

General Outlook of the Chinese Buddhist Front after the Eleventh Century

The purpose of this study is to gain a general outlook of the Chinese Buddhist front after 11 th century.

In order to grasp the general situation of the Buddhist front in its phases of development, rise and decline, I adopted the method of investigating into what kind of activities Buddhist monks of these centuries made with regard to the period, their stature, and the place, and as a result the following facts came to be clarified :

Chronologically, Buddhism flourished in the three periods: in the middle of the twelfth century, in the middle of the fourteenth century, and in the middle of the seventeenth century. These periods were close to the ends of the Northern Sung, Yüan, and Ming Dynasties respectively. This fact shows that the activities of Buddhist monks tended to rise from the end of a unified Dynasty to the beginning of the following one, and that they tended to fall in the middle of a Dynasty.

Examining the stature or the kind of monks, we found in most cases Zen monks coming first in number (25.8%); secondly came those monks who had contributed to reconstructing Buddhist temples (16.7 %); thirdly came scholar-monks (13.7 %); and lastly Pure Land monks (13 %). It was further known that generally speaking, in the period of the prosperity of Buddhism more number of Zen monks and scholar-monks appeared than in any others, while in the period of its decline there were more number of monks who contributed to reconstructing Buddhist temples and the Pure Land monks than in any others.

Geographically speaking, eminent monks appeared practically in all places throughout the whole territory of China, and it was found out that their appearance concentrated firstly around the Sekkō-shō 浙江省 District, secondly the Kōso-shō 江蘇省 District, and thirdly the Kahoku-shō 江北市 District. Then follow the Konan-shō 湖南省 District, the Shisen-shō 四川省 District,

and so forth. So far as the Sekkō-shō District is concerned, eminent Buddhist monks who appeared in this area occupy 29 % of all other districts, and if those of the adjacent Kōso-shō 江蘇省 District were added to this, the total percentage of these would amount to 47 %. That is to say, it was clearly learned that the rise or fall of Chinese Buddhism depended upon the prosperity of Buddhism in those two Districts along the Yangtze River.

Let us have a close look at these two great centers of Chinese Buddhism. In the Sekkō District, Zen monks come first in number, and then follow scholar-monks. Of all sub-schools of Zen Buddhism in this district, there were once such schools as the Hōgen-shū 法眼宗, Ummon-shū 雲門宗 and the like, but after 13th century, the Yōki Branch 楊岐派 of the Rinzai school 臨濟宗 developed, and this only survived ever since. As far as the scholar monks were concerned, the T'ien-tai School 天台宗 funded by Chirai 智礼 was predominant. In the Kahoku District, Buddhism flourished around Enkyō 燕京. It was since the Ryō 遼 Dynasty that Buddhism came to be popular among the people in this area. As soon as Enkyō started to develop as the political center, Buddhism in this area also started to flourish. It was particularly so because Buddhism enjoyed the protection and support of influential people in the capital. The Buddhist circle in Enkyō, however, was fluctuating. The Ritsu (*vinaya* or Precept) school 律宗 monks in the Ryō 遼 Dynasty; the Zen monks in the Kin 金 Dynasty; and scholar monks in the Yüan Dynasty were respectively dominant in their respective periods. On the whole, at Enkyō it seems to have been a general tendency that no particular school has ever lasted long or taken root deeply. It was true that Buddhism in Enkyō did actually flourish in the political center, but basically it was not, after all, strong enough to overpower Buddhism flourishing in the Kōnan 江南 District.

Shizuka Shigenoi