

Buddhism and Confucianism in Sudden Approach: A Cunning Cultural Paradigm

Many scholars would agree that the sudden and gradual paradigm has caused as much ink to flow as it deserves. It is well known that the rise of Chan orthodoxy was conducive to the success of the “sudden” teaching. It calls forth the most famous argument between the “Northern” and “Southern” factions of Chinese Buddhism in the eighth century that reflected upon the supposed differences between the two schemes of meditative paths to the attainment of awakening; while the Northern school describes a “gradual” mental cultivation, the Southern school emphasizes a “sudden” spiritual insight. The complex theme of the sudden-gradual distinction, throughout Chinese culture and literature, seems to cover a bewildering succession of issues.¹ Conspicuously, we are often confronted with a teleological model describing the polarity of “sudden and gradual” in resolving a hermeneutic or philosophical problem particularly contentious for Chan/Zen Buddhism.² There are, in fact, good reasons to question this model—it may well have failed to take into account the cultural contexts in its approach. It is known that the sudden-gradual

¹ The analogy between the geographical locations of “south-north” and the two-way of thinking (sudden-gradual) was drawn in the Six dynasties: “The learning of the Southerners is coherently lucid and concise” 南人學問清通簡要... “the learning of the Northerners is profoundly comprehensive and abundant” 北人學問淵綜廣博... “the Northerner comprehends his book as if he sees the moon in wide-openness” 北人看書如顯處視月, “the Southerner comprehends his book as if he peeps the sun through the window” 南人看書如牖中窺日. See *Shishu xinyujianshu, Wenxue* 世說新語箋疏·文學, 216. This analogy, however, does not clearly articulate the doctrinal positions in the Chinese cultural and literature histories. According to Qian Zhongshu 錢鐘書, it is more of “préfiguration rétroactive” (Bergson’s term), like the upstart who rewrites his genealogy, or like the fore-generations of a high rank imperial official being endorsed with titles retroactively by the emperor. See Qian Zhongshu, *Qizhuiji* 七綴集, 3. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Chinese are by the author.

² McRae argues that the terms “sudden teaching,” “sudden awakening,” and “sudden practice” often carried affective and rhetorical power as slogans rather than demarcating clearly articulated doctrinal positions. Luis O. Cómez remarks that the “sudden” and “gradual” polarity may be seen as developing a deeply rooted tension in Chinese culture between the effortful cultivation and spontaneous intuition. Whereas Paul Demiéville suggests directly, the sudden and gradual polarity reflected in its broad scope, in the respective stances of Confucianism and Taoism. For more “Sudden and gradual” polarity discussions, cf. Gregory, ed. *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought*.

emergence reflects complicated historical and cultural circumstances within Buddhist contexts, and can be traced back in the earlier history of Chinese Buddhism.³ To avoid constraining myself to restrictive Buddhist textual and philosophical approaches in this paper, I will endeavor to demonstrate that the early attempt to affirm the sudden approach in Buddhism was an echo in the feud of the “foreign and Chinese debate” (*yixia zhibian*)⁴ and revolved around a cunning consensus between Buddhism and Confucianism. By means of utilizing the “foreign and Chinese debate” as a device, I will locate the sudden approach in pre-Chan Buddhism within the socio-cultural contexts from the viewpoints of anthropological perspectives and literary criticism.

“Foreign and Chinese Debate”: the Cultural (Dis) content

“What a monk has to accomplish/ Sweeps floor and burns incense/ While the clean scent whiffs over the green mountain/ The idle clouds drift onto the bamboo hut/ Body and mind are far away from the dust of the world/ Time is forgotten in the crossed-leg sitting/ The meditation hall is closed at dusk/ Nothing is seen in the empty sunset.”⁵ It is easy to recognize the romanticism in the poetic view of monastic life. However, the difficulty in the Buddhist scholarly discourse, as Pei-yi Wu observes, is that Buddhist historiography never escaped from the rigid canons of Confucian historiography, and the Chinese Buddhist doctrine earned the same retributions.⁶ Though, Derrida argues that “The concept of Chinese writing thus functioned as a sort of European hallucination. This implied nothing fortuitous: this functioning obeyed a rigorous necessity. And the

³ See studies on the earliest sudden approach to Buddhism practice proposed by Zhu Daosheng 竺道生 (355? -434): Whalen Lai 1987; Heinrich Dumoulin 1963; Walter Liebenthal 1956, 1955; Chen Yinque 陳寅恪 1947; Tang Yundan 湯用丹 1938.

⁴ *Yixiazhibian* 夷夏之辯, see *Hongming ji* 弘明集 T.52, 2102:29-49.

⁵ Cui Tong 崔峒. *Tangshi biecai* 唐詩別裁 · 沈德潛 Vol.11.

⁶ “Even a revered Buddhist master, secured in his station and independent of the Confucian world...as soon as he laid down his staff and grasped a pen instead, he would become almost as helpless as his Confucian brethren” subject to the Confucian tradition. The act of grasping a brush (pen) as the primacy of Confucian education would deprive him of “whatever freedom he had in his other roles and impose on him a set of constraints one could seldom defy.” See Wu, *The Confucian's Progress: Autobiographical Writings in Traditional China*, 71. Though, Peter N. Gregory proposes that classical Chinese seems “ill equipped” to deal with the subtle psychological and epistemological distinctions found in the Indian Buddhist meditation manuals (doctrines) in addition to its cultural distance. See Gregory, ed. *Traditions of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism*, 5.

hallucination translated less an ignorance than a misunderstanding.”⁷ At the same time “as the ‘Chinese prejudice,’ a ‘*hieroglyphist prejudice*’ had produced the same effect of interested blindness.”⁸ The classical Chinese language was used by both Buddhist and secular historiographers and scholars with the same consequences, “concise,” “intangible,” and “suggestive,” like that of poetry. Inevitably, the challenge becomes focusing perceptions and honing methods in the doctrines that are “concise,” “intangible,” and “suggestive,” while next to nothing is being said about the transformations between interior life and external circumstance.⁹ Nevertheless, “in a certain way we might consider the time of their religious ‘filling’ as a moment in the history of these cultural forms.”¹⁰ One may assume that dominated as it was by Confucian models of human relationship in highly hierarchized imperial China, the Indian Buddhist anarchism must have had liberating effects. Allegorically, this anarchism is what made Indian Buddhism quickly meet its limits. The foreignness (*yi*) of the early Buddhist monastic establishment in China, and the conditions of Chinese (*xia*) acceptance, thus remain the underlying impetus to the sudden approach in Buddhism.

The early extant descriptions of Buddhist monastic values¹¹ suggest everything in opposition to the cultural values that were held in Chinese society.¹² In addition,

⁷ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 80.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ In spite of this fact, some of the poems collected in the Dun Huang Texts may give us a rather close view on the interior life of monks. These poems often are in opposition to our common view of the Buddhist monastic life: “I often look at the moon in water, and listen to the drifting wind, but my confusions still arise. I regret my youth is gone with time, pity how much longer my posture will be. My compassion is gone with floating clouds, abhorring thoughts sharpening like an awl. Doddering, my steps are baffling, I ask the Chan master for help. A short awakening does not keep the frosty mirror clean; the flourishing things tempt my heart. When I think of my past at dusk, a hundred arrows of sorrow shout out one grief.” See Pelliat No. 4660, Département des Manuscrits Orientaux, Bibliothèque Nationale.

¹⁰ De Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 176.

¹¹ “Those who follow the (Buddhist) way must be tonsured, abjure their secular duties and leave their family behind, be ordained by their (Buddhist) masters, abide vinaya, live gregariously (in the monastery), cultivate one’s mind and develop one’s simplicity, and beg one’s own food, are named *shamen* 沙門... The beginner who practices the ten precepts is called *shami* 沙彌, and he who advances to two hundred fifty precepts, becomes a *daseng* 大僧. Women who follow its way are called *biqioni* 比丘尼, abide in the precepts up to five hundred... Since the Han time, the monks and nuns all wore red wardrobes, later (the color of the wardrobe) varied...” See *Weishu*, *Shilaozhi* 魏書·釋老志, TFSH, 3026.

¹² In order to establish the cultural legitimacy for the monastic begging in China, early Buddhism identified monks as *qishi* 乞士 [begging literati, or begging gentlemen]. Stated in *Fahua yishu* 法華義疏 by Jizang 吉藏: “Monk is thus named *qishi*, so that Tathāgata begs for teachings to cultivate awakening from above, while the layman begs for living below.” See T. 34,1721:457c22. “The body and hair are bestowed by the parents. To not impair the body and hair is the beginning of filial piety”. See T.50, 2040:49. “In the

Sākyamuni's aristocratic background provided a reasonable account for the Chinese to identify the Buddhist precepts and Buddhist monastic of a foreign aristocracy with democratic constitution. The Buddhist monastic thus was legislated by its own law so that it expressed its independence from the State. In reality, the establishment of the Buddhist monastic in China was a migration of a foreign collective that stood with its independent constitution and class structure in the Chinese society. Nevertheless, confronted with the ordered social structures of Chinese society, and family unity and its multifaceted rituals of ancestor worship, early Buddhism had to consider ways in which its monastic practices might be rendered into forms accessible to a wider segment of the community. The formation of a fictive Buddhist family kinship thus led to a transposition in the polarity of the two cultures: adopting the organizational patterns and inter-relational terms from the Confucian family kinship system. As a result, the Buddhist monastic re-created a "Buddhist family" structure¹³ in order to win popularity from both the imperial house and the populace.

The sense of allegiance to follow the dharma within its cultural contexts, in rejection of their previous secular lives, and their birth names in particular, had to be established¹⁴ (i.e. a transference of the Chinese cultural context, a need for resembling and a substitution for the formal secular family name). Although Daoan's suggestion functioned as the beginning of Buddhist conscious attempt to alleviate the "foreign and

Huangchu regime of Wei (220-225), the Chinese monks began to abide by the Buddhist precepts, shaving their hair." See *Suishu, Jingji zhi* 隋書·經籍志, TFSH, 1097.

¹³ Teiser observes that the "differences found expression in both the spiritual powers popularly attributed to monks and nuns and the hostility sometimes voiced toward their way of life, which seemed to threaten the core of the Chinese family system," and "the use of kinship terminology—an attempt to—re-create family—among monks and nuns" was brought about the comfort to the society. See "The Spirits of Chinese Religion" in Donald S. Lopez, Jr. ed. *Religions of China in Practice*, 17. The Buddhist monastics adopted the essential Confucian family models by using terms such as *zu* 祖 [grandfather/master's master, male/female], *fu* 父 [father/master, male/female], *shubo, gu* 叔伯 姑 [uncle, aunt /master's fellow disciple], *xiongdì, jiemei* 兄弟 姐妹 [brother, sister/fellow disciples]. See also John Jorgenson, *The Imperial' Lineage of Ch'an Buddhism*.

¹⁴ See *Yanshi jiaxun, Fengcao* 顏氏家訓·風操 by Yan Zhitui 顏之推 (531-591): "...after a hundred generations they still are brothers. If one should tell the others, they all are called *zuren* 族人 [clan's fellowmen]. The people of Literati in north of the Yellow River are still called *congshu* 從叔 [fellowing uncle] after twenty or thirty generations," 86-87. *Congshu* are the cousins on the father's side who are addressed in the same *xin* 姓 [surname] thus born the same family tie. *Xin* is the fundamental function that carries on the family tie, and is strictly connected with *zu* 族 [clan]. Renouncement of surname is a rejection of one's family, clan, and culture ultimately.

Chinese debate,”¹⁵ the autonomous stance of the aristocracy and the independent nature of the Buddhist monastic were still highlighted in both the social and the political sectors. Like the domestic aristocracies, the Buddhist monastic benefited from a variety of rights. In the North of China, there were *sengzhihu*¹⁶ who cultivated the lands for the monks, and *fotuhu*¹⁷ who were responsible for sundry works and miscellaneous duties in monasteries. In the South, monks and nuns resumed the family function by “fostering sons” (*baitu*) and “daughters” (*yangnü*).¹⁸ The ultimate monastic prestige and its privileges, after all, were exemptions from military service, and taxation.

Consequently, refusing to comply with the imperial house¹⁹ and rejecting to pay deference to the Confucian family kinship, which confronted the Buddhist monastic socially and politically, were overwhelming. Shi Huiyuan²⁰ was the first monk to launch the debate to assuage the “foreign and Chinese debate” openly. He promoted the confluence of Buddhism and Confucianism:

Thus to seek Sages’ teachings, the ways of laity and clergy can be joined largely. The dharma and the social etiquettes and protocols, Tathāgata, Yao, and Confucian are cultivated and originated differently, but affect one another profoundly. They began truly discretely, and they will end in the same way and at the same time.²¹

In contrast to Huiyuan’s efforts, the Buddhist monastic did not manage to comply with the imperial house during those times.²² Likewise, the Confucian literati’s

¹⁵ Shi Daoan 釋道安 (312-385) suggested all monks taking the name of their ultimate teacher Sākyamuni, under the surname *shi* 釋, which endowed a Buddhist “surname” and “established as creed.” Thus, this creed was no longer in the context of foreignness, or *yi*, but religious. See *Gaoseng zhuan*, T.50, 2059:351.

¹⁶ *Sengzhihu* 僧祇戶: The family was responsible for a donation of sixty-hu 斛 (approximately 1300 gals.) of grains to Buddhist monastery annually. See *Wei Shu, Shilaozhi*, TFSH, 3037.

¹⁷ *Fotuhu* 佛圖戶: The family, or an individual, served in the monastery (as a probation) under prison sentence or government punishment. *Ibid.*, TFSH, 3037.

¹⁸ *Baitu*: 白徒 untrained soldier originally, see *Guanzi, Qifa, Xuanchen* 管子·七法·選陳. Here it refers to the drifter or unskilled person. *Yangnü* 養女: Fostered daughter. “Monks adopt *baitu* and nuns have *yangnü*, who are all undocumented; half of the state resident registrations are missing. Many monks and nuns conduct themselves unlawfully. And the Yangnü dressed in silk-veil and offended the public with their indecency.” See *Nanshi, Xunli zhuan, Guozushen zhuan* 南史·循吏傳·郭祖深傳, TFSH, 1722.

¹⁹ Refusing any merit to Liang Wudi 梁武帝 for the construction of temples suggested a rejection of obedience to the imperial house, thus Bodhidharma encountered the “foreign and Chinese debate” and had to move on to the North.

²⁰ Shi Huiyuan 釋慧遠 (334-416) See *Gaoseng zhuan*, T.50, 2059:357

²¹ *Shamen bujing wangzhe lun* 沙門不敬王者論 and related discussions in *Hongming ji*, T.52, 2120:29.

²² “In the beginning (462), Yubing 庾冰 suggested the Buddhist monastic to be ordered to pay obedience to

opposition was strongly articulated in works such as “foreign and Chinese discussions.”²³ To continue alleviating the “foreign and Chinese debate,” Guifeng Zongmi²⁴ called forth attention in his commentaries on *Yulanpen jing*.²⁵ He explicated the efforts and engaged in the controversy by expounding and propagating Confucian filial piety. In addition, in his *Yuanren lun*, Zongmi began to pace Huiyuan’s confluence of Buddhism and Confucianism with Taoism.²⁶

Few years after Zongmi’s death, poet Du Mu depicted a landscape of the Jinling area:²⁷ “Four hundred eighty monasteries from the South Dynasties remain/ How many splendid towers and terraces are in the mist of rain?”²⁸ Intriguingly, with the cultural discontent, there seemed to be, in parallel, cultural content.²⁹ The proliferation of the Buddhist monastic in the Six Dynasties persuades us to shift our perception from elitism to proselytism. Explicitly, Buddhism came at times to assume various features of the popular cultures it encountered. In spite of the complex fact that the status of

the imperial, no actions were taken. Thus, the ministers carried this memorial to the throne: ‘Buddhism as the Teaching is against the Learning (of Confucian) and is impeding the Way. Buddhists kneel to the four of their own kinds (monks, nuns, layman, and laywoman of Buddhism) but not to their parents. They chronicle their ages by their ordination dates but stand erect before Your Majesty. We, the ministers, request the Buddhists to pay obedience to the Imperial.’ In September, Buddhist monastics were forced to comply with the Imperial. However, Buddhist affairs returned to the way they were when the Emperor Fi took the throne.” See *Yupi tongjian jilan* 御批通鑑輯覽 Vol.38, *Songshu*, *Manyi zhuan*, *Tianzhu jiapigu zhuan*, 宋書·蠻夷傳·天竺迦毗國傳, TFSH, 2387.

²³ “Huan stated in *Yixia lun* 夷夏論 (discussions of yi and xia): ...long luxuriant gowns with abundant belts are Chinese (*xia*, or *hau*) attributes; hairlessness and loose robes are all foreign (*yi*) customs. Raising hands and kneeling gracefully is the nobility’s reverence. Squatting like a fox, crouching like a dog, are barbarian apprehensions. The double-coffin and a burial site with ceremony, is the Chinese manner. Torched with fire, the corpse discarded in water, is the Western vulgar way. Keeping one’s body intact, following social protocols are the great teaching. Impairing one’s image and changing one’s nature are the teachings of vice... we have our own success, if we follow the Western barbarian teachings, we will not be alike, nor unlike (the barbarian) fully. Abandoning wife and children, discarding ancestor worship... are against the *li* 禮 (social etiquette) and those who are well conducted...” See *Nanshi*, *Guhuan zhuan*, 南史·顧歡傳, TFSH, 1876. See also *Hongming ji*, T.52, 2120:29-32.

²⁴ Guifeng Zongmi 圭峰宗密.

²⁵ *Foshuo yulanpen jingshu* 佛說盂蘭盆經疏 T.39, 1792:505.

²⁶ *Yuanren lun* 原人論 T. 45,1886:707.

²⁷ Jinling 金陵, modern Nanjing, was the capitals of the dynasties of Song 宋, Qi 齊, Liang 梁, and Chen 陳.

²⁸ Du Mu 杜牧: “南朝四百八十寺 多少樓臺煙雨中” See Gao Buyin *Tangsongshi juyao*, 828.

²⁹ “From 454 to 477, nearly one hundred monasteries were built; there were over one thousand monks and nuns inside the capital. There were six thousand four hundred and seventy eight monasteries, and seventy-seven thousand two hundred and fifty-eight monks and nuns outside of the capital. In 512, there were thirteen thousand seven hundred and twenty-seven monasteries in the State. In 518 the monastery numbers increased over thirty thousand.” See *Weishu*, TFSH, 3039.

Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism is somewhat always ambiguous,³⁰ in the present study I adopt the epistemological model of “learned culture/popular culture, official religion/popular religion” in a slightly different perspective.³¹ Bracketing the dualistic model onto the frame of traditional Sinology helps us to see a similar role played by both the early Buddhist establishment in the Six Dynasties and the Chan establishment in the Tang dynasty. It is, as Faure describes, a role that is often on the threshold between learned culture and popular culture, and it is equally midway between official and popular religions when its prestige as thaumaturges serve the prestige of the State—as did Fotudeng to Shi and Shenxiu to Wu.³² These venerated meditators were supposedly endowed with the six abhijñā³³ that were commonly recognized as by-products of the Buddhist meditation. *Shentong*, as the general Chinese term was used, a transliteration of abhijñā that acquired Taoist and the popular religious connotations, became the early and the essential Buddhism attractions for the Chinese.

Yanagida Seisan describes an endemic trait in Chinese that was to seek for supernatural powers in the Six Dynasties. He argues that the acceptance of Chan and Pure Land (Buddhism) in China had less to do with its teaching and philosophical supremacy but more to do with the supernormal powers supposedly brought by the practice of Buddhist meditation. This popular belief was rooted so deeply in Chinese Buddhism that it ramified the independence of Chan Buddhism later.³⁴ As scholar monk, Daoan was one of the first Chinese who took Buddhism as a religion seriously: “being full of earnest

³⁰ “At the lower end of the social-political spectrum, one could perhaps distinguish heuristically between a folk religious culture and several ‘popular’ (or rather ‘popularized’) religions such as popular/folk Buddhism and Daoism.” See Faure, *The Rhetoric of Immediacy*, 87.

³¹ For discussions of the methodological issues, see Bell 1989, Berling 1980, Duara 1988, Freedmen 1974, Johnson, Nathan, and Rawski 1985, Lancaster 1984, Overmyer 1980, Sangren 1987, Weller 1987, and C.K. Yang 1961.

³² Fotudeng 佛圖澄 (232-348), known for his supernormal powers, came to China in 310, offered his prestige to the ruling Shi 石 family of Houzhao 後趙 State (319-351), titled as *Daheshang* 大和上. Wu 武則天. See T.50, 2059:383, Pelliat No. 2680, Département des Manuscrits Orientaux, Bibliothèque Nationale; Chen Zuolong 陳祚龍 *Dunhuang xueyuanlingshi* 敦煌學園零拾, 275; *Jiutang shu, Fangji, Shenxiu zhuan* 舊唐書·方伎·神秀傳, TFSH, 5109; Chen Yinke “Wuzhao and Buddhism,” *Jinmingguan conggao erbian* 金明館叢稿二編, 153.

³³ The six abhijñā: *Shenzutong* 神足通, *Tianyantong* 天眼通, *Tianertong* 天耳通, *Taxintong* 他心通, *Sumingtong* 宿命通, and *Loujintong* 漏盡通. For a detailed explanation of the definitions about the six abhijñā, see Yanagida Seisan 柳田聖山 *The History of Chinese Chan Thoughts*, 中國禪思想史 translated by Wu Rujun 吳汝鈞, 28-29. See also Faure, *The Rhetoric of Immediacy*, 102.

³⁴ See Yanagida Seisan, *The History of Chinese Chan Thoughts*.

devotion for the scriptures, set his will upon propagating the Buddhist faith.”³⁵ Cultivated by Fotudeng, Daoan’s deep interests in the supernatural powers signified the trend of the time:

One who attains the (power of) meditation steps and the world shakes, waves his hands and the sun and moon eclipse, blows on the iron barrier and it flies away, breathes on water and it dances. Such wonders are brought about only by practicing catur-dhyāna (the four-stage meditation), and grasping the six breathing method.³⁶

Sudden/Chinese and Gradual/Foreign: Ideological (Dis)content

Buddhism advanced in both scholarly studies and religious practices when the Chinese began to search for the essential nature of shentong. In its course, Buddhism was gradually infatuated with the Chinese elite intellectuals.³⁷ The “foreign and Chinese debate” thus penetrated deeply into the ideological strata. In the ocean of translations of the Buddhist sūtras from Sanskrit to Chinese, Buddhists began to develop ways in which their doctrines could be integrated into tenets available to the Chinese intellectual segment. *Geyi*, or the method of analogy, came to be the first ideological encounter of the Chinese intellectual response to early Buddhist thoughts. Stated in *Gaoseng zhuan*: “Ya³⁸ and Kang Falang³⁹ associated the contents of the sūtras with the external writings in order to annotate them, which were called *geyi* ...the external writings and Buddhist sūtras were, therefore, transmitted and expounded upon, on behalf of each other.”⁴⁰ According to Chen Yinke, these “external writings” included the Taoist and Confucian writings, as well as many other classics. *Geyi* became the first mediation in facilitating the intellectual exchanges between foreign and Chinese thoughts in Chinese cultural history.⁴¹

³⁵ *Gaoseng zhuan* T.50, 2059:351.

³⁶ *Chu Sanzang jiji* 出三藏記集 See T.55, 2145:43c15.

³⁷ Yanagida, *The History of Chinese Chan Thoughts*, 36.

³⁸ Zhu Faya, 竺法雅 see T, 50, 2059: 347.

³⁹ Kang Falang, 康法朗 see T, 50, 2059: 347.

⁴⁰ *Geyi* 格義, see T, 50, 2059: 347a22. See also *Zihui* 字彙, Vol.5.

⁴¹ Chen Yinke suggests that *geyi* not only functioned as the mediation between Buddhism on one side and Taoism and Confucianism on the other, but also stimulated the Chinese cultural and intellectual development. The well-known allusion of the “Seven Sages in the Bamboo Grove 竹林七賢” well exemplified a Buddhist and Confucian confluence. According to Chen, the “bamboo grove” was inspired by the name of India 天竺 [heavenly bamboo], while the seven sages cited in *The Analects* “the originators

According to Bourdieu: “If the ‘immigration of ideas’, as Marx puts it, rarely happens without these ideas incurring some damage in the process, this is because such immigration separates cultural productions from the system of theoretical reference points in relation to which they are consciously or unconsciously defined.”⁴² The development of Mahāyāna enhanced the Buddhism’s ambivalent attitude toward *shentong*. While the idea of Bodhisattva as a wonder-working mediator dancing magically through the universe, the logic of emptiness undermined these wonders and tended to reduce them to empty delusions. When the philosophical-minded scholarship of rational tendency downplayed, if not denied, *shentong* in the name of Buddhist philosophy, Buddhism thus was in the position to acquire Confucian intellectual empathy. Like Chan, early Buddhism “had to affirm *shentong* as a weapon in its rivalry with Daoism and indigenous cults when it was trying to gain ground in Chinese society, once firmly established, it chose to draw closer to Confucianism and to shift toward the other pole of Chinese ideology.”⁴³ This fusion of traditions was anticipated throughout the history of Buddhism, although the position of being the protagonist in the two encounters shifted back and forth.⁴⁴ The continuing similarities call attention to the possible parallels that evidently advocated the continuation of the “foreign and Chinese debate.”

In contrast to the notion of early Buddhism’s association with Neo-Taoism, I argue that the sudden approach in Buddhism was an outcome of Buddhism espousing Confucianism—a cunning strategy to defuse the “foreign and Chinese debate.” In this light, one could even consider that the Buddhist sudden approach and Confucianism may be two antagonistic, yet shrewd, teaching accomplices in a conspiracy of silence. Whereas the nature of Buddhist awakening differs from that of the Taoist, ultimately, Buddhism aims at absolute awakening, not simply longevity as Taoism does. “Buddhist teaching sees the emptiness of life, thus abandoning the body to liberate all sentient

were seven” (14:40). On the other hand, the Buddhist influences were also cogently expressed in Kouqian’s 寇謙 Taoism reformation. Kou rehabilitated and transformed the Celestial Taoism into the Northern, or the new tradition, based upon Indian Buddhist medicine, astrology, and precepts. Furthermore, the rapid translation and distribution of Buddhist canons brought about the formation of the Chinese phonetic tone 四聲. See *The Lectures on the History of the Dynasties of Wei Jin Nan Bei* 48-50, 348-368. For more about the Buddhist influence on Chinese phonetics, see Qian Daxin 錢大昕 *Shijiazhai Yangxinlu* 十駕齋養新錄.

⁴² Bourdieu, *Language & Symbolic Power*, 163.

⁴³ Faure, *The Rhetoric of Immediacy*, 125.

⁴⁴ Whalen Lai argues that this fusion of traditions took place between Buddhism and Taoism. See “Tao-sheng’s Theory of Sudden Enlightenment Re-examined,” in Gregory, ed. *Sudden and Gradual*, 169.

beings. Taoist teaching sees the body as the ultimate, thus cultivating food and medicine for longevity.”⁴⁵ To a certain extent, analogous concepts between Buddhism and Neo-Taoism functioned as the “lens” through which Buddhism was understood; however, the ambiguous status of Confucianism and Taoism was surprisingly deceitful. For example, *mingjiao* (the teaching of name)⁴⁶ was deeply intermingled with the rise of Neo-Taoism, while Han Confucianism was apparently fading as an effect of *danggu* event.⁴⁷ Neo-Taoism was never as “individualistic”, or clearly cut from the Confucian tradition, as it led us to believe. The theme of “light talk” and the “mysterious learning” in Neo-Taoism had created a seductive ground where scholars argue the development of Neo-Taoism providing the basis for Chinese reflection on the Buddhist mysteries in the Six dynasties.

It seems clear that the Chinese rejection of Indian Buddhist thought, particularly the Indian dhyāna and the abhidharmic maps of the path, and the stress on the Mahāyāna doctrine of emptiness and formlessness became a manifestation of Buddhist demythologization. At this point, the inclination of Buddhism toward Confucianism is apparent. Whereas the Confucian, “whose respect for the Spirits and Gods keep him at a distance (from spirits and gods), may be enlightened,” the Buddhist’s “sudden awakening” contributed to a “decline of magic,” and a banalization of the sacred.⁴⁸

Luis O. Cómez remarks that “the Chinese concern with sudden and gradual enlightenment was the most intense and long-lasting, simply because the dichotomy was

⁴⁵ Daoan *Erjiao lun* 二教論, *Guanghongming ji* 廣弘明集, T.52, 2103:39a8.

⁴⁶ *Mingjiao* 名教 was first proposed in the Taoist teaching. It states in *Laozi*: “When the Ultimate becomes dispersed, vessels are formed. Thus the Sage assembles leadership.” “Once an institution is established, there is a name (constitution).” See Gaoming 高明 *Boshu laozi xiaozhu* 帛書老子校註, 375-400. “Spring and autumn are adjudicated in the Dao of the name.” See Guo Qingpan 郭慶藩 *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋, 1067. Commentated by Wangbi 王弼: “After dispersing the Ultimate, it is a time for a system of officialdom. There must be distinctions of names to determine the high and the low, therefore, it is called the name.” See *Jinshu, ruanji zhuan* 晉書·阮籍傳: “Rong asks: The Sage (Confucius) emphasizes *mingjiao* [the distinctions of name], Lao and Zhuang stress *ziran* 自然 [the natural]. Are the two teachings different? Zhan replied: They are the same.” According to Chen Yinke’s examination, the definition of *mingjiao* in the Six dynasties was socially and politically determined. It provided a cheap commodity for the literati (whether Confucian or Taoist) to mediate, and to obtain political success in the name of *qingtan* 清談 [light talk] and *ziran*. *Mingjiao* and *ziran* were amalgamated and became the essential theme of the “light talk.” Shantao 山濤, Xiangxiu 向秀, and Wangrong 王戎 were the exemplars. See Chen Yinke, *The Lectures on the History of the Dynasties of Wei Jin Nan Bei*, 49-59.

⁴⁷ *Danggu* 黨錮. See *Houhan shu, Danggu zhuan* 後漢書·黨錮傳, TFSH, 2183-2218. The outcome of *danggu* set off the Neo-Taoist trend of *qingtan*, or light talk and *xuanxue* 玄學, or mysterious learning.

⁴⁸ Faure, *The Rhetoric of Immediacy*, 124.

a part of Chinese culture and not an idea introduced with Buddhism.”⁴⁹ We are told in both *Weishu* and *Shishuo xinyu*, the earliest references to the Buddhist awakening from the early Confucian intellectual standpoint:

Gradually one accumulates merits, casts away one’s vulgarity in countless rebirths; with perseverance one carries on the spiritual imminence to non-birth and attains the way of Buddha.⁵⁰ Regarding the Buddhist sūtras, it is through the gradual cultivation of the spiritual imminence that one arrives at Sage-hood. Said Jianwen: “Will one ascend to the summit and reach the extreme (awakening)? Thus far, one cannot neglect reimbursements acquired through perseverance.”⁵¹

If the dichotomy was not already a part of Indian Buddhism, its cultural contexts and its foreignness undeniably initiated a dichotomous effect that was introduced to China with Buddhism. Likewise, “if one does not step on the earth and live under the heaven, one can leave the mundane world behind, but hunger makes one step on the earth, and thirst brings one back under the heaven.”⁵² Buddhism created a gap by its very nature, at least implicitly, between the world of enlightenment and world of delusion. The early Chinese Buddhists attempted to recognize a doctrine of innate enlightenment, a sudden awakening and used it to close the gap — a gap that the later sudden Chan Buddhism also tried to erase.⁵³

“In the hands of the Buddhist metaphysicians, the sudden practice is no longer merely the best method for the cultivation of the mind or the one method of the ultimate vehicle. If it can be described as such from the outside, from the inside, so to speak, it is no method at all but the very nature of the mind and, indeed, of all things.”⁵⁴ Moreover, there was the sense of being “incapable of meeting the expectations of ordinary people, trapped in a world of suffering and desperately longing to find an escape. This may be one of the shortcomings of the ‘sudden’ position advocated by Chan.”⁵⁵ Evidently, the

⁴⁹ Cómez, “Purifying Gold: The Metaphor of Effort and Intuition in Buddhist Thought and Practice,” in Gregory, ed. *Sudden and Gradual*, 69.

⁵⁰ *Weishu*, TFSH, 3026.

⁵¹ *Shishuo xinyu jianshu* 世說新語箋疏, 229.

⁵² *Henan chenshi yishu* 河南程氏遺書, Vol. 18.

⁵³ Cómez in Gregory, ed. *Sudden and Gradual*, 95.

⁵⁴ Carl Bielefeldt, *Dōgen’s Manuals of Zen Meditation*, 89.

⁵⁵ Faure, “One-Practice Samādhi in Early Ch’an, Traditions of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism” in Gregory, ed. *Traditions of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism*, 117.

first advocate of the “sudden awakening” of Chinese Buddhism had early demonstrated both the “desperation” and the recognition of the gap, and attempted to ease the “desperation” and erase the gap with the “sudden” approach. We are told in *Gaoseng zhuan*:

Daosheng pondered in seclusion for a long time, his awakening went completely beyond words. He sighed deeply: “Forms exist only to reveal meaning. Once the meaning is grasped, the form can be discarded. Words are to explicate principle. Once the principle is recognized, all words cease. Ever since the Sūtras came east, obstacles have hindered the translators. Most of them are trapped in the literal texts, and few have ever seen the original meaning. Only if one can drop the trap and grab the fish, will one finally speak of the Way.” Hence, (Daosheng) reflected the true and the mundane, brooded over cause and effect. Thus, (Daosheng) deduced: Merits incur no reward; by the sudden awakening, one becomes a Buddha.⁵⁶

Daosheng, the first monk to propose the sudden approach to Buddhism⁵⁷ “was remarkably gifted in letters and thoughts as a child.” His “family lived in Peng Town as the literati aristocracy for generations, his father was the county governor.”⁵⁸ “He defeated all the eminent monks and the most famed scholars in his time (in debates).” “He was vigilant in spirit and solemn.”⁵⁹ A careful reading of the “concise” and “suggestive” text, concerning his thoughts and behavior, may assist us in catching sight of the Confucian effect. He “studied all sūtras, and reflected on the other discussions... took no fatigue in the ten thousand miles to obtain teachings.”⁶⁰ One may suspect his idea that “words are to explicate principle. Once the principle is recognized, all words cease” somewhat reflected the Confucian idea “words (of principle) that are articulated are ceased,”⁶¹ and “it is man who can disseminate the Way, not the Way that disseminate a

⁵⁶ T. 50, 2059:366.

⁵⁷ *Songshu* 宋書, *Manyi zhuan*, *Tianzhu jiapiguo zhuan*, 蠻夷傳·天竺迦毗國傳, TFSH, 2387.

⁵⁸ T. 50, 2059:366,b24.

⁵⁹ T. 50, 2059:366,b29.

⁶⁰ Since his “first illumination was alone and condemned as the heretic teaching by the followers of the traditional teaching,” Daosheng was expelled from the monastic community in Changan around the year 429. See Lai in Gregory ed. *Sudden and Gradual*, 191.

⁶¹ *Cida eryiyi* 辭達而已矣, see *The Analects* 15:40, SZ, 2519. Compare the interpretations below: “In language it is simply required that it convey the meaning.” Legge, 305. “In official speeches all that matters

man.”⁶² While Daosheng faced severe oppositions brought against him by the traditional Buddhist teaching in the sudden and gradual debate, his expression of willingness to die for his faith in the sudden approach⁶³ echoes Confucius: “learn the Way in the morning, die content in the evening.”⁶⁴ When the emperor Wen granted a feast (picnic) for the monks, in response to his fellow monks’ concern about time (was inappropriate to the precepts), Daosheng remarked: “The bright day depends on heaven (the emperor); when heaven says day starts at noon (appropriate to the precepts), it is noon.”⁶⁵ He then took his bowl and began to eat. It would appear to be teleological, if we believe Daosheng’s behavior here was simply a Buddhist “presence of mind.”⁶⁶ Daosheng’s advocacy of “sudden awakening” recognized the conditions of possibility for unconditioned freedom. His sudden approach was by no means Mahāyāna doctrine, or the Nirvāna Sūtras inspiration.⁶⁷ The statement “merits incur no reward” and “all sentient beings possess the Buddha nature” denied causality and disregarded retribution, and reflected the unconditioned freedom of “sudden awakening,” which in turn was traversed by the multiple constraints of Chinese society.

At any rate, Xie Lingyun clarified Daosheng’s position in his *Bianzong lun*. It eloquently points out that Daosheng opposed the Indian dhyāna and the abhidharmic maps of the path, and freed himself from the Buddhist establishment, crossing the line of

is to get one’s meaning through.” Waly, 213. “In expressing oneself, it is simply a matter of getting the point across.” Ames and Rosemont, Jr., 192. The theme of the fused connections between Confucianism and Neo-Taoism requires much greater examination, and is beyond the scope of this paper. However, Wang Bi’s 王弼 words may prevent us from being trapped in the traditional Buddhism-Neo-Taoism nuance: “The Sage (Confucius), being identified with non-being, realized that it could not be made the subject of instruction and so felt bound to deal with being. Lao and Chuang, however, constantly spoke of that in which they were themselves deficient.” See Fung Yu-lan *A History of Chinese Philosophy II*, 170. See also footnote 40.

⁶² *The Analects*, 15:28, SZ, 2518.

⁶³ T. 50, 2059:366,c28.

⁶⁴ *The Analects*, 4:8, SZ, 2471.

⁶⁵ See T.50, 2059:366,c11. The term *li* 麗 refers to “depend on”, “attach to”, “adorn”, and “beauty.” *Bairi litian* 白日麗天: while translating as “the sun adorns heaven” vs. “bright day depends on heaven”, the social-cultural context differs greatly. The correct interpretation should be “the bright day depends on the heaven (emperor),” not “the sun adorns the emperor.” My suspicion is that Daosheng’s “demonstration of free spirit” had more to do with the cultural, social-political context, than simply the Neo-Taoism philosophical context, as a reaction against the Indian custom and the Hinayāna precepts. See Lai’s opposite interpretations in Gregory ed. *Sudden and Gradual*, 171-172.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁶⁷ See the cogent reconstruction on the issue by Whalen Lai “Tao-sheng’s Theory of Sudden Enlightenment Re-examined” in Gregory ed., 169-200, and Chen Yinque *The Lectures on the History of the Dynasties of Wei Jin Nan Bei*, 49-59.

the “foreign and Chinese debate.” Xie Lingyun articulated Daosheng’s statement further and clarified the “foreign and Chinese debate” by placing the two positions of foreign and Chinese in their cultural contexts on each side of the rubric:

In the Buddhist theory, the way of the Sage is remote, by accumulating learning, illuminating through lives, and eliminating all bonds, one gradually achieves awakening. In the Confucian theory, the way of the Sage is subtle, even Yan⁶⁸ eliminated all bonds, yet reached only virtual perfection since the truth is only revealed in the One Ultimate.⁶⁹ There are new discussions proposed by a monk (Daosheng): “The silent illumination is so subtle that it allows no gradations. The endless accumulations of learning can never determine itself.” Now, I propose to discard Buddhist gradual awakening while accepting its aptitude to leap, and abandon Confucian virtual perfection while accepting its One Ultimate. The doctrinal differences of Buddhism and Confucianism are formed in different places to reflect matters of nature. Overall, they are reflected by the people. The Chinese find it easy to see the truth but difficult to obtain teaching, so they are closed to accumulations of learning, open to One Ultimate. Foreigners find it easy to obtain teaching but difficult to see the truth, so they are closed to sudden understanding, open to gradual awakening. Therefore, Chinese grasp truth with no gradualness and no need for accumulations of learning in attainment of the way.

⁶⁸ Yanyuan 顏淵 was a student of Confucius. According to Zhang Taiyan 章太炎, Yanyuan fulfilled the “Confucian esoteric thought” of “surrendering oneself, or *keji*” 克己 that enables one to overcome obstinacy (vs. the traditional understanding of the mainstream Confucian thought of “cultivating self, or *xiuji*” 修己 and “having effected orders on the others, or *zhiren*” 治人). The similar marginal idea is also found: “The Sage eradicated the four: no-mind, no-aggression, no-obstinacy, and no-self” 子絕四 毋意 毋必 毋固 毋我. And “Could anyone be said to have effected order while remaining nonassertive action” 無為而治者? See *The Analects* 9:4, SZ, 2490, 9:10, 2490, 15:4, 2517. In spite of the concept of “nonassertive action, *wuwei*” may be a Confucian thought borrowed by the later Taoism, Zhang Taiyan argues that the Confucian “non-mind” is identical to Buddhist *laya-vijñāna*. Zhang remarks that Yanyuan articulated the “Confucian esoteric teaching” as: “The more I gaze up at it, the higher it soars; the more I penetrate it, the harder it becomes. I look at it in front of me, and suddenly it is behind me” 仰之彌高 鑽之彌堅 瞻之在前 忽焉在後, which is expressed unambiguously in the idea of “heart fasting” *xinze* 心齋 and “sit forgetting” *zuowang* 坐忘 by Zhuangzi. See Zhang Taiyan *Guoxue jiangyanlu* 國學講演錄, 173. Thus, we find Fingarette’s following remarks convincing: “the (Confucian) magical element always involves great effects produced effortlessly, marvelously, with an irresistible power that is itself intangible, invisible, unmanifest.” See Fingarette, 4.

⁶⁹ “One Ultimate” *yiji* 一極, is derived from Confucius: “My way is pervaded by oneness” 吾道一以貫之. See *The Analects* 4:15, SZ, 2471. This “Oneness” is a main part of Confucian’s esoteric thought, Legge remarks: “This chapter is said to be the most profound in *Lun Yu*.” His translation goes: “My doctrine is that of an all-pervading unity.” See Legge, 169. Compare the translations made by Waly: “My Way has one (thread) that runs right through it,” Waly, 45, and by Ames and Rosemont, Jr.: “My way is bound together with one continuous strand.” See Ames and Rosemont, Jr., 93.

Foreigners grasp truth with accumulations of learning, and need gradualness in attainment of the way.⁷⁰

Xie Lingyun was born in a hereditary literati, aristocratic family. “He was remarkably gifted in letters and thoughts as a child, learned as an adult, bold and unconstrained. A man of luxury, he constantly came to change the traditional wardrobe and ornamentation, design new styles that led the new fashions in the time.”⁷¹ However, he also had expatiated much of his life on mountains and rivers studying nature as many Taoists did.⁷² “Lingyun often complied with no social etiquette.”⁷³ On the other hand, he was particularly aware of the decline of the Confucian cultural traditions in his time. “The great thinkers no longer exist, to whom will I utter my bosom (lofty ideals)?” He lamented that only “the Six Arts⁷⁴ can disseminate the Sage’s teaching (Confucianism).”⁷⁵ Here, we seem to have a rather typical complex case of the ambiguous status of Confucianism and Taoism again. At any rate, it is always without warrant to simply associate social values with Confucianism and individualistic values with Taoism.

By delving into the conditions of awakening, Xie Lingyun clearly construed a cultural rubric between “foreign (*yi*) — gradual — (*jianwu*),” and “Chinese (*xia*) — sudden — (*dunliao*).” Thus, the sudden and gradual division became the cultural dissection between Chinese Confucianism and Indian Buddhism. Xie continued to argue: “The two Sages conferred two teachings to adapt the natures of the hard conditions of China and the easy conditions of India. Thus, (the ways of teaching) to complement the lands, and to merge into the cultures ought be praised.”⁷⁶ Moreover, “Since the goals of Buddhism and Confucianism are the same, their means to save sentient beings cannot be

⁷⁰ Xie Lingyun, 謝靈運 (385-433) *Bianzonglunzhudaoren wandweijunwenda* 辯宗論諸道人王衛軍問答, *Guanghong mingji* vol. 18 廣弘明集卷第十八, T.52, 2103: 224-230.

⁷¹ *Nanshi* Vol. 19, 538, see also *Songshu* Vol. 67, TFSH, 1743.

⁷² According to the legend, Xie made the first “mountain climbing boots” in China. See Li Bei: “I have worn Master Xie’s clogs/ And I am on the mountain-ladder to the blue clouds” 腳著謝公屐 身登青雲梯. See Gao Buyin 高步瀛 *Tangsongshi juyao*, 唐宋詩舉要, 188.

⁷³ “(Lingyun) drinking with Wang Hongzi and others at the Thousand Autumn Pagoda, naked and shouting... he was fuming: ‘It is my body and my shouting, it concerns no other idiots.’” See *Nanshi* Vol. 19, TFSH, 538-540.

⁷⁴ Six Arts: “Ritual” *li* 禮, “music” *yue* 樂, “archery” *she* 射, “horse carriage driving” *yu* 御, “reading and calligraphy” *shu* 書, and “mathematical calculation and divination” *shu* 數. See Zhouli, *Diguan Baoshi* 周禮·地官·保氏 Vol. 14, ZS, 731.

⁷⁵ See *Songshu* Vol. 67, TFSH, 1770.

⁷⁶ T.52, 2103:225b5.

different.”⁷⁷ He lamented then: “Now the way of Confucian Sage learning is shut,⁷⁸ and the door of Buddhist gradual awakening is open. Since the ways are perplexed, how can ordinary people attain the Ultimate (awakening)?”⁷⁹ In due course, Xie made a deviously steep detour to insist that the “subtlety of One Ultimate brooks no gradations” in a purely Confucian context: “Buddhism expresses the gradual; therefore, it demonstrates gradualness. Confucianism conveys non-gradual; therefore, it reveals non-gradualness, and how could it be? To the man who is above the average, the ultimate truth may be uttered.”⁸⁰

Bianzong lun deserves much fuller treatment than is possible here in this paper. As Qian Zhongshu remarks: “the entire treaties of *Bianzong lun* going back and forth like sawing wood, the object is one.”⁸¹ It is noteworthy to cite Qian Zhongshu’s incisive examinations on the subject. Qian indicates that *Yudao lun*,⁸² and *Mingfo lun*⁸³ carried on the notion of the convergence of Buddhism and Confucianism: “Zhou, Confucius is the Buddha, and the Buddha is Zhou, Confucius, it is just the name in foreign or in Chinese.” *Guoshi bu*:⁸⁴ “If Sākyamuni were born in China, he would have established Zhou, Confucianism; if Confucius were born in the West, he would have established Buddhism.” In *Fazang sui jin lu*:⁸⁵ “Be illuminated in silence, be learned without dullness, and teach others without weariness⁸⁶— the former is the sudden awakening, the latter is the gradual cultivation, and the third phrase is called awakened then to wake others.” In *Tianquan zhengdao ji*⁸⁷, the author Wangji restated his teacher Wang Shouren’s claims:

⁷⁷ T.52, 2103:225a22.

⁷⁸ Xie’s laments on Confucianism should be reconciled to “the esoteric Confucian thoughts.” See footnote 68.

⁷⁹ T.52, 2103:225b8.

⁸⁰ T.52, 2103:226c02. See also *The Analects*: “To the man who is above the average ultimate truth may be uttered, to the man who is below the average ultimate truth may not be uttered” 中人以上 可以語上也 中人以下 不可以語上也. 6:19, SZ, 2479. Compare Legge’s translation: “To those whose talents are above mediocrity, the highest subjects may be announced. To those who are below mediocrity, the highest may not be announced.” See Legge, 191.

⁸¹ Qian Zhongshu, 錢鍾書 *Guanzhui bian* 管錐編, 1292.

⁸² Sunchao, 孫綽 (314-371), *Yudao lun* 喻道論, See *Jinshu* 晉書, *Xin Tangshu*, *Yiwenzhi* 新唐書·藝文志 TFSH.

⁸³ Zongbing, 宗炳 (375-433) *Mingfo lu* 明佛論, See *Songshu* 宋書, *Nanshi* 南史 TFSH.

⁸⁴ *Guoshi bu* 國史補, *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 Vol.101.

⁸⁵ *Fazang sui jin lu* 法藏碎金錄 by Chaojiong 晁迥.

⁸⁶ *The Analects* 7:2, SZ, 2481.

⁸⁷ Wangji, 王幾 (1497-1582) *Tianquan zhengdao ji* 天泉證道記, *Longxi xiansheng quanji* 龍谿先生全集.

“the learning of sudden awakening” is for “the upper rooted man” to pursue, and “gradual cultivation is for middle and lower rooted man.” Noticeably, the preceding remarks were formulated with Xie Lingyun’s implications: the *xia* “Chinese” simply happened to be “the upper rooted man” (who is above the average), and the “middle and lower rooted man” was, perhaps, the *yi* “foreigner” (who is below the average).⁸⁸ According to this model, the consciousness of belonging to the selected few, of being able to access the ultimate truth, and look down upon the unaware mundane world becomes a subtle infatuation with the early sudden assertion, which served to instill an elitist character to Chan, and a strong obsession with the neo-Confucian informed intellectuals. As a result, a typical modern Confucian intellectual would remark: “the deep-rooted sinic faith in the perfectibility of human nature through self-effort underlines the teachings of Mencian Confucianism, Chuang Tzu’s Taoism, and the subitist Ch’an.”⁸⁹

The philosophical framework of the sudden approach to Buddhism proposed by Daosheng and Xie Lingyun was provided by the Two Truths theory: sudden and gradual refer to whether awakening is regarded from the point of ultimate truth or of conventional truth. The conventional truth is distant ultimate reality, and yet is continuous with the mundane. One can have only a mediated step-by-step access to it. Whereas ultimate truth is a non-dualistic reality, and yet autonomous, unlike our illusions or expectations of it. One can reach it only all-at-once without any mediation whatsoever. By refuting conventional truth, the sudden advocacy avers ultimate truth. The sudden approach in Buddhism attempts to fill the ontological chasm between noumenon and phenomenon by fusing both extremes, and by identifying *samsāra* with *nirvāna*, conventional truth with ultimate truth, the many with the One, which eventually leads to the affirmation of *samsāra*, of the worldly conventional truth. One may be prompted to ask the question: “If carrying water and chopping wood are really the nature of the Way,” why should one become a monk engaged in spiritual cultivation, and not a Confucian engaged in the

Wang Shouren, 王守仁 (1472-1528), also known as Wang Yangming, Wangji’s teacher. See *Mingshi* 明史 TFSH.

⁸⁸ Qian Zhongshu, *Guanzhui bian*, 1292-1294. See also *Quan songwen*, 全宋文 Vol. 32, and *Quan qiwen*, *Wuliangyi jingxu*, Vol. 20 全齊文·無量義經序.

⁸⁹ Tu Wei-ming, “Afterword: Thinking of “Enlightenment” Religiously,” in Gregory, ed., *Sudden and Gradual*, 455.

court?⁹⁰

“What is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity.”⁹¹ Clearly, the early sudden approach to Buddhism was no exception to this rule; however, its short-lived triumph was not simply a syncretistic development in the Buddhist Prajñā and Mahāyāna doctrines, and a merging with the ideological terms of the current Neo-Taoism. It achieved, in fact, an uneasy polytheism, if not the concession of Confucianism. In this sense, the advocacy of the sudden approach is an implosive process in the “foreign and Chinese debate.” As Baudrillard suggests: “Implosion is not necessarily a catastrophic process. In a subdued and controlled form, it has even been the main secret of primitive and traditional societies,”⁹² and yet, “nothing will halt the implosive process, and the only remaining alternative is between a violent or catastrophic implosion, and a smooth implosion, an implosion in slow motion.”⁹³ The early sudden approach in Buddhism, as a smooth implosion, with every effort to assert principles of reality and the principles of evolution, contrives an uneasy polytheistic system that seems to echo the “foreign and Chinese debate.”

Conclusion

In this short essay, I have examined the foreign (*yi*) cultural contexts of Buddhism, with its early monastic establishment in the Six Dynasties, and the conditions of the Chinese (*xia*) acceptance of Buddhism. I have attempted to show that the early Chinese cultural discontents toward Buddhism were a reflection of the “foreign and Chinese debate,” which led to the prompt replacement of the cultural contents as advanced by Chinese attraction to Buddhist supernatural powers. I have argued that early Buddhism affirmed shentong as a weapon in its competition with Taoism and indigenous cults, while it was trying to gain ground in Chinese society and expand geographically. Once firmly established, Buddhism chose to draw closer to Confucianism. When the development of Mahāyāna doctrine enhanced the philosophical-minded scholarship of rational tendency,

⁹⁰ Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy II*, 406.

⁹¹ Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, 142.

⁹² Jean Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*, 58.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 61.

Buddhism began to downplay shentong in the name of Buddhist philosophy. Therefore, Buddhism was in the position to acquire Confucian intellectual empathy.

The sudden approach to Buddhism surfaced as the result of Buddhism espousing Confucianism. By delving into the conditions of awakening, the Buddhist scholars and the Confucian intellectuals contrived a rubric between “foreign/gradual” and “Chinese/sudden.” It was proposed that the sudden position was Chinese, and the gradual position was foreign. Moreover, the *xia* “Chinese” claimed to be “the upper rooted man,” who was above the average and thus able to “grasp truth with no gradualness and no need for accumulations of learning in attainment of the way.” The *yi* “foreigner,” on the other hand, was “middle and lower rooted man,” who was below the average, and thus only able to grasp truth with accumulations of learning, and needed gradualness in attainment of the way. According to this model, the early sudden approach in Buddhism leads to a dichotomous cultural tradition. The individualistic search for freedom led to rationalization, paradoxically increasing hierarchy and cultural domination, which reinforced the social structures imposed on both Buddhism and Confucianism. As dim a picture as it may seem, the ambiguity and vitality in its being now opens to reinterpretation.

Stanford, California, 2002

Abbreviations

SZ	<i>Shisanjing Zhushu</i> 十三經註疏 1979. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
T.	<i>Taishō shinshū daizōkyō</i> 大正新脩大藏經. CBETA.
TFSH	<i>Twenty-four Standard Histories</i> 二十四史 1979. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.

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