

NARA PERIOD 奈良時代

- 710-794

- capital- Nara

- scholastic and disciplinary endeavours of the *Six Schools of Nara Buddhism*

南都六宗

- studying and coming to terms with the sea of Buddhist scriptures from China

- utter devotion of its practices for the benefit of the aristocracy, as well as the needs of the court and the imperial household

- protection of the state- *chingo kokka* 鎮護国家

奈良仏教・国家仏教という

It soon became clear to the court that Buddhism was much more than just a cult of a new, powerful deity; unless it was kept under control, it might easily develop into an autonomous institution of considerable power. (Bowring, p.54)

Somewhere at the heart of the underlying message of Buddhism lay the unusually dangerous concept of liberation and a radical questioning of the status of worldly power and prestige. (ibid.)

- Establishment of the *Sóniryó*- 層尼令- Regulations for members of the Sangha
- The court treated its members as government employees on government salaries
- Members of the Sangha seen foremost as servants of the state
- Strict regulations of the Japanese Buddhist Sangha- modulated upon the example of the rules of monastic behaviour known as *Vinaya*
- Sangha Office- *sógó*- 層綱
- Initiation- *tokudo*- 得度
- Novice- *shami*- 沙彌
- Ordination (receiving all 250 precepts)- *jukai*- 受戒
- Self-initiation- *shido*- 私度
- Role of the early Japanese monks- divination, prayers for the protection and well-being of the state and the sovereign, curing of illnesses, prayers for rain and crops, reading of certain Sutras that were known to have state-protecting powers, f.e. guard against pestilence, flood, famine, calamities and other natural disasters
- Temples- founded with the protection/ supervision of the state- *kokubunji* 国分寺, *kokubuniji* 国分尼寺 (741- edict of emperor Shómu 聖武天皇)

The Sutras- two main uses- reading and studying

copying, revering, reciting

(Recitation in the correct ritual circumstances would ensure that the promises contained in the Sutras would come to pass. [Bowring, p. 64.]

! the Japanese did not translate the Chinese scriptures into their native tongue!

- Sutra of Golden Radiant Wisdom- *Konkomyōkyō*- 金光明經
- Sutra for Humane Kings- *Ninnōkyō*- 仁王經

Six Schools of Nara

- their main concern were the philosophical theories concerning the nature of phenomena, dharmas
- division upon the emphasis on the Buddhist canon:
- Sutra Pitaka (words delivered by the Buddha; teachings originally transmitted orally, said to contain some 5000 texts)- Hossō and Kegon
- Abhidharma Pitaka (Skt. Basket of Higher Doctrine; originally not present in the early Buddhist canon, developed only later as a list of key terms of the Sutras; later commentaries on the scriptures)- Sanron, Kusha, Jōjitsu
- Vinaya Pitaka (Skt. Basket/ Collection of Monastic Law; regulations within the monastery and definition of relationships within the community as well as their relationship with the laity)- Ritsu

Kusha School 俱舍宗

- Abhidharma kōsa- Philosophy of Analysis
- dealing with analysis and elucidation of the Dharma
- psychological approach to the analysis of the dharmas- seeing them as factors of existence
- soteriological aim of proving the non-self (anātman) nature of all existents
- reduction and extermination of clinging and other psychological attitudes, which served as obstacles on the path to enlightenment
- systematic classification of the dharmas of existence
- aim: to intellectually demonstrate that the self did not exist as solid permanent entity, but was subject to change -> emphasis on impermanence and emptiness

Jōjitsu School 成実宗

- Abhidharma kōsa- Investigation of Truth
- flourished under the government patronage
- attempt to encompass the best of all Abhidharma doctrines
- closely linked with Sanron
- emphasis on 'truth'- viewing the Four Noble Truths as a path to Enlightenment
- emphasizing the final truth of Nirvana and its attainment- by means of philosophical interpretation rather than categorization
- stressing the emptiness of self and all dharmas
- notion of two levels of truth- upon the teaching of Nagarjuna:

'Those who do not know the distinction between the two truths cannot understand the profound nature of the Buddha's teaching.' (Nagarjuna, in Matsunaga)

- a) Samvrti Satya- Conventional truth- based upon the existence of the understanding of an individual- five factors- form, feeling, notion, activities, consciousness;

perceiving the phenomena as possessing a substantial self-existent nature;
regarding reality through false thought projections and empirical determination
lit.- ‘covered truth’- clouded by the categorising and conceptualising functions of the
human mind

- b) Paramartha Satya- Absolute truth- universal truth, including complete cessation of
reasoning, supreme experience where reality and its intuitive comprehension are
identical;
perception of emptiness as the true nature of phenomena (perception of the
enlightened)

Sanron School 三論宗

- originates in Nagarjuna’s ‘middle teaching’
- revelation of the true meaning of Buddhism by means of the middle course
between extreme practices and theories of all kinds
- a renewal of the early Buddhist effort to explain Nirvana (and other
phenomena) in terms of what it is ‘not’
- the truth is revealed in a dialectic process in which oponent’s views are
questioned and challenged rather than negated
- described the ‘true nature of phenomena (dharma)s’ as empty and void →
Nagarjuna’s teaching of emptiness- *shunyata*

‘Since emptiness is the true nature of all phenomena, and therefore of what exists, there can
be no ontological basis for the differentiation between Nirvana and Samsara. Any difference
which exists, it was argued, are a result of ignorance and misconception.’ (Keown)

Accordingly, Conventional truths lie at the bottom of Absolute truth, which in due course
becomes clear by means of *upaya*. Once the Absolute becomes grasped by consciousness, it
becomes conventional *de nouveau*. Hence, the middle teaching is a path to liberation by way
of the constant progress towards the Absolute.

- ⇒ Samsara is Nirvana
- ⇒ and Nirvana is Samsara

Sanron- Three Theories- threefold classification of Sutras:

- 1) the root- Avatamsaka Sutra- preached by the Buddha for the bodhisattvas alone
shortly after his Enlightenment, text that directly conveys the content of his vision, the
ultimate emptiness of all phenomena
- 2) the trunk- Lotus Sutra- for those who have been conditioned for enlightenment,
stresses the a) goal of all beings- Buddhahood, and b) the ideal of a bodhisattva
- 3) the branches- all Hinayana and Mahayana texts for those of inferior ability

Hossó School 法相宗

- ‘The Role of Consciousness’
- its role was to investigate and clarify the essential nature and phenomenal
manifestation of all dharmas
- *yuishiki* 唯識 ‘consciousness only’ – emphasises the view of consciousness
as the basis of the appearance of the phenomenal world, both the objective
world and the subjective mind that regards it

- consciousness is therefore the key to enlightenment
 - enlightenment is an attitude of mind
 - if one regards the world as an ignorant individual, it is the work of his consciousness
 - the consciousness only creates an object in the manner in which it is perceived by the human mind, not in itself
 - our impressions of the exterior world are delusions
 - the attachments created by the ego arise from the consciousness
 - the consciousness contains the seeds (bija) for the manifestation of phenomena
- ⇒ analysis of the human mind
- ⇒ ignorance can be transformed into enlightenment within the mind

Kegon School 華嚴宗

- heir of the Chinese Hua-yen tradition
- based on *Kegonkyō* 華嚴經 in jap.- Avatamsaka Sutra
- preached by the Buddha 14 days after his Awakening, the first preaching of the essence of the event
- totalistic symbolism in the Japanese understanding- *Kegonkyō* made the principal Sutra of the nation during the reign of emperor Shōmu 聖武天皇 (reigned 724-749)
- Mahavairocana Buddha (Roshana in Jap. 蘆舎那)- principal Buddha of the Avatamsaka, identified with the Japanese emperor:
Mahavairocana= center of the Universe, all phenomena emanate from his own being
Japanese Emperor= center of the nation, all subject would trace the source of authority back to the central power of the imperial household
- under him are in a hierarchical order placed the individual buddhas;
in emperor's case those are the bureaucrats on the state level
- lower are other Buddhist deities- in the case of the Japanese nation those are the people of the realm

Ritsu School 律宗

- Vinaya- precepts of the Buddhist sangha
- moral regulations regarded as the first step in conditioning the individual whereby he will later be able to comprehend the Sutra and Abhidharma teachings
- places rules and discipline before meditation and monastic training
- in order for Buddhism to prosper, the precepts *śīla* had to be properly transmitted
- due to its emphasis on regulations the school naturally presided over ordinations for all monastics in Japan until 820s (only after Saicho's death).
- Ganjin (688-763)- journeyed to Japan in 753 (invitation issued in 742)
- in 755 he supervised construction of an ordination platform *kaidan* 戒壇 at Tōdaiji 東大寺

