

Brief Introduction to Buddhism in China

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Abstract

This article provides a brief history of the origin, development, decline of Buddhism in China and various schools of Chinese Buddhism and esoteric teachers that flourished in its long history. According to European historians, Mauryan emperor Asoka, the Great sent royal monk Massim Sthavira to Nepal, Bhutan and China to spread Buddhism around 265 BCE during Han Dynasty. Han Dynasty in China was deeply Confucian, and Confucianism is focused on maintaining harmony and social order in the world. Buddhism, on the other hand, emphasized entering the monastic life to seek reality. In fact Buddhism found an alliance in China's other indigenous religion like Taoism. Taoist and Buddhist meditation practices and philosophies were similar in many respects, and some Chinese took an interest in Buddhism from a Taoist perspective. However, Chinese Buddhism refers collectively to the various schools of Buddhism that have flourished in Inner China since ancient times after introduction from its original source, India. Many of these schools integrated the ideas of Confucianism, Taoism and other indigenous philosophical systems initially a foreign religion came to be a natural part of Chinese civilization, albeit with a unique character. Buddhism flourished during the beginning of the Tang Dynasty. The Kaiyuan's Three Great Enlightened Masters, Subhakarasiṃha, Vajrabodhi, and Amoghavajra, established Esoteric Buddhism in China from AD 716 to 720 during this period. Buddhist arts flourished, and monasteries grew rich and powerful during this period. Buddhism has played an enormous role in shaping the mindset of the Chinese people, affecting their aesthetics, politics, literature, philosophy and medicine.

Introduction

Buddhism entered China, a few centuries after the passing away of the Buddha, at a time when Confucianism and Taoism were the predominant religions in a country that was as big as a continent and rivaled India in historical antiquity and cultural pluralism. In the early phases of its entry, Buddhism did not find many adherents in China. But by the 2nd Century AD, aided to some extent by the simplicity of its approach and some similarities with Taoism, it managed to gain a firm foothold and acquired a sizeable following. The arrival of many new Buddhist scholars from the Indian subcontinent and central Asia, like Shih-Kao, a Parthian monk, and

Lokakshema, a Kushana monk from Central Asia gave an impetus to the new religion that had many attractive features besides an inbuilt organizational approach to the study and pursuit of religion. During the same period many Buddhist texts were translated from Pali and Sanskrit into Chinese.

The collapse of Han Dynasty around 220 AD was followed by a period of confusion which continued to trouble Chinese society for the next 350 years. During this period Confucianism and Taoism gradually replaced by Buddhism. The new Mongolian rulers of China from the Northern Wei Dynasty and some rulers in the south like Emperor Wu found that Buddhism a great opportunity to demolish the old order and establish a new one. As a result by 6th Century AD, China was teaming with millions of Buddhist monks and thousands of monasteries.

During this turbulent period in China, two major developments took place in Buddhism. One group consisting mostly of the sophisticated gentry dwelled on the philosophical and mystical aspects of Buddhism, while the other group dominated by rural folk followed Buddhism in their own superstitious and simple ways imparting to it in the process a peculiar Chinese Character.

During this period many Buddhist scholars came to China from the east and worked selflessly to make Buddhism a mass religion. Notable among them there were scholars like Dharmaraksha (3rd Century AD) Kumarajiva (4th Century AD), who got a number of Buddhist texts translated into Chinese. By this time China produced its own eminent Buddhist scholars with extraordinary vision like Seng-Chao, Tao-Sheng and Fa-hsien who also contributed richly to the growth of Buddhism China through their translations.

Between the 6th Century AD and 10th Century AD China was ruled by Sui and T'ang dynasties who were also patrons of Buddhism. During this period Buddhism reached its glorious heights in China. At the same time the process of degeneration also began. Many Buddhist monasteries turned to serious business and indulged in farming, trade and money lending for their own benefit neglecting the spiritual side of their responsibilities. Strangely, in a very uncharacteristic way, the Buddhist monasteries cultivated the farm lands, ran mills and oil presses using slave labor and low ranking monks and hoarded vast amounts of precious stones and metals. They also indulged in pawn brokering and money lending.

Many new schools of Buddhism also emerged in China during this period. Each school derived its authority from some ancient Buddhist text or doctrine. Some of these schools spread to countries like Korea and Japan and contributed to the emergence of Buddhism as the predominant religion.

The fall of Buddhism began during the reign of a Chinese Emperor Wu-Tsung (841-847). Probably noticing the greed that characterized many monasteries, he ordered for the general destruction of all Buddhist establishments and return of all Buddhist monks and nuns to lay life. This shook the foundations of Buddhism

though it did not destroy it. Emperor Wu dismantled the greedy monasteries probably to fill his own coffers, but not Buddhism. However his actions definitely reversed the fortunes of Buddhism in China and sowed the seeds of its decline. From 11th Century onwards, China witnessed the reemergence of Confucianism and revival of people's interest in their traditional religions. By their own excesses and neglect of their primary duties, the Buddhist monasteries became the contributory factors to the declining popularity of Buddhism. During the same period the Buddhism faced tremendous challenges from the increasing popularity of Brahmanism and the aggressive policies of the Islamic rulers of the Indian subcontinent.

These new developments in the land of the Buddha had a direct impact on the fortunes of Buddhism in China since for a very long period the monks from the subcontinent provided a recurring source of inspiration and information to their brethren in China. This decline contributed greatly to the slackening of standards in the recruitment of monks and the emergence of some decadent schools of Buddhism. These schools deviated from the original rules prescribed by the Buddha for monastic discipline among the brethren and emphasized the need for exploring the lighter side of life in the practice of Buddhism instead of sorrow and suffering. One prominent example was the emergence of Pu-Tai, or the Laughing Buddha. He was but a decadent version of the exalted and highly revered Maitreyi Buddha. The Yuan dynasty that came to power in 1280 adopted Lamaism as their state religion. It was the Tibetan version of Buddhism which gained ascendance in the mountainous country following the emergence of Vajrayana Buddhism in eastern India. During this period some secret schools of Buddhism also emerged in China. They believed in the future advent of Maitreya and the emergence of new world order. These schools practiced martial arts like Kungfu and sometimes indulged in the petty politics of the local warlords.

Although Buddhism lost most of its dynamism and vibrancy by the 20th century, it continued to flourish in China till the advent of the Communism. As is well known, the emergence of communism sounded the death knell of Buddhism. The Communist government of China did succeed officially in putting an end to the practice of religion by abolishing all forms of public worship and closing down all the monasteries. The excesses of Cultural Revolution put an end to whatever hopes the followers of Buddhism had about its revival. Today Buddhism in China is a relic of the past, an ancient monument that has been ravaged and vandalized by the clash of classes and ideological notions. It is really difficult to say how long it would take for the cycle of Dhamma to regain its supremacy and whether it would ever happen at all.

Chinese Schools of Buddhism

The principal schools of Buddhism which flourished in China were:

1. The Vinaya School (Lu-tsung)
2. The Realistic School (Chu-she)
3. The Three Treatises School (San-lun)
4. The Idealist School (Fa-hsiang)
5. The Mantra or Tantric School (Mi-tsung or Chen-yen)
6. The Avatamsaka or Flower Adornment School (Hua-yen)
7. The T'ien-t'ai or White Lotus School (Fa-hua)
8. The Pure Land School (Ching t'u)
9. The Dhyana School (Ch'an)

1. The Vinaya School (Lu-tsung)

As the name suggests, this school concentrated upon the monastic discipline (Vinaya) of the Buddhist monks and adhered strictly to do's and don'ts prescribed for them in the Vinaya Pitaka. This school was said to have been founded by Tao-hsuan in the 7th Century AD.

2. The Realistic School (Chu-she)

This school derived its inspiration from the Abhidhamma Kosha of Vasubhandu (316-396), a Peshawar based Indian monk who was originally a Sarvasthivadin and was faithful to the original teachings of the Buddha. In course of time it became a part of the latter day Idealist school.

3. The Three Treatises School (San-lun)

This school followed the teachings of the Madhyamika sutras of the famous south Indian Buddhist monk, Nagarjuna who is remembered by history for his Sunyavada or the theory of Absolute emptiness. His approach to the notions of reality was akin to the Upanishadic idea of non-self and the doctrines of the Advaita or non dualistic schools of Hinduism. His ideas were brought to China by Kumarajiva (549-623) through the translation of the Sutras, which were later expounded in the form of commentaries by Chih-Tsang (549-623). Chih-Tsnag argued in one of his works that it would be possible to understand metaphysical truths only through negation of things in view of the limitations of the mind to understand transcendental reality. This school also derived its inspiration from the Shata Shastra (The treaties of Hundred Scriptures) of Aryadeva. With the emergence of the Idealistic school, this school suffered a decline. It was later revived in the 7th Century AD by an Indian monk called Suryaprabhasa.

4. The Idealist School (Fa-hsiang)

This school was founded on the ideals of Yogachara school of Vasubhandu as expounded in his Vimsatika- Karika or the Book of Twenty Verses. The school became popular because of Hsuan-Tsang (596-664) who traveled to India in the 7th Century AD to collect original Buddhist texts and bring them back to China. Hsuan Tsang was an adventurous monk who combined in himself the traits of a monk as well as inveterate traveler. Undaunted by the task ahead of him and driven by his goal to see the land of the Buddha, Hsuan-Tsang travelled to India by a circuitous route via the Silk Road through the perilous terrain of the north western frontiers, and reached the University of Nalanda in eastern India after a great hardship. He spent considerable time there in the study of the Yogachara philosophy under the guidance of a teacher called Silabhadra. From there he went to the court of the famous Indian king by name Harshavardhana, who was a powerful but generous ruler of his times and ruled parts of northern and eastern India. He developed a great liking for the Chinese monk and insisted him to stay in his court for several years. Hsuan-Tsang complied with the king's request and stayed in his court for a few years before resuming his journey. He returned to China after many hardships, and managed to carry with him a huge collection of about 650 Buddhist texts and some Buddha relics. He spent the rest of his life in the translation of the texts and in spreading the teachings of Vasubhandu. Despite of the fact that the translations he arranged were not superior in quality, Hsuan-Tsang earned a place for himself in the history of China by his unique contribution to the development of Chinese Buddhism. Through his familiarity with the teachings of Vasubhandu, he made the Idealist School one of the most popular schools of Buddhism in ancient China.

5. The Mantra or Tantric School (Mi-tsung or Chen-yen)

This is the Chinese version of Tantric Buddhism. It flourished in China for less than a hundred years, starting with the arrival of Subhakarasiṃha (637-735) from India during the reign of T'ang dynasty. Subhakarasiṃha translated the Mahāvairocana Sutra which expounded the Tantric teachings. Two other monks who played a key role in the growth of Tantric Buddhism in China were Vajrabodhi (670-741) introduced the concept of Mandalas to the Chinese, while Amoghavajra said to have initiated three T'ang emperors into Tantricism. the Tantric school of Buddhism believed in magic, incantations, drawing of mandalas, casting of spells and elaborate and often secret rituals. The school was later replaced by Lamaism, which was a more popular version of Tantricism.

6. The Avatamsaka or Flower Adornment School (Hua-yen)

This school flourished in China for about 200 years, starting from the 7th Century AD and attracted the attention of the famous Empress Wu (690-705). It was based

upon the teachings of the Buddha as contained in the Avatamsaka Sutra. The followers of this school believed that the sutra contained the most complex teachings of the Buddha, not comprehensible to ordinary followers. The Avatamsaka school expounded a cosmic view of the universe containing the two principal aspects of the reality, namely li and shih, an approach which is in some ways resembles the concept of Purusha (spiritual) and Prakriti (physical) of Hinduism, adopted later on by the Tantric schools. It also believed that in each and every aspect the cosmic reality reflected the same relationships and balance of forces, signifying the ultimate truth of one in all and all in one. The school was founded by Tu-shun, whose commentary of Avatamsaka, known as Ha-chieh Kuan, (Contemplating the Dharmadhatu) provided the necessary background for the emergence of this school in the Buddhist world. He was followed by four patriarchs, Chihyen (602-668), Fa-tsang (exact period unknown), Chiangling (738-838) and Tsung-mi (780-841).

7. The T'ien-t'ai or White Lotus School (Fa-hua)

Like the Avatamsaka school, the White Lotus School also was based upon the highest teachings of the Buddha, but compared to the former, provided a more elaborate view of the cosmic reality. It was founded by a Chinese monk by name Chih-i (538-597) who lived in Chekiang province of China, and formed his doctrines on the basis of the Saddharma-pundarika sutra, an ancient Buddhist text, which he believed to be the vehicle of all other truths. According to this school, Truth operated from three levels or aspects. At one extreme was the void or emptiness, the unknown or the non self, about which nothing much could be speculated except talking in terms of negation and denial. At the other extreme was temporariness that was in reality nothingness but would manifest itself temporarily or momentarily because of the activity of the senses, as some kind of an illusion or as an image on the film screen. The third level is a middle state, 'middle' for our understanding, but not necessarily middle, 'different' for our understanding but not necessarily different, because it unites the two and presents them together as the one Highest Truth. These three levels of truth are also not separate or different from each other. They are the aspects of the same reality that is universal as well as ubiquitous. The school advocated the practice of concentration and insight (chih and kuan) to understand the transience of things and attain the Buddha Mind in which the above mentioned three aspects of Truth reside in perfect harmony. Chih-i said to have become very popular during his life time and caught the attention of the emperor who donated the revenues of a district for the maintenance of his monastery. The While Lotus School was introduced into Japan in the 9th century AD and became popular as Tendai.

8. The Pure Land School (Ching t'u)

This school was founded by Hui-yuan (334-416), who was originally a Taoist. It was based upon the teachings of the Mahayana school and the belief in the Bodhisattvas, the highest beings, who were next to the Buddha in the order and just a step away from salvation, but would postpone their own salvation for the sake of others. This school worshipped Amitabha and sought his grace for deliverance from this world under the notion that salvation could not be gained on ones own efforts (jiriki) but with the help of the other power (tarik), the grace of Amitabha. The school practiced devotional forms of worship and regular chanting of O-mi-to-fo (the Chinese rendering of Amitabha) as the means to salvation. It followed the teachings contained in the Smaller and Larger Sukhavati-vyuha sutras. The school was subsequently introduced into Korea and Japan where it flourished under three different names.

9. The Dhyana School (Ch'an)

This was the most popular of the Chinese schools of Buddhism, which became popular in Japan and later in the west as Zen Buddhism. Chan was a "way of seeing into the nature of ones own being." (D.T.Suzuki). Though it was introduced into China by an Indian monk by name Bodhidharma, around 520 AD, Chan was essentially a product of Chinese character, which unlike the Indian, evolved out of the practical and down to earth philosophy of life. Chan rejected book learning as the basis of enlightenment, set aside all notions and theories of suffering and salvation, and relied upon day to day events, simple thinking and ordinary living as the means to enlightenment. Enlightenment descended upon one as a sudden shift in awareness, not because of elaborate study of the Buddhist sutras, exposition of the philosophies, nor worship of the images of the Buddha but from a sudden shift in the paradigm, from an instantaneous chasm in the process of thought, from a kind of Eureka experience, characterized by a sudden opening of the mind and removal of a veil, after years of silent waiting and steady preparation. The Chan school discouraged the intellectual kind of pursuit of religion as it believed that any scholarly approach would tend to stiffen the mind and prevent it from experiencing the sudden flowering of Chan.

Although the Chan masters did not encourage preoccupation with scriptural studies, they encouraged the initiates to study the basic Chan scriptures like the Lankavatarasutra, the Vimalakritinirdesa, the Vajracchedika Sutras and some additional Chan texts as a part of their preparation for the subsequent stages of observing into the nature of things. By denigrating the scriptural knowledge, the Chan masters therefore were not promoting illiteracy, but were preparing the students to free themselves from opinionated intellectuality and scholarly affectations to emerge into a world of notion less observations.

The word 'chan' is a corrupt form of the Sanskrit word, 'dhyana' meaning concentrated meditation or contemplation. Dhyana was an essential aspect of Chan Buddhism aimed to develop inner stillness and accumulation of chi energy among the practitioners. But what Chan encouraged, more than the mechanical aspects of meditation, was the development of an unfettered and detached mind that would not cling to anything and would not rest anywhere and would flow with the flow of life gathering nothing and gaining nothing. Chan Buddhism did not place too much emphasis on meditation, unlike the Zen Buddhism of Japan, but on finding the Buddha mind in the most mundane tasks and conversations of day to day life. In short, Chan made living a deeply religious act aimed to break the encrusted layers of thought.

Chan Buddhism underwent a schism during the 7th century resulting in the formation of two rival schools, a southern school led by Hui-neng and a northern school led by Shenhsiu. While the northern school disappeared over a period of time, the Southern school underwent further sub-divisions resulting in the formation of five Houses and seven sub sects of which two survived. One was Lin-chi (Jap. Rinzai) and Tsao-tung (Jap.Soto).

Chan Buddhism influenced Chinese way of life profoundly. The Chan art became famous in ancient China for its spontaneity and simplicity of expression. But with the decline of Buddhism in China, Chan also gradually retreated into remote monasteries and gradually lost its appeal.

Esoteric Teachers

Arrivals of several prestigious monks in the early 5th century also contributed to the propagation of the religion and were welcomed by rulers of the Sixteen Kingdoms and Northern Dynasties. Fo Tu Cheng was entrusted by the tyrant Shi Hu of Later Chao. Kumarajiva was invited by Lü Guang, the founder of Later Liang, and later by Yao Xing, second ruler of Later Qin. Biographies of these monks, among others, were the subject of the *Memoirs of Eminent Monks*.

The direct experiential impact of contact with practicing monks should not be underestimated. Confucianism had no equivalent to holy men – the archetypical best and brightest was a wise government minister, not a saint. In this way Buddhism grew to become a major religion in China. By the beginning of the 6th century, Buddhism had grown in popularity to rival Taoism. We know they were successful because the monks were soon accused of falling into extravagance and their lands and their properties were confiscated by Emperor Wu of the Northern Zhou dynasty and Wuzong of the Tang Dynasty ..

The Kaiyuan's Three Great Enlightened Masters, Subhakarasiṃha, Vajrabodhi, and Amoghavajra, established Esoteric Buddhism in China from AD 716 to 720 during the reign of emperor Tang Xuanzong (or Hsuan-Tsung).

They came to Daxing Shansi, Great Propagating Goodness Temple, which was the predecessor of Temple of the Great Enlightener Mahāvairocana. Daxing Shansi was established in the ancient capital Chang'an, today's Xi'an, and became one of the four great centers of scripture translation supported by the imperial court. They had translated many Buddhist scriptures, sutra and tantra, from Sanskrit to Chinese. They had also assimilated the prevailing teachings of China, Taoism and Confucianism, with Buddhism, and had further evolved the practice of The Esoteric School.

They brought to the Chinese a mysterious, dynamic, and magical teaching, which included mantra formulae and rituals to protect a person or an empire, to affect a person's fate after death, and, particularly popular, to bring rain in times of drought. It is not surprising, then, that all three masters were well received by the emperor Tang Xuanzong, and their teachings were quickly taken up at the Tang court and among the elite. Mantrayana altars were installed in temples in the capital, and by the time of emperor Tang Taizong (Tai-Tsung, r. 762-779) its influence among the upper classes outstripped that of Taoism. Relations between Amoghavajra and Taizong were especially good. In life the emperor favored Amoghavajra with titles and gifts, and when the master died in 774, he honored his memory with a stupa, or funeral monument.

1. Subhakarasiṃha

Subhakarasiṃha (637-735), an eminent Indian Tantric master, arrived in the capital Chang'an in 716 and translated the Vairocanaḥi-Sambodhi-Tantra, better known as the Mahāvairocana-Sutra, or Great Sun Buddha Scripture. Four years later another master, Vajrabodhi (670-741), and his pupil Amoghavajra (705-775), arrived, and proceeded to translate other scriptures, thus establishing a second, though not rival, Mantrayana (Chen-Yen, or Zhen-Yan) lineage.

2. Vajrabodhi

Vajrabodhi (671-732), an Indian Buddhist master, and a graduate of the Nālandā Monastery, received complete empowerment and transmission from Nagabodhi, who in turn received from Nagarjuna. He was born of a South Indian Brahmin family, and his father was a priest for the royal house. Vajrabodhi probably converted to Buddhism at the age of sixteen, although some accounts place him at Nālandā at the age of ten.

He studied all varieties of Buddhism and was said to have studied for a time under the famous Buddhist logician Dharmakīrti. Under Santijnana, Vajrabodhi studied Vajrayāna teachings and was duly initiated into yoga. Leaving India, Vajrabodhi travelled to Sri Lanka and Srivijaya (present-day Sumatra), where he apparently was taught a Vajrayāna tradition distinct from that taught at Nālandā. From Srivijaya he sailed to China via the escort of thirty-five Persian merchant-vessels and by AD 720 was ensconced in the Jian'fu Temple at the Chinese capital, Chang'an (present-day Xi'an). Accompanying him was his soon-to-be-famous disciple, Amoghavajra.

When Vajrabodhi arrived in Chang'an, Subhakarasiṃha had already been there for four years. Subhakarasiṃha was eighty some years old. Vajrabodhi was about thirty something, and Amoghavajra a teenager. Subhakarasiṃha and Vajrabodhi met and debated. Afterward, they bowed to each other as each other's teacher.

Like Subhakarasiṃha, who preceded him by four years, Vajrabodhi spent most of his time in ritual activity, in translating texts from Sanskrit to Chinese, and in the production of Esoteric art. Particularly important was his partial translation of the Sarva-Tathāgata-Tattva-Saṃgraha between the years 723 and 724. This Yoga Tantra, along with the Mahāvairocana Sūtra translated by Subhakarasiṃha the same year, provides the foundation of the Chen-Yen school in China and the Shingon and Esoteric branch of the Tendai schools in Japan.

Like Subhakarasiṃha, Vajrabodhi had ties to high court circles and enjoyed the patronage of imperial princesses. He also taught Korean monk Hyecho, who went on to travel India. Vajrabodhi died in 732 and was buried south of the Longmen Grottoes. He was posthumously awarded the title Guoshi, 'National Master'.

3. Amoghavajra

Amoghavajra (705-774), a Singhalese, was the most famous Yogacharya of his time. He was a prolific translator who became one of the most politically powerful Buddhist monks in Chinese history, acknowledged as one of the eight patriarchs of the doctrine in Shingon lineage.

Born in Samarkand of an Indian father and Sogdian mother, he went to China at age 10 after his father's death. In 719, he was ordained into the Sangha by Vajrabodhi and became his disciple. He also became Subhakarasiṃha's disciple a few years later. Both Subhakarasiṃha, the holder of the Garbhadhatu Womb Realm teachings; and Vajrabodhi, the holder of the Vajradhatu Thunderbolt Realm teachings transmitted the Dharma Lineage to Amoghavajra, who began the Not-Two Dharma Teachings of Garbhadhatu and Vajradhatu. The Tang emperor granted

Dharma instruments to Amoghavajra to setup the first Abhiseka-Bodhi-Mandala at Daxing Shansi, thus began the Chinese Esoteric School.

After Vajrabodhi's death in 732, and at his wish, Amoghavajra went on a pilgrimage in search of esoteric or tantric writings, visiting Ceylon, Southeast Asia and India. During this voyage, he apparently met Nagabodhi, master of Vajrabodhi, and studied the Tattvasamgraha system at length. He returned to China in 746 with some five hundred volumes, and baptized the Emperor Tang Xuanzong. He was especially noted for rainmaking and stilling storms. In 749 he received permission to return home, but was stopped by imperial orders when in the south of China.

In 750, he left the court to join the military governorship of Geshu Han, for whom he conducted large-scale tantric initiations at field headquarters. In 754, he translated the first portion of the Tattvasamgraha, the central text of Esoteric Buddhism, which became one of his most significant accomplishments. He regarded its teachings as the most effective method for attaining enlightenment yet devised, and incorporated its basic schema in a number of writings.

In 756, under emperor Suzong, Amoghavajra was recalled to the capital. He was captured in general An Lushan's rebellion but in 757 was freed by loyalist forces, whereupon he performed rites to purify the capital and consolidate the security of the Tang state. Two years later, he initiated the emperor Suzong as a cakravartin.

In 765, Amoghavajra used his new rendition of the Scripture for Humane Kings in an elaborate ritual to counter the advance of a 200,000-strong army of Tibetans and Uyghurs, which was poised to invade Chang'an. Its leader, Pugu Huairen, dropped dead in camp and his forces dispersed.

The opulent Jin'ge Temple on Mt. Wutai was completed in 767, a pet project of Amoghavajra's, and one of his many efforts to promote the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī as the protector of China. Amoghavajra continued to perform rites to avert disaster at the request of the emperor Tang Taizong. His time until 771 was spent translating and editing tantric books in 120 volumes, and the Yogachara rose to its peak of prosperity.

He died greatly honored at 70 years of age, in 774, the twelfth year of Taizong, the third emperor under whom he had served. On his death, three days of mourning were officially declared, and he posthumously received various exalted titles. He was given the title of the Thesaurus of Wisdom, Amogha Tripikata and the posthumous rank and title of a Minister of State. The Chinese monks Huilang, Huiguo and Huilin were among his most prominent successors. Seventy-seven texts were translated by Amoghavajra according to his own account, though many more, including original compositions, are ascribed to him in the Chinese canons.

Huiguo was the most well-known disciple of Amoghavajra. Both Amoghavajra and Huiguo were emperors' guru, in other words, they were National

Masters. Huiguo's main residence was the Qinglong. Tang Emperor Wuzong, distrusting its popularity and magical claims, prohibited these new practices.

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