THE PRINCIPLE OF CAUSALITY, AS SEEN IN THE
JINZANGLUN COMPILED IN MEDIEVAL TIMES IN CHINA,
AS THE METHOD OF SPREADING BUDDHISM

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I will consider the method of spreading Buddhism by using the text of the
Jinzanglun 金藏論. The Jinzanglun was compiled by Daoji 道紀 during the
late Northern dynasties period in China, with the aim of teaching Buddhism to
the laity. Therefore, we can understand the method of propagation of Buddhism
in medieval times in China by analyzing this text. Buddhism was spread by
teaching the principle of causality to the laity. In medieval times, both China
and Japan accepted the principle of this cause and effect. This is probably the
underlying belief of the culture of East Asia.

In my opinion, not many people are aware of the Jinzanglun because of the
following two reasons: (1) the complete original text of the Jinzanglun has not
been preserved and (2) the Chinese catalogues of Buddhist scriptures do not
mention it. However, several extant scrolls were discovered in Japan about 70
years ago. Furthermore, some pieces were recently found among the Dunhuang
manuscripts.

The Jinzanglun scrolls which can now be found in Japan are as follows. First,
scrolls 1-2 in the possession of Otani University–formerly a part of the Horyu-ji
法隆寺 Temple’s collection. It can be said, based on the last inscription, that
these scrolls were copied in 1134. (This was done through transfer copying in
the possession of the Kyoto University Library.) Second, scroll 6 (the initial
part is missing) is in the possession of the Kofuku-ji 興福寺 Temple; the
reverse side of the scroll has the Nihon-ryo-i-ki 日本靈異記, the anthology of
Buddhist tales of Japan, that was designated as a national treasure. These have
been common knowledge among the researchers of Japanese literature, because
they were considered as the sourcebook of the Konjyaku-monogatari-syu 今昔
物語集, which is one of the most famous anthologies of Buddhist tales of Japan
compiled in the twelfth century. Although most researchers of Buddhism were
unaware of the text for a long time, the situation changed drastically in the past
several years.
Currently, the following scrolls, including those discovered by Dr. Arami Hiroshi 荒見泰史 and Dr. Fang Guangchang 方廣錩, are available: (1) B. 1322 (為 86, BD3686) • Д х 00977 in Russia • D156 in Beijing University, (2) B. 8407 (鳥 16, BD7316), (3) S. 3962 and (4) S. 4654. These are equivalent to scrolls 5 and 6 of the Jinzanglun. According to its preface, the complete original text consisted of 7 scrolls (although another description states that it comprised 9 scrolls), 24 chapters and 192 tales. Finally, we succeeded in collecting 10 chapters and 49 tales from old Japanese and Dunhuang manuscripts. Hereafter, we will discuss the research conducted to date on the Jinzanglun, which provides precious information about Chinese Buddhism in medieval times.

The Jinzanglun is written in the ‘leishu 隨書’ style; leishu is a term used in the traditional classification of Chinese books and is typically translated as an encyclopedia. Leishu contains many excerpts from the Chinese canon, which are classified into different categories. Moreover, every excerpt has a note concerning its source. Even the Buddhists made many Buddhist leishus; one of the most famous leishus is the Fa-yuan-zhu-lin 法苑珠林. The Jinzanglun follows a style similar to that of the Fa-yuan-zhu-lin, and both the books have the same textual content. However, there is a difference in both the books. While Fa-yuan-zhu-lin tends to classify and arrange the knowledge on Buddhism and comprises 100 scrolls and 100 chapters (篇), the Jinzanglun comprises only 7 scrolls and 24 chapters (縁). This is because the Jinzanglun was compiled and used at the time of the preaching in order to revive Buddhism after the reign of Emperor Wu 武帝 of the Northern Zhou 北周 Dynasty who persecuted Buddhism. This has been recorded in the biography of Daoji. 1 Even the theme of the Jinzanglun indicates that it was an anthology to propagate Buddhism. The following are the chapters of the Jinzanglun:

**Scroll 1 Chapter 1:** Wrong view (邪見縁第一) 3 tales.

**Chapter 2:** Killing and injuring (殺害縁第二) 7 tales.

**Scroll 5 Chapter 15:** Buddhist stupas (〔塔〕縁第十五) 9 tales.

**Chapter 16:** Buddha statues (像縁第十六) 5 tales.

**Chapter 17:** Incense and floral tribute (香花縁第十七) 4 tales.

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1 「道紀傳」, Xu-goaseng-zhuan 續高僧傳 Vol.: 30 (Taisho, Vol. 50, 701a~b.)

2 Since the title for the chapter was missing, we have added a possible title based on the contents.
Chapter 18: Votive candles (燈縁第十八）4 tales.

Scroll 6 Chapter 19: Decoration using flags and canopies (幡蓋第十九 4 tales.

Chapter 20: Leaving the household life (出家縁第二十）5 tales.

Chapter 21: The Buddhist robe (袈裟縁第二十一）4 tales.

Chapter 22: Filial devotion (孝養縁第二十二）3 or 4 tales.

Next, I would like to look at the contents of the Jinzanglun. Since I wish to clarify the basic structure of the tales on the cause and effect theme of the Jinzanglun, I shall discuss the first two tales in detail.

Chapter 1 (Wrong view) explains that a wrong view—rejection of Buddhist teachings—produces an adverse result. In my opinion, the tales in this chapter helped people understand the importance of investing faith in Buddhism following the period of Buddhist persecution.

The first tale in Chapter 1 describes the story of KumAra Kassapa who used to teach PAyAsi; this tale uses analogies to show that the latter’s distrust of causality is wrong (迦葉爲蜱肆王説邪見過惡譬喩縁). Since PAyAsi did not display any faith in the law of causality, his view was considered to be wrong. Conversely, the Buddhist monk explained to him that one would be born in hell if he/she engaged in evil deeds and in the heavenly realm if he/she did well. This is the basic belief of Buddhism. Here, it is important to note that causality is explained in relation to the ‘SaMsAra’ or cycle of re-births. The basic structure of the tales suggests that one’s activities in the previous life lead to the various events in the present life. Thus, the tales of the Jinzanglun are referred to as ‘avadAna’.

The second tale in Chapter 1 talks about an aged servant in Sudatta’s house who suffered as a result of having held a wrong view in her past life (須達家老婢過去起邪見得惡報縁). In this tale, it is explained that an aged servant in Sudatta’s house in the present was the monk who had fallen into the hell because had not believed the teaching of the ‘SUnyatA’ or the concept emptiness of Buddhism in her past life. Such a description of retribution—’A’ in the previous life is ‘B’ in the present life—is a typical example and is introduced in many tales of the Jinzanglun.

The third tale in Chapter 1 mentions the destruction of the three treasures—Buddha, Dharma and SaMgha—suggesting that those who hold a wrong view
are met with an adverse result (邪見毀滅三寶得惡報縁). This tale refers to five fundamental grave sins related to Buddhist persecution or engaging in something which is strongly admonished in Buddhism. Moreover, it is said that those who commit such sins will become victims of natural disasters. The connection between the present life and the past one is not elucidated in this tale. As mentioned above, the Jinzanglun includes an uncommon tale which is lacking in the basic structure needed to explain the causality. However, it is important to note that the persecution of Buddhist was considered to be evil. Thus the tale is suitable at the end of Chapter 1.

Next, Chapter 2 (Killing and injuring) includes tales which suggest that killing and injuring would lead to adverse results. Destruction of life is forbidden in Buddhism. This chapter is compiled in order to make people understand this fundamental precept of Buddhism. Furthermore, I believe that it has been influenced by the emotions of people who desired peace and detested the war that continued during the period of the late Northern dynasties.

Next, we will discuss Chapters 15-22 of scrolls 5 and 6. As stated previously, this part is found in several Dunhuag manuscripts, implying that this part circulated widely.

Chapter 15 (Buddhist stupas) includes tales suggesting that the construction or renovation of Buddhist stupas would lead to beneficial results. It is considered a virtuous act for a Buddhist to build a Buddhist stupa. In my opinion, the tales of this chapter reflected the condition of the Buddhists in those days, who hoped that Buddhism would prosper once again, to restore temples because they were destroyed by Emperor Wu during the Northern Zhou Dynasty. There are nine tales in this chapter—more than in any other chapter. This implies that the teachings of this chapter might be extremely important.

Chapter 16 (Buddha statues) includes tales which suggest that one would enjoy greater benefits as a result of the construction of Buddha statues or adoration of his image.

Chapter 17 (Incense and floral tribute), Chapter 18 (Votive candles) and Chapter 19 (Decoration using flags and canopies) are related to worship and offering.

It was believed that the act of listening to the tales included in Chapters 15-17, related to worshipping and offering in the past life, led to virtues in the next life and strengthened people’s faith in Buddhism.

Chapter 20 (Leaving household life) includes tales which suggest that leaving a household or lay life would lead to acquiring virtue. Chapter 21 (The Buddhist robe) includes tales which describe the type of mysterious powers that
the clothes of Buddhist monks possessed. These tales encouraged people to take up Buddhist monkhood. Moreover, they made people respect Buddhist priests.

Chapter 22 (Filial devotion) includes tales which encourage filial devotion towards one’s parents. Although filial piety was an important virtue in Indian society as well as in lay Buddhists ethics, it never acquired the central role which it had in traditional China.

Although the contents of the Jinzanglun have been discussed, we shall re-examine an important element. Most tales in the Jinzanglun explain that one’s actions in the past life lead to one’s state in the present life. People who listened to these tales were expected to attempt to engage in good deeds. Causality serves not only as a Buddhist principle but also as a tool for the propagation of Buddhism.

However, in China, this is not restricted to the medieval times. We are aware of the fact that the Jinzanglun was very popular not only in China but also in Japan (it influenced Buddhist literature such as Konjyaku-monogatari-syu). It was due to such tales of retribution that Buddhism gained popularity in East Asia.