

Studies in the *Fa-huā-tong-lüe*

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Jí-zàng, who flourished during the Suí dynasty, systematized the Buddhist teachings according to Nāgārjuna's Prajñāpāramitā philosophy and formed the Sān-lùn sect. Besides the *Sān-lùn-xuán-yì* and *Zhōng-guān-lùn-shū* which are known as representative of his works, he left other works numbering as many as 24 volumes--expositions of the main doctrines of sutras and commentaries on the texts. He proceeded to explicate well-known sutras one after another, according to his belief that all sutras were the revelation of truth by Śākyamuni Buddha himself and that this truth was none other than the Middle Way of non-attachment. It was a process that he left so many writings. Of the many writings thus produced, majority is concerned with the *Lotus Sūtra*, which amounts to five volumes of commentaries or expositions on it, and the *Fa-huā-tong-lüe*, believed to belong to his later years. I am convinced that by studying these works we will be able to clarify his philosophy and its development in his later years.

He records in the preface to his *Fa-huā-tong-lüe* (Zoku-zō : 1, Vol. 43, 1) that he had studied the Four Commentaries on the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* in his early years, but later on took to the study of the *Lotus Sūtra*, wrote the *Fa-huā-xuán-lùn* at Kuāi-jī (ca. 589-599 A.D.), and then the *Fa-huā-yóu-yì* after he moved to live in Cháng-ān. At Xīng-huáng-sì he studied under Fa-lang the Prajñāpāramitā philosophy expounded in the scriptures such as the *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā*. It is surmised that his study of the *Lotus Sūtra* was started only after he moved to Kuāi-jī, as a man past forty, and that as a result of this study the *Fa-huā-xuán-lùn* was written. It was immediately followed by his commentaries on the *Lotus Sūtra*. It is said that his lectures on the *Lotus Sūtra* were given as many as three hundred

times, and since he came to conceive novel ideas and to make new discoveries in the meantime, he collected them into a new work, which he entitled *Fa-huā-tong-lüe*.

He enumerates in six articles the characteristics of this work that make it distinct from those of his former works. A close examination of them provides us with the following three points as the main motives that occasioned him to write the *Fa-huā-tong-lüe*. First, he criticized the theories of the other schools and expounded his own philosophy by holding more radically to the truth of the Middle Way unattached to any particular standpoint. By simplifying and unifying their complicated interpretations, he thereby succeeded in revealing many other new meanings. Second, his perusal of and speculations on the texts of the *Lotus Sūtra* provided them with novel interpretations. By changing the interpretation of certain parts of the text, he was able to pursue a new way of interpretation. Third, he stressed that the *Lotus Sūtra* purports to expound the Eka-Buddhayāna thought. While thus clarifying the importance of the *Lotus Sūtra*, he proceeded to characterize the nature of the Buddha more fully.