

throughout the period and Kanmu, in particular, had some difficult years at the beginning of his reign with constant fighting in the northeast of the country. It is sometimes claimed that he was at loggerheads with the Buddhist establishment and that this was why he decided to move the capital north to escape their influence, but this is most unlikely. The move, when it came, had more to do with Kanmu (being a descendant of Tenji) wishing to finally distance the monarchy from the Tenmu line, which was so clearly identified with Nara and had its home and its sacred spaces in Yamato (Toby 1985). Kanmu was not particularly anti-Buddhist, but he did feel the need to revive the kind of strict controls that we find in the *Regulations for members of the saṅgha*. In 783–84 the gifting of land to temples was banned, and the prohibition on simply 'initiating' people in the provinces without recourse to the Saṅgha Office was reinforced. A large number of these 'monks' were forcibly returned to lay life, particularly if they were found to have families of their own, and emphasis was placed on the meditational duties of priests in order to try and depoliticise their activities. In 798 an age restriction of thirty-five was imposed and candidates were required to sit a test and pass five out of ten topics set. In 801 a distinction between Sanron and Hossō monks was made and in 803 both traditions were allotted five monks each. Here we have the real beginning of the *nenbun dosha* quota system, fixing the number of ordinands initially at ten per year.

4.7 Buddhist scholarship

The constant refrain one finds in official documents bewailing low standards among members of the saṅgha was based on a general concern that priests were simply lazy and wasting their time, and on a more specific worry that an inability to read sūtras would interfere with their prime function: recitation for the protection of the state. As it happens, it is not difficult to learn how to recite in rote fashion from a text one does not really understand, and there is a quantum leap from this to being able to read Buddhist scholarly treatises and explain doctrine. Leaving aside the commentaries ascribed to Prince Shōtoku for a moment, it is only in the latter half of the eighth century that we begin to encounter this level of learning. Perhaps we can also now begin to talk of monks living in monastic institutions. Up to this point we have used the term 'priests' because it is likely that their primary role was of worship and ritual, but there now developed what had been there from the beginning in India: groups of men and women living in celibate communities apart from

the rest of society, devoted to meditation and the study of texts, and occupying what we might legitimately think of as a monastery rather than a temple.

One commonly encounters the term 'Nara rōkushū' 奈良六宗, first used in 760. It is sometimes translated as 'the six Nara schools' or even 'the six Nara sects', but this is misleading: in some contexts the word 'seminar' is more appropriate; in others 'tradition'. Certainly, in the beginning, the term *shū* was written not with the character 宗, which can have a sectarian flavour, but with 衆, which simply meant '(study) group'. By and large, the title of a seminar referred to the name of the sūtra or treatise studied. It was natural for certain monks to specialise in certain texts, and it should therefore come as no surprise to find that some temples became known for the study of one particular tradition rather than another; but there was nothing particularly exclusive about the arrangements. Tōdaiji, for example, as the hub of the whole system, was home to all six seminars. Here we shall introduce all six in outline. The object is not to discuss Buddhist philosophy in detail (which is beyond the scope of this history) but merely to illustrate the kind of concepts that were occupying the minds of scholar-monks. All except one of these traditions were of Indian origin.

Ritsu 律 was the study of the *vinaya*. This became a recognised tradition of scholarship with the arrival of Jianzhen and the building of Tōshōdaiji. As a separate tradition, however, it did not survive past the end of the Nara period and had to be revived in a rather different guise in the twelfth century.

Kusha 俱舍 was the study of Vasubandhu's important work *Abhidharmakośa* (Jp. *Abidatsuma kusharon* 阿毘達磨俱舍論),¹⁷ an epistemological analysis of being, which formed the bedrock for an understanding of how Buddhists viewed the world. It covered such fundamental topics as the distinction between absolute and conventional truth, and the Four Noble Truths. These were, firstly, that existence is defined as suffering; secondly, that the cause of suffering is our insatiable thirst for life, which inevitably leads to rebirth; thirdly, that in order to eradicate suffering one must eradicate the thirst and aim to reach that state of perfect liberation from desire known as nirvāṇa; and fourthly, that the way to achieve this is to follow what is known as the Eightfold Noble Path: right views (seeing the world as it really is) and right intention, both of which have to do with wisdom (Sk. *prajñā*); right speech, right action and right livelihood, which have to do with conduct

¹⁷ T. 1558–59. This was first translated into Chinese by Paramārtha in the mid-sixth century, although the Japanese used Xuanzang's seventh-century version.

(Sk. *śīla*); right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration, which have to do with meditation (Sk. *samādhi*).

Then there is the doctrine of non-self (Sk. *anātman*, Jp. *muga* 無我). There is no such thing as a permanent self and it is precisely because we cling to the idea of such an unchanging core that we experience suffering. Body and mind are analysed into five aggregates (Sk. *pañca-skandha*, Jp. *goun* 五蘊): form (Sk. *rūpa*, Jp. *shikūm* 色蘊), sensation (Sk. *vedanā*, Jp. *juun* 受蘊), perception (Sk. *samyjñā*, Jp. *sōun* 想蘊), mental formations (Sk. *samskāra*, Jp. *gyōun* 行蘊) and consciousness (Sk. *viññāna*, Jp. *shikūm* 識蘊). The self that we think we experience is nothing but a cluster of these aggregates, a grouping of mental and physical elements known as dharmas (Jp. *hō* 法), all of which are in constant flux. The categories of 'form' and 'mental formations' are in their turn subdivided into yet further dharmas. A person has no core entity, being nothing more than a set of events and elements that are causally connected over time. I am not as I was a moment ago, but neither am I a random cluster. Death is simply another event in this continuing flux. As with the person, so with the world: all objects are also made up of conditioned, transitory dharmas. Nothing is permanent. Only three dharmas exist that were considered unconditioned and hence permanent: space, the state of nirvāṇa achieved through 'analytical cessation', and the same state achieved via 'non-analytical cessation'. The fact that a dharma is conditioned does not make it any the less real. Dharmas come into existence through the law of dependent origination (Sk. *pratītyasamutpāda*, Jp. *engi* 緣起), which is analysed as a chain with twelve links. Everything is mutually conditioned, everything dependent on a cause and itself the cause of something else. So every dharma has its own set of connections, both temporal and spatial, that form its dharma-realm (Sk. *dharmadhātu*, Jp. *hokkai* 法界), although since dharmas come and go on the instant this means that everything is interconnected with everything else in unimaginable complexity.

Jōitsu 成實 was the study of Harivarman's *Establishing the truth* (Sk. *Satyasiddhi śāstra*, Jp. *Jōjitsuron* 成實論, T. 1646). This was critical of the *Abhidharmakośa*, precisely because although it explained the emptiness of the self, it did not extend this to dharmas themselves, seeing them as real. The study of this text did not survive as an independent tradition past the end of the eighth century, at which point it was subsumed in what follows.

Sanron 三論 was so called because it was based on three works: the *Root verses on the middle* (Sk. *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, Jp. *Chūron*, 中論, T. 1564); the *Treatise in one hundred verses* (Jp. *Hyakuron*, 百論, T. 1569); and the *Twelve approaches* (Jp. *Jūnimonron*, 十二門論, T. 1568). This was

essentially Indian Madhyamaka thought, which denied that anything, including dharmas, could have inherent existence. They were constantly changing in response to conditions and so must also in the ultimate analysis be characterised by emptiness. Emptiness is not, however, nothingness; it simply means that a dharma lacks a permanent, unchanging core; it is but the temporary sum of all that has brought it into being. And since emptiness is also a characteristic of nirvāṇa, it follows that according to absolute rather than conventional truth, conditioned existence, *samsāra*, must be the same as nirvāṇa. Sanron as a separate seminar did not survive the Nara period, but the study of these works was essential for anyone interested in Mahāyāna doctrine and it continued to form part of the training of all serious scholars.

Hossō 法相 (the name means 'characteristics of dharmas') developed out of the Indian Yogācāra tradition. It took matters a stage further and made explicit what Sanron had implied, namely that if all dharmas are empty then they can only be the product of mind. It accepted that all dharmas are characterised by emptiness and without innate existence, but it was more interested in the question of why we see things as we do. How does our consciousness work to produce the illusions it does? Such an analysis would presumably bring us closer to understanding how enlightenment could be achieved. Hossō based itself on the assumption that the objective external world is nothing but a fabrication of our own consciousness, which, because we are ignorant of the truth, produces representations of externality and gives rise to the illusion that both self and other exist. Objects do not have independent existence apart from the perceiving mind, but because of the way human consciousness works, perception continually causes us to posit real objects and (the illusion) of a perceiving self. Since existing as a human involves us in a continual flow of ever-changing perceptions, we are continually inventing for ourselves objects of desire, which, of course, lead to attachment and suffering.

Hossō starts its analysis by categorising the countless dharmas of existence into a hundred types, beginning, as we might expect, with the dharmas of mind. Eight forms of consciousness are distinguished: hearing, smell, taste, feeling, mental cognition, the defiled mind (*kliṣṭa-manas*), in which the consciousness of ego resides, and lastly the *ālaya vijñāna* or Store Consciousness (Jp. *arayashiki* 阿賴耶識), where the illusions are generated.

The mind in its active capacity, for example as intention, instigates the performance of intentional deeds (Sk. *karma*). These deeds, once performed, leave traces or consequences which are said to redound to the mind, now in its sustaining capacity as mental continuum or store-consciousness of each sentient being. Specifically, the

traces of acts enter the *ālaya* by way of 'impregnation' or 'suffusion' (Sk. *vāsanā*, Jp. *kunji* 薰習) and are thus regarded as the implanted 'seeds' (Sk. *bija*, Jp. *shuji* 種子) of future conscious acts. The 'seeds' planted from without by the active mind mingle with the 'innate seeds' (this is a matter of some sectarian dispute) and all proceed to influence each other according to their respective moral species as pure, impure, or neutral. Eventually this process of mutual influence (again *vāsanā*) brings about the fructification or maturation (Sk. *vipākā*, Jp. *kahō* 果報) of the seeds in the form of new mental phenomena. This 'biogenetic' model of the mind serves, among other purposes, that of explaining dependent origination by showing how there can be retribution for acts when there is no personal agent or self to whom those acts might be charged (Gimello 1976: 234).

In this sense, the Store Consciousness constitutes our whole experience and ensures that the illusion of a dichotomy between self and other will continue. If this were all, of course, then there would be no way out and enlightenment would be impossible. But the Store Consciousness, which accounts for a person's continuity through the cycle of birth, death and rebirth, does contain pure 'seeds', some of them innate, which can be germinated through the practice of meditation, right thought, and a determination to see beyond the idea of self and other; the nurture of these seeds involves many acts of compassion and will take aeons to bring to completion. Hossō also posits a hierarchy of three aspects of human perception and understanding: the imagined, the dependent and the perfected.

A favourite analogy of Yogācāra thinkers is that of the mirage. The water that appears before the eyes of the parched desert traveller, for example, does not really exist; it is only *imagined*. Nevertheless the appearance or visual idea of water does exist; it exists in *dependence upon* the traveller's imperfect faculties of perception and his wishful, projective thoughts. When the traveller has realized that in the vision of water there is actually no water, then he has 'emptied' the mirage of own-being and seen the fact or truth of the matter to *perfection* (Gimello 1976: 248).

Once all the seeds in the store are pure, a fundamental transformation (*āśraya-parāvṛtti*) occurs within the defiled mind, the Store Consciousness stops generating illusions, and the opposition of self and other disappears. This is the onset of enlightenment.

The emergence and survival of Hossō as an independent tradition in Japan was the result of historical accident and is an interesting example of the vagaries of transmission. Its parent, known in Chinese as Faxiang 法相, was based not on earlier translations of Yogācāra treatises by Paramārtha (Zhendi 眞諦, 499–569), but on those produced a little later by Xuanzang 玄奘 (c.596–664). Xuanzang is, of course, famous for the journey he made to India

and back and for the sheer number of translations he produced. The reason for preference being shown to Xuanzang's interpretations owed more to imperial patronage for the man himself than to anything else. In China the Faxiang tradition itself was not to survive the Anlushan rebellion of 755–57, but survive it did in Japan, partly because of Fujiwara patronage and partly, no doubt, because of the sophistication of its doctrines. Hossō texts were initially brought to Japan by Dōshō, who settled at Gangōji, but Genbō had also studied in this tradition and such was the influence of the Fujiwara that Kōfukuji eventually won pre-eminence for this area of scholarship.

One unorthodox element that seems to have been transmitted to Japan as part of Hossō doctrine was the idea that there was a particular class of beings (Jp. *shushō* 種姓), known as *ichchantika* (Jp. *issen dai* 一闍提) or incorrigibles, who, because of the type of innate seeds lying in their store consciousness, would never be able to achieve enlightenment no matter how hard they strived. This ran counter to the more inclusive Mahāyāna universalism and caused considerable controversy. It is not clear whether this theory came from Xuanzang's experience in India or from some other source, but the fact that it remained a central tenet of Japanese Hossō was perhaps not unrelated to the aristocratic nature of its Fujiwara patrons. Although there must have been a number of monks who felt rather uncomfortable with the ramifications of such overt discrimination, the term *shushō* has strong overtones of status being defined by one's birth.

The *Kegon* (Ch. Huayan 華嚴) tradition is the only one to take its name from a sūtra, the vast *Flower Garland sūtra*. There were two full translations into Chinese: the first in sixty volumes by Buddhahadra, and the second in eighty volumes by Śikṣānanda. The sūtra itself is a collection of texts from different traditions and different periods, some of which, such as the *Dāśabhūmika* (Jp. *Jijikyō* 十地經) and the *Gaṇḍavyūha* (Jp. *Nyūhokkaibon* 入法界品) existed as works in their own right, in both India and China. These texts were grouped together under the general theme of man's quest for enlightenment. Perhaps best thought of as a presentation of the universe through the eyes of someone already enlightened, a bodhisattva, the sūtra consists of a series of long sermons. There are eight grand assemblies (會), two on earth, four in the realm of desire, and the last two back on earth. Vairocana is present throughout but does not speak, only emitting light occasionally from different parts of his body at various stages. The long progress of the candidate for buddhahood towards final enlightenment passes through five stages (位).

The philosophy that emerges is a complex one, treated by many as the crowning glory of Chinese thought. The central figures are, therefore, all Chinese: Dushun 杜順 (557–640), Zhiyan 智嚴 (602–68), Fazang 法藏 (643–712) and, later, Zongmi 宗密 (780–841). It marks the maturation of a process by which the Chinese made Buddhism their own, often analysed as a Chinese response to Madhyamaka and Yogācāra thought. It is not a commentary on the sūtra so much as a complex analysis of the process towards, and the experience of, enlightenment that takes the journey and the vision illustrated in the sūtra as its starting point.

This sinification of Buddhism began with Dushun, who started with the traditional terms 'emptiness' (Sk. *śūnyatā*, Jp. *kū 空*) and 'form' (Sk. *rūpa*, Jp. *shiki 色*), but shifted to 'principle' (Jp. *ri 理*) and 'phenomenon' (Jp. *ji 事*). He proposed three 'discernments' 觀 or meditational stances that would eventually lead to enlightenment: firstly, the 'discernment of true emptiness' 眞空觀, which was the straightforward Mahāyāna view that there is no such thing as an unconditioned dharma; secondly, the 'discernment of the mutual non-obstruction of principle and phenomena' 理事無礙觀, which marks the change in terminology; and lastly, the 'discernment of the total pervasion and inclusion' 周遍含容觀, which reinvests phenomenal reality with significance. This is seen as a necessary procedure if the paradox of the bodhisattva, enlightened yet still present in this world, is to be explained.

The replacement of 'emptiness' by 'principle' signals an important step in the direction of evolving a more affirmative discourse . . . The second discernment elucidates various ways in which phenomena and principle interrelate. Because they instantiate principle, all phenomena are thereby validated. This positive valuation of the phenomenal world culminates in the third discernment, that of total pervasion and inclusion. With this final discernment principle itself is ultimately transcended, and one enters the world of total interpenetration for which the Huayan tradition is justly famous. Each and every phenomenon is not only seen to contain each and every other phenomenon, but all phenomena are also seen to contain the totality of the unobstructed interpenetration of all phenomena' (Gregory 1991: 7).

The cosmos that is discerned in this third phase is the Dharma Realm, the ultimate absolute nature of the universe, identified with the Dharma Body (Sk. *dharmakāya*, Jp. *hosshin 法身*), the body and mind of the Buddha Vairocana.

Dushun's initial analysis was later recast in terms of four approaches, rather than three, the fourth view being particular to Huayan/Kegon. It described the terms in which a Buddha saw the universe.

- 1 The universe as phenomena (*jihokkai* 事法界): waves on the ocean appear to exist in and of themselves.
- 2 The universe as principle (*rihokkai* 理法界): the ocean appears as water and one does not see the waves.
- 3 The universe as the unimpeded interpenetration of principle and phenomena (*riji muge hokkai* 理事無礙法界): one sees the waves and the water as at once distinct from each other and as one, dependent on each other.
- 4 The universe as the unimpeded interpenetration of phenomena and phenomena (*jiji muge hokkai* 事事無礙法界): this is Indra's net, covered in jewels at each knot, each jewel reflecting all the others. All things that exist are interdependent, all in one and one in all, the part dependent on the whole as the whole is dependent on the part. Everything has in common the fact that everything is emptiness, and it is this emptiness that links everything in a mutual relationship: the Dharma Realm can be therefore defined as pure relationship. The distinction between nirvāṇa and saṃsāra collapses.

Another central element investigated by Huayan/Kegon doctrine was the idea of Buddha Nature (*busskō* 佛性). We all have within us the potentiality for buddhahood, that element of pure principle without which we would never have any aspiration towards becoming enlightened in the first place. This was also known as the 'Womb of the Buddha' (Sk. *tathāgatagarbha*, Jp. *nyoraijō 如來藏*). Enlightenment can be seen as the fusion of this individual element with the Dharma Realm.