

Outline Lecture Fifteen—Buddhism in the Tang State

Key Focus:

- 1) What role did Buddhist rituals play in the Chinese state during the Tang?
- 2) How did Buddhist monasteries both contribute to and undermine the cohesiveness of the state?

I) Golden Age of Chinese Buddhism—Tang Dynasty (7th-9th centuries)

- a) “Woven into every texture of Chinese life and custom”
 - i) Fully integrated into local economies
 - ii) Oversaw local rituals and community needs
 - iii) Lay community gaining merit through patronage
- b) “Nation-Protection Buddhism”
 - i) E.g. “Scripture on Perfect Wisdom for Humane Kings”
 - (1) Intercessional role of a “human king” as a *chakravartin*
 - (2) Recitation of this sutra as a “spiritual defense shield”
 - ii) The ambiguous legacy of this sutra
 - (1) Allegedly a sermon given by the historical Buddha to King Prasenajit
 - (a) Doctrine of “The Three Ages of Buddhism”
 - (b) Apocalyptic idea of *Mo Fa* or “Extinguishing of Dharma” (Japanese *Mappo*)
 - (2) In 765, a Tang Emperor (Daizong) commission to Bukong
 - (a) Scripture functioned as “occult medicine” or “magical buffer”
- c) Buddhist Ritual and Filial Piety
 - i) Zannin in 10th century argument to reinstate incense ritual
 - (1) Looked to precedents in antiquity of incense offering
 - (2) Killing a sacrificial animal incompatible with the belief in rebirth
 - (3) How filial are you towards your ancestors?
- d) Difficult Reconciliation Between Buddhism and State
 - i) Challenges from rival Taoists sects and Confucian scholars
 - (1) Accused monasteries of abusing privileges
 - (2) Emphasized subversive threat of some apocalyptic Buddhist ideas
 - ii) Sporadic persecution or exclusion of temples and monasteries
 - (1) Under Northern Wei (446-452)
 - (2) Huichang Suppression (840-845)

II) Major Chinese Buddhist Sects

- a) Adaptability and diversity within the Mahayana tradition
 - i) Maitreyism
 - ii) Amitabha (O-mi-to-fo)—Buddha of the Western Paradise
 - (1) a.k.a. Pure Land Buddhism
 - iii) Lotus Sutra centerpiece of Hua-yan sect
 - iv) Chan or Zen Buddhism

III) The Historical Development of Chan (Zen)

- a) Origins of the tradition
 - i) Sanskrit word *dhyana*—“meditation”

- ii) Emphasis on lineage
 - (1) Esoteric and secret form of transmission
 - (2) Passing on the Bodhidharma robe and Teachings
- iii) Role of Bodhidharma in Chan tradition in the 6th century
 - (1) First audience with Emperor Wu of Liang
 - (2) Bodhidharma's summation of Chan
 - (3) Established Shao-lin Temple
 - (a) E.g. of his teaching: "Pacifying the mind"
- iv) Compatibility of Chan with Chinese philosophical traditions
- b) The Sixth Patriarch Hui-neng's Approach to Self-enlightenment
 - i) Buddha nature is intrinsic in all
 - ii) Delusions as a parasitic "second nature" of our mind
- c) Enlightenment in *Chan*
 - i) Emancipating the Mind
 - (1) How to achieve this?
 - (a) Mindfulness through *vipassana*—insight meditation
 - (b) The Function of *Gong-an* (Koans)
 - (2) Examples of Koans
 - (a) Purpose of koans
 - ii) The Appeal of Chan or Zen
 - (1) "To be born human is to be innately endowed with the seed of enlightenment"