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[Project Proposal of Indian Buddhist Thought in the 6th-7th Century China](#)

## Indian Buddhist Thought in 6th-7th Century China

### [center]Project Proposal[/center]

This project aims to explore the reception of Indian Buddhist thought in China during the sixth and seventh centuries. It is a three year project, which will be conducted by an international research team. It is also a publication-oriented project, in that a volume of collected papers is planned for publication. The main goal of this research project is to create the platform for promising junior scholars in Taiwan to work together with prominent scholars around the globe. The project will also enable these Taiwanese scholars to achieve academic excellence in the study of Chinese Buddhism.

### [center]Background[/center]

Many excellent scholarly works have been produced on Buddhist thought during this period, either on the Indian or on the Chinese side. In recent years, some effort has also been devoted to exploring the early phase of translation of Buddhist texts from various Indic/Central Asian languages into Chinese. However, no particular attention has been paid to the reception of Indian Buddhist texts and doctrines in China from the sixth century to the seventh century. Although some studies have been undertaken to explore individual Buddhist thinkers, such as Bodhiruci, Paramārtha, Jizang, Xuanzang, Kuiji and Wŏnhyo, these projects are far from sufficing to comprise a complete picture of the reception of Buddhism, a long process that started from the second century and continued down to the Sui and Tang Dynasties. Acting out of an awareness of precisely this lacuna in scholarly attention, this project will gather a team of international researchers, including some of the most prominent scholars in the field, to work on filling in this gap.

Instead of merely focusing on Chinese forms of Mahāyāna Buddhism, like Tiantai, Huayen and Chan, which began to flourish in China since the sixth and seventh century, this project will be mostly concerned with the reception of Indian Buddhist thought during the same period. We would like to know more about the translations and exegesis of Indian texts in this, an intellectual milieu which was much more complicated than earlier stages. We would also like to explore the various ways in which the expressions of Indian Buddhist thought were hermeneutically appropriated into Tiantai, Huayen and Chan. The scope of the project will cover the different fields of Indian Buddhism transmitted to China during this period, such as Abhidharma, Mahāyāna scriptures, Madhyamaka, Yogācāra, Tathāgatagarbha, Hetuvidyā, etc. The participants will be encouraged to deal with either (1) the Chinese reception of individual Buddhist thinkers, like Nāgārjuna, Asaṅga, Vasubandhu and Dignāga; or (2) doctrinal and philosophical issues, e.g., Two Truths, Three Natures, Dependent Origination, Representation-Only, Tathāgatagarbha Thought, Buddhist Logic and Epistemology, etc.; or (3) the hermeneutical issues found in the Chinese commentaries on the Māhāyana scriptures; or (4) if possible, they are also welcome to study the reception of Hindu (non-Buddhist) systems, such as Sāṃkhya, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā and the Grammarian School, which were preserved in Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures.

### [center]Aims[/center]

The aims of the project are:

- to identify the processes by which Indian Buddhist systems were received in China during the sixth and seventh century;
- to demonstrate the efficacy of the various methodological theories employed in this project to disclose the transfiguration of ideas and practices from one culture to the other;
- to reveal the hermeneutical complexity in the Chinese receptions of Indian Buddhist texts and doctrines;
- to strengthen cooperative ties between local scholars in Taiwan and international scholars of Buddhist studies.

The project undertakes to achieve these aims by coordinating and drawing on the combined resources of a unique body of expertise in a highly innovative collaborative undertaking. The project involves the collaboration of a network of fourteen specialists from the international and local scholarly communities, active in Japan, the United States, Germany, New Zealand, Hong Kong and Taiwan. It brings together the expertise of scholars of Buddhist studies specializing in the Indian, Chinese, and Korean traditions of Buddhism, in order to competently address the

task at hand. The project team includes the following scholars:

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#### [center]Significance[/center]

The significance of the project in more general terms lies in its contribution to our understanding of the broader issue of how the Chinese tradition received and appropriated Indian Buddhism during the medieval era. More specifically, the project will enable us to:

- illuminate the ways that the doctrinal systems of individual Indian Buddhist thinkers, like Nāgārjuna, Asaṅga, Vasubandhu and Dignāga, were (re-)presented in the medieval milieu of Chinese Buddhism;
- investigate the ways that Buddhist philosophical issues, e.g., Two Truths, Three Natures, Dependent Origination, Representation-Only (Vijñaptimātratā), Tathāgatagarbha, Buddhist logic and epistemology, were incorporated into Chinese Buddhism;
- closely examine the process of translation and related issues;
- publish the results of our research in English through an academic press.

#### [center]Review of Scholarship[/center]

Despite its great potential for enhancing our understanding of both Indian Buddhism and the reception of it in China, Buddhist thought in China through the sixth and seventh centuries remains an understudied field. Fortunately, major breakthroughs have been made by a few recent studies. The most promising frontiers opened up by these studies are: (1) the study of Buddhism in the Northern dynasty, esp. regarding the Dilun School; (2) the study of Paramārtha—an Indian translator who had huge impact on later Chinese Buddhism, and after whom the Shelun School was named; (3) the study of the earlier history of Hetuvidyā, esp. the works of Dignāga.

A whole new perspective was opened up with a collection of articles by Japanese scholars on Buddhist thought in the Northern dynasties, edited by Aramaki Noritoshi (*Hokuchō Zui Tō Chūgoku Bukkyō shisōshi* 北朝隋唐中国仏教思想史. Kyōto: Hōzōkan, 2000). In particular, Aramaki's own article draws attention to the development of Buddhist thought in the latter half of the Northern dynasties period. The articles by Ishii Kōsei and Aoki Takashi focus on the doctrinal aspect of the Dilun School, mostly based on the long-lost Dunhuang fragments. The article by Funayama Tōru tries to link the Dilun thought to the intellectual background of the Southern dynasty. All these articles urge scholars to pay more attention to the yet little-known development of Buddhist thought in the Northern and Southern dynasties, as well as to the interaction between them.

In particular, Funayama has also done extensive study on the Buddhist context in the Southern dynasty. He is mainly interested in the notion of sainthood and the theory of the stages leading to sainthood. More specifically, he focuses on how the indigenous Chinese stage-theory—the so-called “forty stages of mind before the first Bodhisattva-stage” propounded in apocryphal Chinese texts—interacts with Indian stage-theory. This directs our attention to the issue of how Buddhism became sinified in the Chinese context. On the other hand, Ōtake Susumu

has done extensive studies on the Buddhist context surrounding the Indian translator Bodhiruci, the alleged founder of the Dilun School in northern China. Both Funayama and Ôtake also draw our attention to the genre of lecture notes by Bodhiruci and Paramârtha. They regard those lecture notes as intermediate forms resulting from the interaction between the Indian teacher and his Chinese audience; these notes thus represent a weak form of sinified Buddhism.

Regarding Buddhist thought in the Southern dynasties, significant progress has been made on the Indian translator Paramârtha. Iwata Taijō published his monograph on Paramârtha in 2004, the only extensive study of Paramârtha in Japanese scholarship during the recent decades. In 2006 Shengkai published a two-volume monograph on the Shelun School, the school named after Paramârtha's Chinese translation of the Mahayanasamgraha. Further, Yoshimura Makoto published a series of articles arguing that our current image of Paramârtha is to a large extent a combination of elements deriving from Paramârtha in the south and the Buddhist context in the north. Yoshimura's thesis was later reinforced by Michael Radich (2009) and Ching Keng (2009). These works urge us to investigate more closely the interaction between the north and the south. The Awakening of Faith, an extremely influential text across the East Asian Buddhist traditions, may well be a product of such an interaction. If this claim can be sustained, then the traditional image of Paramârtha's thought as diametrically opposed to that of Xuanzang, and of Tathāgatagarbha thought and Yogâcāra thought as mutually incompatible, must be significantly modified.

Regarding Yogâcāra Buddhism in the seventh century in China, Charles Muller and Dan Lusthaus have made fresh progress. Muller devotes himself to the study of the Korean Buddhist scholar Wŏnhyo (617-686) and tries to illustrate how the two seemingly conflicting Indian Buddhist philosophical traditions—Yogâcāra and Tathāgatagarbha—converge harmoniously in Wŏnhyo's philosophical system. On the other hand, Lusthaus approaches the Faxiang School—the Yogâcāra School established by Xuanzang and his disciple Kuiji—from a more philosophical perspective, focusing in particular on the comparative study between Yogâcāra and Husserl's phenomenology.

Yet another promising field in the Chinese Buddhism of the sixth to the seventh centuries is the study of Hetuvidyā (Ch. yinming 因明). During the last few decades, mainly through the efforts of Ernst Steinkellner in Vienna, the study of Buddhist Epistemology (Skt. pramāṇa) has become a prosperous and fruitful field in Buddhist studies. Recently, Chen-kuo Lin and Dan Lusthaus have called for more attention to the Chinese sources in order to unearth the earlier development of Hetuvidyā (in Dignāga and earlier texts). Regarding the great value of the Chinese sources, Katsura Shōryū, a leading authority in the study of Hetuvidyā, has also done extensive study of the Nyāyamukha during recent decades.

To conclude, major progress has been made during the last decade on Indian Buddhism as preserved in the Chinese Buddhist translations. It is now time to engage more scholars from different perspectives in more comprehensive and systematic studies on the reception of Buddhist thought in the sixth to seventh century China. Not only will such studies demonstrate the usefulness of the Chinese sources for enhancing our current understanding of Indian Buddhism, but they will also help us appreciate the complexity of the transmission of religious and philosophical ideas from one cultural tradition to another.

#### [center]Structure and Methodology[/center]

The methodology of this project will combine historical, philological, exegetical, hermeneutical and philosophical analysis to unpack the complexity of Chinese reception of Indian Buddhist thought during the sixth and seventh centuries. Individual participants will be free to employ the methodology which is most suitable for their individual projects. However, the project in general will examine the epistemological ground of the theory of "Sinification" in the studies of Chinese Buddhism. We would like to see to what extent that this theory can be justified, modified, or even replaced through the individual case studies. We will address the following questions: If we still continue to use the term "Sinification," what does it mean in the context of sixth and seventh century Chinese Buddhism? Is there a clear distinction between "Indian Buddhism" and "Chinese Buddhism" during that period? Is it sufficient to justify the theory of Sinification through textual, philological and doctrinal analysis? These methodological issues will be re-examined in the course of this project.

Concerning the structure of the project, the contributions of participants consist of three parts:

## 1. Yogācāra Buddhism in China and Korea

The importance of Yogācāra Buddhism in sixth and seventh century China goes without saying. Paramārtha stands out as the most influential figure in the entire history of Sinitic Buddhism during this period. Two members of this project are devoted to the study of Paramārtha. Michael Radich's project "Sources of Paramārtha's concept of \*amalavijñāna" proposes to consider each instance of the term \*amalavijñāna in relation to its conceptual context, and also in relation to parallel passages in other extant texts in Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese, where they exist. As a result of this study, Radich argues that a surprising view of Paramārtha's conception of \*amalavijñāna emerges, which runs counter to the stereotypical characterisation of \*amalavijñāna in the modern secondary literature. In the second part of the paper, he will survey all mentions of \*amalavijñāna in the Chinese tradition down to approximately the year 800. Radich argues that there is relatively little overlap between characterisations of \*amalavijñāna in later doxographic statements, and the concept as it features in Paramārtha's actual works, and that later understandings of the concept instead have a traceable history whereby they develop away from Paramārtha. On this basis, he suggests that modern scholarly understandings of \*amalavijñāna owe more to later doxographers than they owe to Paramārtha himself.

Similar to Radich, Ching Keng also proposes to study how Paramārtha was received and interpreted by the Chinese Buddhist scholars, as is indicated in the topic of his proposal, "The Early Reception of Paramārtha's Works and Thought." Keng will focus on an understudied fragmentary text entitled Zhaolun shu (A Commentary on the Treatises by Zhao), probably written during the Chen dynasty (557-589). He will focus on the major scholars in Chang'an who reported on or even manipulated Paramārtha's teachings, including Tanyan, Huiyuan, Jizang, and Huijun. In addition, he will also study the confluence between Paramārtha's teachings and the Awakening of Faith, by examining the long-lost commentaries on Paramārtha's works found in Dunhuang, namely Taishō 2806, 2807, 2808, 2809. Keng will principally focus on three major issues: (1) the ninth consciousness, (2) the notion of Buddha-gotra (foxing) and (3) the stage theory of Buddhist practice.

Turning to the so-called New Yogācāra School in the seventh century, Dan Lusthaus will trace what Xuanzang studied in Loyang and Chang'an, and then what he encountered outside China's borders, as well as what he brought back and provided to his Chinese audience, with special attention to those subjects – such as hetu-vidyā – that were virtually unknown in China previously. In conjunction with related materials (such as Yijing's writings), Lusthaus will sketch out the Buddhist world between India and China, with attention to those elements and issues that particularly exercised the Chinese Buddhists of the day. Within the same context, Choong Yoke Meei will examine Kuiji's exegesis and criticisms of Kumārajīva's translation of Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā to see how close Kuiji's understanding might be to that of Indian commentaries. Choong will also compare Kuiji's exegesis with the other Tibetan and Chinese translations. Taking Kuiji as the main figure in the same period, Shoryu Katsura will dedicate himself to the study of Kuiji's knowledge of Buddhist Abhidharma philosophy as well as non-Buddhist philosophical systems, such as Sāṃkhya and Vaiśeṣika, by tracing his knowledge to its original Indian sources.

Instead of focusing on the central stage in Chang'an, the capital of the Tang Empire, Charles Muller rather directs our attention to Wōnhyō (617-686), a Korean monk, as the one who profoundly synthesized the apparent conflicts between Yogācāra and Tathāgatagarbha thought. As Muller convinces us, a thorough examination of the character and trajectory of the Yogācāra-Tathāgatagarbha relationship in East Asia would be incomplete without taking into the account of events in Korea, and in particular, the approach taken by Wōnhyō.

## 2. Buddhist logic and epistemology in China

Three proposals are included in this section. Yao Zhihua will take up the problem of the cognition of nonexistent objects in Indian and Chinese sources. He will explore some pre-Vaiśeṣika sources that are extant in Pāli and Chinese, including the Kathāvatthu, Samayabhedoparacanacakra, Śāriputrābhidharma, and Vijñānakāya. These sources suggest an early origin of the concept of the cognition of nonexistent objects among the Mahāsāṃghikas and some Vibhajyavādins under their influence, and a possible linkage of this concept to the concept of non-cognition (anupalabdhi) as developed later by the Buddhist logicians.

Focusing on Dignaga's theory of mental perception, Chu Junjie reexamines the relevant passages in the first chapter of Pramāṇasamuccayaṅgīti, based on new Sanskrit materials authored by Jinendrabuddhi, and also on

Chinese sources, attempting to prove the Yogācāra background of Dignāga's theory with the following conclusions: (1) Dignāga asserts that there is no essential difference between sense perception, mental perception, and self-awareness, but that they are rather different aspects of the same cognition; (2) the notion of simultaneous-cause (sahabhūhetu), accepted by Yogācāra as a prerequisite of the above assertion, is also accepted by Dignāga.

Regarding the reception of Buddhist epistemology in seventh century China, Lin Chen-kuo's research will focus on Huizhao (648-714) and his *A Treatise on the Two Means of Knowledge* (Er liang zhang). Lin will translate the Treatise with annotations. He will further place Huizhao's epistemology within the broader Sino-Indian context of Buddhist epistemology in the works of Dignaga, Xuanzang and Kuiji.

### 3. Indian elements in Chinese forms of Buddhist system

Under this subtheme, five pieces of research are proposed to examine the Indian elements in the formation of Sinitic forms of Buddhism such as Chan, Sanlun, Tiantai and Huayan. In "Hunting for Indian Impact on Chinese Chan Buddhism," John R. McRae will, if anything, subvert the stereotypical image of history, by arguing that there is no Indian element in the early stage of Chinese Chan. He firmly contends that there is nothing known to have been directly transmitted from India to China in the sixth century that contributed to the school's development. It seems most reasonable to explain the genesis of Chan solely with reference to the preceding centuries of Chinese Buddhism, taking into consideration only those elements of Indian Buddhism that were already known within the Chinese tradition.

On the side of Madhyamaka thought in the sixth century, Chien-hsing Ho turns to Jizang (549-623), the central philosopher in the Sunlun School, to see how and to what extent Chinese Madhyamaka philosophy differs from its Indian archetype. Ho will focus on the problems of language and truth in both Indian and Chinese Madhyamaka. Taking a similar approach, Hans-Rudolf Kantor rather attempts to show the key role played by Yogācāra thought in the formation of Sinitic Buddhism. In his proposed study, "The Transformation of Indian Yogācāra Thought and the Formation of Early Chinese Buddhist Schools," Kantor will investigate philosophical issues, such as dependent co-arising, consciousness, Tathgātagarbha, and three natures, that were transmitted in the works of the Dilun and Shelun masters. He will also explore the extent to which Indian Yogācāra concepts of mind and consciousness were influential for divergent developments in Chinese Tiantai, Huayan and Sanlun schools.

Unlike the above philosophical and doctrinal approaches, Funayama Toru is rather interested in examining the Chinese adoption and rejection of Indian culture and thought from the viewpoint of the formation and dissemination of Chinese Buddhist apocrypha, such as the *Scripture of Brahma's Net* (Fanwang jing), in connection with translated texts. His research begins with the assumption that the formation of apocryphal scriptures in Chinese Buddhism was closely connected to Chinese scholar-monks' "compilation activities" (bianzuan or bianji; i.e., how they utilized existing sources in the process of making a new text), which were also conducted in the process of translation. In the project, Funayama aims to shed new light on the problem of the formation and the impact of Fanwang jing.

Nattier proposes to re-examine from a philological perspective the "translation policy" of the foremost translators of Buddhist texts in China, such as An Shigao, Zhi Qian, Kumārajīva, Paramārtha, and Xuanzang. Nattier regards it as inadequate to simply characterize the differences and developments among those translators primarily in terms of such categories as "ancient/old/new" or "northern/southern." Instead, she aims to investigate the devices each translator came up with when confronted with challenges in translation, which reveals how they respectively understood the differences between the Indic and the Chinese languages. Nattier believes that such work will allow us to discern in a more nuanced way the distinctive lines of development among the translators, a result which will no doubt contribute to our understanding of the history behind each Chinese translation of a Buddhist text.

### [center]Outcome[/center]

The Project's outcomes will be presented at the annual workshops, monthly group meetings, the Annual Meeting of the AAR and finally the Conference of the International Association of Buddhist Studies in 2011. These outcomes will be also published in the form of an edited volume. The originality of the topic and its clear potential for

long-term impact on the field of Buddhist Studies, combined with the unique configuration of expertise the project brings together, will help ensure publication by a leading academic press.

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