ABSTRACT

Venerable Yen Pei BBM (1917--1996) was a tireless Buddhist in propagating Buddhism all his life. He is best known for his charity and social welfare projects in Singapore. His life went through three critical stages during which he stayed in China, Taiwan, and Singapore. In each stage Yen Pei played a different role in his lifelong pursuit of this-worldly Buddhism.

This thesis is the first attempt to sketch a biography of Yen Pei. It outlines the three stages of his life in three different places. Throughout the three stages we can witness the idea of this-worldly Buddhism gaining prominence and eventually put into practice in Yen Pei’s missionary life. In the first stage when he was in China, Yen Pei received Buddhist training as a novice under many different eminent monks including Venerable Taixu and Venerable Yin-shun, and eventually gained experience in running Buddhist schools himself. During this time, he was introduced to the idea of this-worldly Buddhism first created by Taixu, which emphasized social engagement. The experience in this stage proved to be crucial in his later career as a Buddhist monk. The second stage witnessed a period of social and political chaos in Hong Kong and Taiwan when he spent almost all of his energies on propagating Buddhist teachings to the general public. The various constraints in Taiwan prompted the migration of Yen Pei to Singapore in the early 1960s, where he finally found an opportunity to put his belief in this-worldly Buddhism into practice, specifically in the form of his various charity and social welfare projects.