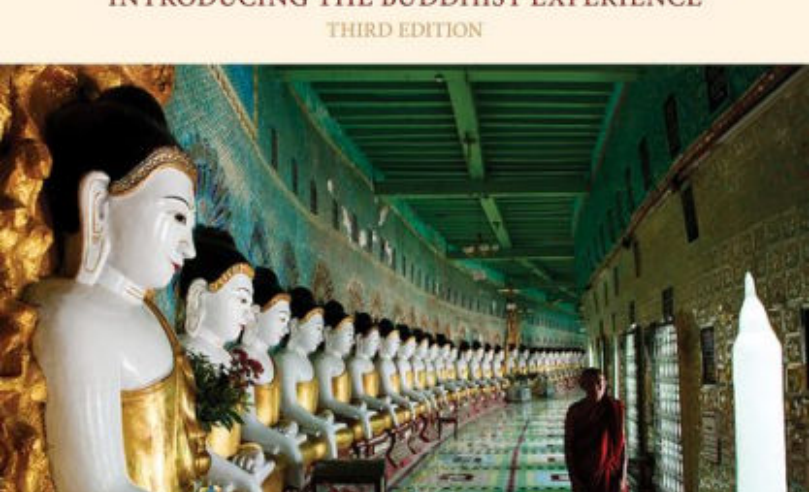
Buddhism

INTRODUCING THE BUDDHIST EXPERIENCE

THIRD EDITION



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Chinese Experiences of Buddhism

It is said that King Aśoka sent Buddhist missionaries to Central Asia, and in fact, Aśokan inscriptions have been found in Afghanistan. Traditional sources also say that Aśoka's son, Kustana, founded the kingdom of Khotan to the northwest of Tibet in 240 B.C.E., some thirty years after the first Buddhist monastery was constructed in Khotan. In the first century C.E., the Kuṣāṇa Dynasty was founded. The Kuṣāṇa empire ruled much of Central Asia, including Afghanistan and parts of northern India, and lasted until the middle of the third century. Members of this dynasty converted to, and supported, Buddhism throughout their empire. This included the Silk Road, which was the major east–west trade route that linked Persia (Iran) to China. It was by way of the Silk Road that Central Asians began to actively export Buddhism into China around the first century C.E. Chinese records indicate that Central Asian Buddhism included both Sarvāstivāda and Mahāyāna sects.

The Silk Road had northern and southern routes, which converged in the city of Dunhuang, China (see Map 5). Dunhuang was a cosmopolitan city, which eventually became a center for translating Buddhist texts into Chinese and for the development of Buddhist art. As Buddhism became more known in China, Dunhuang also became the starting place for Chinese Buddhist pilgrims and scholars to travel on the Silk Road to India to gain more knowledge about their new religion. Much later, in the eleventh century, the Chinese sealed Buddhist texts in the caves at Dunhuang to preserve them from Mongol invaders. In 1900, Wang Yuanlu discovered the caves and some of their contents. He later worked with a British and Indian expedition in 1907, as well as expeditions from France (1908), Japan (1911), and Russia (1914). They discovered 20,000 Buddhist texts and drawings dating from the fifth to the eleventh centuries. This material has given modern scholars a better understanding of the history of Buddhism in both China and Tibet.

Chinese imperial records first refer to Buddhism during the reign of Mingdi (ruled 58–75 C.E.). The Buddhist tradition in China claims that Emperor Mingdi actually brought Buddhism to China. However, historical records

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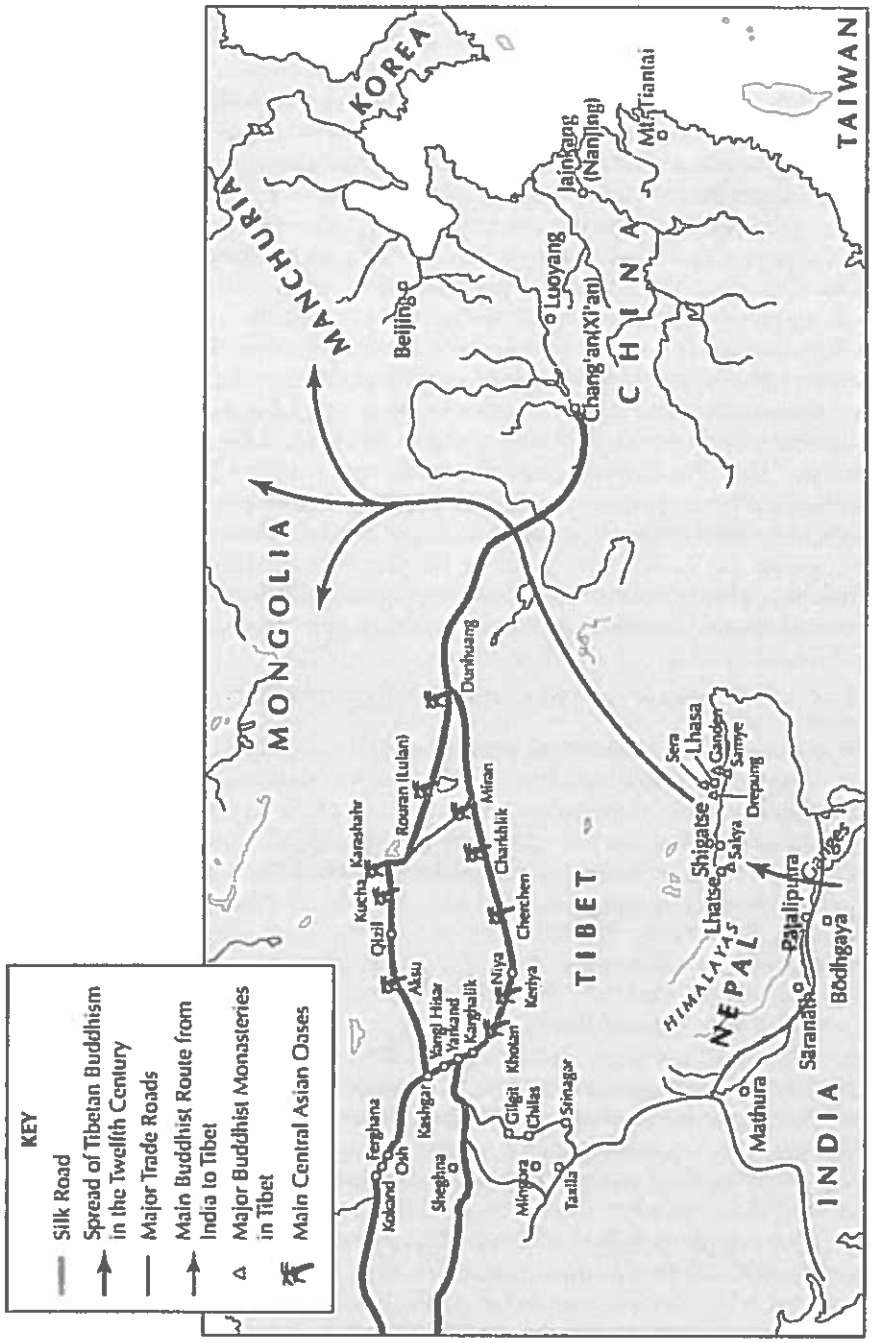

MAP 5. The northern and eastern spread of Buddhism: c. first–twelfth century C.E.

indicate that Central Asian merchants brought Buddhism into the country. In any case, the Chinese were intrigued by Buddhist monks and images of the Buddha, whom they took to be a great god from India. By the middle of the first century C.E., Buddhist monks were present in the Chinese capital, and the Buddha was worshiped at the imperial court as a god alongside Laozi, the founder of Daoism, and another popular god named the Yellow Emperor.

Buddhism's introduction into China met resistance from what was already a vigorous intellectual and cultural tradition based on Confucian classics and Daoist religion. Confucianists were not impressed with Buddhist monasticism, which they felt abandoned family and society, going against the responsibilities of filial piety. The Buddhist belief in rebirth was also incompatible with the veneration of ancestors. Daoists were disappointed that the Buddhists could not provide elixirs and practices that led to the immortality they sought. On the other hand, as we shall see, early on, Buddhists used Daoist terms and concepts to convey their ideas. We will also see that in the process of its inculturation, Buddhism adapted to Chinese culture. For example, given the Daoist value of harmony and nature, Chinese Buddhism emphasized the experience of the interdependence of phenomena and the living out of that experience through simplicity and naturalness in daily life. Also given the Confucian values of human perfectability, sagehood, and social harmony, Chinese Buddhism emphasized the Bodhisattva Path, the universal ideal of Buddhahood, and contributing to the social good.

TRANSLATION AND INCULTURATION

The transmission of the actual teachings of Buddhism into China necessitated the translation of Buddhist texts. These translations began to be made in earnest during the second century C.E. Some of the first translations were made by An Shigao, who arrived in the capital of Luoyang in 148 C.E. Because at that time Daoism stressed inner cultivation and refining of the spirit, the most popular of An Shigao's translations were the ones about Buddhist meditation, mindfulness, and breathing practice. A Mahāyāna monk named Lokakṣema also arrived in Luoyang in 168 C.E., where he translated the *Small Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* and a *Land of Bliss Sūtra*. It was around this time, the middle of the second century C.E., that the first Buddhist monastery in China was constructed and the first Chinese monks were accepted into the Saṅgha. However, full monastic ordination was not possible until the *Vinaya* was brought to China, translated, and implemented in the fifth century.

This early work of translating texts and preaching the Dharma continued into the third century. Thus, the ground was prepared for the great Dharmarakṣa (born 230), a native of Dunhuang, who established intellectual respectability for Buddhism in north China from 266 to 308. Dharmarakṣa translated a large number of *sūtras*, including the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Large Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra*, and founded a vigorous Saṅgha by building monasteries, ordaining monks, and expounding the Dharma. Through the

efforts of Dharmarakṣa and his disciples, Buddhist monastics gained respect for their wisdom, simplicity, purity of heart, and fellowship with people from all classes of Chinese society. When barbarians sacked the northern Chinese capitals, Luoyang in 311 and Chang'an (Xi'an) in 316, these monks were pillars of strength, compassion, and virtue in a world torn apart by destruction and chaos.

With the loss of north China to the barbarians, many Buddhists from that region traveled to other parts of China, thus spreading Dharmarakṣa's intellectual and disciplined style of Buddhism. In south China, Buddhism developed in peace among the ruling class, and monastics gradually gained influence at the imperial court. With the support of the ruling class, the center of Buddhism in south China was established in the capital city of Jiankang (Nanjing). There, monks produced new translations of Indian texts, lived comfortably, and devoted much of their time to more philosophical pursuits and literary activity. Large monastic estates, supported by the rulers, provided their monastics with both religious education and spiritual formation. There were also smaller monasteries in villages where the less educated monastics provided the populace with devotional services. Finally, forest monasteries were founded for monastics who wanted to devote all of their time to the practice of meditation.

Meanwhile in north China, things were much more difficult. Most Buddhist intellectuals had fled to the south, so the Buddhist community in the north focused more on practice than on theory. Individual monks gained prominence among the barbarian rulers as "holy men" and "wonder workers." For example, around 310, Fotudeng arrived in China, where he witnessed massacres when the capitals fell. By performing what are referred to as "feats of magic," Fotudeng sought to gain the barbarian rulers' admiration to exert a civilizing influence on them. In this way, he hoped to help those innocent people who were suffering under the cruel oppressors. The example of Fotudeng and others like him gave witness to the spiritual power and the moral values of Buddhism. Some modern scholars argue that the real "magic" of Fotudeng was the conversion of the barbarians.

Fotudeng did not pretend to be a scholar like Dharmarakṣa, but stressed the practice of meditation and devotion. His major achievements included his disciplined method of training monks and the foundation of the Chinese Buddhist order of nuns. In 317, Zhu Jingjian (c. 292–361) became the first Chinese woman to take novice ordination. She was soon joined by other women and founded a monastery in Chang'an. However, full women's ordination would not be available in China until 434, when Sri Lankan *bhikṣuṇīs* came for the purpose of establishing such a lineage.

NEW TRANSLATIONS AND SCHOLARSHIP

During the fourth century, some of the more intellectual Buddhist monastics in the south of China were using Daoist and Neo-Daoists terms and concepts to aid in the translation of Buddhist texts and in the understanding of

Buddhist ideas. For example, some Neo-Daoists held, based on original Daoist texts, that the world of phenomena is the "functioning" of the Dao, which is itself Ultimate Reality. All phenomena are the self-determinations of the Dao, formed by the Dao's dynamic functioning. This means that the "essence" of all things is the Dao itself. The Neo-Daoists referred to the phenomena of the world as "being" and the ultimate and formless Dao that is the essence of all phenomena as "non-being." Buddhist scholars used these distinctions in discussing the Mahāyāna notion of emptiness. Emptiness was understood to be, like the Dao, the causal source and formless essence of all phenomena. As essence, emptiness is nonbeing; but in its functioning of dependent arising, it takes form as being.

In time, some Buddhist scholars came to realize that looking at Buddhism through a Daoist lens could be distorting the meaning of Buddhist texts. One such person was Dao'an (312–385), a disciple of Fotudeng who was forced to migrate south due to civil war. In 379, Dao'an returned to Chang'an in the north and began a new translation center. Indian monks were brought to Chang'an to work with Chinese scribes. The most famous monk to come to Chang'an shortly after Dao'an was the great Kumārajīva (344–413). When he arrived in 402, he was already well known in China and was therefore able to gain the ruler's patronage. Kumārajīva, along with a large number of Chinese disciples, undertook a massive translation project. A number of popular *sūtras* were retranslated, and new translations were completed. Kumārajīva's translation of Mādhyamika texts, the Perfection of Wisdom literature, the *Lotus Sūtra*, and the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* sowed the seeds of a deeper understanding of Buddhism in China. This clearer understanding would later flower in a number of highly creative schools of Chinese Buddhist thought. In this way, the inculturation of Buddhism in China took a giant step forward.

One of Kumārajīva's disciples, Sengzhao (374–414), helped to clarify the central Mahāyāna notion of emptiness. Before Sengzhao, Chinese Buddhists based their understanding of the meaning of emptiness on the previously translated *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras* in which emptiness is identified with the forms of the world. As we have seen, the Chinese Buddhist understanding of this identity of emptiness and the world had been colored by Daoism. In that Buddhist/Daoist interpretation, emptiness was thought to be a causal force that creates the universe and remains in things as their essence. With the new translation of Mādhyamika texts, Sengzhao was able to explain emptiness in a more orthodox fashion. He used the texts of Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva to show that all phenomena are "empty" of the self-existence we attribute to them through our conceptual understanding of things. The work of Sengzhao contributed to the establishment of the Chinese Mādhyamika School of Buddhism in the sixth century.

Another notion that was of great interest to Chinese Buddhists at the time of Kumārajīva was *Tathāgata-garbha*, a term the Chinese rendered as "Buddha-nature." The *Lotus Sūtra*, and later the *Nirvana Sūtra*, introduced to China the notion that there is within us an innate Awakening that can develop through religious practice into the full Buddhahood. The early Chinese understanding

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of Buddha-nature was also influenced by Daoism. The Daoists believed that people have an inner spirit of light that manifests the power of the Dao, the creative source of the universe. Dao Sheng (fl. 397–432), another student of Kumārajīva, argued that Buddha-nature should not be understood as a particular spiritual power, but should be understood as one universal reality that is the same in all beings. He also taught that Buddha-nature cannot be grasped gradually, but only all at once, in a single stroke of sudden Awakening. Dao Sheng's teaching about "sudden" Awakening in which one "recognizes one's innate Buddha-nature" contributed to a line of Buddhist thought that was influential throughout all of East Asia.

PERSECUTION AND REFORM

As Buddhism spread in north China during the fourth century, it enjoyed the support of the emperor. Eventually, a monastic "Saṅgha-director" was appointed to establish the government's support and control of the monasteries. While Buddhism flourished under this new system, its prosperity also led to corruption. Much of this corruption was due to the Saṅgha's extensive property holdings. Because of corruption in the Saṅgha, and in response to pressure from Daoist and Confucianist leaders who were afraid that Buddhism was gaining too much temporal power, there was a severe persecution of Buddhism in the north beginning in 446. Many temples and scriptures were destroyed, some of the monks were executed, and others fled to the south. However, with a new emperor in the north, the persecution ended in 452, and Buddhism again enjoyed royal patronage.

While the more philosophically minded monastics like Sengzhao and Dao Sheng emphasized emptiness and the inner essence of Buddhahood, many Chinese lay Buddhists were more interested in worshiping the Buddha according to Mahāyāna's devotional tradition. During the Buddhist revival that began after the persecution in the north ended in 452, Chinese artists glorified the Buddha in a manner that became popular with the masses, and lay worship of the Buddha was reinforced by the architecture of the Buddha-temples. In the temples, the central Buddha statue was the focus of devotion; from this time on, Buddhist art and liturgy offered a strong emotional appeal to the Chinese people. Besides the worship of the Buddhas, by the fifth century there were many popular forms of piety directed to bodhisattvas. One of the most lasting of these has been the devotion to Avalokiteśvara, known in China as Guanyin (see Figure 7.1). Guanyin is worshiped as a female deity in China. Over the centuries, she has remained the most popular deity in all of China, often portrayed as a graceful woman holding a lotus flower. She is considered to be compassionately concerned for the plight of humanity, rushing to the aid of beings in need with her boundless skillful means. In Buddhist temples, a statue of Guanyin has always been a popular site for both lay and monastic devotion.

Another aspect of the Buddhist revival was an early type of social reform in China. Around 470, a Saṅgha leader named Tanyao devised a plan to aid the poor and needy in rural areas. A peasant family could become part of a

FIGURE 7.1. Guangyin Bodhisattva Statue in Fengxian Cave at Longmen Grottos, China dated 672–676.

"Saṅgha household" by donating an amount of grain to the local Saṅgha. The member family could then receive a share of the Saṅgha's grain in times of need. Within this extended Saṅgha family of monks, nuns, and laypeople, the members saw themselves as brothers and sisters supporting each other in the spirit of Buddhist compassion. Another example of social reform was found in the urban areas where the city temples encouraged new types of lay-oriented Buddhist piety. In this system, the monks set aside the monastic contemplative life to be Dharma teachers, supporting and guiding the laity in living their religion in daily urban life. Buddhist householders were taught that the bodhisattva precepts meant that one should generously care for the needy in the community.

In time, a belief developed among Chinese Buddhists in both rural and urban areas that a "Buddha-kingdom" was being built on earth. However, this social vision of a Buddha-centered society disintegrated as the Northern Wei Dynasty fell into civil war and the capital city was sacked and abandoned. Buddhists took both sides in the conflict: high priests supporting the

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state and lower clerics supporting the peasant uprisings. The disillusionment that rose from this disunity was reinforced when from 574 to 578, the Zhou emperor in the north supported Confucianism and suppressed Daoism and Buddhism. Again monastics from the north fled for refuge to the south.

Some say that the fruit of the persecutions of 446 and 574 was that the monastic migrations south led to a blending of northern Buddhist practice with southern Buddhist scholarship. This blending of theory and practice is said to have influenced the founding of more fully inculturated schools of Chinese Buddhism during the sixth century. The founding of these schools was also influenced by an idea that was strengthened by the disillusionment stemming from the persecution of 574. The persecution that had attacked the sophisticated forms of Buddhist social, intellectual, spiritual, and devotional life meant for many Chinese Buddhists that they were witnessing the degeneration of the Buddha's Dharma. In Indian Buddhist literature, there was a prediction that the teaching and practice of the Dharma would weaken over time. It would be strong and true at first, but then weaken to the point that it would finally fall into a state of degeneration. It was said that this process would take place during three ages: the "age of the True Dharma," the "age of the Semblance Dharma," and the "age of the Degenerate Dharma." Given the situation of Buddhism in China and calculations that were made at that time, it was believed by many that the age of the Degenerate Dharma had arrived. What this meant to many Chinese Buddhists was that Buddhism had to produce stronger forms of practice, since, in the degenerate age, Awakening would be very difficult to attain using only traditional methods that had proven successful during the previous two ages.

INDIAN FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHINESE EXPERIENCES OF BUDDHISM

The Sui Dynasty, founded in 581, reunited China through its conquest of the south in 589. The first ruler of this dynasty was Emperor Wen (ruled 581–604), a devout Buddhist. The capital of Chang'an (renamed Daxing) became the center of Chinese Buddhism as eminent monastics taught in the city with imperial patronage. In this atmosphere of religious freedom and spiritual renewal, various schools of Buddhism emerged. The Chinese have traditionally identified ten principal schools. Of these ten, six were primarily Indian schools in China. They exerted more or less influence on the Chinese experiences of Buddhism but did not last very long as independent schools. The other four, which we introduce in the following section, were more fully inculturated forms of Chinese Buddhism, and defined the lasting spirit and worldview of Chinese Buddhism.

The Abhidharma Schools

After the *Abhidharma-kośa* of Vasubandhu was translated into Chinese by Paramārtha (499–569) from 563 to 567, the Zhushe (*kośa*) School was founded.

Based on Vasubandhu's work and the Sarvāstivāda School that it represented, the Zhushe School held a realistic view of the world. It taught that the elements of existence, the *dharmas*, are real. It categorized the mental and physical elements of life, and it defined the causal forces that structure life and experience. This school's teachings concerning Abhidharma philosophy became a basic part of Buddhist studies in China.

Kumārajīva translated the *Satyasiddhi* ("Establishment of Truth") *Treatise*, which was written in India by Harivarman (c. 250–350 C.E.) and is associated with the Indian Sautrāntika School. The Chengshi (*Satyasiddhi*) School used this text to refute the independent reality of the *dharmas*, thus opposing the Zhushe School. The *Satyasiddhi Treatise* was quite popular during the fifth ana sixth centuries, but eventually the text and its school of thought were absorbed into the Chinese Mādhyamika tradition.

Whereas the Zhushe and Chengshi schools taught doctrines from the Indian Abhidhiarma traditions, another school from that tradition did not transmit any formal doctrinal teachings. Instead, it preached the monastic discipline of the *Vinaya*. Without the *Vinaya*, there was no way to establish ordination procedures or ensure the authenticity of the lineages. This Lu (*Vinaya*) School was successful in China and enjoyed significant influence in the formation of the Saṅghas in Korea and Japan. Founded by Dao Xuan (596–667), the purpose of this sect was to develop a stricter observance of the *Vinaya's* monastic rules. The school was concerned that Mahāyāna placed more emphasis on the spirit of the rules than on the letter. Thus, Lu emphasized a stricter observance of the two forms of Buddhist ordination—novice and full.

The Māhāyana Schools

The fourth school is the Tantric Chenyan ("True Word") School, which developed during this time period but was more formally established later by Amoghavajra (705–774). As a Tantric tradition, the school's name indicates the importance the use of *mantras* has in its practices. In the Chinese context, this school developed from the early Chinese fascination with Tantric masters, who were said to be able to use magic powers and rites for blessings, for averting catastrophes, and for influencing the fate of people after death. Fotudeng was famous for his magical powers and knowledge of Tantric ritual formulas.

As more systematized Tantric texts were introduced into China, the focus of Tantra shifted to meditation involving visualization of Buddhas and bodhisattvas used to aid practitioners in the realization of Buddhahood. Eventually, the Indian monk Śubhākarasiṃha (637–735), and his Chinese disciple Yixing (683–727), translated the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, which became quite popular in Tantric traditions in China and Japan. Then the Indian monk Vajrabodhi (671–741) came to China in 719. His disciple from Central Asia, Amoghavajra, is said to be the founder of the Chenyan School. Amoghavajra was also one of the greatest translators of Buddhist texts in Chinese history.

The fifth school was the Sanlun School founded by Jizang (549–623). This school, devoted to Indian Mādhyamika philosophy, is based on the work of Kumārajīva and his disciple Sengzhao. *Sanlun* meaning "Three Treatises," refers to two texts by Nāgārjuna and one by his disciple, Āryadeva. Jizang argued that the Mādhyamika doctrine of emptiness does not imply a dualism between emptiness on the one hand and the ordinary reality of human experience on the other. There is but one reality, namely, this world grasped either by a person's discriminating mind or by the wisdom-mind. By the former, one experiences the ordinary world of things; by the latter, one finds the truth of emptiness. That is, one discovers that the "suchness" (*tathatā*) of the objective world is emptiness; things in their suchness are empty of the independence that the discriminating mind attributes to them.

The sixth school, derived from the Indian Yogācāra tradition, took form in three stages. The first tradition of Yogācāra in China was called the Dilun School, founded in the early sixth century. This school struggled with the question of whether the storehouse-consciousness is pure or defiled. If it is defiled, Dilun taught, then it is in need of purification through the realization of an even higher innate Pure Mind. This school was replaced by the Shelun School, named after a Yogācāra treatise by Asaṅga. Shelun is based on the later writings of the Indian monastic scholar Paramārtha, who arrived in China in 546.

Paramārtha's intellectual work was foundational not only to Yogācāra in China but also to the development of all of Chinese Buddhism. This is because of his role in promoting the *Tathāgata-garbha* tradition. This notion, rendered *Buddha-nature* in China, provided a positive way of depicting ultimate reality. For Paramārtha, Buddha-nature is another name for what he taught was an innate Pure Mind (*amala-vijñāna*) that remains unchanged and undefiled behind the transformations and defilements of the functioning mind. This Pure Mind, he taught, is beyond the storehouse-consciousness. With the realization of the higher Pure Mind, or one's Buddha-nature, all defilements of the ordinary mind are eliminated by its inherent purity, and one lives in the pure freedom of nirvanic Buddhahood.

For Paramārtha, Buddha-nature is not just the essence of consciousness. It is also seen to be the essence of all things. The suchness (*tathatā*) of all existence is Buddha-nature; everything has the Buddha-nature. Because this Buddha-nature is the nirvanic essence of Buddhahood (*Dharmakāya*), then all existence (*saṃsāra*) is the manifestation of the Dharma-body of the Buddha (Nirvana). To see the world with wisdom, which itself is the functioning of Buddha-nature, is to discover the inner Buddha-nature shining with luminosity in all phenomena. Awakening is the "uncovering" of the Pure Mind of Buddha-nature so as to find Nirvana in *saṃsāra*, Buddhahood in all things. It was this positive notion of ultimate reality that the Chinese found to be lacking in Sanlun Buddhism. This notion paralleled the Daoist understanding of the inner "unborn nature." It impressed the Chinese intellectual world and influenced the evolution of Chinese Buddhism.

It is not a coincidence, then, that at around the time of Paramārtha, a text teaching the Buddha-nature doctrine, and claiming to be an Indian Buddhist *sūtra*, was composed in China. This is the famous *Treatise on the Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna*, or simply, *The Awakening of Faith*. Written in the mid-sixth century, *The Awakening of Faith* became a seminal text in East Asian Buddhism, influencing such major schools as Huayan and Chan, which we introduce in the next section. This important text taught that Buddha-nature is the "One Mind" which is the source of all the universe. Drawing on Yogācāra, *The Awakening of Faith* states that the One Mind has two aspects. First, it is the always pure nirvanic suchness of existence, the very *Dharmakāya*. Second, it is the basis for the storehouse-consciousness to generate the *saṃsāric* world of experience. The image used by the text to depict this identity is the Yogācāra one of water (Nirvana) within waves (*saṃsāra*).

The third stage in the evolution of Yogācāra in China was achieved by Xuanzang (596–664). Xuanzang was unsure of the Shelun teachings about the nature of the mind, so he traveled to Central Asia and on to India to resolve the question. The teachings of Xuanzang and his disciple Kuiji (632–682) became the basis of the Faxiang ("The Characteristics of the *Dharmas*") School. Xuanzang taught that the experience of one's mind and of objects, of self and world, arise dependently as two sides of an interdependent pattern of consciousness. He says that "both the self and the *dharmas* of the world are constructions based on false ideas, and have no independent reality. . . . How are the self and these *dharmas* produced? They are all constructions based on the . . . transformation of consciousness itself" (*Cheng weishi lun*, 2a). The transformations of the first six forms of consciousness construct one's experience of the world, while the transformations of the seventh form construct the experience of self. Xuanzang says that given that "self-delusion, self-view, self-conceit, and self-love" are associated with these transformations, the eighth consciousness, the storehouse-consciousness, "is defiled" (*Ibid.*, 7).

This means that the strorehouse consciousness contains both pure and impure (moral and immoral) states that then affect one's experience of self and world. One's defiled consciousness can be purified by spiritual practice so that a person can mature in the purity of Awakening and attain Buddhahood. For Xuanzang, there is no innate Pure Mind. While Xuanzang's view on this matter was accepted as the Indian Yogācāra position, it was Paramārtha's *Tathāgata-garbha* notion of a Pure Mind behind the defiled ordinary consciousness that spoke more strongly to the Chinese religious way of thinking.

DEFINING THE CHINESE EXPERIENCES OF BUDDHISM

Although the six schools described in the previous section played foundational roles in the development of Chinese Buddhism, they were essentially schools of Indian Buddhism in China. The four schools described in this section are significantly distinct and creative forms of inculturated Chinese

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Buddhism. Because these four schools clearly define the particular Chinese experiences of Buddhism, we spend more time introducing them.

The Heavenly Terrace School

The Tiantai ("Heavenly Terrace") School is named after the mountain in southeast China where it originated. Tradition states that Tiantai was founded by Huiwen (c. 550), who is considered its First Patriarch. Huiwen's disciple was Huisi (514–577), who crafted many of the teachings of the school. However, it was Huisi's disciple who was the real architect of Tiantai. This was the famous Zhiyi (538–597). At the time of Zhiyi, Chinese Buddhists were struggling with how to deal with the diversity of Buddhist texts coming from India. Stressing the Chinese spiritual preference for harmony, Zhiyi sought to reconcile and synthesize different Buddhist teachings by emphasizing the *Lotus Sūtra's* notion of *ekayana*, the "One Vehicle." In so doing, Zhiyi defined one important task of Tiantai as being the reestablishment of the unity of Buddhism.

Zhiyi taught that the differences between the varieties of texts and teachings of Buddhism were due to the Buddha's having accommodated his teaching to his listeners at different times in his life. At the beginning of what Zhiyi called the "Five Periods" of the Buddha's ministry, the Buddha taught the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, with the message of sudden Awakening to the Buddha-nature in all things. This message not being understood, the Buddha then taught the *Sūtra Piṭaka*, followed by the early Mahāyāna *sūtras*, and then the Perfection of Wisdom Literature and its doctrine of emptiness. Finally, he taught the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, both of which again emphasized the sudden realization of Buddha-nature.

Zhiyi taught that the essential message of Buddhism, the notion of the universal Buddha-nature, is most clearly expressed in the *Lotus Sūtra* (See Figure 7.2), the central text of the Tiantai School. However, he also taught that this message is present in all the Buddha's teachings preserved in the variety of Buddhist texts coming from India. Thus, Zhiyi rejected the idea that the teachings of the different texts and schools contradict each other. Instead, they present different perspectives of the One Vehicle; they complement each other and blend into a harmony of different perspectives on the one Buddha Dharma. He also taught that because of the clarity of its presentation of this Dharma, the *Lotus Sūtra* most fully realizes the purpose of the Buddha's advent on earth, namely, to save all living beings. Thereby, Zhiyi recognized the relative validity of the teachings and scriptures of all forms of Buddhism, while at the same time proclaiming Tiantai, given its reliance on the *Lotus Sūtra*, to be the highest form of Buddhism. Other forms of East Asian Buddhism might not have accepted Tiantai's claim to superiority, but many were influenced by the general idea that there is an internal unity in Buddhism and that its highest teaching affirms the universal presence of Buddha-nature in all forms of existence. Here we see the influence of Paramārtha's work, with which Zhiyi and his teachers were familiar.

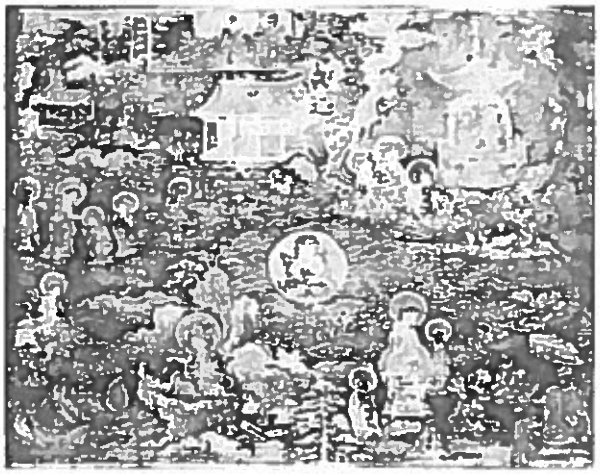

FIGURE 7.2. *Lotus Sūtra;* gold on indigo; Song Dynasty (960–1279 C.E.), China. Cleveland Museum of Art.

In terms of its teachings, Tiantai presents the oneness of the Three Levels of Truth. The first level is the truth of emptiness, that all things (*dharmas*) are empty of own-being because they are all dependently arisen. The second level is the truth that all things possess a temporary existence due to dependent arising. The third level is that the nature of things is both empty and temporarily existing. This third truth is called the Middle Truth; to behold it, according to Zhiyi is to see all three truths as one.

To behold this identity between emptiness and phenomena is to see the suchness (*tathatā*) of things. This suchness is the true nature of things that Tiantai calls Buddha-nature. Therefore, Buddha-nature is not something that one can see in itself, apart from phenomena. Given emptiness, Buddha-nature is not an independent thing, but is the essence of Buddhahood seen in the phenomena of the world. The metaphor that is used to express this presence of Buddha-nature in phenomena is water in waves. One cannot see water in itself apart from the forms it takes. So, too, the suchness of existence, Buddha-nature, is found when one sees the identity of emptiness and the temporary forms of life.

This identity means that all living beings are embraced by the Buddha-nature, and so can attain Buddhahood. To further emphasize this doctrine of universal salvation, Tiantai points to its understanding of the world and the mind. The cosmos is said to be made up of 3,000 worlds. This is not just an enumeration, but indicates the interpenetration and unity of all worlds. In Tiantai philosophy, it is said that there are ten worlds from the Buddha realms down to the hellish realms. These ten worlds arise dependently, and thus interpenetrate each other, resulting in 100 worlds. Each of these worlds possesses the ten characteristics of suchness, resulting in 1,000 worlds. Finally, each of these 1,000 worlds consists of three distinct worldly conditions, resulting in 3,000 worlds.

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Given the interpenetration of these 3,000 worlds, each element (*dharma*) of any world contains the elements of all other worlds. Zhiyi says that this means that the 3,000 worlds are present in one moment of thought:

> Now, one mind contains ten *dharma*-realms, but each of these *dharma*-realms contains ten *dharma*-realms, resulting in 100 *dharma*-realms. One realm contains 30 kinds of worlds, hence 100 *dharma*-realms contain 3,000 worlds. These 3,000 worlds are contained in a fleeting moment of thought. . . . All one can say is that the mind is all *dharmas*, and that all *dharmas* are the mind. . . . It is obscure, but also subtle and extremely profound. Knowledge cannot understand it, and words cannot express it. Therefore, it is called "the realm of the inconceivable." (*Mohe zhiguan*, V)

One implication of this notion of the interpenetration of worlds is that all living beings from the realms of hell to those of the Buddhas are found within the mind. This means that the innate suchness of all beings, Buddha-nature, and all the qualities of the Buddha realms are present in the mind. Therefore, Buddha-nature can be experienced in a moment of thought, a sensation of fragrance, or a perception of color. Each moment of one's experience is united with the dependent arising of all forms of life in the cosmos expressing the suchness of existence, the Buddha-nature in all things. Here again we see the reason why all living beings possess Buddha-nature and are thereby capable of salvation.

Huisi described the mind's relation to its inherent Buddha-nature:

> The mind is the same as the mind of pure self-nature, true suchness, Buddha-nature, and the *Dharmakāya*. . . . Although the mind has always been obscured by *dharmas* based on ignorance, its nature has always been pure; thus it is called pure . . . and is originally enlightened. . . . The Buddhas past, present and future, as well as all living beings have this pure mind as their essence. . . . It is therefore called suchness. . . . This pure mind is called Buddha-nature because "Buddha" means Awakening, and "nature" means the mind. . . . The mind is called *Dharmakāya* because the meaning of *Dharma* consists in functioning, and the meaning of *kāya* [body] consists in establishing. . . . The functioning [of the Dharma] is established on the basis of this one mind. . . . Therefore, the mind is called the *Dharmakāya*. (*Dacheng zhiguan famen*, I–II)

The spiritual goal of Tiantai is to awaken to this identity between the suchness of existence, the interpenetrating unity of life, the inner Buddha-nature, and the innate purity of mind. Therefore, Zhiyi was not only a philosopher but also a practitioner and teacher of meditation. In fact, it was while reading a passage in the *Lotus Sūtra* that he gained the highest *samādhi* in which he realized Awakening. To guide others to this attainment, Zhiyi established an ordination lineage and taught forms of meditation practice that would have great influence on the spiritual practice and experience of all East Asian Buddhism.

The spiritual journey of Tiantai is intended to lead from the unenlightened life, conditioned by blind attachment to the world, to an enlightened vision of the world that brings inner freedom and outer harmony with the universe. To further this ideal, Zhiyi taught meditation methods that fostered both sudden and gradual attainment, tailoring them to the needs of his disciples. For example, he guided his monks in nondual forms of sitting meditation where one moves beyond the distinction between the meditator and the object of meditation to a more sudden experience of Buddha-nature. He also taught forms of quiet walking meditation with focus on one's body and breathing for gradual deepening of concentration. And he taught his disciples how to use the ordinary events of daily life as objects of meditative reflection. All three of these kinds of meditation have enjoyed wide popularity in the Buddhist world of East Asia.

Zhiyi taught a rather unique type of meditation. He believed that since the suchness of the 3,000 worlds is found in all moments of thought, then even blind attachments express suchness. Given the fact that these negative states of mind are common to the unenlightened human condition, they were Zhiyi's favorite objects of meditation. When one realizes the deeper interrelated unity of reality, one sees that the unwholesome states of mind are arising dependently, that they are empty of any substance, and then one finds freedom from any bondage to these negative factors of existence. However, this does not mean that the liberated person is purified of all negative mental factors. Given the interpenetration of all realms, even the hellish ones, these factors can always be found in the mind. While the liberated person is not himself or herself moved or defiled by any negative mental factors, he or she uses them to stay united with all beings in their struggle for liberation and to work as a bodhisattva for their salvation. This meditative use of the negative factors of mental life to penetrate the mystery of their suchness appealed to Chinese Buddhists who believed they were living in the age of the Degenerate Dharma.

Zhiyi also showed how traditional Buddhist tranquillity meditation is harmonious and complementary to traditional Buddhist insight meditation. As when the water is still one can see the bottom of the pond, so too when the mind is still one can see one's innate Buddha-nature reflected in the clear mirror of the mind. Finally, following the teachings of the *Lotus Sūtra*, Zhiyi taught that Gautama Buddha was a manifestation of an ever-present Buddha, thus affirming the value of devotional practice such as the repetition of the Buddha's name. In the end, Tiantai Buddhism emphasized the need in one's spiritual journey to balance study of the Dharma with both appropriate meditation practices and devotionalism. For centuries, this Tiantai balance in religious living influenced the development of the Chinese Buddhist experience.

Zhiyi was regarded as a person of great wisdom, learning, and moral character. He organized Buddhist doctrines, produced an impressive system of philosophy, and trained his disciples in ways that have been respected throughout the ages. His teachings spoke to the minds and hearts of the Chinese Buddhist world, and Tiantai became the first really Chinese form of

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Buddhism. A Korean monk named Hyŏn'gwang (fl. 539–575) studied under Huisi and later returned to Korea, where he became famous as teacher of Tiantai. However, it was much later that Ŭich'ŏn (1055–1101) actually founded an independent school of Tiantai in Korea, where it is known as Ch'ŏnt'ae. The Japanese monk Saichō (767–822) studied under a disciple of the Sixth Tiantai Patriarch, from whom he received Tiantai doctrine and bodhisattva ordination. Saichō returned to Japan and founded the Tendai School on Mt. Hiei near Kyōto, which remains active to this day.

The Flower Garland School

The next great school that helped define the Chinese Buddhist experience is the Huayan ("Flower Garland") School, founded by Dushun (557–640). Dushun was a practitioner of meditation and a student of the *Avataṃsaka (Huayan) Sūtra*. Although Dushun was the First Patriarch of Huayen Buddhism, it was really the Third Patriarch, Fazang (643–712), who was the real architect of the school. Fazang served as preceptor to four emperors and wrote the systematic philosophy of Huayan Buddhism. This Philosophy is considered to be one of the most complex and difficult to understand in the Buddhist world. However, it gives us a glimpse into one of the profound dimensions of the Chinese Buddhist experience.

Box 7.1

Free and at Ease

The strength of Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism lies in its all-encompassing character and flexibility, enabling it to adapt to all situations and to the needs of those of all capacities and backgrounds. Thus, Chinese Buddhism makes one feel pure, vigorous, and free and at ease under any circumstances.

Take myself for example. I left home to become a monk as a child, and later joined the army. I was ordained once again after ten years and since then have remained a monk. Based on my own Chinese Buddhist experience, all people I have met during these decades I consider friends, never enemies.

For example, when I meet people with different religious beliefs, I always respect them as people appearing in this world with different statuses, assuming different responsibilities, and fulfilling different missions. Although they might not agree with me and become Buddhists, as far as I am concerned, they help me in a variety of ways. To me, they are all bodhisattvas and benefactors. By seeing and treating others in this way, they also become my friends, and do not regard me as an enemy.

This is the beauty of Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism in my experience.

DHARMA MASTER SHENG YEN
Dharma Drum Mountain, Taiwan

FIGURE 7.3. Statue of Vairocana Buddha in Fengxian Cave at Longmen Grottos dated 672–676.

The Tiantai notion that dependent arising implies the interdependence, or interpenetration, of all phenomena was greatly appreciated by the Chinese people, for whom the harmony of nature and society was so important. Huayan thought also reflects the experience of the dependent arising as interrelatedness. Specifically, Huayan was interested in the interrelatedness of what is called the *Dharmadhātu*, the "realm of all *dharmas*," or the totality of the cosmos. In its devotional writings based on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, Huayan taught that the great *Dharmadhātu* is itself the very body of Vairocana Buddha (see Figure 7.3). Therefore, to realize the true nature or suchness of the cosmos is to discover the Buddha-nature of all existence. In its philosophical writings, again based on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, Huayan taught that the totality of the *Dharmadhātu* arises in an interdependence that is wondrous and harmonious. When one sees this marvelous harmony, one generates a deeper commitment to living the Bodhisattva Path in a way that embodies that harmony in daily life. Huayan sought to

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explain its experience of this wondrous vision of the cosmos to help Buddhists attain a liberating insight into the harmonious nature of the *Dharmadhātu*.

Huayan teaches that there are four ways of experiencing the *Dharmadhātu*. First is the ordinary experience of existence that reveals the "realm of phenomena" (Chinese: *shi*), or the myriad *dharmas*. According to Huayan, this is the vision of the cosmos with which the early Buddhist tradition, such as Theravāda, works to gain Nirvana by the purification of the negative phenomena in one's consciousness. Second is the experience of existence that reveals the emptiness of all phenomena, the true suchness of all things. This is the "realm of principle" (Chinese: *li*), with which Mahāyāna works to attain Buddhahood. Through this second vision, one realizes that the real and inherent "principle," or nature of things, is always pure. Although phenomena may be either pure or impure, in essence they are empty of the independent nature one conceives them to have. Realizing this emptiness, the dependent arising of existence, reveals the inherent purity as the Buddha-nature of all phenomena. This inherent purity as the principle of existence is likened to a clear mirror. The mirror may reflect pure and impure images, but its essential clarity is never lost. Here again we see the influence of Paramārtha.

Now we come to the third experience of the cosmos, namely, seeing "the realm of the non-obstruction between principle (*li*) and phenomena (*shi*)." This nonobstruction refers to the fundamental Mahāyāna identity of emptiness with phenomena, or Nirvana with *saṃsāra*. For Huayan, these two aspects of reality "interpenetrate" such that the essential purity of suchness is not lost, and the diversity of dependently arisen phenomena is maintained. The two sides of reality do not "obstruct" each other: The essence of things is always pure, while the free expression of phenomena is preserved. This nonobstruction is, as in Tiantai, likened to water and waves. The water (representing the one suchness of phenomena) is always "still," and the waves (representing the diverse phenomena) are always "in motion." The inherent still nature of the water does not obstruct the movement of the waves, and the movement of the waves does not obstruct the still nature of the water. For Huayan, this third vision of reality is at the heart of the Tiantai experience of Buddha-nature in all phenomena.

Finally we arrive at the fourth experience of the cosmos in which one sees "the realm of the nonobstruction between phenomena (*shi* and *shi*)." Here, we are not looking at the relationship between emptiness and phenomena, but at the relationship between the phenomena themselves. For Huayan, the vision of this nonobstruction reveals that the dependent arising of all phenomena exists as a totality of dynamic interrelatedness. It also reveals that the phenomena making up this totality are related to one another by what Huayan calls "mutual identification" and "mutual penetration." To try to understand something about this fourth vision of reality, let us look at these two characteristics one at a time.

The *mutual* identification of all things does not imply a kind of *static* identification by which one might say, for example, that fire is the same as ice. Rather, in the Huayan vision, all phenomena in the cosmos are dependently

arising together simultaneously. Each phenomenon provides a condition for the arising of the whole cosmos, and the particular totality of the cosmos is dependent on the conditions provided by all of its parts. If one part, one thing, was different or not present, the totality would itself be different. In dependent arising, each phenomenon plays an identical role in the mutual forming of the universe. Although there may be many differences between phenomena, as between fire and ice, in terms of their mutually conditioning roles, they are identical. Mutual identification refers to the identical way that all phenomena share in the conditioning mutuality of interrelatedness. They are mutually one with each other in providing the conditions for the dependent arising of the totality of the cosmos.

One implication of this idea of mutual identification is that each thing in the world is what it is because of the conditioning effect of all other things in the universe. Therefore, each being one experiences exists due to oneself, due to one's conditioning presence in the universe. For the same reason, one's self exists due to that being. So, despite the many differences between oneself and the beings one encounters, there is a fundamental unity or oneness in which each being finds a mutual identification with all other beings. In realizing this mutual identification, a person discovers that he or she owes his or her existence to countless beings throughout the universe. This discovery gives one a deeper sense of gratitude and respect for other beings. One also feels a deeper sense of responsibility for how one uses his or her existence, given its effect on the universe. This discovery will also give one a greater aspiration to benefit all living beings (*bodhicitta*).

The idea of mutual penetration takes this notion of mutual identification a step further. In the Huayan teaching about the mutual penetration of phenomena, we find the high point of Huayan experience that has been so important to defining East Asian Buddhism. Once, Fazang presented this notion of mutual penetration in a lecture to Empress Wu. In her palace, he used a golden statue of a lion to illustrate his ideas. Later, he used this lecture to compose his famous *Treatise on the Golden Lion*. In what follows, we use passages from that treatise to help explain the Huayan notion of mutual penetration.

At the beginning of his treatise, Fazang clarifies the idea of the mutual arising of the cosmos using the gold of the statue to represent emptiness ("principle": *li*), the lion to represent the totality of the cosmos, and the parts of the lion to represent the phenomena (*shi*) of existence:

> The gold has no self-nature. . . . The arising [of the lion] is due only to dependence, so it is called dependent arising. . . . The lion is empty [not self-sustaining]; there is only the gold. . . . Also, emptiness, having no self-nature, manifests itself through form. . . . This means that since the gold takes in the totality of the lion, apart from the gold there is no lion to be found. . . . This means that when we see the lion coming into existence, we are seeing only the gold coming into existence as form. There is nothing apart from the gold. (*Jin shizi zhang*, 1, 2, 4, 5)

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Fazang goes on to present the Ten Mysterious Gates as a way of explaining the mutual penetration of this dependent arising of the cosmos. In the first gate, it is said that the gold (emptiness) and the lion (the totality of phenomena or forms) come into being simultaneously. In the second gate, it is said that the oneness of this dependent arising in which all things condition each other does not obstruct the unique identities of each thing in the cosmos:

> [1] The gold and the lion arise simultaneously, perfectly complete. . . . [2] The gold and the lion arise compatible with each other, the one and the many not obstructing each other. In this situation, emptiness [*li*] and forms [*shih*] are distinct. Whether one considers the one [emptiness] or the many [forms], each entity maintains it own position. (*Jin shizi zhang*, 7)

In the third and fourth gates, Fazang says that even though the forms of life are distinct, they also interpenetrate so that they "contain" each other. By this he means that in dependent arising, the very presence of each phenomenon influences or conditions the other phenomena of the cosmos. The conditioning influence of one phenomenon "enters" into all other phenomena, Fazang says, like reflections of objects enter a mirror. Note here that Fazang does not say that the phenomena physically enter each other. Once, to demonstrate this interpenetration to Empress Wu, Fazang placed a statue of the Buddha with a lamp in the middle of a room with mirrors all around it. He then showed the empress how the image of the Buddha-statue (representing emptiness), while physically remaining at the center of the room, was reflected in each mirror (representing phenomena). He also showed her that each mirror, while physically remaining where it is, was reflected in all other mirrors, and that their mutual reflection (representing mutual penetration) was repeated infinitely. In a similar way, each phenomenon in the cosmos contains the presence of all other phenomena in the cosmos, while at the same time retaining its uniqueness:

> [3] If the eye of the lion takes in the whole lion, then the whole lion is purely the eye. . . . [4] Since the various organs, and even each hair of the lion, takes in completely the whole lion in so far as they are all gold, then each [element of the lion] penetrates the whole [of the lion]. The eye of the lion is its ear, its ear is its nose, its nose is its tongue, and its tongue is its body. Yet, they all exist freely and easily, not hindering or obstructing each other. (*Jin shizi zhang*, 7)

In the fifth and sixth gates, it is said that when one looks at the cosmos (the lion), emptiness (the gold) is hidden; and when one looks at emptiness, the cosmos is hidden. But whether they are hidden or manifest, emptiness and the phenomena of the world "mutually shine," revealing to the enlightened that they are "completely compatible":

> [5] If one contemplates the lion, there is only the lion, and the gold is not seen. The gold is hidden and the lion is manifest. If one contemplates the gold, there is only the gold, and the lion is not seen. The lion is hidden and the gold is

manifest. . . . [6] The gold and the lion may be hidden or manifest. . . . The principle [emptiness] and the jointly arisen [phenomena] mutually shine. Principle and phenomena appear together as completely compatible. (*Jin shizi zhang*, 7)

The seventh gate presents the metaphor of Indra's net. In the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, it is said that the Hindu god Indra has a net made with jewels at its knots. Each of these jewels reflects the image of every other jewel and does so on to infinity. Like the mirror example, Indra's net represents the awakened vision of the mutual penetration of the cosmos:

[7] In each eye, ear, limb, joint and hair of the lion is [reflected] a golden lion. All these golden lions in all the hairs simultaneously enter into a single hair. Thus in each hair, there are an infinite number of lions. In addition, all single hairs, together with their infinite number of lions, enter into a single hair. In a similar way, there is an endless progression [of realms interpenetrating realms] just like the jewels of Indra's net. (*Jin shizi zhang*, 7)

The last three gates relate this vision of mutual penetration to ignorance and insight into suchness, to how all time frames also interpenetrate in the totality of the cosmos, and to how both emptiness and the world of phenomena depend on the transformations of the mind. Note that this final gate presents the Yogācāra position:

[8] The lion is spoken of in order to demonstrate the result of ignorance, while its golden essence is spoken of in order to make clear its true nature. . . . [9] This lion is a created *dharma*, arising and passing away in every moment. . . . Yet, since the different periods of time are formed dependent on one another, they are merging harmoniously and mutually penetrating together without obstruction in each moment of time. . . . [10] The gold and the lion may be hidden or manifest . . . but neither has any own-being. They are constantly being evolved through the transformations of the mind. (*Jin shizi zhang*, 7)

The treatise ends with the following comments about the attainment of wisdom and Nirvana:

Wisdom . . . means that when we see the lion, we realize right away that all *dharmas* are produced by causes, and are from the very beginning quiescent and empty. By being free from attachments to the world and from renunciation of the world, one flows along this way into the sea of perfect knowledge . . . [and the] afflictions that result from desires will no longer be produced. Whether one sees beauty or ugliness, the mind is calm like the sea. Wrong views cease, and there are no negative mental formations. One escapes bondage, is free from hindrances, and forever cuts the roots of *duḥkha*. This is called the entry into Nirvana. (*Jin shizi zhang*, 9, 10)

In Huayan practice, tranquillity meditation is used to enable a person to find emptiness as the quiescent nature of all things. This leads to detachment and inner calm in the midst of the world. Then through insight meditation,

one sees this emptiness functioning as the forms of the world. This functioning is experienced as an interpenetrating, fascinating, and wonderful matrix of dependent arising. This insight, in turn, leads to a rejection of world renunciation and a compassion for all living beings who fail to see this hidden harmony and are caught in afflictive mental formations. Thereby, one dwells spiritually neither in *saṃsāra* nor Nirvana but courses freely as a bodhisattva in the matrix of the cosmos seeking the benefit of others. Huayan vision of this matrix of mutual identification and penetration, where all things are interwoven in perfect balance and harmony, was very appealing to the Chinese world, which had always appreciated both harmony and nature.

From China, Huayan spread to other parts of East Asia. The Korean monk Ŭisang (625–702) studied Huayan Buddhism along with Fazang under the guidance of Huayan's Second Patriarch, Zhiyan (602–668). Ŭisang, a close friend of Fazang, later brought Huayan Buddhism to Korea. In the eighth century, Huayan was brought to Japan by Korean and Chinese monks, and the Japanese emperor built the Eastern Great Monastery (*Tōdai-ji*) as a sanctuary for the preaching of the Huayan doctrine. *Tōdai-ji*, with its gigantic bronze statue of Vairocana Buddha, still stands near Nara. Huayan thought is studied today in Buddhist centers of learning throughout East Asia.

The Meditation School

The original Chinese word for meditation is *channa*, a rendering of the Sanskrit word for meditation, *dhyāna*. Later, *channa* was shortened to *Chan*. During the sixth century, meditation was just one of many religious activities practiced by the various sects of Chinese Buddhism. In fact, most practitioners of Buddhism would attend lectures, study *sūtras*, participate in devotional rituals, and practice various pious works—often leaving little time for meditation. For those Buddhists who wanted more intense training in the practice of meditation, numerous monastic centers were dedicated to such practice. These monasteries were often located in mountainous areas in central and southwestern China and were led by meditation (Chan) masters. These masters taught powerful meditative practices in ways that were accessible to anyone. Chan techniques were said to be so powerful that they could bring a person to Awakening in the age of the Degenerate Dharma, when this feat was thought to be so difficult.

The manuscripts discovered at Dunhuang have given modern scholars a better understanding of the history of the Chan School that emerged from these early meditation lineages and traditions. These manuscripts indicate that many of the legends concerning the founding of Chan Buddhism are most likely myths. Historically, we know that one of the first Chan masters to gain a wide following in China was Hongren (601–674), master of the East Mountain School. According to the legends about this school, Hongren was the Fifth Patriarch of Chan, the First Patriarch being Bodhidharma. As time went on, this legendary line of transmission was accepted as the founding lineage of the Chan School of Buddhism.

Bodhidharma was a monk from India who arrived in south China about 470 and who was famous for his meditative prowess. According to legend, it is said that the emperor asked Bodhidharma how much merit his building of Buddhist temples, donating to the Saṅgha, and worship offerings had brought him. Bodhidharma is said to have answered that all these acts of piety had brought the emperor no merit at all. The point of this story is that according to Chan, only the direct experience of one's Buddha-nature is truly meritorious. Thus, the whole purpose of Chan is to enable a person to discover his or her Buddha-nature through the practice of meditation. Eventually, the legend goes, Bodhidharma settled in a mountain retreat in north China near Luoyang, where he gathered disciples, guided them in silent meditation, and taught them the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*. It was in this place that Bodhidharma is said to have spent nine years in meditation in front of a wall. This "wall-gazing" meditation demonstrated the power of one-pointed concentration for achieving the goal of Chan.

Legend associates Bodhidharma with the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* as a way of explaining the Chan experience of Awakening. As we have seen, the *Laṅkāvatāra* states that the foundation of the mind is the storehouse-consciousness that contains the *Tathāgata-garbha*, the Buddha-nature. When one attains a meditative state in which there are no thoughts, there can be a sudden "reversion of the foundation of consciousness" whereby the wisdom light of the pure Buddha-nature reveals itself. Chan teaches that to reach this sudden turning over of consciousness that reveals Buddha-nature, one must negate all ordinary distinctions and conceptualizations through meditative stillness of mind. Chan meditation is said to be able to still the mind's functioning in a one-pointed concentration that reaches the ground of consciousness. It is there that the pure wisdom nature of the mind's essence is revealed in a direct and sudden intuition of Awakening.

This goal of Chan practice was stated clearly in a stanza composed around the eleventh century and attributed to Bodhidharma:

> A special tradition outside the scriptures;
> With no dependence upon words and letters.
> A direct pointing into the mind;
> Seeing there one's own nature, and attaining Buddhahood.

The first two lines of this stanza imply that Chan does not emphasize the study of *sūtras* or attempt to harmonize the Buddhist scriptures as did Tiantai. Nor does Chan use words to compose high mystical tracts as did Huayan. Rather, as the last two lines imply, Chan guides, or "points," disciples through the inner levels of consciousness in order to discover their Buddha-nature and attain, thereby, Buddhahood.

In the fully developed legend, the Chan lineage was traced back from Bodhidharma to the historical Buddha himself. In this extended line of transmission, Bodhidharma was said to be the Twenty-Eighth Patriarch in India, and the First Patriarch in China. The legend also states that once when asked

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about the ultimate truth, Gautama Buddha held up a flower. Among his disciples, only Mahākāśyapa understood this gesture and received "from mind to mind" the "seal of the Buddha-mind." Mahākāśyapa is said to have personally passed this seal of sudden Awakening on in what became an Indian lineage that centuries later was brought to China by Bodhidharma. Legend also states that Bodhidharma brought the martial arts from India to China, where they were taught at a monastery said to have been founded by him, namely, the Shaolin Monastery (see Figure 7.4).

Moving now from legend to history, we come again to Hongren, the Chan master designated in legend to have been the Fifth Patriarch. Hongren was invited by Empress Wu to teach the Dharma at the imperial palace. This gave his East Mountain School some national prominence. It was the disciples of Hongren who claimed that he was the Fifth Patriarch in a lineage dating back to Bodhidharma. These disciples also claimed that one of Hongren's students, Shenxiu (c. 606–706), was the Sixth Patriarch. While the East Mountain School enjoyed some popularity in the capital, in 732 a monk named Shenhui (684–758) attacked the teachings of Shenxiu. Shenhui had been a student of Shenxiu, but when Shenxiu was called to the imperial court, Shenhui went to the south of China to study with another disciple of Hongren named Huineng (638–713).

In his attack on Shenxiu's school, Shenhui claimed that Shenxiu taught gradual Awakening rather then sudden Awakening. In fact Shenxiu taught that a gradual clearing of afflictions and defilements from the "pure mirror mind" was helpful in the attainment of sudden Awakening. Shenhui also claimed

FIGURE 7.4. Shaolin Temple (5th century) on Mt. Song in Henan Province, China, known for its association with the Chinese martial arts.

that Shenxiu's school was the "Northern School" of Chan and that Huineng had founded the "Southern School" of Chan which taught sudden Awakening. Shenhui went so far as to claim that Huineng was the true Sixth Patriarch of Chan Buddhism and that Huineng had Bodhidharma's robe, the symbol of Chan transmission. The result of Shenhui attack on the East Mountain School led to a period of sectarianism among the Chan schools. About a century later, the emperor called a council to settle the controversy, and Huineng was proclaimed the true Sixth Patriarch. The so-called Northern School of Chan continued only until the tenth century, while the Southern School gave life to a number of important Chan schools, two of which continue today.

Before introducing these schools, let us look at some verses from a Chinese text, the *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch*. This text purports to convey the teachings of Huineng and provides a famous legend about how Huineng became the Sixth Patriarch. Indeed, partly because of this *sūtra*, Huineng is venerated as one of the greatest Chan figures in Chinese history.

> While I [Huineng] was a child, my father died and my elderly mother and I, her only child, moved to Nanhai. We suffered extreme poverty, and I sold firewood in the market place. By chance, a man bought some firewood. . . . Having received my money . . . I happened to hear another man reciting the *Diamond Sūtra*. Upon hearing it, my mind became clear and I attained Awakening.
>
> I asked the man, "Where do you come from with this *sūtra*?" He answered, "I pay reverence to the Fifth Patriarch, Hongren, at the East Mountain." . . . Hearing what he said, I realized that I was meant to hear him. I took leave of my mother [making arrangements for her] and went to East Mountain.
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> Hongren asked me, "Where are you from, and why did you come to this mountain to pay reverence to me? What do you want from me?" I answered, "I am from [southern China]. . . . I have come a long distance to pay reverence to you. I ask for nothing but the Buddha's Dharma." The master reproved me saying, "If you are from [Southern China], then you are a barbarian. How can you become a Buddha?" I answered, "While people may be distinguished as northerners and southerners, there is neither north nor south in the Buddha-nature. The bodies of a barbarian and a monk are different; but what difference is there in Buddha-nature?". . . . Then a lay attendant ordered me to the rice-pounding area to pound rice. This I did for more than eight months.
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> One day the Fifth Patriarch suddenly called his disciples to come to him. When they were assembled, he said, "Let me say this to you. Life and death are serious matters. You disciples are engaged all day in making offerings . . . and you make no effort to achieve freedom from this bitter sea of life and death. If you are still deluded about your true nature, how can these blessings save you? All of you return to your rooms . . . write a verse and present it to me. After I see the verses, I will give the robe [of the Patriarch] and the Dharma to the person who understands the true meaning [of the Dharma], and will appoint him to be the Sixth Patriarch."
>
> At midnight, the head monk, Shenxiu, holding a candle wrote a verse on the wall of the south corridor, without anyone knowing about it. The verse said:
>
> The body is the *Bodhi* Tree,
> The mind is like a bright mirror standing.

Take care to wipe it diligently,
Keep it free from all dust.

The Fifth Patriarch said [to Shenxiu], "The verse you wrote shows that you still have not reached true understanding. You have merely arrived at the front gate, but you have not yet entered it. . . . You must enter the gate and see your own nature."

One day, a young novice passed by the rice-pounding area reciting this verse. I knew as soon as I heard it that the person who had written it did not yet know his own nature. . . . I said to the novice, "I beg you to take me to the south corridor, so I can see this verse. . . . " [There], I made a verse and, since I could not write, I asked someone to write it on the wall of the west corridor, so that I might offer my own original mind. If you do not know the original mind, studying the Dharma is to no avail. If you know the mind and realize its true nature, then you will awaken to the true meaning [of the Dharma]. My verse read:

Bodhi originally has no tree,
The bright mirror is nowhere standing.
Buddha-nature is forever clear and pure,
Where can there be any dust?

The Fifth Patriarch suddenly realized that I had understood the true meaning. . . . At midnight, the Fifth Patriarch called me into the hall, and expounded the *Diamond Sūtra* to me. As soon as I heard this, I was immediately awakened. That night the Dharma was imparted to me without anyone else knowing about it. Thus the Dharma of sudden Awakening and the robe were transmitted to me. The Fifth Patriarch said, "You are now the Sixth Patriarch. This robe is proof of transmission from generation to generation. But the Dharma must be transmitted from mind to mind. You must help people awaken to themselves. . . . But if you stay here, there are people who will harm you. So, you must leave at once." I set out at midnight with the robe and the Dharma. . . . After taking my leave, I set out for the south. (*Liuzu tanjing*, 2–4, 6–10)

In this story it is said that Awakening can be found within one's own body by gradually purifying the mirror mind by meditation so that no mental "dust" is present. Huineng, on the other hand, is said to have affirmed that Awakening is not something that arises from a mind that is purified, but suddenly from the Buddha-nature, which is inherently pure beyond the duality of mind and body. The *sūtra* claims that Shenxiu's experience of meditative purifying of the mind has brought him to the gate of Awakening. But Huineng's experience of the purity of Buddha-nature is Awakening itself. Elsewhere, the *Platform Sūtra* says more about Buddha-nature being the source of Awakening:

The nature of humankind is originally pure. It is because of false thoughts that true suchness is obscured. If you are free from delusions, the original nature reveals itself. . . . As the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* says, "At once, we gain clarity and recover the original mind." Good friends, when I was at Priest Hongren's place, as soon as I heard him [recite the *Diamond Sūtra*], I immediately gained great Awakening as I realized that true suchness was my original nature. (*Liuzu tanjing*, 18, 30–31)

By saying that Buddha-nature must reveal itself, the *sūtra* is not rejecting meditation. It is simply stating that Awakening is possible in any situation since it is not a product of mental purification. Rather, Awakening comes from our original Buddha-nature that can reveal itself anytime and anywhere. Here, Huineng is said to have experienced Awakening to Buddha-nature when he heard the recitation of the *Diamond Sūtra*. This story also indicates that Chan recognizes levels of Awakening and that the private interview with a Chan master is a central element to the process of Dharma transmission from "mind-to-mind."

To clarify the relationship between meditation (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*prajñā*) in light of his notion of Buddha-nature, the *sūtra* uses the distinction between essence and function. That is, meditation is not one thing that precedes and causes another thing called wisdom. Rather, because true meditation is the realizing of one's Buddha-nature, meditation is the very essence of wisdom, and wisdom is the functioning of meditation. This means that meditation and wisdom are not two different things, but a unity of the essence and functioning of Buddha-nature:

> Never mistakenly say that meditation and wisdom are different; they are a unity, and are not two different things. Meditation is itself the very substance of wisdom; and wisdom is itself the function of meditation. . . . Be careful not to say that meditation produces wisdom. . . . How then are meditation and wisdom alike? They are like a lamp and its light. If there is a lamp, there is light. . . . The lamp is the essence of light; and the light is the function of the lamp. (*Liuzu tanjing*, 13, 15)

The eighth century saw the collapsing of the Tang Dynasty, and the more intellectual forms of Chan in the capital cities began to lose their status. Other schools tracing themselves to Huineng began to rise up in rural areas, where a number of innovative Chan masters developed radical techniques to help their disciples awaken to their Buddha-nature. Among the most original of these Chan masters was Mazu (709–788). Mazu was said to have had a "remarkable appearance": He walked "like a bull" and glared "like a tiger." He was the first Chan master to use shouting and hitting mixed with paradoxical dialogue to trigger Awakening in his disciples. While he did not reject meditation, he helped Chan acquire a more practical approach focused on everyday life. In the context of daily living ("drawing water and chopping wood"), it was believed that one could find Awakening with the help of a master. This approach to Chan would later give rise to popular collections of biographies, sayings, conversations, and questions and answers of famous Chan masters. One of the most famous collections was the *Record of the Transmission of the Lamp* (1004).

In terms of Mazu's own Awakening, it is said that one day when he was sitting in meditation, his master asked him what he was doing. Mazu responded, "I wish to become a Buddha." The master then picked up a tile and began to grind it with a stone. Mazu asked his master what he was doing;

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to which the master responded, "I am polishing this tile to make a mirror." Mazu replied, "No amount of polishing will ever make a mirror out of a tile." The master then said, "And no amount of cross-legged sitting will ever make a Buddha out of you." In other words, although meditation is valuable for producing a spiritual environment wherein Awakening can take place, this Awakening is the revealment of the Buddha-nature itself. In short, you cannot make yourself *become* a Buddha because you already *are* a Buddha.

As various techniques developed in Chan, the Southern School split into different subschools called the Five Houses. Of these five, two are of special historical importance and continue to be influential today. First is the Caodong School named for its two founders, Dongshan (807–869) and Caoshan (840–901). Instead of practicing unusual techniques, this school emphasizes silent meditation as the best means of fostering enlightenment. This silence is itself understood to be a living expression of the primal stillness of the Buddha-nature. Therefore, sitting in silent meditation is the living manifestation of one's original Awakening. Living one's Buddha-nature in silent meditation allows this original Awakening to gradually show itself in one's complete life. This approach is based on Huineng's own view that wisdom and meditation are really one reality. It is not that meditation leads to wisdom, but that meditation is itself the essence of wisdom. The Japanese Zen master Dōgen (1200–1253) introduced this form of Chan into Japan, where it is known as Sōtō Zen.

The second of the Five Houses that has had continued popularity is the Linji School, named after its founder Linji (died 867). This school aims at a more sudden attainment of Awakening by using various innovations pioneered by people like Mazu. They stress the use of paradoxical sayings called *gong'ans* (Japanese: *kōans*). The term *gong'an* means "public legal case," implying that the sayings used in Linji practice are authoritative "cases" for Chan practice. The *gong'an* stories contain a mysterious question, a paradoxical answer to a question, or an irrational phrase that can be used by the practitioner to set aside rational dualistic thought. By moving beyond conventional reason, and with guidance from a master, the person can become one with the quandary of the *gong'an* itself. Then, in a state of spiritual questing intensified by the *gong'an* practice, the sudden answer to the *gong'an* arises "like the sun from behind a cloud." Since one's very existence is identified with the *gong'an*, in this sudden insight one glimpses one's Buddha-nature as it reveals itself at the depth of one's questing mind. Collections of *gong'ans* became popular in China and the rest of East Asia. A Linji master named Yuanwu Kejin (1063–1135) wrote the famous *Blue Cliff Records* that records one hundred *gong'ans* with his commentary. Later, forty-eight selected *gong'ans* were compiled with commentary by Wumen Huikai (1183–1260) into *The Gateless Gate*, which is held in high regard in Japan.

The Linji sect and its *gong'an* practice had a formative influence on Korean Buddhism. Early on, the Korean monk Pŏmnang (fl. 632–646) studied Chan with Doxin (580–651), considered in legend to be the Fourth Patriarch. Pŏmnang brought Chan to Korea, where it is known as Sŏn Buddhism.

However, it did not really develop in Korea until the Linji sect was later introduced in the ninth century. Since that time, the Linji style has defined all forms of Korean Sŏn Buddhism. The Linji sect was also brought to Japan by Eisai (1141–1215), where it is known as Rinzai Zen.

The Pure Land School

The last of the great Chinese schools of Buddhism is the Jingtu ("Pure Land") School. Pure Land Buddhism, more than any other Chinese school, formed the devotional experience of Buddhism in China and throughout all East Asia. It is considered along with Chan to be a "practical school" because it sets aside more theoretical issues in order to stress practice. Pure Land Buddhism bases its teachings and practices on the *Land of Bliss Sūtras* composed in India. As we saw in Chapter 4, in those *sūtras* it is said that Dharmākara Bodhisattva traversed the Ten Stages of the bodhisattva's Great Journey to become Amitābha Buddha (Chinese: Amiktuofo; Japanese: Amida Butsu). In doing so, Amitābha fulfilled certain vows and gained the power necessary to create a Buddha realm referred to in China as the Pure Land. Through the realization of his vows, Amitābha also gained the power to enable people to be born in his Pure Land, where they can gain Awakening much more easily than in the human realm. Pure Land Buddhism stresses faith in this power of Amitābha to save humankind from rebirth into the realms of ignorance and suffering by bringing those who call on him to his Pure Land.

Pure Land Buddhism in China traces its roots back to when one of the *Land of Bliss Sūtras* was translated into Chinese in the second century C.E. Many scholars believe that the Pure Land tradition in China most likely developed from many sources of devotional practice. However, the tradition itself points, in what may be a more stylistic account, to three patriarchs as the primary founders of Pure Land Buddhism in China. The first acknowledged patriarch was Tanluan (476–542). Tanluan was once convalescing from an illness and had a vision of a heavenly gate opening to him. Inspired by this dream, he began to seek eternal life through the practice of Daoism. However, one day he met the Indian Buddhist monk, Bodhiruci, who arrived in Luoyang in 508. Bodhiruci introduced Tanluan to teachings about Amitābha Buddha and Pure Land piety. Tanluan converted, pursued Pure Land practice, and eventually wrote a book that unified the teachings of the *Land of Bliss Sūtras* with a sophisticated explanation of how to visualize and invoke Amitābha Buddha.

In his writings, Tanluan introduced some of the themes that would become foundational to Pure Land Buddhism. Tanluan was inspired by the Amitābha's eighteenth vow, which stated that "all beings" who think of the Amitābha Buddha for even one thought moment with sincerity and faith when they hear his name will be reborn into the Pure Land. Tanluan interpreted "all beings" to mean that not just saintly bodhisattvas, but even common persons, including sinners, can be reborn into the Pure Land through the help of Amitābha Buddha. With this possibility in mind, Tanluan distinguished

between the "difficult" and "easy" paths to Awakening. Given that the human condition is affected by ignorance and defilements, practice based just on one's own efforts is the difficult path. This is especially the case in the age of the Degenerate Dharma. On the other hand, practice becomes the easy path if it is based on one's recognition and acceptance of the power of Amitābha Buddha and one's desire to be reborn in the Pure Land. This inspiration opened the doors to popular Pure Land devotionalism in China.

The task for Tanluan was to define what the "easy" practice should be that depends on the grace of Amitābha Buddha and results in birth in the Pure Land. Studying the Pure Land texts, Tanluan concluded that all beings, even evil persons, can be released from their defilements by reciting the name of Amitābha Buddha. Now, if this "recitation of the Buddha's name" (*Nianfo*) depends just on the efforts of the recitor, the results would be minimal. However, Tanluan believed that the effectiveness of the recitation was dependent on Amitābha Buddha himself. Tanluan claimed that the name of Amitābha Buddha itself embodies the Buddha reality for which it stands. To invoke Amitābha's name is to make present in one's life the Buddha reality it represents. To explain how this name could have the power to purify one's life, Tanluan likened it to a "*Maṇi* gem." Tradition teaches that if you throw such a gem into muddy water, the jewel cleanses the water of impurities. Tanluan taught that as the name *Amitābha* means "infinite light," and since the name embodies the reality it represents, then to recite this name brings its infinite light into one's life. Its brilliance, like with a *Maṇi* gem, penetrates the mind of the recitor, bringing it immeasurable wisdom-light that purifies it of ignorance and defilements.

Finally, Tanluan drew a distinction between "self power" and "Other power," which became fundamental for Pure Land thought. Self power refers to relying on one's own efforts in taking up a discipline and engaging in religious practice. This self-power attitude, Tanluan taught, manifests a certain pride and can actually reinforce the self-centeredness one is trying to overcome. On the other hand, by relying on Other power in one's practice, that is, on the action of Amitābha Buddha, one is humbly allowing oneself to be transformed. Tanluan identified five practices, called the Five Recollection Gates, that he considered helpful to this Pure Land practice: (1) prostration to Amitābha, (2) reciting his name, (3) resolving to be born in the Pure Land, (4) visualizing the Pure Land, and (5) sharing the benefits of the Pure Land. This latter practice means to share one's merit in this world and to be born again in this world to help others after gaining Awakening in the Pure Land.

The next great patriarch of Pure Land Buddhism was Daochuo (562–645). He, like Tanluan, had a deep concern for the plight of the common person. In fact, Daochuo converted to Pure Land Buddhism after visiting a monument praising Tanluan's devotion to spreading the Pure Land faith to the common people. Looking at the sheer numbers of persons who had not gained Awakening, the question that most bothered Daochuo was the following. If all persons have the Buddha-nature, and if they have certainly met a Buddha during their numberless past lives, then why do they continue to be reborn in this world of *duḥkha*? Referring to the image in the *Lotus Sūtra* of children

caught in a burning house, Daochuo asked, why have so many people have not found a way to escape?

In answering this question, Daochuo makes a distinction between the Holy Path and the Pure Land Gate. The Holy Path refers to the Buddhist discipline of practicing morality and meditation to still the mind and purify oneself of defilements, and rooting out ignorance by gaining wisdom insight. This path to Awakening and Buddhahood makes for a long and arduous journey, especially in the age of the Degenerate Dharma. On the other hand, the Pure Land Gate can be entered even by a person who is still lost in ignorance and full of afflictions and defilements. Once in the Pure Land, the person can make the journey to Awakening and Buddhahood without any hindrances.

Daochuo concluded that the Pure Land Gate is the only viable way for people to gain liberation. Using the terms "self power" and "Other power," he felt that in the age of the Degenerate Dharma, the Holy Path of self power is not only difficult but is actually useless. The Other power of Amitābha Buddha leading through the Pure Land Gate was the exclusive way to liberation. Of Tanluan's Five Recollection Gates, Daochuo stressed the second, reciting the name of Amitābha Buddha. He is also credited with introducing prayer beads, later used in Pure Land piety throughout East Asia. Besides being known for his own ideas, Daochuo is also honored for being the teacher of the next patriarch of Pure Land Buddhism, Shandao (613–681). Shandao's teachings brought Chinese Pure Land thought to its peak.

When Shandao was twenty-nine, he met Daochuo and was impressed by his lectures. Converting to the Pure Land School, Shandao became its leading exponent in the capital of Chang'an. The foundation of Shandao's thought was his empathy with the sufferings of the common people and his awareness that this suffering is a function of the human condition. This condition, shared by all persons, is marked by defilements, afflictions, and erroneous views that are themselves the result of numerous past lifetimes in which evil actions were committed. Everyone has, during his or her many births, repeatedly killed or injured living beings, stolen from people, treated others unjustly, and spoken to or about others unkindly. Everyone has had evil thoughts, spoken evil words, and done evil actions, breaking all the Buddhist precepts.

Shandao taught that if a person is aware of his or her evil tendencies and actions in this life, even the most insignificant, and repents of these evils, he or she will begin to gain an insight into the shared human condition that is so flawed by the mistakes of past lives. Then, one can better turn with authentic repentance, true humility, and self-knowledge to Amitābha Buddha for his help. This turning to Other power is a matter of faith entrustment. Drawing on Pure Land texts, Shandao defined this faith, or faithful turning to Amitābha, as having three expressions of sincerity: a sincere or honest attitude, a deep mind of sincere faithfulness, and the sincere aspiration to be born in the Pure Land. This faith is nurtured by Pure Land practice. Shandao, following the teachings of Daochuo, stressed the recitation of the name of

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Amitābha Buddha as the primary practice of Pure Land piety. All other practices were to be seen as auxiliary.

The following passages are taken from a work by Shandao. It presents his *Parable of the White Path* that illustrates Pure Land spirituality. Shandao first gives the parable, and then his explanation of its meaning:

> [Wishing to be reborn in the Pure Land] is like a man who desires to travel 100,000 *li* to the west. Suddenly . . . he sees two rivers. On the south is a river of fire; and on the north is a river of water. . . . Between the fire and water is a white path barely four or five inches wide, and 100 steps long. . . . The man is in the middle of a wasteland . . . and a horde of vicious ruffians and wild beasts seeing him there alone, vie with each other in their rush to kill him.
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> [Facing death all around], he is seized with inexpressible terror. . . . Then he hears someone from the east bank call out encouraging him, "Friend, just resolutely follow this path and there will be no danger of death. . . . "And on the west bank, someone calls out, "Come straight on, single-minded and with a fixed purpose. I can protect you, so never fear falling into the fire or water."
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> Hardly had he gone a step or two, and the horde of vicious ruffians calls to him, "Friend, come back! The way is too perilous, and you will never get across. Doubtlessly you will die. None of us mean you any harm." Though he hears their calling to him, the man does not look back, but straight-away proceeds single-minded on the path. In no time, he is on the west bank, forever far from all troubles. He is greeted by his good friend, and there is endless joy.
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> The east bank is likened to this world. . . . The west bank is likened to the precious Land of Bliss. The ruffians and wild beasts, which seem to be friends, are likened to the six sense organs, six consciousnesses, six defilements, five aggregates, and four elements. The lonely wasteland is likened to the following of bad companions and not finding good and wise ones. The two rivers of fire and water are likened to attachment, like water, and aversion or hatred, like fire. The white path . . . is likened to the aspiration to be born in the Pure Land, which arises in the very midst of the passions of attachment and aversion. . . .
>
> The man on the path is likened to one who directs all his or her actions and practices towards the west [Pure Land]. Hearing the voices from the east . . . is like hearing Śākyamuni Buddha, who has disappeared from sight, but whose Dharma is still pursued, and therefore likened to "voices." The calling of the ruffians . . . is likened to teachings, practices and evil views that . . . lead people astray. . . . Someone calling from the west bank is likened to the vow of Amitābha. Reaching the west bank, being greeted by a good friend and rejoicing is likened to . . . attaining the Pure Land after death, where one is met by the Buddha, and knows unending bliss. (*Guan jing shu*)

As a footnote to this parable, it should be said that in Pure Land piety, reciting reciting "Namo Amituofo ("Praise to Amitābha Buddha") with the sincerity of a deep faith, attention, and seriousness brings the "infinite light" of Amitābha Buddha into the mind and heart of the practitioner in this world. Therefore, the spiritual journey of Pure Land Buddhism does not just lead through the Pure Land Gate after death. Rather, the Other power of Amitābha Buddha experienced within gives one a taste of the Pure Land even in this

life. This experience can also translate into a more compassionate life of humility, gentleness, and kindness toward other beings. By the ninth century, even Chan recognized the positive fruits of Pure Land piety, and began to accept the practice of *nianfo*. Today, recitation of the name of Amitābha Buddha is practiced in Buddhist communities of all types in China. Pure Land practice also spread to Korea and Japan in the seventh century. In Japan, it was instituted into the Tendai (Chinese: Tiantai) School, and later became independent as two major Japanese Pure Land schools through the efforts of Hōnen (1133–1212) and his disciple Shinran (1173–1262).

PERSECUTION AND DECLINE

We can now see that the Tang Dynasty (618–907) is considered to be the high point of Buddhism in China. The great masters of Huayan and Pure Land Buddhism, namely, Fazang and Shandao, lived during that time period. This was also called the "Golden Age of Chan." During this Golden Age, Moshan Liaoran (ca. 800) became the master and abbess of Moshan Monastery. She is the most famous woman Chan master, and she taught both men and women. Her teacher was Gao'an Dayu, who was taught by a student of the great Mazu. Dayu is said to have brought Linji to Awakening. Linji's famous student, Guanxi Zhixian, later studied under Moshan. She is the only woman Chan master to be mentioned in the *Record of the Transmission of the Lamp;* and she was quoted in the *Shōbōgenzō*, written by Eihei Dōgen, the founder of Sōtō Zen in Japan. It was also during the Tang Dynasty that the famous monk Xuanzang (602–644) went on a pilgrimage over the Silk Road to India to find more Buddhist scriptures. He spent seventeen years traveling, and when he returned home translated seventy-five *sūtras* and wrote the *Great Tang Record of the Western Regions* that recounted his journey. This text was the basis for *Journey to the West*, written in 1596, which is one of the great classics of Chinese literature.

While the various schools of Buddhism flourished in China during much of the Tang Dynasty, the Buddhist Saṅgha became quite wealthy. It used national resources to construct huge Buddha statues, and its monastic institutions were exempt from taxation. As the national economy was more and more affected by Buddhist institutions, there was pressure to "purify" the Saṅgha. When the Empress Wu (c. 625–706), who had patronized Buddhism, was driven from the throne, the new emperor, Xuanzong (ruled 712–756), moved against the Buddhist Saṅgha. He laicized about one-fourth of the monastics who were on the imperial rosters. However, the most severe persecution took place a century later under Emperor Wuzong (ruled 840–846). Influenced by Daoism, he attempted actually to destroy Buddhism in China. From 842 to 845, he ordered the destruction of a vast number of Buddhist temples, the confiscation of much of the Saṅgha's property and holy objects, and the laicization of most monks and nuns.

Although this great persecution ended when the emperor died in 846, some schools of Buddhism disappeared and others were greatly weakened.

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Of the scholarly schools that depended on monastic libraries only Huayan and Tiantai survived, although severely damaged. Chan was not so badly affected because it did not depend on libraries and was centered in more remote regions of China where the emperor's decrees were less effective. Pure Land also survived with little damage because it was not monastic centered but depended on support of laypeople. After the earlier persecutions, Buddhism had always made a remarkable recovery. But after the persecution of 845, no such recovery was achieved. In fact, even with government support, Buddhism entered a process of decline.

The Song Dynasty (970–1279) began with renewed support for Buddhism. The first Song emperor undertook the Buddhist layperson's vows and encouraged religion in many ways. He ordered the first printing of the Chinese *Tripiṭaka*, which was written on 130,000 wooden printing-blocks; the task took eleven years. Succeeding Song emperors were also helpful to Buddhism. By the thirteenth century, there were almost a half million monks and nuns and around 40,000 temples. Song rulers created monastic estates, which they divided for three purposes. A few were *Vinaya* monasteries for training in the precepts and ordination. A larger number were teaching monasteries dedicated to the formal study of doctrines and texts. The majority of monasteries were for meditation, headed by Chan monastics. This system gave raise to the Three Traditions, whereby a monastic was identified by ordination lineage, lineage of meditation training, and doctrinal lineage.

With government support, two Buddhist schools managed to remain active during the Song Dynasty. Pure Land Buddhism increased in numbers as Pure Land Societies sprang up all over China. Chan temples increased in numbers and became involved in the social and political life of the nation. In this way, Pure Land and Chan contributed to Chinese culture, inspiring Chinese art and literature. There were also efforts to develop a closer relation among the existing Buddhist schools. Here, too, Chan played an active role in finding a common ground that would harmonize meditation, devotion, and study. Chan masters began studying the totalistic ideas of Huayan and the unifying teachings of Tiantai. Chan practitioners also saw affinities between mental concentration in meditation and in the invocation of Amitābha Buddha.

It was also during this time that there developed what is known as Literary Chan with its many written collections of *gong'ans*. On the other hand, an important reaction to this literary approach to the *gong'an* came from Dahui Zonggao (1089–1163), who became the dominant figure of the Linji tradition during the Song period. Dahui studied the records of the Five Houses of Chan as well as existing collections of *gong'ans* as a young monk. However, this intellectual understanding did not bring him to Awakening. He began serious *gong'an* practice and on May 13, 1125, he broke through to Awakening. Dahui become abbot of a monastery in the Southern Song capital and his community of monks and lay followers grew to more than 2,000. He became known as the most important Buddhist figure in the Southern Song dynasty. Dahui rejected the practice of silent sitting in meditation as useless to the attainment of Awakening. He taught that to reach Awakening, a "Great Doubt"

is necessary in *gong'an* practice. This doubt that is generated by the paradox of a *gong'an* must spread to all life and death prior to sudden Awakening. Dahui is also famous for rejecting the literary study of *gong'ans* as useless to attaining Awakening. To make his point, he had all copies of the *Blue Cliff Record gong'an* collection, as well as the wooden blocks needed to print them, destroyed. It would take 200 years for this famous collection to come back into circulation. Dahui's *gong'an* training method greatly influenced the Linji tradition in China, Korea, and Japan; and his notion of Great Doubt was used some 500 years later by Hakuin Ekaku, the famous Japanese Rinzai Zen master.

Even with government support and these notable accomplishments, Buddhism entered a time of decline in China during the Song Dynasty. Scholars identify two major causes, one internal and the other external. Within the Saṅgha, there was a certain moral and spiritual degeneration caused in part by the government's sale of ordination certificates. The Song Dynasty was threatened by invasions along its northern frontiers. This threat resulted in huge military expenses, as well as annual payments to the northern barbarians. The government had also greatly increased its costly bureaucracy. To meet these expenses, the government decided to sell ordination certificates, which up until that time had been issued to monastics when they were officially ordained and had passed an examination. These certificates exempted the holder from taxation and labor service required of citizens. Under the new policy, even a layperson could purchase such a certificate to avoid taxation or labor service. Others who were criminals or just lazy could use the certificate to seek refuge in monasteries where they would be safe and cared for without any expense or labor service. This policy brought many undesirable persons with no interest in Buddhism into the Saṅgha, contributing to the moral and spiritual decay of the community, which lost respect in the eyes of the Chinese society.

The external cause of the decay of Buddhism in China at this time was the rise of Neo-Confucianism as the unifying force behind Song culture and society. This new form of Confucianism criticized Buddhism for its doctrines as well as its lack of social responsibility. Neo-Confucianism inspired the important thinkers of the age to reclaim China's classical heritage, thus restoring Confucianism to prominence in Chinese culture. Instead of discussing such notions as emptiness and Buddha-nature, Neo-Confucianism focused on reason, the formative forces of nature, the moral potential of the human mind, and the ethical nature of humanness. Because Confucianists eventually controlled the educational system as well as the social service examination system, Buddhism seemed much less attractive to the educated classes in China, and very few entered the Saṅgha.

LATER DEVELOPMENTS

The Yuan Dynasty (1280–1368) of the Mongols, who ruled China from the new capital in Beijing, favored the Tibetan form of Buddhism. The Mongols

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understood that they needed the cooperation of the masses of China to have a stable government. But they could not embrace either Confucianism or Daoism given the views of those religions concerning Chinese superiority and barbarian inferiority. Buddhism, on the other hand, considered all people as equals, and Tibetan Buddhism had a cultural connection with the Mongolian nation. During this dynasty, Buddhist culture did not advance in China. In fact, secret Buddhist-related societies, such as the Maitreya Society and the White Lotus Society, became quite active. These groups were actually political entities that fomented political rebellions.

One uprising led by Zhu Yuanzhang was successful in overthrowing the Mongols in 1368. Zhu who had formerly been a Buddhist monk, then founded the Ming ("Enlightened") Dynasty (1368–1644). He encouraged Buddhist ordination, and the Saṅgha grew due to this support. Following the pattern of the Three Traditions, the monasteries during the Ming Dynasty were divided into three types: the Chan meditation training centers, the monasteries dedicated to study of the *sūtras*, and the "instruction" monasteries. This last category, an extension of the *Vinaya* institutions, included rituals, prayers, and Tantric ceremonies for the welfare of the common people.

One of the leaders of Ming Buddhism was Zhuhung (1535–1615). Zhuhung, who practiced Pure Land Buddhism and was trained under Huayan, Tiantai and Chan masters, played an important role in a movement to harmonize the different schools of Chinese Buddhism. This movement was one of the significant features of Ming Buddhism. Zhuhang taught that the two major schools of practice, Pure Land and Chan, both focus the mind in meditation or recitation on ultimate reality, which he called "Absolute Mind." This Absolute Mind is ever pure of all passions and defilements, free from all illusions and ignorance, and is the essence of Awakening itself. Zhuhang taught that both Huayan and Tiantai teach about this nature of mind that embraces all phenomena. In this attempt to bring a greater unity between the schools, the common ground included the state of mind that is conducive to advancement in the spiritual life, as well as the foundation of that advancement, namely, the Absolute Mind. In the broader movement toward harmonization, it was not uncommon for Chan practitioners to recite the name of Amitābha Buddha, for Pure Land practitioners to practice meditation, and for both to study the *sūtras*.

Another activity of Zhuhung that contributed to a second feature of Ming Buddhism was his work for the laity. Given its degeneration during the Song and Yuan Dynasties, many people did not wish to join the Saṅgha, but wanted to practice Buddhism as laypersons. This interest led during the Ming Dynasty to the growth of Pure Land piety as well as new forms of lay activities and the printing and distribution of its Buddhist texts. Pure Land devotional experience expressed in the fine arts also made lasting contributions to Chinese culture, especially in literature and poetry. Zhuhung himself supported the formation of lay Buddhists according to Buddhist principles and practices adapted to their daily life.

Under the Manchu emperors of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1912), Buddhism was also supported, especially the Linji branch of Chan and Tibetan Buddhism.

Support of the latter won allegiance from the Mongols and Tibetans. The importance given to Tibetan Buddhism can be seen in the fact that the Beijing Edition of the Tibetan *Tripiṭaka* was completed in 1724, and only later was the Dragon Edition of the Chinese *Tripiṭaka* completed under imperial auspice in 1738, with a Manchu translation completed in 1790.

Activity among the Buddhist laity also continued during the Manchu Dynasty. This was especially true after the Taiping rebellion (1851–1865), during which the rebels destroyed Buddhist images, texts, and temples wherever they went. In response, Buddhist laypersons played crucial roles in reviving the tradition through publishing and disseminating Buddhist literature. Yang Wenhui (1837–1911) brought Buddhist texts from Japan and founded the Chinling Sūtra Publishing Center to print and disseminate Buddhist material throughout China. This kind of publication work was complemented by other Buddhist lay organizations dedicated to social and cultural renewal.

With the fall of the Manchu Dynasty in 1911 and the establishment of the Republic of China, many intellectual leaders saw Buddhism as a part of the premodern Chinese culture that must be set aside to facilitate the modern development of the nation. This opinion was reinforced some ten years later by the introduction of Marxism. To counter this attack on Buddhism, Taixu (1890–1947) inspired a reform movement that had wide-ranging consequences. Taixu promoted an educational program that founded schools where modern secular subjects were taught along with traditional Buddhist scholarship in Western-style classes. He also founded a number of new institutes to educate Buddhist monastic and lay leaders. Taixu's reforms stressed the regeneration of the monastic life and the dedication of monastic structures to aid the needy in society. He developed new contacts with Buddhists in other countries and supported the notion of a closer fellowship of Buddhists around the world. Finally, he supported the study of Buddhist texts and doctrines and the publication of Buddhist books and periodicals.

This kind of Buddhist renewal in mainland China was cut short when communism took control in 1949. In the 1950s, Saṅgha land holdings were confiscated, most monasteries and temples were closed, younger monks and nuns were laicized, older monastics were forced to work, and a governmental Chinese Buddhist Association was established to oversee the remaining Buddhist communities. During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), Buddhist buildings and works of art were destroyed. However, the government safeguarded many of the famous Buddhist temples and works of art during the Cultural Revolution, and afterward it rebuilt many other temples and religious sites. More recently, as we see in the essay at the conclusion of this chapter, there has been a renewal of interest in Buddhism in China (see Figure 7.5). Many people in China have been converting to Buddhism, which has had a renewal of its own during the past few decades. This renewal has been inspired by the new Buddhist movements that had been developing in Taiwan during the latter half of the twentieth century that were themselves inspired by Taixu.

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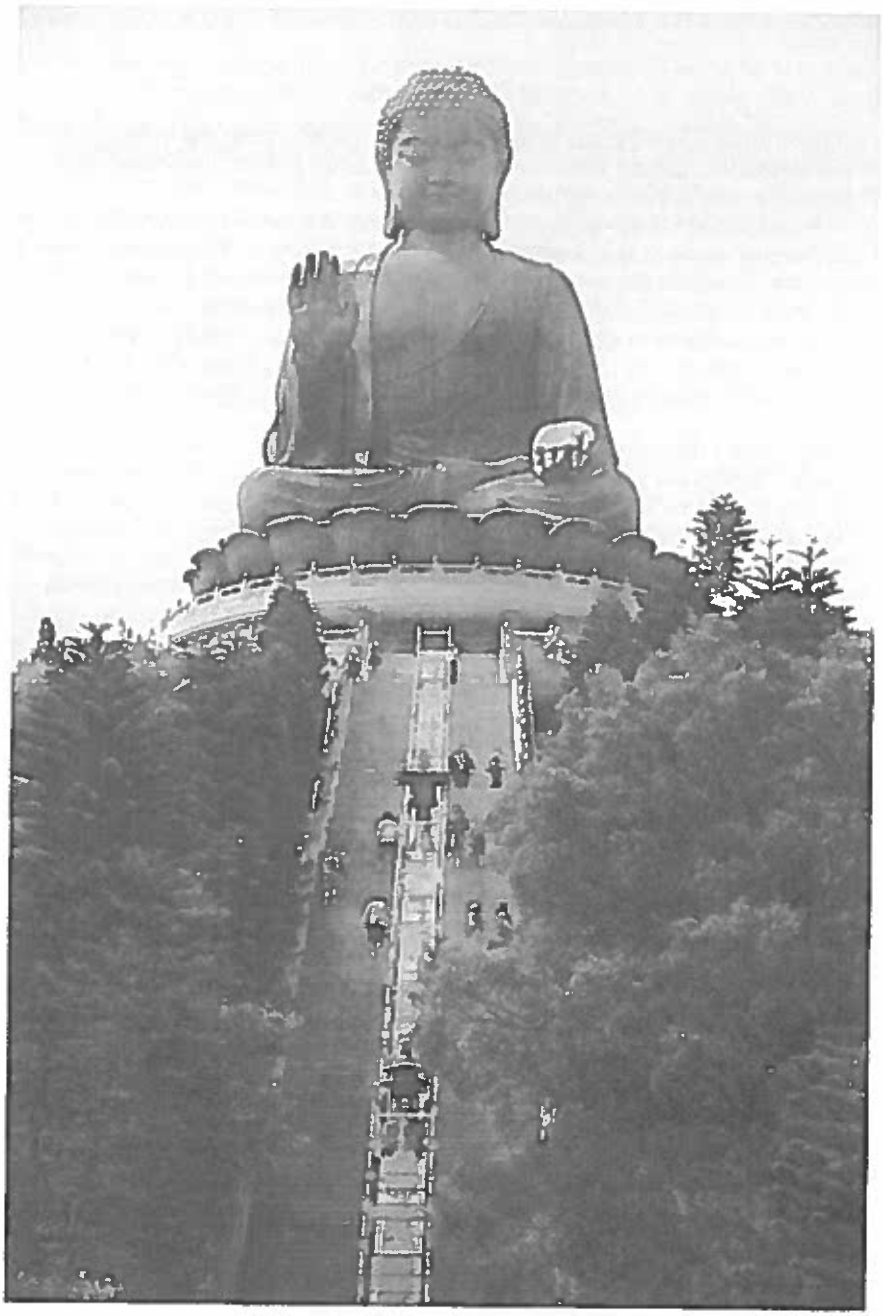

FIGURE 7.5. Statue of Amoghasiddhi Buddha at Bolin Monastery, Hong Kong, completed in 1993 and named the Tiantan Buddha since the model for its base is the Temple of Heaven (Tiantan) in Beijing.

Box 7.2

A Nun's Story

When I joined the Buddhist order at the age of twenty, I was still a student in law school. My sudden renunciation was beyond my parents' comprehension; therefore, they opposed my decision.

I recall that my father, whose thinking is strongly influenced by Confucianism, challenged me by asking a question: "Being a nun living in a monastery, how are you going to repay your debt of gratitude to family, school, and society, all of which have raised you and have provided for your education?"

I replied to him that by joining the order without a future family of my own, I could devote myself completely to helping society. My father did not say a word, but I knew that he was wondering how I could be of help to society living as a nun.

Afterward, I did not give up my study of the law; instead, my order supported me in finishing law school and then going to the United States for further education. When I received my doctoral degree from Yale University, my parents, as well as my eldest brother and sister, who both represented my other siblings, flew to the East Coast to attend my graduation. On this occasion, my father told me that he was very proud of me. Due to my accomplishment, my parents received the Father and Mother of the Year Awards in my hometown.

Being a Buddhist nun in Taiwan, especially as a member of Fo Guang Shan, I was fully ordained, received both a clerical and a secular education, and have the opportunity to teach at universities outside the monastery. Through participating in the educational process in Taiwan, I can make a positive contribution to society.

My teacher, the Venerable Master Hsing Yün, advocates "Humanistic Buddhism," a teaching that brings Buddhism into society. Spiritual cultivation is not the sole prerogative of monks and nuns in a monastery, but it is considered a necessary element for humanizing our society. Society should not be seen as just a source of temptation, and thus as an obstacle to spiritual cultivation. On the contrary, society should serve as the soil for nourishing spirituality. From the viewpoint of Humanistic Buddhism, witnessing suffering in society generates compassion. Facing and overcoming temptation in society means not to shy away from desire, but to encounter it without being tainted by it. Training oneself to attain equanimity does not require a solitary place to hide, but rather a peaceful and unmovable mind in the midst of the social turmoil of the world.

Humanistic Buddhism, from which I myself have benefited deeply, provides a philosophy that encourages me to walk into society, keeping social commitment and spiritual cultivation in balance.

VEN. DR. YIFA
Fo Guang Shan Monastery

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