linh Nhan, is credited with ordering the construction of over 100 pagodas. In 1086, the construction of the Canh Long Dong Khanh pagoda began in Lam Son Mountain and was completed in 1094. The tower of this pagoda was finished in 1088. In 1099, a pagoda was built in the An Lao Mountain and in 1100 the Vinh Phuc pagoda was built on the Tien Du Mountain. In 1105, the One Pillar Pagoda was enlarged and two towers were added. That same year, three more towers were built on to the Lam Son pagoda. In 1108, the Van Phong Thanh Thien tower came under construction on the Chuong Son mountain and was finished in 1117.

Construction of the Thang Nghiem Pagoda began in 1114 and was completed in 1118. A chamber, called the Thien Phat, and containing one thousand statues of the Buddha, was added that same year. In 1115, the Sung Phuc pagoda in Sieu Loai hamlet (Thuan Thanh-Ha Bac) was constructed. The erection of the Sung Thien Dien
Linh tower at the Doi mountain (Ha Nam Ninh province) began in 1118 and was completed in 1121. The Tinh Lu pagoda was completed in 1119. In 1121, local authorities built the Dao Thien pagoda and began constructing the Quang Giao pagoda at the Tien Du Mountain. It was finished in 1123. That same year saw the completion of Phung Tu pagoda and four years later the Trung Hung Dien Tho pagoda was also finished. In 1134, during the reign of King Than Tong, two pagodas, the Thien Ninh and Thien Tho were built.

While history does not record the construction of any pagodas during the reigns of Kings Anh Tong and Cao Tong, it is often argued that the Phuc Van pagoda (in Thuan Thanh, Ha Bac) was completed during their era in 1161. As evidence suggests that the pagoda was actually built much earlier, it was perhaps only renovated in 1161. Another massive renovation occurred at the Chan Giao pagoda in 1179, where Ly Hue Tong, the last Ly king, entered the monk hood during the waning years of the dynasty.

The pagodas and towers mentioned above were erected by the state and thus recorded in official history books. Moreover, many local pagodas were also built. Based on steles which date from the Ly period, it is known that the construction of Bao an pagoda on An Hoa mountain (Nhoi mountain in Thanh Hoa) began in 1099 and was completed a year later. The Bao Ninh Sung Phuc pagoda in Chiem Hoa (Ha Tuyen) was built in 1107. The Linh Xung pagoda at the Nguong Mountain (Ha Trung, Thanh Hoa) was built on Ly Thuong Kiet’s order and finished in 1126. The Sung Nghiem Dien Thanh pagoda (Hau Loc, Thanh Hoa) was built in 1117. work on the Dieu Phuc pagoda (Xuan Thuy, Ha Nam Ninh) began in 1121 and ended in 1122. The Dien Phuc pagoda from Co Viet hamlet (My Van, Hai Hung) was built around 1156-57. The Tu Gia Bao an pagoda at Thap Mieu (Me Linh, Hanoi) was finished in 1209.

While the distinctive architecture of Ly pagodas and towers has been gradually destroyed over time, scattered ruins and epigraphical vestiges give us some sense of its scale and special characteristics. An archeological excavation carried out in 1972-73 at the Lang (Vien Giac) Pagoda in the Minh Hai commune, My Van district, Hai Hung province, uncovered a significant segment of the foundation of a
pagoda built around 1115 during the Ly. Nearly square in shape, the foundation comprise three floors, the first 20.2 x 23.6 meters, the second 15.2 x 18.8 and the third 8.2 x 10.4 meters. The third floor served as an altar, whose remains include Buddha statues and statues of lions holding aloft the Buddha’s throne poised atop a stone platform. The three story square pagoda had four doors each facing a cardinal director, a special facet which seems characteristics of Ly architecture. Many Ly pagodas such as the Phat Tich pagoda built in 1057 and the Giam pagoda built in 1086, were situated atop mountains. They were generally built on high stone platforms and embedded in the mountain sides. Many of the floors from these mountain pagodas are still visible today.

The Dien Huu pagoda (i.e. the One-Pillar Pagoda) was also an original architectural feat of the Ly. According to the Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu, ‘In winter, on the 10th month of the 6th year of “Thien Cam Thanh Vu (1049), the Dien Huu pagoda was built. It was constructed following a dream of the King Ly Thai Tong. In the dream, the king had seen Buddha Avalokitesvara sitting on a lotus throne and had been invited to sit upon the throne with her. The king’s officials interpreted the dream as a bad omen. One of them, the monk Thien Tue, advised the king to erect a pagoda atop a stone column and place within it a throne resembling the one he had seen in his dream. The monk then walked around the column recited prayers and begged for longevity for the king. Thus, the pagoda was named Dien Huu, meaning long life.”54

“In Autumn, in the 9th month of the 5th year of the Long Phu era (1105), two white pointed towers were added to the Dien Huu pagoda. King Ly Nhan Tong ordered the pagoda renovated, to make it more beautiful than before. He had a small lake dug around the pagoda called Linh Chieu Lake. The lake in turn was surrounded by an ornately carved and painted path. Another lake, Bich Tri was dug around the path with a parabolic bridge linking the two sides. In the courtyard in front of the pagoda, a tower was erected. On the first and fifteenth days of every month and the eighth day of 4th month, the King prayed and carried out a Buddhist bathing rite at the

54 Literature under Ly, Tran’s Reigns, Book I 1977 .362
pagoda. This ceremony became a routine over time.\textsuperscript{55}

The stele on the Sung Thien Dien Lin tower erected in 1122 atop the Doi Mountain in Ha Nam Ninh contained a similar paragraph. “The Dien Huu pagoda was built in the Tay Cam Garden in accordance with the ancient dimensions and base dons both the requirements and patronage of the king at that time. After the Perfumed Linh Chieu Lake had been dug, a stone column whose top was covered by a lotus with a thousand blossoming leaves emerged from its depths. A dark red temple was built on the lotus and a yellow statue was erected inside it. A painted path ran around the lake. And around the path, the Bich Tri Lake was dug. A parabolic bridge linked the two sides. In a courtyard, to the right and left of the bridge, two towers inlaid with precious pearls were erected.”\textsuperscript{56} Obviously, the architectural style of the Dien Huu pagoda during the Ly period was different and much more beautiful than the One-Pillar Pagoda as it exists today.

During the Ly dynasty, the pagoda and tower architecture was symmetrical and parallel, with all structures constructed around a central axis. Also popular were many-storied towers. For example, the Dai Thang Tu Thien Tower of the Bao Thien pagoda constructed in Thang Long was twelve stories high. The Sung Thien Dien Linh tower in the Doi pagoda (Ha Nam Ninh) was thirteen stories high. The Chieu An tower at the Linh Xing pagoda (Thang Hoa) was nine stories high. The tower at the Phong Tich pagoda (Ha Bac) was ten stories high and 8.5 meters wind on each side. The Van Phong Thanh Thien tower in Chuong was built on a pedestal nineteen meters wide, and much higher than the Phat Tich tower.

Pagodas and towers during the Ly reign were decorated spherical statues and beautiful bas-relief carved in stone. The statues include representations of elephants, lions, buffalos, horses, rhinos (i.e. in the Phat Tich pagoda in Ha Bac), crocodiles (i.e. in the Lang Pagoda in Hai Hung and Hanoi’s Ba Tam pagoda), and divine birds, such as dancing and singing lays (i.e. at the Chuong Son and Phat Tich pagodas). Decorative designs of lotus leaves and waves are found carved in stone on the floor.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid
and the pagoda walls are often covered with pictures. For example, the walls of the Linh Xung pagoda were reputedly, “painted with beautiful scenery, Buddhist images, ever-changing forms and uncountable pictographic designs.” On the walls of the Sung Nghiem Dien Thanh pagoda, “there were paintings suggesting the principle of karma and laws of cause and effect, and depictions of thousands of fantastic and illusory transformations.”

Ly Dynasty art complemented the beauty of Buddhist architecture, and Ly Dynasty Buddhism in turn shaped the distinctive spirit of Ly Dynasty art.

Statues erected within pagodas and towers can be analyzed to illuminate important aspects of art and Buddhism under the Ly. Three stone statues from the Ly period remain today. The first can be found in the Phat Tich Statue, the most beautiful, stands 1.87 meters high, 2.77 with the pedestal included. According to epigraphic evidence, the statue was completed in 1057. While some scholars identify the statue as a representation of the Buddha Amitabha, others disagree.

The Mot Mai statue, on the other hand, based on an inscription carved into its lotus- crowned lion-shaped pedestal is generally accepted to be Amitabha. According to the inscription, “a monk with the Buddhist name Tri Bat from Thach That mountain, upon recalling Amitabha in the ‘Western Land of the Blessed’, asked his followers to build a large ceremonial altar. He also planned to erect a large stone statue of Amitābha, but was unable to realize his aim.” Only in the 8th year of the Hoi Phong era (1099) did he manage to have the statue completed. Tri Bat, whose name was carved on the pedestal of the Mot Mai Pagoda, is almost certainly a member of the twelfth generation of the Vinītarūci sect. As mentioned previously, Tri Bat (1049-1117) was a disciple of Bonze Superior Sung Pham in the Phap Van pagoda (i.e. Dau pagoda Ha Bac.). According to the Thien Uyen Tap Anh, Tri Bat entered the monkhood in the To Phong pagoda atop Thach That Mountain, Tri Bat was strongly influenced by Tantrism, as evidenced by the Tantric prophesy he repeated at the end of his sutra on the nature of life and death. But based on the

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57 TUTA, lower book
58 Ibid
59 Ibid
inscription on the status pedestal, it is clear that Tri Bat was also influenced by the Pure Land sect and believed in the ‘Western Land of the Blessed’ and in the Buddha Amitabha. This suggests that the Pure Land sect exerted influence within the Vinītarūci sect. At that time the Wu Yan Tong sect was also influenced by the Pure Land sect. According to the Thien Uyen Tap Anh, Bonze Tinh Lue (1112-1175), a member of the tenth generation of the Wu Yantong sect, advocated reciting prayers with both one’s heart and month. This suggested a combination of the Dhyana and the Pure Land beliefs.

The existence of Pure Land beliefs and a belief in Amitābha, can also be seen in the inscription on the Sung Thien Dien Linh tower at the Doi pagoda in Ha Nam Ninh. The inscription on the tower recalled the Amitābha statue erected during the Quang Chieu lantern festival in front of the Dai Hung gate of Thang Long. It also expresses hope that Queen Linh Nhan “will have a pure and contented soul after death.” The inscription on the stele of the Vien Quang pagoda (constructed in 1122) related that the statue of Amitābha could be found in the middle compartment beside the statue of Bodhidharma. The final sentence of the inscription said, “Amitabha sits in the middle and Bodhidharma sits behind him.” Coupled with a belief in Amitābha, there was also a belief in Avalokiteśvara, the bodhisattva whose job it was to lead living beings to the Western Land of the Blessed. It is clear that a cult of Avalokiteśvara was widespread during the Ly.

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60 Literature under the Ly, Tran...op. cit., p 545
61 ibid