

## 2 Chinese challenges to Buddhism

Buddhist interactions with Confucianism and Daoism; and Chinese Mahāyāna

### 2.1 FACTORS THAT CHALLENGED BUDDHISM IN ANCIENT CHINA

When Buddhism began entering China shortly before the Common Era, she was an ancient and well-established culture with her own indigenous philosophy and religion [1.1]. As such, Buddhism faced these special conditions following its introduction into China:

- (1) Daoism was China's own popular religion, but it did not have the rational and philosophical depth that gave Buddhism greater prestige.
- (2) Confucianism emphasized family values, obedience to authority and social stability. Confucian scholars constituted the most influential sector of society. They generally disapproved of “barbarian” religions.
- (3) Antecedents. Confucianism and Taoism had long provided the Chinese people with a vocabulary and philosophy of something beyond the daily grind. The cultural and intellectual bedrock helped Buddhism tremendously to express itself by means of contextualization.
- (4) The discipline and standard of moral virtue of Buddhism, as exemplified in the early Buddhist missionaries inspired the thinking Chinese. But, on a general level, the ancient Chinese were attracted to what they perceived as the magical powers of these missionaries.

### 2.2 DAOISM IN CHINESE BUDDHISM

**2.2.1 How the early Chinese viewed Buddhism.** When Buddhism first arrived in China in the 1<sup>st</sup> century (or earlier), it remained within the community of foreign traders, and had no significant impact on the Hān Chinese. Around 150 CE, translators such as Ān Shīgāo 安世高 (?-170)<sup>1</sup> began to produce Chinese translations of Buddhist texts. Most of his translations were of the Hīnayāna, “inferior vehicle” (a Mahāyāna term for the early Indian scripture and system), and as such served more as a curiosity and diversion for the leisure elite, but had no impact whatsoever on the common people, who were mostly illiterate, anyway.

Almost all of the Buddhist texts translated into Chinese were *philosophical* (eg the Wisdom texts), *legalistic* (the Vinayas) or *mythical* (the Lotus Sutra), and with the sidelining of early Buddhist teachings and meditation—and with the dominant influence of indigenous philosophies and beliefs—the Buddhism that grew on Chinese soil and filled the Chinese mind was effectively a *Chinese* religion. Whalen Lai, in “Buddhism in China: A historical survey,” for example, notes:

For the Han Chinese, the doctrine of karmic rebirth entailed the transmigration of the soul—a presumption they could not do away with even when they accepted the doctrine of emptiness. Since nirvana was seen as a return to a pure origin, it was believed to be achieved by discarding the defilements. Refining one's inner self was thought to be a process of attaining a sublime *shen* (spirit) that would realize nirvanic immortality or nondeath. (2002:10 digital ed)

**2.2.2 The Huàhú controversy: Lǎozi vs the Buddha.** Around 300, Wáng Fú 王浮, a Daoist, fabricated the **Huàhú jīng** 化胡經 (Classic on the Conversion of the Barbarians) in which they claimed that the Buddha was a reincarnation of Lǎozi, or that he went to India and became Shakyamuni (or the teacher

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<sup>1</sup> Ān Shīgāo was a prince of Parthia (ancient Iran) who renounced his claim to the throne to become a missionary monk. In 148, he arrived in China at the Luòyáng (洛阳), the Hān capital, where he set up a centre for translating Buddhist texts. He translated 35 texts, mostly from the early Pali texts. Ān Shīgāo is the first Buddhist missionary to China to be named in Chinese sources. Another Parthian monk named Ān Xuán 安玄 is said to have joined Ān Shīgāo at Luòyáng around 181 CE.

of Shakyamuni).<sup>2</sup> The Buddhists responded with the **Qīngjìng fǎxíng jīng** 清淨法行經 (Sutra to Propagate the Clear and True Teaching),<sup>3</sup> wherein the Buddha sent out his three disciples,<sup>4</sup> namely, Confucius (the bodhisattva Judō), his chief disciple Zhāng Yànyuǎn 張彥遠 (the bodhisattva Kōjō)<sup>5</sup> and Lǎozǐ (Mahā Kaśyapa),<sup>6</sup> to instruct the Chinese, claiming this to be the true interpretation of the Daoist classic, **Qīngjìng jīng** 清淨經. [2.5; 2.6.3]

Some 200 years later, in 520, in Luòyáng 洛陽,<sup>7</sup> there was a court-sponsored public debate between the Daoists and the Buddhists over the *huàhú* 化胡 thesis: did Lǎozǐ leave China and reappear in India as Buddha? Or, did Buddha will his own rebirth in China as Lǎozǐ? This debate was a product of the Hàn perception of Buddha and Lǎozǐ as equal sages, and each side sought to absorb the other. (Around the same time, in India, the Hindus were claiming that Vishnu had masqueraded as a heretical “Buddha” in order to deceive and weaken the demonic hosts.) In the process of the debate, the Chinese Buddhists and Daoists pushed the relative dates of their respective founders farther and farther back until Buddha was said to have died in 1052 BCE.

The Buddhists won the 520 debate, but that also moved the date of the demise of the *dharma*, set by one popular count as coming 1,500 years after the Buddha’s death, which would move the beginning of the last age to 552 C.E. After a debate in 520, was a period when Buddhist and Daoist scholars forged Classics and Sutras, both to prove that their respective founders were anterior to the other. In 552, the prophecy self-actualized, as it were. A civil war raging in Luòyáng, burnt down its temples.

One of the darkest hours for Chinese Buddhism was the anti-Buddhist persecution of 574–577, launched by emperor Wǔ of Northern Zhōu [7.4.1]. Yet, out of this trial by fire, the Buddha *dharma* rose like a phoenix, and a result would be the Chinese Mahāyāna schools that flourished in the Sui and the Táng dynasties. The mature Chinese Mahāyāna synthesis was not like the earlier “concept-matching” or *géyì* 格義 syncretism [2.2.3]. The period of digesting Indian subtleties had ended; a time of independent creativity had begun. But before we consider a philosophical analysis of the Chinese Mahāyāna schools, we need to consider the building blocks of that edifice.

**2.2.3 Dào shēng 道生 (c360-434).** Early Buddhism is a gradual teaching.<sup>8</sup> But in China, the dominant schools adopted the official view of “sudden awakening” [4.1.27; 5.3.1]. Why did this happen? The Chinese Buddhist theory of sudden awakening was first proposed by the ultra-liberal monk **Dào shēng**, who was also remembered for asserting the doctrine of universal Buddha-nature [2.3.2, 4.2.2.3]. Let us examine Dào shēng’s connection with universal Buddha-nature first; for, this would lead him on to formulate his view of sudden awakening.

Up to Dào shēng’s time, there was a belief that *not* all beings have Buddha-nature, that is, they do not have the potential for awakening—a novel view not found in early Buddhism. According to this belief,

<sup>2</sup> Also called *Lǎozǐ huàhú jīng* 老子化胡經 “Lǎozǐ Converted the Barbarians” or *Lǎozǐ kāitiān jīng* 老子開天經, “Classic of Lǎozǐ Opening Heaven.” According to another such apocryphal account, Siddhartha, on meeting Lǎozǐ could not understand his philosophy, and as a result the former taught what we know as Buddhism!

<sup>3</sup> The extant version prob dates from the 6th cent Northern Celestial Masters (*Tiān Shī Dào* 天師道). The text is honorifically known as the *Tàishàng Língbǎo Lǎozǐ huàhú miào jīng* 太上靈寶老子化胡妙經, “The Supreme Numinous Treasure’s Sublime Classic on Lǎozǐ’s Conversion of the Barbarians”). A copy of the *Huàhú jīng* was found in the Mògāo Caves near Dūnhuáng. Liu Yi (1997) believes the original text dates from around late 4th or early 5th cent; see *International Dunhuang Project Newsletter* 7, 1997: [http://idp.bl.uk/archives/news07/idpnews\\_07.a4d](http://idp.bl.uk/archives/news07/idpnews_07.a4d).

<sup>4</sup> *Sānshèng pàiqiǎn shuō* 三聖派遣說.

<sup>5</sup> Yányuǎn 顏淵, Confucius’ foremost disciple as the bodhisattva Kōjō.

<sup>6</sup> Móhē Jiāyè 摩訶迦葉.

<sup>7</sup> Located about 300 km east of Xī’ān 西安, the other ancient capital of China. Currently, a prefecture-level city in western Henan province, People’s Republic of China. It borders the provincial capital of Zhengzhou to the east, Pingdingshan to the southeast, Nanyang to the south, Sanmenxia to the west, Jiyuan to the north, and Jiaozuo to the northeast. Situated on the central plain of China, one of cradles of the Chinese civilization, Luòyáng was one of the 4 great ancient capitals of China. See <http://www.answers.com/topic/luoyang> & <http://www.answers.com/topic/historical-capitals-of-china>.

<sup>8</sup> See esp Cūḷa Hatthi, padōpama S (M 27) = SD 40.5 & Kandaraka S (M 51) = SD 32.9; also M:ÑB 34-38.

there were the *icchantikā* (“those of great desire”), who on account of their nature, were incapable of awakening. This was the view found in the shorter version of the Nirvāṇa Sūtra (*Nièpán jīng* 涅槃經), brought back from India by Fǎxiǎn 法顯 (c337-c422). So this view was accepted by the text-based Chinese Buddhists of that time.

Dàooshēng’s times were noted for the meeting of Buddhist and Daoist traditions: it was the heyday of the “concept-matching” (*géyì* 格義), where difficult Buddhist terms were translated by what were viewed as their Daoist cognates, so that Buddhist concepts were understood in the light of neo-Daoist ideas [2.6.2]. It was the time of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras and their doctrine of emptiness, a notion that resonated with the neo-Daoist ideas of nothingness or non-being (*wú* 無).<sup>9</sup>

This was a time when the preoccupation with the dialectical conflict between ignorance and awakening grew so pervasive that suffering (*duḥkha*) was altogether forgotten. This shift reinforced the emphasis on the mind and Buddha-nature. Awakening was no longer defined as realizing the causes and end of suffering, but instead pointed to the seeing of the nature of the mind itself. This is the spirit that would pervade Chinese Buddhism in the centuries that followed.

Dàooshēng, due to his Daoist leanings, exhibited a great freedom of the spirit, characteristic of the Daoist sages. His liberal views were based on an intellectualized and rationalized interpretation of the standard Mahāyāna hermeneutical principle, found in such guides as “the four refuges or reliances” (*sīyī* 四依, Skt: *catvāri pratisaraṇāni* or *catvāro niśrayāḥ*) of the **Catuḥpratisaraṇa Sūtra**:

Rely on the teaching, not the teacher.

Rely on the meaning (*artha*), not the letter (*vyañjana*).

Rely on the explicit [definitive] meaning (*nītārtha*), not the implicit [indefinitive] meaning (*neyārtha*).

Rely on insight (*jñāna*), not on sense-consciousness (*vijñāna*).<sup>10</sup>

More specifically, these four refuges or reliances are called “the four Dharma reliances” (*sī yīfǎ* 四依法) or the four bases of the Dharma, that is, the four “masters” (or teachers) that we can rely on after the Buddha has entered nirvana.<sup>11</sup>

Dàooshēng, however, interpreted these guidelines as giving him *a free hand for religious self-expression*. He viewed the teaching as he understood it, viewing its meaning and defining it through his own insight [3.3.1]. In short, Dàooshēng left the raft behind without ever having crossed the river. So free was his spirit, that like a modernist Sinhalese scholar-monk, he was very liberal with the precepts, and had, for example, no qualms taking food well past noon.<sup>12</sup>

Whether it was on account of his intellectual liberality or his great compassion, Dàooshēng declared that even the *icchantikā* were capable of Buddhahood. Since truth is indivisible, he argued, it follows that awakening must also occur “at once” (*dùnwù* 頓悟). Moreover, since the permanent essence lies within us, it is identical with the Buddha-nature. This was perhaps the most radical aspect of Dàooshēng’s theory.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See Whalen Lai 1987a: 169.

<sup>10</sup> See <http://santifm1.0.googlepages.com/fourrelianceessutra>. See Vimalakīrti Sūtra (T14.556c); Étienne Lamotte (tr) *L’Enseignement de Vimalakīrti* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires) 1962: 380-382 n23 for refs & Kumārajīva’s explanation of these 4 refuges (*catuḥpratisaraṇa*). See Hakamaya Noriaki, “Shie (catuḥpratisaraṇa) hihankō josetsu,” 1987 & Ronald M Davidson, “Standards of scriptural authenticity,” 1990: 301 f.

<sup>11</sup> The best known is the set of 4 “great references” (*mahāpadesa*): see **Mahāparinibbāna S** (D 16.4.7-11/-2:125 f & also SD 9 Intro (11), & Mahāpadesa S (A 4.180/2:167-170).

<sup>12</sup> See Whalen Lai 1987a: 171 f; see also the examples of Ven Dr W Rahula (Paris): **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10) = SD 13.1 (12.3) & of Ven Dr Ratanasara (Los Angeles) in the light of **Alaggadūpama S** (M 22) = SD 3.13 Intro (1).

<sup>13</sup> See Whalen Lai 1987a: 173.

Dàoshēng, the last of the great neo-Daoistic Buddhists, thus had some notion of the doctrine of universal Buddha-nature even before the final chapters of the full-length Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra<sup>14</sup> had arrived in the south. On the basis of the Lotus Sutra, he had already argued that if the truth is one, then awakened realization of this truth of the “one vehicle” (*eka,yāna*) must also be sudden and total.

Both Dàoshēng and **Huiguān** 慧觀 (d 446) were pupils of Kumāra,jīva (Jiūmóluóshí 鳩摩羅什 344-409), but while the former was liberal, the latter was traditional, leaning towards early Buddhism. Hui-guān, in fact, wrote “On Gradual Awakening” (*Jiānwù lùn* 漸悟論), as a rebuttal of sudden awakening (subitism), and defending gradual awakening. According to Whalen Lai, it was in 429 that Huiguān had Dàoshēng expelled from Cháng’ān, “for admitting the *icchantika* into the ranks of the enlightened in clear violation of the words of the Buddha as they were then known” (1987: 191).

The two shorter versions of the Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra—one translated by Fāxiǎn, and the other a middle-length Tibetan version—indicate that the *icchantika* has so totally severed all his good roots that he can never attain Buddhahood. The full-length Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra, however, states that even the *icchantika* can eventually find release into nirvana, since no state is fixed and that change for the better or the best is always possible.<sup>15</sup>

The full-length Mahā,parinirvāṇa Sūtra translated by the Indian monk **Dharma,kṣema** (Tánwúchèn 曇無讖 or Tánwúluóchèn 曇無羅讖 385-433) in 422, finally reached Cháng’ān in 430. Dàoshēng, vindicated and ever more confident, shifted his position from “a causative analysis of Buddha-nature to one asserting a priori possession of this essence” (Lai 1987: 198 n68). Thenceforth, subitism was forever linked with universal Buddha-nature, as far as Chinese Buddhism is concerned.<sup>16</sup>

**2.2.4 Gradual vs sudden awakening.** Scholars have discussed that the notion of “sudden awakening” (*dùnjiào* 頓教, or *dùnwù* 頓悟) and “gradual awakening” (*jiānjiào* 漸教, or *jiānwù* 漸悟) especially in connection with the Chán 禪 school [5]. The Chán championing on sudden satori<sup>17</sup> is at best viewed as a skillful means (*fāngbiàn* 方便, Skt *upaya*), or at worst, “unchanly” polemics, of the mediaeval Chinese Buddhists, as a bridge to accommodate ancient Chinese perception of wisdom and reality. Peter Gregory, in his volume on *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought*, makes this helpful observation:

...the importance of the sudden/gradual controversy in Chinese Buddhism could be understood, in part, by seeing it as elaborating a tension already present in Chinese thought (such as that between what Richard Mather, in an article on the Chinese intellectual world in the third century, has characterized as naturalness and conformity). Because this tension was given one of its most articulate expressions in the Buddhist debates of the eighth century, we are justified in using the Buddhist terms “sudden” and “gradual” to characterize this polarity without thereby implying that it was a specifically Buddhist paradigm, or that its use in later non-Buddhist contexts necessarily reflected a Buddhist influence. In fact, it seems to have been due to their very vagueness and generality that the terms could be adopted by Yen Yu and Tung Ch’i-ch’ang as categories in their theories of Chinese poetry and painting, as Richard Lynn and James Cahill ably demonstrated, without necessarily suggesting any explicitly Buddhist content.

When considered in terms of the very broad polarity of intuition vs effort, the sudden/gradual rubric has a wide applicability which can be seen as operating at different levels of generality throughout the course of Chinese intellectual history. On the most general level, the polarity can be seen as reflected in the tension between the early Confucian and Taoist traditions. Moreover, within the Confucian tradition itself, it can be seen as reflected in the different points of emphasis

<sup>14</sup> Or simply Nirvāṇa Sūtra, *Nièpán Jīng* 涅槃經: this is *not* the Pali text (D 16), but prob a quasi-Mahāsaṅghika work, written around 100 CE. See below for its 3 versions; see also <http://www.acmuller.net/cgi-bin/search-ddb4.pl?Terms=%E6%B6%85%E6%A7%83%E7%B6%93>; and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirvana\\_Sutra](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirvana_Sutra).

<sup>15</sup> Other scriptures, such as Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, indicate that the *icchantikas* will be saved the Buddha himself, who, after all, will never abandon any being.

<sup>16</sup> See Gregory 1987: 2 f; Whalen Lai 1987a: 191.

<sup>17</sup> On *satori*, see Foulk, “The form and function of koan literature,” 2000: 40-42.

between Mencius and Hsun-tzu, or between the Ch'eng-Chu and Lu-wang schools of Neo-Confucianism. Even within the latter, it can further be seen as operative in the different interpretation of Wang Yang-ming's Four Sentence Teaching given by his disciples Ch'ien Te-hung and Wang Chi. (Gregory 1985:485; emphases added)

TU Wei-ming, in his Afterword to Gregory's volume on *Sudden and Gradual*, makes this honest and instructive note:

The process that leads to enlightenment is always gradual, whereas the experience itself, no matter how well one is prepared, is always sudden. Enlightenment occurring as an unintended consequence is inconceivable. If we do not seek it consciously and conscientiously, we can never be enlightened.... On the other hand, since the enlightenment experience can never be fully anticipated, and it is a surprise even if one has the premonition that it may occur momentarily, the sense of suddenness is inevitable. This seems to suggest that the sudden-gradual distinction is not particularly significant in the actual process leading to the enlightenment experience.

However, the subitists' faith is so deeply rooted in the indigenous traditions of Chinese thought and religion that an explication of its underlying logic is in order. Lest we should misconstrue sudden enlightenment as an easy way out of the rigorous spiritual discipline required of all serious students of Ch'an, let us assume that the sudden-gradual debate is not about the necessity of practice but, given the centrality of diligent spiritual discipline, about what the authentic method of achievement, ritual, and teaching are in the last analysis supplementary. One never experiences enlightenment (the full awakening of the true self) by means of reading sūtras, adhering to the tradition of a particular school, observing established rituals, or following the instructions of a master. The illumination of the mind, like drinking water to quench thirst, must be experienced immediately and directly. No mediation, no matter how valuable, and how lofty, is allowed. The demand for personal participation is absolute....

The open-mindedness with which the subitists decide to pursue a certain course of action or to abandon a well-traversed path gives the impression that there is a great deal of arbitrariness in their approaches to the enlightenment experience. How can anyone be sure of the way to proceed? The academic community, dedicated to the programmatic pursuit of knowledge, is not at all suited to appreciate the seemingly situational and inspirational pedagogy derived from them.

...We do not depart from where we are here and now in order to appropriate what we do not have. Rather, the way is near at hand and inseparable from the ordinary experience of our daily lives. Paradoxically, we must make the existential decision to find our way; otherwise, we will lose it to the extent that we become unaware that it is originally ours. Nevertheless, because it is originally ours, we can get it by simply exercising our will to do so. Willing is the necessary and sufficient condition for us to get it. The way is ours, sudden and simultaneously, when we will that this be done. (TU Wei-ming 1987:453 f)

Ironically, TU Wei-ming is quite right—yet, he is *not* quite right! He is right in pointing to the fact that the awakening experience is a very personal one—often one of “seemingly situational and inspirational pedagogy,” is quite beyond “programmatic pursuit of knowledge.” While *science* can only deal with what is measurable, *the arts* pursue only sense-based beauty and imagination. On the other hand, deep meditation and awakening are not only *extrasensory* experiences, but are totally *joyful* one, that is, they are feelings that transcend knowing. Our knowledge of dhyana or awakening arises only *after the fact* (indeed, any knowing about a fact must occur after that fact). Otherwise, the dhyana or the “awakening” is merely a language construction, a sublime, yet still worldly experience. This latter aspect of Buddhist spirituality is beyond any vicarious, third-person, observation or scholarship; it can only be experienced in a direct first-person manner.

In a way, the *moment* of awakening is “sudden,” just as a ripe fruit abruptly falls from a tree. But the *ripening* is a gradual process. Spiritual awakening, as taught by the Buddha, begins with moral virtue as a

support for mental cultivation,<sup>18</sup> which is in turn a tool of calm and clarity to examine momentary events of reality until we transcend the constructions of language and ideas, so that we directly experience true reality.<sup>19</sup> There is nothing to talk about here really; for, it is the most personal of experiences.

I think the best Zen solution to the “sudden awakening” non-sense is that there is *no* sudden awakening. A method can never be sudden; every method takes time; a method is always gradual. There is no sudden path. “No-thought” is *no*-thought; it is *not* awakening. The fact is that satori may be sudden, but satori is not *bodhi*. There is only awakening (*bodhi*): either you are it or not it.<sup>20</sup> [4.1.2]

**2.2.5 Timelessness of the Dharma.** A reflection on the virtues of the Dharma in connection with *time* is useful in understanding the gradual/sudden controversy that characterized Chinese Buddhism. The two related virtues of the Dharma here are those of “visible here and now” (*sandiṭṭhika*) and “timeless” (*akālika*).<sup>21</sup> The Visuddhi, magga defines *sandiṭṭhika* as follows:

...here, the noble path is “visible here and now” because it can be seen by a noble individual for himself when he has done away with lust (*rāga*), etc, in his (mind-body) continuity (*santana*). As such, it is said [in the Sandiṭṭhika Dhamma Brāhmaṇa Sutta]:

Brahmin, when one is dyed with lust, overcome by it, his mind obsessed by it, then he thinks of his own affliction, he thinks of other’s affliction, he thinks of the affliction of both, and he feels mental pain and grief.

But when he has abandoned lust, then he thinks not of his own affliction, he thinks not of other’s affliction, he thinks not of the affliction of both, and he does not feel mental pain and grief. (A 3.53/1:156 f)

This means that the benefits of spiritual practice can be seen in this life itself. We need not wait until the afterlife. Take the ten suttas of **the Okkanti Saṃyutta**, for example, they all state that with the constant practice of *the perception of impermanence*, streamwinning will surely arise in this life itself, surely at the very last moment of our lives.<sup>22</sup>

The Visuddhi, magga explains *akālika* as “it gives its fruit at the same time (*samanantara*) as its own occurrence” (Vism 7.80/216). Bhikkhu Bodhi, in a critical study of dependent arising, remarks that

The terms [of the Dharma’s virtues] all highlight, not the intrinsic nature of the Dhamma, but its relation to human knowledge and understanding. They are all *epistemological* in import, not ontological; they are concerned with *how the Dhamma is known*, not with the temporal status of the known...

The Dhamma (inclusive of *paṭicca-samuppāda*) is *akālika* because it is to be known immediately by direct inspection, not by inference or by faith in the word of another. Thus, although birth and death may be separated by 70 or 80 years, one ascertains immediately that death occurs in dependence on birth and cannot occur if there is no birth.

Similarly, although the ignorance and *saṅkhārā* that bring about the descent of consciousness into the womb are separated from consciousness by a gap of lifetimes, one ascertains immediately that the descent of consciousness into the womb has come about through ignorance and *saṅkhārā*.

And again, although future becoming, birth, and aging and death are separated from present craving and clinging by a gap of lifetimes, one ascertains immediately that if craving and clinging

<sup>18</sup> For an interesting discussion on morality in China, see Kim-Chong CHONG, “Egoism in Chinese ethics,” in *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy*, 2003: 241-246: <http://www.routledge-ny.com/ref/chinesephil/Egoism.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> There are some scholars hold that there is *only* knowing, and that feeling is also a kind of knowing, and all this must occur as language and ideas. Those who have experienced some depth of Buddhist meditation will know that there are mental states that are pure feeling in the non-cognitive sense. On the threefold training, see **Mahā-parinibbāna S** = SD 9 Intro (10d) & **Saṅkhitta Dhamma S** (A 8.63) = SD 46.6.

<sup>20</sup> However cf Yampolsky 1967: 116.

<sup>21</sup> See *Dhammānussati* = SD 15.9 esp (2.2-2.3).

<sup>22</sup> S 25/3:225-228: see eg (Anicca) Cakkhu S = SD 16.7.

persist until the end of the lifespan, they will bring about reconception, and hence engender a future cycle of becoming.

It is in this sense that the Buddha declares *paṭicca-samuppāda* to be *sandiṭṭhika, akālika*—“directly visible, immediate”—not in the sense that the terms of the formula have nothing to do with time or temporal succession. (Bodhi, 1998a §27/p31 digital ed; reparagraphed)<sup>23</sup>

The Chinese Buddhist conception of sudden awakening, on the other hand, tends to see the suddenness as an *ontological* reality, that is, it regards *the awakening itself* as of the nature of being timeless. In doing so, the unpredictable awakening is predicated: it is reified. So what is the problem here, in layman’s terms? *Epistemology* is the study and process of how we know things (although the “how” aspect would also describe *psychology*). *Ontology*, on the other hand, is the study and process of understanding or conceiving what life or existence is—the nature of being—which is the most fundamental branch of metaphysics.<sup>24</sup> Ontology thus has a decisive influence in how we view reality.

When we talk about reality or describe awakening, we only end either putting together strings of words or conjure up a verbal chimera. Describing awakening in this manner is interesting philosophically, but it is not the real thing. When silence is put into words, it is no more silence. The word is not the thing.

If early Buddhism is strong in epistemology, in explaining *how* we know things, how our mind works, and to see beyond concepts and existence, Chinese Buddhism tends to delve in ontology, to being preoccupied with *what* things are. While early Buddhism aims to deconstruct our views so that we can directly see true reality, the Chinese Buddhist masters—despite Chán claims of seeing reality directly—were often experts in *constructing realities*.

**2.2.6 The pure bright mind.** The Pabhassara Sutta (A 1.6.1-2),<sup>25</sup> found in the Accharā Saṅghāta Vagga<sup>26</sup> of the Aṅguttara, is a short remarkable text where the Buddha declares that our mind is by nature pure and bright (*pabhassara, Skt prabhāsvara*).<sup>27</sup>

- 1 Bhikshus, this mind is radiant, but it is defiled by adventitious impurities [impurities that “arrive” through the sense-doors].  
The uninstructed [ignorant] ordinary person does not understand things as they really are. Therefore there is no mental development for the uninstructed ordinary person, I say!<sup>28</sup>
  - 2 Bhikshus, this mind is radiant, and it is freed from adventitious impurities [impurities that “arrive” through the sense-doors].  
The instructed [wise] noble disciple understands things as they really are.  
Therefore there is mental development for the instructed noble disciple, I say!<sup>29</sup>
- (A 1.6.1-2/1:10; also 1.5.9-10/1:10; MA 1:167)

Although Theravāda meditation teachers generally take the radiant mind here to refer to *the dhyanic mind*,<sup>30</sup> Mahāyāna Buddhists generally use this teaching to support the notion of our “original nature” as being pure and good. In other words, we are not born in sin and that evil is not inherent in us. Understandably, since evil is not our nature, to persist in committing evil would only bring on conflict or suffering. As such, the purpose of the spiritual life is for one to return to this innate “original” pure goodness.

<sup>23</sup> See also his n at S:B 754 n103.

<sup>24</sup> Metaphysics can be defined as a branch of philosophy that investigates principles of reality beyond those of science. As such, it is the most speculative of the humanistic disciplines.

<sup>25</sup> A 1.6.1-2/1:10.

<sup>26</sup> A 1.4-5/1:8-10, “The chapter on the finger-snap.”

<sup>27</sup> A 1.6.1-2/1:10.

<sup>28</sup> *Pabhassaram idam bhikkhave cittaṃ tañ ca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi upakkiliṭṭham. Taṃ assutavā puthujjano yathā, bhūtaṃ n’ appajānati. Tasmā assutavato puthujjanassa citta, bhāvanā n’ atthi ti vadāmi ti.* Qu at MA 1:167; DhA 1:23; NmA 1:22; PmA 1:242; DhsA 68.

<sup>29</sup> *Pabhassaram idam bhikkhave cittaṃ tañ ca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi vippanuttam. Taṃ sutavā ariya, sāvako yathā, bhūtaṃ pajānati. Tasmā sutavato ariya, sāvakassa citta, bhāvanā atthi ti vadāmi ti.*

<sup>30</sup> See eg Brahmali 2007.

In fact, at least one early Mahāyāna Buddhist, Sthira,mati, in subcommentary (*tīkā*) on Maitreya's Madhyānta, vibhāga (a *śāstra* or Sanskrit commentary on emptiness) to illustrate that the two aspects of emptiness do not imply separate realities, says:

It is not polluted (by afflictions), nor is it not polluted.

It is not pure, nor is it impure.

*Why is it not polluted and not impure?* Because it is in fact naturally pure from all duality. In this connection, the Āgama says, "for the mind is inherently (naturally) luminous."

(Quoted by Gomez 1987: 130)

What is explained in the Pabhassara Sutta (A 1.6.1-2) in connection with meditation becomes, in Mahāyāna philosophy, a statement of nonduality. What is simply an epistemological teaching in the early texts becomes a profound ontological statement in the Mahāyāna.

The Manoratha, pūraṇī (Aṅguttara Commentary), for example, says that "the mind" (*citta*) here refers to the *bhavaṅga, citta*, the life-continuum or underlying stream of consciousness that supervenes whenever active consciousness lapses, most notably in deep dreamless sleep. The "adventitious impurities" (*āgantukā upakkilesā*)<sup>31</sup> are greed, hate and delusion,<sup>32</sup> which appear at the stage of the cognitive process which, in later Buddhism, is called "impulsion" (*javana*). The Commentary says that the impurities do not arise with the life-continuum, but "arrive" later, at the impulsion phase (AA 1:63).

The "radiant mind" (*pabhassara citta*), in other words, does not refer to any eternal mind-essence or enduring entity. This is obvious from an important statement that precedes this sutta:

Bhikkhus, I do not see a single thing that changes so rapidly as the mind. It is not easy here to give a simile as to how rapidly the mind changes. (A 1.5.8/1:10)

The mind not only changes so rapidly, but it is *not* always pure and radiant. This passage which appears in at least two places in the Pali Suttas attest to this fact, that the mind can be polluted by the five mental hindrances:

So too, bhikkhus, there are these five impurities of the mind (*citta*), corrupted by which the mind is not malleable nor wieldy nor radiant (*pabhassara*), but brittle, and not rightly concentrated for the destruction of the cankers. What are the five?

Sensual desire is an impurity of the mind ...

Ill will is an impurity of the mind...

Sloth and torpor are an impurity of the mind...

Restlessness and remorse are an impurity of the mind...

Doubt is an impurity of the mind,

corrupted by which the mind is not malleable nor wieldy nor radiant, but brittle, and not rightly concentrated for the destruction of the cankers. (S 46.33/5:92; A 5.23/3:16)

This important passage shows that the *pabhassara citta* is simply *the mind freed from the five hindrances*, the best example of which is the mind in dhyana.<sup>33</sup>

I mentioned earlier here that while the Theravāda meditation tradition generally takes *pabhassara citta* to refer to the dhyanic mind, the Mahāyāna tends to regard it as some sort of natural goodness or inherent purity. In fact, modern Buddhologists generally acknowledge this fact, that is, the Mahāyānists generally take *prabhāsvara citta* to mean an innately pure luminous mind that is only adventitiously covered over by defilements (*āgantuka kleśā*), and that this notion is the root of the *tathāgata, garbha* doctrine.<sup>34</sup> [2.3.2, 4.1]

<sup>31</sup> Skt *āgantuka kleśā*.

<sup>32</sup> For other examples of impurities (*upakkilesa*), see (Anuruddha) Upakkilesa S (M 128) = SD 8.2. See also Harvey 1995:167 f.

<sup>33</sup> See Brahmali 2007:13.

<sup>34</sup> See Gregory 1987a: 288 f.

## 2.3 CONFUCIANISM IN CHINESE BUDDHISM

**2.3.1 Confucianism enriched by Buddhism.** From the time of Buddhism's advent in China, it began to be sinicized [1.1]. The Chinese Buddhist translators and teachers often made use of indigenous Daoist terms to convey difficult Buddhist ideas and terms [2.2, 2.6.1], and the early Chinese Buddhists also had to defend themselves against the powerful Confucian gentry and literati. In an important way, the Chinese Buddhists beat the Daoists and the Confucians at their own game—by become Daoist Buddhists [2.2] and Confucian Buddhists.

During the Sòng period, however, Confucianism found new vitality partly by reabsorbing the elements “borrowed” by the Buddhists. These elements had been modified and expanded by the Buddhists, and given metaphysical foundations that the Neo-Confucians<sup>35</sup> retained and reworked. Neo-Confucian thinkers, especially after **Zhūxī** (朱熹 1130-1200),<sup>36</sup> rediscovered Mencius and unanimously embraced his view of the original goodness of human nature.<sup>37</sup>

In other words, Confucianism revitalized itself as Neo-Confucianism partly by adopting Huáyán's metaphysics of nature, and Zhūxī's famous dialectic of *principle* 理 (*lǐ*) and *psychic energy* (qì 氣) owed much to Huáyán's metaphysics of *lǐ* 理 and *shì* 事 (meaning “event,” “affair” or “thing”). We see here an interesting synergy of influence and counter-influence between Confucianism and Chinese Buddhism.<sup>38</sup>

**2.3.2 Human nature originally good?** Confucianism [1.1] emphasized family values, obedience to authority and social stability. Confucian scholars constituted the most influential sector of society. They generally disapproved of “barbarian” religions. It was precisely because of the religious character of Buddhism that appealed to the Chinese masses. For Confucianism, by its nature—elitist, hierarchical and patriarchal—was incapable of having popular religious quality.<sup>39</sup> Confucianism also provided the Chinese with a vocabulary and philosophy that were helpful in their assimilating of Buddhist teachings and values.

Confucianism was closely related to Chinese Buddhism in the ancient debate whether *human nature* (here, meaning the Buddha-nature, *fóxìng* 佛性) [2.2.3, 4.2.2.3] is good, evil, or neutral. The Huáyán school contended that Buddha-nature and *tathāgata, garbha* are pristinely pure and good. This position, however, was opposed by **the Tiāntái** school, which argued that some evil (that is, some ignorance) remains in Buddha-nature. Following the Daoist notion of *non-duality*, good and evil, or pure and impure, are complementary opposites, and are, as such, impossible to separate from each other as east from west. Tiāntái thus accused Huáyán of dualistic extremism.

Furthermore, Tiāntái insisted that it is necessary for Buddha-nature to retain some traces of evil and delusion in order to understand and empathize with the plight of ordinary sentient beings. Otherwise, one loses touch with the everyday reality in which people wander in delusion, and thus one cannot effectively save such people. Buddhahood, for Tiāntái, was not simply a matter of correctly seeing or understanding in a “pure” way, but Buddhahood is the natural and active liberation of sentient beings from ignorance.

<sup>35</sup> Neo-Confucianism (*Lǐxué* 理學; *Dàoquè* 道學), a form of Confucianism primarily developed during the Sòng dynasty, but which can be traced back to essayist and poet **Hán Yù** (768-824) & philosopher and prose-writer **Lǐ Ào** (772-841) of the Tang dynasty. It formed the basis of Confucian orthodoxy in the Qing dynasty. It attempted to merge certain basic elements of Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist thought. Most important of the early Neo-Confucianists was Zhūxī (1130-1200). See foll n.

<sup>36</sup> **Zhūxī** was a Sòng-dynasty Confucian scholar who was the leading figure of the School of Principle and the most influential rationalist Neo-Confucian in China. He assigned special significance to “the Four Books”: the *Analects of Confucius*, the *Mencius*, the *Great Learning*, and the *Doctrine of the Mean*, and emphasized the investigation of things (*gewu*), and the synthesis of all fundamental Confucian concepts. See prec n.

<sup>37</sup> See 賴永海 [LÀI Yónghái], *中國佛教文化論* [A Discussion on Chinese Buddhist Culture], Beijing: 中國青年出版社 1999: 151.

<sup>38</sup> See Lusthaus, “The Chinese Buddhist schools: Huáyán”: <http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/G002SECT8>.

<sup>39</sup> Confucianism, in its most patriarchal manifestation, was often oppressive and restrictive of women. In pre-modern China, the female symbol of Guanyin Bodhisattva helped Chinese women transcend the restrictions of a Confucian-defined, male-dominated society: see Reed 1992.

The debate began with Mencius (Mèngzi 孟子 372-289),<sup>40</sup> when he proposed that human nature is *originally good*, but this did not prove persuasive. Others argued that human nature is *essentially neutral* and subject to the influence of external conditions. Another early Confucian, Xúnzi (荀子 c300-230 BCE)<sup>41</sup> argued that human nature is *basically selfish and ignorant*, which is why human society needs ethical norms and sages such as Confucius to guide them beyond the baseness of their own nature (性 *xīng*).

Hàn-dynasty Confucians sided with Xúnzi rather Mencius. The Tiāntái position, in insisting that some evil and ignorance exists even in Buddha-nature, was closer to some readings of Xúnzi's position, while the idealistic optimism of the Huáyán view clearly paralleled Mencius. Between the Hàn and Sòng dynasties (3<sup>rd</sup>-10th centuries), however, Confucianism was intellectually stagnant.

### 2.3.3 Early eclectic approaches.

2.3.3.1 DÀO'ĀN THE CONFUCIAN BUDDHIST. Like Confucianism, Buddhism too has a deep concern over moral conduct. The early Chinese masters like Dào'ān 道安 (312-385),<sup>42</sup> Sēngyòu 僧祐 (445-518) and Zhìshēng 智昇 (873-963) were aware of the profusion of inauthentic texts. They composed Chinese catalogues of Buddhist works<sup>43</sup> "in large part precisely for the purpose of separating the dragons from the snakes, and the jewels from the stones"<sup>44</sup> [2.6.1]. Most of the early translators of Buddhist texts were Central Asian or Indian monks, like Kumārajīva, who have taken the original sutras in China and translated them in order to transmit Buddhism to the Chinese.

Dào'ān was a very disciplined monastic teacher who knew the old forms of meditation and was devoted to them. Although he was a product of classical Chinese education, he rejected the eclectic match-making translation and exegesis known as *géyì* 格義 [2.6.2]. Yet, in his openness, he allowed his disciple, Huiyuǎn to use Daoist concepts to explain Buddhist doctrines.<sup>45</sup> At the same time, he was a literary scholar renowned for textual-critical work that helped to sort out genuine scripture from spurious works, identify textual variants and translations, and produce the earliest Buddhist bibliography of Buddhist works in China. He also wrote commentaries on existing scriptures and helped to set new guidelines and standards for translating Buddhist texts from Indian languages into Chinese.

2.3.3.2 HUIYUǎN THE CONFUCIAN-DAOIST BUDDHIST. Huiyuǎn 慧遠 (334-416), Dào'ān's most prominent pupil, was also classically educated, and remained a nobleman even as a monk. He is remembered as a courageous defender of the faith. Using his Confucian expertise, for example, he wrote the 5-

<sup>40</sup> Mencius was arguably the most famous Confucian after Confucius himself. While Confucius himself did not explicitly focus on the subject of human nature, Mencius taught that man is innately good, and that evil character arises through neglect or negative external (or social) influence, but the innate goodness is never lost altogether.

<sup>41</sup> Xúnzi or Hsun-tsu was a Chinese Confucian philosopher of the Warring States Period and contributed to one of the Hundred Schools of Thought. As one of the three great Confucian philosophers of the Classical period in China, he elaborated and systematized Confucius and Mencius, so that Confucian thought continued as a living tradition for over 2,000 years.

<sup>42</sup> Up to Dào'ān's time, Chinese monks used surnames indicating their masters' nationalities, eg, *Chih* for a Bactrian, *Po* for a Kuchan, *Yu* for a Khotanese, and *Chu* for an Indian. It was Dào'ān who introduced the universal monastic surname *Shi* 釋 (the first character from the Chinese for Śākya, muni (*Shìjiā móuni fó* 釋迦牟尼佛) for Chinese monks and nuns: see 194. For details on Dào'ān, see Zürcher 1959: 184-204 & Ch'en 1964: 94-103. Note: Not to be confused with the later Vinaya master, Dào'àn 道岸 (654-717).

<sup>43</sup> Dào'ān 道安 (312-385) composed the earliest scriptural catalogue, the *Zongli zhongjīng mulu* 綜理衆經目錄 (*Comprehensive Catalogue of Scriptures*) in 374 (lost); Sēngyòu 僧祐 (435-518), the *Chū sānzàngjì jí* (出三藏記集) in 515; Huijiǎo 慧皎 (497-554), the *Gāosēng zhuàn* 高僧傳 (*Biographies of Eminent Monks*) c 531 (T2059); and Zhìshēng 智昇 (fl 700-786), the *Kāiyuán shìjiào lù* 開元釋教錄 (*Compilation of Notices on the Rendering of the Tripitaka*, T2145.55.97c-98a) in 730. See Kyoko Tokuno 1990:31-74.

<sup>44</sup> Makita Tairyō 牧田諦亮, *Gikyō kenkyū* 疑經研究 (Studies on Apocryphal Sutras), Kyoto: Jimbun kagaku kenkyūsho, 1976:99. Quoted by Charles Muller, "East Asian Apocryphal Scriptures: Their origins and role in the development of Sinitic Buddhism," [http://www.tyg.jp/tgu/school\\_guidance/bulletin/k6.acmuller/acmuller.htm](http://www.tyg.jp/tgu/school_guidance/bulletin/k6.acmuller/acmuller.htm) 2004:1.

<sup>45</sup> Zürcher 1959: 184-204, 230.

fascicle (juǎn) “Monks Do Not Bow Down Before Kings” (*Shāmén bú jìn wáng zhě* 沙門不敬王者) (404),<sup>46</sup> in an attempt assert the political independence of the Buddhist clergy from the royal courts. It was both a religious and political text whose purpose was to convince the rulers and Confucian-minded ministers that Buddhists were not subversive. He argued that Buddhists could make good subjects in a kingdom due to their beliefs in karma and the desire to be reborn in paradise [3.2-3.3]. Although Buddhist monastics had to renounce their families, Huiyuǎn stated that “those who rejoice in the Way of the Buddha invariably first serve their parents and obey their lords.”<sup>47</sup>

If philosophically, Huiyuǎn was well-rooted in Confucianism, religiously, he was deeply influenced by Daoism, especially in his beliefs of the indestructible soul and moral retribution.<sup>48</sup> These are the twin tenets, the philosophical and the ethical bases, that underlay the famous Daoist quest for immortality, in which Huiyuǎn himself was deeply interested. Like Huiyuǎn, Tánluán 曇鸞 (476-542) was influenced by Daoism early in life. After a serious illness, he went on a quest for the elixir of life. While in Luòyáng, he met the Indian monk translator, Bodhi, ruci (Pútíliúzhī 菩提流志, 6<sup>th</sup> century) [3.4.4.5], who introduced him to the *Guan wuliangshou jīng* (Sutra on the Buddha of Boundless Life), and remarked that Amitābha (Boundless Light) or Amitāyus (Boundless Life) was *the* “great immortal” (*dàxiān*). This apocryphal text reflected a link between the Daoist quest of eternal life and the rapid rise in popularity of the Amitābha cult in China. Tánluán was also the author of *the first known systematic works on Pure Land* to be produced in China.

Huiyuǎn combined Buddhist and Daoist elements in his meditation practice, and as a fervent devotee of Amitābha Buddha, he was fond of using pictures and visual aids for his meditation. In fact, his practice of reciting Amitābha’s name, *niànfó* 念佛, became so popular, and because of his close association with Amitābha Buddha, he was posthumously named *the first patriarch of the Pure Land school*. Tánluán was virtually ignored in China, but his influence in Japan had been considerable since Shinran’s time and he is regarded as a patriarch of the Japanese Pure Land school. [3.4.4.4]

**2.3.4 Vinaya texts in China.** At the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, there began an important new development: Chinese monks themselves travelled all the way to India to retrieve Buddhist texts. The best known of these pilgrims (that is, those who did survive their journeys) were Fǎxiǎn 法顯 (401-414), Xuánzàng 玄奘 (629-645) and Yìjìng 義淨 (671-695). Fǎxiǎn brought back the following Vinayas to China:

Vinaya of the Mahāsaṅghikas (Mahā,saṅghika Vinaya) Móhēsēngqílù 摩訶僧祇律 (T1425)

Translated by Buddhahadra and Fǎxiǎn at Nanjing in 416 from an original Fǎxiǎn found in Pāṭaliputra, India.

Vinaya of the Mahīśāsaka (Pañca,vargika Vinaya) Wǔfēnlǜ 五分律 (T1421)

Translated by Buddhajīva and his team, 423-424, in Nanjing from a MS discovered in Sri Lanka by Fǎxiǎn. It is very close to the Pali Canon.

Xuánzàng brought back the most number of Vinaya texts, namely, the Sthavira, the Mahā,saṅghika, the Mahīśāsaka, the Saṃmitiya, the Kaśyapiya, the Dharma,guptaka and the Sarvāstivāda Vinayas [2.6.1]. Yìjìng brought back and translated the Mūla,sarvāstivādin Vinaya (over 170 fascicles), which he regarded as the most important, as it was current in India during his stay there and the one he was most familiar with.

The Vinaya system that the Chinese finally adopted was that of the Dharma,guptaka, which came to be known as the “Four-limbed Vinaya.”<sup>49</sup> How did this happen? The Dharma,guptaka was an ancient

<sup>46</sup> For tr, see Leon Hurvitz 1957.

<sup>47</sup> Zürcher 1959: 204-253, esp 238 f.

<sup>48</sup> *Hóngmíng jí* 弘明集, 5/9a-10a, 5/13a-16a (in Sēngyòu 1928).

<sup>49</sup> Cātur,vargīya Vinaya, *sifēnlǜ* 四分律 (T1428), tr Buddha,yaśas & Zhú Fóniàn btw 410 and 412 in 60 juǎn. (Buddha,yaśas arrived in Cháng’ān in 408.) For a discussion on its modern application, esp to nuns, see Shih Heng-Ching, “Lineage and transmission: Integrating the Chinese and Tibetan orders of Buddhist nuns, *Chung-Hwa Bud-*

Indian school from the same family tree as the modern Thera, vāda,<sup>50</sup> but there are importance differences. The Dharmaguptaka, for example, appeared to have regarded the Buddha as being separate from the Sangha, so that his teaching was superior to those given by arhats.<sup>51</sup>

The first Buddhist monks in China were all foreigners<sup>52</sup> [1.1]. Once the local Buddhist community began to grow, there was a need for Chinese translations of the Buddhist texts. According to the Official History of the Sui,<sup>53</sup> *the first Chinese monk* was ordained during the Huángchū 黃初 period (220-226) of the Wèi kingdom. Scholars generally consider Yán Fódào (嚴佛調 or Yán Fúdiào 嚴浮調),<sup>54</sup> a collaborator of Ān Shīgāo (end of 2<sup>nd</sup> century) [2.2.1] as the first known Chinese monk. As the order attracted more local candidates, there clearly was a need for a translation of the Vinaya texts. Furthermore, by the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, the immigrant Buddhist families became more naturalized and indigenized, even losing contact with their original languages, they had to rely on Chinese texts.<sup>55</sup>

In 406, the Kashmiri monk, **Vimalākṣa** met Kumara, jīva in Cháng'ān and introduced the Sarvāsti, vāda Vinaya (T1435) to him. In 399-413, it was translated by Punyatratā/Puṇya, tāra, Kumāra, jīva, Dharma, ruci and Vimalākṣa. After Kumāra, jīva died, Vimalākṣa revised Kumāra, jīva's translations and propagated the Sarvāstivāda Vinaya. In 405 or 408, the second Vinaya to be translated into Chinese (by Buddha, yaśas & Zhú Fóniàn) was that of the "Four-limbed Vinaya" (*Sìfēnlǚ*, see above), that is, the Dharma, guptaka Vinaya (T1428). From 423 to 424, Buddha, jīva and (Zhu) Dàoshēng translated the **Mahīśāsaka Vinaya** (T1421).<sup>56</sup>

By the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the most important Vinaya translations were completed and available in monasteries all over the country. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century, **the Mūla, sarvāstivāda Vinaya** (T1425)<sup>57</sup> was translated and introduced into China. It was at this time, that the Dharma, guptaka Vinaya (in Chinese), was adopted to the exclusion of other Vinaya systems. This history of the Vinaya texts in China spanned a period covering the fall of the Hàn 漢 (simplified 汉, 220 CE) and the Táng dynasty 唐朝, following empress Wu Zetian (690-705).<sup>58</sup> [5.2.2]

*dhist Journal* 13,2 May 2000: 503-548: <http://ccbs.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-BJ001/93614.htm>; also Karma Lekshe Tsomo, *Sisters in Solitude: Two Traditions of Buddhist Monastic Ethics for Women*. Albany, NY: State Univ of New York Press, 1996 & rev by Charles S Prebish: *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 5 1998: 322-327: <http://www.buddhistethics.org/5/preb.pdf>.

<sup>50</sup> The Dharma, guptaka was one of the 18 or 20 schools of early Buddhism, and which originated from another sect, the Mahīśāsaka. It had a prominent role in early Central Asian and Chinese Buddhism, and its Vinaya is still in effect amongst many of the East Asians monastic systems to this day. See Sujato's: Sects and Sectarianism": <http://sectsandsectarianism.googlepages.com/home>, esp "Dharmagupataka: Greek Missions." For further refs, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dharmaguptaka>.

<sup>51</sup> They also emphasized the merit of venerating stupas, which often had pictorial representations of the stories Buddha's past lives (such as those recounted in the Jātakas). Consequently, they regarded the path of disciple (*śravaka*) and the path of bodhisattva to be separate. The Dharma, guptaka Tripiṭaka contains two new additions, namely, the Bodhisattva Piṭaka (a collection of Mahāyāna works) and the Dharaṇī Piṭaka (a collection of mantras). It should be noted here that such a dichotomy of śravaka vs bodhisattva (or Mahāyāna vs Hīnayāna) is not found in the early texts, but a later innovation, as mentioned above, a later polemical and political innovation. There is *no* quarrel whatsoever between the *śravaka* and the bodhisattva: it is a one-way attack by certain groups of later "Mahāyānist" rhetoricians and sectarians. This so obvious from the terms, as to who the guilty perpetrators were.

<sup>52</sup> Ch'en 1964:43 f; Zürcher 1972 1:18-23, 1990:163. This was the community of Pengcheng, a flourishing commercial centre on the main route btw Luòyáng to the south, in northern Jiangsu province. It was mentioned for the first time in 65 CE (*Hòu Hànshū* 42,5:1428 f). The community was prosperous and attracted a number of local lay followers: see Zürcher 1972 1:26 f; Rhie 1999:15-18.

<sup>53</sup> *Suishū* 隋書 35,4: 1097. It was compiled in 636.

<sup>54</sup> See Ch'en 1964:45 f; Zürcher 1972 1:34, 2:331 n86; Tsukamoto 1985 1:64 f, 79, 93-97. However, Forte sees him as a layman (1995:66).

<sup>55</sup> See Heirman 2007: 169 f.

<sup>56</sup> See Lancaster 1993: 526 f.

<sup>57</sup> Tr Buddha, bhadrā & Fāxiǎn.

<sup>58</sup> For a table of Vinaya texts translated in China, see Yifa 2002: 8.

After the fall of the Hàn dynasty, China was divided into the Three Kingdoms (*Sānguó* 三國): *Wèi* 魏 (220-265), *Shǔ* 蜀 (221-263), and *Wú* 吳 (222-280).<sup>59</sup> They were temporarily unified under the Western Jin (*Xī Jīn* 西晉 265-316), but it was unable to withstand foreign attacks from the north. So they withdrew to the south, resulting in a north-south division of the country, known as the Southern and Northern Dynasties (*Nánběicháo* 南北朝, 420-589), comprising “the Five Dynasties and Three Kingdoms” (*Wūdài Shíguó* 五代十國).<sup>60</sup> The most important of the northern kingdoms was Northern Wei (*Běi Wèi* 北魏 386-535), which controlled important cities such as Cháng’ān and Luòyáng. In the south, there was a succession of several dynasties.<sup>61</sup> Then, the country was reunited under the Suí dynasty (*Suí cháo* 隋朝 (589-618), followed by the Táng (*Táng cháo* 唐朝 618-705), with a brief interregnum, the Zhōu dynasty of empress Wǔ Zétiān 武则天 (690-705) [5.2.2].

A number of Chinese catalogues record that the first texts on *saṅgha, karma* or ecclesiastical acts, especially the procedural texts (*jiémó; karma, vācanā; P kamma, vācā*),<sup>62</sup> were the two Dharma, guptaka *karma, vācanā* (*jiemo*) texts—the *Tánwúdé lǚbù zájiémó*<sup>63</sup> and the *Jiémó*.<sup>64</sup> Huijiǎo, in his *Gāosēng zhuàn*, also refers to an early Dharma, guptaka *karma, vācanā* text, translated by Tándì 曇諦 (347-411).<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, many of the early masters claimed that the first legal ordinations in China were based on the ecclesiastical procedures of the Dharma, guptaka school *karma, vācanā*.<sup>66</sup> Hence, for such reasons, it is the Dharma, guptaka ordination was accepted as the only authentic one in China, and its Vinaya became that of the Chinese sangha.<sup>67</sup>

In fact, the Dharma, guptaka Vinaya was officially adopted by the Chinese sangha (and also by the Mahāyāna sanghas in Korea and in Vietnam), when the Vinaya Master Dào’àn 道岸 (654-717)<sup>68</sup> requested the Táng emperor Zhōngzōng 中宗 to issue an imperial edict in 709, *declaring that all monastics must follow the Dharma, guptaka Vinaya*.<sup>69</sup> Since then, the Dharma, guptaka Vinaya has been the sole Vinaya tradition followed by the Chinese Mahāyāna sangha.

Such Vinaya texts and traditions, however, served merely as a ritualistic legitimization of monastic ordination, but not as a moral moderator, not even for monastic training. For their personal and social conduct, the Chinese reformers composed various apocryphal perceptive texts, to supplement, as it were, the “inadequacies” of the Indian Vinaya systems. We shall now examine some of these key apocryphal perceptive texts composed by them.

**2.3.5 Apocryphal Vinaya texts.** As soon as Indian Vinaya texts were systematically brought into China beginning in the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420-580), the Chinese Buddhists studying them experienced “culture shock” after “culture shock,” trying to make sense of their ascetic, renunciative, re-

<sup>59</sup> More correctly, they were the “Three Countries,” “Three Dynasties,” or even “Three Empires,” as each state was eventually headed by an emperor who claimed legitimate succession from the Eastern (*Dōng Hàn* 東漢) or Later Hàn (*Hòu Hàn* 後漢) dynasty (25-220). For refs, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three\\_Kingdoms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Kingdoms).

<sup>60</sup> For refs, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five\\_Dynasties\\_and\\_Ten\\_Kingdoms\\_Period](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_Dynasties_and_Ten_Kingdoms_Period).

<sup>61</sup> That is, Eastern Jin (*Dōng Jīn* 東晉 317-420), Liúsòng 劉宋 (420-479), Qí 齊 (479-502/Liang2), Liáng 梁 (502-557) and Chén 陳 (557-589). Their capital was at *Jiànkāng chéng* 建康城 (modern *Nánjīng* 南京).

<sup>62</sup> The *jñapti, caturtha karma* (P *ñatti, catuttha kamma*) is called *báisì jiémó* 白四羯磨 (T1428.22.571a26) in Chinese.

<sup>63</sup> 曇無德律部雜羯磨 (T1432), *Karma, vācanā* of the Dharma, guptaka, tr by the Sogdian Kāng Sēngkǎi 康僧鎧, (Sangha, varman) in 252. See Lamotte 1958:595; Demiéville et al 1978:122.

<sup>64</sup> 羯磨 (T1433), *Karma, vācanā* tr by the Parthian Tándì 曇諦 (?Dharma, satya) in 254. See Lamotte 1958: 595; Demiéville et al 1978:122.

<sup>65</sup> Huijiǎo 慧皎, T50.2059.325a8-9.

<sup>66</sup> See Heirman2002b: 410-416.

<sup>67</sup> For more details, see Heirman 2007:169-172.

<sup>68</sup> Not to be confused with the early master, Dào’àn 道安 (312-385) [2.3.3].

<sup>69</sup> *Sòng Gāosēng zhuàn* 宋高僧傳 (T50.2061.793a11-27). See also T’ang Yongtong 1938 2:828 f.

clusive, technical, and even anti-Chinese, features.<sup>70</sup> In simple terms, the early Chinese monastics, being pragmatically inclined, found the early Vinaya simply difficult to appreciate or practise.

Even relative conservatives, who dreamt of a more faithfully reenacted Indian monastic environment in Chinese society, tended not to be precept literalists and were *highly eclectic and innovative in their interpretations of the Vinaya literature*, often advocating Confucian proscriptions alongside Buddhist ones, and Mahāyāna precepts together with Śrāvakayāna ones. **Dào xuān** 道宣 (596-667) and Jiànyuè 見月 (1602-1679) were examples of those who devoted their lives to promulgating the Hīnayāna Four-limbed *Vinaya*,<sup>71</sup> yet widely resorted to the Lotus Sutra and the Flower Garland Sutra, among other Mahāyāna sutras in their Vinaya commentaries, and argued for the “mutual complementarity” of, and the “simultaneous adherence” to, both the Mahāyāna and non-Mahāyāna precepts.<sup>72</sup>

The medieval Chinese monks, in fact, introduced a flurry of generous but apocryphal adaptations and pragmatic innovations, urgently motivated by the desire to make the Vinaya and the precepts more amenable to Chinese sensibilities. This is attested by the fact that most of such indigenous apocryphal texts were written during this period.<sup>73</sup> These activities culminated during the Sòng dynasty in the production of such apocryphal texts as the *Fàn wǎng jīng* 梵網經 (Brahmajāla Sūtra)<sup>74</sup> and the *Púsà yīngluò běnyè jīng* 菩薩瓔珞本業經 (T24.1485)<sup>75</sup> [4.3.3.3]. Such apocryphal texts (especially the *Fàn wǎng jīng*) became very popular partly because they closely parallel, even identify with, Confucian values, and their latitude appealed to the pragmatic penchant of Chinese Buddhists.<sup>76</sup>

Besides these apocryphal preceptive texts (such as the *Fàn wǎng jīng* and the *Púsà yīngluò běnyè jīng*) the Chinese Buddhist reformers had to improvise books on monastic regulation to govern and maintain the elaborate organization, hierarchies and monastic wealth that had arisen by the late Táng. Clearly, for such new monastic developments, the traditional Indian Vinaya models proved inadequate.<sup>77</sup>

Despite all this, some efforts were made to preserve at least those ancient training rules, as in the “Pure Rules of Bǎizhàng” (*Bǎizhàng qīngguī* 百丈清規) attributed to the Táng Chán master **Bǎizhàng Huáihǎi** 百丈懷海 (720-814).<sup>78</sup> Bǎizhàng’s original rules were simple and practical, comprising the five

<sup>70</sup> Some examples of their difficulties would be: *ascetic* (such as celibacy and head-shaving), *renunciative* (such as going on alms-round, abstinence from using money), *reclusive* (such as staying aloof from society), *technical* (such as the Prātimokṣa recital, and *karma, vācanā* [P *kamma, vāca*] or the texts of the *saṅgha, karma* or ecclesiastical acts), and *anti-Chinese* (such as not bowing down to parents, family or the rulers). See Mario Poceski 2003.

<sup>71</sup> *Sifenlü* 四分律, ie the Dharma, guptaka Vinaya (T1428), divided into four sections of 20, 15, 14, and 11 juǎn. The *Sifenlü zàng* 四分律藏 *Dharma, guptaka Vinaya* was tr in 405 by Buddhayaśas and Zhú Fóniàn 竺佛念; the *Sifen bīqūnī jiémófǎ* 四分比丘尼羯磨法 *Dharmagupta, bhikṣuṇī, karman* was tr by Gunavarman in 431.

<sup>72</sup> Shi Guodeng, 265-266. For discussion of Dào xuān’s Mahāyāna-based *panjiao* system and strategy of incorporating Mahāyāna ideals and moral injunctions into the Four-Division Vinaya, see Yang Huinan, esp 1993: 379-382. Shi Sheng-Yen, too, attributes the success of Dào xuān’s preceptive lineage to his peculiar Vijñānavāda approach, favored by Chinese Mahāyānists: see “The Renaissance of *Vinaya* Thought During the Late Míng Dynasty of China,” in *Buddhist Ethics and Modern Society*, 1991: 41. See also William Chu 2006.

<sup>73</sup> Paul Groner. “The *Fan-wang ching* and Monastic Discipline in Japanese Tendai: A Study of Annen’s *Futsū jubosatsukai kōshaku*,” in Buswell (ed), *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, 1990: 252-257.

<sup>74</sup> T24.1484.997a-1010a. This apocryphal Chinese work should not be confused with **Brahma, jāla S** (D 1) of the Pali Canon. This Brahma, jāla Sūtra features both Shakyamuni Buddha and the cosmic Buddha Vairocana, and states the 10 major Bodhisattva precepts and 48 minor ones. The language of the text suggests that these precepts are for monastics who have chosen to become bodhisattvas. See: <http://lotus-sutra.org/buddhist-ayurveda-encyclopedia/-brahma-net-sutra-brahmajala-fan-wang-jing.htm>.

<sup>75</sup> “The Sutra on the Original Deed that is the Garland of the Bodhisattva,” by Zhú Fóniàn (竺佛念, late 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> cent), has better organized and more comprehensive discussions of the Vinaya than the Brahma, jāla Sūtra.

<sup>76</sup> Even in our own times, filial piety (*xiào* 孝) is a common and desirable social virtue: see Shi Shengyan 2007: 84-86.

<sup>77</sup> For a detailed study on the evolution of these “edificatory rules” and the Chán monastic communities, see **Satō Tetsugen** 1987: 479-554.

<sup>78</sup> Bǎizhàng was Dharma heir to Mǎzǔ Dàoyī 馬祖道一 (709-788). His students included Huángbò Xīyùn 黃檗希運 (d 850).

precepts and other rules of austerity and poverty. The original text is lost, and the earliest extant code we have is the *Chányuàn qīngguī* 禪苑清規 (The Pure Rules for the Chán Monastery), compiled by Cháng-lú Zōngzé 長蘆宗曠 (d 1107?) of Northern Sòng in 1103.<sup>79</sup>

The most influential version of the “Pure Rules,” according to received Chán tradition, is the later more comprehensive *Chìxiū Bǎizhàng qīngguī* 勅修百丈清規 (The Rules of Bǎizhàng Corrected by Imperial Order), compiled between 1335 and 1338, that is, the Yuán 元 period (1271-1368). It gives details of offices and ceremonies in Chán monasteries, and this is the version that is still in use today in many Zen and Chinese monasteries.

Chán tradition has it that Bǎizhàng introduced the rules and kept up a strict routine of daily manual labour for his monks so that they are independent of other schools. The monks engaged themselves in rice-planting, farming, bamboo-splitting and other manual labour. Understandably, the newly arrived layman, Huìnéng, had to spend eight months splitting wood and treading the rice-mill in Hóngrěn’s monastery. Bǎizhàng is famously remembered for the succinct aphorism: “A day without work, a day without food” (*yìrì búzuò, yìrì bùshí* 一日不作, 一日不食).<sup>80</sup> [2.3.7; 5.2.2.2]

Through careful textual critical study, scholars have concluded that there is no evidence whatsoever that Bǎizhàng was behind the monastic rules named after him. They probably evolved over time, but were finally “canonized” during early Sòng, and traditionally and retrospectively attributed to Bǎizhàng. Scholars, however, are more certain about a rudimentary set of six monastic rules, known as “the Teacher’s Regulations” (*Shīguīzhì* 師規制 or simply, “Xuěfēng’s Code”) compiled by the late Táng monk, **Xuěfēng Yícún** 雪峰義存 (822-908)<sup>81</sup> [5.5.2.3], and which was in turn based those of his teacher, an obscure but virtuous monk, Lìngxùn 靈訓,<sup>82</sup> of a mountain monastery. Xuěfēng’s code is historically important in that it is one of the very few Táng Chán texts explicitly dealing with monastic life and discipline.<sup>83</sup>

**2.3.6 Ordination certificates.** Bǎizhàng’s injunction regarding monastic daily labour had a practical reason, too. It was in response to socio-economic changes that started in the Sòng 宋 (960-1279) period, and intensified in the Míng 明 (1368-1644) period. A very significant change was that Chinese Buddhism had to contend with *an active and systematic government regulation of religious affairs*. As in the Tokugawa shogunate (1603-1868) in Japan, a greatly centralized China, allowed the state to implement an unprecedented regularization and nationalization of the monastic order and Buddhism. This centralization process began in the Sòng and became complete in the Míng.<sup>84</sup> One of the most regulated aspects of institutional Buddhism and Daoism was the restriction in temple building, and the number of ordinations and of ordained clergy within a time-frame.<sup>85</sup>

The Buddhist religion was administered by a special bureaucracy of “monk-officials” (*sēngguān* 僧官). State-controlled ordination, to some extent controlled potential loss of those who otherwise needed to serve corvée or other productive labours. The reality was that government-issued ordination certificates *exempted their holders from tax, conscription and corvée*, and was avidly sought after, even short-term ones. As we have noted, during economic crises, the state did not hesitate to sell such certificates which always had a wildly lucrative market in the Sòng [5.2.3.5]. And in the Míng, the ordination certificate market was even

<sup>79</sup> See Foulk 1987: 62-99; Fritz 1994: 1-111; Yifa 2002 esp 102 & Foulk, Heine & Wright 2004.

<sup>80</sup> See his biography in *Jīngdé zhuàndēng lù* 景德傳燈錄 (T51.2076.250c-251b); *Sòng Gāosēng zhuàn* 宋高僧傳 (T50.2061.770-771); & also Pūjì (Southern Sòng), “Bǎizhàng Huáihǎi chánshī” (Chan Master Baizhang Huaihai), in *Wu deng hui yuan*, Peking: Zhonghua shuju, 1984 3:136. See also: <http://www.buddhist-canon.com/-SINOABHI/other/GUZUNSU/BAIZHANG.TXT>.

<sup>81</sup> Andrew Ferguson, *Zen’s Chinese Heritage*, 2000: 237-241.

<sup>82</sup> There is very little information on Lìngxùn, and virtually no records of his teachings; but see *Zūtáng jí* 17: 382 & *Jīngdé chuàndēng lù* 10: 280c-281a. He was obviously not FúróngLìngxùn 芙蓉靈訓 (1043-1118). See Mario Poceski, “Attitudes towards canonicity and religious authority in Tang China,” 2002; 41-43; JIA Jinhua, *Hongzhou School of Chan Buddhism*, 2006: 100 f.

<sup>83</sup> See Mario Poceski, “Attitudes towards canonicity and religious authority in Tang China,” 2002; 34 f.

<sup>84</sup> See William Chu 2006: 6 f.

<sup>85</sup> On restriction of temple-building, see Yü 1981: 145-153. For details of religious policies implemented in Míng China, see Fan Jialin 2001: 37-37.

more lucrative, so that its selling was officially systematized and handled by the Bureau of National Sacrifices of the Ministry of Rites,<sup>86</sup> and by 1392, there was the Central Buddhist Registration (*sēnglù sī* 僧錄司) to weed out imposters (unregistered “monks” and “nuns”).

There was a major advantage in paying for an ordination certificate instead of joining the monastic order in the traditional way. The purchaser could *bypass various stringent criteria*, such as mastery of the scripture and sitting for ecclesiastical examinations! Another negative consequence of this lucrative selling of ordination certificates was *the rise of ad hoc illicit private ordinations* so that tens of thousands signed up for the Buddhist and Daoist clergies to escape from taxes, corvée and conscription. As paper monastics, some of them even kept wives and concubines, and raised families within the monasteries.<sup>87</sup> Understandably, the monastic “order” was flooded with imposters and degenerates through the selling of ordination certificates, so that its effect was “more to weaken the *sangha* than all the conscious attempts by the post-Tang state to limit the power of Buddhism.”<sup>88</sup> [4.3.3.7]

**2.3.7 Bodhisattva precepts in Míng society.** There were two major supplements to the revisionist Chinese Vinaya, that is, the Pure Rules of Bǎizhàng [2.3.3] and the apocryphal “Bodhisattva precepts,” which rose during the Sòng period (960-1279) [4.3.3.4]. While the former concerned only monastics, the latter—the apocryphal Bodhisattva precepts—were more liberal and could apply to both the monastic and the lay. The Bodhisattva precepts were especially popular because they effectively *Confucianized* Chinese Buddhism: they were the Buddhist answer to Confucianism. The popularization of the Bodhisattva precepts occurred notably during the Sòng dynasty (960-1279), peaked in the Míng dynasty (1368-1643), when the Vinaya ceremonies were officially banned [4.3.3.4]. These Precepts are still a significant part of Chinese Buddhism to this day.

One important good point of the practice of the Bodhisattva precepts was that *it was not sold*. Anyone, monastic or lay, celibate or married, could practise them. When the selling of monastic certificates ceased, and formal ordination restricted, those desirous of the monastic life found an avenue of religious satisfaction in the apocryphal Bodhisattva precepts. In fact, the *Fànwǎng Jīng* and the *Yīnglò Jīng* [2.3.3] give explicit allowances for and instructions on self-initiation into the precepts. The Bodhisattva precepts were believed to be empowered by the Mahāyāna Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and deities themselves, so that their practitioners were purportedly purged of bad karma more effectively and more quickly than in the Hīnayāna (that is, early Indian) system.

In this new “simplified” preceptive system, what was deemed as the laborious steps of training of early Buddhism was *replaced by rituals and vows*, very much like the Confucian system. The early ecclesiastical act of ordination was not easily available, and even if it was, the standards for candidacy were too rigorous.<sup>89</sup> Understandably, the Chinese at once found Tantric rituals simply attractive with their promise of immediate power and efficacy. Such “empowerments” emotionally satisfied those thirsty for legitimization and respectable status that were absent from a commercially acquired monastic identity. This was even more so at a time when state policies and social conditions favoured Tantric rituals over Vinaya discipline (especially during the Míng dynasty). [4.3.3.6]

In fact, the Bodhisattva precepts were probably the only recourse for the countless pious Buddhists, including respectable patriarchs, who sought some sort of semblance of a committed Buddhist life. The ninth patriarch of the Pure Land, **Ōuyì Zhìxù** 藕益智旭 (1599-1655), for example, in his autobiography, relates how he received both his monastic and Bodhisattva precepts before the image of the late Pure

<sup>86</sup> Yü 1981: 155.

<sup>87</sup> *Míng Yīngzōng shìlù* 明英宗實錄 (“Veritable History of the Yīngzōng Era of the Míng,” 1467), fasc 4, cited in FAN Jialin 2001: 46. Yü also noted that in 1407, in a single swoop, 1,800 people from the coastal regions were arrested for having secretly ordained themselves in order probably to avoid the draft. The number of people in this single incident, says Yü, was indicative of the overall scale of the problem of illicit ordination (Yü 1981: 158).

<sup>88</sup> Brook, *Praying for Power*, 1993: 32.

<sup>89</sup> For a discussion on traditional Mahāyāna ordination requirements and procedures stipulated by the Vinaya, see Shi Shengyan 1993: 47-49.

Land monk, **Yúnqī Zhùhóng** 雲棲祿宏 (1535-1615), whom he obviously admired deeply enough to see as a Bodhisattva candidate, and as such served as a vicarious preceptor.<sup>90</sup>

There is the story of **Gǔxīn Rúxīn** 古心如馨 (1541-1615), the founder of the modern-day Chinese Vinaya lineage.<sup>91</sup> It is said to he ascended Wútái shān 五台山 and beseeched the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī (Wénshūshìlì Púsà 文殊师利菩萨) to confer upon him the precepts. Then, he propitiously dreamed that the Bodhisattva actually conferred upon him the “precept essence” (*jiètǐ* 戒體).<sup>92</sup> As William Chu notes:

It is indeed both intriguing and ironic to think about what implications this story may have on the legitimacy of modern Chinese monasticism as a whole, which, as the story would have it, was transmitted without the staple requirement but through this alternative, fantastic channel sanctioned only by the apocrypha. (William Chu 2006, digital ed)

The fortnightly confessional conclave during which monastics are required by the Vinaya to confess any minor transgressions of the monastic code, too, took a similar turn. Shi Shengyan discusses how the Bodhisattva precept practice of confession and repentance before Buddha images was performed in place of confessing before seniors.<sup>93</sup> **Yúnqī Zhùhóng**, in his memoirs, gives us a good idea of the sentiments of conscientious monks during the Míng period:

[Under] the present government, performing *Vinaya* ceremonies is forbidden. I wish to improve the situation, but I do not want to violate the law. Instead, I have the *Sangha* in my temple read the *Brahma-net Sūtra* [*Fanwang Jīng*] and *Bhikṣu Precepts* every two weeks. Monks from near and far join us for this reason. (*Lianchi Dashi Quanji*, cited in Shi Shengyan 1993: 46)<sup>94</sup>

The apocryphal Bodhisattva precepts were often conveniently vague so as to allow for “precept-suspension in special occasions” (*kāi [zhē] fǎ* 開[遮]法), giving more latitude for reinterpretation and modification for the benefit of an urbanized culture. After all, such rules were traditionally understood to emphasize *the inherent purity of the mind rather than as training-rule in the early Indian sense*.<sup>95</sup> In fact, all the so-called Four Eminent Monks of the late Míng consensually preached this priority of the “purity of the mind” and acting compassionately, rather than simply following rules.<sup>96</sup>

On the other hand, the leading Buddhists of the Míng period were also deeply aware that theirs was a time of moral degeneracy and spiritual inadequacy, which is evinced by virtually all contemporary Buddhist writings on current affairs and the state of Buddhism. As such, the adjustments were self-consciously made by Buddhists who were desperately aware of the new challenges they faced in *a centralized and urbanized society that was highly materialistic*. A common sense of guilt or of expediency prevented a total abandonment of disciplinary rules. Bodhisattva precepts during in the Míng era, as such, kept a delicate balance between moral imperative and a liberal attitude to accommodate new social challenges. [4.3.3.6]

<sup>90</sup> Ōuyì Zhìxù, *Ouyi dashi quanji*, vol 6 1989: 1007-1008. For a detailed discussion of Zhixu’s connection with the *Fānwǎng Jīng* and his views on penitence and karmic cleansing, see Chō Kyogen 1976, esp 192-282.

<sup>91</sup> The two “lineages” in the Míng were founded by Rúxīn and Zhùhóng. Ruxin’s system was the only one that survived and is regarded as the source of the modern Chinese monastic tradition. See Shi Shengyan 1993: 46.

<sup>92</sup> Shi Shengyan 1993: 46.

<sup>93</sup> See Shi Shengyan 1993: 20.

<sup>94</sup> Tr & cited in William Chu 2006.

<sup>95</sup> *Fānwǎng jīng zhījiě* 梵網經直解, Taipei: Huazang Tushuguan, 1984: 520 & 522.

<sup>96</sup> The Four Eminent Monks were traditionally regarded as those who helped revive Buddhism during the Míng era. On their efforts in this connection, see (1) the 8<sup>th</sup> patriarch, **Yúnqī Zhùhóng** 雲棲祿宏 (1535-1615), *Jieshu Fayin* 2.177-178 & 5.620, cited in Chen 1964: 186-187; (2) **Zībō Zhēnkě** 紫柏真可 (1543-1603), *Manji Zokuzokyo* 126.668; (3) **Hānshān (or Hánshān) Déqīng** 憨山 (or 寒山) 德清 (1546-1623), *Hānshān lǎorén mèngyóu jí* 憨山老人夢游集, pp554 f; and (4) the 9<sup>th</sup> patriarch, **Ōuyì Zhìxù**’s 蕩益智旭 (1598-1655) elaborate discussion in *Fānwang Hezhu*, cited in Chen 1964: 163 n4 & 5.

### 2.3.8 The free spirit of Chinese pragmatism.

2.3.8.1 CONFUCIANIZED MORALITY. I think the main difficulty (or, as some might see it, main failure) of Chinese Buddhism in terms of the Vinaya is that *they tended to philosophize and rationalize the training that is meant to discipline body and speech*.<sup>97</sup> Moral virtue became *externalized* like *lǐ* 禮 the notion of “rituals” or formality. According to Confucius, under the law, *external* authorities mete out punishments *after* illegal actions, so people generally behave well out of *fear* of punishment, and without understanding why they should. Whereas with *ritual*, behavior patterns are *internalized*, influencing them *before* they act. As such, they will behave properly because they fear shame, that is, do not wish to “lose face.” This is, in fact, a behaviourist—a carrot-and-stick—view of moral behaviour.

Moral virtue, as such, is merely an external—even, politically correct—behaviour, so people are measured and respected according to their social status, with special deference to authority and hierarchy. In fact, in such a system, moral virtue has little or no role as the basis for mental cultivation so central in early Buddhism. Indeed, since external behaviour is measured by its “face-saving” graces, one’s status becomes commensurate with one’s mastery of such external graces.

It is interesting to note here that through the Confucian “ritual” or *lǐ* 禮, behaviour patterns are *internalized*. In other words, our behaviour becomes second nature: we need not think before we act, and intention has no significant role here. I’m not arguing that *lǐ* is socially useless, but rather that they would work better when motivated by wholesome intentions, and not through merely learned behaviour. Moreover, in the Buddhist conception, being morally virtuous not only places us in a mutually beneficial position in society, but such a society also conduces to the fostering of true individuals (*sappurisa*).<sup>98</sup>

The point is that people rarely, if ever, are able or willing to behave in a morally virtuous way, unless motivated by some kind of benefit for self or significant others. In such a situation, especially in the absence of any vision of higher mental cultivation and its benefits for the individual, personal and social behaviour becomes “negotiable,” that is, simply arbitrary or depending on self-centred desires and delusions. Understandably, under such circumstances, the strict and austere rules of Indian monasticism became even more difficult to be appreciated, and much less practised. Furthermore, the social climate in “Buddhist” China was not always conducive to monasticism as it was in Buddhist India. William Chu notes such a development in the post-Tang liberalization of Chinese Buddhism, thus:

Suffering from devastating political persecutions and social chaos in the late Táng, scholastic Buddhism steadily declines, giving way to Chan practitioners to assert their idiosyncratic pedagogy which extolled, at least in rhetoric, spiritual spontaneity and transcendence from stifling ceremonialism. This spiritual assertiveness found expression in Chan adepts’ willingness to further test the elasticity and boundary of Buddhist moral regulations. As the *Vinaya* School (*lǐzong* 律宗) ceased to be a continuing, identifiable tradition around the same time, general interest in the minutiae of apparently outdated fine lines of the *Vinaya* inexorably waned.

(Chu 2006: 3 f; emphasis added)

Free-spirited Chán patriarchs like **Shítóu Xīqiān** 石頭希遷 (700-790) and **Wúxiè Língmó** 無懈靈摸 (746-818) openly discussed *abrogating the precepts altogether*.<sup>99</sup> Even influential Buddhist thinkers of the times, such as **Guīfēng Zōngmì** 圭峰宗密 (780-841)<sup>100</sup> and **Yǒngmíng Yánshòu** 永明延寿 (904-975),<sup>101</sup> although they regarded moral virtue as vital for the monastic community as well as individual

<sup>97</sup> On the threefold training (*ti, sikkhā*), see **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16) = SD 9 (10d).

<sup>98</sup> On the *sappurisa*, see **Sappurisa S** (M 113) = SD 23.7 Intro (3).

<sup>99</sup> *Zutang Ji* 1711c & 1641c. The **Zūtáng jí** 祖堂集 (Collection from the Patriarchs’ Hall, 10<sup>th</sup> cent) was the first comprehensive Chan/Zen historiographic work. Qu by Ran Yunhua 1995: 250.

<sup>100</sup> **Zōngmì** (780-841) was a Tang dynasty Buddhist scholar-monk and widely admired Chan master, the 5<sup>th</sup> and last recognized patriarch of the Huáyán (Skt *Avatamsaka*; Jap *Kegon*) school, and a patriarch of the Heze (Ho-tse) lineage of Southern Chan [5.2.3]. See <http://www.acmuller.net/ddb/search-ddb3.html> (keyword “guest”), & also <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zongmi>.

<sup>101</sup> **Yánshòu** (904-975), best known for his stand on “moderate Chan” (which tries to harmonize Chán and scripture) as against the better known “rhetorical Chan”: see Albert Welter, “The problem with orthodoxy in Zen Buddh-

training, championed an “internal precept” that superseded all the “external rules,” and spoke of the danger of “attaching to the provisional, Hīnayānist regulations” (T85.675c).

Chinese masters and exegetes such as Zōngmǐ, Yánshòu and their likes, were clearly inspired and guided by the apocryphal Vinaya texts. The *Púsà yīngluò běnyè jīng* [2.3.5], for example, states that “All mundane and supramundane precepts have the Mind as their essence.”<sup>102</sup> The *Fànwǎng jīng* [2.3.5] states that the training rules were merely “expedient,” while the “immaculate Mind Ground of the original self-nature” is the essence of external precepts.<sup>103</sup>

Questions regarding the authenticity of such texts arose early in Chinese history,<sup>104</sup> but on account of their great expedience—and the majority must surely be right—they were eventually accepted into practically all later scriptural catalogues.<sup>105</sup> The question, of course, remains, *what sort of Vinaya* have the Chinese monastics been following since then? Were they authentic renunciants like the early monastics of India?<sup>106</sup> The point remains that the Mahāyāna Chinese Buddhists rejected the early “Hīnayāna” moral training either because they were unable to appreciate their vital role as a basis for mental training, or that they were unable to accept any moral standards except the indigenous Confucian system. Either way, they famously fell short of the moral ambience so familiar in early Buddhism.

2.3.8.2 DAOIZED WISDOM. Chinese Buddhist wisdom is essentially an expression of Daoist philosophy. The terms may be Indian—for example, the path (*dào* 道), Buddha-nature (*rúláizàng* 如來藏) [4.1], meditation (*samādhi*) as the essence (*tǐ* 體/体) of wisdom (*prajñā*), and wisdom as the function (*yòng* 用) of meditation [5.2.4.6]—but the usage is *Daoist-inspired*. Daoist philosophy and wisdom found their fullest expression in Chinese Buddhism through Chán. Through Confucian inspiration, the Chán masters replaced the Buddha with monastic “ancestors” (zǔ 祖). Through Daoist inspiration, the Chinese Buddhist goal is no more the Buddhist nirvana but immanent “non-activity” (wúwéi 無為) [5.2.4.2].

It was clearly no easy matter for the ancient Chinese Buddhists, even the specialists, who were mostly neither fully familiar with nor experts in any Indian language. Not only had they to strive to understand the philosophy, methods and goals of a new and foreign religion, they also had to contend with the charge of their fellowmen, especially the Confucianists and the Daoists, that they were upholding a foreign faith, that is, a barbaric system. As we tend to perceive or recognize new ideas and images through learned or received notions, the early Chinese Buddhists found many Daoist concepts (most of which were common Chinese words, anyway) familiarly consonant with the Buddhist ideas as they understood them.

In fact, the early Chinese Buddhists (and we can say, traditional sinicized Buddhists in general) *understand Buddhist awakening in a Daoist sense*. The Daoists see *Dào* 道 (immanent reality) as pervading everything [5.1.2.8]. The Chinese Buddhists adopted the same word for the Buddhist *marga* (Skt; P *magga*), which means “path” (and all paths are gradual). It was just a matter of time the Chinese Buddhist saw the Buddhist *dào* through a Daoist lens. Thenceforth, the *Dào* was no more a gradual path, but *an ever-present reality that we only need open our eyes to*. This explains the Chán parsimonious rhetoric—using as few words as possible to express what is beyond words.

The only “practical” instruction for Ch’an was the direct experience of enlightenment; any other instruction would be a hindrance—an “impediment to the Tao” as the *Platform Sūtra* would have

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ism: Yōngmíng Yánshòu’s notion of *zong* in the *Zongjin lu* (Records of the Source Mirror),” 2002: [http://www.wlu.ca/press/Journals/sr/issues/31\\_1/welter.pdf](http://www.wlu.ca/press/Journals/sr/issues/31_1/welter.pdf).

<sup>102</sup> Qu by Ran Yunhua 1995: 259

<sup>103</sup> *Fànwǎng Jīng Zhíjiě* 梵網經直解, Taipei: Huazang tushuguan, 1984: 520.

<sup>104</sup> Paul Groner 1990:254.

<sup>105</sup> There are many cases where apocryphal texts were eventually entered into later bibliographical catalogues.

This process showed the relative standards for “scriptural authenticity,” and how much such criteria were influenced by polemical and sectarian agendas. See Kyoko Tokuno, “The Evaluation of Indigenous Scriptures in Chinese Buddhist Bibliographical Catalogues,” in Buswell (ed), *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, 1990: 31-74.

<sup>106</sup> For an instructive, even surprising, response by Brahmavamso to such a question, see Piya Tan, *History of Buddhism*, 2005: 2.23 (Cults). The bottom line is not that the rules make the monk, but rather it is *the mind that makes the monk*. Accessible at <http://pali.house.googlepages.com/historyofbuddhism>.

it. Hence, Ch'an words are intended to convey the experience and content of enlightenment; and if that experience is ineffable, then the language used to describe it must strive to be equally ineffable. Indeed, any other type of description would contradict the experience itself.

(Buswell 1987:336)

Interestingly, any serious practitioner of early Buddhism (not necessarily a Theravada Buddhist), would find such language very familiar, almost an echo of such teachings as found, for example, in the **Kaccā(ya)na,gotta Sutta** (S 12.15),<sup>107</sup> whose cognate is found in the **Samyukta Āgama** 301 (T2.85c-86a).<sup>108</sup> Perhaps by then Mahayana heights had overshadowed the Hīnayāna ground, or more likely there were no foreign teacher proficient in teaching such Suttas. It was after all a Hīnayāna text. [2.8.5]

## 2.4 GROWING ECLECTICISM

With the three-cornered tension amongst Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism in China, it is inevitable that at some point, there would be arise some sort of *religious assimilation*. This sort of assimilation arose as a result of the disputes between Daoism and Buddhism during the Six Dynasties (*Liù cháo* 六朝) period (3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries). [2.3.3]

However, it was not until after the Táng period that the idea of the unity of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism was most clearly advocated. Such responses from the Buddhist side were mainly motivated to defuse the anti-Buddhist sentiments of the Confucianists. The most prominent efforts in such syncreticism were those of the Chán monks of the Sòng dynasty.

During the Sòng dynasty,<sup>109</sup> the notion of “Three teachings in one” (*sānjiào héyì* 三教合一), or “Confucianism and Buddhism combined” (*rúfó héliú* 儒佛合流) was introduced. The Buddhist monks Gūshān Zhīyuán 孤山智圓 (967-1022)<sup>110</sup> and Míngjiào Qīsōng 明教契嵩 (1007-1072) tried to explain the relationship of Confucianism and Buddhism for daily life. Just as Confucianism educates *the self* (*xiūshēn* 修身), Buddhism trains *the mind* (*xiūxīn* 修心). Both teachings were regarded as *complementary*, and the loss of one would entail a defect in one's personality. By transposing Buddhist terms into the Confucian one, they equated the “five precepts” (*wǔjiè* 五戒) of Buddhism with the “five constant virtues” (*wǔcháng* 五常) of Confucianism,<sup>111</sup> with filial piety (*xiào* 孝), a central Confucian concept, as the beginning of the five precepts. The Buddhist mind (*xīn* 心) was taken as the expression of humanity 仁 (*rén*) and propriety (*yì* 義) of Confucianism. In Neo-Confucianism (*lǐxué* 理學), while the Buddha himself was merely one polar point or extreme 極 (*jí*, simplified 极), the Dào is the immanent principle of the universal order.

<sup>107</sup> See **Kaccā(ya)na,gotta S** (S 12.15/2:15 f) = SD 6.13.

<sup>108</sup> Tr Guṇabhadra: btw 12<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> years of Yuánjiā (元嘉), Liú Sòng dynasty (劉宋) (435-443 CE) at Wǎguān Monastery (瓦官寺), Yángdū (楊都): [http://www.acmuller.net/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0650.html#note-k0650-2](http://www.acmuller.net/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0650.html#note-k0650-2). See **Kaccā(ya)na,gotta S** (Sā 301) = SD 6.13a.

<sup>109</sup> The Sòng Dynasty (宋朝 Sòngcháo, 960–1279 CE), succeeding the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms Period, and was followed by the Yuan Dynasty.

<sup>110</sup> In such names, the first two characters are the toponym, the person's place-name, ie the school, temple or location he is famously associated with.

<sup>111</sup> The five constant virtues of Confucianism): humanity (*rén* 仁), righteousness (*yì* 義/义), ritual formality (*lǐ* 禮/礼), moral wisdom (*zhì* 智), trust (*xìn* 信). Cf Zhiyi's *Renwangjīng shu*, where he incorporates the five precepts, and their respective virtues, with the cardinal points, the five elements, and the five constant virtues of Confucianism (Xuzangjīng 1.40.4.376b): (1) not taking life (east), wood, humanity; (2) not to steal (north), water, wisdom; (3) not to commit adultery (west), metal, righteousness; (4) not to take intoxicants (south), fire, propriety; (5) not to lie (centre), earth, trust; qu in Piyasilo, *The Buddha's Teachings*, 1991b:10.



2.4 *Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism are one*, a painting in the style of Li Táng 李唐 (d 1130) portraying Confucius, Lǎozǐ and the Buddha laughing by a river stream, Sòng Dynasty (12th century).

## 2.5 THE THREE-RELIGION DEBATES

In the early centuries of its arrival, Buddhism was often considered as *a foreign religion*, and was, as such, rejected by the indigenous systems of Daoism and Confucianism *as a threat to the culture and security of the country*. The imperial court, however, in order to explore and resolve social and political issues arising from this tension, invited the luminaries of Buddhism, Daoism, and to a lesser extent, Confucianism, to explain or to defend their doctrines. [2.2.2]

The “Three Doctrines Discussions”<sup>112</sup> of medieval China were imperially-sponsored debates between representatives of China’s three major religious or philosophical systems, Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism. These debates had a long history, beginning in the Period of Disunion (221-580), when China splintered into a number of independent, contending states.

The rulers were not only interested in the truth of the teachings, but also the possible impact that they might have on society. The emperor often proposed a specific thesis, judged the debate, and in due course issued related policy directives. During the Northern Wei (386-584), for example, the imperial house introduced the practice of “birthday debates” (*dànchén tánlùn* 誕辰談論),<sup>113</sup> holding such discussions as part of the celebration of the emperor’s birthday.

The debates continued during the reunification of the empire under the short-lived Suí dynasty (581-617). After reaching their heights in the early half of the Táng dynasty (618-960), when they were referred to as “explications and discussions of the Three Doctrines” (*sānjiào jiǎngtán* 三教講談 or *jiǎnglùn* 講論 or *jiǎngshuō* 講說).

The first two Táng emperors refused to hold such debates on their birthdays, perhaps not wishing to grant Buddhism this mark of imperial favor. However, they did hold them on other occasions, most notably at the Imperial Academy (*guózǐjiàn* 國子監) after the emperor performed the sacrificial ritual (*sìdiǎn* 祀典) there. These debates were occasionally interrupted, for example, by the Ān Lùshān revolt (755-763), but were resumed in 796; and during the Huichāng persecution of Buddhism (841-845) [7.4.1], but were revived in 849. The last debate of the Táng dynasty was held in 870.

These adversarial debates were an extension of Chinese philosophical disputations or Pure Talk<sup>114</sup> (usually amongst the Daoists or the Confucianists) to include Buddhism. However, unlike Pure Talk discussion, these inter-religious debates were often adversarial, and the emperor could any time make

<sup>112</sup> For detailed discussion, see Mary M Garrett 1994.

<sup>113</sup> Zanning 999/1924.248a-b.

<sup>114</sup> *qīngtán* 清談, ie an abstract discussion.

arbitrary rules and decisions. Like all court debates, the “Three Doctrines Discussions” were not open to the public. Only well-placed officials and selected members of the religious and secular elite were invited to the audience, and the populace learned of the results through official imperial proclamations.

Significantly, like the debates over policy issues, these “Three Doctrines Discussions” could result in governmental action. For instance, after the debate of 705 on the authenticity of the text “Lǎozi Converted the Barbarians” (*Lǎozi huàhú jīng* 老子化胡經), a work which described the Daoist sage Lǎozi as the source of Buddhist teachings [2.2.2], emperor Gaozong ordered that all copies of this text be burned. Sometimes the benefits could be substantial. After the monk Zhixuán 智玄 won the debate of 849, for example, emperor Xuán zōng commanded that all the monastic establishments which had been demolished by the previous emperor be rebuilt.<sup>115</sup>

We should not forget that whichever way such debates went, it was, above all, to the emperor’s advantage. For example, debators were as a rule encouraged *to refute the adversaries’ doctrines rather than to establish their own*—which effectively diminishes the significance of a victory. In other words, the imperial house further legitimized itself through holding such debates. For, the emperor himself chose the debators, who had no choice but to debate, the emperor was both judge and jury. The debates, in other words, were a brilliant rhetorical tool that worked in the emperor’s favour. The point was that the emperor was not obliged to back the winner, and might secretly be swayed by the losing arguments. In due course, the debates became a shadow play.

## 2.6 WHAT IS THE CHINESE BUDDHIST CANON?

**2.6.1 Translating Buddhism into Chinese: some issues.** Human languages can be broadly divided between those that are *alphabet-based* (such as the Indic languages and English) and the *glyph-based* (such as Chinese and the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics). While the alphabet-based languages facilitate abstract thought, a glyphic language tends to work in mostly concrete or palpable terms by way of monosyllabic pictographs (“thing” words) and ideographs (“idea” words).<sup>116</sup> Understandably, the early translators had to overcome great odds to render the Indic Buddhist texts (mostly Sanskrit) into Chinese. In the earliest centuries of the Buddhist presence in China, the problem was especially acute when the Indic-speaking missionaries knew little or no Chinese, and the local Buddhist translators knew little or no Indic language. Even when both sides had mastered the language of the other, these two problems remained, namely,

- (1) The two languages come from completely different language stocks. Sanskrit, Pali and other Indic languages belong to the Indo-Aryan family, while the Chinese language is from the Sino-Tibetan family. The Indic languages are alphabetic while Chinese is monosyllabic.<sup>117</sup>
- (2) There is a vast difference between Chinese and Indian cultures and philosophies. Not only did translators discover it was nearly impossible to find synonyms or near-synonyms, or equivalent concepts for the scriptures in the Chinese language, but they also found a very basic difference between the ways of thinking and of expressing thoughts in the two languages.

Even before Kumārajīva [2.2.3] came to China, **Dào’ān** (312-385) had introduced the concept of “the five losses and three difficulties” in translating Indic texts into Chinese. The great translator, Xuánzàng 玄奘 (602?-664), pointed out the “five kinds of untranslatable words.” [2.6.1.2]

2.6.1.1 DÀO’ĀN’S THEORY OF THE “FIVE LOSSES AND THREE DIFFICULTIES” referred to five points in which the meaning of the original was lost through translation and to three things that were not easy to accomplish in translating. The five losses are as follows:

<sup>115</sup> Zanning 988/1924.744a; also Dalby 1979:666-669.

<sup>116</sup> On written Chinese, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Written\\_Chinese](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Written_Chinese).

<sup>117</sup> Linguistically, Chinese is said to be an analytic, isolating, or root language, that is, one in which the words are invariable, and syntactic relationships are shown by word order. Indic languages, on the other hand, are said to be synthetic, fusional, or inflecting (also inflected or inflectional).

- (1) The word order in the Indic originals had to be reversed to conform to Chinese grammar. For example, in Chinese the first of the Three Refuges is *zì guī yī fó* 自归依佛 (“I take refuge in the Buddha”), whereas in the Indic original it is expressed in the reverse word order as *Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi* (“To the Buddha for refuge I go.”)
- (2) The Indians preferred simple, unadorned writing, whereas the Chinese were fond of ornate, polished writing. When the translator gave priority to literary style to please the Chinese audience, the simplicity and accuracy of the original were lost.  
For example, when Zhīqiān 支謙 of the Wu dynasty (222-280) attempted to translate the Dharmapada in ornate Chinese style, the Indian monk, Wéiqínán 維祇難 (or Zhànghài 障害; Skt: Vighna)—who had brought the original from India—cautioned him against shrouding the Buddha’s words in beautiful prose.
- (3) The Indic texts had many repetitive passages. To emphasize a point, they repeated a sentence or sentences several times, or in the case of the Nikāya texts, repetitions were a mark of the oral tradition. This textual style did not appeal to the Chinese, who deleted all repetitions when translating into Chinese.
- (4) The Indic texts often contained nested sentences (a sentence within a sentence). For example, it was not unusual to find a long explanatory passage of over a thousand characters introduced in the middle of a sentence so that it is difficult to trace the original point. These interpolations were generally deleted in the Chinese translations. As such, the complex meanings of the India originals were lost.
- (5) In Indic writing even after a point had been fully explained, the explanation was often repeated in a subsequent passage as stock passages. These repetitions were all deleted in the Chinese translations.

And the three difficulties pointed out by Dào’ān are as follows:

- (1) The graceful and highly inflected ancient Sanskrit, for example, had to be translated into plain, clear Chinese.
- (2) Although Sanskrit sentences expressed very subtle nuances, in keeping with Indian thought of the Buddha’s time, the Chinese translations had to be palpable and clear to Chinese readers.
- (3) Although the 500 Arhats led by Mahā Kaśyapa had scrupulously compiled the texts by reconfirming the accuracy of each phrase, errors occurred in the course of their transmission. As such, the third difficulty actually referred to editorial skills and profound understanding of the Buddha Word that translators must have.

2.6.1.2 XUÁNZÀNG’S THEORY OF THE “FIVE KINDS OF UNTRANSLATABLE WORDS” referred to five instances in which Indic words whose meanings were so profound that they defied a single, simple definition, that is, to say:

- (1) Complex, pregnant Indic terms that defied a single, simple definition. For example, *dhāraṇī* (formulaic incantation) were simply transliterated into Chinese (as *tuólúóní* 陀羅尼).
- (2) Polysemic words (word with multiple meanings). For example, the term *bhagavat*, Xuánzàng pointed out, has six meanings, and all the meanings are integral to convey a complete understanding of the term.
- (3) Indigenous words for things that have no Chinese equivalents, such as the names of Indian plants, animals, minerals, places.
- (4) Words traditionally transliterated or transcribed phonetically. For example, *anuttara,samyak-sambuddha*. According to Xuánzàng, such words had been transliterated ever since the time of Kaśyapa Mataṅga (1<sup>st</sup> century CE).
- (5) Special terms that would lose their flavour or special meanings in translated into Chinese. For example, although *prajñā* does mean wisdom, its fuller meaning of perfect wisdom is preserved only when it is transliterated.

**2.6.2 *Géyì* 格義 (concept-matching).** In the early centuries of Buddhism in China, the foreign missionaries and local Buddhist teachers had to look for ways of expressing the newly-arrived religion so that the locals would understand and practise it. A common translation method then was to match the senses of important and difficult Buddhist terms with those of secular and Daoist literature that the translators perceived as being synonymous or close in meaning. This was known as *géyì*, 格義.

*Géyì* 格義, concept- or meaning-matching [2.2.2], was a way of coining a Chinese technical term for Buddhist texts and translations. It involved looking for terms from Chinese secular literature or religions, especially Daoism, as opposed to using Chinese characters strictly for transliterating their sound value as a way of representing the Sanskrit word, or introducing a neologism altogether.

The time of Dàoshēng (c360-434) was noted for the meeting of Buddhist and Daoist traditions: it was the heyday of the “concept-matching” (*géyì*), where difficult Buddhist terms were translated by what were viewed as their Daoist cognates, so that Buddhist concepts were understood in the light of neo-Daoist ideas [2.2.3]. It was also the time of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras and their doctrine of emptiness, a notion that resonated with the neo-Daoist ideas of nothingness or non-being (*wú*).<sup>118</sup>

The Huáyán school (*Huáyán zōng* 華嚴宗) was historically *the most Chinese of the Buddhist schools* because of their rich uniquely Chinese religious philosophy, much of which paralleled Daoism. The rise of the school is traditionally attributed to a series of five patriarchs who developed the school’s doctrines, namely, Dùshùn 杜順 (557-640), Zhìyǎn 智儼 (602-668), Fǎzàng 法藏 (643-712), Chéngguān 澄觀 (738-839) and Zōngmì 宗密 (780-841). Another important figure in the development and popularization of Huáyán philosophy was the lay scholar Lǐ Tōngxuán 李通玄 (635-730).

The first Daoist element most apparent in Huáyán philosophy was the notion of *xuán* 玄, a Daoist term and concept meaning “mystery, profundity, deep truth, darkness, or subtleness.”<sup>119</sup> For Huáyán, *xuán* was a key word, referring to the whole truth of the *dharma, dhātu* (*fǎjiè* 法界). Kang-nam OH (2000: 287) discusses how Daoism influenced Huáyán Buddhism and how *dharma, dhātu* became qualified with the Daoist *xuán*. Zhiyan used the word *xuán* in the title of his magnum opus, *Huáyán jīng sōu-xuán jì* 華嚴經搜玄記 (The Record of Probing the Mystery of the Avatamsaka Sūtra). This implied that his purpose in examining the Avatamsaka Sūtra was to get into the *xuán* mystery. Fǎzàng’s monumental commentary on the Avatamsaka is similarly titled, *Tànxuán jì* 探玄記. Chengguan, too, titled his commentary on the *Huáyán fǎjièguān mén* 華嚴法界觀門 (The Huáyán Gate of Insight into the Dharmadhātu) as *Fǎjièxuán jìng* 法界玄鏡 (The Mirror of Dharma-realm Mystery). As such, for Huáyán patriarchs, their main doctrine for the *dharma, dhātu* were the “ten mysteries (*xuán*).”

Even before the rise of the Huáyán school, Dào’ān 道安 (312-385) [2.3.3] of Eastern Jin 東晉 (317-420), had criticized the Prajñā (Wisdom) schools,<sup>120</sup> challenging their faithfulness to authentic Buddhist positions as well as the translation methodologies behind the texts they and other Chinese Buddhists had come to rely on. In particular, he criticized the practice of “concept-matching” (*géyì*). The matching of Buddhist ideas with familiar Chinese terms might make them more understandable, but such matches were often less than perfect, often distorting Buddhism.

For instance, early translators chose a well-known Daoist and Confucian term, *wúwéi* 無為 (“non-deliberate activity”), to translate *nirvāṇa*. Arguably, *wúwéi* and *nirvāṇa* represent the respective goals of Daoism and Buddhism, but those goals are totally different one. Later, to emphasize the uniqueness of Buddhist *nirvāṇa*, Chinese translators abandoned *wúwéi* for a transliteration, *nièpán* 涅槃. *Wúwéi* was retained to render another important Buddhist notion, *asaṃskṛta* (unconditioned, un compounded), but also which had its own problems. A danger of importing of such “pregnant” non-Buddhist terms into

<sup>118</sup> See Whalen Lai 1987a: 169.

<sup>119</sup> It should be noted however that *xuán* (“mystery”) was and is actually a common word. It is just like the word “faith,” used in all the world religions, but each having their own sense of it.

<sup>120</sup> This term refers to the early Chan schools, esp the pupils of Kumārajīva, ie, the “Four Philosophers” 四哲 (as listed in Huijiāo’s *Gāosēng zhuàn*), viz, Dàoshēng 道生 (360?-434): T.2059:50.366b23-367a28, Sēngzhào 僧肇 (384-414): T.2059:50.365a9-366a29, Dàoróng 道融 (mid-5<sup>th</sup> cent): T.2059:50.363b, and Sēngruì 僧叡 (371-438): T.2059:50.364a14-366b22. See LO Yuet Keung 2002: 92.

Buddhism is that those unfamiliar with the Sanskrit terminology would read the words in their native senses, thus distorting the Chinese understanding of the intended texts.

For example, while the Daoist *wúwéi* and the Buddhist *wúwéi* might overlap in some senses, they were ultimately quite distinct. For Daoists, *wúwéi* meant interacting effortlessly and naturally with the world, while for Buddhists it meant unaffected by causes and conditions, neither arising nor ceasing. Chinese readers would inevitably conflate the semantic ranges of such terms, so that over the centuries they became distinctively Chinese Buddhist concepts.<sup>121</sup>

After Dào'ān, Chinese Buddhism became more distinct from the indigenous traditions, and Buddhists became more critical in their hermeneutic approaches to textual translation.<sup>122</sup> However, after the time of Zōngmì [4.3.2.2] and Li Tōngxuán 李通玄, the Huáyán school generally stagnated and then eventually declined. The school, dependent upon state support, suffered severely during the Huichāng persecutions of 841-845, never to recover its former strength [7.4.1.3]. The Chán school, on the other hand, was better prepared for the uncertainties of worldly patronage, and imposed a strict work discipline that made them self-sufficient even in the most difficult times, based on Bǎizhàng's teaching, "A day without work, a day without food." [2.3.3].

**2.6.3 Apocryphal Chinese sutras.** When Buddhism first arrived in China, it was generally rejected by the Daoists and the Confucianists as a foreign religion. When Buddhism was taking root in the land, there was intense rivalry between Buddhism and the indigenous religions. One expression of this rivalry was the claim to precedence through the fabrication of classics (*jīng* 經), such as the **Huàhú jīng** 化胡經 (Classic on the Conversion of the Barbarians) by the Daoists, and the Buddhists responded with the apocryphal **Qīngjìng fǎxíng jīng** 清淨法行經 (Sutra to Propagate the Clear and True Teaching) [2.2.2].

In the early days of Chinese Buddhism, apocryphal or fabricated "sutras" (more properly, *classics*) were sometimes used to present Buddhism in terms of the philosophy of Daoism, such as the philosophy of the Daoist philosopher, **Zhuāngzi** (莊子 4<sup>th</sup> cent BCE). Such "sutras" were often used in good faith to adapt a "barbarian" religion to Chinese society. However, because they often distorted Buddhism, they are regarded as apocryphal, or even spurious.

It should be noted that apocryphal sutras are found throughout Chinese history. Fortunately, the apocryphal sutras produced in China are readily distinguishable from the genuine sutras. The apocryphal sutras and texts fall into seven general categories:

(1) Extended texts of the early translations.

John Brough first revealed an interesting case of apocryphal sutra (though he did not call it such in his study of the Chinese translation of the *Jātaka, māla* or *Garland of Birth Stories*).<sup>123</sup> In the despair at translating the text, the few Sanskrit phrases the Chinese were able to construe served as clues for lifting entire stories verbatim from other texts that contained the same keywords.

For example, finding the term *vyāghrī* (tigress) in their manuscript, they simply wrote out the *Vyāghrī, parivarta*, the last chapter of the *Suvarṇa, prabhāsōttama Sūtra* (T 665). Compounding their problems, the translators were working often without dictionary or grammar, and not always with an Indian pundit to assist them in construing the text.

There is also evidence that they were working on a deadline and were not given time to revise their hurried work.<sup>124</sup>

(2) Texts that reconcile Buddhism with the indigenous Daoism, or that use Daoist terminology and ideas to express Buddhist thought.

<sup>121</sup> See Dan Lusthaus 1998 ch 2.

<sup>122</sup> See Livia Kohn 1992: 135-137.

<sup>123</sup> John Brough, "The Chinese Pseudo-Translation of Ārya-Śūra's *Jātakāla*," *Asia Major* 11 (1964-1965): 27-53. Brough's study has been summarized with additional textual sources cited for the storied pilfered by the Chinese translators, in Kōgen Mizuno, "J Brough: The Chinese Pseudo-Translation of Ārya-Śūra's *Jātakamāla* 'shōkai,'" *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyō* 14 1966: 801-805.

<sup>124</sup> Robert E Buswell, *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, 1990: 11.

The antecedence of Daoist and Confucianist terminologies and philosophies actually helped Buddhism adapt itself to Chinese society.

(3) Texts that attempt to adapt Buddhist doctrines to the indigenous needs of Chinese Buddhists.

This would include texts that promote filial piety and ancestor worship.

(4) Texts that relate Buddhism to traditional folk beliefs.

Such texts were composed and expounded to palm off folk beliefs off as Buddha Word.

(5) Condensed sutras (*chāo jīng* 抄經) that are simplified abridgements of more complex, repetitive translated sutras.

It is said that the Southern Ch'i (Nánqí) prince Xiāo Ziliáng 蕭子良<sup>125</sup> (459-494), a devoted Buddhist who encouraged Buddhist scholarship, himself compiled 36 abridged sutras (120 fascicles) so that his father's subjects could easily read and understand them. Among his abridgements are:

The Abridged Flower Garland Sutra (*Chāo huá yán jīng* 抄華嚴經), of the Avatamsaka Sūtra.

The Abridged Great Collection of Sutras (*Chāo fāng děng dà jí jīng* 抄方等大集經), of the Mahā-saṃnipāta Sūtra.

The Threefold Lotus Sutra, chapter 23 (Bodhisattva Medicine King) and the “closing sutra” (Meditation on the Bodhisattva Universal Virtue).

(6) Texts “transmitted” by someone experiencing a state of possessive vision claiming to reveal teachings from the Buddha.

A psychic nun named Sēngfǎ 僧法 (b 489), of scholarly birth, had since childhood indulged in ecstatic meditation. In such a trance, she would recite various “sutras” as if she was acquainted with them. This even impressed the emperor Wǔ of Liáng (r 502-549). In fact, some 21 apocryphal sutras of Sēngfǎ's are included in the Chinese canon.

The Tibetan “treasure” (*gter-ma*) texts would be examples of such texts, too.<sup>126</sup>

(7) Sutras composed and expounded to exploit Buddhism for some agenda.

There are two such kinds of apocryphal texts: one done by the Buddhists themselves; the other, fabricated by non-Buddhists to discredit Buddhism.

Jamie Hubbard, a specialist in medieval Chinese Buddhism, is against the use of the term “apocryphal” for Buddhist texts:

I find this<sup>127</sup> usage to be misleading, even if one is familiar with the original meaning or use of the term in Biblical studies. There, although apocrypha does include the sense of spurious or false (and the adjective “apocryphal” even more so), its most common use is to refer to the books which, while inspired, are not strictly considered part of the Bible—the Pseudepigrapha and books included in the Vulgate, for example. So there is a good case to be made for avoiding the term apocrypha for Buddhist texts for the simple reason that *i ching* [疑經] and *wei ching* [偽經], doubtful sutras and spurious sutras, are used in a much more damning way by the Chinese catalogers. Even if you understand “apocrypha” to refer to scriptures of false attribution, however, not all of the works labeled spurious are actually false attributions to Indic originals, as is the case with San-chieh texts [S4: pp14-16]... For general academic discourse, however unwieldy it may seem to some, I recommend we stick with “indigenous scriptures” to describe scriptures determined to have been composed in China or elsewhere (including India) and leave the question of their conformance to orthodoxy—that is to say, their apocryphal status—to theologians.

(Hubbard 2006: 13)

<sup>125</sup> Full title, Nánqí Jinglíng Wáng Xiāo Ziliáng 南齊竟陵王蕭子良.

<sup>126</sup> See Robert E Buswell (ed), *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*. Honolulu: Univ of Hawaii Press, 1990, esp chs by Kyoko Tokuno & by Michel Strickmann.

<sup>127</sup> “This” refers to eg Buswell (ed), *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, 1990, cf Buswell's intro (1-30).

### 2.6.4 The Chinese Buddhist canon

2.6.4.1 THE EARLY CANON. Although early Buddhism mainly uses the oral tradition to teach and transmit the Dharma, it has a large corpus of canonical, commentarial and other auxiliary texts.<sup>128</sup> The standard modern edition of the Mahāyāna canon is **Taishō shinshū daizōkyō** 大正新脩大藏經<sup>129</sup> (T for short) published in Japan, in 100 large volumes. It has both canonical and non-canonical (including Chinese and Japanese) literature, and its arrangement does not clearly distinguish the two. Its first two volumes contain the four Āgamas (paralleling the Pali Nikāyas), and includes versions of the Vinaya, the Dhammapada, the Itivuttaka and the Milindapañha and of parts of some other books.<sup>130</sup>

Theravāda Buddhism that arrived in Sri Lanka and SE Asia brought with it a complete set of the Pali Canon, which was available in written form by the 1<sup>st</sup> century. The Buddhist texts that went to China, too, were written texts, but did not arrive as a comprehensive and systematic collection. The texts arrived one after another with the missionary monks and pilgrims into kingdoms or an empire using Chinese as the official language. Such a long process required the Chinese to set up a mechanism for receiving a constant stream of new materials.<sup>131</sup>

2.6.4.2 OPEN CANON. As such, for centuries in imperial China, the Chinese Buddhists kept an open canon. Their task was to ensure that they had all of the Indian texts, however long it might take to find and translate them. Pilgrimages from China to the western regions were often made with the express purpose of finding “missing” texts [2.3.4]. What these pilgrims found in India and brought back to China were a motley of early texts and sectarian works (with a majority of the latter).

The various Indian Buddhist schools each had their own closed *nikāya* (such as the Pali canon) or *āgama* (mainly Sanskrit canons), but it was more complicated for the Chinese. They had received and translated the four *āgamas*, but these came from various Indian schools, namely:<sup>132</sup>

Sanskrit name	Chinese name	Pinyin (with tones)	Provenance (school)	Taishō no
Dīrgha āgama	長阿含經	<i>Cháng āhán jīng</i>	Dharma, guptaka	T1 <sup>133</sup>
Madhyama āgama	中阿含經	<i>Zhōng āhán jīng</i>	Sarvāstivāda	T26 <sup>134</sup>
Saṃyukta āgama	雜阿含經	<i>Zá āhán jīng</i>	Sarvāstivāda	T99 <sup>135</sup>
Ekottara āgama	增一阿含經	<i>Zēngyī āhán jīng</i>	Mahāsaṅghika (?)	T125 <sup>136</sup>

<sup>128</sup> One estimated count of pages of the Pali Text Society eds of the Pali Canon is about 12800 pages, equivalent to around 30 million characters: <http://seacoast.sunderland.ac.uk/~os0dwe/bs12.html>.

<sup>129</sup> See [http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/alc/refguide/refguide.htm#Taisho\\_Canon](http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/alc/refguide/refguide.htm#Taisho_Canon); for list of vols, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese\\_Buddhist\\_canon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_Buddhist_canon). Of the 100 vols, the last 15 are Japanese Buddhist works.

<sup>130</sup> The Taishō canon contains a total of 2,920 texts in 85 volumes was compiled and redacted between 1924 and 1932 by the Editorial Committee of the Japanese Tripiṭaka under the direction of TAKAKUSU Junjirō. This ed of Chinese-language scriptures from China, Japan, and Korea was based on critical readings of several earlier canons, and is the most complete collection of east Asian scriptures available. However, due to its size, it does have misprints. It is the standard reference for scholars of east Asian Buddhism, and citing it will generally give the document number and/or volume number, with the prefix “T,” followed by the page number, register, and line in order to give the exact location of the passage. Thus, the reference “T.2016,48:524c13” or “T2016.48.524c13” or T2016 = T48.524c13) refers to a passage from Yōngmíng Yánshòu ‘s *Tsung ching lu*, which is document no 2016 in the Taishō canon, found in volume 48, page 524, the third register (c), beginning from line 13.

<sup>131</sup> This section is mainly based on Lewis Lancaster 1993.

<sup>132</sup> See Charles Muller, *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism* entry on 阿含經 *Āhán jīng*: [http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?96.xml+id\('b963f-542b-7d93'\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?96.xml+id('b963f-542b-7d93')).

<sup>133</sup> T1 = T1.1a-149c tr Buddha, yaśas (Fótuóyēshè 佛陀耶舍) & Zhú Fóniàn 竺佛念 at Cháng’ān in 413.

<sup>134</sup> T26 = T1.421a-809c tr Gautama Saṅgha, deva (Qútán sēngjiātípó 瞿曇僧伽提婆) in Dōngtíng Monastery (東亭寺), 397-398.

<sup>135</sup> T99 = T2.1a-373b tr Guna, bhadrā (Qíunábátuó 求那跋陀羅) at Wǎguān Monastery 瓦官寺 sometime between 435-443.

<sup>136</sup> T125 = T2.549a-830b tr Gautama Saṅgha, deva (Qútán sēngjiātípó 瞿曇僧伽提婆) on Lúshān 廬山.

By the 5<sup>th</sup> century, China had received a number of Vinaya texts, especially those of the Sarvāsti-, vāda, the Dharma,guptaka, the Mahā,saṅghika, the Mahiśāsaka, and the Mūla,sarvāsti,vāda [2.3.4], but were undecided which Vinaya text to follow. During the 7<sup>th</sup> century, **Dào xuān** 道宣 (596-667) founded the Vinaya school (*Lǜzōng* 律宗), and chose the Dharma,guptaka Vinaya as the standard for the Chinese sangha. The Dharma,guptaka Vinaya (T1428)<sup>137</sup> was translated into Chinese by Buddha,yāśas and Zhú Fóniàn 竺佛念 in 405 or 408 [2.3.4].<sup>138</sup>

However, unlike for most of the Theravāda sanghas, where Vinaya issues are of great importance, the Chinese Buddhists found no practical problems with the variety of Vinaya texts. As Lancaster observes:

It should be noted that the Vinaya School had little to do with the actual practice of the rules; rather, the main task was the study of the *vinaya* texts. Monastic members involved in this type of scholastic study of the *vinaya* were few in number, and since the Chinese community did not attempt to follow all of the rules laid out in the texts, the differences between the codes of behaviour created no practical problems. (Lancaster 1993:527 f)

The Abhidharma (*āpidámó* 阿毘達磨), the third “basket” (*piṭaka*) of the early Canon comprises treatises and enumerations of dharmas or phenomena (that is, psycho-physical states). The Chinese Buddhist canon makers had difficulties it, too. Learning that there was no consensus over the Abhidharma even amongst the Indian Buddhists, the Chinese canon makers merely included the Abhidharma translations—such as those translated by Kumāra,jīva. Guṇa,bhadra, Pāramārtha and Xuánzàng—without paying much attention to them.

2.6.4.3 MAHĀYĀNA EMPHASES. Most of the Buddhist texts that came to China were of **the Mahāyāna** (“the great vehicle”), a major movement, involving many schools, that reinterpreted fundamental Buddhist ideals, with strong leanings towards or emphasis on mythology (cosmic Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Pure Lands), philosophy (emptiness and Buddha-nature) or rituals (vows and mantra recitation). *The strongest point of the Mahāyāna is that it has, or tries to project, a proactive view of cosmic compassion. One of its weakest points* is perhaps that it is unable to accept or withstand the rigours of the early Vinaya (*śīla*) and meditation system (*samādhi*), focussing mostly on the wisdom (*prajñā*) aspects.

Most probably, the Mahāyāna *idea* first arose in India in the 1<sup>st</sup> century as a popular alternative to the rigorous monasticism and meditative discipline. In the following centuries, its popularity grew as more scholarly monks began to produce polemical texts such as the Lotus Sutra. In fact, the earliest use of the word “Mahāyāna” in Indian inscriptions dates from the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>139</sup> By the 5<sup>th</sup> century, Mahāyāna was influential in India, and in due course spread throughout North and East Asia.<sup>140</sup>

The Chinese Buddhist canon makers faced their greatest challenge when they had to consider the place of the Mahāyāna texts as opposed to the Hīnayāna texts. “Since the Mahāyāna materials claimed superiority over all other Buddhist teachings, the problem of canonicity was pressing” for the Chinese canon makers (Lancaster 1993: 529) [2.8.2]. It was the genius of Zhiyi [2.6.4.4] that resolved the problem.

2.6.4.4 ZHIYI AND PĀNJIAO 判教. **Tiāntái Zhiyi** 天台智顛 (538–597),<sup>141</sup> inspired by the Lotus Sutra’s universalist or ecumenical notion that all Buddhism *was the one vehicle* (*yīchéng* 一乘, Skt *eka,yāna*), introduced his *pānjiào* 判教 system, where all the Nikāyas and Mahāyāna sutras are organized into *a temporal and hierarchical system of five periods and eight types of teachings*.<sup>142</sup> According to this system, many elementary doctrines and bridging concepts had been taught early in the Buddha’s advent when the

<sup>137</sup> That is, the Cātur,vargīya Vinaya, *Sifēnlǜ* 四分律..

<sup>138</sup> See Lancaster 1993: 526 f.

<sup>139</sup> See Schopen 1979.

<sup>140</sup> For North Asia (esp Tibet, Mongolia and Siberia), usu the term Vajrayāna or Tantra is used, but Mahāyāna is a common generic term here. See MacQueen 1981 & Paul Williams 1989: 20-33.

<sup>141</sup> See <http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/G002SECT7>.

<sup>142</sup> See Leon Hurvitz, “Chih-I,” *Melanges chinois et Bouddhique* XII, Brussels, 1960-62, esp app on *p’an-chiao*; also Chanju MUN, *The History of Doctrinal Classification in Chinese Buddhism*, 2005.

vast majority of the people during his time was not yet ready to grasp the “ultimate truth.” These teachings (the Āgamas) were a *skillful means* (*fāngbiàn* 方便, Skt *upāya*), whereby the Buddha used his boundless wisdom to lead such people to the truth.<sup>143</sup> Subsequent teachings delivered to relatively more advanced followers thus represented a more complete and accurate view of his teachings, and did away with some of the skillful means used earlier. Zhiyi’s classification culminated with the Lotus Sutra, which he held to be the supreme synthesis of Buddhist doctrines.<sup>144</sup>

The 5 Periods (according to Buddha’s ministry)	The 8 Types of Teachings	
	The 4 divisions	The 4 categories
(1) 3 weeks Avataṃsaka Sūtra	(1) <i>The Nikāyas</i> : śrāvaka & pratyeka-buddha	(1) <i>The Sudden Teaching</i> : jolts one into awakening
(2) 12 years Hīnayāna (the 4 Nikāyas)	(2) <i>Mahāyāna</i> : lower-level bodhisattvas	(2) <i>The Gradual Teaching</i> : for the average practitioner
(3) 8 years Mahāyāna (basic)	(3) “ <i>Distinct teaching</i> ”: bodhisattvas on the path	(3) <i>The Secret Teaching</i> : for specific person or group
(4) 22 years Prajñā, pāramitā	(4) “ <i>Round teaching</i> ”: Highest bodhisattvas	(4) <i>The Indeterminate Teaching</i> : everyone is addressed
(5) 8 years Nirvāṇa & Lotus Sūtras		

**Table 2.6.4.4** Zhiyi’s *pànjiào* system

Such an hierarchical system clearly suggests Confucianist elitist influence, heavily skewed to promote Mahāyāna teachings. Zhiyi’s classification puts the Lotus Sutra at its apex, reflecting his bias for the Sutra. In fact, except for the “Hīnayāna period” (12 years), the rest of the Buddha’s ministry was presented as Mahāyāna teachings (38 years and 4 weeks). Hence, the total length of the Buddha’s ministry is 50 years and 1 month according to this reckoning as against the traditional 45 years of early Buddhism, which is generally accepted by scholars.

Most scholars regard the Tiāntái as *the first truly Chinese school of Buddhist thought*. The schools of Buddhism in China before the emergence of the Tiāntái were generally believed to represent direct transplantations from India, with little modification to their basic doctrines and methods. The creation of the Tiāntái school signified the maturation and integration of Buddhism in the Chinese context. No longer content to simply translate texts received from India, Chinese Buddhists began to apply new analyses to old texts, and even to produce new sutras and commentaries that would attain significant status within the East Asian sphere. The Tiāntái emphasis on the Lotus Sutra would, in due course, be developed by the Japanese reformist monk Nichiren (Rilián 日蓮, 1222-1282), that led to the rise of Nichiren Buddhism in Japan.<sup>145</sup>

2.6.4.5 CANONIZATION PROCESS. Unlike the Southern Buddhists who have a unified and closed Pali Canon, the early Chinese Buddhists worked out their own canon. Not only were their texts of a complex nature, but the canon makers were also faced with conflicting information from the various Chinese schools (something that could have been easily settled by reference to a common canon).

<sup>143</sup> Sharf’s n is relevant here: “Historians of Buddhism must be particularly circumspect to wielding the hermeneutic of *upāya*. The concept was first used to justify the intentional misreading of the early Buddhist canon in order to appropriate and subordinate Hīnayāna teachings to the new Mahāyāna revelation. The rhetorical maneuver of *upāya* inevitably lies in the interests of a hegemonic and universalizing discourse—invoking *upāya* allows the usurper to disavow difference and rupture, while arrogating the right to speak for the displaced other. (“The Buddha did not really mean what he said. What he meant was...”) Scholars of Buddhism must be wary lest such patently “theological” strategies come to substitute for critical historiographic and ethnographic reconstruction.” (1995: 267 f)

<sup>144</sup> See *Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism*, 2003: 304 f.

<sup>145</sup> See Piyasilo, *Nichiren: The new Buddhism of modern Japan*, Malaysia, 1988d.

As already mentioned [2.3.3.1] the early Chinese masters like **Dào'ān** 道安 (312-385), **Sēng'yòu** 僧祐 (445-518) and **Zhishēng** 智昇 (873-963), in their efforts to weed out inauthentic texts, composed catalogues of Buddhist works. These catalogues functioned like library accession records. But without the expert guidance of the missionary monks who could guide the classification, these catalogues were not always satisfactory, as it was not always easy to distinguish an authentic text from a spurious one, or the cataloguer could be biased in his selection.

The Chinese were forced to look for another canonical model, that is, a method of creating and defining the criteria for authentic texts. They found that model in the treatment of *statecraft texts*, which were used for the examination system throughout the land. Even before the Buddhist advent, character *jīng* 經 or *diǎn* 典 had long been used to refer to a “classic,” that is, a text that was an authoritative source for ideas and values, and “these terms include in their etymologies the notions of standards, rule, regulation, and norm.”<sup>146</sup> These texts were also compiled into standard collections—*jí* 集 and later *zàng* 藏—which referred to collections of *jīng* containing the sayings and teachings of the sage-kings which became social norms.

The Chinese Buddhists adopted the ancient term *jīng* 經, meaning “classic,” which they applied the Buddhist sense of a canonical “sutra,”<sup>147</sup> or more technically, “canonical classic.” But this only occurred after Sēngyòu’s time. For, he himself did not use *jīng* in his catalogue, which he titled simply as **Sānzàng** 三藏. More fully, the title is *Chū sānzàng jìjí* 出三藏記集, which could be translated as “A compilation of the records regarding the Tripitaka appearing (in Chinese translations).”<sup>148</sup> Lewis Lancaster further notes that the emphasis here seemed to be on the Indic nature (Sanskrit) of the text rather than the translation (id).<sup>149</sup>

In place of the early Indian oral tradition of memorizing and handing down the canonical teachings, the Chinese Buddhists resorted to the ancient tradition of compiling bibliographies or catalogues: *jīnglù* 經錄 or *mùlù* 目錄, and texts within these bibliographies were separated according to canonical status, with the *jīng* accorded primary status. Eventually, the Chinese Buddhists compiled catalogues not necessarily reflecting collections of actual libraries, but serving as a sort of Buddhist *imprimatur* list.

After Sēng'yòu’s time, the cataloguers shifted their emphasis to the translations themselves. Hence, **Fǎjīng** 法經 in 594 called his work *Zhōngjīng mùlù* 眾經目錄 “Catalogue of miscellaneous sutras,”<sup>150</sup> and **Jīngmài** 靖邁 used the title *Gǔjīn yìjīng tújì* 古今譯經圖紀 “A history of the publication of the translated *jīng* in ancient and contemporary times,”<sup>151</sup> where *jīng* refers to the Chinese translations of the Indian texts.

In time, the canon’s name evolved into **Dàzàng jīng** 大藏經 “The great collection classic,” which has come down to our own times. This is the generic name for the various editions of the Chinese canons, all of which contains more than just canonical sutras, but also commentaries and even non-Buddhist works. The word *zàng* 藏 “store” is also problematic as it is not the equivalent of *piṭaka* (“basket”). As such, we cannot translate *Dàzàng jīng* as “the great store of sutras.”

It is possible that the word *dàzàng* 大藏 is a translation of *mahā,piṭaka*, but there is no recorded explanation why “three” (*tri* of *tri,piṭaka*) should be omitted: perhaps, it is omitted because the collection as a whole also contains works that are non-canonical. However, Lancaster throws some light here: he explains that in Sòng historical records, the term *dàzàng* 大藏 appears by itself in connection with the emperor or officials giving orders for the construction of a *dàzàng* on the grounds of a monastery. It is likely that here a *library building* (“great store”) was meant, that is, “a structure that was specifically

<sup>146</sup> Hubbard 2006: 9.

<sup>147</sup> The Five Classics *wǔjīng* 五經 were recognised as official learning in 136 BCE by emperor Wu. See Hānshū 漢書 (“History of the Hàn”), fasc 6, which refers to the establishment of the Offices of the Five Classics. See also Lancaster 1993: 531 & Tsai 2000.

<sup>148</sup> T2145.55.1a-114a, compiled during the Liang dynasty 梁朝 (502-557). See Lancaster 1993: 538.

<sup>149</sup> *Chū sānzàng jìjí* 出三藏記集, T2145.55.1a-114a, compiled during the Liáng dynasty 梁朝 (502-557).

<sup>150</sup> T2146.55.115a-150a.

<sup>151</sup> T2151.55.348a-367c.

commissioned to hold the official *jīng*,” and only those texts that were officially recognized were kept in this library. As such, the formation of the Chinese Buddhist canon was in large measure determined by the “library” policies of the court, which decided what texts were to “enter” the library and hence be “canonized.” It also showed that Buddhism as a religion has some power and prestige. (Lancaster 1993: 540 f).

## 2.7 HOW THE CHINESE LANGUAGE CHANGED BUDDHISM

**2.7.1 Chinese as a glyphic language.** Humans have been using various symbols as records for over 30,000 years, but the first civilization to use true writing were the Sumerians, followed shortly by the Egyptians. The Chinese, the Mesoamerican Indians, and the Indus Valley civilization also invented unique pictographic systems. The Mesoamerican and the Indus Valley languages are now dead. The scripts of the other three languages are the ancestors of all other writing systems in the world, both phonetic and glyphic. As far as we know, all phonetic systems evolved from glyphic ones. Some scholars believe in “developed” and “primitive” writing systems. The idea was that those scripts which were still using glyphic or pictographic characters were still at a lower stage of evolution than those with alphabetic or monosyllabic symbols.

Most linguists believe that writing was invented in China during the latter half of the 2nd millennium BCE and that there is no evidence to suggest the reception of writing from elsewhere. The earliest recognisable examples of written Chinese dated from **Shāng** 商 dynasty (1600-950 BCE) and were inscribed on ox scapulae and turtle shells as “oracle bones.” The earliest Chinese language was probably *pictographic* (expressing mostly concrete things), and then became *ideographic* (expressing ideas and feelings). With the Chinese adoption of Buddhism, the language began to use *transliteration*, that is, forming sound equivalents in Chinese. [7.1]

The glyphic nature of the Chinese language—despite featuring both pictographs and ideographs, or, *because* it comprises only pictographs and ideographs—is more facile in expressing concrete things and ideas other than abstract thought, as in classical Indian, early Buddhist or Greek philosophy. Such abstract thought is best expressed and developed through an alphabet-based language. Understandably, Chinese civilization is better known for its *practical* philosophical and scientific ideas rather than abstract philosophy.

**2.7.2 The word *is* the thing.** Buddhism arrived in China early in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. From the 4<sup>th</sup> up to the 7<sup>th</sup> centuries, Chinese Buddhists periodically noticed that their views and practices were at variance with their Indian antecedents, and tried to correct them either through new translations or by highlighting differences between Buddhist and indigenous Chinese ideas. By the 8<sup>th</sup> century, however, the Chinese Buddhists apparently had effectively indigenized Buddhism, since by then they had lost interest in Indian commentaries and treatises. Instead, they turned their attention to Chinese commentaries on the Buddhist scriptures, such as the Lotus Sutra and the Huáyán Sutra—that had grown in importance for the Chinese Buddhists.

Even though missionaries continued to arrive in China and new translations continued to be produced up to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, none of the significant developments in Indian Buddhism (such as Buddhist syllogistic logic) from the 7<sup>th</sup> century onwards had any lasting impact on Chinese Buddhism, and many important texts and thinkers (for example, Dharmakīrti, Candrakīrti, and Śāntaraksita) remained virtually unknown in East Asia until modern times. Buddhism in China from the 8<sup>th</sup> century up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century was essentially a *Chinese* Mahāyāna religion, a very far cry from Indian Buddhism.<sup>152</sup>

One very significant difference between Chinese Buddhism—or Sinitic East Asian Buddhism as a whole—and early Indian Buddhism is that Chinese Buddhism, due to the very nature of being Chinese, is essentially *word-centred*, while early Buddhism was more *meaning-centred*. Chinese Buddhism, like other Chinese religions, gives great significance to form and formality. A traditional teacher of Chinese

<sup>152</sup> See Dan Lusthaus, 1998 ch 1.

Buddhism could, for example, give a lengthy discourse on a single Chinese sentence, or phrase, or even character.<sup>153</sup>

The traditional Chinese has *great respect for the visible Chinese character*, which is sacred as well as magical. The Chinese character is a pictograph embodying wisdom and power. When such characters are put together they create a new reality. So pregnant with power is the visible Chinese word that its terminology *is* reality: the word *is* the thing. The traditional Chinese even worship the word enshrined on their altars with names of deity and ancestors.

**2.7.3 The word is *not* the thing.** A German philosopher named Gottlob Frege (1848-1925) wrote, “*The name is not the thing named*,” and a Scottish mathematician and fiction writer, Eric Bell (1883-1960), wrote, “*The map is not the territory*.” But because the famous linguist Alfred Korzybski (1879-1960) frequently used the first saying he was popularly but erroneously credited for it.<sup>154</sup> We also see a combined version of Frege’s statements: “The map is not the territory; the word is not the thing defined.”<sup>155</sup> The British anthropologist, social scientist, linguist, semiotician and cyberneticist, Gregory Bateson (1904-1980), is sometimes also credited with saying, “The name is not the thing named.”<sup>156</sup>

But even before their times, Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), the father of the English dictionary, had written, “Words are but the signs of ideas,” in the Preface to his famous dictionary,<sup>157</sup> and the English philosopher John Locke (1661-1756) had written, “We should have a great many fewer disputes in the world if only words were taken for what they are, the signs of our ideas only, and not for things themselves.”<sup>158</sup>

However, it was linguists Alfred Korzybski and Gregory Bateson who developed the conceptions around those famous sayings that later was cited as an underlying principle of neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), an interpersonal communication model and an alternative approach to psychotherapy. For Korzybski, for example, the statement “the map is not the territory” encapsulates his view that an abstraction derived from something, or a reaction to it, is not the thing itself. It means that individuals do not in general have access to absolute knowledge of reality, but only have access to *a set of beliefs* about reality that they have built up over time. So it is considered important to be aware that *people’s beliefs and awareness of reality (the “map”) are neither reality itself nor everything they could be aware of (“the territory”)*.

The pain we feel from a stone falling on our foot, for example, is not the stone itself; our opinion of a politician, favourable or unfavourable, is *not* that person himself; a metaphorical representation of a concept is not the concept itself; and so on. A specific abstraction or reaction to an idea, person or thing, does not capture *all* facets of any of them. The pain in our foot does not convey the internal structure of the stone; we do not know *everything* about the life of a politician, etc. As such, all this may limit our understanding and cognitive abilities, unless the two are distinguished. Korzybski held that most of us confuse maps with territories, in this sense.

<sup>153</sup> Some examples could be found in the teachings and commentaries of Master Hsuan-hua 宣化 (1918-1995). See eg “The Buddha Speaks Amitabha Sutra” pp11-12: <http://online.sfsu.edu/%7Erone/Buddhism/BTTStexts/ps.-ami.02.020609.screen.pdf>; “The Heart of Prajñā Pāramitā Sūtra” pp17-20 comy on *śūtra* 經 *jīng*, pp26 f on Guanyin’s name, pp115-121 on 道 *dào*: <http://online.sfsu.edu/%7Erone/Buddhism/BTTStexts/ps.heart.02.020530.print.-pdf>.

<sup>154</sup> The expression first appeared in Korzybski’s “A Non-Aristotelian System and its Necessity for Rigour in Mathematics and Physics,” a paper presented before the American Mathematical Society at the New Orleans, Louisiana, meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, 28 Dec, 1931. Repr in *Science and Sanity*, 1933: 747-61.

<sup>155</sup> For example, see SI Hayakawa, *Language in Thought and Action*, NY: Harcourt, Brace & Co, 1949: 31.

<sup>156</sup> See *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology*. Chicago: Univ of Chicago Press, 1972; & Gregory & Mary Bateson. *Angels Fear: Towards an epistemology of the sacred*, NY: Macmillan Publishing, 1987:21.

<sup>157</sup> *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 1755 §17.

<sup>158</sup> *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, London, 1836: III.x.15.

## 2.8 THE MAGIC OF CHINESE BUDDHISM

**2.8.1 The power of the word.** The early Buddhist missionaries who came to China inspired others by the uncommonly calm demeanour, moral discipline and new wisdom, which influenced Chinese philosophy in due course. But, on a more general level, the foreign monks were often perceived as having magical powers. Indeed, both the popular and elite Buddhisms of China were mainly a magical Buddhism of spells and prayer, serving to give immediate and practical solutions to mundane problems. [1.2.3; 4.3.3.8]

Often *the sympathetic magic* of religious Daoism would overflow into a Chinese Buddhist religious rituals, especially for the dead. This kind of belief in the magical power in popular Chinese ritualistic practice can be described as *fetishist*. “Fetishism” is the attribution of magical, mystical or religious qualities or power to inanimate objects, such as effigies representing dead or living humans (to be servants of the dead, etc), and food, clothing, and objects connected with the dearly departed would be displayed at the funeral. Paper money and hell notes are burnt for the economic welfare in the deceased afterlife.<sup>159</sup>

The traditional Chinese often show a fetishist respect for the Chinese character. The printed word apparently has a magical, mystical or religious power of itself, such as the Buddhist and Daoist paper charms, amulets or talismans known as *fúshū* 符書 or *fúlù* 符籙. Such charms are pasted over the main doors, worn on the person, or even burnt, mixed with water and drunk (*fúshuǐ* 符水 or *shénshuǐ* 神水). Such practices are regarded as *superstitions* because we perceive the source of our problem as being located *outside* of ourselves rather than as being how we think and how our mind works. The truth is *not* out there: it is in our *inner* stillness.

**2.8.2 A Mahāyāna Bible.** Amongst the religious, there is a more sophisticated form of belief in the power of the palpable word, that is, the power of the *physical* sutra or text. Classical Mahāyāna, as exemplified by the Lotus Sutra, for example, is *a religion of the word and the book*. In fact, the Lotus Sutra is probably the first work in which the word *mahā,yāna* (“great vehicle”) appears. [2.6.4.3]

The Lotus Sutra is in many ways a “Bible of the Mahāyāna Buddhists” or the Gospel (“Good News”) where the Buddha *is* God (omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, and omnifigent), and speaking in parables and skilful means (Skt *upāya*).<sup>160</sup> The Buddha (that is, the “real” Buddha of the Lotus Sutra) appears as a father-figure who did not really die, but is forever living and caring for all beings, his children. A similar doctrine of Buddha-centred eternity is found in the *tathāgata,garbha* sutras [4.1], which are very close in spirit to the Lotus Sutra.

The teachings of the historical Shakyamuni are superseded by those of the Lotus Sutra, and you need only to have *faith* in it. In chapter 23, for example, the historical Shakyamuni sits with Prabhūta, ratna, a Buddha of the past (a deliberate contradiction to the early teaching that only one Buddha can or need appear in a world system), and if that is not enough, the chapter on Dharaṇīs (ch 26) proclaim that they were spoken by buddhas, “numerous as the sands of 62,000 koṭis<sup>161</sup> of Ganges river,” followed immediately by the anathema, “If anyone does violence to the teacher of this Law, then he will have done violence to these buddhas.”<sup>162</sup>

Such hyperboles and anathemata are very common in the Lotus Sutra and in other Mahāyāna texts. These are not empty boasts: the use of astronomical numbers and time are meant to convey a sense of timelessness and ineffability. It was a time when the ancient Indians were aware of the zero and infinite-simals,<sup>163</sup> and were celebrating this awareness by applying it to religious notions. After all, it is in keeping

<sup>159</sup> See Hill Gates, “Money for the Gods.” *Modern China* 13,3 1987: 259-277. John McCreery, “Why Don’t We See Some Real Money Here?: Offerings in Chinese Religion,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 18 1990: 1-24. For samples, see <http://www.luckymojo.com/hellmoney.html>.

<sup>160</sup> See eg Paul J Griffiths, “The Lotus Sutra as Good News: A Christian Reading”: [http://muse.jhu.edu/demo/-buddhist-christian\\_studies/v019/19.1griffiths.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/demo/-buddhist-christian_studies/v019/19.1griffiths.html).

<sup>161</sup> A *koṭi* is 10 million = 10,000,000; so the above number become 62,000 × 10,000,000 = 620,000,000,000.

<sup>162</sup> *The Threefold Lotus Sutra*, tr Katō et al 1975: 329.

<sup>163</sup> See eg Pasadika 2001: 736.

with the spirit of the “great vehicle,” which is the highest teaching that cannot be expressed in words, not matter how much is written or spoken. The late Mahāyāna sutras tended to be self-replicative, resorting even to curses against their perceived adversaries.

The Lotus Sutra as we have it today is a much expanded version of an ancient core, which was probably compiled in the first century CE in Kashmir, during the fourth Buddhist Council of the newly founded Mahāyāna, hosted by king Kālāśoka, over 500 years after the Great Parinirvana. As a new post-Buddha text, even though labelled a *śūtra*, it is not included in the early Nikāyas of the Pāli Canon nor in the Āgamas of Mahāyāna, both of which preserve the teachings of the Buddha himself and the early saints.

Like most Mahāyāna works, the Lotus Sutra, is best read as a *mythical* work<sup>164</sup> like *Star Wars*<sup>165</sup> or *The Lord of the Rings*.<sup>166</sup> The Lotus Sutra scenario is the last days of the historical Shakyamuni himself, who himself speaks this Sutra. The Lotus Sutra tradition is that it was written down in the Buddha’s time and then hidden away for five hundred years in the realm of the nagas (underground serpent spirits). Then, at the right time, that is, at the time of the “fourth” Buddhist Council in Kashmir they were re-introduced into the human realm.<sup>167</sup>

The Lotus Sutra acknowledges the Āgamas (and as such the Nikāyas, too) by claiming that it is higher than them. In the time of Shakyamuni, people were not intelligent enough, so the Buddha only taught them the Āgama (or Nikāya) teachings (the kind of texts that I am translating), teaching them only arhat-hood, and not Buddhahood. Some 500 years later, the time was right—people were intelligent enough—to understand the Lotus Sutra!<sup>168</sup>

The Sanskrit version of the Lotus Sutra is not so well known outside of academia, and was the version translated by Eugène Burnouf into French (*Le Lotus de la Bonne Loi*, 1852) and by H Kern into English (*Saddharma Puṇḍarīka or the Lotus of the True Law*, 1884). This was followed by English translations of the Chinese translations of the Sanskrit original, such as those by Leon Hurvitz (*Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma: The Lotus Sutra*, 1976) and by Burton Watson (*The Lotus Sutra*, 1993).<sup>169</sup> According to Burton Watson, the sutra may have originally been composed in a Prakrit dialect but then later rendered into Sanskrit for greater respectability.<sup>170</sup>

<sup>164</sup> A mythical work, unlike a historical text, makes greater use of symbolic language and images. We may however treat it just like a historical text by way of asking similar questions like “What is it trying to say?” “How does this help me be happy in my daily life.” “Does this help to overcome greed, hate or delusion?” See (Dhamma, vina-ya) **Gotamī S** (A 8.53/4:280 = Cv 10.5/V 2:258 f) = SD 46.15.

<sup>165</sup> This is not to slight those who treat the Lotus Sutra as a sacred text. The point is that there are also those who profess to follow the Jedi faith, after the warriors of Star Wars (a series by George Lucas, b 1944). On the Jedi religion in late 20<sup>th</sup> to early 21<sup>st</sup> cents, see Matthew Bortolin, *The Dharma of Star Wars*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2005; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jedi\\_census\\_phenomenon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jedi_census_phenomenon) & [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy\\_and\\_religion\\_in\\_Star\\_Wars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_and_religion_in_Star_Wars).

<sup>166</sup> The language of the dharanis of the Lotus Sutra make interesting comparison to the language of Arda (an artificial language invented by the *Ring* author, JRR Tolkien, 1892-1973), see: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages\\_of\\_Middle-earth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_of_Middle-earth).

<sup>167</sup> This method of introducing new teachings, often at variance with the traditional one, is even more common in Tibetan Buddhism in the form of *terma* (buried teachings) to be discovered later by incarnations of ancient teachers, such as Padmasambhava. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terma\\_%28Buddhism%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terma_%28Buddhism%29). See Donald S Lopez, Jr, *Prisoners of Shangri-La*, Chicago: Univ of Chicago Press, 1998 ch 1.

<sup>168</sup> As mythical literature, the Lotus Sutra has the poetic licence to make such claims: we should suspend the fact that many Āgama/Nikāya teachings are more useful, beautiful and profound than much of the Lotus Sutra. It should be remembered that while the Lotus Sutra is to be *worshipped and adored* forever, the early teachings of the historical Buddha is to be *practised and realised* in this life.

<sup>169</sup> For other translations, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lotus\\_Sutra](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lotus_Sutra).

<sup>170</sup> At the turn of the millennium, western scholars began examining the Buddhist texts in the Schoyen collection (<http://www.schoyencollection.com/Buddhism.htm>). Several scholars noticed that some Lotus Sutra fragments predated the earliest Christian gospels in Greek. Other scholars have noted that some of the dharanis of the Lotus Sutra are closer to Prakrit than to Sanskrit. See CN Tay, “The Lotus Sutra in Its Latest Translation,” a review of Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma*, in *History of Religions* 19,4 May 1980: 372-377.

2.8. The Lotus Sutra was originally translated from the Sanskrit into Chinese by Dharmarakṣa around 209 CE, followed by a translation in seven fascicles by Kumārajīva in 406 CE. The Chinese title is usually abbreviated to *Fāhuā jīng* 法華經 in Chinese, or *Beop,hwa gyeong* in Korean, or *Hoke kyō* in Japanese, or *Pháp Hoa Kinh* in Vietnamese. For some Japanese Buddhists, the Lotus Sutra has a prologue, the Innumerable Meanings Sutra (*Wúliàngyì jīng* 無量義經 Jap: *Muryōgi Kyō*), and an epilogue, the Sutra of Meditation on the Bodhisattva Universal Worthy (*Pǔxián jīng* 普賢經 Jap: *Fugen Kyō*); hence, they call it the Threefold Lotus Sutra (Katō 1975).

The mythical tone and prophetic visions of the Lotus Sutra are highly attractive to the religious who are desperately seeking a way out of religious or social oppression. The Lotus Sutra's millennial tone (speaking of the Dharma-ending age) (eg Katō 1957: 226) bodes well, for example, with the Buddhists of Kamakura Japan (1185-1333), troubled by earthquakes, tsunamis, political unrest and impending invasions of the Kublai Khan's Mongol navy. Nichiren (*Rilián* 日蓮, 1222-1282) fervently exploited the Lotus Sutra in his vision of an idealized Japanese society.

Today, the lay Nichiren organizations—such as the Rissho Kosei Kai and the Soka Gakkai International—are socially very successful modern religions. However, the main reason for their success is less spiritual than social and economic. A lesson here is that it is easier to start and run a religion when we have *a religious vision* and *a lot of funds*. After all, religious truth is what the believer believes. Those who have tasted true inner peace, and perhaps the more insightful scholars of religions, too, would see that such religious phenomena are but colourful and brief phases in the cycle of human civilization.

Ronald Barthes has usefully defined *myth* as “depoliticized speech,”<sup>171</sup> but it can also be politicized words when used with a polemical agenda. In this sense, the Mahāyāna texts, as a rule, often employ *politicized myth*, especially when it projects itself as “greater” (*mahā*) against an “inferior” (*hīna*) other. It is against such polemics, that I hope to demythologize the Mahāyāna here.<sup>172</sup>

### 2.8.3 The Saṅghāta Sūtra.

2.8.3.1 A POPULAR MAGICAL TEXT. In June, 2008, when I googled “Sanghata Sutra” on the Internet, I made a total of 5480 hits. As far as I could check, these entries make pious praise and great claims for this Mahāyāna sutra. Like most other Mahāyāna texts, **the Saṅghāta Sūtra** or more fully Ārya Saṅghāta Sūtra (“the Noble Vessel Discourse”),<sup>173</sup> was first written in Sanskrit, and later translated into the major languages of Buddhist communities to the north, northwest and east of India, such as Khotanese, Sogdian, Chinese, and Tibetan. These translations occurred between the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. Manuscripts of the Saṅghāta Sūtra have been recovered in Gilgit (1931 and 1938), Khotan, Dunhuang, and other sites along the silk route in Central Asia.

Many scholars have shown an interest in the Saṅghāta Sūtra, but the interest is mostly philological (the nature and significance of its language). They have produced critical editions of the sutra and made significant contributions to its study. Oskar von Hinüber, however, has noted that the text is “confused” (1980), and Giotto Canevascini says that it is “cryptic” (1993). Such remarks are understandable as the text is not didactic (instructive) but apotropaic (magical), which also explains its widespread popularity.

2.8.3.2 INSTANT KARMIC REMISSION. The popularity of the apocryphal Saṅghāta Sūtra is mainly due to its promises of purportedly immediate and quick end to our bad karma, especially the “five heinous sins” or, in the Tibetan version, the “five uninterrupted actions” (*pañcānantaryāṇi karmāṇi*).<sup>174</sup>

<sup>171</sup> Ronald Barthes, *Mythologies*, tr Annette Lavers. NY: Noonday Press, 1972: 143. Qu by Joseph Walser 2008: 264 f.

<sup>172</sup> For a modern literary critique of the Lotus Sutra, Diamond Sutra, Tathāgata, garbha Sutra and the Vimala, -kīrti Nirdeśa, see Alan Cole 2005.

<sup>173</sup> This is a free tr, foll internal usage of the Sutra. SED defines *saṅghāta* as “fitting and joining of timber, joinery, carpentry” and also “pot?” In a few Buddhist Skt texts, it means “vessel” or “jar,” and this image of containing is evoked several times in the sutra, where the Buddha there calls the Saṅghāta a “treasury of the Dharma.” There are at least two Chinese trs: *Sēngjiāzhā jīng* 僧伽吒經 (T13.423) by Upasūnya (Yuèpóshōunà 月婆首那) of Yuán Wèi (Northern Chao) & *Dàjìhuì zhèngfǎ jīng* 大集會正法經 (T13.424) by 施護 of Sòng.

<sup>174</sup> The Skt text is found at [http://www.sanghatasutra.net/sanskrit\\_roman.pdf](http://www.sanghatasutra.net/sanskrit_roman.pdf).

The Buddha said: “Virtuous man, suppose someone has personally committed, or asked others to commit, or compliantly rejoiced in the five heinous sins, if he can hear even four gathas from this Dharma-Gate, join his palms, pay homage to it, and have pure faith in it, then his five heinous karma will be eliminated. How much more so, of those who fully write, read, recite, and make offerings to it, such merits and virtues are immeasurable.” (Saṅghāṭa Sūtra ch 2)<sup>175</sup>

The *pañcānantarya, karma* in Pali is *pañca ānantariya* or *ānantarika kamma*,<sup>176</sup> translated as “immediacy-deeds, heinous crimes which bring immediate results.”<sup>177</sup> The locus classicus for this doctrine is in the Parikuppa Sutta (A 5.129) in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, here given in full:

## Parikuppa Sutta

### The Discourse on the Agitated

[The five heinous karmic deeds]  
(Aṅguttara Nikāya 5.129/3:146)

(Sāvatti, nidānaṃ)  
*Pañcime bhikkhave āpāyikā nerayikā  
parikuppā atekicchā.*  
*Katame pañca:*  
*mātā jīvitā voropitā hoti,  
pitā jīvitā voropito hoti,  
arahaṃ jīvitā voropito hoti,  
tathāgatassa duṭṭhena cittaṃ  
lohitaṃ uppaditaṃ hoti,  
saṅgho bhinno hoti.*  
*Ime kho bhikkhave pañca āpāyikā  
nerayikā parikuppā atekicchā ti.*

(Originating in Sāvattī.)  
Bhikkhus, there are these five who are born into a suffering state, hell-bound, agitated, incorrigible. What are the five?  
(1) One who deprives a mother of life.  
(2) One who deprives a father of life.  
(3) One who deprives an arhat of life.  
(4) One who, with an evil mind causes, a Tathagata’s blood to flow.  
(5) One who breaks up the Sangha.  
These, bhikkhus, are the five who are born into a suffering state, hell-bound, agitated, incorrigible.

— evaṃ —

The Commentary here explains that these five deeds bear great blame; for, they are the five heinous karmic deeds (*pañca hi ānantariya, kammāni mahā, sāvajjāni nāma*, AA 2:27). In the Vinaya, after Devadatta pushes down a rock from Mt Vulture Peak above the Buddha and hurting his toe so that it bleeds, the Buddha declares, “This, bhikkhus, is the first heinous deed piled up by Devadatta” (*Idaṃ bhikkhave Devadattena paṭhamāṃ ānantarika, kammaṃ upacitaṃ*, V 2:193).<sup>178</sup> From the Parikuppa Sutta, it is apparent that Devadatta would be reborn in a suffering state in this very life itself, that is, upon his death.

Nowhere in the early texts is it said that any of these five heinous deeds is remissible or its karmic fruiting can be prevented. The writers of the Saṅghāṭa Sūtra had introduced not only a *new* idea, but one that was *clearly against the Buddha’s teaching*. The reason for this is very clear: if we have committed such a deed (say, with conscious ill-intent, killing a parent), and then we simply recite a verse from the Saṅghāṭa Sūtra, we are fully cleared of our karma, this would be encouraging others to commit such heinous karma, since it is so easily remitted!

<sup>175</sup> See eg [http://www.fodian.net/world/0423\\_2.html](http://www.fodian.net/world/0423_2.html).

<sup>176</sup> V 5:128; Dh 225; Vbh 378; Vism 177.

<sup>177</sup> Payutto, “Dictionary of Numerical Dhammas” in 1975: 208.

<sup>178</sup> For further refs, see CPD: *ānantarika*.

2.8.3.3 BOOK CULTS. Some scholars<sup>179</sup> have proposed the notion that Mahāyāna might have begun as *a loose network of groups centred around particular sutras*, that is, they are “cults of the book.” The popularity of the Saṅghāta Sūtra in Central Asia showed that it is a classic example of the cultic worship of a scripture. Art historian Deborah Klimburg-Salter has written about the impact that the Saṅghāta Sūtra might have had on the culture around it. She points out that the decorative manuscript covers found with the Saṅghāta in Gilgit were among the very earliest, suggesting that the text itself played a pivotal role in shifting attitudes towards books in India itself:

The Gilgit manuscript covers, as well as manuscripts from the find, mark an important phase in the history of the art of the book in India.... That is, that a change took place in the concept of the book so that books were seen not merely as media for the conveyance of information but, for some reason or reasons as yet unclear, began to be conceived of as objects worthy of beautification. As we shall see, one possibility, which needs further consideration, is that this development was affected by the evolution of certain texts into cult objects. (Klimburg-Salter, 1987: 817)

Such passages as this, declaring that simply *reading* (or chanting) the sutra brings abundant merit, clearly shows the characteristics of *a book cult*:

The Blessed One said: “Listen, child of the lineage: If anyone who hears the Saṅghāta dharma-paryāya is able to have a lifespan of 84,000 aeons, what need is there to mention one who has the Saṅghāta sutra written out and who reads it? Sarva-shūra, that one will produce an extremely large mass of merit. (Saṅghāta Sūtra 2006: 4)<sup>180</sup>

One widespread effect of such a book-cult was that *the monastic sangha becomes marginalized* since the worship was centred around a physical object that was easily available at any time. Where there was a monastic sangha, it would perhaps serve only when the worshipper’s religious needs could not be realized through scripture-worship. Either way, we have here a new form of Buddhism, one that *had less or no emphasis on self-effort or mental training*. In other words, it is a spiritually weak Buddhism. The consequence of a weak Buddhism is simply disastrous. Today, Buddhism has all but disappeared from Central Asia.

Towards the end of the first millennium CE, the Uighur Turks moved into the area once occupied by the Kuchians, and converted to Buddhism. Finally, in the tenth century, the Tangut empire expanded into the eastern end of the Silk Road, and the Tanguts were the last of the Buddhists of the Silk Road.

Gradually, towards the end of the first millennium CE, Chinese power in Central Asia declined and the Mongol and Turk influences increased. This helped in the spread of Islam and the decline of Buddhism, leading to its eventual disappearance from Central Asia. With the fall of the Tangut empire to Genghis Khan in 1227, Buddhism all but disappeared from the Silk Road.

#### **2.8.4 The origins of Mahāyāna.**

2.8.4.1 THE SOCIAL CONTEXTS: THE COMMUNITY THEORY. From the internal evidence of the Lotus Sutra itself, we know that this very early Mahāyāna sutra was *written*,<sup>181</sup> that is, created at a time when writing was common enough and was used for religious purposes. Writing was mentioned (only rarely) in the early texts, but never used in the transmission of the Dharma.<sup>182</sup> Understandably, when such Buddhist

<sup>179</sup> See eg G Schopen 1979.

<sup>180</sup> Refs to the Tibetan version, Ārya Saṅghātasūtra Dharmaparyāya, © Damcho Diana Finnegan (Lhundup Damchö), 2006: [http://www.sanghatastra.net/english\\_translation\\_final\\_a4.pdf](http://www.sanghatastra.net/english_translation_final_a4.pdf).

<sup>181</sup> See eg *eka, gāthām api... likhīyanti* (“even if he would write a single verse,” Vaidya 142) & Katō 1975: 24, 186, 229 etc.

<sup>182</sup> Gregory Schopen, “The phrase ‘*sa prthivīpradeśāś caityabhūto bhavet*’ in the *Vajracchedikā*: Notes on the cult of the book in Mahāyāna,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 17 1975:147-181 & “Two problems in the history of Indian Buddhism: The layman/monk distinction and the doctrines of the transference of merit,” *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 10 1985: 9-47. Richard Gombrich, “How the Mahāyāna began,” *The Buddhist Forum* 1 1990: 21-30.

texts reached China, which even during the 1<sup>st</sup> century had well advanced in writing, easily accepted them rather than the more repetitive oral tradition of early Buddhism.

Modern scholars have formulated various interesting theories about how Mahāyāna arose,<sup>183</sup> and they approach from two main contexts: the social and the geographical. From the social context, there are three main theories. The first social context—which I call “the community theory”—is that the Mahāyāna comprised simply of groups of those with liberal ideas with well established Buddhist sects, such as the Sarvāstivāda and the Dharmagupta. In other words, the word “Mahāyāna” here would simply denote, not even a movement, *a specific doctrinal inclination* among a smaller cohort of monks within of one of the existing sects.

According to this view, regardless of the Mahāyānists’ specific beliefs, they were all keeping to the same Vinaya, that is, had the same kind of ordination. Among the most prominent scholars to research early Mahāyāna who accept this theory are **Junjirō Takakusu, Auguste Barth, Louis de La Vallée Poussin, Jean Przyluski, and Heinz Bechert.**<sup>184</sup>

These scholars primarily point to the travel accounts of Chinese pilgrims such as Yijing and Xuánzàng, for example, who mention monasteries in which both Mahāyānists and non-Mahāyānists lived and studied together. Furthermore, these scholars also note that few inscriptions in India use the word “Mahāyāna” as an adjective to describe a monastery or a sangha. Finally, according to Bechert, if Mahāyāna had formed a separate sect, there would first have to be a schism. Yet the Vinaya defines a “schism” as a rift over interpretation of Vinaya, not the Dharma. As such, he concludes that the rise of Mahāyāna as a separate doctrinal system would not have constituted a schism.

Some advocates of this view, such as Heinz Bechert and Paul Williams, claim that Mahāyānists lived peacefully among other monks in their monastery. Others, such as Stephen Kent, argue that although Mahāyānists may have lived among non-Mahāyānists, there was considerable tension between the two groups.<sup>185</sup> This constant antagonism the Mahāyānists endured at the hands of their fellow monks led to the “embattled mentality” found in such Mahāyāna texts as the Saddharma,puṇḍarīka. This is also a view championed by Gregory Schopen, who argues that “one strand of the early Mahāyāna in India was institutionally located within the larger, dominant, established monastic orders as a marginal element struggling for recognition and acceptance.”<sup>186</sup>

**2.8.4.2 THE LAITY THEORY.** The second social context—which I call “the laity theory”—is that early Mahāyāna was the work of not so much the monks as the laity. This theory’s main advocate, Akira HIRAKAWA, connects Mahāyāna’s origin to the laity and to stupa worship from close readings of early Mahāyāna sutras. He connects Mahāyāna explicitly to the laity by pointing out that, in Mahāyāna texts, the Buddha addresses his audiences not as “householder” or “monk” (the common forms of address in Tripiṭaka literature) but as the ambiguous *kula,putr* or *kula,duhitr* (“son or daughter of a good family”), which could refer to either laity or monastics.<sup>187</sup>

One of Hirakawa’s most interesting arguments is that the stupa was predominantly a lay area, separate both from the world as well as from the monastery. Hirakawa believes that the early Chinese sutra translations suggest that early Buddhists regarded the stupa not just as the mound in which the relics are buried but as the whole stupa compound in which devotees (that is, bodhisattvas) would gather for worship. Finally, he observes that whereas *nikāya* Buddhism revolved around the sangha, Mahāyāna must have revolved around the Buddha.

Hirakawa’s arguments are complex, but his central thesis is that Mahāyāna developed among the laity in the context of stupa worship. As such, he regards the antagonism sometimes found in Mahāyāna sutras

<sup>183</sup> Most of what follows is summarized from a comprehensive survey by Joseph Walser 2005: 16-23 (ch 1).

<sup>184</sup> For a discussion of each of these authors’ contributions, see Jonathan Silk, “The Origins and Early History of the Mahāratnakūṭa Tradition of Mahāyāna Buddhism with a Study of the Ratnarāśīsūtra and Related Materials” (PhD diss, Univ of Michigan, 1994: 1–14).

<sup>185</sup> See Stephen Kent, “A Sectarian Interpretation of the Rise of Mahāyāna,” *Religion* 12,4 1982: 311–332.

<sup>186</sup> Gregory Schopen, “The Mahāyāna and the Middle Period in Indian Buddhism: Through a Chinese Looking-Glass,” *Eastern Buddhist* (ns) 32,2 2000: 20.

<sup>187</sup> Hirakawa 1963: 69–73.

as a reflection of the antagonism of monastery-centered Buddhist traditions against laity-centered Buddhist traditions. Hirakawa's theory has many flaws and is the least popular now, some of which have been pointed out by Ulrich Pagel.<sup>188</sup>

2.8.4.3 THE FOREST MONK THEORY. The third social context—which I call “the forest monk theory”—of how early Mahāyāna arose, is that of Reginald Ray. Following Hirakawa's lead, Ray points out the distinctions that early Mahāyāna sutras make between monks and bodhisattvas. Ray highlights the numerous discussions of asceticism in the same texts and argues that Mahāyāna started with communities of “forest-dwelling monks” (*āraṇyakas*) (the bodhisattvas). These forest-dwelling bodhisattvas reflected the monastic bhikṣus (monks living in monasteries) as being too caught up in scholasticism and debate, and as such detracted from the life of meditation.<sup>189</sup>

Gregory Schopen has further suggested that the Mahāyāna forest monks were a parallel development to Kent's “embattled Mahāyāna monks” of the monasteries. He argues that a Mahāyāna that was geographically marginalized in this manner could account for the lack of palaeographic evidence relating to Mahāyāna before the fifth century.<sup>190</sup> However, if early Mahāyāna started with forest monks, it certainly died out very quickly. Furthermore, there are Mahāyāna works such as the Ratnarāśi Sūtra that take settled monastic life for granted.<sup>191</sup> It is also interesting to note that most of the forest monks of today are found in south and southeast Asia, but they are Theravāda, not Mahāyāna, and they are serious meditators.

2.8.4.4 GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION. Let us now look at another useful line of inquiry, that is, the question of the geographical spread of Mahāyāna. Three scholars are known for working in this direction. In 1921, Charles Eliot was perhaps the first to suggest a northwest Asian (Kuṣāna) influence on and possible origin for Mahāyāna. Although he notes that many features of Mahāyāna are also present in Hinduism—ruling out a non-Indian origin for Mahāyāna—he argues that some peculiar features of Mahāyāna have more in common with Persian religion than Indian.

Following the line of inquiry begun by Sylvain Lévi, who argues for a Tokharian origin of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī,<sup>192</sup> Eliot points to the similarities between the Mahāyāna Buddha, **Amitābha**, and the Zoroastrian god, *Ahura Mazda*. He writes that both Ahura Mazda and Amitābha are deities residing in a paradise of light. (Their names are also homophonic.) In both cults, the practitioner is led to this paradise of light after reciting the name of the deity.

Finally, Eliot points to the homophony between the names of Amitābha's paradise, **Sukhāvati**, and the name of Ahura Mazda's abode, *Saukavastan*.<sup>193</sup> In short, he argues that all the chief features of Amitābha's paradise are Persian: only his way of making a vow is Buddhist. “It is true that Indian imagination had conceived numerous paradises, and that the early Buddhist legend tells of the Tushita heaven. But Sukhāvati is not like any of these abodes of bliss. It appeared suddenly in the history of Buddhism as something exotic, grafted adroitly on the parent trunk but sometimes overgrowing it.”<sup>194</sup>

Étienne Lamotte, in 1954, offered his own study of the geographical provenance of Mahāyāna as the northwest of India.<sup>195</sup> He shows that Mahāyāna texts, such as the Mañjuśrī, mūla.kalpa, the Mahā.karuṇā, puṇḍarīka, and the Mahā.prajñā.pāramitōpadeśa (which, in his early years, he believed was composed by Nāgārjuna), all contain specific references to the geography and peoples of northwestern and central Asia. Surveying the records of Fāxiǎn and Xuánzàng, Lamotte finds a predominance of Mahāyānists in the north, and virtually none south of Magadha. Thus he emphasizes, “One can no longer doubt the important role played by the Kuṣāna states in the formation of the Mahāyāna if one is willing to take a good look at

<sup>188</sup> *The Bodhisattvapitaka* [Tring, UK: Institute for Buddhist Studies] 1998; 165 n205.

<sup>189</sup> See Paul Harrison, “Searching for the origins of the Mahāyāna,” *Eastern Buddhist* (ns) 28,1 1995: 48-69.

<sup>190</sup> Schopen, “The Mahāyāna and the Middle Period,” 2000: 20 ff.

<sup>191</sup> See Joseph Walser 2008: 54.

<sup>192</sup> *Journal Asiatique* 1 1912: 622; see also Sylvain Lévi, *Le Népal*, Paris, 1905: 330 ff.

<sup>193</sup> Charles Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, London: Routledge & K Paul, 1957 3:220 n7.

<sup>194</sup> Charles Eliot 1957 3:220.

<sup>195</sup> Étienne Lamotte, “Sur la formation de Mahāyāna,” in *Asiatica*, (ed) U Schneider, Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1954: 386 ff.

the census of the monasteries and the monks drafted at the beginning of the fifth century by Fāxiān and of the seventh century by Xuánzàng.”<sup>196</sup>

The third theory on the geographic concentration of Mahāyāna is that of Xinru LIU, who explores the connections between Roman trade with China and the development of Buddhism. Liu cites a passage from the Mahāvastu that mentions “seven jewels”: “*suvāṇa* (gold), *rūpya* (silver), *vaiḍūryā* (lapis lazuli), *sphāṭika* (crystal or quartz), *muktā* (pearl), *lohītikā* (a red precious stone or coral), *musāragalva* (ammonite, agate or coral).”<sup>197</sup> These texts also mention silk, which at that time could have only come from China. Coral was a Roman manufacture and the only lapis lazuli deposits were in Afghanistan: the respective sources of the commodities described the arc of an ancient trade route between Rome and China. She argues that all seven items were among the luxury goods traded between Rome and China during the Kuṣāna dynasty. On this route, the later Kuṣānas became wealthy by acting as middlemen transferring goods from central Asia, through Kashmir, Taxila, and finally to Barygaza on the coast of Gujarat. This route allowed the Romans to circumvent the Sassanian empire and trade their goods through Ethiopia.

Although these items are not found exclusively in Mahāyāna sutras, they play a prominent role in Mahāyāna sutras, especially the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka, suggesting that Mahāyāna sutras containing references were composed somewhere along that route and addressed an audience for whom these commodities would be significant. This would place the composition of these sutras in the corridor from central Asia, through Afghanistan or Kashmir, Taxila, Nāsik, and on to Barygaza.

In short, the scholarly consensus seems to be that Mahāyāna did not develop into an independent Buddhist sect in the first few centuries CE. It had either existed as groups within established Buddhist sects or in sectors of society outside of Buddhist institutions altogether (that is, among the laity or as “forest monks”). The consensus also seems to be that Mahāyāna began as a movement in the northwest and moved southward as it developed.<sup>198</sup>

To the three social contexts proposed by Schopen, Hirakawa, and Ray, Joseph Walser adds a fourth (an overlapping of all these three) “that is crucial to our understanding of Mahāyāna sources, in general, and those relating to Nāgārjuna, specifically.” (2008: 23). The evidence suggests that the status of some Mahāyānists might have changed around the fifth century onwards, when it appears that they began to occupy more privileged positions in certain monasteries.<sup>199</sup>

**2.8.5 The nature of Mahāyāna.** In a strictly dialectic sense, the Mahayanists who totally reject the non-Mahayana teachings, especially early Buddhism, as Hīnayāna, or better, “unbuddhist,” are bringing upon themselves *the Dharma-ending mind*, at least, of the Buddha Dharma of the early Buddhists. While the historical Buddha lived, his charisma and expertise have always in some way resolved any doctrinal or disciplinary issue. With his passing, it is matter of the genius, good or evil, of those who claim to speak in his name.

Informed scholars are well aware that the Mahayana school did not represent a true historic account of the life and teachings of Buddha. A most telling piece of evidence that a Mahayana text is a post-Buddha creation is the effort to *legitimize* such texts through stories of mythical nagas or subterranean dragons hiding such texts until humans are “wise” enough or conditions are “right” for their appearance. The Mahayana often resort to denigrating accounts of the low intelligence of humans in the time of the Buddha, so that he had to resort of an “inferior vehicle” (*hīna,yāna*) of teachings, and that the “true teachings,” that is, the “great vehicle” (*mahā,yāna*) were discovered only after the Buddha by those who were admittedly of superior intelligence. Not surprising some Mahāyāna sutras (such as the Lotus Sutra and the Saṅghāta Sutra) use curses or anathemata to warn those who “disrespect them! [2.8.2]. All this clearly reflect sectarian competition, even intolerance, which even today is reflected in their sectarian proponents. As such, we can call such groups and activities, “Buddhist evangelism.”

<sup>196</sup> Étienne Lamotte 1954: 392

<sup>197</sup> Xinru Liu, *Ancient India and Ancient China*. Delhi: Oxford India Paperbacks, 1997: 93 f.

<sup>198</sup> Further see Joseph Walser 2008: 23-48, where he reviews the evidence from four sources central to the study of early Mahāyāna: Mahāyāna sutras, inscriptions, Chinese pilgrims’ accounts, and Buddhist doxographies.

<sup>199</sup> See Joseph Walser 2008: 23-58. For a brief but helpful overview on the beginnings of Mahāyāna, see Rupert Gethin 1998: 224-226.

The Buddhologist AK Warder, in the introduction to his classic study, *Indian Buddhism*, critically notes that

...some of our sources maintain the authenticity of certain other texts not found in the canons of these schools (the early schools). These texts are those held genuine by the later school, not one of the eighteen, which arrogated to itself the title of Mahāyāna, “Great Vehicle.” According to the Mahāyāna historians these texts were admittedly unknown to the early schools of Buddhists. However, they had all been promulgated by the Buddha. [The Buddha’s] followers on earth, the *śrāvakas* (“pupils”), had not been sufficiently advanced to understand them, and hence were not given them to remember, but they were taught to various supernatural beings and then preserved in such places as the Dragon World (under the earth) or among the gods....

With the best will in the world we cannot accept this or similar accounts as historical facts.

(Warder 1970: 6; 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, 2000: 4)

The key points of Warder’s arguments that the Mahayana Sutras<sup>200</sup> do not give a historical account of events in the life of the historical Buddha are as follows:<sup>201</sup>

- (1) “it is a curious aspersion on the powers of the Buddha that he failed to do what others were able to accomplish 600 years later.”
- (2) “linguistically and stylistically the Mahāyāna texts belong to a later stratum of Indian literature than the *Tripitaka* known to the early schools.”
- (3) “Everything about early Buddhism, and even the Mahāyāna itself (with the exception of the Mantrayāna), suggests that it was a teaching not meant to be kept secret but intended to be published to all the world, to spread enlightenment...”
- (4) “we are on safe ground only with those texts the authenticity of which is admitted by all schools of Buddhism (including the Mahāyāna, who admit the authenticity of the early canons as well as their own texts), not with texts accepted only by certain schools.”
- (5) “[Mahāyāna] developed gradually out of one, or a group, of the eighteen early schools,<sup>202</sup> and originally it took its stand not primarily on any new texts but on its own interpretations of the universally recognised *Tripitaka*.

This is not to say that only one school of Buddhism, such as the Theravāda, that is “pure” or “true,” but that there are difficulties faced in the study of religion and religions that we have to be aware of. Some of the problems we have to work with are, for example:

- We may have the *texts* of pre-sectarian Buddhism,<sup>203</sup> and even understand their languages (such as Pali or one of the Prakrits), but we also need to understand the *contexts* of the teaching, and also its original *purpose*, as far as possible.
- Buddhist history (or any history, for that matter) is often written by the powerful with a political agenda [5.2.2], or by the Buddhists themselves with a non-spiritual agenda [5.2.3].
- Buddhism is often taught with a purely academic or professional bias or lack of commitment by non-Buddhists, or by Buddhists who lack enough knowledge or understanding of Buddhist texts and history [6.2.3].
- Our motive for studying Buddhism is other than for the sake of spiritual practice and liberation, or worse, as an expression of our unresolved psychological or emotional needs [7.6.1.5].

The point is that if our intention is the quest for inner stillness and spiritual liberation, we will be able to tease out useful teachings from Buddhist tradition, or any religious teaching, for that matter. For, *what is well spoken is the Buddha Word*,<sup>204</sup> but we must also have the ready ear for it.

<sup>200</sup> For refs, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahayana\\_sutras](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahayana_sutras).

<sup>201</sup> See Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, 1970: 6 f; 2000: 4 f.

<sup>202</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early\\_Buddhist\\_Schools](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Buddhist_Schools).

<sup>203</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pre-sectarian\\_Buddhism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pre-sectarian_Buddhism).

While the Buddha lived, his wisdom and compassion have always in some way resolved any doctrinal or disciplinary issue. With the Buddha's passing, it is matter of the skillful means (*upaya*) or the evil genius of those who claim to speak in his name. Buddhism, however, is not a matter of speaking, but of inner silence. Those with true inner silence speak best for the Buddha and the Dharma, that is, if the listener's priority is awakening to true reality.

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<sup>204</sup> See Uttara S (A 8.8/4:162-166). Asoka's Bairāt (Bhabra) inscription, transliterated in *The Moral Edict of King Asoka*, by PHL Eggermont & J Hoftizer (eds), Leiden: EJ Brill, 1962: 38. Cf "The good say that the well spoken is supreme" (*subhāsitaṃ uttamam āhu santo*, Sn 450), "having heard the Buddha's well-spoken word" (*sutvāna Buddhassa subhāsitaṃ padam*, Sn 252). See George Bond, *The Word of the Buddha*, Columbo: MD Gunasena, 1982: 30-33.