Introduction to Buddhist East Asia

Origins, Core Doctrines, Transmission, and Schools

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The purpose of this volume is to provide an introduction to the development of Buddhism[1] in East Asia—particularly China, Korea, and Japan—along with practical pedagogical resources for teaching East Asian Buddhism in the undergraduate classroom.[2] Wherever Buddhism germinates throughout the world, it not only changes the culture into which it assimilates, it is also changed by each culture in which it takes root.[3] Each chapter in this volume, including the opening chapters that focus on pedagogy, provides a view onto a significant aspect of Buddhism in its dynamic interplay with culture over the course of two thousand years in East Asia. This introduction is divided into five sections: The first section provides a general historical overview of the origins and development of Buddhism in India; the second section offers a brief summary of core Buddhist doctrines; the third section provides a historical overview of the transmission of Buddhism to East Asia beginning in the 1st century CE in China; the fourth section outlines the principal schools of Buddhism that have arisen in East Asia, several of which continue to flourish to this day; and the final section offers synopses of the following chapters in this anthology.

The Origins of Buddhism

The origins of Buddhism in East Asia trace back to Siddhartha Gautama (San.; Pli. Siddhattha Gotama), who was a prince of the small republic of

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the Śākya people of the Ganges basin in what now forms the border between Nepal and Northeast India. Generally known as "the historical Buddha," in Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition Gautama is known as Śākyamuni ("the Śākyan sage").[4] The story of his spiritual awakening is probably apocryphal and meant to serve as a spiritual lesson more than as a historical record. Siddhartha was born in 563 BCE in Kapilavastu in an area that is now part of southern Nepal. The son of a king, he lived a life of sheltered luxury until the age of twenty-nine. At that time, while riding outside the palace in his chariot, he witnessed four signs: an elderly man whose body was crippled by advanced age, a man ravaged by disease, a funeral procession, and a recluse sitting in peace. The first three signs made him aware of the existence of suffering in the world, while the fourth sign made him realize that it is possible to transcend suffering through diligent training. Siddhartha left the palace and began to study yoga, first under Arāḍa Kālāma and later under Udraka Rāmaputra. Though he mastered both systems of yoga, Siddhartha found that neither provided a way to eliminate suffering in the world. He then tried asceticism, including extreme bodily mortification, but again found that his questions about the elimination of suffering remained unanswered. Disappointed by available systems of spiritual care, he decided to create his own "middle way" between the self-indulgence of his youth and the self-denial of his life as a recluse. He sat beneath a tree in tranquil meditation until he became enlightened to the nature of suffering, its causes, and the ways to remove these causes.[5] Following his enlightenment, Gautama traveled the region for more than forty years, gathering a cohort of followers who embraced his teachings.

Buddhism arose within the religious context of Brahmanism, which later (around 200 BCE) became known as Hinduism.[6] Brahmanism took root in the region at the twilight of the Indus Valley Civilization (2500–1500 BCE) with the arrival of Aryan people from Central Asia. Along with Brahmanic religion, the Aryans brought the Sanskrit language to the region as well as a four-tier, hierarchical class structure in which the priestly class (*brahmin*) were set at the top. Central to Brahmanic doctrine and practice is belief in thirty-three gods (*Devas*), each representing natural forces, along with rites that included hymns and sacrifices performed by priests.[7] Brahmanism was originally based on oral teachings and hymns that were codified in the *Vedas* sometime between 1000 and 800 BCE. In the *Vedas*, the ideal of liberation (*mokṣa*) is conceptualized in terms of gaining an understanding of the unity between one's true self (*ātman*) and the underlying substance of Ultimate Reality (*Brahman*). The doctrine of reincarnation (the development of which

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was likely influenced by non-Aryan sources) arose in close connection with the idea of *karma,* which refers to the moral quality of one's *ātman,* which can be improved through ethical action and the fulfillment of one's social duties in life as defined by one's place in the social hierarchy.

The period in which the Buddha lived (during the 5th century BCE) was characterized by dramatic social and economic change. An increasingly urban, money-based trade economy was rapidly displacing the small, kin-based agrarian communities of the previous millennium, and the expansion of large urban centers of trade in the regional kingdoms of Magadha and Kosala facilitated the ongoing discussion and dissemination of new and diverse ideas and ways of life. Within this dynamic cultural context, a growing number of groups of wandering ascetics, known as *Śramanas,* began to question the Vedic tradition and develop new ways of responding to the rapidly changing social realities. Gautama, upon renouncing his position as a Sakyan prince, joined a group of *Śramanas* and later, following his enlightenment experience, established his own *Śramana* movement that included close followers who would become the first Buddhist monks. That is to say, Buddhism was, at first, a *Śramana* movement, but it soon set itself apart from other such movements including Jainism, the *Ájívaka* movement, the materialists, and the Skeptics. The Jainists emphasized extreme self-denial and total nonviolence (*ahiṃsā*) as the means to freeing oneself from *karmic* residues; the *Ájívakas* affirmed a kind of *karmic* fatalism (*niyati*) according to which one could not change one's *karmic* destiny; the materialists rejected the idea of reincarnation, embracing "annihilationism," and the distinguishing mark of the Skeptics was to be critical of all points of view.[8] While the Buddha agreed to some extent with some of the ideas put forward by other *Śramana* movements, such as the shared sense that the *Vedic* understanding of *karma* and rebirth called for some kind of revision, he thought these groups to be too extreme either in terms of their way of life (as with extreme self-denial, promoted by Jainism) or their doctrine (as with the materialist view of extreme annihilationism). Two of the Buddha's closest disciples, Sāriputta and Moggallāna, were at first Skeptics, a movement whose critical approach to all doctrine resonates to some extent with the Buddhist idea of the emptiness of all things (*śūnyatā*).[9] However, in contrast to the extreme tendencies of these other *Śramana* movements, the Buddha developed the broadly applicable idea of the "middle way." For instance, in response to the extreme asceticism embraced by Jainism, the Buddha called for moderation of appetites. In response to the fatalism of the *Ájívakas,* while the Buddha upheld the power of *karma* to affect the opportunities and outcomes one

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experiences, he argued just as strongly in favor of the ability to change one's *karma* by altering one's values, intentions, and the relational dynamics one has with others and with one's surroundings.[10] In response to annihilationism put forward by the materialists, the Buddha's response was to not take a stance on the afterlife but, rather, to redirect attention to the central point of his teaching, that the way to end suffering is to end craving.[11] Finally, in relation to Skepticism, while the Buddha's affirmation of *śūnyatā* aligns with a generally skeptical metaphysical understanding of things as empty, the Buddha departs from Skepticism in affirming a few basic doctrines, including the four noble truths, as fundamental guides to enlightenment.

While there is some scholarly disagreement on the precise dates of the Buddha's death as well as the time and place of the subsequent "community councils" that were held to establish the core teachings (*Dhamma*) and monastic codes of conduct (*Vinaya*), many scholars agree that the first community council took place in 400 BCE at Rájagaha in what is now Northeast India. The second and third community councils (estimated to have taken place in 330 BCE at Vesālī and 314 BCE at Pātaliputta) involved heated debates on the monastic codes of conduct and discipline (*Vinaya*) which led to a schism among Buddhist monastics into two fraternities, the *Sthaviravāda* (San.; Pli. *Theravāda*—meaning "ancient teachings") and *Mahāsānghika* (meaning "Belonging to the Universal Sangha"), which later subdivided even further.[12] In total, eighteen or more different fraternities developed in early Buddhism, but the doctrinal differences among the various fraternities, in retrospect, appear to have been relatively minor, and only three primary branches continue today: *Theravāda, Mahāyāna,* and *Vajrayāna*. *Mahāyāna* (literally "the greater vehicle") stemmed from the *Mahāsānghika* fraternity and began to thrive as a separate tradition sometime between 100 BCE and 100 CE in the Kusān empire in Northwest India.[13] *Mahāyāna* is the primary branch of Buddhism that went on to thrive in East Asia. The third branch of Buddhism, *Vajrayāna* (Tantric or Esoteric Buddhism), developed as an offshoot of *Mahāyāna* and has flourished in Tibet and in Japan (as Shingon Buddhism).

It was during the reign of the Magadhan King, Aśoka (268–239 BCE) that the spread of Buddhism accelerated throughout the Indian subcontinent. In the early years of his reign, King Aśoka expanded his empire through bloody conquests; however, following the violent subjugation of the Kalinga region in 259 BCE, Aśoka, having embraced Buddhism a year earlier, felt great remorse for the bloodshed and violence and decided to end the kingdom's policy of violent aggression. Following this turn away from

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violence, subsequent edicts issued by King Aśoka show that he promptly committed to ruling his kingdom according to the Buddhist *dhamma* and gave up aggressive military conquest.[14] For the remainder of his reign, Aśoka demonstrated the ideal virtues of a *Cakkavatti*, a Buddhist "wheel-turning king," setting up generous public works including widely accessible medical aid, prioritizing education in Buddhist virtues, and advocating for religious freedom and mutual respect among religions.[15] Such was Aśoka's dedication to *Dhamma* that he sent aid and missionaries beyond the borders of his empire, including sending his son Mahinda south to Sri Lanka to establish *Theravāda* Buddhism there, where it continues to thrive to this day. From Sri Lanka, *Theravāda* spread east across the Bay of Bengal to Southeast Asia, where it continues to flourish in Myanmar/Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Malaysia.

Core Doctrines of Buddhism

This section offers a brief overview of the basic tenets of Buddhism in terms of the original teachings of the historical Buddha. While several schools of Buddhism developed in East Asia (discussed in the fourth section below), the core doctrines are shared by all schools.

The central teachings of Buddhism were summarized by Siddhartha Gautama, the historical Buddha, in the first sermon he delivered in Deer Park just after his awakening.[16] The Buddha presented these teachings in the form of the Four Noble Truths (Pli. *cattāri*[17] *ariyasaccāni*; San. *catvāri āryasatyāni*; Chi. 四聖諦 *sìshèngdì*; Kor. *sa-seong-je*; Jpn. 四諦 *shitai*).[18] The First Noble Truth states that all life is characterized by *dukkha* (San. *duḥkha*; Chi. 苦 *kŭ*; Kor. *ko*; Jpn. *ku*), which can be translated as "suffering," "sorrow," or "unsatisfactoriness." *Dukkha* refers to physical pain, psychological distress, and the general sense of dissatisfaction that accompanies everyday living. At its worst, *dukkha* is epitomized by things such as infirmity, sickness, poverty, famine, death (via natural causes or violence), warfare, racism, and genocide. *Dukkha* is made worse by the fact that human beings are trapped within *saṃsāra* (San. *saṃsāra*; Chi. 輪迴 *lúnhúi*; Kor. *ryunhoe*; Jpn. *rinne*), the cycle of rebirth. A person's actions build up karma (Pli. *kamma*; San. *karma*; Chi. 業 *yè*; Kor. *eop*; Jpn. gō), which is a kind of metaphysical record of a person's moral worth. Morally significant actions accrue karma, which determines the type of rebirth that a person gets after death. Immoral humans with a great deal of negative karma might be born as nonhuman animals or

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into a different realm of existence (e.g., one of many hells). Moral humans who have built up karmic merit will return in a more favorable rebirth, for example, as a human being of favored social status with the means to focus on spiritual cultivation. Because life is characterized by *dukkha,* rebirth is not a blessing, so the goal of Buddhism is to permanently exit the cycle of *saṃsāra.*[19]

The Second Noble Truth is that *dukkha* comes as a result of *taṇhā* (San. *tṛṣṇā*, Chi. 貪愛 *tānài*, Kor. *gal-ae*, Jpn. 渇愛 *katsuai*), which literally means "thirst," though it is often translated as "craving." Because of our ignorant attachment to false ideals, we crave things that we cannot or should not have, which causes us to act in ways that promote suffering. This is related to the Buddhist notion of *paṭiccasamuppāda* (San. *pratītyasamutpāda*; Chi. 緣起 *yuánqī*; Kor. *yeongi*; Jpn. 縁起*engi*), which can be translated as "interdependent arising," "dependent co-arising," or "dependent origination." The true nature of reality is that all things exist as part of an interdependent process in which all things are impermanent (Pli. *anicca*; San. *anitya*; Chi. 無常 *wúcháng*; Kor. *musang*; Jpn. *mujō*), coming into being, persisting for a finite period, and decaying into oblivion. Contrary to the Hindu notion that human beings have an *ātman,* or true self that is one with Brahman (unchanging Ultimate Reality), Buddhism asserts the idea of no-self or non-self (Pāli *anatta*; San. *anātman*; Chi. 無我 *wúwǒ*; Kor. *mua*; Jpn. *muga*). What I call my "self" exists only as a temporary aggregate of matter that is a function of a continual process of interchange with the world around it. Craving comes when I attach myself to notions of ego and permanence.[20] For example, if I'm attached to the false idea that I'll never get old, I will go to great lengths to preserve a youthful appearance (e.g., comb-overs, liposuction, Botox, face-lifts, etc.) rather than aging gracefully and enjoying each of life's stages as they come. If I'm attached to wealth, I will harm my employees, customers, and other stakeholders to maximize personal profit. If I'm attached to the illusion of white supremacy and the unjust privileges it accrues, I will cause immeasurable harm to members of my community to promote my misguided racist attitudes. In general, if we persist in our ignorant attachment to false ideals, we will always suffer.

The Third Noble Truth says that if we eliminate our ignorant attachment to false ideals, we can eliminate the craving that causes suffering. This is Buddhism's optimistic solution to the reality of *dukkha*: most of our suffering is self-inflicted because of our attachments, and we can alleviate suffering by reshaping the way that we view and experience the world.[21]

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The Fourth Noble Truth is the Eightfold Path, which outlines the method of practice that must be used to eliminate ignorance, craving, and suffering. It consists of three categories of cultivation: wisdom (right views and intentions), ethics (right speech, actions, and livelihood), and meditation (right effort, mindfulness, and concentration). All three categories are complementary: meditation promotes wisdom about the true nature of reality as nonsubstantial and dynamically relational interdependent arising; wisdom, in turn, promotes compassion for all beings (who are part of the same interrelated process); compassion encourages one to diligently meditate and pursue wisdom. One who has diligently followed the Eightfold Path can attain *nibbana* (San. *nirvāṇa*; Chi. 涅槃 *nièpán*; Kor. *yeolban*; Jpn. *nehan*), the extinguishing of one's karma that will lead to release from *saṃsāra*. In Theravāda Buddhism, one who has attained *nibbana* is known as an *arahant* (San. *arhat*; Chi. 阿羅漢 *āluóhàn*; Kor. *arahan*; Jpn. *arakan*), and attaining this state is the ultimate goal of one's training. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, one who realizes *nibbana* will vow to become a *bodhisatta* (San. *bodhisattva*; Chi. 菩薩 *púsà*; Kor. *bosal*; Jpn. *bosatsu*), a buddha who chooses to remain in *saṃsāra* until all sentient beings have become awakened.[22]

The Transmission of Buddhism to East Asia

The Transmission of Buddhism to China

Buddhism arrived in China from Central Asia sometime during the first century CE, entering by way of trade routes ("silk roads") that extended from the Chinese Capital Chang'an (now Xi'an) through Central Asia to the Indian subcontinent. According to legend, Emperor Ming of China (58–75 CE) dreamed of "a mystifying foreign deity with golden hue," foretelling the arrival of Buddhism in China.[23] In the context of the decline of the Han Dynasty (200 BCE–220 CE) and throughout the ensuing 360 years of divided kingdoms, Buddhism took root in China. While some Buddhist ideas and practices, such as the doctrine of emptiness (Pli. *suññatā*; San. *śūnyatā*), were entirely new to the region, others resonated with indigenous Confucian and Daoist beliefs. For instance, the high importance given to written texts by Buddhist monks and the Buddhist idea of no-self were values compatible with Chinese literary culture and the Confucian understanding of identity as defined in terms of a relational harmony of differences.

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By the first century CE, Buddhist teachings and practices were being transmitted, little by little, into China via the "silk road" from the Kusān empire in Northwest India through Central Asia. By the third century CE, Kuchean monks were regularly transmitting both *Theravāda* and *Mahāyāna* texts along this route.[24] The divided kingdoms period in China (220–589 CE) proved conducive to the reception of new ideas, as no state religion was enforced. During this period, many in the educated elite in China turned to Buddhist texts and practices. The growth of Buddhism in China was further facilitated by the steady translation of several *Mahāyāna* texts by Lokaksema (born circa 147 CE, known by the Chinese name Zhī Lóujiāchèn), a missionary from Central Asia, and Kumārajīva (344–413 CE, aka Jiūmóluóshí) a Kuchean monk and founder of the Old Sanlun school (see the first part of the following section below) who translated more than three hundred *Mahāyāna* Sutras. While some early Chinese Buddhist scholastics followed the highly formalized Yogācāra approach to Buddhist textual analysis, which emphasized the ideas of "three natures" and eight levels of consciousness, culminating in "appropriating" or "storehouse" consciousness (Pli. *ālayavijñāna*; San. *Ālāyavijñāna*), Kumārajīva was strongly influenced by the Madhyamaka school, which emphasized the doctrines of emptiness (San. *śūnyatā*), two truths (conventional and ultimate), and conditioned origination. Another important figure during this time was Daosheng (360–434 CE), a Sanlun Buddhist monk who was instrumental in popularizing the central East Asian Buddhist doctrine of Buddha-nature, the idea that all sentient beings have the potential for enlightenment. The doctrine of emptiness, by contrast, met with some resistance in China due to its perceived negative connotations, but the monk Dushun (557–640 CE) was able to draw out the positive significance of the doctrine of emptiness by linking it with the Confucian principle of *lī* (禮, the underlying principle of reality, tied to ritual practices), thereby bringing a central Buddhist concept into attunement with Chinese cultural sensibilities.[25]

As access to Buddhist texts and translations increased from the third to fifth centuries CE, a rigorous tradition of Chinese Buddhist scholasticism grew that placed particular emphasis on the study of *Mahāyāna* texts, especially the *Lotus Sūtra*, which rose in importance as the focal text of the Tiantai school (see the following section). Other texts that became central to Buddhist practice as it began to flourish in China during the divided kingdoms period included the *Nirvana Sūtra*, the *Prajñāpāramīta Sūtra*s, and the *Vimalakīrti-Nirdēśā Sūtra*.[26] Tensions arose, however, in the fifth century CE in the Northern states between monastics and rulers due

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to the independence of the monasteries from the states. In addition to the independence of monasteries from the government, another point of contention involved the requirement for monks to take a vow of celibacy, which was seen as conflicting with the central Confucian virtue of filial piety that placed family relationships at the center of virtuous living. Such tensions culminated in state-led persecutions of Buddhism in the Northern states from 446–451 CE (in the Wei kingdom) and 574–577 CE (in the Zhou kingdom).

In 581 CE, following the reunification of China under the Sui Dynasty, Buddhism returned to favor as the state-sponsored religion, and it was embraced by all sectors of Chinese society throughout the Sui (581–618 CE) and Tang (618–907 CE) Dynasties, except for a three-year period of persecution from 842–845 CE under the Emperor Wuzang.[27] From the late sixth to seventh century CE, support for Buddhist institutions from the state as well as from private donors rapidly increased, enabling the widespread construction of Buddhist temples, monasteries, and shrines, the crafting of ritual objects, and the casting of Buddhist statues. By the eighth century CE, 70 to 80 percent of the total wealth of the empire was in Buddhist hands, but these days of overflowing abundance for Buddhist institutions in China were short lived, as public criticism of the economic privileges of monasteries increased in the ninth century, leading to imperial proscriptions that placed limits on donations to Buddhist institutions.[28] In spite of these setbacks, Buddhism remained the dominant religion in China throughout the Tang, through the subsequent warring period (907–960 CE), and into the Song dynasty (960–1279 CE).

During the Sui and Tang dynasties, four primary Chinese Buddhist schools emerged: Chan (founded, according to legend, by Bodhidharma in the sixth century), Huayan (founded by Dushun in the early seventh century), Tiantai (founded by Zhiyi in the sixth century), and Pure Land (founded by Tanluan in the early sixth century—see the following section for more on these schools of Buddhism). Despite the variety of schools, there was a fluid interchange among monks of different schools, and monks of all schools shared monastic institutions and resided together in "public monasteries." In most cases the differences among schools were more a matter of emphases on focal texts or practices than stark divisions.[29]

The immense impact of Buddhism on Chinese society and culture remained largely intact during the Song Dynasty (960–1279 CE), though its cultural influence was moderated by the rise of Neo-Confucianism in the late twelfth century. Buddhist practice and monastic life remained an import-

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ant part of Chinese culture and society throughout the Ming (1368–1644 CE) and Qing (1644–1911 CE) dynasties all the way up to the Cultural Revolution of 1966–1976, which had a devastating effect on all religious practice in China. Since 1976, however, religious tolerance has improved in China, and Buddhism has been experiencing a restoration and resurgence.[30]

The Transmission of Buddhism to Korea

The transmission of Buddhism from China to the Korean peninsula began in the late fourth century CE. In 372 CE, Fujuan, a former king of the Qin dynasty in the Northern kingdom of China, sent the Sanlun (三論; Kor. Samnon; Jpn. Sanron) monk Shundao to Koguryeo, one of the three kingdoms on the peninsula (Paekche and Silla were the other two). The king of Koguryeo welcomed the monks and commissioned the building of the first two Buddhist monasteries on the peninsula in their honor.[31] Twelve years later, in 384 CE, Buddhism was conveyed to the Paekche kingdom by monks sent from the southern Chinese state of Eastern Jin. Among the monks in the convoy was the Central Asian monk Mālānanda who led the way in introducing Buddhism to the Paekche court. The Paekche court readily embraced the new teachings, and in the first half of the sixth century CE, the Paekche King Seong (523–554 CE) commissioned the construction of the first Buddhist temple complex in the region, Taet'ong-sa. King Seong also sent monks to Japan, introducing Buddhism there (see below).

The third kingdom on the peninsula, the Silla, was resistant to Buddhism until (according to tradition) a miraculous event occurred in 527 CE in which a courtier named Ichadon, who advocated for the construction of a Buddhist temple, was beheaded. According to tradition, when Ichadon was beheaded a white liquid flowed from his neck, and his head immediately flew away to a nearby mountain. News of this event led to the Silla court embracing Buddhism as the state religion, and the first Buddhist temple was built in the region in 535 CE.[32] State-sponsored Buddhism in the Silla kingdom proved instrumental to military recruitment leading up to the Silla victory in the battle for unification of the three kingdoms. A Silla government-sponsored institution called *hwarang* gathered youth for education in native traditions, military training, and Buddhist religious practice devoted to the worship of Maitreya, the Buddha of the future. The *hwarang* institution effectively promoted a patriotic spirit and prepared young military leaders who fought in the war for unification in 668 CE.[33]

As Buddhism developed and spread across the Korean peninsula, it combined in a pluralistic fashion with indigenous shamanic traditions as

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well as with Confucian and Daoist beliefs. In the late seventh century, the Korean monk Weonhyo's classic text *Ten Approaches to the Pacification of Disputes* became very influential in promoting an ecumenical spirit among these traditions, and the peninsula also proved receptive to a plurality of schools of Buddhism arriving from China during the unified Silla. In the early unification period, the monk Uisang (625–702 CE), having studied with the Huayan master Zhiyan (602–668 CE) in China, transmitted Huayan (華嚴; Kor. Hwaeom; Jpn. Kegon) Buddhism to the peninsula and was a founder of the *Paseok-sa* temple.[34] Hwaeom remained an important Buddhist tradition on the peninsula throughout the unified Silla well into the Goryeo dynasty (918–1392 CE).

Chan Buddhism (禪; Kor. Seon; Jpn. Zen) arrived on the peninsula in 821 CE through the monk Doeui, who had received mind-to-mind transmission from the Chan master Xitang Zhizang (735–814 CE) in Hongzhou in Southeastern China. The third disciple of Doeui, Ch'ejing (804–880 CE), was able to secure state recognition for Seon. In 858 CE, with the backing of the state, Ch'ejing helped to establish the first temple for the Kaji-Seon school (on Mt. Kaji), which grew into the "nine mountains of Seon" community and continues to thrive up to the present day.[35]

During the Goryeo dynasty (918–1392 CE) Buddhism became the state sponsored religion on the peninsula, and state-administered monastic exams were put in place as a system of rank for both monastic and secular offices. While this situation facilitated the growth of Buddhist practices and institutions, tensions began to rise among Buddhist schools during the Goryeo. In the twelfth century the Cheontae (Chi. Tiāntāi) and the Hwaeom (Chi. Huáyán) schools accused the Seon school, which emphasized meditation and mind-to-mind transmission of enlightenment, of departing too far from the authority of Buddhist texts. A key figure in diffusing these tensions was the Seon monk Chinul. Chinul affirmed the importance of both sudden (mind-to-mind) awakening and gradual cultivation (which involved the careful study of texts), a doctrinal view that diverged from the Chinese Linji school of Chan, which affirmed sudden awakening and sudden cultivation. Chinul's influence was crucial to restoring the ecumenical spirit of Korean Buddhism as well as in validating Seon practice in Korea, which remains the most active school of Buddhism in Korea today.[36]

During the Cheoson dynasty (1392–1910), Buddhism lost state sponsorship, as Neo-Confucianism gained favor with the state. Despite the lack of state support, Buddhism continued to be practiced throughout the Cheoson period and formed an important part of the social fabric in Korea, where it maintains a vital presence today.[37]

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The Transmission of Buddhism to Japan

In 538 CE, King Seong of the Paekche court sent Samnon (Chi. Sānlùn) Buddhist monks across the sea to introduce Buddhism to Japan. However, Buddhism initially met with resistance from the Japanese nobility, who considered it a foreign religion that would anger the *kami* (indigenous Shintō gods).[38] By the seventh century, however, Buddhism was embraced by Japan nobility and a productive, pluralistic relationship between indigenous Shintō practices, Confucianism, and Buddhism rapidly took root and flourished. By 692 CE there were more than five hundred Buddhist Temples in Japan,[39] and the expansion of Buddhism continued during the Nara period (710–784 CE), during which Kegon (Chi. Huáyán) Buddhism became the most prevalent school (see the following section for more on Kegon Buddhism). One distinguishing characteristic of the Nara period was its emphasis on gender equity, especially during the reign of Emperor Shōmu (720–749 CE) and his consort Kōmyō (701–760 CE). Shōmu founded a network of official temples that included at least one temple for monks and another for nuns in each province.[40] The strong emphasis on gender equity in Japan was short-lived, however, as the ordination of female monks declined during the Heian period (794–1185 CE). During the Heian period, there was a sharp increase in "household nuns," that is, women who were ordained but who stayed at home in family life rather than living in celibacy in a monastery, which might have been viewed as a way of resolving the tension between filial values and monastic vows.[41]

From the eighth to the thirteenth centuries, several other schools of Buddhism arrived in Japan. In the late eighth century, the monk Saichō (767–822 CE), having travelled to China, brought Tendai (Chi. Tiāntāi) Buddhism to Japan. In the early ninth century, the charismatic monk Kūkai, having studied Vajrayāna Buddhism under the monk Huiguo in China, introduced esoteric Shingon Buddhism in Japan and founded the Kangōbuji monastery on Mt. Kōya. In the tenth century, the monk Kūya helped transmit Pure Land Buddhism to Japan, later advocates of which include the very influential monks Hōnen (1133–1212 CE) and Shinran (1173–1263 CE). Pure Land Buddhism flourished and remains the most popular form of Buddhism in Japan to this day. During the Kamakura period (1185–1333 CE), a military government (the Shogunate) came to power and remained in place up to the modern period (1868 CE). Early in the Kamakura period, the monk Yōsai (1141–1215 CE), having traveled to China, founded Rinzai Zen in Japan. In 1227 CE, the monk Eihei Dōgen

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(1200–1253 CE), after receiving transmission from the master Tiantong Rujing of the Caodong School of Chan in China, founded the Sōtō Zen school in Japan.[42] While all schools of Buddhism in Japan share a few core doctrines, significant differences in the practices and focal texts of the various schools remain, as will be discussed below in the following section.

In the modern period (1868–1945), in an effort to restore indigenous traditions and promote patriotism, Shintō was embraced as the state religion and separation edicts required kami deities to be removed from Buddhist temples. Such measures curtailed the pluralistic spirit of Buddhism in Japan and relegated the influence of Buddhism to the private sphere.[43] In the early twentieth century, however, discourse about Buddhism expanded in the public sphere through scholars at Kyoto University such as Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945) and Nishitani Keiji (1900–1990), who drew out the metaphysical implications of Zen Buddhism in relation to contemporary European philosophy. Known as the "Kyoto School," this academic movement drew a great deal of scholarly attention to Japanese Buddhism and highlighted to a global audience the universal relevance of Buddhist doctrine to the human condition. In postwar Japan, there has been an increased spirit of ecumenism among Shintō, Christian, and Buddhist practices; however, while Buddhist monasteries and several Buddhist schools remain active, including Zen, Shingon, Kegon, and Pure Land, religious life in Japan has become increasingly privatized.[44]

Major Schools of East Asian Buddhism

Sānlùn[45] (三論; Kor. Samnon; Jpn. Sanron)

"Sanlun" means "three treatises" and refers to the three major texts that the tradition views as authoritative: Nāgārjuna's *Fundamental Verses on the Middle Way* (San. *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā*; Chi. 中論*Zhōng Lùn*) and *Twelve Gate Treatise* (San. *Dvādaśadvāra-śāstra*; Chi. 十二門*Shíèr Mén Lùn*), along with his disciple Aryadeva's *One Hundred Verses Treatise* (San. *Śata-śāstra*; Chi. 百論 *Bǎi Lùn*). "Old Sanlun" was founded by Kumārajīva (344–413 CE), who translated all three texts into Chinese, while "New Sanlun" appeared later when the monk Jizang (549–623 CE) gave a systematic account of its philosophy.[46]

Sanlun developed from Indian Mādhyamaka philosophy. It adopts Nāgārjuna's two-truth theory, which argues that there are both conventional

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truths about reality that are useful for daily life and ultimate truths that can be discovered through meditation, the latter of which often differ from our everyday understanding of the world. Wisdom also has two levels: ordinary wisdom, which draws a distinction between subject (the knower) and object (what is known), and extraordinary wisdom (Pli. *paññā*; San. *prajñā*; Chi. 智慧 *zhīhuì*; Kor. *jihye*; Jpn. *chie*), which realizes the emptiness of such distinctions.[47]

Sanlun argues that suffering comes from attachment to objects and false ideals. Nonattachment can be achieved by cultivating "no mind" (Chi. 無心 *wúxīn*; Kor. *musim*; Jpn. *mushin*) in which ordinary conceptions of self and mind fall away, and all things are perceived as interrelated and in possession of Buddha-nature. Growing away from its Mādhyamaka roots, Sanlun stresses the ethical implications of dependent co-arising (San. *pratītyasamutpāda*) and Buddha-nature more than the theoretical logic of emptiness. This emphasis upon Buddhism as a practical philosophy had an enormous influence on Chinese culture, particularly the development of Tiantai Buddhism (see below for more on Tiantai Buddhism).[48] The Sanlun monk Daosheng (c. 360–434 CE) was the first to popularize the idea that all beings possess Buddha-nature and are thus capable of enlightenment. Though he was initially criticized by senior monks for this view due to its apparent contradiction of the *Nirvana Sutra*, Buddha-nature ultimately became one of the most important concepts for virtually all schools of East Asian Buddhism.[49]

Fǎxiàng (法相; Kor. Beopsang; Jpn. Hossō)

Fǎxiàng was founded in 645 CE by the Chinese monk Xuanzang (600–664 CE), who traveled to India in 629 CE to study Yogācarā Buddhism. It was later imported into Korea as Beopsang Buddhism by Woncheuk (613–696 CE) and into Japan as Hossō Buddhism by Dōshō (629–700 CE).[50] The names *Faxiang, Beopsang,* and *Hossō* are translations of the Sanskrit term *dharma lakṣaṇa,* which means "dharma marks" or "dharma characteristics." The term *dharma*, in this context, refers to the constituents of phenomenal reality, the things that make up the world around us. Yogācarā argues that our consciousness (Pli. *viññāṇa*; San. *vijñāna*; Chi 識 *shí;* Kor. *sik*; Jpn. *shiki*) influences our experience of reality. There is a "storehouse consciousness" (Pli. *ālayavijñāna*; San. *ālāyavijñāna*; Chi. 阿賴耶識 *ālàiyēshí*; Kor. *aroeyasik*; Jpn. *Araya-shiki*) that is a repository of our karma based upon our past actions. This storehouse consciousness conditions our perceptions of the

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world. Because unenlightened people experience the world through the lens of karma, the world as they know it is a mental fabrication.[51]

Fǎxiàng diverges from traditional Yogācarā philosophy on the issue of *gotra* theory, which argues that human beings are born with an innate potential for spiritual achievement based upon their karma. *Gotra* theory claims that some people are *icchantikas*, deluded beings who can never reach enlightenment. While early Fǎxiàng endorsed *gotra* theory, Woncheuk rejected it because it contradicted the idea that all beings manifest Buddha-nature (innate enlightenment). Woncheuk's interpretation of Fǎxiàng became the orthodox view in China, Korea, and Japan, and reflects the positive world-view that came to characterize East Asian Buddhism.[52]

Tiāntāi (天台; Kor. Cheontae; Jpn. Tendai)

One of the most prominent East Asian schools of Buddhism, Tiantai takes its name from the mountain where Zhiyi (538–597 CE), the third patriarch of the tradition, trained and taught.[53] Tiantai philosophy is grounded in the notion that the *tathatā*—the "suchness" (San. *tathātā*; Chi. 真如 *zhēnrú*; Kor. *jinyeo*; Jpn. *shinnyo*) or fundamental nature of reality—is Buddha-nature. Insight into dependent co-arising yields knowledge of the emptiness of distinctions and an awareness that all beings are interdependent, which in turn generates compassion for all sentient beings. Tiantai asserts that both meditation and doctrinal study are equally important for awakening.[54]

The central doctrine of Tiantai is the notion of "3,000 realms in an instant of thought" (Chi. 一念三千*yī niàn sān qiān*; Kor. *ilnyeom samcheon*; Jpn. *ichinen sanzen*), which refers to the interdependent nature of all things in the universe. This can be experienced via "the threefold contemplation in a single mind" (Chi. 一心三観 *yīxīn sān guān*; Kor. *ilsim samgwan*; Jpn. *isshin sangan*) in which one realizes the provisional truth that all things are impermanent, the ultimate truth that all things are empty, and the middle truth that all things are a mean between impermanence and emptiness. These three should not be viewed oppositionally, but rather as a "round threefold truth" of mutual complementarity.[55]

The proliferation of Buddhist schools in China caused many people to question why there were so many conflicting doctrines. Zhiyi argued that the historical Buddha revealed his teachings progressively based on his audience's capacity for understanding. His first twenty years of teachings were simple and foundational, forming the core components of the "lesser vehicle." The second period introduced the basic Mahāyāna concepts

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associated with the Yogācāra and Madhyamaka schools. The third teaching period offered advanced Mahāyāna teachings. In his final days, the Buddha gave his most advanced teachings in the form of the *Huayan* and *Lotus Sutras*. Because Zhiyi believed the *Huayan Sutra* to be too esoteric to be understood by everyone, he chose the *Lotus Sutra* as the foundational text of Tiantai Buddhism.[56]

The *Lotus Sutra* explains how the Buddha used "skillful means" (Pli. *upaya*; San. *upāya*; Chi. 方便*fāngbiàn*; Kor. *bangpyeon*; Jpn. *hōben*) to present his teaching at his students' level of understanding in order to progressively lead them from lower, partial truths to higher, complete truth. Following this, Tiantai describes its teachings as "Round Teachings" because they encircle everything. Other schools of Buddhism are not wrong, but they offer simpler, more limited visions of the truth. The example of a chariot can be used to illustrate the Tiantai school's doctrine of three truths (provisional, empty, and middle). A chariot can be provisionally called "chariot" because it came into existence as a result of specific causes and conditions that shaped it in a particular way; that is, when I say "chariot," I mean "a two-wheeled vehicle that is pulled by a horse." The concept *chariot* is also empty because there is no intrinsic, universal thing to which it corresponds (a "form" as Plato would have it). *Chariot* is just a linguistic handle that we use to refer to a temporary aggregate of matter that performs a certain function. There is also a nondualistic, middle truth between these: a chariot can be aptly described as both provisional and empty and, at the same time, as neither provisional nor empty. A chariot exists in the tension between the extremes of the provisional and the empty. Zhiyi uses this nondualistic three truth theory to understand enlightenment. The deluded mind and the pure mind are not separate, but rather part of the same interconnected process.[57]

Saichō (767–822 CE), also known as Dengyō Daishi, founded the Tendai school at Mount Hiei near Kyoto, Japan, after studying for a year at Mount Tiantai in China. Tendai became the most influential school of Japanese Buddhism. It emphasized the doctrine of original enlightenment (Chi. 本覺 *běnjué*; Kor. *bongak*; Jpn. *hongaku*), the idea that since everything possesses Buddha-nature, all beings are inherently enlightened and can thus attain immediate awakening once we eschew the delusions that mask our true nature. Tendai also emphasized the interconnection of all things: every person constantly affects and is affected by the world around them.[58] Saichō emphasizes *shikan* (Chi. 止観 *zhīguān*) meditation as the method through which one can realize the truth of the Middle Way that all things are both empty and provisionally existing. Originally developed by Zhiyi,

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shikan involves seated meditation in which one calms one's mind to directly experience the world. Saichō also emphasizes socially engaged Buddhism with his philosophy of *ichigu wo terasu* (一隅を照らす), or "light up one corner [of the world]." In this way, Saichō emphasized that Buddhists have the responsibility to devote their time, money, and effort to the betterment of the world around them.[59]

Huáyán (華嚴; Kor. Hwaeom; Jpn. Kegon)

Huayan was founded by Dushun (557–640 CE) and significantly expanded by its third partriach, Fazang (643–712 CE). It takes its name from the *Flower Garland Sutra* (San. *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*; Chi. 華嚴經 *Huāyán Jīng*), which it considers to be the highest teaching of the historical Buddha.[60] Huayan was imported into Japan as the Kegon school in the eighth century CE.[61] It was the most dominant Buddhist school of the Nara Period (710–794 CE). Imported into Korea as Hwaeom, it has remained one of the most influential Buddhist traditions in East Asia.[62]

According to Huayan, because all things are interdependent, there are no fundamental differences between things, only conventional distinctions that we draw for the sake of convenience. All things exist only as a function of their relationships to other things. This interdependence is described through the metaphor of Indra's Jewel Net. The universe is like an infinite net made of shining jewels interconnected by strings. Each jewel perfectly reflects the other jewels and is in turn reflected by them. Just as every jewel in Indra's net is connected to and reflects every other jewel, everything in the universe is interconnected with every other thing through interdependent arising.[63] This idea of interconnectedness is also described in "The Treatise on the Golden Lion," which Fazang wrote for Empress Wu to explain the complexities of Huayan in plain language using the metaphor of a golden lion figure at the palace. Just as the lion only exists because a skilled artist shaped it from gold, all things exist only because of their relationships with other things. While the gold that makes up the lion is real, the lion itself is empty because it is only a temporary manifestation of the matter that makes it up.[64]

The Huayan Sutra reflects the ideas expressed by the Buddha during the first seven days of his enlightenment. During this time, the Buddha entered "sea-state *samādhi*" (Pli. *Sāgara-mudrā samādhi*; San. *Sāgara-mudrā samādhi*; Chi. 海印三昧 *hǎi yìn sān mèi*; Kor. *haeinsammae*; Jpn. *kaiin sanmai*), "a condition wherein one experiences reality directly, without

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interpretation and evaluation."[65] Here the metaphor of an ocean is used to illustrate four patterns of thinking that characterize the stages of cultivation as one progresses from ignorance to enlightenment. In the lowest stage, one views each wave in the ocean as a separate, unconnected entity. This is the everyday worldview endorsed by most people, a sort of naive realism that considers things to be real and independent. In the second stage, one is able to perceive the water of the ocean without seeing the waves. One understands that all things are empty and undifferentiated. In the third stage, one sees the interdependence of the water and waves. Awakened beings understand that phenomena and emptiness are identical. In the final stage, one sees the waves interacting with one another as well as with the ocean. All phenomena are mutually interdependent.[66]

Zhēnyán (真言; Jpn. Shingon)[67]

Zhenyan is the Chinese version of Vajrayāna Buddhism (also known as Mantrayāna, Guhyamantrayāna, or Tantrayāna). It was imported into Japan by Kūkai (aka Kōbō Daishi, 774–835 CE), under whom it quickly became one of the most prominent schools of Japanese Buddhism, leaving a lasting impression on Japanese art. The term "tantra" is typically avoided in East Asia due to its association with sexual practices, so the term *mikkyō* (密教) is used, which refers to mysterious or esoteric teachings.[68] "Zhenyan" literally means "true word," which refers to mantras, sounds used to focus consciousness during meditation. The goal of Zhenyan is to realize oneness with the universe through the practice of the "three mysteries": *mantras* (vocal sounds), *mudrās* (hand gestures), and *maṇḍalas* (visual symbols). These three practices help one to focus body, speech, and mind on the Buddha Mahāvairocana (also known as Vairocana Buddha), who symbolizes the perfect cosmic being. The Japanese Shingon patriarch Kūkai claims that they allow one to "become the Buddha in this body" (即身成佛 *sokushin jōbutsu*), simultaneously realizing the world as *saṃsāra* and coming to dwell in the *dharmadhātu* (Ultimate Reality).[69]

Zhenyan emphasizes the idea that sentient beings share *bodhicitta*—the buddha-mind or potential for Buddhahood—with Mahāvairocana. Unlike the Huayan tradition, which argues that practice allows one to realize buddha-potential, Zhenyan/Shingon claims that buddha-potential itself has the ability to destroy delusion, so practice (*mantras, mudrās,* and *maṇḍalas*) is merely the means through which buddha-body (*sokushin jōbutsu*) becomes manifest. Zhenyan uses two *maṇḍalas* to focus meditation. The Womb Maṇḍala (sometimes called the Truth Maṇḍala) is female and represents

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the first five elements that comprise the universe: space, air, fire, water, and earth. The Diamond Maṇḍala (also known as the Wisdom Mandala) is male and represents the last of the six elements, mind.[70]

Pure Land (Chi. 淨土宗 Jìngtǔzōng; Kor. Jeongtojong; Jpn. Jōdo Shū)

Pure Land Buddhism represents a significant philosophical departure from the other types of Buddhism that preceded it in India and China.[71] According to Pure Land, the historical Buddha emphasized awakening through "self-power" (Chi. 自力 *zìlì*; Kor. *jaryeok*; Jpn. *jiriki*), which is one's own concentrated effort to realize *nirvāṇa*. While self-power might have worked in the Buddha's time, we now live in a degenerate age (Chi. 末法 *mòfǎ*; Jpn. *mappō*) in which realization of enlightenment through one's own efforts is impossible because of the inordinate amount of suffering and ignorance in the world. Rather than trying to reach enlightenment on one's own, one should abandon the futility of *jiriki* and instead embrace the "other power" (Chi. 他力 *tālì*; Kor. *taryeok*; Jpn. *tariki*) of the Buddha Amitābha, who will transport the practitioner at the moment of death to the Pure Land (or Western Paradise), an idyllic realm in which one can realize enlightenment without distraction. While early incarnations of Pure Land Buddhism view Amithāba's Western Paradise as a place where one can realize *nirvāṇa* without interference from the degenerate world, later Pure Land describes it as a final heavenly realm in which the faithful will dwell for eternity. Tanlun (476–542 CE) encouraged the chanting of the *niànfó* (念佛; Kor. *yeombul;* Jpn. *nembutsu*), a short phrase that literally means "Praise to Amitābha Buddha" (Chi. 南無阿彌陀佛 *Nāmó Ēmítuófó*; Kor. *Namu Amita Bul;* Jpn. *Namu Amida Butsu*). In Japan, Hōnen (1133–1212 CE), founder of the Jōdo school, promoted the chanting of the *nembutsu* among lay Buddhists, and Pure Land quickly gained popularity (and remains to this day the most popular form of Buddhism in Japan).[72]

Chán (禪 Kor. Seon; Jpn. Zen)

Chan is one of the most influential traditions of East Asian Buddhism, leaving an indelible impression on the arts of China, Korea, and Japan.[73] "Chan" is short for *channa,* the Chinese translation of *dhyāna,* which is the Sanskrit word for "meditation." The Chan tradition emphasizes meditation as the primary method of training as opposed to the intensive academic study that is considered essential by most other traditions. The First Patriarch of

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Chan was Bodhidharma (c. fifth to sixth century CE) who is said to have brought the tradition from India around 520 CE (though, like the historical Buddha, his origins are somewhat apocryphal). He emphasized direct transmission from mind to mind, where understanding is passed from teacher to student without the use of language or discursive reasoning. Though Chan training includes some *sūtra* study, true insight will always come as "a special transmission outside the scriptures" (Chi. 教外別傳 *jiāo wài bié zhuàn*; Kor. *kyooe pyolchon*; Jpn. *kyōge betsuden*). Most of our everyday experience of the world involves mental evaluation, a type of internal dialogue Chan identifies as our sense of self, which is responsible for our ignorant attachment to false ideals. Meditation allows us to disengage from this self-reflection and directly experience reality as it truly is, which will bring an end to the dualistic thinking that causes suffering.[74]

For Chan, there is no fundamental distinction between enlightenment and nonenlightenment because all things have Buddha-nature (and the Zen philosopher Dōgen goes so far as to say all things *are* Buddha-nature). Chan practitioners seek understanding (Chi. 悟 *wù*; Kor. *o*; Jpn. *satori*) of their own nature (Chi. 見性 *jiàn xìng*; Kor. *gyeon seong*; Jpn. *kenshō*) as buddhas through direct experience of reality as it truly is. This is accomplished primarily through the practice of seated meditation (Chi. 座禅 *zuòchán*, Kor. *jwaseon*; Jpn. *zazen*) while focusing on breathing and concentrating on a point below the navel called the *dantian* (丹田; Kor. *danjeon*; Jpn. *tanden*).[75] Because all things are Buddha-nature, meditation is not a means to achieving enlightenment, but rather the practice of enlightenment itself. As a result, the Chan tradition emphasizes sudden enlightenment: awakening is not the product of many lifetimes of study, but can instead happen at any moment of one's training.[76]

In addition to seated meditation, many Chan schools also practice *gōng'àn* (公案 Kor. *gong-an*; Jpn. *kōan*), which are puzzling statements or records of encounters between teacher and student that can act as a focus during meditation. Developed originally by Linji (d. 867 CE), *gōng'àn* were meant to disrupt the rationalistic thinking of the everyday mind and thereby create opportunities for awakening.[77]

Chapter Summaries

This volume consists of eleven chapters and is divided into two parts. Part 1 of the volume, entitled "Creative Pedagogies for Teaching Buddhist East

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