



Avataṃsaka 華嚴 *Transnationalism in Modern Sinitic Buddhism*

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This article describes the important but overlooked influence of Avataṃsaka thought within East Asian Buddhism from the nineteenth century to the 1930s. It shows that Avataṃsaka was transnational in two significant ways: First, its popularity is illustrative of the connections that existed between Buddhists in China, Japan, and Korea during that time. Second, Avataṃsaka thought served as the basis for discourses of transnationalism.

Keywords: Avataṃsaka, Kegon, Huayan, Hwaṃm, transnationalism, equality, egalitarianism

The first half of the twentieth century witnessed many changes in East Asian Buddhism. New epistemologies and technologies, along with changing social and political structures, formed much of the context for these changes. While the impetus for many of these changes was provided by Western ideas and Western colonialism, lively exchange *between* Asian nations was an important factor in the development of East Asian Buddhism in the twentieth century. This article traces a few of the threads that make up this web of intra-Asian Buddhist influence. It brings together observations made by contemporary scholars of China, Japan, and Korea that, when taken together, paint a picture of the influence of Avataṃsaka thought within modern Sinitic Buddhism.¹ It will show that from the nineteenth century to the 1930s, Avataṃsaka thought became a transnational discourse that Buddhists across East Asia used to link their tradition with modern political and social issues.

Avataṃsaka thought was transnational in two significant ways. First, the way in which thinkers from one country influenced those in another country around shared concerns are illustrative of the transnational links that existed between Buddhists in China, Japan, and Korea in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Second, modern Avataṃsaka thought was not merely the product of transnational

1 In this paper I follow the convention of referring to the Buddhisms of these three nations collectively as “Sinitic Buddhism,” because of their reliance on a shared canon written in Classical Chinese. While the Buddhisms of these three countries certainly have their differences, there was much commonality and mutual influence between them in the modern period, just as there was in the past. Vietnam also falls under the rubric of Sinitic Buddhism, but inclusion of Vietnamese Buddhism in this study is outside the author’s linguistic competency.

collaboration; it was used as a resource for Sinitic Buddhists to create discourses of transnationalism. For example, the concept of ontological equality (Skt. *sama*, 平等) was adopted from Avataṃsaka thought to deal with political concerns such as social class, national unity, and colonialism, which emerged in the context of colonialisms (Western and Japanese) and the widespread popularity of social evolutionism among East Asian thinkers. Some Chinese and Korean Buddhists used the central doctrines of interdependence and unity to envision stateless and radically egalitarian societies, while in Japan it was used to justify the one-state transnationalism of Japanese Imperial fascism.

Avataṃsaka as a School of Thought

Scholars have rightly paid much attention to the roles played by certain schools of Buddhist thought in modern Sinitic Buddhism. Among these have been the philosophical uses of Zen in Japan and Korea, the revival of Yogācāra studies in China and Japan, and the emergence of various forms of socially-engaged Buddhism in East Asia in the early twentieth century, such as China's "Humanistic Buddhism" (*rensheng fojiao* 人生佛教 or *renjian fojiao* 人間佛教) and Korea's "Buddhism of the Masses" (*minjung pulgyo* 民眾佛教). This paper aims to show that one can discover interesting and historically significant things by looking at how other schools of Buddhist thought were used. Here, the focus is Avataṃsaka Buddhism, which is one of the main schools of Buddhist thought indigenous to East Asia. It developed primarily in China between the seventh and ninth centuries. Referred to as "Huáyán" in Mandarin, "Hawŏm" in Korean, and "Kegon" in Japanese,² it derives its name from the *Avataṃsaka*³ *Sūtra* 華嚴經, a voluminous Mahāyāna text likely aggregated in China from smaller independently circulating sūtras between the fourth and ninth centuries (Wei Daoru, 2011: ch. 1). Within much of Sinitic Buddhism, this text is generally considered to contain the Buddha's most profound teachings, and it served as the inspiration for a body of thought that is identified by the umbrella term of "Avataṃsaka."

Starting from the sixth century C.E., a series of five putative patriarchs drew from the Indian Buddhist philosophical traditions of Madhyamaka, Tathāgatagarbha, and Yogācāra to craft and refine a series of conceptual tools for thinking about causality, and to articulate the interrelationship between various Buddhist teachings and between phenomena. As other Buddhists in China were doing at the time, they ranked the various Buddhist scriptures based on their level of truth, and they placed the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* at the top. These thinkers developed an ontology based on causality, which described in some detail the complete "interpenetration of all phenomena without obstruction" (*shishi wuai* 事事無礙). Eschewing the *via negativa* of Indian Madhyamaka thought,

2 Because I am dealing with Chinese, Japanese, and Korean pronunciations of Chinese characters I have chosen to adopt the following conventions when providing romanization: When referring to something specific to a given country, or when referring to the Avataṃsaka tradition of a specific country, I shall use the pronunciation from that country's language. In all other cases, I shall provide the modern mandarin Chinese reading. Thus, I refer to the Avataṃsaka tradition of Japan as "Kegon," but talk about the general Avataṃsaka principle of *shishi wuai* 事事無礙.

3 The author is aware that scholars disagree on whether Avataṃsaka is the original Sanskrit term behind the Chinese 華嚴 (the primary alternative being Gaṇḍavyūha) (Ōtake, 2007). Since the twentieth century, however, it has been common to use Avataṃsaka as the default Sanskrit equivalent for the Chinese term. Furthermore, given that the current article deals with a school of thought that spans all of East Asia, choosing one pronunciation for the Chinese characters is problematic. The author also feels that the English translation "Flower Garland" is too precious, and thus too distracting.

Avataṁsaka thinkers put forth a view of reality that was, as Robert Gimello famously put it, broadly kataphatic (Gimello, 1976). In their view, reality is an abundant, harmonious whole, composed of an infinity of pieces, with each causally dependent upon all others.

A comment is in order here regarding the relationships between the *Avataṁsaka Sūtra*, an Indic text, and the Sinitic Avataṁsaka school. The most influential of the classical texts of the Avataṁsaka school have been those structured as commentaries on the *Avataṁsaka Sūtra*. In Japan, the works of Fazang 法藏 (643-712), the school's third patriarch, were generally considered the most authoritative. In China, however, from the late Ming to the modern period the commentaries of Chengguan 澄觀 (737-838), the fourth patriarch, have been the most important (Chen, 2003: 329-331). As the nun and Buddhist scholar Guo Cheen writes:

I cannot emphasize enough how revered Chengguan's Commentaries and Subcommentaries have been and are in the Chinese-speaking world and among Chinese-speaking Buddhist practitioners. I consider it utterly inadequate to study *The Huayanjing* [*Avataṁsaka Sūtra*] or advance Huayan Studies without them. Furthermore these crucial texts explain the acme of Chinese Buddhism, a three-pronged approach of scripture, commentaries, and outline to studying *The Huayanjing* and to Huayan Studies in China (Guo Cheen, 2014: 1-2).

Thus, although many of the central doctrines of Avataṁsaka thought do not explicitly appear in the *Avataṁsaka Sūtra*, no one in China studied the *Avataṁsaka Sūtra* without the aid of Chengguan's commentary, which adopts as its central exegetical framework the ideas of the Avataṁsaka school. The same has been true in Korea, where Chengguan's commentaries have been the basis for the study of the *Avataṁsaka Sūtra* since the eighteenth century (Kim Yong-tae, 2014: 138-139). In the following pages we will meet a number of individuals who studied and lectured on the *Avataṁsaka Sūtra*. As we do, it is important to keep in mind that this text was almost always read through the lens of the Avataṁsaka philosophy present in these commentaries.

Here I refer to Avataṁsaka as a "school" of Buddhist thought, but it is important to clarify what I mean by this. It is, of course, now well known that one must be careful how one uses the term "school" (*zong* 宗) when discussing East Asian Buddhism. In Japan, Buddhist sects are clearly defined institutions, with their own teachings, texts, temples, and dedicated clergy. In China, however, this was never the case, and the "schools" of Buddhism were rarely institutionally distinct. Instead, in China the "schools" tended to represent coherent bodies of thought or lineages of practice, which individuals often combined in their lives as they saw fit. The situation in Korea was different again, as the various schools of Buddhism were consolidated in a unique way as the result of multiple imperial mandates issued in the early Chosŏn Dynasty (1392-1897).

In order to encompass the diversity of Sinitic Buddhism, I use the term "Avataṁsaka school" to mean a coherent body of thought articulated in a body of canonical texts written by five founders. I do not refer to Avataṁsaka as an institution, even in Japan where it did see some revival in the nineteenth century. Here Avataṁsaka is meant to indicate the source of intellectual and discursive resources used by modern Buddhists, who often combined it with other forms of Buddhist thought. It is not my goal to argue that there developed a separate Avataṁsaka school in the modern period; rather, my point

is that there were many people who made some use of ideas drawn from the tradition of Avataṃsaka thought. Their decision to turn to this form of thought was the result of three factors explained below: The first was the great extent to which Avataṃsaka discourse was already suffused throughout Sinitic Buddhist thought by the start of the nineteenth century (within Chan discourse, for example). The second was the idea, originating in Japan before spreading to China and Korea, that real Sinitic Buddhism was made up of eight or more distinct schools, and that modern Buddhism required the presence of all of these schools in order to flourish. (Avataṃsaka was one of these schools.) The final factor was pragmatic: Avataṃsaka thought provided modern Sinitic Buddhists with specific discursive tools they could use to respond to important issues of the day.

1. Suffusion of Avataṃsaka Thought

At the start of the nineteenth century, Avataṃsaka thought was one of the key components of Sinitic Buddhism, though it was not always identified explicitly by that name. After their development in Tang Dynasty (618-907) China, classical Avataṃsaka ideas were incorporated into the Chan 禪 tradition, which came to dominate the Buddhist landscape in China from the Song Dynasty (960-1279) (Wei Daoru, 2001: ch. 6). A similar phenomenon occurred in Korea, where Avataṃsaka thought came to serve as the philosophical foundation for Sŏn 禪 meditative practice as laid out by the Korean master Chinul 知訥 (1158-1210) (Shim, 1999: 50-97), which remains dominant to this day. In Japan, Avataṃsaka Buddhism was institutionalized as the Kegon Sect in the eighth century, but this sect was never very large or influential. Nevertheless, ideas drawn from Avataṃsaka found their way into the general curriculum of study for Japan's Buddhist monastics. Since the Tokugawa Period (1603-1868) the basic Buddhist curriculum was a combination of the categories of Dharma-characteristic 法相 studies and Dharma-nature 法性 studies following a two-fold classification scheme originally created by the fourth Avataṃsaka patriarch Chengguan (Hamar, 2007). In Japan, the first category combined Yogācāra thought and a large Indian commentarial text known as the *Abhidharmakośa* (*Apidamo jushe lun* 阿毘達磨俱舍論). The second category was composed of Avataṃsaka texts and the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* (*Dasheng qixin lun* 大乘起信論) (Jorgensen, 2014: 94). Thus, even though the Kegon Sect had few adherents in Japan, Japanese Buddhist scholasticism as a whole continued to preserve and propagate Avataṃsaka thought into the modern period.

A similar tendency toward the broad adoption of Avataṃsaka thought occurred in China, though it was not universal, as it was in Japan. Avataṃsaka thought remained an implicit part of Chan discourse after the Song, and several masters incorporated it explicitly into their writings during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Although its popularity as an explicit discourse receded among monastics during the middle of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), a number of lay scholars remained attracted to Avataṃsaka thought, and studied and wrote on it (Wei Daoru, 2011: 289-299). Gong Zizhen 龔自珍 (1792-1841) was particularly important in this regard, and his mixture of Tiantai 天台, Avataṃsaka, and Yogācāra influenced Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873-1929) and other important intellectuals of the late Qing who made use of Avataṃsaka thought in their writings (Mori, 2004: 224). Tan Sitong 譚嗣同 (1865-1898) and the politician and reformer Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858-1927) were both known for blending Avataṃsaka thought and Western philosophy (Chan,

1985: 77-92, 148-149; Wei Yixia, 2012). More significantly, Avataṁsaka was important for Yang Wenhui 楊文會 (1837-1911), the “father” of modern Chinese Buddhism.

2. Avataṁsaka as One of the “Schools” of Buddhism

By the end of the nineteenth century, Avataṁsaka thought had become part of a doctrinal synthesis in both China and Japan that included the study of Yogācāra. While the popularity of Yogācāra in early twentieth century Sinitic Buddhism has been well studied by scholars (Chen and Deng, 2000: ch. 6; Makeham, 2014), less has been said about Avataṁsaka Buddhism, which was treated by some Buddhists as the final development of Sinitic Mahāyāna thought. Against the background of its broad suffusion into Sinitic Buddhism, Avataṁsaka emerged as a distinct school in the minds of East Asia’s Buddhists at the end of the nineteenth century. This was due in large part to the influence of Japan.

James Ketelaar has shown that Buddhists in late nineteenth-century Japan responded to the encroachment of government constraints by developing a discourse about the uniqueness and perfection of the Japanese form of Buddhism, and by constructing modern institutions of education to train Buddhists clergy to be of service to the state. Although each of these institutions was usually associated with a specific sect of Japanese Buddhism, their curricula shared many features. For textbooks, all of them used sectarian histories of Buddhism based on a work titled *Essentials of the Eight Sects* (*Hasshū kōyō* 八宗綱要) (Ketelaar, 1990). Written by the Kegon monk Gyōnen 凝然 (1240-1321), this text describes the history of Buddhism as the development of a series of sects, each with its own central doctrines, practices, and texts. Implicit in Gyōnen’s text is an argument about what Buddhism is. Beginning with the early schools of mainstream Indian Buddhism, it discusses the rise of various Mahāyāna schools in India, and then in Tang China. This text argues that “Buddhism” is a whole made up of all of these parts. In Meiji era Japan (1868-1912), Buddhists argued that Japanese Buddhism was the best form of Buddhism because all of these sects were represented (more or less) within Japan. This particular argument was used by Japanese scholars to argue the superiority of their Buddhism over the Buddhisms of China and Korea.

The *Essentials of the Eight Sects* and the sectarian textbooks it inspired advanced the idea that *real* Buddhism is a Buddhism in which all of the sects are present and represented. This viewpoint had an impact outside of Japan. In China, Yang Wenhui was particularly influenced by this argument. A common theme in the letters he wrote to his friend Nanjō Bunyū 南條文雄 (1849-1927) was his deep desire to revive Buddhism in China, by which he meant reviving all of the Buddhist schools that had been “lost” in China. As noted above, Chinese Buddhism had historically not been divided into different schools in the same way that Japanese Buddhism had, but Yang’s understanding of Buddhism was informed by Japanese sectarian historiography. This can be seen in many of Yang’s writings, such as his *Summary of the Ten Schools* (*Shizong lüeshuo* 十宗略說) and the *Buddhist Studies Primer* (*Fojiao chuxue keben* 佛教初學課本), which he used as a textbook in China’s first modern Buddhist seminary, which he ran from 1908 to 1910 (Schickentanz, 2014).

In China, the *Buddhist Studies Primer* became an influential introduction to Buddhism, but it was only the first of many Chinese works that described the history of Buddhism as the successive appearance of various schools, each with their own founders, central

scriptures, and doctrines (Gong, 2013). These texts popularized the idea that the Golden Age of Buddhism was one in which eight (or ten, twelve, or thirteen) schools all flourished together. Erik Schicketanz has argued that the idea that Chinese Buddhism had fallen from its former completeness was one of the rationales for Chinese Buddhists' well-known calls for a "revival" of Chinese Buddhism in the early twentieth century. In particular, Chinese Buddhists called for the reestablishment of specific schools of Buddhism that had lost their distinct institutional and lineal identities (even though, in reality, most had never had such an identity in China). In this context, Buddhists in both Japan and China pointed to Avataṃsaka as one of the schools that needed to be reinvigorated in order to return Sinitic Buddhism to its former glory.

Beyond the mere fact that the *Essentials of the Eight Sects* identified the Avataṃsaka as one of the schools in need of preservation, it also contained a doctrinal claim about Buddhism that was rooted in Avataṃsaka thought itself: the theme of doctrinal unity. As Ketelaar points out, Gyōnen resisted the idea of a hierarchy of teachings. Instead, in true Avataṃsaka fashion, he acknowledged the value of all the different schools of Buddhism while privileging none (183-184). As a result, even though the *Essentials of the Eight Sects* described the history of Buddhism as a history of different sects, it did not claim that they actually sought different goals. The Buddhism Gyōnen described, then, was one of different paths, but one destination. This attitude, which was repeated in some of the sectarian histories inspired by the *Essentials of the Eight Sects*, would have sat well with Chinese Buddhists who were accustomed to a non-sectarian approach to Buddhism. And in Korea, this attitude likely contributed to the discourse of "unified Buddhism (*t'ong pulgyo* 通佛敎)" that emerged in colonial Korea as a way to valorize Korean Buddhism over and against the claims of Japanese Buddhist missionaries that Korean Buddhism was inferior because it lacked some of the sects needed to be considered a complete form of Buddhism (Cho, 2004: 39).

From the end of the nineteenth century through the beginning of the twentieth, Avataṃsaka thought within Sinitic Buddhism transformed from an implicit discourse to an explicit one as Buddhists sought to revive it as a coherent school of thought by reprinting its key texts, and by studying and teaching its central concepts. Here I will highlight some of the ways in which Avataṃsaka thought was reinvigorated by a network of actors who spanned the nations of northeast Asia. These actors were driven not only by a desire to recreate a putative "complete" Buddhism, but also by the specific resources that Avataṃsaka thought provided for engaging with modernity.

Interdependence of China and Japan

Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (1869-1936) and Yang Wenhui were two of the most notable Chinese scholars to embrace Avataṃsaka thought in China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and both played important roles in the transnational flow of Avataṃsaka thought within modern Sinitic Buddhism. Yang Wenhui was a government official and one of the most important Buddhists of the late Qing dynasty. As stated above, Yang was committed to the publication of Buddhist texts, especially those that had been lost in China, and he was indebted to the Japanese scholar and Jōdō Shinshū 淨土真宗 priest Nanjō Bunyū for helping him get copies of texts that had been lost. Having originally met in London, England, Yang and Nanjō exchanged many letters to one another over the years, and, through Nanjō, Yang was influenced by trends in Japanese Buddhist scholarship. As

we have seen, Nanjō influenced Yang’s view of Sinitic Buddhism by sharing the sectarian histories common in Japan. Although Yang eventually worked to publish all the major canonical texts and commentaries of Sinitic Buddhism, he began with texts belonging to the Pure Land tradition (which formed the basis for both his and Nanjō’s practice of Buddhism); he also worked to revive the study of both Yogācāra and Avataṁsaka, and the texts he chose to reprint first belonged to these two schools (Chen, 2003: 187).

Among the texts that Yang Wenhui printed and promoted, one text stands out and requires some explanation in the context of this article. This text is the *Awakening of Faith*, mentioned above as part of the monastic curriculum in Japan. Although attributed to the Indian Buddhist thinker Aśvaghōṣa (fl. 2nd c. C.E.), it was likely composed in China in the sixth century. It is not generally considered by insiders or outsiders to be one of the classical texts of the Avataṁsaka school, but it did have a symbiotic relationship with that school. The ideas it puts forth influenced the thinking of several of the Avataṁsaka school’s founders (Gong, 1995: 150-158), and one of them, Fazang, wrote one of the most influential commentaries on that text (Vorenkamp, 2014). The *Awakening of Faith* is widely regarded by those within the tradition as the pinnacle of Sinitic Buddhist thought. Like many other Buddhists, Yang told people who were new to Buddhism that they should begin their studies with this text. For Yang, as well as for Buddhists in Japan, this text held a special relationship with Avataṁsaka thought. One of the first texts that Yang printed was Fazang’s commentary on the text, which had been lost in China. In the preface to this 1877 work, Yang said that the study of Buddhism should begin from the *Awakening of Faith* and Fazang’s commentary on it because they unified the two main “branches” of Sinitic Buddhism, which are none other than the Dharma-nature and Dharma-characteristic schools (*xingxiang erzong* 性相二宗) that were the two main components of the Japanese Buddhist doctrinal curriculum. In his preface to the reprint, Yang applauds Fazang’s description of the “complete interfusion” of these two schools (*xingxiang yuanrong* 性相圓融) (Chen, 2003: 314-322). “Complete interfusion” is a key Avataṁsaka term, and was used to describe the relationship between phenomena, as well as between the various teachings of Buddhism, as Yang Wenhui and Fazang use it here.

Yang Wenhui’s emphasis on the works of Fazang over the works of Chengguan is another example of the influence of Japanese Buddhist studies. As noted above, Chinese Avataṁsaka had tended to focus on the works of Chengguan, but even though Yang did include Chengguan’s commentaries within the curriculum he outlined for his seminary (Yang, 2000: 336), he explicitly favored Fazang’s writings. He even went so far as to refer to Avataṁsaka as the “Xianshou School 賢首宗,” using one of Fazang’s honorific names, Xianshou (Yang, 2000: 375-376).

Under the influence of Japanese sectarian historiography, Yang Wenhui worked for the revitalization of Chinese Buddhism through the publication and study of all of the putative “schools” of Sinitic Buddhism. But he personally recommended study of Yogācāra and Avataṁsaka above other schools of Buddhist thought (Yao, 2015: 212). The impact of this can be seen in the trajectory of his students’ studies. One student in particular played an important role in modern Avataṁsaka: Gui Bohua 桂伯華 (1861-1915). Gui trained as a scholar, and then joined Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, and Tan Sitong in the Hundred Day Reforms of 1898. After those reforms failed, and Tan and others were executed, Gui retreated to his home where he became ill. After a conversion experience, he began

studying Buddhism with Yang Wenhui in Nanjing (Yu, 2004: 1.852a-854b). In a letter to a friend, Yang praised Gui for his diligence, and noted that he was particularly interested in the *Awakening of Faith*, Yogācāra, Buddhist logic, and Avatamsaka thought (Yang, 2000: 463). In other words, Gui studied the same mixture of doctrine that Yang himself favored.

In 1904, Gui compiled and published *Arranged Commentaries on the Awakening of Faith* (*Qixin lun kezhu 起信論科註*). This work is basically a reprint of the *Awakening of Faith* along with Fazang's commentary. China's first major Buddhist periodical *Buddhist Studies Journal* (*Foxue congbao 佛學叢報*) carried an ad for this collection in ten of the twelve issues of its two-year run from 1912 to 1914. The ad was brief, but it emphasized the fact that the collection included Fazang's commentary. This ad always appeared alongside an ad for *Synchronized Explanations of the Avatamsaka Inquiry Into the Origin of Humanity* (*Huayan yuanren lun hejie 華嚴原人論合解*), a collection of commentaries on *Inquiry Into the Origin of Humanity*, which was written by the fifth Avatamsaka patriarch Zongmi 宗密 (780-841) (Gregory, 1995). This text explained the relationship between, and ranked the profundity of, Confucianism, Daoism, and various forms of Buddhism, and was also commonly recommended as an introductory text for those new to Buddhism. In the ad copy for both of these texts there is a clear emphasis on the identity of the authors of these texts as Avatamsaka thinkers.

In 1906, Gui moved to Japan to continue his studies. There he would have encountered an approach to the study of Buddhist doctrine that he would already have been familiar with as a result of his time with Yang Wenhui. While in Japan, Gui was instrumental in organizing a series of Buddhist lectures that would have a major influence on some of the attendees and even on one of the lecturers (Xiao, 2003: 244-245). One of the attendees at the lectures organized by Gui Bohua was the scholar and radical Zhang Taiyan. Like other young intellectuals of his generation, in the late 1890s he threw himself into the study of modern ideas entering China from the West via Japanese translations. He embraced social evolutionism (usually incorrectly referred to as "social Darwinism"), materialism, and radical politics. Gui worked with Zhang, Liang Qichao, and Tan Sitong in the reform movement led by Kang Youwei in 1898. After the movement was crushed by the government, Zhang fled to Japan with Liang before returning to China in 1903 to continue promoting his radical agenda. Because of his political activities he was put in jail in 1903, where he began to study Buddhism. He had originally been opposed to all forms of religion, but while in prison he immersed himself in the study of Yogācāra and Buddhist logic. From this point on, Buddhism featured prominently in Zhang's thought. His early studies of Buddhism received a boost when he went back to Japan and began spending time with Gui Bohua. During that time he attended a series of lectures given in Japan by the monk Yuexia 月霞 (1858-1917) that had been organized by Gui.

Zhang's use of Yogācāra is well known, but until recently not enough attention has been paid to the impact of Avatamsaka on Zhang's philosophy. Zhang himself favored the same combination of Yogācāra and Avatamsaka thought that dominated in Japan (Jorgensen, 2014: 92). He did not really differentiate the two schools of Buddhism (Ishii, 2015: 8), and he believed that these two forms of Buddhism together could provide a means to liberate all beings, universally (Jorgensen, 2014: 8). Zhang was committed to political revolution within China, and he desired to see a society based on the radical equality of socialism. He had already argued that equality is a necessary element of a modern political order, but after arriving in Japan he fell in with a group of Chinese and Japanese thinkers inspired by

the anarchist socialism of Kropotkin (Ishii, 2015: 9). Zhang quickly came to see continuities between anarchism and Buddhism, and his writings on the topic eventually influenced the monk Taixu 太虛 (1890-1947) (Ritzinger, 2014: 226-227). By 1909, Zhang had begun using Buddhism to champion the idea of the radical equality of all sentient beings. Although he had written critically of Buddhist notions of equality as late as 1897, in Japan he argued that all beings, regardless of class, ethnicity, or nationality, are equal because they all equally possessed of the mind of the Buddha (Jorgensen, 2014: 92.). This idea is deeply rooted in Sinitic Buddhist thought, but Ishii Kōsei sees this as a specific example of his use of Avataṁsaka thought (Ishii, 2015: 5, 8, 10). Zhang was not content to merely describe a world of radical equality; he promoted activism and argued that young people should sacrifice themselves, just as the bodhisattvas in the *Avataṁsaka Sūtra* did, for the sake of establishing this perfect society on earth (Ishii, 2015: 7; Jorgensen, 2014: 88). Zhang developed the view that the perfect society was one of harmony, equality, and unity, which mirrored the view of reality described in Avataṁsaka thought. He was not the only one to be influenced to turn toward Avataṁsaka thought while in Japan. Although the evidence is, for the most part, circumstantial, I believe that the monk Yuexia, considered by many as the first patriarch of modern Chinese Avataṁsaka, was equally impacted by his time in Japan.

Yuexia spent much of his monastic career studying Chan under the era's most famous masters at its major Chan centers. In 1902 he was one of a group of monastics who traveled extensively throughout South and Southeast Asia to observe the state of Buddhism there. In 1909, he accepted Gui Bohua's invitation to give a series of Buddhist lectures to Chinese expatriates in Japan. During his eight-month stay he lectured on the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, and the *Sūtra of Perfect Enlightenment*, and met intellectuals and reformers such as Zhang Taiyan. None of the texts upon which Yuexia lectured is particularly associated with classical Avataṁsaka thought, but in 1912, two years after his return, Yuexia and a few close disciples opened the Avataṁsaka University (Huayan daxue 華嚴大學) (Yu, 2004: 1.144a-147c). This seminary focused on meditation and sūtra study, with the central curriculum being Yuexia's lectures on the *Avataṁsaka Sūtra*.

Yuexia's founding of the Avataṁsaka University is well known among scholars (Welch, 1968: 196; Chen and Deng, 2000: 395-396), but few have asked why Yuexia, a Chan practitioner with a not unusually eclectic taste in sūtras, came to focus on the *Avataṁsaka Sūtra* at the end of his life. I argue that Yuexia's turn toward Avataṁsaka thought was partly the result of the time he spent in Japan, time that he spent with Gui Bohua and others who were deeply involved in the dual study of Avataṁsaka and Yogācāra thought. The original Avataṁsaka University ceased operations in 1916, and Yuexia himself passed away in 1917, but by then Yuexia had already laid the foundation for the modern monastic study of Avataṁsaka in the Chinese world. Many of that first university's students went on to have distinguished monastic careers that included lecturing and publishing on Avataṁsaka. After the closing of the first university, Yuexia's close associate Yingci 應慈 (1873-1965) and their student Cizhou 慈舟 (1877-1958) lectured widely on the *Avataṁsaka Sūtra* (Jueqing, 1999a and b). Yuexia's students also set up many "franchises" of the Avataṁsaka University and, though many of these were intentionally short lived, a dozen seminaries with curricula centered on the Avataṁsaka school appeared in the Chinese world by the middle of the twentieth century (Han, 2015). One of these, the Huayan Lotus Society (Huayan Lianshe 華嚴蓮社), was founded in Taipei in 1952 by Zhiguang 智光 (1889-1963),

a student of Yuexia's at the original Avataṃsaka University. This institute hosted many of the Chinese world's leading Avataṃsaka masters and remains in operation today.

Yuexia left behind few writings, but his students published many works on Avataṃsaka thought. I will leave a deeper discussion of the nature of modern Chinese Huayan thought for future articles, so here I will briefly summarize some of the ways in which the monk Changxing 常惺 (1896-1939) used Avataṃsaka thought to speak about modern issues. In 1929, Changxing published *An Outline of Buddhist Studies* (*Foxue gailun* 佛學概論). Bearing the clear influence of the times in which it was written, the bulk of the work is organized as a sectarian history, much like Gyōnen's *Essentials of the Eight Sects* and Yang Wenhui's *Buddhist Studies Primer*. To this basic framework Changxing added sections on the modern significance of Buddhism. He began with a broad discussion of the key problems facing humanity, as well as a brief summary of Western philosophy. For Changxing, for humanity to survive in the present age it is essential for us to have a correct understanding of our place within existence. Materialism, dualism, and idealism do not provide accurate descriptions of reality, for this one should turn to the radical, thoroughgoing equality expressed in Buddhism (Changxing, 2007: 4-5). In an age when there were many different worldviews on offer, Changxing felt Buddhism provided the one best suited to human flourishing.

Though he did not say so in the introduction, it is clear that Changxing saw this worldview as stemming most clearly from Avataṃsaka thought. The section of the *Outline* that he dedicated to the Avataṃsaka school is five times as long as that for any other school, and in it he went beyond simply recounting the history and doctrine of the school to reflect on what it teaches for the modern age. To cite but one example, Changxing uses the Avataṃsaka doctrine of the "Ten Mysterious Gates (十玄門)" to talk about the debt that each person owes to all other people (to farmers and craftspeople, for example). In a spirit of ecumenism not unusual for the time, he also supported the interrelatedness of various branches of human knowledge, though he did issue a warning about the dangers posed by science (Changxing, 2007: 22-27), such warnings being common among Buddhists in the late 1920s (Hammerstrom, 2015: ch. 5). Changxing concluded by saying that humans need both science and Buddhism, and that for us to survive we need to understand our existence according to Avataṃsaka concepts of interdependence and equality (Changxing, 2007: 28-29). Changxing's use of Avataṃsaka thought to describe a world of radical unity and cooperation between humans echoes ideas Zhang Taiyan's had expressed 20 years earlier.

In telling the story of the modernization of the Chinese Buddhist monastic community, much is often made of the great monk Taixu and the Wuchang Buddhist Seminary (Wuchang Foxue Yuan 武昌佛學院), which he helped found in 1922 (Lai, 2013). One should not, however, underestimate the impact made on modern Chinese Buddhism by the graduates of other institutions. From the preceding we can see that much more remains to be known about the impact left by the network of monks, schools, and publications associated with Yuexia and the original Avataṃsaka University.

Outside of Buddhist monastic curricula, Avataṃsaka thought also played a role in the wider intellectual world of China during the first half of the twentieth century. The famous lay Buddhist thinkers Ouyang Jingwu 歐陽竟無 (1871-1943) and Lü Cheng 呂澂 (1896-1989) both dismissed Avataṃsaka thought completely (Aviv, 2008: ch. 3; Lin, 1997: 306-307), but one finds its influence in the writings of other so-called New Confucian

philosophers of the period (Yao, 2015: ch. 5). Following the trends of the times, Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 (1909-1995) saw Avataṁsaka thought as closely linked to Yogācāra but ultimately rejected Avataṁsaka thought as inferior to Tiantai, another indigenous Chinese Buddhist school (Clower, 2014: 386, 389). Xiong Shili 熊十力 (1885-1968) used the classical Avataṁsaka idea of “nature origination (*xingqi* 性起)” as a basis for a syncretic philosophy (Makeham, 2014: ch. 8), Thomé Fong (Fang Dongmei 方東美, 1899-1977) built his own syncretic philosophy using elements of Avataṁsaka thought, and the Confucian Tang Junyi 唐君毅 (1909-1978) drew from both the doctrinal classification scheme and philosophy of mind put forward by the Avataṁsaka patriarch Fazang (Chiu, 2014).

Avataṁsaka in Modern Korea

As in China, Avataṁsaka played an understudied role in Korean Buddhist thought during the early modern and modern periods. As Robert E. Buswell, Jr. notes, Korea has been somewhat neglected in the story of East Asian Buddhism. He writes, “the symbiosis that occurred between the different East Asian traditions of Buddhism is sometimes obscured because of the construction of the field of East Asian Studies along principally national lines” (Buswell, 2010: 44). While he was referring specifically to the premodern period, I think his observation holds true even in the modern period, as does his insistence that we consider “East Asian Buddhism” as a phenomenon worthy of study in its own right. The colonial context of Korea during the first of the twentieth century resulted in conditions different from those affecting Buddhists in Japan and China, but there were many common ideas that impacted Buddhists across East Asia. Modern political concepts of nationhood, the rising authority of science, colonialism in various forms, and new ideas about the structures of society were debated across the region. Korean Buddhist thinkers were influenced by many of the same concerns as their neighbors, and, they were often influenced by their writings. We see hints of this around Avataṁsaka thought, especially in the development of rhetoric about the united nature of Korean Buddhism.

Scholars have written a great deal about the interaction between Japan and Korea while the latter was a colony of the former during the first half of the twentieth century. Until recently, little has been made of early modern links between China and Korea. Such links, however, were real, and they worked in both directions. Buddhist magazines were one conduit through which ideas about Avataṁsaka Buddhism from the Chinese and Japanese Buddhist worlds entered Korea. Buddhist magazines like *Korean Buddhism Monthly* (*Chosŏn Pulgyo Wŏlbo* 朝鮮佛教月報, 1912-1913) and *Buddhism* (*Pulgyo* 佛教, 1925-1934) carried articles on the state of Chinese Buddhism, as well as travel diaries by Koreans and Japanese who had visited famous Buddhist sites in China. *Korean Buddhism Monthly* serialized *On Humaneness* (*Renxue* 仁學), which was written by the late nineteenth-century Chinese reformist martyr Tan Sitong, mentioned above. His work posited a deeply organic vision of nature and society that was influenced by Avataṁsaka thought. Such writings would have appeared in the context of a Korean Buddhist culture well steeped in Avataṁsaka thought.

Avataṁsaka Buddhism has a long history in Korea, where it served a far more central role in Buddhist thought than in either China or Japan. It was first introduced in Korea in the seventh century, while still in its infancy in China. From that period forward it became central to both the scholastic and cultic activities of Korea’s Buddhists (McBride, 2007). Sŏn (Zen) eventually came to represent the highest form of Buddhist praxis in Korea, and

Avataṃsaka thought served as the philosophical basis for Sōn until the modern period. These two traditions continued to dominate Korean Buddhism after their formal incorporation in the seventeenth century as the first and second parts of the tripartite monastic practice curriculum known as the “Three Gates (*sammun* 三門)” (Lee and Seon, 2012: 76).

The most important early figures of the Korean Avataṃsaka tradition were the native thinkers Ŭisang 義湘 (625-702) and Wōnhyo 元曉 (617-686), but from the eleventh century, Korean Buddhists, like their Chinese counterparts, favored Chengguan’s interpretation of Avataṃsaka (Kim Yong-t’ae, 2012: 290). For several centuries, however, Koreans lacked access to many of Chengguan’s most important writings, and they had to rely on only a few of his summaries. This changed in 1681 when a shipwrecked Chinese vessel brought copies of Chengguan’s major commentaries on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* to Korean shores for the first time. Printings were soon made of these texts, and their circulation led to a great wave of Avataṃsaka-centered activity in the eighteenth century (Kim Yong-t’ae, 2012: 280-287). Imagery and ideas from the Avataṃsaka tradition appeared in some of the most widespread folk Buddhist songs of the late Chosōn (Lee Younghee, 2012), and from the eighteenth century to the present, it was Chengguan’s particular version of Avataṃsaka thought that maintained its position as the pinnacle of the Korean Buddhist monastic curriculum.

As we turn to the question of the place of Avataṃsaka thought in early modern Korean Buddhism, it is important to address the standard narrative of Korean Buddhism, which states that the premodern history of Korean Buddhism is one of decline. It is generally held that Buddhism diminished in Korea after the Confucian Yi family founded the Chosōn Dynasty in the fourteenth century as near-continuous persecution by the government limited the role of Buddhism in Korea until Japanese colonial authorities rescued it to serve as an ally in their colonial efforts. This easy narrative has been repeatedly challenged by historians of late. In a way similar to China, from the late nineteenth century Buddhism served as an intellectual resource for a number of young, reform-minded court politicians in Korea (Cho 2003: 96-100). And during the height of the Japanese colonial period, as the nationalists began to show a greater interest in Korea’s cultural heritage, Korean Buddhism came to be viewed by some as integral to the very essence of the Korean nation (Tikhonov 2010: 167-169).

As noted above, by the late nineteenth century Japanese scholarship and the widespread adoption of sectarian histories derived from the *Essentials of the Eight Sects* popularized the idea that a nation’s Buddhism was only complete when it contained all of the various sects of Buddhism. Korean Buddhism, like Chinese Buddhism, was portrayed by Japanese scholars as underdeveloped, immature, and incomplete. In response, in the first decades of the twentieth century, Korean Buddhists developed the idea that Korean Buddhism was actually superior and complete *because* it was unified and free from sectarianism. This idea gathered popularity in the 1920s, and Koreans began to describe their Buddhism as “Unified Buddhism” (*t’ong Pulgyo* 通佛敎, Cho, 2003: 101). This idea was often articulated using Avataṃsaka doctrinal language. For example, in 1908, in response to the growing institutional power of Japanese Buddhist missionary groups, Korean monks created the first modern unified Korean Buddhist institution, which they titled the Complete/Perfect Sect (Wōnjong 圓宗). Although scholars disagree on the origin of this name, some thinkers of the day explained it by referring to the Avataṃsaka idea of “complete, unobstructed interfusion (*wōnyung muae* 圓融無礙)” (Hwansoo Kim: 2013: 217-218).

Some people at the time clearly saw a connection between the idea of a unified Korean Buddhism and the doctrinal position of Avataṁsaka Buddhism, in which all specific forms of Buddhist truth are harmonized within a whole. It should be recalled that this is the same doctrine that Yang Wenhui invoked when he described the nature of the relationship between the various schools of Chinese Buddhism. I am not suggesting that Korean Buddhists were directly influenced by Yang Wenhui in their choice of the name of their institution, but they did adopt a common strategy for dealing with the claim made by Japanese scholars that their Buddhism was inferior because it lacked sects.

There are more concrete examples of Korean awareness of trends and ideas coming out of the world of Chinese Buddhist thought. Regarding events in Chinese Avataṁsaka Buddhism, in 1918 the *Korean Buddhist Journal* (*Chosŏn Pulgyo Ch'ongbo* 朝鮮佛教叢報) carried an article on the establishment of Yuexia's Avataṁsaka University in China. The article was a reprint of an article that originally appeared in China's *Buddhist Studies Journal* in March 1914 ("Huayan daxue yuanqi..."). The Korean version included only the first part of the article, which describes the importance of the Avataṁsaka school and the *Avataṁsaka Sūtra* within Buddhism in glowing, flowery prose ("Sanghae hapdong hwawŏn..."). The Korean version did not include any of the more prosaic institutional information (organizational structure, class schedules, etc.) that comprised the bulk of the original Chinese article. Given this, and the fact that I have seen no reference within Korean Buddhist periodical literature to any of the numerous other Buddhist seminaries founded in China during the period, I tentatively conclude that it was specifically the ideas about the importance of Avataṁsaka and its rebirth as a school within China that led the editors of the *Korean Buddhist Journal* to publish this article.

A more significant and clear-cut case of the influence of modern Chinese Buddhist thought on a Korean Buddhist is that of Han Yong'un 韓龍雲 (1879-1944). A famous reformer of modern Korean Buddhism, Han was deeply influenced by the writings of the Chinese reformer and intellectual Liang Qichao. In particular, Han was affected by Liang's writings on social evolutionism and his emphasis on freedom and equality (Tikhonov and Miller, 2008: 6-9). Several scholars have noted that as Han developed his thinking around these issues in the 1910s, he drew extensively on Avataṁsaka thought. Chŏn Posam examined Han's *A Buddhist Canon* (*Pulgyo Daechŏn* 佛教大典), a summary and interpretation of the entire Buddhist canon that he wrote between 1912 and 1914. He found that Han leaned heavily on Avataṁsaka ideas to support his argument for a Buddhism that took the ideal of a Bodhisattva's compassion as a demand that Buddhists be active in within the world. Han's Buddhism, founded upon Avataṁsaka thought, promoted equality among beings and rooted its ethics within the individual. Avataṁsaka thought also allowed Han to posit a Buddhist doctrine of creative possibility and growth that put it in line with ideas of social progress popular at the time around the world (Chŏn, 1985). The argument that Buddhism should be active in the world appeared in all of Han's major writings, and Han repeatedly returned to Avataṁsaka concepts and imagery to support his idea of active engagement with the world (Zemanek, 2009: 149). This is even more the case with the ideas of social and political freedom and equality. For Han, Buddhism supports these ideals because they are a natural extension of the core Buddhist philosophy of the "interpenetration of all phenomena without obstruction" (Zemanek, 2009: 159-168). As noted at the outset of this article, this is an eminently Avataṁsaka concept. Han was one

example of a Korean thinker who applied Avataṃsaka thought to the political and social concerns of his day. There were likely others who did this as well, and further research into this may yet yield other examples. For the moment, however, we return to Japan.

Back to Japan

Japanese sectarian history had an impact on the Buddhisms of China and Korea. This influence paralleled the manner in which Japan served as a window through which ideas from the West were translated and transmitted into East Asia. From the Meiji Era to the second quarter of the twentieth century, Japanese translations of western works and ideas were one of the primary means by which ideas from the West were brought into East Asian circles. Several of the most influential areas of interest were philosophy and politics. It is no surprise, then, that Japanese, Korean, and Chinese Buddhists would share similar tendencies in their writings on modern issues.

One of the most well studied groups of intellectuals to make use of Buddhist thought in early twentieth century Japan was the Kyoto School. The members of this loosely confederated group drew from a variety of philosophical traditions from both Asia and Europe. Scholars have paid much attention to the particular importance of Hegel and Zen Buddhism within this group, but Ishii Kōsei has argued that Avataṃsaka thought also served as an important resource for several of Kyoto School thinkers. Kametani Seikei 龜谷聖馨 (1856-1930) was deeply involved with Western philosophy, including Hegel, but he also studied Avataṃsaka in the 1890s at Tōdaiji, the headquarters of the Japanese Kegon sect (Ishii, 2002: 133). These two streams of thought served as the primary influences on the intellectual trajectory of his life, and his oeuvre includes a number of works linking ethics, politics, science, and philosophy with Avataṃsaka thought (Ishii, 2002: 140). Ishii contends that Kametani was probably also influenced by the political writings of the Chinese reformers Kang Youwei and Zhang Taiyan, especially the Buddhist anarchism adopted by the latter during his time in Japan in the first decade of the twentieth century (Ishii, 2015). Ultimately, Kametani's political use of Avataṃsaka took a related, but different, direction.

Just as other Buddhists in China and Korea were using Avataṃsaka thought to argue for the unity of the various forms of Buddhism, Kametani went one step further by arguing that Avataṃsaka thought could serve to unify the world's competing philosophies, religions, and even cultures. He emphasized the organic unity of the nations of Asia, while supporting the popular idea of a deep cultural divide between the "materialist West" and the "spiritual East." He suggested that one solution to this divide would be the unification of Asia under the Japanese Empire (Ishii, 2002: 146). Kametani's particular mixture of Hegel, Avataṃsaka thought, and nationalism was shared by younger members of the Kyoto School, including Kōyama Iwaō 高山岩男 (1905-1993) and Kihira Tadayoshi 紀平正美 (1874-1949) (Ishii, 2002: 128-130). The linking of Avataṃsaka and nationalism was also a feature of the thought of Nishitani Keiji 西谷啟治 (1900-1990), even before the start of the war. By the mid 1930s in Japan, many intellectuals were invoking Avataṃsaka ideas of unobstructed unity in their support for the actions of the Japanese Empire (Ishii, 2015). As in Korea and China, Avataṃsaka thought served as a resource in Japan for thinking about modern issues, as well as a framework for thinking about how the various ideas presented within Buddhism related to one another.

This impacted thinkers beyond the Kyoto school, including the noted Japanese Buddhist scholar D. T. Suzuki, an important figure for popularizing Buddhism in the West.

Beyond East Asia: D. T. Suzuki teaches Avataṁsaka Buddhism in New York

Early in March 1951, Daisetsu Teitaro “D. T.” Suzuki 鈴木大拙貞太郎 (1870-1966) gave several public lectures at Columbia University in New York City.⁴ These lectures are a well-known turning point in the history of Buddhism in America, and started what is generally referred to as the “Zen boom” of the 1950s (Iwamura, 2011: ch. 2).

Because of his importance, Suzuki’s thought has been subject to much scrutiny by scholars in the past few decades. In particular, scholars have worked to shed light on both his nationalism and the idiosyncrasies of his interpretation of Zen Buddhist doctrine (Faure, 1993: 53-67; Sharf, 1995). Historians of Buddhism in America have also examined the specific impact of Suzuki’s ideas, but such studies have almost always focused on Zen Buddhism. Zen was only one part of Suzuki’s thought, however. In fact, Suzuki’s lectures at Columbia were not primarily about Zen; instead, he structured his lectures around Avataṁsaka thought. Of his decision to make Avataṁsaka (which, again, is referred to as “Kegon” in Japanese) the focus of his lectures, Suzuki wrote:

I accepted the invitation of Columbia University to lecture this coming semester on Kegon philosophy, thinking that this will help arrange material in such a way as to make the Western people understand what they want to know most in Eastern thought and also who [sic] is most needed in the elucidation of Kegon philosophy to the Western mind (Pearlman, 2012: 13-14).

Suzuki felt Avataṁsaka thought to be a suitable means by which “Eastern thought” could be introduced to Westerners. For him, Avataṁsaka philosophy could serve as a summary of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Suzuki’s decision to lecture on Avataṁsaka can be read within the larger context of the continued presence of Avataṁsaka thought within modern East Asian Buddhist discourse. Although he is generally not considered to have been a member of the Kyoto School, Suzuki was on close terms with many of its members, and was aware their use of Avataṁsaka. In 1911, he discussed the importance of the Zen-Avataṁsaka synthesis in the preface he wrote to *Inquiry into the Good*, a famous work by his friend the Kyoto School philosopher Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎 (1870-1945) (Faure, 60). Suzuki emphasized Avataṁsaka after this in his own work as well. In 1921, he helped launch the English-language periodical *The Eastern Buddhist*. The first four issues of the journal carried a serialized essay by him called, “The Avataṁsaka Epitomized,” which was devoted to summarizing the primary meaning of the *Avataṁsaka Sūtra* and the important role Avataṁsaka thought played in East Asian Buddhism. Avataṁsaka thought also holds a central role in his *Essays in Zen Buddhism: Third Series*, which he was in the middle of revising while at Columbia (Fields, 1986: 196-197). In that work Suzuki relies heavily on Avataṁsaka thought, especially the ideas of Fazang and Chengguan, to construct the discursive foundation for his non-discursive Zen Buddhism (Suzuki, 1971).

Suzuki’s focus on Avataṁsaka had a clear impact on some of those who attended his lectures. This can be seen in the diaries of artist and composer John Cage (1912-1992).

⁴ This tendency to emphasize the works of Fazang also influenced early Anglophone scholarship on the Avataṁsaka school, but scholars such as Imre Hamar have recently been working to change this.

Cage composed his most famous piece—“4’33””—in 1952. And, in that same year, he created a highly influential multimedia performance art piece at Black Mountain College in North Carolina that became known as the first “Happening.” These two pieces solidified Cage’s reputation as a leading composer of the *avant garde*, and he explicitly linked their composition with Avatamsaka thought. Of the first “Happening,” Cage wrote in his diary:

It was straight from the class of Suzuki. The doctrine which he was expressing was that every thing and every body [*sic*], that is to say every nonsentient being and every sentient being, is the Buddha. These Buddhas are all, every single one of them, at the center of the universe. And they are in interpenetration, and they are not obstructing one another. This doctrine, which I truly adhere, is what has made me tick in the way that I have ticked (Larson, 2013: 152).

Conclusion

This article has traced a few of the threads that make up the complex web of interactions and relationships that linked Buddhists across East Asia in the early twentieth century. The focus here was the threads that linked thinkers who used Avatamsaka thought as a resource for dealing with certain modern issues. Japanese Buddhists certainly had an impact in this regard, but so too did their counterparts in Korea and China, and the chains of causality that linked them are complicated. Even while accepting some of the assumptions of Japanese sectarian Buddhist historiography, Chinese and Korean Buddhists emphasized the Avatamsaka discourse of the mutual interfusion of the various teachings of Buddhism in order to valorize their nations’ non-sectarian Buddhist traditions. Chinese reformers Liang Qichao and Zhang Taiyan were influenced by the interpretations of Western thought they encountered in Japan, but Liang’s writings on equality and freedom then proved to be highly influential on the Korean reformer Han Yong’un, while Zhang’s ideas of self-sacrifice for the good of the Other influenced at least one Japanese Buddhist thinker with fascist sympathies. These examples encourage one to ask what other threads of influence, both perverse and virtuous, may have connected these countries. For example, did Chinese Buddhists contribute other ideas to the development of modern Korean Buddhism, or vice versa?

This study also raises other questions: Long defined in China by the thought of Chengguan, the twentieth century saw a turn to a Fazang-centered understanding of the Avatamsaka tradition. Was this merely a rhetorical shift, or does this difference in emphasis mark an actual philosophical shift in modern Chinese Avatamsaka thought? More clarity is also needed regarding the relationship of Avatamsaka studies and philosophy to the Yogācāra boom that swept through East Asia’s intellectual circles in the first part of the twentieth century. This is an important question given the intertwined nature of Avatamsaka and Yogācāra in early-modern East Asian Buddhism. Did some continue to use it in conjunction with Yogācāra, in the manner that classical Buddhist logic was often used? Connected to this question is another about the extent to which Avatamsaka thought continued to be applied to, or drawn from, the *Awakening of Faith*. This text was the subject of much controversy during the early twentieth century due to its likely apocryphal nature, but it remained popular and influential in Sinitic Buddhism. How much did modern Sinitic Buddhists use Avatamsaka thought to

help them make sense of Buddhist texts like this? And how else did they use it to help them think through the issues they faced? These questions await further research.

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