

On *Shên Mieh Lun* by Fan Chên

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It is widely known that in time of Six Dynasties in China, when the rule of Ch'i (齊) was being taken over by Lian (梁), anti-Buddhism thought made a logical development led by Fan Chên (范縝)'s *Shên mieh lun* (神滅論), a doctrine of mortality of the soul. This doctrine defies the famous and important principle of Buddhism, San shih yin kuo shuo (三世因果說), which sets retributive sequence through past, present and future. Fan Chên necessarily considered that the soul is to perish and not immortal (that is, *shên mieh*). So, he had come to take up the position of a materiarism and atheism, to make his name one of the highest peaks among Confucianism-Buddhism-controversies in the history of China.

To him and to his doctrine, general estimations today seem to do justice, but I dare say the stress they are putting on its scientific aspect, its popularity and its political values has been carried too far.

Above considerations suggested me to review Fan Chên's *Shên mieh lun* without prejudice and re-examine the whole structure of his mind as it was. I hope this treatise is bringing to light some of his characteristic ideas rightly enough, as well as the reactions and criticisms he invited in his days.