



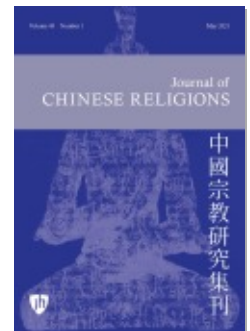
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The Huayan University Network: The Teaching and Practice of Avataṃsaka Buddhism in Twentieth-Century China by Erik J. Hammerstrom (review)

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but eloquently suggests ways to build a dual approach that would result in insights that are greater than the sum of the two—he himself, I should add, is a prime example of such a fruitful approach to the lives of Chinese religious texts.

In brief, this volume is a collection of excellent, fine-grained case studies that will open the way for a comprehensive history of the production, distribution, and use of religious texts in modern China. This may still be on the distant horizon, but *Text and Context* brings it significantly closer by providing several methodological models and sets of questions that are sure to prove fruitful across the various religious traditions, and by showing how many fascinating sources there exist when one looks for them.

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ERIK J. HAMMERSTROM, *The Huayan University Network: The Teaching and Practice of Avatamsaka Buddhism in Twentieth-Century China*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2020. xii, 274 pp. US\$65.00 (hb). ISBN 978-0-231-19430-3

The history of Buddhism in China during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is a history of struggling to reform Buddhist institutions for the sake of both sustaining the monastic community and regaining social relevance. Some sought reform by focusing attention upon a relatively narrow range of fundamental texts and practices. Others recommended embracing modernity, transforming Buddhist institutions by adopting strategies which had proven effective in sustaining and empowering Western (Christian) religious traditions.¹ *The Huayan University Network* meticulously reconstructs the history of early twentieth-century modernizing efforts that prioritized texts and practices associated with the Huayan tradition.

Hammerstrom's reconstruction proceeds in two parts. Part 1, spanning four chapters, examines a diffuse network of affiliations responsible for reviving Huayan-oriented educational institutions in China. Part 2, spanning two chapters, examines the content taught at these institutions. The result is a welcome addition to our understanding of Buddhism in modern China that simultaneously corrects various misconceptions about the Huayan tradition and offers new directions for studying insights available in that tradition.

Chapter 1 examines the propriety of conceptualizing Huayan as a school of Buddhism. Hammerstrom provides a brief history of the *Huayan Sutra* 華嚴經 and the Chinese founders of the Huayan tradition from the Tang era. (Notably absent from this history are the Silla monks Wonhyo 元曉 [617–686] and Ŭisang 義湘 [625–702], both of whom exerted significant influence upon Fazang 法藏 [643–712].) He argues that although the early Huayan tradition lacks a continuous lineage, it qualifies as a school because a common set of beliefs and practices unify its successive patriarchs. Hammerstrom also examines modern receptions of Huayan doctrines, noting that Chinese Buddhists who propagate these doctrines in the modern era typically endorse an ecumenical and

¹ For a brief review, see Raoul Birnbaum, "Buddhist China at the Century's Turn," *The China Quarterly*, no. 174 (2003): 428–450.

non-sectarian attitude according to which Huayan doctrines are worthy of study but are not considered inherently superior to doctrines from other Buddhist traditions.

Chapter 2 begins the project of tracing the rise of Huayan-oriented educational initiatives in early twentieth-century China. The history in this chapter begins with Yuexia 月霞 (1858–1917) and Yingci 應慈 (1873–1965), Chan-ordained monks who are responsible for establishing the first two Huayan universities in modern China. It ends with a first generation of monks whose education gives special attention to Huayan doctrines, and who are responsible for establishing several further Huayan universities. A key insight in the chapter is that monks responsible for establishing Huayan-oriented universities gained authority to do so by first securing positions of leadership at more traditional Buddhist monasteries.

This chapter most earns Hammerstrom's book its title. Hammerstrom's masterful insight is that the relations among these monks constitute a network of reciprocal dependence that retrospectively elevates Yuexia to a position as a Huayan master and prospectively authorizes his students as qualified to teach Huayan doctrine. Yuexia himself had no special authority as a teacher of Huayan. His training by Chan masters Faren 法忍 (1844–1905) and Yekai 冶開 (1852–1922) qualified him to lead the Jiangsu Monastic Normal School (Jiangsu Seng Shifan Xuetang 江蘇僧師範學堂) and Baotong Temple 寶通寺. A partnership with his younger colleague Yingci and subsequent association with another of Yekai's students, Di Chuqing 狄楚青 (1873–1941), led to the first Huayan University—first in Shanghai (1912–1914) and later relocated to Hangzhou (1914–1916). This university educated many students who would go on to establish or teach at other Huayan universities. But Yuexia himself gave only one lecture on the *Huayan Sutra*.

Chapter 3 continues the project begun in chapter 2 by reviewing the history of various institutions for teaching Huayan from the 1920s and 1930s. These institutions provided fixed terms, intensive instruction on the *Huayan Sutra*, and exegesis thereof. Hammerstrom devotes a long section to Yingci's role in influencing curricula with respect to selecting texts, organizing retreats, and arranging lecture series. He also briefly reviews a few programs established by monks who were inspired by but unaffiliated with the original Huayan University. Perhaps the key lesson of the chapter, with respect to conceptualizing the institutions as a network, is that nearly all of the institutions were associated with Buddhist temples where alumni of the original Huayan University, after becoming ordained (often in some Chan lineage), had risen to leadership positions. This lesson helps to refine Hammerstrom's conception of Huayan educational institutions as a network unified by "horizontal" cooperative relations among alumni rather than by "vertical" relations pertaining to shared doctrine or descent from an authoritative founder.

Chapter 4 concludes part 1 by examining the impact of the Huayan network after the Chinese Civil War ends in 1949. Hammerstrom devotes special attention to the way Huayan teachings were exported from mainland China to Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the United States. The Huayan Lotus Society in Taiwan, and the associated Huayan Buddhist College, receive special attention. Hammerstrom also provides a nice explanation for the rise of Buddhist nuns to positions of leadership in Taiwan.

Chapter 5 shifts attention from the history of Huayan-oriented educational institutions to the doctrinal and practical content taught at those institutions. Standard instructional texts from the pre-modern era also included *Essentials of the Huayan School* (Jp: *Kegon shū yōgi*, Ch: *Huayan zong yaoyi* 華嚴宗要義) by the Japanese monk Gyōnen 凝然 (1240–1321) as well as *Outline of Xianshou's [Fazang's] Five Teachings* (*Xianshou wujiaoyi* 賢首五教儀) and *Clarification of the Outline of Xianshou's Five Teachings*

(*Xianshou wujiaoyi kaimeng* 賢首五教儀開蒙), both by Xufa 續法 (1641–1728). The standard topics for instruction included Fazang’s doctrine of the six characteristics, versions of the teaching of the ten profound gates by Fazang and Chengguan 澄觀 (738–839), Chengguan’s doctrine of the four *dharmadhātus*, and Fazang’s system of doctrinal classification. Hammerstrom provides standard summaries for each topic. He also argues that the recovery of “lost” Chinese Buddhist texts from Japan had a negligible influence on modern developments of Buddhism in China, because few recovered texts were reprinted after their initial publication, nearly none were subjects of public lectures on Huayan, and the recovered texts had at best a minimal role in the educational curricula of Huayan universities and institutions.

Chapter 6 narrows the focus on curricular content from generalities to everyday specifics. For doctrinal matters, teachers at the various Huayan universities and institutes relied upon Chengguan’s *Commentary and Subcommentary on the Huayan Sutra* (*Huayan shuchao* 華嚴經疏鈔), as well as the system of doctrinal classification from Fazang’s *Treatise on the Five Teachings of Huayan* (*Huayan wujiao zhang* 華嚴五教章). For practical matters, they relied upon Chengguan’s *Contemplation of the Five Skandhas* (*Wuyunguan* 五蘊觀) to introduce the contemplation of emptiness regarding persons and *dharmas*, as well as the *Contemplation of the Dharmadhātu of Huayan* (*Huayan fajie guanmen* 華嚴法界觀門), attributed to Dushun 杜順 (557–640), for a distinctly Huayan form of meditative contemplation. Daily doctrinal instruction typically involved a main lecture by a master, supplemental lecturing by a senior student, a self-study period with senior students acting as teaching assistants, and a lecture review by a junior student. Practical instruction typically involved a yearly retreat for intensive Chan meditation and daily exercises focused on contemplating the *dharmadhātu*.

Hammerstrom’s attention to practical instruction at Huayan universities and institutions corrects the view, often associated with the Tiantai tradition, that Huayan offers a metaphysics without a praxis. Hammerstrom argues in chapter 6 that contemplating the *dharmadhātu* qualifies as meditative praxis even though Huayan tradition provides no meditation manual for specific instructions and even though the praxis is not oriented toward transcendent experience. He argues, in particular, that contemplating the *dharmadhātu* qualifies as meditative praxis because it is an attention-based technique for inner transformation that guides the meditator through successive perspectives toward reality, such that each successive stage cultivates an increasingly enlightened perspective and the sequence as a whole culminates in a view of reality as a web of interdependence.

In a concluding chapter, Hammerstrom offers explanations for why Huayan is highly teachable (because of its rich and complex content) and why prioritizing the teaching of Huayan need not be sectarian (because studying Huayan involves studying all the major topics of Mahāyāna Buddhism in China).

The Huayan University Network is most suitable for those interested in understanding modern Chinese Buddhism from a sociocultural perspective. It is a model of how to integrate vast swathes of information into a coherent narrative, and part of its charm is the way it derives a structure for its narrative from the doctrinal content of the tradition it studies. This structure is, unfortunately, less apparent than it might have been. Hammerstrom alludes to the network structure of Huayan universities and institutions throughout the book, and especially in chapter 2. He might have helped readers better understand this structure by including visuals. Consider, for example, the network diagrams in figure 1.

The topmost diagram in figure 1 makes plain that Yuexia derives his teaching authority from his training with the Chan masters Faren and Yekai, and from leadership

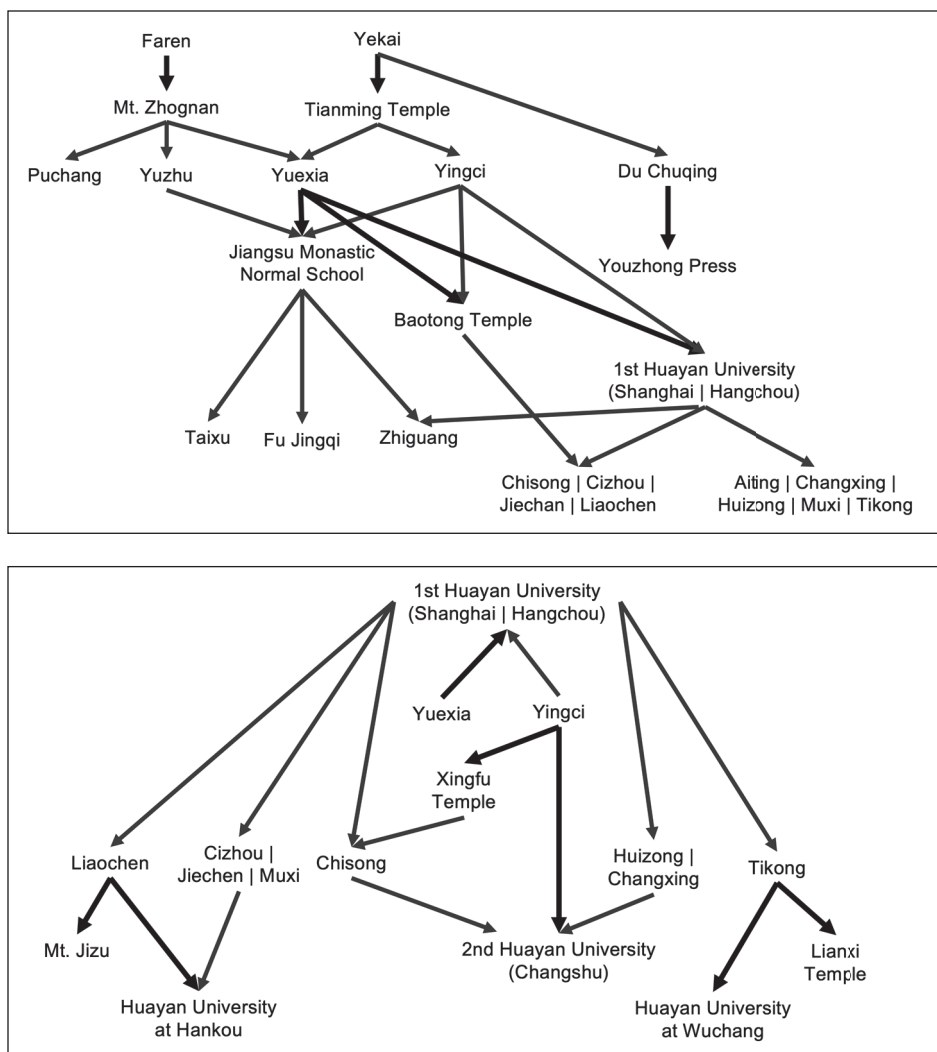


FIG. 1. Visualizing the Huayan University Network. Arrows from people to institutions represent people as teachers. Arrows from institutions to people represent people as students. Thicker arrows represent people in leadership positions. Created by reviewer.

roles at institutions not especially focused on teaching Huayan. The bottommost diagram in figure 1 makes plain the horizontal relations of affiliation responsible for the Huayan educational network and Yuexia's influence upon that network. Details of both diagrams derive from information that Hammerstrom provides. But, at least for this reviewer, Hammerstrom's insights about the structure of the Huayan universities and institutes became apparent only after zooming out from specific details to contemplate the big picture as a whole.

The Huayan University Network is also a valuable resource for those interested in making Huayan teachings more accessible to English-speaking audiences. Contemporary English-language translations and discussions of Huayan teachings, when provided

by non-specialists in Huayan directed toward other non-specialists in Huayan, tend to give most attention to Fazang's *Essay on the Golden Lion* (*Jin shizi zhang* 金師子章).² Hammerstrom's study of educational curricula at Huayan universities and institutes in China from the early twentieth century suggests that the doctrines of four *dharmadhātu*, six characteristics, and ten profound gates, as well as practices associated with contemplating the *dharmadhātu*, perhaps merit more attention.³

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YUHAN LI, *Becoming Guanyin: Artistic Devotion of Buddhist Women in Late Imperial China*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2020. xii, 312 pp. US\$65 (hb). ISBN 978-0-231-19012-1

Yuhang Li's *Becoming Guanyin* is a welcome addition examining the religious life of lay Buddhist women in late imperial China. Since its introduction to China in the early centuries of the Common Era, Buddhism had become fully integrated into the Chinese society by the middle period as one of three traditions, alongside Confucianism and Daoism, which informed thoughts and practices. Given the restrictive role Confucianism defined for women since Han times, scholars have noted how Buddhism has provided alternatives for women to participate in religious activities and created space for engagements in the public domain. With the exception of Wu Zetian 武則天 (624–705), the only female sovereign in Chinese history, who largely relied on Buddhist ideology and the support of Buddhist clerics, lay Buddhist women's social participation in Buddhism was largely confined to their roles as benefactors and patronesses of the religion, from making donations to Buddhist institutions, to copying of sūtras, sponsoring Buddhist rituals, and the dedication of monuments and images. Non-canonical literature also gives accounts of their piety and how they resolved conflicts to justify their Buddhist devotion in the Confucian framework that advocated abiding notions of virtues such as filial piety and purity as daughters, obedience to husbands and duty in procreation to continue the family line as wives, and chastity as widows.

Avalokiteśvara, Bodhisattva of Compassion, better known in Chinese as Guanyin 觀音, remains one of the most popular deities among Buddhist worshippers. In China in the later periods, Guanyin's transformation into a female deity is a phenomenon unique in and of itself; however, Guanyin, like other great bodhisattvas, began as an androgynous

² See, for example, translations from the Huayan tradition in Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 409–424; Justin Tiwald and Bryan Van Norden, eds., *Readings in Later Chinese Philosophy: Han to the 20th Century* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2014); chapter 8 in Graham Priest, *The Fifth Corner of Four: An Essay on Buddhist Metaphysics and the Catuskoṭi* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

³ A standard overview of these topics appears in Francis H. Cook, *Hua-yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra* (University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1977). Cook mentions the *Essay on the Golden Lion* only in passing (see pp. 76, 133 note 4).