

The timing of Yogācāra resurgence in the Ming dynasty (1368-1643)

William Chu

Before proceeding to the main thesis of my paper, I need to review some well known facts about Buddhist-Confucian dynamics in the late imperial era.

The rationalist Song Neo-Confucians known traditionally as the Cheng-Zhu school (程朱; after the Cheng brothers Cheng Hao 程顥 1032–1085 and Cheng Yi 程頤 1033–1107, and Zhu Xi 朱熹 1130–1200) had asserted the exclusive orthodoxy of their tradition. They repudiated all Confucians who professed syncretistic interest or sympathies toward Buddhism and Daoism, and highlighted the doctrinal incompatibilities between Confucianism and other “heretical” religions (*yiduan* 異端). To Zhu Xi in particular, Buddhism was irredeemably at odds with the Confucian “sagely lineage.” Zhu’s staunchly purist stance was targeted at those Confucians who heartily professed dual allegiances to both religions. Another group of Confucians, in contrast, headed by Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵 (1139–1193), that eventually rose to become Zhu’s major rival for Confucian orthodoxy, also harbored deep reservations about Buddhism and reiterated the need to vigilantly fend off the latter’s spiritual allure. But despite Lu Jiuyuan’s self-proclaimed loyalty to Confucianism, followers of Zhu’s school often branded Lu an apostate, one who was secretly a sympathizer of Buddhism and, in fact, cherished a much buddhicized interpretation of Confucianism.

In the Ming dynasty, Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529) relented on Confucian exclusivism. Although still upholding the supreme status of Confucianism, Wang saw that the Buddhist training was not diametrical to Confucian enlightenment and could in fact serve as a stepping stone. His unapologetic use of Buddhist

jargons earned him infamy among his Confucian colleagues, who jeeringly referred to him as the *de facto* successor to the “Chan of the Five dynasties,” and as one who reverently upheld the teachings of “Bodhidharma and Huineng.”¹ Such accusations were not completely baseless, for Wang’s teachings were often direct paraphrase of the words of legendary Buddhist Chan patriarchs, as the following demonstrates:²

The innate conscience knows right from wrong; the innate conscience is also neither of right or wrong. Knowing right from wrong is what constitutes propriety, while being oblivious to (unbounded by) right and wrong and thereby realizing the marvelous, is [what defines] the so-called enlightenment.

良知知是非，良知無是無非。知是知非，即所謂規矩。忘是非而得其巧，即所謂悟。³

In this case, Wang Yangming summarized his understanding of Confucian morality in verses that were unmistakably appropriated from the Buddhist *Platform sūtra*. Compare what Wang said with what Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清 (1546–1623 C.E.) – the most prolific Buddhist writer in the Ming – wrote, their similarity becomes apparent:

[People] do not know that the two opposite polarities of good and evil are in fact dualistic *dharma*s coming from the outside [of one’s innate nature], and have nothing to do with the original essence of our self-nature. That is why those who do evil in the world could at times mend their ways and become good, and good people can also be converted to evil’s way. This is sufficient to prove that [worldly] virtues could not be stable or reliable. For that if one did not cultivate goodness all the way [to eventually consummate in enlightenment], what is apparently moral is really not ultimately moral. As for the presently expounded ‘highest good,’ it constitutes enlightening and illuminating the veri-

¹ Cited in Araki (Rushi) 1978: 181.

² Although Robert Sharf has argued that that the shared terminology of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism might not have been due to deliberate borrowing (see Sharf 2001), in the case of Wang the assimilation of Buddhist ideas and terms was quite deliberate and self-consciously done, as would be made clear in this study.

³ Cited in Araki (Rushi) 1978: 384.

table essence of the self-nature, which is originally devoid of either good or evil.

不知善惡兩頭，乃是外來的對待之法，與我自性本體了不干涉。所以世人作惡的可改為善，則善人可變而為惡，足見善不足恃也。以善不到至處，雖善不善... 今言至善，乃是悟明自性本來無善無惡之真體。⁴

We may recall, however, that Zhu Xi found precisely such Chan teaching of “there is neither right nor wrong” (*wushi wufei* 無是非) to be logically and morally reprehensible. Zhu interpreted what might be explained by Buddhists as “transcendence from right and wrong” as reckless antinomianism, a disregard for conventional morality. He said:

The difference between we the Confucians and the Buddhists lies in that, we Confucians have reasonable rules and principled guidelines. For the Buddhists, they have none of these.

吾儒所以與佛氏異者，吾儒則有條理有準則。佛氏則無此爾。⁵

Antinomianism and moral laxity were some of the most denigrating and inveterate polemics the Confucians had historically maintained about Buddhism, Wang was conscious of the danger of becoming labeled as an antinomian or moral nihilist. The strategy he employed to differentiate his own position from that of the allegedly amoral Buddhism was, ironically, also the same one many Buddhists resorted to in vindicating Buddhism of this same charge. Wang Yangming posited a bipartite approach where he would put forth both the need to maintain moral rigorousness and the transcendence from inflexible dogmatism. Wang Yangming described his understanding of the “innate knowledge of the good” (*liangzhi* 良知) very much in terms of the language of “Buddha-nature.” He posited the Mind or the “innate knowledge” as an all-encompassing, ontological basis for both good and evil. Yet the Mind is only functionally “actualized” when good is cultivated. In the same way, Chan followers had always described the Buddha-nature as having both an ontological aspect and a functional aspect. Example: For

⁴ *Hanshan dashi mengyou ji*, vol. iv, p. 2380.

⁵ Cited in Araki (Rushi) 1978: 379.

Zongmi 宗密 (780–841), the Chan patriarch in the Tang dynasty, the “essence” aspect of the mind has to be emphasized along with the “responsive functioning”⁶ aspect with the same vigor, if both the transcendent and the responsive nature of the Mind are to be maintained.⁷ And ever since Neo-Confucian’s attack on the alleged Buddhist amorality, Buddhists had become especially cautious and vocal when articulating their moral stance, arguing that morality without transcendence is ritualism or mundane Dharma, and that transcendence without morality is false enlightenment. Yunqi Zhuhong 雲棲株宏 (1535–1615) was reiterating this dominant Buddhist doctrinal ethos in the Ming dynasty when he made the same point:

Although the mind is originally luminous, yet as one does good or evil deeds, their traces will make the mind soar high or sink to the ground...How can one say that evil deeds do not matter simply because the mind in its essence cannot be designated as good or evil? If one is addicted to the biased view of emptiness, he will deviate from perfect understanding. Once you realize that both good and evil are nonexistent, [it is all the more compelling that] you should stop evil and do good.⁸

Using unmistakably Chan language, Wang Yangming also explained that at the ontological aspect, the “innate knowledge” transcends the absolutism and dualism of mundane values; but at the functional level, it is ever discerning about good and evil, and actively pursues good and avoids evil. This two-tiered scheme that validates transmudane wisdom without sacrificing the practical need to defer to conventional virtues⁹ was a common Buddhist motif that could be traced back not only to the *Platform sūtra*, but

⁶ Peter Gregory’s analysis of the historical conditions and mentality that gave rise to this comparable bipartite moral scheme (Gregory 2002: 237–244) contains many interesting parallels to the Ming scenario.

⁷ Araki Kengō (1975: 45) suggested that the “solid wall of principle” erected by Zhu runs the danger of “curbing the vitality” of the “Mind.”

⁸ Cited in Greenblatt 1975: 109.

⁹ David Kalupahana (1992: 60–67) had explained the sustained Buddhist attempts at avoiding “absolutism.”

also to such early texts like the *Dhammapada*.¹⁰ Although Wang Yangming might be subverting Zhu's moral absolutism in substantive ways, by bringing such a blatantly Buddhist interpretation into Confucianism, Wang still maintained Zhu's polemic that [Chan] Buddhism is morally degenerate. In other words, even as Wang simultaneously relegated Buddhism and Zhu Xi's intellectual legacy – by charging that Buddhism was hopelessly oblivious to and delinquent of secular moral duties, and that Zhu was trapped in inflexible dualistic thinking – Wang's philosophical views overlapped with important Buddhist ideas popular in the Ming dynasty. His position was much closer to Chan Buddhist ideology than he allowed himself to admit.¹¹

Wang Yangming was responsible for still another Confucian transformation that was to prove conducive to the upsurge of Ming-dynasty syncretism. One of the most powerful appeals Buddhism had in distracting, if not converting, some of the best minds from the Confucian establishment was its systematic outline of a spiritual *mārga* – the cultivational and soteric technology and its promise of ultimate transformations through the application of its prescribed techniques. In the face of Buddhism's systematic, graduated program of moral and meditative training, many Confucians could not but concede to Buddhist superiority in soteric sophistication. The intricate and elaborate ways in which Buddhists conceived of their spiritual path was the result of the traditional emphasis Buddhists placed on its careful formulation. Robert Buswell and Robert Gimello had explained this emphasis in the following way:

[T]he concept of 'the path' has been given in Buddhism an explication more sustained, comprehensive, critical, and sophisticated than that provided by any other single religious tradition...Throughout the

¹⁰ The *Platform sūtra* contained the following passage that illustrates such a two-tiered scheme for morality: 無是無非, 無善無惡...用即了了分明...邪來煩惱至, 正來煩惱除. 邪正俱不用...悟則剎那間. Similarly, the *Dhammapada* urged the practice of good yet posited that only by being unattached to even what is the good can one truly be called a "spiritual aspirant (Brahmin)." Compare verse 183 and 412 in *Dhammapada*, Kaviratna trans. pp. 73 & 159.

¹¹ See some examples of Wang's critical remarks in Chen (Rongjie) 1984: 77–80.

two-and-a-half millennia of its pan-Asian career, Buddhism has been consistently explicit in declaring itself to be, above all else, a soteriology, a method of salvation, rather than, say, a creed. Its unflagging concentration on ‘the path,’ whether for the purpose of advocating and charting that path or for the purpose of qualifying and criticizing it, has not only led to the careful and detailed delineation of numerous curricula of religious practice and to the privileging of such delineation over other modes of Buddhist discourse.¹²

In order to compete, the re-systematization endeavor of the Song Neo-Confucians was to delineate a comparably enticing system of personal cultivation (*gongfu lun* 功夫論) that could outstrip the near dominance Buddhists had always held in this domain. One of the key leitmotifs Confucians had toiled for centuries to configure in its soteriological system concerned a practice known as the “extension of knowledge” (*zhizhi* 致知).¹³ It was one phase of training in a series of graduated steps leading to ever higher spiritual and ethical goals as prescribed in the Confucian classic the *Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大學). Though vague and abstruse in its language, the text provided a rare indigenous outline of soteric path for the Neo-Confucians, who were in a desperate need to “discover” something from their own textual tradition rather than appropriating from Buddhism what they supposedly ostensibly lacked.

Zhu Xi’s canonization and propagation of the so-called *Four Classics* (which included the *Great Learning*) very likely have been propelled by such a mentality. Through this act of canonization, he had undoubtedly changed the character of Confucianism in posterity. The fact that the *Four Classics* were readily and heartily received by fellow Confucians as the *sine qua non* primers for the tradition very likely had something to do with their usefulness to buttress Confucianism in those most glaringly deficient areas. With the exception of the *Analects*, all the *Four Classics* (the *Analects*,

¹² Buswell and Gimello 1992: 2–3.

¹³ It should be noted that Lu Jiuyuan was one of the first to bring about this transformation in the Song. In many ways Wang Yangming simply rediscovered and fine-tuned Lu’s system rather than having single-handedly invented the many implications of an idealist philosophy. See Chan 1963: 572–573; Liu 1964: 165–166; and Qian 1962: 137.

the *Mengzi*, the *Great Learning*, and the *Doctrine of the Mean*) in fact were only elevated to their revered prominence from relative obscurity after Zhu Xi's unreserved commendation of them.¹⁴ Each of the three newly promoted Confucian texts served an important soteric purpose.

The *Mencius* (*Mengzi* 孟子) discusses the Confucian ideal of "sagehood" and the actualization of the "heavenly virtues." The idea of attaining sagehood as outlined in the *Mencius* served as a worthy competing ideal to the Buddhist notions of Buddhahood and enlightenment. The *Great Learning* spelled out the specific praxis involved for that actualization: one sets out to realize the Confucian goal of bringing harmony to the world through a step-by-step self-transformation. The *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong* 中庸) served to explicate the mechanism and principles underlying those Confucian systems of spiritual cultivation: the principle of emotional and practical moderation was advised in this text as the connecting theme for Confucian practice. It also provided much of the philosophical expressions with which Zhu built his metaphysical theories such as that of the "heavenly nature" and the "universal principle"¹⁵ – metaphysical theories that were in one capacity intended to compete with the elaborately constructed Buddhist cosmology.

In the *Great Learning*, there is a passage on the sequence of stages to be accomplished by those cultivators intent on "illuminating the luminescent virtue" and "bringing harmony to the world." The first two of the stages are the "investigation of things" (*gewu* 格物) and, as we have previously discussed, "the extension of knowledge." As many scholars have noted already, Zhu's understanding of this process was that it is an inductive one. He believed that only through wide learning and unceasing exploration of the na-

¹⁴ Mencius was beatified by Zhu himself to become the greatest Confucian sage second only to Confucius (*yasheng* 亞聖). Both the *Great Learning* and the *Doctrine of Mean* were excerpts from the *Book of Rites by the Younger Zai* (*Xiaozai liji* 小戴禮記) singled out by Zhu for their pertinence to his vision of a new Confucianism.

¹⁵ See Zhu Xi's exegesis on this part of the Book in Chen (Rong) 1984: 22–23.

ture of external things would the seeker arrive at a universal principle which pervades them all.¹⁶ He considered Buddhism's introspective and subitist quest undertaken in the "mind ground" to be too introverted and perfunctory to generate any concrete, reliable, generalizable knowledge. By collapsing what should otherwise be a thorough investigation of the myriad phenomena into a single, idealist principle, Buddhism appeared to Zhu to be oversimplifying a serious learning process and too complacently engrossed in the self. One of Zhu's supporters in the Ming expressed this distaste toward Buddhism's allegedly reductionist approach to investigating things:

Some practitioners had only heeded to the aspect of the 'oneness of principle' while overlooking the aspect of its divergent ramifications. In the case of Buddhism, even its professed 'oneness of principle' [that it so favored] differed from the 'one principle' that was advocated by the [Confucian] sages.

學者或只理會這 '理一' 處，便遺了分殊。如釋氏之學，則連所謂 '理一' 者，非聖人之 '理一' 矣。¹⁷

This was where Wang Yangming introduced yet another important revolutionary modification of Zhu's epistemic approach. While Zhu Xi claimed to have "applied his mind in search of the principle amidst the various phenomena and things" 以吾心而求理於事事物物之中,¹⁸ Wang braved the antithetical position. Wang sug-

¹⁶ Zhu Xi's logic was that, "The so-called nature is the myriad principles scattered in various places. This is what makes it the nature [of all things]" 性是許多理散在處為性. Cited in Qian 1962: 117. Therefore only by a tireless investigation into various things would the principle be revealed. Zhu's conclusion was that, "As for our attempt to extend our knowledge, [the key] lies in searching to the limit of things and thereby fully reveal their principle... This is the reason that the beginning-leveled teaching of the *Great Learning* always required the apprentice to pursue the investigation of all things without exceptions under Heaven, basing on principles that one had already comprehended, in order to extend it to its utmost limit." 言欲致吾之知，在極物而窮其理也 ... 是以大學始教，必使學者即凡天下之物，莫不因其已知之理而益窮之，以求致乎其極. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

¹⁷ Cited in Araki (Rushi) 1978: 389.

¹⁸ Cited in Sun, Liu and Hu 1995: 280.

gested that “the Way of the sages is already endowed in my nature. Those who directed their search for the principle in objects and phenomena are misled” 聖人之道，吾性自足，向之求理於事物者誤也。¹⁹ Wang thought that a deductive and introspective “extension of knowledge” could avoid the pitfalls of becoming inevitably “fragmentary and aimless” as was the case in Zhu’s externally-directed system. Instead of looking outward, Wang felt that nothing other than the mind provides a more direct access to the “universal principle,” and that understanding the mind itself would suffice to meet the qualification of “investigating things” and “extending knowledge” as stipulated in the *Great Learning*.²⁰ Very few Confucians dared to suggest a rearrangement or bypassing of steps on this prescribed sequence, yet Wang Yangming was ready not only to place the process of “rectifying the mind” before “the investigation of things,” thereby reversing its traditional order, he altogether relegated the whole idea of graduated, step-by-step practices as an inferior approach to the recovery of the “original mind.”

In such a manner, Wang also seemed to evince the same loathing to externally-directed investigation and entertained the possibility of a direct, sudden realization of this process in very much the same way the mature Chan school would. Wang’s antithetical position to Zhu in this regard was a paradigmatic case for those who are studying the “sudden versus gradual” polarity in religious studies.²¹ It was fashionable for Buddhist exegetes to brandish their knowledge of literati culture by writing commentaries for the Confucian *Classics*. The interesting point was that, Wang’s interpretation of the cultivational outline in the *Great Learning* as a subitist and introspective path was strikingly similar to the way Buddhists had interpreted the Confucian text. This is not to downplay the important, though at times subtle, differences between Wang’s understanding of the Mind and that of the mainstream, Ming-dynasty Buddhist; but for our purpose, their similarities are the focus.

¹⁹ Cited in Wu 1994: 171.

²⁰ For example, Wang emphasized that “the entirety of the investigation should be performed on just this body and mind” 格物之身，只在身心上做。Cited in Sun, Liu and Hu 1995: 280.

²¹ Gregory 1997: 8.

When the Buddhist monk Deqing commented on another two of the cultivational stages in the *Great Learning* – the “rectifying of the mind” (*zhengxin* 正心) and the “making sincere of the intention” (*chengyi* 誠意) – Deqing, too, saw those stages as perfectible in a single enlightened instant:

The mind is originally luminous. Only because it was clouded by desires that it becomes dull...As soon as the ‘Single Reality’ had been recovered, all delusions would no longer arise...Once enlightened, there would be no further delusions; [In fact,] the extinction of delusions is itself the equivalent [of the realization] of the Single Reality.

心本光明，欲蔽故暗 ... 一真既復，諸妄不生 ... 覺則不妄，妄息即真。²²

Most of the commentaries written by the Ming Buddhists on the Confucian *Classics* had in similar fashion attempted to reinterpret the Confucian cultivational stages within the rubric of Buddhist subitist soteriology. Although within the Buddhist tradition itself, there were proponents for both the gradual and the sudden paradigms, the subitist school had decidedly won the ideological battle since the eighth or ninth century. The influential Buddhist systematizer Zongmi categorized the Chan tradition into three major strands, and the one deemed the most advanced on his list of hermeneutical taxonomy was the “School of Directly Revealing the Mind and the Nature” (*zhixian xinxing zong* 直顯心性宗) – not surprisingly, that was the most “subitist” strand of the three.²³ Deqing also echoed this unanimous Buddhist predilection for the subitist and idealist doctrine throughout the Ming dynasty,

The marvel of the great Dao lies in that it could be better accessed through intuitive realization. Even when it comes to mundane knowledge such as the art of elocution, governance of the world, linguistic convention, and various means of livelihood, one could not fail to come to grasp that which is marvelous by simply penetrating into any of these secular enterprises.

²² *Hanshan dashi mengyou ji*, vol. iii, p. 1959.

²³ Zongmi’s panjiao schemes were recorded in the *Chanyuan zhuquan jiduxu*. T. 48.2015.

大道之妙 ... 貴在妙悟。即世智辯聰、治世語言、資生之業，無有一法不悟而得奇妙者。²⁴

Another Buddhist monk in roughly the same period, Ouyi Zhixu 藕益智旭 (1591–1655), in this respect even praised Wang for having reversed Zhu Xi’s claim to Confucian orthodoxy. The Buddhist monk esteemed Wang for having superseded the spiritual accomplishments of all previous Confucians and for that Wang’s enlightenment might not be qualitatively different from Buddhist enlightenment:

Wang Yangming had gone beyond what the Confucians in the Han and the Song had accomplished, and had directly succeeded to the [true legacy] of the ‘Mind School’ as taught by Confucius and Yan [Hui]. The teaching [Wang] had instructed people with throughout his life [could be summed up] in the words of ‘attaining to one’s innate knowledge of the good.’ It corresponds to and perfectly illumines the Self-Nature...It does not direct people to search outside, because the entirety of its practice is rooted in the Self Nature.

王陽明超漢宋諸儒，直接孔顏心學。一生示人，唯有致良知三字 ... 稱性圓照 ... 不向外求，全修在性。²⁵

Most of the points outlined so far are not new in the Buddhist scholarship. But I will now direct the discussion to how these points shed lights on Ming Yogācāra. In all the aforementioned ways Wang brought about the key catalysts for a syncretistic culture – some highly “buddhicized” recast of Confucian ideas. The Buddhists capitalized on these “buddhicized” elements to advance their own polemical agenda, by demonstrating how these elements could best be qualified, harmonized, and criticized in Buddhist hermeneutics. It was against this background of a brooding Confucian intellectual revolution and the resultant change in the inter-religious dynamic, that the return of the Buddhist Yogācāra thought to scholastic spotlight in the high culture of the Ming dynasty becomes more understandable. To the Buddhist syncretists, it must have been apparent that Wang Yangming’s brand of idealism could best be received and countered by Buddhism’s own counterpart of idealism in the

²⁴ *Hanshan dashi mengyou ji*, vol. iv, p. 2405.

²⁵ *Ouyi dashi wenxuan*, p. 178.

Yogācāra tradition. One of the most visible common denominators between the two traditions had been their evolved convergence in the discourse on the mind. The newly resurrected Yogācāra tradition assumed a peculiar form in which the traditional category “consciousness” was treated interchangeably with the notion of the “Mind” in the Tathāgatagarbha thought.

The so-called Eminent Monks of the Wanli Era (*Wanli si gaoseng* 萬曆四高僧), Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清 (1546–1623),²⁶ Daguan Zhenke 達觀真可 (1543–1603), Yunqi Zhuhong 雲棲株宏 (1535–1615),²⁷ and Ouyi Zhixu 藕益智旭 (1599–1655) were interesting subjects of study not simply because of their reputable literary and spiritual accomplishments, but also in the unanimity of their fascination with syncretism, Yogācāra, and Tathāgatagarbha. This striking unanimity probably reflected powerful intellectual and cultural trends of their times. The convergence of these seemingly discrete and unconnected subjects of their fascination (again, syncretism, Yogācāra, and Tathāgatagarbha) was in fact the logical conclusion of development within Buddhism and Confucianism as well as their re-engagement in the Ming. I do not wish to unduly downplay the Eminent Monks’ undeniable individual differences, but it is in their striking resemblance – not fully attributable to their mutual influence – that reflected those compelling cultural forces that are in turn the focus of this paper.

Though Wang Yangming and his followers had always perceived themselves to be continuing the idealist legacy initiated by none other than Mencius himself, Wang’s originality stood out in his spilling forth the creative, ontological implications in explicit terms:

The ‘innate knowledge of good’ is the numinous Spirit of creation... our numinous Spirit has created the heaven and the earth, as well as the myriad things therein. All things in the universe, however, ultimately return to nothingness. [The Spirit] carries out the creating

²⁶ For more on Hanshan’s life and syncretistic efforts, see Hsu 1979.

²⁷ Zhuhong’s life and contribution to Buddhist revival movement in Ming is covered in detail in Yü 1981.

process in all moments, and constantly transforms [all things], never pausing for even a breath-long instant.

良知是造化之精靈 ... 吾之精靈, 生天生地, 生萬物, 而天地萬物, 復歸於無. 無時不造, 無時不化, 未嘗有一息之停.²⁸

Compare this notion to Buddhism's own *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* narrative on the creative Embryo of the Tathāgata, and we can easily discern the likeness between Wang's idealism and the Buddhist one that was encapsulated in the Yogācāra-Tathāgatagarbha hybrid thought:

The Tathāgatagarbha is the causative force behind both the wholesome and unwholesome [deeds]. It can function everywhere in creating the different realms of rebirth. Just like a conjuring illusionist, it could magically manifest [the appearances of] the various realms of rebirth.

如來藏是善不善因, 能遍興造一切趣生, 譬如伎兒, 變現諸趣.²⁹

The synthesis of Tathāgatagarbha and *ālayavijñāna* (the “Store-House Consciousness” described by the Yogācāra school) was well underway when the first Chinese encountered these disparate Buddhist teachings on the nature of consciousness and mind. The ubiquitous influence of Tathāgatagarbha thought in Chinese Buddhism since the eighth century, as Chinese Buddhist scholars have frequently noted, swept through practically all Chinese Buddhist schools. The result was a reinterpretation of all Buddhist ideas within Tathāgatagarbha light, including the notion of *ālayavijñāna*. Although Tathāgatagarbha and *ālayavijñāna* are definitely distinct concepts with very different doctrinal implications, by the Ming they were by and large harmonized and largely read as interchangeable.

The Four Eminent Monks' close alignment with the Tathāgatagarbha thought was not confined to only their understanding of Yogācāra, but was evident in their Huayan, Tiantai, Chan, and Pure Land scholarship as well, where traditionally disparate teachings were collapsed into variants of an all-unifying Tathāgatagarbha

²⁸ Cited in Araki (Yang) 1978: 372–373.

²⁹ *Dasheng ru lengqie jing*, T. 16.619–620.

idealism. The Eminent Monks' sweeping reduction of all Buddhist teachings into a uniform doctrine was not without precedent in Chinese Buddhism. In fact the sectarian traditions of almost all surviving Buddhist schools each had its histories of eventually coming to terms with and assimilating the doctrines of an ontological "Buddha-hood" characteristic of the Tathāgatagarbha thought.

For the Yogācāra system to be amenably conforming to the then Tathāgatagarbha-permeated Buddhist culture, all the Four Eminent Monks saw the synthesis of Tathāgatagarbha and *ālayavijñāna* under the rubric of the "One Mind" to be the most convenient and least problematic formulation to that end. Zhenke wrote,

The 'four divisions' of the Eighth Consciousness were initially not distinct entities [from the Eighth Consciousness itself]. It was because that the True Suchness [has the tendency to] responsively adapt to conditions, that it as a result permuted into various [manifestations like the 'four divisions']. The meaning of 'True Suchness responsively adapt to conditions' is a most difficult doctrine to be clearly elucidated. For if the True Suchness was at the beginning unadulterated and free from 'being perfumed' [by contaminating influences], what determined its initial activation to responsively adapt to conditions? If one unceasingly investigate this [problem of theodicy], one might suddenly become enlightened to it...At that point one could clearly understand [all] the books written on the subject of the Mind-Only teaching...Therefore, for those who aspire to transcending the world and shouldering the responsibility of propagating the Path, could they afford not to wholeheartedly direct their attention to the study of the "school concerning the Dharma-nature,"³⁰ the "school of Dharma-characterization,"³¹ and the school of Chan?

³⁰ Traditionally both the Madhyamaka and the Tathāgatagarbha teachings had been understood by many Chinese to be pointing to a substrative reality, therefore the Chinese often indiscriminately lodged the former with the latter under the category of the "Xing School, or Dharma-nature School." After the Tathāgatagarbha tradition became the undisputed dominant doctrinal tradition in China, however, the "Dharma-nature School" was increasingly being used to refer specifically to only Tathāgatagarbha-oriented teachings. Many scholars are wrong in assuming that, throughout Chinese history, the designation 'Xingzong' was reserved only for the latter group. One example where such an error was made was in Ran 1995: 11.

³¹ "Xiangzong 相宗" was a rather pejorative descriptive term for the

八識四分，初無別體，特以真如隨緣，乃成種種耳。夫真如隨緣之旨，最難明了，良以真如清淨，初無薰染，如何瞥起隨緣耶？於此參之不已，忽然悟入...唯識之書，便能了了...是以有志於出世而荷擔法道，若性、若相、若禪宗，敢不竭誠而留神哉？³²

Zhenke's Yogācāra disputations were clearly tailored to the doctrinal assumptions of the *Awakening of the Faith*, an indigenous Tathāgatagarbha text traditionally received by Chinese Buddhists with paramount esteem. The text, though rather succinct, devised deft solutions to reconcile many apparently contradictory doctrines between the Yogācāra and Tathāgatagarbha schools by positing the so-called “nature-origination” (*xingqi* 性起) formal causal theory. The *Awakening of the Faith* proved most useful a scriptural authority to call upon whenever someone attempted to equate Yogācāra conception of the consciousness with the Tathāgatagarbha Mind. The text provided (what appeared to be) canonically sanctioned precedent of submitting major Buddhist tenets to the all-subsuming Tathāgatagarbha teaching and was especially useful for the Ming Yogācāras' purpose. Most of the Eminent Monks' Yogācāra interpretative frame rested so much on the cardinal themes of the *Awakening of the Faith* (with some of them expressly acknowledging to have done so), that one could not help but to come to the impression that the Yogācāra tradition in the late Ming was only studied to be rendered compliant to the “school of Dharma-nature” (another common name for the Chinese Tathāgatagarbha tradition). Zhixu was one such person who self-professedly took the apocryphal text to legitimize Yogācāra-Tathāgatagarbha synthesis:

What the Consciousness-Only School described as ‘[From the perspective of] the Real, [dharma] characteristics are undifferentiated,’ it is exactly what the *Awakening of Faith* explained under the ‘Gate of the True-Suchness aspect of the One Mind.’ As for what the

Yogācāra system coined by its rival traditions. Since the Yogācāra school was perceived by people like Fazang of the Huayan tradition as merely delving into the feature/phenomenal aspect of reality rather than penetrating into the deeper substrative level, they labeled it a “*Faxiang zong*, or a Dharma-feature/Dharma-phenomena School” in contrast with the “*Faxing zong*, or a Dharma-nature School.”

³² *Man[ji] Zokuzōkyō* 卍續藏經 98, pp. 580–581.

Consciousness-Only School described as ‘[From the perspective of] the mundane, [dharma] characteristics are differentiated,’ it is just pertaining to the ‘Gate of the arising-and-perishing aspect of the One Mind’ as explained in the *Awakening of Faith*.

唯識所謂‘真，故相無別，’即起信一心真如門也；唯識所謂‘俗，故相有別，’即起信一心生滅門也。³³

Attempting at harmonizing the “Dharma characteristic” tradition (a common name for the Chinese Yogācāra tradition) with the “Dharma-nature” tradition, Deqing cited the same text and conflated the “defiled” Store-House Consciousness and the “unadulterated Tathāgatagarbha” as different aspects of the same One Mind. As a result he amalgamated what was traditionally perceived as diametrical strands of Buddhist theories of the mind:

[Aśvagoṣa] authored the *Awakening of Faith* in order to extirpate [people’s] unwholesome attachments...and [he] synthesized the doctrinal strands of ‘Dharma-nature’ and ‘Dharma-characteristics,’ so that they could be consolidated in [their common] source [in the One Mind].

[馬鳴]著起信論以破邪執...攝性相而會一源。³⁴

These developments within Buddhism, and the rise of Confucian idealism through the work of Wang Yangming, gave Ming Buddhists and Confucians compelling reasons to argue for their syncretistic cause – now that they had found a highly homogenous, mutually inspired discourse on the Mind that served as the perfect medium for their syncretistic dialogue. The catalyzing effect of Wang Yangming’s system not only could explain the philosophical outlook of the Ming Yogācāra scholarship (one that was conflated and reconfigured in such a way it was uncannily consonant with Confucian idealism), it could also account for Yogācāra scholarship’s precise timing of reappearance. In other words, the timing of Yogācāra’s revitalization in the Ming coincided perfectly with the rise of Wang Yangming’s thought. Zhenke’s disciple Wang

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 232. I had to redo the punctuation of the Chinese passage in order to make it intelligible.

³⁴ *Hanshan dashi mengyou ji*, vol. ii, p. 1024.

Kentang 王肯堂 (?–1613–?) had recounted a semi-mythical story about the origin of the Yogācāra learning in the Ming. This was a little-known story in and since Wang’s time as far as I could tell, but which nonetheless spoke volumes on the timing of Yogācāra resurgence. Upon closer scrutiny, the story could provide us some inkling regarding how the Ming Buddhists themselves explained the sudden resuscitation of the school after such long dormancy:

I have heard the Great Master Zibo (Zhenke) said that, “the transmission of the [Fa]xiang school (the Chinese Yogācāra) had discontinued for long. The Dharma Master Luan [Pu]tai,³⁵ while on one of his ‘learning journeys,’ had stopped underneath the eaves of a household to shelter himself from the falling rain. He heard the sound of someone giving a Dharma talk inside [the house], and upon listening more closely, it turned out to be about the Faxiang (again, the Chinese Yogācāra) teaching. He immediately entered the house to greet the people inside, and saw that it was an old man explaining [the teaching] to an old woman. Master Tai then bowed and asked to be instructed [in the teaching]. He consequently stayed at the place for more than a month, until [the old man] had completed instructing [Tai] of his learning. [Tai] suspected that the old man and the old woman were no ordinary mortals, they should in fact be the magical incarnation of [enlightened] sages.”

余聞紫柏大師言，相宗絕傳久矣。魯庵³⁶泰法師，行腳避雨止一人家簷下，聞其內說法聲，聽之則相宗也。亟入見，乃一翁為一媪說。師遂拜請教，因留月餘，盡傳其學而去。疑翁媪非凡人，蓋聖人應化而現者。³⁷

The semi-mythical nature of the story is reminiscent of other Buddhist tales that attempt to relate the emergence of a new teaching. One such example involves Nāgārjuna’s journey into the Dragon King’s Palace where he received Mahāyānasūtras and brought the new teaching to the world. Another story of similar nature: Aśaṅga’s ascension into the Tuṣita heaven where he was said to have received instructions from the Bodhisattva Maitreya

³⁵ Luan Putai 魯庵普泰 (?–1511–?) was an otherwise unknown figure save through his two surviving works on Yogācāra currently included in *Man[ji] Zokuzōkyō* 98, p. 513.

³⁶ This character is sometimes written with the “屮” radical.

³⁷ Cited in Shi 1987: 201.

on the intricacies of *Yogācārabhūmi*.³⁸ Such Buddhist tales were likely an admixture of partial historical truths, dramatized fiction, and other projections of culturally specific symbols used to account for the obscure and sometimes questionable background of new teachings.³⁹

It would be hard to separate facts from fictions in stories like these. But the semiotics and circumstantial information contained therein were often predicated on more concrete historical backgrounds. As the provenance of Nāgārjuna's Mahāyānasūtras and the authorship of the *Yogācārabhūmi* were concealed by their great antiquity and the hazy memories that reported them, these stories provided assurances of legitimate origins of otherwise questionable teachings. By the same token, as the beginning (if there was such a thing in the singular form and implying a complete prior discontinuance) of the Yogācāra revival in the Ming was shrouded in mystery even to its contemporaries, there must have existed an almost subliminal compulsion to attribute its origin to legitimate and comprehensible sources, even if that attribution could only find expression in symbolic dramatization.

Just like Asaṅga purportedly started his Yogācāra career after having received Bodhisattva Maitreya's personal tutelage on the matter, thereby locating his source of inspiration in an acknowledged authority, the protagonist of our story at hand – Luan Putai – also was said to have rekindled the moribund Chinese Yogācāra school after receiving the divine revelation of the teaching through otherworldly intermediaries. Moreover, Luan Putai published the [only known] Yogācāra works in 1511 (“In the Xinwei year of the

³⁸ Interestingly enough, Deqing also had the experience of dreaming about ascending into the presence of the same Bodhisattva. According to his own relating of the story, this dream was the occasion after which he came to grasp the true meanings of Yogācāra teachings. See the section on ‘age 33,’ *Hanshan dashi mengyou ji*, vol. iv, pp. 2902–2905. It is puzzling how Western studies of Deqing's life consistently leave out this richly symbolic event in his life.

³⁹ See, for example, Robert Buswell's discussion on the symbolism and social-religious factors that were embodied in the dragon king motif in Buddhist mythological lore (Buswell 1989: 51–60).

Zhengde reign era of Emperor Wu of the Ming dynasty” 明武宗正德辛未), that is, almost immediately after Wang Yangming had put forth and promulgated his idealism. Since it would only be natural that we place Luan Putai’s reported divine encounter *before* the publication date of his Yogācāra book – that is, before Luan Putai became so proficient in Yogācāra as to have been able to write about it – the divine source of inspiration that was said to have sparked off a renaissance uncannily coincided with the most opportune time period when important conditions conducive to that renaissance were just becoming ripe. Whether the story originator(s) recounted the story conscious or unconscious of this coincidence, the conclusions we can draw from the story nonetheless corroborate our theory concerning the significant role played by Wang Yangming’s thought in the Ming-dynasty Yogācāra tradition.

Abbreviations and bibliography

Abbreviations

- T. Takakusu, J. and K. Watanabe, eds. 1924–1932. *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*. Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai.

Primary sources

- Chanyuan zhuquan jiduxu* 禪源諸詮集都序. T. 48.2015.
Dasheng ru lengqie jing 大乘入楞伽經. T. 16.619–620.
Hanshan dashi mengyou ji, 4 volumes. 憨山大師夢遊集(全四冊). 1989.
 Reprinted in Hong Kong: Puhui Lianshe (reprint).
Liuzu dashi fabao tanjing 六祖大師法寶壇經. T 48.2008
Ouyi dashi wenxuan 蕩益大師文選. Compiled by Zhongjing 鐘鏡. 1976.
 Reprinted in Taipei: Fojiao chuban she. Is the 1976 edition used here the reprint? In this case, change “Reprinted in Taipei: Fojiao chuban she” to “Taipei: Fojiao chuban she (reprint)”

Secondary sources

- Araki, Kengō. 1975. “Confucianism and Buddhism.” In *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*, 39–66, eds. William de Bary and the Conference on Seventeenth-Century Chinese Thought. New York and London: Columbia University Press.

- Araki Kengō 荒木見悟. Trans. with Rushi 如實. 1978. "Yangming xue yu mingdai foxue" 陽明學與明代佛學. In *Zhongguo jinshi fojiaoshi yanjiu* 中國近世佛教史研究, ed. Lan Jifu 藍吉富. Taipei: Dasheng Wenhua.
- Araki Kengō T 荒木見悟. Trans. with Yang Baiyi 楊白衣. 1978. "Yijing yu lengyan jing" 易經與楞嚴經. In *Zhongguo jinshi fojiaoshi yanjiu* 中國近世佛教史研究, ed. Lan Jifu 藍吉富. Taipei: Dasheng Wenhua.
- Buswell, Robert. 1989. *The Formation of Ch'an Ideology in China and Korea*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Buswell, Robert, and Robert Gimello. 1992. "Introduction." In *Paths to Liberation: The Mārga and its Transformations in Buddhist Thought*, 1–36, eds. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. and Robert M. Gimello. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Chan, Wing-tsit. 1963. *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Chen Rong 陳戎. 1984. *Sishu Jijie* 四書集解. Tainan: Zhengyan.
- Chen Rongjie (Wing-tsit) 陳榮捷. 1984. *Wang Yangming yu chan* 王陽明與禪. Taipei: Taiwan Xuesheng.
- Greenblatt, Kristin. 1975. "Chu-hung and Lay Buddhism in the Late Ming." In *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*, 93–140, eds. William de Bary and the Conference on Seventeenth-Century Chinese Thought. New York and London: Columbia University Press.
- Gregory, Peter. 1987. "Introduction." In *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought*, 1–9, ed. Peter Gregory. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- _____. 2002. *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Hsu, Sung-pen. 1979. *A Buddhist Leader in Ming China: The Life and Thought of Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Kalupahana, David. 1992. *A History of Buddhist Philosophy*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Kaviratna, Harischandra, trans. 1980. *Dhammapada: Wisdom of the Buddha*. Pasadena, CA.: Theosophical University Press.
- Liu, Wu-chi. 1964. *A Short History of Confucian Philosophy*. New York: Dell Publishing.
- Qian Mu 錢穆. 1962. *Songming lixue gailun*, vol. i 宋明理學概述(一). Taipei: Zhonghua Wenhua.
- Ran Yunhua 冉雲華. 1995. *Cong Yindu fojiao dao Zhongguo fojiao* 從印度佛教到中國佛教. Taipei: Dongda.
- Sharf, Robert H. 2001. *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism: A Reading of the Treasure Store Treatise*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

- Shi Shengyan 釋聖嚴. 1987. *Mingmo fojiao yanjiu* 明末佛教研究. Taipei: Dongchu.
- Sun Kaitai 孫開泰, Liu Wenyu 劉文雨 and Hu Weixi 胡偉希. 1995. *Zhongguo zhixueshi* 中國哲學史. Taipei: Wenjun.
- Wu Guang 吳光. 1994. *Rudao lunshu* 儒道論述. Taipei: Dongda.
- Yü, Chün-fang. 1981. *The Renewal of Buddhism in China: Chu-hung and the Late Ming Synthesis*. New York: Columbia University Press.

JIABS

Journal of the International
Association of Buddhist Studies



Volume 33 Number 1–2 2010 (2011)

The *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* (ISSN 0193-600XX) is the organ of the International Association of Buddhist Studies, Inc. As a peer-reviewed journal, it welcomes scholarly contributions pertaining to all facets of Buddhist Studies. *JIABS* is published twice yearly.

As announced at the XVIth IABS Congress in Taiwan, the *JIABS* is now available online in open access at <http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/ojs/index.php/jiabs/index>. Articles become available online for free 60 months after their appearance in print. Current articles are not accessible online. Subscribers can choose between receiving new issues in print or as PDF. We are kindly requesting all authors that could be opposed to this decision to inform the Editors by June 2012.

Manuscripts should preferably be submitted as e-mail attachments to: editors@iabsinfo.net as one single file, complete with footnotes and references, in two different formats: in PDF-format, and in Rich-Text-Format (RTF) or Open-Document-Format (created e.g. by Open Office).

Address books for review to:
JIABS Editors, Institut für Kultur- und Geistesgeschichte Asiens, Apostelgasse 23, A-1030 Wien, AUSTRIA

Address subscription orders and dues, changes of address, and business correspondence (including advertising orders) to:

Dr Jérôme Ducor, IABS Treasurer
Dept of Oriental Languages and Cultures
Anthropole
University of Lausanne
CH-1015 Lausanne, Switzerland
email: iabs.treasurer@unil.ch
Web: <http://www.iabsinfo.net>
Fax: +41 21 692 29 35

Subscriptions to *JIABS* are USD 55 per year for individuals and USD 90 per year for libraries and other institutions. For informations on membership in IABS, see back cover.

EDITORIAL BOARD

KELLNER Birgit
KRASSER Helmut
Joint Editors

BUSWELL Robert
CHEN Jinhua
COLLINS Steven
COX Collet
GÓMEZ Luis O.
HARRISON Paul
VON HINÜBER Oskar
JACKSON Roger
JAINI Padmanabh S.
KATSURA Shōryū
KUO Li-ying
LOPEZ, Jr. Donald S.
MACDONALD Alexander
SCHERRER-SCHAUB Cristina
SEYFORT RUEGG David
SHARF Robert
STEINKELLNER Ernst
TILLEMANS Tom

Cover: Cristina Scherrer-Schaub
Font: "Gandhari Unicode"
designed by Andrew Glass (<http://andrewglass.org/fonts.php>)

© Copyright 2011 by the
International Association of
Buddhist Studies, Inc.

Print: Ferdinand Berger & Söhne
GesmbH, A-3580 Horn

JIABS

Journal of the International
Association of Buddhist Studies

Volume 33 Number 1–2 2010 (2011)

Articles

William CHU

*The timing of Yogācāra resurgence in the Ming dynasty
(1368–1643)* 5

Vincent ELTSCHINGER

Ignorance, epistemology and soteriology – Part II 27

Richard F. NANCE

*Tall tales, tathāgatas, and truth – On the “privileged lie” in
Indian Buddhist literature.* 75

Alexander WYNNE

*The ātman and its negation – A conceptual and chronologi-
cal analysis of early Buddhist thought* 103

Indian Buddhist metaethics

Contributions to a panel at the XVth Congress of the International
Association of Buddhist Studies, Atlanta, 23–28 June 2008

Guest editor: Martin T. Adam

Peter HARVEY

*An analysis of factors related to the kusala/akusala quality
of actions in the Pāli tradition* 175

Abraham VÉLEZ DE CEA

Value pluralism in early Buddhist ethics 211

Martin T. ADAM

*No self, no free will, no problem – Implications of the Anatta-
lakkhaṇa Sutta for a perennial philosophical issue* 239

Bronwyn FINNIGAN

Buddhist metaethics 267

Stephen JENKINS

On the auspiciousness of compassionate violence 299

Jay L. GARFIELD

*What is it like to be a bodhisattva? Moral phenomenology in
Śāntideva's Bodhicaryāvatāra* 333

Tom J. F. TILLEMANS

Madhyamaka Buddhist ethics 359

Miracles and superhuman powers in South and Southeast Asian Buddhist traditions

Contributions to a panel at the XVth Congress of the International
Association of Buddhist Studies, Atlanta, 23–28 June 2008

Guest editor: David V. Fiordalis

David V. FIORDALIS

Miracles in Indian Buddhist narratives and doctrine 381

Bradley S. CLOUGH

The higher knowledges in the Pāli Nikāyas and Vinaya. 409

Kristin SCHEIBLE

*Priming the lamp of dhamma – The Buddha’s miracles in the
Pāli Mahāvamsa* 435

Patrick PRANKE

*On saints and wizards – Ideals of human perfection and
power in contemporary Burmese Buddhism* 453

Rachelle M. SCOTT

*Buddhism, miraculous powers, and gender – Rethinking the
stories of Theravāda nuns.* 489

Luis O. GÓMEZ

On Buddhist wonders and wonder-working. 513

•

Notes on the contributors 555