

the argument. Again and again, for example, Amstutz draws our attention to the significance of the Tokugawa period. It appears that one is getting a kind of preview in this book or more to come with more scholarly depth and exactitude. We eagerly look forward to his forthcoming study, *Shin Buddhism in the Early Modern Period, 1500–1800* (indicated in note 64 to chapter 3, p. 164).

What of the future? Amstutz is not cheery about the possibility of major changes in approaches or shifts in interpretations of the kind he criticized in his study. He hopes, however, that this study might make a valuable contribution by enhancing a creative global colloquia dealing with issues, first raised by Daniel Bell, involving “the interrelationship of human appetites, wealth creation, sociopolitical justice, and ultimately visions of spiritual harmony. . . .” (p. 121) We heed his observation.

*MADHYAMAKA THOUGHT IN CHINA.* By Ming-Wood Liu. Sinica Leidensia Vol. 30. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994, pp. xiii, 288. ISBN 90 04 09984 0

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MĀDHYAMIKA philosophy, or the philosophy of emptiness, has been of fundamental importance to Chinese Buddhism, ever since it was transmitted from India in the late second century A.D. In this new study, Ming-Wood Liu presents a detailed study of the doctrinal systems of four thinkers and schools he believes are representative of the Mādhyamika tradition in China: Seng-chao (374–414), Chi-tsang (549–623), the T’ien-t’ai school founded by Chih-i (538–597) and the Niu-t’ou or Oxhead school of Ch’an (Zen).

According to the received academic wisdom of Buddhist studies, Chi-tsang 吉藏, the founder of the San-lun (“Three Treatises”) school, is the orthodox representative of Chinese Mādhyamika. This view derives from Chi-tsang himself, who portrayed himself as the true heir of the Mādhyamika tradition tracing itself back to Nāgārjuna in India. Buddhist scholars have been deeply influenced by Chi-tsang’s self-image, and even modern studies devoted to Chinese Mādhyamika are invariably centered on Chi-tsang and his system. Moreover, the main thrust of such studies is frequently focused on showing how Chi-tsang’s thought is prefigured in the writings of earlier thinkers, such as Seng-chao. This sectarian bias leads to a narrow diachronic view of Chinese

## BOOK REVIEWS

Buddhist intellectual history, and glosses over the complex interaction among the various schools

In contrast to standard accounts, Liu defines Chinese Mādhyamika in a very broad sense, and includes within its bounds not only Chi-tsang and Seng-chao, but Chinese Buddhist schools rarely included in the category of "Chinese Mādhyamika," such as the T'ien-t'ai and Niu-t'ou schools. In the hands of the right person, such a perspective would have helped illuminate in new and interesting ways how the concept of emptiness was developed in different directions by different schools of Chinese Buddhism in response to varying historical circumstances. Unfortunately, Liu fails to exploit the possibilities offered by such a comparative, trans-sectarian viewpoint. Instead, each of the chapters is a self-contained unit presenting a conventional outline of the doctrines of the school or thinker under consideration. No attempt is made to relate the doctrines of one school with those of the others. Also lacking is any attempt to discern how the different schools influenced each other, or to understand the specific historical dynamics which molded their distinctive approaches to emptiness.

The Buddhist philosophies of Seng-chao and Chih-i have been treated by many scholars in the West, and although Liu's sketch of their principal doctrines is competent, much of what he presents is readily available in English elsewhere. More significant is his discussion of Chi-tsang, a figure who has been unjustly neglected by Western scholars of Buddhism. Even though numerous studies have appeared in Japanese (Hirai Shun'ei's *Chūgoku hannya shisōshi kenkyū: Kichizō to Sanron gakuha* [A Study of the History and Thought of Chinese Prajñāpāramitā: Chi-tsang and the San-lun Tradition], Tokyo: Shunjū-sha, 1976, is a particularly important work), there has been only one systematic study of Chi-tsang in English until now: Aaron Koseki's doctoral dissertation entitled "Chi-tsang's *Ta-ch'eng-hsüan-lun*: The Two Truths and the Buddha-nature" (The University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1977). For this reason, Liu's chapter on Chi-tsang is exceedingly welcome.

Liu provides a good treatment of the central doctrines of Chi-tsang's system, including those of the Two Truths and Buddha-nature. Chi-tsang holds that the goal of Mādhyamika philosophy is the attainment of liberation from all attachments. His doctrine of the Two Truths is developed from this point of view. According to Chi-tsang, the Two Truths (the Supreme Truth and the Mundane Truth) do not represent two levels of reality, one actual and the other illusory. Instead they are to be understood as two perspectives on the same reality. The Buddha preached the Two Truths for a didactic purpose: to awaken people to the truth of nonattachment. The second half of the chapter is taken up with a lengthy discussion of Chi-tsang's theory of the Five Types

of Buddha-nature, along with his radical new notion that nonsentient objects possess Buddha-nature.

Unfortunately, Liu does not provide an adequate discussion of the historical context in which Chi-tsang's thought developed. This is regrettable, since it obscures some important issues related to the rise of Chi-tsang's system to the position of San-lun orthodoxy. Despite the impression that Liu seeks to give, Chinese Mādhyamika did not develop in a single, uncomplicated line from Seng-chao to Chi-tsang. As Hirai points out in the book mentioned above, from the time of Seng-ch'üan (n.d.), two generations before Chi-tsang, there existed two groups within the Chinese Mādhyamika lineage. One group devoted themselves primarily to doctrinal studies, while the other stressed the importance of meditation. Chi-tsang belonged to the first group. The rise of Chi-tsang's philosophy to the position of orthodoxy represents the victory of his brand of Sinitic Mādhyamika over the other, more praxis-oriented lineage. Since this had an incalculable impact on the subsequent development of this sect, lack of attention to this point is a serious defect in any work on Chi-tsang's thought. Moreover, the rise of Chi-tsang's system to orthodoxy is no doubt intimately related to the close relationship he enjoyed with the Sui court. A closer look at the specific moves through which Chi-tsang sought to establish his system as the normative one for the San-lun sect would have immeasurably enhanced the value of this book.

In conclusion, it may be said that although this volume contains a reliable guide to the main points of Chi-tsang's Mādhyamika philosophy, it is far from being the definitive work on "Madhyamaka Thought in China."

*RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AND CHRISTIAN TRUTH.* By Joseph Stephen O'Leary. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996, xiii + 269 pp.

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ALL RELIGIOUS THINKING today faces the same double challenge: postmodernism and pluralism. Deconstruction especially cannot be ignored, for it has achieved important insights into how all language, including religious discourse, *means*; and the global encounter of religions with each other constitutes a serious challenge to their incommensurable truth claims. The danger with the first is the kind of nihilistic "atheology" that throws out baby with