Caodong Chan Buddhist Concept of “Jeweled Mirror Samādhi”
(baojing sanmei)

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Abstract. The development of Caodong Chan Buddhism, from the very beginning, showed the cultural features of a relationship with philosophy of the Book of Changes. The regretful thing is that presently academic research in this field is extremely weak. The mutual impact between philosophy of the Book of Changes and Caodong Chan Buddhism has a very deep philosophical foundation, a complicated historical background, and an extraordinary cultural and geographical environment, and an infinite life force with strong and great research value. This paper has taken the study of “Caodong Chan Buddhist Concept of Jeweled Mirror Samādhi” (baojing sanmei) as its objects of research, and the author is attempting, through research and investigation, to analyze the source, characteristics and ideological methodology of their relationship. The author intends to clarify the fundamental paths of their ideological development, along with their essential features.

Introduction

Linji Yixuan’s (?)-766) Chan Buddhist concepts of “Four Discernments of Person and Object” (siliaojian 四料简), “Four Perceptions and their Application” (sibinzhu 四宾主) and the “Four Relationships between Guest and Host” (sizhaoyong 四照用) are concerned with a logical or metaphysical dialectic of the relationship between person and object, relative and absolute, appearance and reality, yin and yang. It appears that, to some degree, the Linji Yixuan Chan Buddhist concepts evolved into the Caodong School as the concept of “Jeweled Mirror Samādhi” (baojing sanmei 宝镜三昧) grounded upon the Li Hexagrams ䷃ by Dongshan Liangjia (807-869), Caoshan Benji (840-910) and Huihong Kuanfan (1071-1128).

1. Caoshan Benji, Dongshan Liangjia and Huihong Kuanfan

Chan Master Dongshan Liangjia was ordained at the age of twenty. He first practiced Chan with Chan Master Nanquan (748-834). Historical recordings of Liangjia in Returning to the Origin of the Five Schools (Wudeng huiyuan), The Collection of Patriarch’s Hall (Zutang ji) and A Record of Jingde Dharma Transition (Jingde chuandenglu), show that his major works include The Samādhi Song of the Jeweled Mirror (Baojing sanmeige 宝镜三昧歌), Exoteric Verses Explaining the Five Stages (Dongshan wuwei xianjue 洞山五位显决), Verses Explaining on the Five Stages (Dongshan wuwei song 洞山五位颂), and Treatise on Mystery (Xuanzhong ming 玄中铭). His sayings were collected into Collection of Sayings of Junzhou Dongshan Enlighten Chan Master (Junzhou dongshan wuben chanshi yulu 筠州洞山悟本禅师语录).

Chan Master Caoshan Benji was a native of Fujian province, he studied Confucian classic when he was youth and was ordained for the monkhood at the age of nineteen. His records in Return to the Origin of the Five Schools (Wudeng huiyuan) and A Record of Jingde Dharma Transition (Jingde chuandenglu) show that His major works include An Explanation of Dongshan’s Five Feudalist Ranks (Jieshi dongshan wuwei xianjue 解释洞山五位显决), Verses Explaining Dongshan’s Five Feudalist Ranks (Zhujie dongshan wuwei song 注释洞山五位颂), among others. These were collected into The Collection of Wuzhou’s Chan Master Caoshan Benji (Wuzhou caoshan benji chanshi yulu 抚州曹山本寂禅师语录).
Chan Master Huihong Kuanfan’s major works include *The Chan Writing from Shimen (Shimen wenzi chan)*, *A Biography of a Testimony of Wisdom (Zhizheng zhuan)* and *A Commentary on the Book of Changes*. There are no historical records about Huihong Kuanfan’s life because he was a hermit and all that is known are these works prescribed to him.

2. The Jeweled Mirror Samādhi (*baojing sanmei 宝镜三昧*)

The Jeweled Mirror *Samādhi* concept used diagrams of the philosophy of *the Book of Change* (*Zhouyi*) to explain Chan Buddhist ideology. The concept was established based upon three texts: *The Samādhi Song of the Jeweled Mirror (Baojing sanmei 歌宝镜三昧歌)*, *Exoteric Verses Explaining the Five Stages (Dongshan wuwei xianjue 洞山五位显决)*, *Verses Explaining on the Five Stages (Dongshan wuwei song 洞山五位颂)*. Of these, the most important work is *The Samādhi Song of the Jeweled Mirror*, which consists of twenty-three verses. Of these verses, the key verse that has almost single-handedly influenced Caodong Chan Buddhism is the verse which reads as follows:

The repeated Li trigram 彖 forms six lines; delusion and reality are mutually interchanged. Pile them again to form three patterns; when the transformations are completed, there are five patterns. It is like the flavor of schisandra; and it resembles the vajra-mallet in its durability.

The descriptions of this *Samādhi* song in Caodong Chan Buddhist literature show that this verse was considered as Caodong Chan Buddhist core teaching by Liangjia and was transmitted from mind to mind to Master Caoshan Benji. According to Huihong Kuanfan’s commentary, the Jeweled Mirror *Samādhi* described in this quote should be understood as being grounded upon Chan diagrams, Five Stages, Five Positions and patterns (trigrams or hexagrams). Also the relationship among Chan diagrams, Five Stages, Five Positions and these patterns may be summarized in a table as follows (Table 1):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chan hermeneutical diagram</th>
<th>Five Positions (wuwei)</th>
<th>Five stages</th>
<th>Pattern (Trigram or Hexagram)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>⬤</td>
<td>Lord (jun)</td>
<td>Delusion within Reality (zhengzhong pian)</td>
<td>Xun ⼭</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⬥</td>
<td>Vassal (cheng)</td>
<td>Reality within Delusion (pianzhong zheng)</td>
<td>Dui ⍀</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⬦</td>
<td>Lord faces Vassal (junshi cheng)</td>
<td>Coming from Proper (zhengzhong lai)</td>
<td>Dayou ⸣</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⬧</td>
<td>Vassal faces Lord (chengshi jun)</td>
<td>Approaching from Delusion (Pianzhong zhi)</td>
<td>Zhongfu ⸰</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⬨</td>
<td>Lord and Vassal in Harmony (juncheng he)</td>
<td>Arriving amid Both (Jianzhong dao)</td>
<td>Li ⴫</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Traditionally, the six lines of the Li hexagram 彥 should be counted from the bottom up to the top. The *yin* and *yang* lines go through a dialectical interchange in the six positions that they occupy. To Huihong Kuanfan, the *Samādhi Song* verse, “Pile them again to form three patterns, when the transformations are completed, there are five patterns” is to be understood as follows:

1. With Chan diagram ⬨ as representative, the primary hexagram Li 彯 indicates “Lord and Vassal in Harmony” and “Arriving amid Both”.

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2. Pile the second, third and fourth lines of the Li hexagram ☰ to form the Xun trigram ☰, which, with Chan diagram Ⓟ as representative, indicates “Lord” of the “Five Positions” and “Delusion within Reality”.

3. Pile the third, fourth and fifth lines the Li hexagram ☰ to form the Dui trigram ☰, which, Chan diagram Ⓟ as representative, indicates “Vassal” and “Reality within Delusion”.

4. Pile the Dui ☰ trigram on top of Xun ☰ to form the Dayou hexagram ☰, which, with Chan diagram Ⓟ as representative, indicates “Lord Faces Vassal” and “Coming from Proper”.

5. Pile the Xun ☰ trigram on top of Dui ☰ to form the Zhongfu hexagram ☰, which, with Chan diagram Ⓟ as representative, indicates “Vassal Faces Lord” and “Approaching from Delusion”.

The two principle terminologies of the Five Stages are reality (zheng) and delusion (pian). Based on Zongmi’s Chan diagram concepts of “one mind” and “two aspects,” represented by circle Ⓟ, Chan Master Caodong used “reality” (zheng) to refer to sentient beings’ minds in terms of absolute, which in the terminology of Chinese Buddhist philosophy is “true emptiness” (zhengkong). Delusion (pian), represented by circle ○, indicates sentient beings’ minds in terms of phenomena, which is grounded on the tathāgatagarbha. Hence, in Delusion (pian) the absolute enters into appearances. It completely penetrates the phenomenal world, becomes the all and all things. This is what in Chinese Buddhist philosophical terminology is called “marvelous existence” (miaoyou).

The fundamental concept of the Five Stages is the oneness of the absolute and the relative-phenomenal. These interrelationships are expressed by means of the uniting middle (zhong). The Five Stages then develop as follows:

1) Delusion within Reality (zhengzhong pian): according to The Awakening of Faith, “the mind in terms of the absolute is the one world of reality (dharmadhātu) and the essence of all phases of existence in their totality”, all of reality (zheng) merges with Delusion (pian). Ruth Fuller Sasaki believed that in this stage the knower separated himself from Reality (zheng), from “The Principle” (li), and gave himself over entirely to the phenomenal existence (shi). The movement is from Reality to Delusion. This stage is represented as diagram Ⓟ and it indicates that the mundane world is seen as empty - ultimate truth as real.

2) Reality within Delusion (Pianzhong zheng): this stage indicates the movement from Delusion to Reality. It has often been interpreted as the stage of abandoning phenomena and entering Principle (sheshi ruli). Represented by circle Ⓟ, this stage shows that the mundane world is seen as real, nirvāna seen stubbornly as empty only.

3) Coming from Reality (zhengzhong lai): although the Chan practitioner is free from delusional thoughts and realizes emptiness, he does not remain in the mind state of emptiness, and returns to the mundane world to save sentient beings. This is represented by the Chan diagram ☰, which suggests that absolute reality seen in phenomenal emptiness - nirvāna is in samsāra.

4) Approaching from Delusion (Pianzhong zhì): with an empty mind the practitioner has come back to the secular world. He makes good use of “marvelous existence upon true emptiness” (zhengkong miaoyou); this is what is called giving without giving, without relying on sound, scent, taste touch or thought, as described in the Vajraprajnparamita Sutra, or what is called no-thought, non-form and non-abiding that has been interpreted by Huineng in The Platform Sutra. This stage is represented as Chan diagram Ⓟ, which illustrates that phenomenal particulars seen imbedded in universal reality - samsāra is in nirvāna.

5) Arriving Amid Both (Jianzhong dào): in this stage, form (rupa) is emptiness (sunyatā) and the very emptiness is form; emptiness does not differ from form, form does not differ from emptiness; whatever is form, is emptiness, whatever is emptiness, is form. As is described in the Prajñāparamitahrdhayā Sutra (Heart Sutra) in Sanskrit: rupam sunyatā sunyataiva rupam rupān na prithak sunyatā sunyatāyā na prithag rupam, yad rupam sā sunyatā yā sunyatā tad rupam; evam eva vedānāsamskāravijnānam. This stage is represented by circle Ⓟ, which illustrates that form (rupa) is emptiness (sunyatā) - samsāra is nirvāna.
Researchers such as Ruth Fuller Sasaki believed that, in some sense, Five Positions of Lord and Vassal (wuwei juncheng) is the development of the Linji Chan Buddhist notion of “Four Relationships between Guest and Host” (sibinzhu). In addition, the Chan hermeneutical diagram is regarded as the influence of the Zongmi (780-841) diagram by Whalen W. Lai.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Li hexagram is the primary hexagram of Jeweled Mirror Samādhi. According to Jeweled Mirror Samādhi, the term “Li” literally means “departure from”, “freedom from”, “liberation from” etc. The situation described by the Li hexagram is characterized by a source of mind, enlightenment, emptiness, no-thought and brightness. In using Chan Buddhism’s hermeneutical diagrams, yin and yang lines, trigrams and hexagrams of The Book of Changes to interpret Chan Buddhist philosophy, Chan masters Caoshan Benji, Dongshan Liangjia and Huihong Kuanfan formed their different versions and styles of the concept of “realizing the mind and seeing self-nature”. It exerted a growing influence upon Song dynasty’s Book of Changes and Neo-Confucianism under the Song dynasty’s historical and philosophical background of Song Chan Buddhism becoming a reinvented School, with literati culture introducing Chan Buddhism.

References