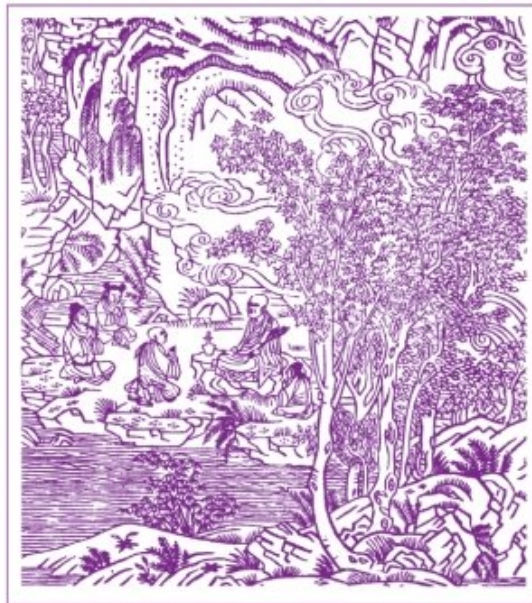


HUA-YEN BUDDHISM: THE JEWEL NET OF INDRA (IASWR SERIES) BY FRANCIS H. COOK

Francis H. Cook

Hua-yen Buddhism

The Jewel Net of Indra



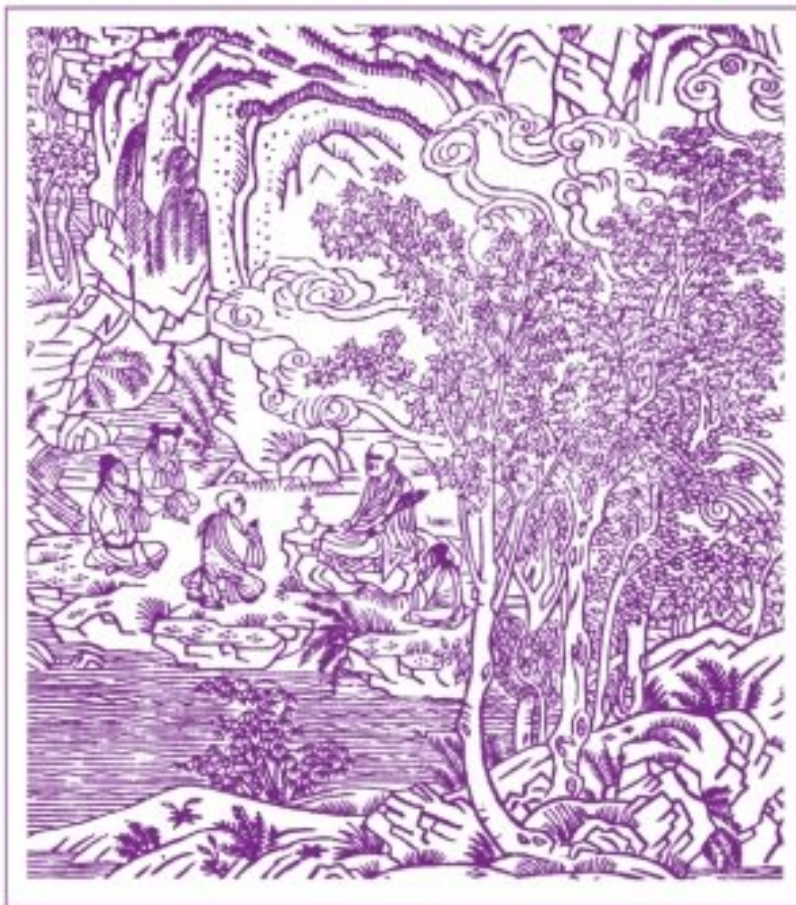
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Hua-yen is regarded as the highest form of Buddhism by most modern Japanese and Chinese scholars. This book is a description and analysis of the Chinese form of Buddhism called Hua-yen (or Hwa-yea), Flower Ornament, based largely on one of the more systematic treatises of its third patriarch. Hua-yen Buddhism strongly resembles Whitehead's process philosophy, and has strong implications for modern philosophy and religion. Hua-yen Buddhism explores the philosophical system of Hua-yen in greater detail than does Garma C.C. Chang's *The Buddhist Teaching of Totality* (Penn State, 1971). An additional value is the development of the questions of ethics and history. Thus, Professor Cook presents a valuable sequel to Professor Chang's pioneering work. The Flower Ornament School was developed in China in the late 7th and early 8th centuries as an innovative interpretation of Indian Buddhist doctrines in the light of indigenous Chinese presuppositions, chiefly Taoist. Hua-yen is a cosmic ecology, which views all existence as an organic unity, so it has an obvious appeal to the modern individual, both students and layman.

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Excellent introduction to a major Buddhist school!

By DocCaligari

I teach Neo-Confucianism and Chinese Buddhism at Vassar College, and I use selections from this book in my course reader every year.

This book is an excellent introduction to Hua-yen Buddhism (known as Kegon in Japan), a very important kind of Mahayana Buddhism, which has strongly influenced Ch'an (i.e., Zen) Buddhism. The basic teaching of Hua-yen is that "all is one and one is all." Cook explains what this means and how this form of Buddhism evolved.

It is a shame that this book is out of print. I hope some smart publisher reprints it in paperback soon.

19 of 19 people found the following review helpful.

The Best Explanation of the Concept of Emptiness

By Doug M

The Buddhist concept of Emptiness or "Shunyata" in Sanskrit is a pretty advanced concept in Buddhism, and can be really daunting for new Buddhists, or scholars. This book details the philosophy of a Chinese Buddhist school (long extinct) called the Hua-Yen or "Flower Garland" school after the sutra of the same name.

The Hua-Yen was a school that explored Buddhism through high philosophy and explored Emptiness like no other school of Buddhism ever has. This book really takes the reader deep, deep into the philosophy behind Emptiness and can be a challenging read. From my own experience though, having been a Buddhist for years, I finally understood Emptiness after reading this book about halfway. Having understood Emptiness, much else in Buddhism became much more clear. That right there gives this book 5 stars.

To reiterate, this book is not for new Buddhists but rather for philosophers or Buddhists who already have a strong familiarity with Mahayana Buddhism. If you are one of these folks, don't pass up the great work done here.

18 of 19 people found the following review helpful.

Best Intro to HuaYen Thought

By J. Storey

This book, well-known to most English-speaking fans of Buddhism, served as a follow-up to Garma C.C. Chang's pioneering book on Hua-Yen (Huayan) entitled the "Buddhist Teaching of Totality". Both of these books (especially Chang's) served to introduce the sophisticated Hua-Yen School's system of thought to English-speaking audiences on a non-scholarly level, and should be applauded for this pioneering effort. Although both books were meant to target non-scholars as well as scholars, the complexity of Hua-Yen thought makes this a rather daunting task (and not just for lay folks!).

Francis "Dojun" Cook needs no introduction to fans of Buddhism, having written several fine books on Japanese Zen master Dogen's thought as well as this book and various articles on Hua-Yen. All are highly recommended reading. Cook combines the rare combination of scholar and practitioner, the latter a result of being a zen practitioner for many years. This gives a practical (or "practice-oriented") edge to his writing that is often missing in scholarly works. As another reviewer noted, there is an old Chinese saying that the summit in historical Buddhist study would ideally be "Hua-Yen for theory; Chan for practice", and Cook certainly appears to embody both sides.

Cook's book is evidently an outgrowth of his early interest in Hua-Yen as evidenced by his PhD thesis: "Fa-Tsang's Treatise on the Five Doctrines: An Annotated Translation". Indeed, Cook makes much use of this particular treatise (in Chinese: Huayan Wujiao Zhang) in his "Jewel Net" book, going into detail to elaborate on Fa-Tsang's/Fazang's metaphors such as a house -together with each part such as rafters, roof, etc.- displaying an interdependence and interpenetration of parts and whole (or "universal" and "particular"), and also the unobstructed interpenetration of each part with each other part (Chinese: shishi wuai fajie: a novel teaching of the Hua-Yen school). Heady stuff, especially how this totality vs. individual illuminates traditional Mahayana doctrines such as "emptiness" and "co-origination" in novel ways. Fazang, the so-called "3rd Patriarch" of Hua-Yen (although some suspect he was actually the primary synthesizer of Hua-Yen doctrines as a system), was a brilliant thinker and it shows in his efforts to utilize appropriate metaphors (not all his) of complex Hua-Yen teachings- the familiar "Indra's Net", the "Golden Lion", the house and rafters, etc.- I simply don't have space to wade into Hua-Yen teachings here, and there is plenty of literature now out on Hua-Yen that folks can refer to. As for Fazang, he evidently wasn't just a perceptive thinker, but also a reported miracle-worker (who isn't in ancient Chinese philosophy?) and who also had a shrewd

political eye, judging from his popularity with Empress Wu Zhao, who naturally sought support for her rule from Buddhist doctrines. By anyone's standards, Fazang is a hugely important figure in classical Chinese philosophy.

As for Hua-Yen thought in general, readers of both books by Chang and Cook might want to go further and explore some modern scholarship in this area. Well-known scholar Steven Odin, for instance, has contrasted traditional Hua-Yen teachings on time vs. contemporary Process metaphysics, and the resultant dialogue has been interesting. On other topics, Cook himself disagrees with Garma Chang's description of "emptiness", the latter displaying too much of a subjective interpretation of the traditional "Mind-only" doctrine, according to Cook, who favors a more objective interpretation of "Mind". So there's plenty of room for scholarly debate there. Another reviewer also mentioned the innovations the Chinese brought to the older Indian doctrine of emptiness; Cook mentions the Chinese re-vamping of this doctrine in the book and elsewhere. The Chinese image enlarged the Indian description from a largely negative one, emphasizing the inconsequential nature of phenomena, to a more robust image, where phenomena are the "fullness" of totality because of being empty- hence, each side emphasized a different aspect of emptiness. These changes by different cultures on standard Buddhist doctrines are also the subject of scholarly discussion, which readers can wade into (at their own peril)...

At any rate, needless to say, the Hua-Yen books by Chang and Cook largely set the stage for Hua-Yen thought to become more familiar to Western audiences. For that, each deserves five stars for giving the public an entrance into this difficult material.

Readers, I hope your chops for abstract thought are in place here, you'll need it for penetrating the abstruse Hua-Yen universe. But hey, effort like that is what life is all about :-)

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