

A Study in the Tathāgatotpattisambhava- nirdeśa of the *Avatamsaka-sūtra*

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For the understanding of the thought of *hsing-ch'i* 性起, the arising of Tathāgata from *bhūta-tathatā* (Dharma nature), a doctrinal elucidation of the central problem of the "Tathāgatotpattisambhava-nirdeśa" chapter of the *Avatamsaka-sūtra* is necessary. The present thesis is intended to present an inquiry into the reason why the title of this chapter was translated by the Chinese *hsing-ch'i p'in* 性起品; to clarify on this basis that this chapter contains within it something to be ultimately termed *hsing-ch'i* 性起.

In the *hsing-ch'i* 性起 thought we can see a natural outflow of the spiritual exuberance characteristic of Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is because this thought is related to the fountainhead and the norm which make up the Mahāyāna sūtras. The *Avatamsaka-sūtra*, as other prominent Mahāyāna sūtras are, is apparently sustained by the freshness and normality of truth, and the genuine life-force of Mahāyāna sūtras consists in always accommodating itself to the particular objects without losing its invaluable identity.

When we examine this chapter from such a viewpoint, it becomes clear that *hsing* 性 means the pervasive nature of truth, which is like a vast space. While vast space can be identified with nothing else, it embraces and sustains all beings. While pervading all things, it transcends all opposites of pervading and non-pervading. *hsing* 性 is thus the basic nature of truth with such a mode of being.

On the other hands, *ch'i* 起 points to the actual working of *dharmatā* that transcends all sentient beings, in which it accommodates itself to them by means of its transcendent nature, and, by penetrating their ignorance and illusion, transforms them into truth. An investigation into the contents of this chapter will reveal the fact that all problems in-

volved therein are to be finally subsumed into the above-mentioned two points. Consequently, the appearance of Tathāgata should not be regarded as his mere appearance, but should more properly be rendered as *hsing-ch'i* 性起.