Title

Thinking Through Texts: The Pedagogy and Practice of Sui-Tang Buddhist Scholasticism

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Publication Date

2024

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

Thinking Through Texts:

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By

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A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor in Philosophy

in

Buddhist Studies

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

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Spring 2024

Abstract

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This dissertation reimagines the world of the Chinese Buddhist scholar monks of the Sui (581-618) and Tang (618-907) dynasties by bringing to bear comparative work on scholasticism. With this framework, we come to understand the central skill of the Sui-Tang scholiasts to have been the performance of exegetical mastery of texts. Individual scholiasts did not restrict their exegetical performances to a single scripture or set of scriptures. Instead, the institutions of Sui-Tang Buddhism allowed them to range across many such fields of specialization—lecturing now on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, and now on *Prajñāpāramitā* texts, modulating their performance to accord with the norms of each field. This reframing allows us to move away from a singular focus on authors and their ideas toward a reading of their works as embedded in tradition and engaging, playfully, in exegesis and Buddhist scholarship. Many of features of their exegetical works, such as outlines and doxographies (*panjiao* 判教), can now be understood not as abstract philosophical argument but as tools for memorization and interpretation.

Chapter 1 discusses the category of "scholasticism" and its use in comparative contexts, highlighting the embeddedness of the scholastic project within tradition, the understanding and practical use of memory, and several patterns of scholastic pedagogy, including the practice of disputation. I also point to the way knowledge in such cultures is organized not around abstract subjects but individual scriptures or sets of scriptures. The following chapters show the relevance of this framework to the Sui-Tang exegetes. Throughout these chapters, I show how the aforementioned aspects of scholasticism can also be seen in their lives and works. In Chapter 2, I synthesize information from prefaces, colophons, and biographical texts to sketch the lifeworld Sui-Tang Buddhist scholiasts. Chapter 3 presents a broad reading of Sui-Tang scholastic texts, surveying different genres and their conventions. Chapter 4 starts with the suggestion that we may understand exegesis as an artform where performers play on patterns, much as musicians improvise on musical themes. It demonstrates this by presenting a close reading of a passage of commentary by Chengguan 澄觀 (738-839) alongside parallels in the works of other Sui-Tang scholiasts. In Chapter 5, I argue that knowledge in the Sui-Tang scholastic world was organized around groups of scriptures such that individual scholiasts, writing on one scripture or the other, "performed" the discourse appropriate to the scripture at hand. It substantiates this by comparing doxographical schemes (*panjiao* 判教) and sources used in commentarial works on different scriptures by Fazang 法藏 (643-712) and Tankuang 曇曠 (c. 700-c. 780).

Contents

Conventions

Unless noted otherwise, all translations are my own.

In general, I translate titles of text into English unless a text is well-known by its title in Chinese or Sanskrit. (These are, admittedly, personal and aesthetic choices.) For some lesser known texts I have opted for the Sanskrit title if a) it seemed to me that readers might most easily find information on the text that way and b) the Sanskrit title is attested.

Chinese words are giving in *pinyin*. When citing from works by scholars using transcription systems I adjust to *pinyin.*

References to texts in the Taishō, Xuzang, and Dazangjing bubian canons are, respectively, T, X, or B plus text number. When citing a specific line or passage, I give T/X plus volume, text number, page, register, and line number.

Further abbreviations:

DZDL: *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* (*Da zhidu lun* 大智度論; T1509).

FDL: *Treatise on the Sūtra on the Buddhas' Abode* (*Fodi [jing] lun* 佛地[經]論; T1530).

Acknowledgments

One of the principle intuitions behind this dissertation is that individualism is a dead-end not just morally, but also intellectually. A myopic focus on great thinkers and their originality forgets so many of their peers and their students, bypasses the generations that have shaped language and conventions for him or her to think and express great thoughts. I myself am certainly no great thinker, so how much the more am I indebted to the stimulation and support provided by mentors, friends, and family! Whatever is good in this work is theirs truly.

Academically, I have had the privilege of being guided, throughout my graduate career, by some fine minds indeed. In their own ways—whether by opening doors to new materials, suggesting different approaches, or bringing and fostering a careful attention to detail—Robert Sharf, Alex von Rospatt, Mark Csikszentmihalyi, and Jacob Dalton have formed me as a scholar. I cannot thank them enough for the ways they have expanded my thinking and have supported me throughout my graduate education. While Daniel Stevenson became part of my dissertation committee much more recently, his feedback on my project has been very invigorating, both by bringing his vast knowledge of the field and by suggesting alternative approaches and sources. I look forward to our unfolding conversation.

Several other scholars have been instrumental in my formulation of this work. Eric Greene has been a treasured conversation partner. At a crucial stage in the development of my project, when many of my ideas about Sui-Tang commentaries were starting to form but I was still lacking a framework, he pointed me to work on scholasticism. At a later stage, when I had formulated much of my thinking but still felt insecure about how to formulate it in writing, Amanda Goodman, Uta Nitschke-Joseph, and Suzanne Conklin Akbari provided the perfect path forward when they solicited my contribution to a special issue on "practices of commentary" for *The Medieval Globe* (2022).[1] Their support and editorial insight were a great inspiration. Parts of that article have been worked into the present material. Over many years in graduate school, alternating as senpai and kōhai, I have learned much in discussions with Max Brandstadt. I cannot thank him enough for his generous and insightful feedback during the writing of this dissertation. I have also learned much from Hou Xiaoming, fellow student of the Chinese exegetes. Bob Miller, from his Tibetan perspective, has enriched my approach. His excitement about my project helped push me toward the finish line. Meghan Howard Masang, long-time fellow student, I thank not only for her observant reading of the appendices but also for stimulating reading sessions and conversations. I am also indebted to Jackson Macor, one of the few similarly afflicted with an obsession with exegetical jazz. His delightful questions continue to provoke and reading of my dissertation has saved me of many an infelicity. Jackson has also been helpful with my questions about Japanese sources, as has Ryoze Wada. What else can I say than ありがとうございます！ I also gratefully acknowledge the help of Lauren Bausch with several Sanskrit queries.

I also gratefully acknowledge several scholars who have generously shared and/or directed me to sources: Paul Harrison, Andrew Jones, Niklaus Largier, Jörg Plassen, Jonathan Silk, and Evan Thompson. Jonathan Silk also made it possible for me to be a visiting scholar at the Leiden Institute for Asian Studies during a visit to the Netherlands in early 2023.

[1] De Vries 2022.

I am also obliged to the Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Global for funding a year of unencumbered research and writing.

Throughout the trials of graduate school, and in my life more broadly, I have been inspired and felt myself supported by my Buddhist community and its wonderful teachers. Even if I don't name them individually, I cherish all of these mentors and friends, and find it hard to imagine I might ever repay their kindness.

Lastly, my parents: thank you. Even if you don't always understand what drives me and what I am after, your support has been unfailing. It touches me deeply. And Rosa: your patience and your help, your support, and your love—you're the best.

Preface

> "It is the experience of the past in the present which supplies the feeling of one's own reality, (…) which is so essential for being able to imagine constructively and to envisage a future."
>
> —Fred Plaut (1966: 116)

> "Thought can live only on grounds which we adopt in the service of a reality to which we submit."
>
> —Michael Polanyi (1966: xix)

> "You have to play a long time to be able to play like yourself."
>
> —Miles Davis

The focus of this study is the world of the great Buddhist exegetes in Sui (581-618) and Tang (618-906) China. Their works consist primarily of extensive commentaries: detailed, line-by-line explanations of canonical texts. To modern observers, such premodern intellectual works tend to look dogmatic. Heirs of the views of early moderns, we tend to think of scholastic works as dogmatic, needlessly theoretical, and disputatious.[2] I want to suggest a different way of understanding the way traditional intellectuals worked, both to better understand them and their contributions, and to reflect on modern epistemic assumptions. Freedom, along with a revaluation (or revolt) against traditional sources of authority, is a central theme in modernity.[3] I contend that modernity's fixation on freedom without restraint is a stumbling block for our understanding of premodern scholastics. A brief look at freedom and the conditions that make it possible suggest that the restraints under which premodern intellectuals labor are, far from dogmatic and pedantic, actually the conditions that allow for insight, creativity, and freedom.

For a child's healthy development, the freedom to play and explore the world is essential. Yet, as experiments with young infants so vividly show, play becomes impossible without the secure presence of the mother. The balance needed, between safety and freedom, between presence and absence, is a delicate one. The psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott, exploring the significance of the interplay between these two poles for the development of a healthy ego-structure, suggests that we can understand culture along similar lines. He proposes that "the interplay between originality and the acceptance of tradition as the basis for inventiveness seems to me to be just one more example, and a very exciting one, of the interplay between separateness and union."[4] Thinking along similar lines as Winnicott, the Jungian analyst Fred Plaut argued that the ability to trust, based in a sense of coherency in the personality, is essential for the imagination, which in turn provides the foundation for

[2] Cabézon 1998b: 2-3.
[3] E.g., Manent 1998; Pelikan 1984: 4; Stout 1981.
[4] Winnicott 1971: 134.

psychological growth.[5] Freedom, in this view, stands not in opposition to structures and limitations. Rather, meaningful freedom is, in fact, dependent upon structure and limitations.

We can see parallel versions of this paradoxical interplay in a variety of contexts. A case in point is Daniel Dennett's argument that human freedom is the result of the complexity of our biological machinery.[6] For this argument, Dennett draws on the concept of degrees of freedom.[7] In statistics, this concept is defined as "the number of values in the final calculation of a statistic that are free to vary."[8] It tends to increase as systems become more complex. While this relationship is not straightforward, it offers a way of extending Winnicott's thinking about the "the interplay between separateness and union" as it applies to culture, religion, and knowledge: freedom not as the absence of restrictions, but as a function of the preponderance of complicating factors.

Human morality might be one of the most vivid examples of this dynamic, in which variety and even contradictions allow for the very possibility of meaningful action and creative thought. The anthropologist Brad Shore argues that all cultures contain within themselves different, incommensurable sets of moral prescriptions.[9] It might seem that, when dealing with moral dilemmas, receiving contradictory pieces of advice would lead to paralysis. Yet Shore suggests that ambivalence may act to moderate and attenuate our decisions. To illustrate this, he gives an example drawn from his ethnographic work in Samoa. A man whose father had been recently murdered received the advice from a Christian paster: to forgive the murderer.[10] Yet, in a different setting, the very same pastor, though now in lay clothes, told the man that it was essential to avenge his father.[11] The net result of these pieces of advice was that the man wounded the murderer. As Shore says, "ambivalence may paralyze, but properly orchestrated it can simply temper behavior, inspire caution, and even engender sufficient guilt to attenuate an extreme response."[12] Thus, in this account, individuals navigate complex moral dilemmas in part by means of the tensions between contradictory moral injunctions and prohibitions.

A similar tension seems to be at play in science. For example, the scientist and philosopher of science Michael Polanyi emphasizes that the originality of a scientist is not an absolute freedom. Rather, it is made possible by reliance on established knowledge, much of it implicit and unarticulated.[13] Of the scientist's process, he writes that, "Every step is an effort to meet an immediate necessity; his freedom is continuous service."[14] This description of the reality of scientific practice resonates with the prescriptions for science proffered by Paul Feyerabend and John Dupré. Both of these philosophers of science have argued that there is no such thing as a unified "scientific method."[15] In its stead, Dupré suggests a virtue

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[5] 1966.
[6] Dennett 2003.
[7] Ibid.: 162 ff.
[8] See "Degrees of Freedom" in *Internet Glossary of Statistical Terms* (accessed 07-22-2021). < http://www.animatedsoftware.com/statglos/sgdegree.htm>
[9] Shore 1990.
[10] Shore 1990: 168-169.
[11] Ibid.: 169.
[12] Shore 1990: 177.
[13] Polanyi 1966: 78-81.
[14] Ibid.: 81.
[15] E.g., Feyerabend 1993; Dupré 1993.

epistemology to serve as a guide for scientific practice and an account of science at its best.[16] Notably, two of the virtues he suggests are "coherence with other things we know" and "exposure to criticism from the widest variety of sources."[17] Similarly, Feyerabend suggests that science needs both a principle of tenacity and a principle of proliferation in his "Outline of a Pluralistic Theory of Knowledge and Action."[18]

Lastly, this same dynamic is at play in music. Indeed, one of the main metaphors underlying this dissertation is musical performance—we will meet with bards singing epics as well as improvising jazz players. Pointing to precisely the same dependence between order and creativity, the ethnomusicologist Christopher Small says that musicians

> work always from a base in the firmly known sets of musical relationships we call a tradition, or a style, and most of what they do will already have been done many times before. As Bateson remarks, a book will tell you nothing unless you already know ninetenths of it, and the same is true of musical performances.In any performance whatsoever, the vast majority of what is heard and experienced by both players and listeners will be familiar, if not in substance at least in style, to all its listeners; if this were not so, comprehension would be impossible.[19]

This brings us back to scholasticism and its context. Just as with the appreciation of music, when we seek to comprehend the commentaries and tracts of the great Buddhist exegetes of Sui-Tang China, we need to grasp their context, including the implicit structures of their thinking.

When read on their own terms, the scholiasts turn out to be deeply creative, playful, and innovative. What makes this possible is the very thing that moderns tend to see as an obstacle to freedom: the evolving tradition of which the scholiasts are part and which they help evolve. Substantiating this suggestion and uncovering the ways in which the tension between structure and freedom plays out in premodern traditions is impossible in the abstract. Coming to terms with tradition, historian and theologian Jaroslav Pelikan urged, is impossible "until a specific tradition has been studied at some depth, in the details of its concrete historical development."[20] The specific tradition on which I focus in this study is that of Sui-Tang Buddhist intellectuals, taking the work of Chengguan 澄觀 (738–839) as my starting point. His works are a high watermark of Chinese Buddhist scholasticism, thus revealing much about that tradition. I argue that modern scholarship has been unable to come to terms with Chengguan and other Sui-Tang Buddhist exegetes because of a misunderstanding of the tradition of which he and others were part—both of the tradition's boundaries as well as its nature. Reconsidering the parameters that structure their works will give us a better sense of how to understand not only their thought or their contributions to the history of Buddhist thought, but also of what it means to be, to speak with Heidegger, "in dialogue with our forebears perhaps even more and in a more hidden manner with those who will come after [us]."[21]

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[16] Dupré 1993: 243.
[17] Ibid.
[18] 1999: 104-111.
[19] Small 1998: 216.
[20] Pelikan p. 52.
[21] Heidegger 1971: 31.

Chapter 1 — Placing the Sui-Tang Exegetes in Cross-Cultural Scholastic Context

> The practice of Bible study consists in three things: reading (*lectione*), disputation, preaching… Reading is, as it were, the foundation and basement for what follows, for through it the rest is achieved. Disputation is the wall in this building of study, for nothing is fully understood or faithfully preached, if it is not first chewed by the tooth of disputation. Preaching, which is supported by the former, is the roof, sheltering the faithful from the heat and wind of temptation. We should preach after, not before, the reading of Holy Scripture and the investigation of doubtful matters by disputation.
>
> - Smalley. *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, p. 208

> If all these sermons are written according to the literary conventions, if all is "literature," is there anything left that is spontaneous, living, and really sincere? Are they all worth the time spent in reading them? Assuredly, they should be read, but one must know how to read them. If, like the author, one can accept its demands, rhetoric only adds to beauty. And, there is a true beauty in the mastery, in the total liberty with which the best monastic preachers manipulate these devices and were not enslaved by them.
>
> - Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God,* p. 173.

Preamble

Much of this study centers around the works of the Chinese Buddhist monk Chengguan 澄觀 (738-839). Yet, my purpose is not to present newly discovered facts about him. Rather, I aim to re-arrange known facts such that a gestalt emerges that synthesizes what we know in such a way that new light is shed on old questions and on facts that have thus far remained mostly in the dark. Some old questions, I hope, will recede into darkness. The actual object of this study is the commentarial literature of Sui-Tang China. The reason I start from Chengguan's works is, admittedly, arbitrary: my dissertation project was originally intended to be a study of Chengguan's thought. But as I read widely in his works and that of other Sui-Tang exegetes, I became apprehensive of such an endeavor. I came to believe we have not yet come to terms with how to read their texts.

The problems start with the genre of Chengguan's writings. His most important works are centered around the *Avatāṃsaka Sūtra*.[22] Indeed, his major works are his *Commentary on the Great and Expansive Buddhāvataṃsaka Sūtra*[23] along with its subcommentary, the *Proclamation of the Meanings of the Commentary on the Great and Expansive Buddhāvataṃsaka Sūtra*.[24] (I will typically refer to these as, respectively, the *Commentary* and the *Subcommentary*.) After an extensive introduction that outlines the Buddha's teachings and the place of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* within them, the *Commentary* supplies a line by line exposition of that sūtra. The *Subcommentary* is an autocommentary, commenting extensively on the meaning and sources of the *Commentary.* The result is an expansive text indeed: the *Avatāṃsaka Sūtra* itself, in the English translation of Thomas Cleary, spans roughly 1500 pages.[25] While some Mahāyāna sūtras owe their volume to their repetitiveness, this sūtra's length is mostly due to its expansive scope, ranging from cosmology to contemplation, from moral and spiritual practice to doctrine. Accordingly, Chengguan's commentary is extremely comprehensive. Although the texts are filled with interesting discussions, I have found it virtually impossible to pin down his actual doctrinal position or find a single coherent system underlying his discussions.

This problem was exacerbated as I read his works alongside those of other exegetes, regardless of their supposed doctrinal affiliation. Their parallels and similarities run very deep. They all asked basically the same questions, repeated roughly the same interpretations, and used more or less the same sources. Their differences, moreover, often do not carry doctrinal import—often being merely matters of style and organization. This is not to say that the exegetical works do not abound in doctrinal discussions—they do. Nor that we find no doctrinal disagreements among them. Nevertheless, the more I read, the more I started to suspect that Chengguan and other exegetes did not write their works in order to argue for a particular interpretation of the Buddhist teachings set apart from other interpretations. Something else was going on.

Of course, one response to such quandaries would be to try harder. Maybe a sophisticated reading would reveal a central concern driving Chengguan's works. Maybe stylistic differences between exegetes are, ultimately, expressions of doctrinal divergences.

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[22] *Da fang'guang fohuayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經; T279.

[23] *Da fang'guang fohuayan jing shu* 大方廣佛華嚴經疏; T1735.

[24] *Da fang'guang fohuayan jing suishu yanyi* 大方廣佛華嚴經隨疏演義; T1736.

[25] Cleary 1984.

My hypothesis, however, has been that such approaches will not pay off and that we need to rethink how we ought to read these texts—what are they *for*? This led naturally to questions not just about their genre, but about their authors—crudely put, what were they about? This dissertation is my attempt at answering these questions.

In short, my thesis is that Chengguan was a scholiast; that along with his peers, predecessors, and successors, he participated in a shared scholastic world. By invoking the category of "scholasticism," I am explicitly comparative: I believe we can pick out a set of patterns spanning social and intellectual realms that recur in various places and times. The rest of this chapter is devoted to describing this concept and exploring its implications and manifestations across the world.

In the foregoing, I have already implicitly gestured a central element of the picture I will paint by consistently referring Chengguan as an exegete—not, that is, as a Buddhist "thinker" or "philosopher." Rather than seeing him and his peers as engaging primarily with abstract doctrines, I believe that we should see them as first and foremost engaging with understanding, interpreting, and transmitting texts. To say that they were scholiasts implies this and more. What it forecloses is conceiving of them with a modern conception of authorship that leads us to imagine—to present an ideal-type—Chengguan thinking through, abstractly and in the privacy of his own mind, philosophical problems and coming up with systematic and coherent answers which he then worked to put to paper. Beyond its individualism, this image is founded on a modern idea of what it means to philosophize with an emphasis on abstract and propositional knowledge. This leads to attempts to identify *his* thought, *his* take on doctrinal matters in the abstract. An important variant of this conception is the idea that Chengguan represents a particular school of thought, "Huayan philosophy." There are several problems with this view, but foremost in my mind is, again, its excessive emphasis on abstraction, as though there is a coherent Huayan system that he is representing. In contrast to such perspectives, the view that I articulate here emphasizes that these exegetes were embedded in tradition, implying embodiment and community more than abstract ideology, and focuses on roles and performative context instead of singular individuals.

Put positively, this approach implies that we should read their texts as performance. What prooftexts an exegete cites, which doctrines he expounds and claims to be supreme, and how, in doing so, he applies interpretative moves and hermeneutic tools, depend for a large part on what text he finds himself lecturing on; not, that is, primarily on his abstract philosophical convictions. This, I submit, is a more fruitful way to think about the differences in exegetical traditions that are generally described in the language of different "schools." In recent decades, scholars have deconstructed that framework, tracing how institutional divisions that arose in Song-dynasty China (宋; 960-1279) and Japan have influenced scholarly categories applied to the study of earlier East Asian Buddhism. It is not my aim in the present work to replicate this work, nor even to further it. Rather, out of a conviction that the old reifications are bound to persist in lieu of an alternative picture, I aim to sketch another way of framing exegetes such as Chengguan.[26] On the view that I am putting forth, Chengguan was

[26] According to this model, Chengguan belonged to the so-called "Huayan school" (or "Avataṃsaka school;" *Huayan zong* 華嚴宗) and as such was a successor of the famous "Huayan patriarch" Fazang 法藏 (643-712).

indeed a specialist in the study of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, and many of his texts evince his vast knowledge of that sutra and the tradition(s) of interpretation that had emerged around the text. Yet, he had mastered other scriptures too and could deliver commentary on, say, Nāgārjuna's *Verses on the Middle Way* if the occasion presented itself. He was not a Huayan-scholar, neither institutionally nor philosophically; he was, first and foremost, a scholiast expounding scriptures within the ever-shifting confines of the tradition.

After I present a description of scholasticism in the remainder of this chapter, I devote the rest of this dissertation to showing that the Chinese Buddhist masters of the Sui and Tang dynasties can be fruitfully understood within this framework. The four remaining chapters are organized primarily along these lines, describing the culture and the writings of these masters within this framework. However, the more significant argument, threaded throughout my chapters, is that when we understand the Chinese Buddhist scholiasts as such—as scholiasts—old problems resolve, and new ways of looking at their writings open up. I explore some of these lines of thought at different points throughout the chapters; in some cases, they thread through multiple chapters. At the end of this chapter, I will say more about this, previewing the individual chapters as well as such new avenues for explorations.

Scholasticism

At the core of the framework that I am putting forward here, as mentioned above, is that we understand the great masters of the Sui and Tang "scholiasts," that we see them as participating in a single Sui-Tang Buddhist scholastic tradition. Of course, on the face of it, there is nothing original or innovative in suggesting we call the monk-philosophers of Sui-Tang China "scholiasts." John Kieschnick, for example, uses it to describe them in his study of the *Biographies of Eminent Monks* by Huijiao 慧皎 (497-554), Daoxuan 道宣 (596-667), and Zanning 贊寧 (920-1001).[27] In fact, the word is used rather freely by Buddhologists to describe certain textual genres and modes of reasoning. We find, for example, a volume called *Sarvāstivāda Buddhist Scholasticism*, by Charles Willemen, Bart Dessein, and Collett Cox, where the term is taken for granted.[28] Sometimes when authors use the term they point to one or more relevant aspects. One case is Martin Stuart-Fox, who, in his article "*Jhāna* and Buddhist Scholasticism," speaks of "the scholastic mind" by which he means specifically the "penchant (…) for composing lists and drawing symbolic parallels."[29] Similarly, in his discussion of Southeast Asian bitexts, Trent Walker speaks of exegetical expansions in those texts and

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Their school (*zong* 宗) had two main rivals: the Tiantai school (*Tiantai zong* 天台宗), based on the teachings of Zhiyi 智顗 (538-597), who was based at Mount Tiantai, and later reinvigorated by Zhanran 湛然 (711-782); and the Dharma-characteristics school (*Faxiang zong* 法相宗), centered around the Yogācāra texts translated by Xuanzang 玄奘 (602-664) and promulgated by masters such as Kuiji 窺基 (632-682) and Woncheuk 圓測 (613-696). On the anachronism of this model in regard to Huayan, see the brief comments by Cook (1977: 23–24); Liu (1981: 10–11, n. 2); Poceski (2014: 342); and the discussion by Hammerstrom (2020: 30–46). For Tiantai, see Penkower (1997). For Faxiang, see Lee (2015). For Esoteric Buddhism and Pure Land, see Sharf (2002a: 263–78; 2002b). The relevant literature in the case of Chan is extensive; see, e.g., Foulk (1987, 1992); Jorgensen (1987); and McRae (1986; 2004).

[27] 1997.

[28] 1998; they use the term "scholastic(ism)" a number of times, though without offering a definition or description; see, e.g., pp.

[29] 1989: 99, 100.

notes that those are "suitable for scholastic readers."[30] In the Japanese context, Matthew McMullen has discussed the development of "Esoteric Buddhist Scholasticism."[31]

In pointing to these various authors who unreflectively use "scholastic(ism)" as an analytical category, I do not intend to criticize them. It is only fair that these authors take for granted an understanding of a term, especially when they all use it with a fair degree of consistency for a relatively stable set of phenomena—e.g., exegesis, expansion, systematization, debates and polemics, particular scholarly institutions, and so forth. When others in Buddhist Studies such as José Cabezón, Paul Griffiths, and Georges Dreyfus, have offered more sustained attempts to describe their usage of the term, it seems to me that they attempt to describe, with more rigor, the same phenomenon taken for granted by others.[32] I will, in turn, offer up such an attempt below. As I indicated above, I do indeed believe that the word points to a stable set of phenomena "out there" in the world.

A Comparative Problem

But before articulating the range of the concept "scholasticism," I need to briefly address a fundamental problem that arises when we use of the word outside of medieval Europe. In doing so, we wish to invoke parallels and resonances with the world of medieval European scholastics. Yet, aspects of the technical definition of the term in that context are lost, which ends up potentially misleading us in our comparative attempts. On my reading, there are two elements to the way "scholasticism" is used in the European context, only one part of which resonates with that relatively stable set of phenomena for which we use the term. The other part of its technical definition, however, concerns the specific institutional setting of the late medieval "schoolmen." As Bernard McGinn puts it:

> Scholastic theology is a particular *way* of thinking about belief, done in a special *location,* the formal setting of the university and the lower theological institutions that prepared students for the university.[33]

As such, medievalists do not describe the intellectual studies pursued by great exegetes who lived and taught in monastic settings as "scholastic"—*even if* it were to answer to all the other aspects of the description, which it certainly could.[34] Yet, when Buddhologists use the term "scholastic," we do not have in mind parallels with the specific institutions of European scholasticism, such as the universities of Paris and Oxford. Rather, the emphasis lies on the practice of applying intellectual rigor to religious questions, within the confines of the tradition. This, indeed, is what the European scholiasts did—as did many of their brethren in properly monastic institutions. And in fact, many, if not all, of the sources and tools used by the schoolmen active at the secular academies in Europe had their origin in the monastic context.[35] Meanwhile, a more generic usage of the word "scholastic" has been in use for some time in the English language too, namely as a term of abuse for scholarship seen to be pedantic,

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[30] 2020: 678; cp. his use of the word "scholastic" on pp. 684, 685, 688, 689, 698.

[31] McMullen 2016; cp. McMullen 2020. To be fair, in the former work (his dissertation), McMullen does offer a brief description of what he means to pick out with the term "scholasticism" (2016: 11). Although he does point to some important elements (see below), his definition remains rather vague and unfocused.

[32] Cabezón (1994, 1998, 2020); Griffiths (1998, 1999); Dreyfus (2003).

[33] McGinn 2014: 10.

[34] The distinction is also drawn emphatically by Leclercq (1982: 2-3).

[35] See Smalley 1964.

unnecessarily complicated, and bound to dogmatic tradition.[36] Note that this usage of the term lacks any implication of what kind of institution supported said scholarship. We may suspect this usage has led to the application of the term in Buddhist contexts, even if it is not used pejoratively for the most part.[37]

Whatever the genealogy of the broad application of the term "scholasticism" and its usage as a comparative category, we are left with a dilemma consisting of two unsatisfactory options. On the one hand, we could simply insist on using a different term. That, however, would involve ignoring the widespread usage of the term and the concomitant as shared intuitions about its meaning. We could on the other hand, choose to simply keep using the term "scholastic" as we have. This option requires us to acknowledge that outside of the European context, its usage answers only to part of its original meaning, making its application broader. Both of these options have serious drawbacks. However, as the artificiality involved in coining a new term for a wide array of activities and approaches troubles me, I opt for the second approach, even if it requires apologies to historians of medieval Europe.

Describing Scholasticism Cross-Culturally

As mentioned above, some scholars have already undertaken more sustained comparative work invoking the category of "scholasticism." This work shows that the term (understood without the institutional aspect) does fruitfully pick out a set of patterns across different religious traditions. Prime examples are the volume *Scholasticism: Cross-Cultural and Comparative Perspectives*, edited by José Cabezón as well as a recent issue of the journal *Medieval Worlds* called "Rethinking Scholastic Communities" (published in 2020).[38] More specific applications can be found Georges Dreyfus' *The Sounds of Two Hands Clapping: The Education of a Tibetan Buddhist Monk* and Carl Yamamoto's article "The Historical Roots of Tibetan Scholasticism."[39] I conceive of my present work as continuing with that broader project, bringing the Chinese Buddhist case into the conversation.[40]

From such comparative work, we see certain regularities in the dynamics within which commentarial literature, such as the writings of Chengguan, arise. I believe it is to this overall dynamic that we refer when we speak of "scholasticism." In that case, it refers to the natural outgrowth of intellectual engagement with authoritative ("canonical") texts in the context of a tradition. Thus the work of scholiasts is essentially exegetical in nature. This engagement will always be partly pedagogical, as it is concerned with the appropriate transmission of the canon but may also be contemplative and/or polemical. Moreover, the knowledge transmitted

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[36] For some examples and brief discussions of the history of this pejorative usage, see Cabezón (1998: 2-3); Griffiths (1998: 201-202).

[37] Sometimes this pejorative aspect still comes through. The article by Stuart-Fox invokes it (1989). Kieschnick does not use the term in his chapter on the scholar-monks until he starts to contrast their intellectual approach with that of the emerging Chan school (Kieschnick 1997; Chapter 3 "Scholarship").

[38] Cabezón 1998; cp. Cabezón (1994 & 2020).

[39] Dreyfus 2003; Yamamoto 2009.

[40] My thinking is also informed by Paul Griffiths' work on what he calls "religious reading," which he calls "scholasticism" in the context of Cabezón's volume (Griffiths 1998). In the specific Sinitic context, some have spoken of the commentarial tradition along similar lines as what I have in mind here; see Buswell (2017) and Mayer (2004), and especially the more recent work by Xiaoming Hou (2022). Though not explicitly invoking the category of scholasticism, Nance's treatment of Indian Buddhist commentarial conventions and their pedagogical background also informs my approach (2012).

through scholastic works and practices is not merely propositional content but also conveys the implicit understandings and interpretative skills that bind a given tradition together.[41]

This description of scholasticism as, in its core, consisting of intellectual engagement with authoritative ("canonical") texts in the context of a tradition, aligns with other scholars' descriptions.[42] It echoes, for example, Dreyfus' description, when he says

> I believe the most distinctive feature of scholasticism to be its emphasis on interpreting the great texts constitutive of the tradition within the confines of its authority, using the intellectual tools handed down from previous generations.[43]

Dreyfus draws on Makdisi, who had in mind Islamic and Christian scholastic traditions, to describe a variety of intellectual tools: lectures, glosses on basic texts, disputation, methods of arguing pro and contra regarding doubts concerning the scriptures. Plus: systematic texts offering detailed, rigorous explanations of relevant topics.[44]

As we will see below, we find these tools in traditions around the world. Yet, as McGinn emphasized, speaking of the medieval Christian context, we should see scholasticism not as a particular position or set of methods but rather "as a rationalized system of ways of appropriating Christian faith in an organized academic setting."[45] Translated to the cross-cultural context and bracketing the specific institutional setting of which McGinn speaks, we can say that scholiasts are a given tradition's intellectual elite, engaged with the most rigorous study and the most thorough transmission of its scriptures.

This way of describing the concept differs, at least on the surface, from Cabezón's[46]. He proposed a polythetic definition consisting of eight characteristics that may or may not all be present in a given case—to wit, a sense of tradition, concern with language, proliferativity (or, textual and analytic inclusivity), completeness and compactness (or, the assumption that everything necessary is contained in the tradition), the assumption that the world is epistemologically accessible, systematicity, rationalism, and self-reflexivity.[47] Indeed, virtually all of these are present in those traditions that we may call scholastic along the lines suggested above.[48] From my perspective, many of the characteristics in Cabezón's list are natural outflows of the scholiasts' engagement with their traditions' scriptures. For example, as

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[41] Although it is not my interest in the present context, we should note that the flourishing of such a culture requires certain institutional underpinnings. As noted above, the secular academies of Medieval Europe provided such a context. For reflections on what conditions make the emerging of a scholastic tradition possible, see Cabezón (2020).

[42] Note that I am not claiming to have offered a watertight definition. I think the description that I have offered captures an essential dynamic that we can see across traditions, but I do not claim that it accounts for limit-cases.

[43] Dreyfus 2003: 11. One of Makdisi's description of scholasticism speaks of "an inner spirit, the basic characteristic of which is a deep and equal concern for both authority and reason, engaging scholastics over a long period of time in an endeavor to effect a harmony between the two" (1974: 643).

[44] Dreyfus 2003: 10. Dreyfus is explicitly drawing on Makdisi (1974), although similar aspects are discussed, and at much more length, in Smalley (1964) and Leclercq (1982).

[45] 2014: 11.

[46] Similar points regarding the relation of my description with Cabezón's apply to Yamamoto's (2009).

[47] Cabezón 1998: 4-6.

[48] The one characteristic to which I take exception is the assumption that the world is epistemologically accessible—or rather, I would rephrase it to say that scholiasts believe that, whether or not we have access to the world, "something must be said."

Cabézon points out, they tend toward textual inclusivity and systematicity.[49] We can understand these as following from the fact that the scholiast is beholden to his canon and the overarching authority of his tradition. If a text is seen as part of the canon, it must be explained and made to cohere with other canonical texts that may seem to contradict it. This in turn explains the importance of doxography for scholiasts. Similarly, the exegetical and pedagogical nature of their work also explains the format of their texts: line-by-line commentaries, digests, and anthologies.[50]

Given all this, we should not be surprised that there are significant parallels if we compare scholastic texts across traditions. After all, their composers worked within similar parameters and toward analogous goals. One study that is helpful in this regard is John Henderson's cross-cultural study of commentaries.[51] Looking at exegetical literature from around the globe, he points to a set of assumptions as well as strategies that recur all over the world.[52] The first of the assumptions to which Henderson points accounts for the tendency of commentaries to become all-inclusive repositories of knowledge, namely that the canon itself is all-encompassing; that, in other words, the author of the canon was omniscient.[53] Furthermore, traditions see the canon, even when contradictory, as coherent and consistent.[54] They also tend to understand the canon as illustrating moral truths and as being always profoundly meaningful.[55] These shared assumptions make that commentators across the world have drawn from a similar arsenal of exegetical techniques. In short, these are: summary, allegory, modal distinction, accommodation.[56]

Henderson does not seek to account for the assumptions he uncovers. To some extent, there may be no deeper explanation other than a restatement of the concepts involved. That traditional commentators see scripture as encompassing all knowledge in a sense needs no further explanation. After all, being regarded as an endless source of knowledge is exactly what constitutes scripture; it is precisely how those in a given scripture's tradition relate to the text.[57] Nonetheless, more *can* be said. Some of these assumptions do have deeper explanations; others can at least be fleshed out and put in context.

Exploring Scholasticism

The hermeneutical assumptions and approaches to which Henderson points are not the only constants. Across the world, this constellation of elements that together make up the scholastic occupation leads to further characteristics. I explore several of these below. However, the relations between these various aspects of scholastic cultures, as with any social and cultural phenomenon, are complex. They do not operate by deductive logic. In many cases we cannot clearly describe whether *x* comes from *y* or the other way around—"both, and more" being the likely answer. Thus, in my view, attempts to define such relations

[49] Cabezón 1998: 4-7.
[50] Griffiths 1999.
[51] Henderson 1991.
[52] Henderson 1991; see, respectively, chapter 4 and 5.
[53] Ibid., p. 89 ff.
[54] Ibid.; respectively p. 106 ff. and p. 115 ff.
[55] Ibid.; respectively p. 121 ff. and p. 129 ff.
[56] Ibid., chapter 5.
[57] My understanding and use of the concept "scripture" are informed by the approach of Wilfred C. Smith (1993). On his view, what makes a text scripture consists not of some inherent characteristic, but of the way it is treated by people (1993: 17-19).

schematically are always less than satisfactory; often simply at odds with reality. In what follows, therefore, I do not intend to offer a logically coherent account of scholasticism but rather a thick description, coming at the phenomena involved from multiple, often overlapping perspectives.

Implicit Knowledge, Tradition, and Change

One aspect of the description I gave above finds no parallel in Cabezón's list: the insistence that scholastic knowledge is not merely propositional, but also includes implicit understanding and interpretative skill. Paul Griffiths has emphasized this aspect at length. He describes scholastic epistemology as externalist, in opposition to the internalist epistemology that is typical of modern thought and religion.[58] Broadly speaking, the favored theory of knowledge in the modern era centers on the individual who finds truth on his own, unburdened by tradition. In the religious context, Griffiths points to the theologian who relies on a-priori reasons to establish religious doctrine on purely rational grounds as well as to mystics who find truth via direct meditative experience. He contrasts such internalist epistemology (whether rationalist or empiricist) with the externalist views regarding the conditions for knowing truth that emphasize modes of knowing not accessible to the agent. Although Griffiths does not spell this out, this relates to the form that knowledge takes. Whereas moderns, starting with Descartes, came to understand knowledge as propositional, Griffiths suggests that scholastic knowledge is much broader. He notes that scholastics "will think that patterns of reasoning and the knowledge produced by them are constitutively and necessarily tradition-specific; that engaging in them is best likened to the performance of a complex skill."[59] Scholastic pedagogy, accordingly, focuses not merely on the transmission of the factual truths found in scripture, but also on truthful ways of thinking about and engaging with scripture.

One illustration of this can be found in Maria Heim's work on Buddhaghosa's commentarial practice, one of the few book-length studies of Buddhist commentarial writing to date.[60] Although she generally refrains from looking at Buddhaghosa's compositions through a comparative lens, when reflecting on his pedagogy she invokes the Greek distinction between *mētis* and *techne*.[61] While the latter consists of abstract rules that can be applied across the board, the former form of knowledge is really a skill; it may work with rules of thumb, but their application is local and deeply contextual. The latter, Heim argues, most aptly describes Buddhaghosa's methods. Of his pedagogy she says that it "is cumulative rather than declarative, particularist rather than universal (though we will want to look for patters), and methodical rather than summative."[62]

This, as I understand it, is a natural outcome of the fact that scholiasts operate within a tradition. At its most foundational, tradition implies a *traditum* or a set of *tradita* that persists over time as they are handed down from one generation to the next.[63] Another aspect of tradition, however, is precisely that it includes the transmission of that other type of knowledge emphasized by Griffiths: the tacit dimension. Indeed, Michael Polanyi, the

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[58] Griffiths 1999: 79-80; cp. 1998: 222-223.
[59] Griffiths 1998: 224.
[60] Heim 2018.
[61] Heim 2018: 104.
[62] Heim 2018: 103.
[63] E.g. Pieper 2010: 9-11; Shils 1981: 12.

scientist-philosopher who coined the term "tacit dimension," emphasized that its transmission—that is, the handing from one generation to the next of shared but unspoken assumptions and, to be intentionally vague, "ways of thinking"—is central to tradition.[64] In fact, Polanyi emphasized that without tradition, knowledge is impossible.[65] Edward Shils echoes this point in his book-length exploration of tradition, emphasizing that traditions are "often the 'tacit component' of rational, moral, and cognitive actions, and of affect, too."[66]

Keen observers have also insisted that living traditions, rather than static and dogmatic, are dynamic and responsive to the present.[67] For a tradition to be alive, its canonical truths (and texts) need to be reinterpreted, again and again, from one generation to the next. Josef Pieper, another philosopher who reflected on the concept of tradition at some length, describes this as the "unending task of theology," namely "the translation, which has to be revised over and over again under continually changing circumstances, of the 'original texts' of the *tradita* into a form that can be understood by the present historical moment."[68] This process leads naturally to an "increasing differentiation of the categories used in interpretation and the ever more precise understanding of what was truly meant," Pieper states.[69] With regard to the interpretation of religious scripture in the context of tradition, Shils notes quite aptly:

> The authority of the interpretations is supported not only by the sacred character of the text which they interpret and the consensus of past authorities, it is reinforced by the rationality of the interpretations. The tradition is continuously subjected to rational criticism. Hitherto unsolved problems are discerned and resolved; critics who would reject the tradition of interpretation are confronted by reasoned argument—not always only by that—and refuted. The process of rationalization—clarifying, refining, and making logically consistent—itself modifies the tradition and therewith the meaning of the sacred text itself. The tradition of religious belief, particularly that current among the learned, has of course dogmatic elements but the tradition itself is not rigidly unchanging.[70]

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[64] Polanyi 1966: 61-63.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Shils 1981: 33; this aspect of tradition runs through Shils' entire book. See also Pelikan who points to "intuition" as a significant part of tradition (1984: 34).
[67] E.g. Pieper 2010: 15; Pelikan 1984: 81; Shils 1981.
[68] Pieper 2010: 45; cp. 49. Cp. also the following observation by Dreyfus: "One of the great temptations in analyzing tradition is to confuse it with traditionalism or fundamentalism, the belief that the validity of tradition requires only the literal repetition of some truth transmitted from the past. Such confusion arises because authority does play a central role in tradition. A tradition, particularly a religious one, is constituted around the transmission of a given truth based on the authority of the past. But that transmission is neither simple nor univocal, as traditionalism would have it, for truth needs to be constantly interpreted. This necessity introduces a tension central to the dynamic of tradition, which must negotiate between authority and the freedom required by interpretation" (2003: 7).
[69] Pieper 2010: 46.
[70] Shils 1981: 95. This is a specific application of a general point Shils points out earlier: "Nonetheless, in those categories of human activities which attract persons of strong intelligence and imagination, it is not likely to be held very long in the exact pattern in which it was received. Even a sacred text or a somewhat less sacred commentary, committed to memory and supported by a written version, cannot remain wholly intact. A ritual might remain wholly intact over generations, the tradition of an intellectual achievement is not likely to do so. It

Seen in this light, exegesis is the natural task for any religious tradition's intellectual elite, and necessarily involves, generation after generation, creative re-interpretation. Indeed, exegesis is the quintessential activity of scholiasts and commentary their archetypal genre.[71] For this reason alone, it should come as no surprise that scholastic traditions have left us massive amounts of commentaries.

Scholiasts as Deep Readers

A rich and suggestive article on scholasticism by Griffiths may serve as our entry point into the entwined intellectual practices of scholiasts. At the article's center is a description of scholasticism that complements well what I offered above. He suggests that we understand reading as the root-metaphor for scholastic practice, as opposed to *writing*, the moderns' primary engagement with text.[72] He contrasts the reverential way in which scholiasts make scripture their own and find in it an endless wellspring of meaning with what he calls the *consumerist* attitude of modern readers wherein texts are mere instruments while the end-goal is that the reader-turned-writer himself creates new order out of chaos. In other words, to play on Griffiths metaphor, the modern attitude toward texts puts the individual in the center as the creative agent *forming* new texts; the scholastic attitude understands persons as being *formed* by scripture.[73] Scholiasts, accordingly, understand texts as a "stable and vastly rich resource, one that yields meaning, suggestions (or imperatives) for action, matter for

might be the intention of the recipient to adhere "strictly" to the stipulation of what he has received but "strictness" itself opens questions which are not already answered and which must be answered. If it is a moral or a legal code, or a philosophical system, the very attempt by a powerful mind to understand it better will entail the discernment of hitherto unseen problems which will require new formulations; these will entail varying degrees of modification Attempts to make them applicable to particular cases will also enforce modifications. Such modifications of the received occur even when the tradition is regarded as sacrosanct and the innovator might in good conscience insist that he is adhering to the traditions as received." (Shils 1981: 45).

[71] McGinn notes along these lines that "Medieval theology was always based on lectio, that is, commentary on authoritative texts" (2014: 41). Similarly, Griffiths says, "Religious readers have composed more commentaries than any other kind of work. If there is a single genre most characteristic of them, it is the commentary" (1999: 77).

[72] Griffiths 1998: 208-213. Note that Dreyfus has critiqued Griffiths' argument, arguing that the slow and reverential reading to which Griffiths points was practiced in the European monasteries and was gradually lost in the secular academies—that is, those technically termed scholastic in the European Medieval context (2003: 158-159). However, in defense of Griffiths I might note two things. First, Griffiths proposed the contrast between scholastic reading and modern writing as ideal-types, and he warns his readers against taking it as a historically descriptive when he urges: "Recall that a sketch such as this neither makes nor implies any claims as to whether this ideal type, or anything like it, ever has been instanced; it serves only as a heuristic device" (1998: 211). Moreover, Dreyfus relies on the narrow definition of scholasticism in his critique of Griffiths—and only there, as far as I can tell. As cited above, his description of scholasticism in his introduction is similar to what I offered above and contains no reference to the academic setting required by the narrow European definition. Griffiths' ideal type, as I read him, relies not on the narrow definition but on the broader understanding of scholasticism along exactly the lines of Dreyfus usage elsewhere.

[73] I am invoking here Halbertal's conception of formative texts. He says: "the formative canon is not only obeyed but also serves other functions: it is studied, taught, transmitted, rehearsed, performed, and reflected upon. It affects and influences many domains, including attitudes, beliefs, judgments, sensitivities, aspirations, ideals, language, self-identity, and so on. Among the various domains the most fundamental formative level is the one that contains beliefs, attitudes, and narratives that shape the framework for future discourse within a community and constitute its terms. Borrowing Wittgenstein's concept of framework, this fundamental text will be called the 'framework text'" (1997: 90).

aesthetic wonder, and much else."[74] Texts, seen with this attitude, offer endless profundity by definition, so can (and must) be continuously mined for insight.

Scholastic reading, Griffiths emphasizes, need not involve the use of written books; indeed, for scholiasts "the ideally-read text is the memorized text, and the ideal mode of reading is by memorial recall."[75] Indeed, memorization, the thorough internalization of texts, is central to scholastic praxis.[76] Griffiths suggests that the fact that scholiasts hold their scriptures in memory with devotion, demands from them that they interpret it, that they compose of commentaries, "the archetypical and basic scholastic genre."[77] But memorization also has a practical effect on the formal features of commentaries, as Griffiths points out perceptively.

> Practically, the presence of the whole work in the memory, coupled with its storage in the form of gobbets, any one of which can be recalled and juxtaposed to any other, will suggest and enable the composition of commentaries that have two important formal features, both of which are typical of scholastic commentaries. The first is that the scholastic commentary will take as its first object precisely the gobbets into which the work has been divided for memorizing, which means that it will treat in the first instance small units of the work, and only secondarily larger units or the work as a whole. The second is that a comment on any one of these gobbets will presuppose knowledge of them all and may be incomprehensible without such knowledge.[78]

Besides being a very apt observation on the structure and assumptions in commentarial literature, Griffiths' observations suggest that the form and conventions of commentaries are deeply entangled with the way scholiasts relate to their texts. How they understand scripture as formative, how they internalize it in memory, and how they interpret it with a hermeneutic allowing for an endless mining of the text for profound significance all hang together in an intricate feedback loop, interwoven in relations sketched by Griffiths.

Textualism and the Internalization of Scripture

We might look a little closer at the understanding of textuality that underlies this usage of scripture. Mary Carruthers, in her study of the medieval conception and practice of memory, differentiates between two ideal-typical approaches to texts: fundamentalism, according to which texts require no further interpretation, and textualism, which understands texts as a endless resource.[79] It is the second orientation that Carruthers sees as most predominant in Medieval Europe.

> The Latin word *textus* comes from the verb meaning "to weave" and it is in the institutionalizing of a story through *memoria* that textualizing occurs. Literary works become institutions as they weave a community together by providing it with shared experience and a certain kind of language, the language of stories that can be experienced over and over again through time and as occasion suggests. Their meaning

[74] Griffiths 1998: 209.
[75] Griffiths 1998: 213.
[76] Griffiths 1998: 213-216, 219-220.
[77] Griffiths 1998: 218.
[78] Griffiths 1998: 218.
[79] Carruthers 2008: 13-14.

> is thought to be implicit, hidden, polysemous, and complex, requiring continuing interpretation and adaptation.[80]

It is, firstly, Carruthers' last sentence here that I think fits so neatly the general pattern of commentarial literature where texts are mined endlessly. Yet, we ought to note as well the ways in which her description of the textualist orientation ties in with the social realm and with time. Combined, those two imply tradition: the endurance of community over time. And tradition is served better by the playful theory of language, as we might also call the textualist orientation, than by the fundamentalist understanding of scripture as fixed, solid, and transparent. A first, rather obvious reason for this is that survival over time requires adaption to change, something contrary to the very nature of the fundamentalist orientation.[81] Moreover, interpretative playfulness, more so than fundamentalism, aids in the transmission of the tacit components of tradition.

Another aspect to which Carruthers points is the relation between the textualist approach to text and memorization, the deeply intimate familiarity with a text to the point that one has truly made it "one's own." Carruthers herself is explicit about this relationship, suggesting that memorization is valued especially in cultures with a textualist understanding.[82] I would suggest, however, that the line of influence also goes in the other direction. Memorized, a text becomes part of an individual's cognitive structure. Future encounters of the world, including encounters with other texts, will hence be (partly) mediated by the already memorized text. Scripture, then, becomes "a certain kind of language," as Carruthers puts it, through which one interprets the world. This way, we might reverse Carruthers formulation and say that the text's meaning is continuously *revealing* itself anew, ambiguous, hidden, polysemous and complex, *enabling* continuing interpretation and adaptation.[83]

Reading As a Spiritual Exercise

More practically speaking, scholiasts engage with scripture as a spiritual practice. A central practice in the Catholic tradition is the *lectio divina*, the "divine reading."[84] Speaking in the context of that tradition specifically, Jean Leclercq describes how

> To meditate is to attach oneself closely to the sentence being recited and weigh all its words in order to sound the depths of their full meaning. It means assimilating the content of a text by means of a kind of mastication which releases its full flavor.[85]

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[80] Carruthers 2008: 14.

[81] Indeed, the two major fundamentalist traditions in the world, Protestant Christianity and science, prove this point by their history. Protestantism has seen either an endless splintering into different sects, or a movement away from fundamentalism toward ever more liberal interpretations of its scripture. Science, on the other hand, while it insists on a fundamentalist reading of scientific works (which is not to say that all representatives of science believe in a simple representationalist theory of truth, but rather that no self-respecting scientist reads, say, the works of Einstein as multilayered and open to endless interpretation and application—though that does sound like a rather fun New-Age type alchemical project that I should shelve in case my academic career fails), has taken *this* to be its hallmark: the endless refutation of its own past.

[82] 2008: 13-14.

[83] Carruthers 2008: 14.

[84] For an engaging description of how this practice was to proceed in the context of the early Christian monastic community of the Pachomian Koinonnia, see Graham (1987: 128 ff.). Cp. also Graham's comments on meditation in that community (ibib.: 33 ff.).

[85] Leclecrq 1982: 73.

Such mastication, or rumination, of scripture involves the entire person: reading was done, by default, out loud, and was aimed not merely toward the processing of information, but also toward one's formation as a person. As Leclercq puts it:

> For the ancients, to meditate is to read a text and to learn it "by heart" in the fullest sense of this expression, that is, with one's whole being: with the body, since the mouth pronounced it, with the memory which fixes it, with the intelligence which understands its meaning, and with the will which desires to put it into practice.[86]

Put differently, as this reading engages the whole person, the *meaning* of the text is not confined to what is conveyed by its words in a literal sense. Meaning lies, rather, also in the aesthetic dimensions of a text, which make it easier or harder to recite and to memorize; in its moral dimensions, the areas where it touches upon the life of the heart. Scripture structures the life of its students. Leclercq, once again, says:

> For the monks in general, the foremost aid to good works is a text which makes possible the meditated reading of the word of God. This will greatly affect the domain of monastic exegesis, entirely oriented toward life, and not toward abstract knowledge.[87]

Life, of course, ranges broadly. Traditions may stipulate abstract knowledge as a goal to be pursued, and to that extent we may disagree with Leclercq. Yet, it still strikes me that he is right. After all, in such a case, knowledge as a goal in itself is still a goal in relation to, or rather superseded by, other goals defined by the tradition. Medieval Christian exegesis, for example, was not oblivious to the literal reading of the Bible. It was, in fact, deemed essential, though as a *foundation* for more spiritually pertinent readings.[88]

The contemplative side of the scholiasts' reading of scripture is not merely relevant in understanding the hermeneutic stance they take in exegesis. It also bears on the *shape* of their exegesis. Like a cow who chews and rechews grass, one who ruminates over scripture approaches the text repetitively and from different angles, not in straightforward linear fashion. Moreover, for many religious exegetes, the true, the good, and the beautiful are synonymous or at least closely related in some or another fashion. Thus, the truth presented in scripture is often expounded with an eye toward beauty. Though not all exegetes aim at it in the same degree—nor, certainly, do those who aim all succeed in the same measure—poetic elegance, stylistic flourish, and playful allusion regularly mark their writings. Though not all scholastic texts are ordered, or disordered, along these lines, we do well to cultivate a sensitivity to the spiritual aspects of the scholastic endeavor.

Another way to make this point is to say that we often do well to read scholastic texts as though we are hearing them in a chapel, temple, or meditation cushion. Cabezón, speaking of Indian and Tibetan scholastic institutions, emphasizes the central role of prayer in the life of scholar-monks.[89] He offers it as part of the scholiasts' life that is not intellectually oriented. However, I would suggest that the relevance of liturgy goes deeper: it is not only important as part of the broader context in the life of scholiasts, but also figures in the background of

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[86] Leclercq 1982: 17.
[87] Leclercq 1982: 17.
[88] See, e.g., Smalley's comments on the literal reading as foundational (1964: 12-13, 89, 214-242, 259).
[89] Cabezón 2020: 56-58.

scholastic writing itself. Quite obviously, the liturgy is often made up of texts that function centrally in scholastic practice—think of the Psalms in the Christian context. Moreover, scholastic and liturgical practices may overlap. The Benedictine *lectio divina*, for example, while granting a certain amount of freedom, is certainly liturgical in nature, being a disciplined practice, done at specific times daily with an enjoined attitude of reverence. A specific and clear example of the entanglement of liturgy and scholastic exposition can be found in Buddhaghosa's works, as Heim points out. What appears as doctrinal analysis in one context, is given, verbatim, as the prescribed content of meditative practice in another.[90] When we keep in mind that the scholiasts' compositions may be (in)formed by liturgy and could be used for contemplative practice, we can come to a more nuanced understanding of their style.

Memory

The central role of memory and memorization has already come up several times at this point. It is an essential part of contemplative reading of texts and will also figure largely in the following discussion of the scholastic classroom. The point here is not simply that scholiasts commit large amounts of texts to memory, although this is true and might require some emphasis. It is also not that they were not literate, which they certainly were. Rather, it is that scholastic cultures are memory cultures, to use Carruthers' term.[91] Such a culture is marked by a range of practices and assumptions, regardless of their use of written texts.[92] Since these differ vastly from ours, we in the modern world, quite predictably, tend to have quite different intuitions about what our memory might accomplish. For one, we tend to underestimate even how much text an ordinary person, with proper training and methods, is capable of memorizing. As scholarship on a variety of cultures documents how much trained memories of past scholars could hold, I will not try to document any of that here, though I urge readers skeptical of the idea that a Buddhist monk with the relevant training could hold in his mind, say, a complete Mahāyāna sutra (and more) to explore the relevant literature.[93]

The "relevant training" is an important caveat. An essential element of memory cultures is that they view memory not merely as a natural endowment such as height—some people are taller than others; some people are born with better memories—but also see memorization as a craft. Just like those who are naturally good runners will still need technique to run well and sustainably, memorization, in the view of our forebears, requires

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[90] Heim 2018: 181.

[91] Carruthers 2008, 1998. I don't wish to imply necessarily that are memory cultures are scholastic. Note that Carruthers uses "memorial culture" in her *Book of Memory* (2008; originally published 1992), a somewhat confusing coinage. I prefer "memory culture," which she uses in later work (1998: e.g., p. 66).

[92] One of the main points Carruthers has sought to debunk is the common assumption that memorization is a mark of oral cultures (esp. 2008: 12).

[93] Carruthers (2008, 1998); Griffiths (1999: e.g., 40-54); Drewes (2015: esp. 132-133 n. 48). See Graham: "One does not have to read long in Muslim texts nor listen often to an 'ālim speak to discover how the ring of the qur'anic text cadences the thinking, writing, and speaking of those who live with and by the Qur'ān. Mastery of the Qur'ān is a baseline for the scholar: Completely aside from knowledge of tajwid, the 'ālim has to be able to quote and to recite from the Qur'ān at will even to begin to hold his own among compatriots. It is by no means excessive to say that Muslim scholarship is based to a significant extent upon acceptance of the Prophetic adage from the Ḥadith that claims that 'knowledge shall not perish so long as the Qur'ān is recited'" (1987: 106).

method, rules of thumb, and practice.[94] Medieval Europe has left us a range of texts giving advice on how to memorize effectively.[95] "The fundamental principle," in Carruthers words,

> is to "divide" the material to be remembered into pieces short enough to be recalled in single units and to key these into some sort of rigid, easily reconstructable order. This provides one with a "random-access" memory system, by means of which one can immediately and securely find a particular bit of information, rather than having to start from the beginning each time in order laboriously to reconstruct the whole system (…).[96]

These short-enough pieces are exactly the gobbets that Griffiths describes, as mentioned earlier. The practice of ordering them rigidly, and the possibilities that that gives for composition, leads naturally to the perceived obsession on the part of scholiasts with structure, divisions, and ordering. Entire passages in commentaries can be taken up by extensive parsing of the root-text. Ayalet Even-Ezra describes the experience of encountering such passages well:

> Part of what makes these divisions difficult to swallow is that most scholars, especially those using modern editions, encounter text divisions only in their verbal form, which often follows a pattern such as "The book has three parts… The first part divides into two… The first of these sections divides into three," and so on and so forth, written in the same running lines in which the rest of the commentary is written. Often, the entire division is not initially presented but unfolds along with the commentary. Verbal descriptions of complex structures are destined almost by their nature to be tedious and difficult to process cognitively.[97]

Even-Ezra's study is concerned with "horizontal-tree diagrams," as she calls them, often found in the margins of Medieval European manuscripts, where they visualize conceptual relationships, including the organization of texts.[98] Carruthers, referring to such diagrams, emphasizes their role in memorization.[99] We can understand the use of diagrams that depict the organization of texts as being based in scholiasts' continuous concern with cutting up texts for the sake of memorizing them. Even-Ezra points to a different reason for which European exegetes were interested in dividing their texts: as they had learned, in their study of rhetoric,

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[94] Carruthers 2008: 8-9, 50.

[95] See, e.g., Carruthers & Ziolkowski 2002; Carruthers 2008.

[96] Carruthers 2008: 8.

[97] Even-Ezra 2021: 157-158.

[98] While her study is concerned with these diagrams as they appear in the European Middle Ages, she points to Arab, Syrian, and Jewish parallels as well (Even-Ezra 2021: 24-25, 80-81). As I will suggest in Chapter 2, some manuscript material from Chinese Buddhist scholiasts can be understood similarly—if we allow for the fact that, due to the writing system, the trees are vertical.

[99] She says: "I would modify the common understanding of the various diagrams and drawings and even, in some cases, the full illustrations that we find in monastic manuscripts. They are not just "aids" to understanding, as we would say, implying their subservient role to language and that they are in some, basic way unnecessary to knowing. They are exercises and examples to be studied and remembered as much as are the words. Words and images together are two "ways" of the same mental activity—invention" (1998: 142).

that good compositions are to be well ordered, they want to show how their scriptures are, indeed, organized well.[100]

Yet Even-Ezra's interpretation too points to the centrality of memory. Carruthers fondly quotes an aphorism of Victor of Saint Hugh's, which says that "the method of reading consists in dividing."[101] As she notes, "to read" in the Medieval world meant to memorize, whether it be of words or of the arguments and ideas. This in itself is a clear suggestion that the scholastic obsession with textual organization ties in with their experience of memory as requiring small gobbets in rigid structures. We may, however, also confidently change the aphorism to say that "the method of composing consists in dividing." Carruthers, at heart a scholar of literature, discusses the Medieval and Classical understanding of textual composition (much of which I suggest also applies to other scholastic contexts).[102] Key here is this very word-choice: they *composed* texts, "put them together" (*cum + ponere*). The creation of a text was not considered a physical act, but a mental one: drawing on one's memory bank, one puts together bricks of memorized text—words, phrases, concepts—hereby finding new connections and thus formulating new ideas.[103] In fact, Carruthers documents that the act of *writing* a text was not only seen as distinct from its composition, but occurred at a later stage, often by dictation to a scribe. Texts, accordingly, are not identified with books; books are but one medium for texts, the ideal medium is the memory bank.[104] Drawing on the ideas contained therein and then re-structuring them is how texts are born. This account of textual composition helps understand the shape of many scholastic compositions. Scholiasts typically organize their compositions in strict ways, announcing the organization in thorough detail and following it to the dot.

Carruthers also describes another principle operative in memory-practice: the principle of compression. This helps understand important elements of scholastic texts: their denseness of style as well as the use and function of citations and allusions. Carruthers describes it as follows:

> (…) one of the fundamental principles for increasing mnemonic (recollective) efficiency is to organize single bits of information into informationally richer units by a process of substitution that compresses large amounts of material into single markers.[105]

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[100] Even-Ezra 2021: 157. Note that she herself distances her work from the interest in memory, unfortunately presenting her own explanation as exclusive with an emphasis on memory (2021: 47-49). As I discuss immediately below, however, the assumption that good authors composed well-structured words is closely related with memory culture. Thus, if one holds scholiasts went to the furthest limits in outlining the organization of texts they admired *because* they assumed a good text was a well-organized text, they assumed so precisely because this is how they understood textual creation. Indeed, outlining the structure of one's root-text is also to outline one's own commentary. Moreover, the most-organized scholastic texts are often not commentaries (at least when they deal with the root-text line by line) but stand-alone works.

[101] Carruthers 2008: 217, 232, 281. She cites the Latin as "Modus legend in dividend constat," with the textual reference at p. 430, note 75.

[102] Carruthers 2008: 244-257; 1998: 173-174.

[103] Carruthers notes that "*Memoria* is most usefully thought of as a compositional art" (1998: 9; cp. p. 8). Discussions of the use of memory for the sake of invention run throughout her earlier work as well (e.g., 2008: 39.

[104] Cp. Griffiths 1998: 209.

[105] Carruthers 2008: 105.

This principle, of course, is what underlies the simple mnemonics that students still use these days; it also lies behind the functionality of the use of mnemonic grids and organizational outlines.

Moreover, it also influences how texts are read and understood. That is to say, in a memory-culture, a scholiast can compose texts assuming that his audience has available in their memories a similar bank of texts and references as he does. Thus, he can mention the title of a book of scripture safely assuming that his readers then think of its general content; he can paraphrase scripture silently, knowing that his readers will infer what he is referencing and its larger context; or, he may cite the beginning of a sentence or passage, leaving it up to us to fill in the blanks.[106] Leclercq's description of allusions in Christian monastic exegesis gives a good sense of this.

> It is this deep impregnation with the words of Scripture that explains the extremely important phenomenon of reminiscence whereby the verbal echoes so excite the memory that a mere allusion will spontaneously evoke whole quotations and, in turn, a scriptural phrase will suggest quite naturally allusions elsewhere in the sacred books. Each word is like a hook, so to speak; it catches hold of one or several others which become linked together and make up the fabric of the exposé. This accounts for the difficulty of what we call research into sources: are the monks quoting older versions of Scripture or are they modifying them? Most frequently, it would seem, they are quoting from memory; quotations by means of the "hook-words" group themselves together in their minds and under their pen, like variations on the same theme. It happens that the same context is found several times in the same author and in others. Not that the one is necessarily referring to what he has already said or is citing another author who is using the same series of texts. Quite simply, the same words evoke similar quotations.[107]

Leclercq's use of the word "fabric" is not incidental—*textus*, again, comes from the verb "to weave" (hence also "textile").[108] Embedded in an intertextual tapestry, scholiasts' very thinking was in terms of patches and threads that they absorbed from scripture and the surrounding commentarial tradition.[109]

The principle of compression was also used pedagogically by composing texts for students to memorize which functioned as a framework for further instruction. Nugent provides a useful example of such use in his study of the *Qianzi wen*, the *Thousand Character Classic,* in relation to its paratexts found as Dunhuang-manuscripts.[110] Due to its simplicity and its rhyme and parallelism, the text is easy to memorize. Yet, it is also highly terse, referring

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[106] Carruthers 2008: 113-116, 128. Cp. also Griffiths 1999: 129.
[107] Leclercq 1982: 73-74.
[108] Carruthers 2008: 14.
[109] Cp. Graham's comments: "The major Christian thinkers—and the major thinkers of the Muslim, Indian, Jewish, and other scriptural traditions—have been characterized by the aforementioned capacity to (or rather the incapacity not to) 'speak scripture' when they write or utter any words at all. They have known scripture so intimately that it has passed into the fabric of their thinking and discourse and provided the conceptual matrix as well as the inner linguistic content of that thinking and discourse. Such thorough familiarity with scripture goes beyond, even though it includes, the venerable practice of proof-texting with scriptural citations at every opportunity. It determines mental constructs no less than rhetorical constructs" (1987: 165; cp. p. 144).
[110] *Qianzi wen* 千字文; see Nugent 2018.

and alluding to a vast swath of classical texts and traditional knowledge.[111] Several manuscripts found at Dunhuang, as Nugent suggests, were teacher-notes; they supplied much of this broader context.[112] Nugent sketches a situation where teachers would have students memorize the text first. Thereafter, the teacher would explain each sentence, supplying the broader historical and cultural context, and making literary allusions explicit.[113] Each sentence served as a substitute that could unlock that broader context. As Nugent says,

> (…) while the *Qianzi wen* text proper was clearly meant to be memorized, its true value was in serving as a series of mnemonic pegs on which to hang more important elements, namely the classical writings (ranging from poetry to historical anecdotes) and explanations found in the paratext (in the form of annotations).[114]

While it is not clear that this text was composed with this intention, scholiasts sometimes composed primers with this exact intention. I return to this genre below.

These two features of texts in memory-culture—its use of allusion as memory peg and the tendency to structure texts rigidly—do not just apply to texts in their written form. Indeed, as Carruthers shows, memory practice lay at the foundation of Classical and Medieval rhetoric. The memory-bank shared with the audience, allowed a speaker to cite texts rather freely; since the audience knew the reference, creatively re-phrasing the original was not seen as an incorrect citation, but appreciated as creative play.[115] One of the most basic pieces of advice for orators was to announce the structure of one's speech at the outset—implying also, of course, that one would follow that structure. Delivering a speech was done by reliance on one's memory. Composing a speech beforehand meant to order a sequence of topics for which one has material—ideas, structures, citations—ready at hand in memory. If this repeats what I said above about textual composition, this is exactly the point. Whatever the media of delivery and retention, a text was composed by invention in the mind based on memory. Thus, as Carruthers argues, the distinction between what we call "oral" and "written" texts is not relevant when speaking of medieval Europe, and I suggest that we at the very least keep this in mind as a possibility when speaking of scholiasts in other cultures, as they operate the assumptions of a memory-culture.[116] For such cultures, Carruthers argues, the oft-invoked distinction between oral and written "styles" does not apply; such differences between texts are due to different in genre-expectations and (intended) audience.[117] The ambiguous

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[111] Nugent 2018: 159-167.
[112] Nugent 2018; he discusses the Dunhuang texts on pp. 168-189. His suggestion that some of them were teacher notes is on pp. 180-181.
[113] Nugent 2018: 160.
[114] Nugent 2018: 160.
[115] Carruthers 2008: 115-116.
[116] Carruthers 2008: 34, 240.
[117] Carruthers 2008: 260. Her comments are worth quoting in full: "A great deal has been made of what is called the oral style of medieval sermons, and it's supposed differences from written style or authorial style. Oral style, in this theory, is characterized by repetition, verbal formulas, digressions, especially of a colloquial or informal kind, and parataxis above all. Written style, by contrast, is hypotactic and periodic in the Latin manner, marked by subordination and sub-divisions; it contains longer and more unusual words, is nonrepetitive, and self-consciously artful. This distinction has been raised in this century to the status of a truism in literary analysis, but, unlike many truisms, this one isn't true. It rests upon a genuine tautology, which causatively associates the stylistic features of a particular text whose compositional conditions are known with its method of composition;

boundary between the oral and written will return below when we consider the scholastic classroom and the genres of scholastic writing.

The Scholastic Classroom: Pedagogical Concerns

Maybe more than the chapel, temple, and meditation cushion as the context for scholastic reading, the most practical, and in many ways the most revealing, context in which we can understand much of the patterns is the classroom. This angle sheds light on a few of the same aspects discussed above and helps elucidate others. The most important ones in the context of this dissertation are those aspects of scholastic practice that explain the shape that scholastic texts take, such as the pedagogical context of scholastic texts and the role of debate and exchange.

Situating the exegetes in the classroom reminds us to have a broader perspective on the goals of commentary. When scholiasts are tasked with the transmission of scripture in a traditional context, this often means transmitting the tradition in the context of lecturing on scripture. Consider the purposes of lectures on the bible and its standard gloss in the Middle Ages as described by Smalley:

> The master is lecturing on the text and its Gloss; but this leads to questions which may be only slenderly connected with either. He is also giving his pupils a moral training, and preparing them for the task of preaching to clergy and people. He is fitting them both for their academic career and for the ecclesiastical dignities which may be in store when their studies are over.[118]

We can thus understand the act of lecturing on scripture as aimed to more than the transmission of only the reading of that scripture; reading the scripture is done *within* the aims of the tradition, including the institutional, the moral, and the contemplative. How different is this from modern consumerist reading habits, especially those of academic readers quickly skimming for *the* point of a text. Commentaries stemming from a classroom context baffle us as they seem to have no point. Rather, they have too many points, on too many different levels. Smalley, however, points to the benefits of this approach. Though she speaks specifically of Saint Gregory (540-604), her comments apply broadly.

> To us, this is a most annoying system. Everything in St. Gregory's teaching is attached, however loosely, to the thread of the text, which precludes any attempt at coherence or logical arrangement. But if we take a series of two or three homilies, or one of the thirty-five books of the *Moralia*, we can see how suitable it was for educational purposes. In two or three addresses, or hours of study, St. Gregory's hearers or readers would get a series of lessons on doctrine, prayer and ethics, in a well arranged and carefully varied time-table."[119]

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these features are then used to demonstrate that the text was composed in a particular way. What can we deduce from style alone about the methods by which a work was composed? Nothing at all. Medieval writers extended the classical canons of stylistic decorum by applying them not just to content and genre but to types of audience. Thus a sermon preached to the people would require a popular style in order to be understood, while one preached to a learned audience would require a more evidently formal, grand style. But medieval writers did not associate the levels of style with compositional methods."

[118] Smalley 1964: 213.

[119] Smalley 1964: 34.

This offers another way of seeing the use of texts that Carruthers framed as textualist: when scriptures function as spring-boards for all topics relevant, their words spring-boards in themselves, and are opened up for continuous interpretation and adaptation. Such use of text, then, is not only made possible by a textualist understanding; it also reinforces seeing the meaning of words as "implicit, hidden, polysemous, and complex," to repeat Carruthers once again.[120]

Leclerq echoes Smalley's points and suggests a hermeneutic implication of this usage of scripture, speaking specifically of Saint Gregory as well.

> His vast literary output may sometimes give the impression of being unorganized and overly diffuse; but, to be truly appreciated, his works must be understood and savored, a state perhaps rarely achieved in our times. They demand a certain leisure, the *otium* of which he so often spoke. Nevertheless, the rather unsystematic character of his writings has this one notable advantage—we can profitably read, beginning at any point and stopping where we will.[121]

Exegetes meander. They may seem, to us, to do so aimlessly, but really, it is with an overabundance of aims that they roam all over the map. There is, at every turn, something for students to learn. Each current of thought teaches a lesson. But in this non-linear context, these lessons are never comprehensive. Those savoring commentaries are thus constantly caught in the hermeneutic circle: we can only understand the part in relation to the whole, while understanding the whole depends on grasping the individual elements. As a student, one must enter everywhere at once. Borrowing from Cabezón, we might call this "the accordion-effect": scholiasts take pithy phrases and expand them almost ad infinitum; or they summarize an expansive text into the briefest précis.[122]

This makes scholastic commentaries the opposite of modern textbooks, which aim at once at clarity, conciseness, and comprehensiveness. It may seem that scholastic primers would fulfill the modern function of textbooks, but they do not. Their aim is conciseness; their clarity and comprehensiveness depend fully on the student's intimate familiarity with the big picture and its details. The function of primers is not to introduce students to a topic, but to offer an easy-to-memorize framework within which topics can be understood and consolidated. In fact, in some traditions, the foundational texts themselves function this way. Dreyfus describes how in the Tibetan scholastic tradition, monks memorize its very terse technical texts before they receive any instruction on their meaning. The nature of these treatises *de facto* precludes any understanding.[123] As Dreyfus points out, this aides in memorizing the text in the first place, and the absorption of the text's meaning when stduents subsequently attend courses on it.

Seeing commentaries as stemming from the classroom-context also suggests a complementary angle from which to think about this accordion-effect, namely the performative. In Classical and Medieval rhetoric, the orator was expected to have a vast

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[120] Carruthers 2008: 14. That this is how scripture functions quite naturally in the context of a tradition is shown by the fact that even the most fundamentalist protestant minister will be able to come up with a different sermon on the same text for different occasions.
[121] Leclercq 1982: 27.
[122] Cabezón (2020: 56). Maria Heim speaks in this regard of the waxing and waning of texts (2018: 71–73).
[123] Dreyfus 2003: 93-94.

memory-bank at his disposal and to have the outline of his speech in his mind.[124] He did not need to have every word thought out in advance; in fact, some warned against this.[125] Lists, themes, and formulaic descriptions—with which commentaries are teeming—served the scholastic lecturer in much the same way as musicians make use of motifs and themes when improvising. Or we might point to the analogy with bards in oral traditions. As Milman Parry and Albert Lord have documented, such bards compose their song simultaneously with its performance, aided by an arsenal of formulae and themes.[126] Having internalized the arc of the narrative or doctrinal argument, as well as having an array of lists and formulae at hand, the bard and lecturer can deliver a seamless performance, true to the tradition they represent and fresh for the ears they entertain. Lists, for the scholiast, were especially useful tools in their delivery: they could easily expand on any given point if they had the list at hand as a memory peg.

Parry and Lord, to my knowledge, have not commented specifically on the role of the audience's knowledge of these elements as they listen to epics. Indeed, as far as I can tell, this is an understudied aspect of oral literature.[127] Yet I suspect that this is a very important element if we wish to understand the nature of oral performances. Knowledge of the story seems a prerequisite for the understanding of any line as well as for enjoyment of the performance. I believe that a similar dynamic is at play in the scholastic classroom, as I also suggested above. It may, in effect, be more pronounced since it is, so to speak, the equivalent of a gathering of bards. In a scholastic context, the exegete will assume on the part of his audience, whether they hear or read him, that the briefest of allusions will evoke for them entire texts. The central role of memorization in the didactic context comes out well in Dreyfus' account of a typical classroom experience during his scholastic training in the Tibetan tradition:

> The entire session relied on memorization. Gen Pe-ma Gyel-tsen's explanations assumed that all the students had memorized the root text. In explaining that text word by word, he often entered long digressions that could last for several classes. At times he referred to other parts of the text, to passages from other texts, and to related or unrelated commentaries, which he quoted from memory. In this way, Gen-la's

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[124] Carruthers 2008: 30, 155, 253-255.

[125] Carruthers 2008: 255; cp. also p. 205.

[126] I am thinking here of their work on Yugoslavian bards and the Homeric epics in, e.g., *The Singer of Tales*, with its emphasis on the simultaneity of composition and performance (1981: e.g., p. 5 and chapter 2), and the importance of formulae and themes (chapters 3 and 4). In a context closer to ours, though less worked out, we find Gethin's discussion of the mātikās in early Buddhist literature as tools for preaching (1992: 149-150). Gethin even suggests thinking of the mātikās as flowcharts for preaching (ibib.: 156). For some critical notes and necessary context regarding the work of Parry and Lord, see Green (1990) and Saussy (2016).

[127] Lord mentions the audience's knowledge of context but a few times (1991: 69, 97). In speaking of an Indian tradition of oral performance, Claus comments that "there exists in the minds of the performance and audience a larger sense of the story framework from which the particular versions are drawn. Paradoxically, perhaps, this larger 'epic' never exists as a performance event" (1989: 36). Gethin, in discussing *mātikās* in early Buddhist literature, mentions in passing that these are useful tools not just for the speaker of a sermon, but also for the audience (1992: 150). Although again seemingly little discussed, the same dynamic is (obviously) at play in music appreciation. In Christopher Small's study of music(king), which I briefly discuss in Chapter 4, he mentions the necessity of pre-knowledge on the part of the audience in passing (1998: 216). In a technical article analyzing Robert Levin's resurrection of improvisation in classical music (on which, see Levin 2002), Rabinovitch discusses in some detail the role of the audience's expectations and previous understanding of (in this particular case) Mozart's style (2020: no pagination, see sections 1.2.6, 2.4.2-4, 2.4.6, 2.5.3-4).

> teachings created a web of oral explanations connecting a number of texts. Such explanations would have been difficult to follow had the listeners not memorized the relevant works. They would have been hard-pressed to instantly find the passages being discussed; even more important, the students would have found those explanations difficult to retain unless they could be organized in relation to the memorized texts.[128]

The scholiast thought in text and spoke in text, and sought to bring his students into that same tapestry. Making their way into that world, the students memorized texts and attended lectures where they heard passages explained, again and again in different ways and on different levels. Thus, they learned their tradition, not only did they absorb its knowledge, they also internalized its ways of thinking with texts.

Dreyfus' account of Gen Pe-ma Gyel-tsen's classes also bears on the organization of knowledge in scholastic contexts. Note how his "teachings created a web of oral explanations connecting a number of texts." Scripture is often to be understood in the plural—whether we speak of multiple sūtras or different books in the bible. Scholastic studies are structured by scripture; scholastic knowledge organized around scriptural texts (or sets of texts), unlike modern academic knowledge which is organized around abstractly defined fields of knowledge. "Fields of study," as Dreyfus puts it, are centered around "great books."[129] Along the same lines, Smalley notes:

> In the middle ages both teaching and original thinking centred in texts which had been handed down from an earlier period, whether it were an inspired text, the Bible, or a *corpus iuris*, or a classical author.[130]

One implication of this way of organizing knowledge is that giving a commentary on, say, the Psalms calls for different tropes, jargon and associations than when expounding the Book of Judgment. To specialize as a scholiast, then, means to have a high degree of mastery over a particular text (or set of texts) along with the hermeneutic moves, the tropes, the imagery, and the jargon traditionally associated with it. Since in principle scholiasts are conversant in most if not all of the great books of their tradition, they would, so to speak, "switch hats" between expounding different texts.[131]

The picture that emerges of the scholiast in action is one of a master who expounds on scripture, word by word and line by line; and who, in doing so, draws on memorized scripture and on commentaries with which he is intimately familiar, who echoes formulae and hermeneutic moves that he has heard from his teachers and other exegetes. Hereby, he creates a textual web around the (part of) scripture in question. Such exegesis may also be

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[128] Dreyfus 2003: 162.
[129] Dreyfus 2003: 91, 99-101.
[130] Smalley 1952: 52.
[131] As I was relating this to a friend with scholastic training in the Tibetan curriculum, he started gesturing putting on different hats—even before I had used that image. He related his experience studying with Geshe Tashi Tsering. The Geshe might have been teaching, say, the Abhidharma, but some student would jump ahead in the curriculum and start citing Madhyamika sources. To this, Geshe Tashi Tsering would respond with exactly the image of wearing different hats. My friend paraphrased him as saying, "When we study Abhidharma, put on your Abhidharma-hat. When we study Madhyamika, put on your Madhyamika hat." (Robert Miller, personal communication Jan. 19th, 2024.)

practiced as meditative rumination over the words of scripture in the privacy of his own monastic cell—though we should here avoid the modern locution "in the privacy of his own mind" since, as Carruthers puts it, his "head is constantly filled with a chorus of voices."[132] Yet, well outside of his cell, this "chorus of voices" was also a literal aspect of the scholastic life. Lectures were not simple top-down affairs. Students engaged their teachers during lectures. Scholastic masters crossed swords in public debates.

Disputation

Explication of scripture and its interpretative tradition, as Smalley put it, "leads to questions which may be only slenderly connected with either."[133] These questions arose not only from the various purposes the master may have had in instructing his students, but also from the students themselves. Smalley emphasizes that they were fully engaged in the classroom experience—they were active learners, to use the modern jargon.

> The difference in intellectual development between master and pupils was less marked than we are accustomed to, especially among the theologians, since the students had already spent years over the arts course and had perhaps taught as masters of arts before becoming students of theology. We must realize, too, the sense of election which united the small group of *litterati*, who had devoted themselves to the 'queen of sciences', as they gathered round the sacred page where all the secrets of this science were concealed. We must add the sense of responsibility which lay on the future prelates of Europe; for the schools were a path to preferment. We shall find Langton trying to sharpen their sense of responsibility, and warning them against pride.[134]

From this, Smalley notes, "it follows that the students were less passive listeners and reporters than those who attend modern university courses."[135] Exegetical lectures were often interactive, with students asking questions and disputing interpretations for the sake of clarity.[136] Such interaction, of course, need not only be with one's teacher but may also be with one's peers. Across many scholastic cultures, we find formalized disputation as a way of engaging scripture. In some traditions, debate has also become a separate, formalized activity. This is famously the case in Tibetan scholasticism, but also in Medieval Christianity, Islam, and Japanese Buddhism.[137]

The fact that debate is a central element in scholastic tradition reminds us once again that transmission of the scriptures is not merely the handing down of simple and straightforward truths; it is an initiation into a dance of dialectics and interpretation that teaches important intellectual tools. Dreyfus, while being clear that a given tradition will surely

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[132] Carruthers 2008: 202.
[133] Smalley 1964: 213.
[134] Smalley 1952: 208.
[135] Smalley 1952: 208.
[136] E.g. Smalley 1952: 209-210; McGinn 2014: 14.
[137] A good starting point for the Tibetan practice is Dreyfus (2003: esp. chapters 10, 11, 12). On *disputatio* as a practice separate from exegetical lectures in Medieval Christian and Islamic scholasticism, see, e.g., Smalley (1952: 210-211, 277) and Makdisi (1974: 647; 653, 658). On the Japanese case, to which I return briefly in the next chapter, see Sango 2012, 2015. See also Graham's brief comments on debate in early Christian monasticism (1987: 137-139) and Smith's comments on debate in Judaism (1993: 116).

impose limitations, emphasizes that across traditions debate opens up space for critical inquiry of the tradition.[138] "Truth," he says,

> cannot be imparted dogmatically but needs to be appropriated by each person individually. It cannot be captured immediately and certainly not in simple statements, but it must be understood through a process of inquiry that involves a certain open-endedness.[139]

Dreyfus recounts how in early stages of training, this freedom is not yet manifest. Instead, disputation at first is a highly structured practice. The student first needs to learn the correct use of words and concepts and the possible moves. In that early stage, the back and forth of question and answer resembles not free debate but catechism, wherein the right answer is a matter of fact. Building on this foundation, debate ensures students grasp the tradition's teachings both in memory and understanding; over time, it teaches them how to apply to these teachings the appropriate intellectual tools. One learns, for example, to formulate questions, to foresee consequences of different positions, and to cite prooftexts appropriately.

By equipping students with such tools, debate helps scholiasts to internalize and explore the tradition's great texts. However playful and competitive debate can become, this goal, serious and existential, lies at the foundation of scholastic debate.[140] In some cases, this is also true historically. While disputation became a separate and highly specialized activity in Medieval universities, the practice originally emerged in classes dedicated to expounding scripture.[141] The *quaestio*, inquiry into doctrinal matters suggested by the root-text, was "an exegetical instrument." [142] The process of specialization also brought a change in the conventions of commentaries. Whereas before the split, Biblical commentaries often consisted of both glosses and *quaestiones*, afterward the *quaestiones* came to form a separate genre.[143]

Scholastic Compositions

The above observations about scholiasts' lifeworld, including their intellectual formation and practice, bears directly on our reading of their literature. The classroom-setting is a prime context for scholastic writings. In a fundamental sense, the purpose and function of the scholastic texts is educational: they are aimed at transmitting and inculcating the highest level of sophistication the proper interpretation of scripture. More practically, the oral setting of the classroom is in the background of many scholastic texts, even if indirectly. Many commentaries were originally based on notes made in preparation for commentarial lectures by an exegete himself or by his students during or after lectures.[144] Just as giving line-by-line

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[138] Dreyfus 2003: 267-281.

[139] Dreyfus 2003: 278.

[140] Both of these elements are brought together when Dreyfus describes the attitude toward debate of some of the geshes with whom he studied: "These scholars, who have mastered the system, speak of an exhilarating sense of openness that debate makes possible for them as they use it as a mode of inquiry in studying the tradition's great texts" (2003: 268).

[141] Smalley 1952: 209-210; see also Dreyfus' convenient summary of this history (2003: 202-203).

[142] Smalley 1952: 74.

[143] Smalley 1952: 66-82.

[144] See, for Medieval Europe, Smalley (1952: 95, 98, 200-207, 266, 298); cp. also Leclercq (1982: 167-172, though he is concerned with sermons). Makdisi mentions that the practice of composing a text based on a master's

exegesis on scripture is the main activity of scholiasts, line-by-line commentaries are their foundational genre. Other text-forms emerge out of this. I discuss some of these genres below.

Several other genres emerge quite directly from the classroom as well. One genre closely related to full-fledged commentaries are the *scholia*, brief expositions on especially difficult passages.[145] Another genre closely related to scriptural exposition often makes up the first part of a commentary as a sort-of prologue. We might think of these as the meta-exposition of a given scripture. These may also circulate independently. Before starting to lecture on the text proper, commentators often give an overview of the main themes of a text. Peter Martens, speaking specifically of Antiochene scriptural commentary, notes that teachers would preface their detailed exposition of a text by giving an overview of its title, purpose, genre, and style.[146] This practice is certainly not limited to Antioch; Smalley is speaking of Biblical commentators working in the 12th and 13th centuries when she says, speaking as much of written as oral commentary:

> The commentator beings his explanation of each book by a prologue, where he explains its authorship, its date (so far as these are known to him), the causes of its composition, its matter and purpose.[147]

Or consider Alasdair Minnis, who says:

> A medieval lecture-course on an auctor usually began with an introductory discourse in which the text would be considered as a whole, and an outline provided of those literary and doctrinal principles and criteria supposed to be appropriate to it. When the series of lectures was written down by pupils, or prepared for publication by the teacher himself, the opening lecture became the prologue to the commentary on the text.[148]

And later:

> The literary analysis in academic prologues was conducted in an orderly fashion, each and every text being discussed under a series of headings. The most popular series of headings employed in twelfth-century commentaries on *auctores* was as follows: the title of the work, the name of the author, the intention of the author, the material or subject-matter of the work, its mode of literary procedure, its order or arrangement, its usefulness, and the branch of learning to which it belonged.[149]

Nor is this practice limited to Christian commentaries. In his manual for exegetes, the Indian Buddhist scholar Vasubandhu (d.u.; 4th-5th century) instructs that one starts a commentary with consideration of a text's purpose and its overall meaning.[150] A few hundred years later, the Tibetan scholiast Sakya Paṅḍita (1182-1251) echoes these suggestions in his tome on the

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lecture was practiced in the Arab world too (1974: 657). The oral background of many of the commentaries in the Chinese Buddhist tradition is well documented at this point; see the next chapter.

[145] Mentioned briefly by Smalley (1952: 27).

[146] Martens 2017: 52-53; cp. 43-47.

[147] Smalley 1952: 217.

[148] Minnis 1988: 2.

[149] Minnis 1988: 4. See also Smalley who lists who notes that the prologue commentary was to begin by discussing the authorship, date, causes, matter and purpose (1964: 216).

[150] Skilling 2000: 318; Nance 2013: 105-122.

nature of (Buddhist) scholarship.[151] Not only did such meta-exposition become part of commentaries, sometimes they led a life of their own. It is not hard to imagine that sometimes a lecture series would go no further than this prologue, or that such a high-level exposition might circulate independently. The subject of Martens' study, a commentary by Adrian (early fifth century), is exactly such a text.

Other texts retain less of the form of expositions given in the classroom. This is the case with much of the scholastic (in the narrow sense) writings of the late Middle Ages, especially such texts as *quaestiones* (questions and answers) and of *sentences* (lists of brief doctrinal statements). Yet, Smalley discusses how also the genres of *quaestiones* (questions and answers) and of *sentences* (lists of brief doctrinal statements) originated from scriptural exegesis.[152] She offers the following sketch of the origin of such theological texts attributed to Saint Anselm of Laon (? - 1117)

> all the teaching in theology at Laon consisted in lectures on *sacra pagina* [i.e., the Bible]. Discussion of questions concerning the Creation, angelology, the fall, would take place within the framework of lectures on the Hexaemeron, while most other doctrinal matters would arise naturally from the text of the Pauline Epistles. The sentence collections emanating from Laon represent a rearrangement and systematization of the masters' exegesis. It was the work of pupils and assistants, who collected, sorted, added and touched up.[153]

Such texts, in turn, could become the object of extensive study and commentary.[154] Since they were organized around specific doctrinal topics, rather than following the meandering of narrative flow found in many scriptures, they could serve as excellent resources, especially in preparation for disputation. In some traditions, scholiasts compose such texts specifically for their didactic use. In Tibetan scholastic education of the Gelug school, the *Collected Topics* introduce students to the basic terminology and structure of Buddhist thought and prepare them for debate.[155] In this regard, we may also consider the reasons Thomas Aquinas gives for composing his *Summa Theologiae*:

> We have considered that beginners (*novitios*) in this teaching have been much put off by what has been written by different authors; in part by the proliferation of useless questions, articles, and arguments; in part by the fact that what is necessary for them to know for this science is not set out according to the correct order of learning (*secundum ordinem disciplinae*), but by what is required for commenting on texts, or for what provides material for disputations; and finally in part because the frequent repetition of these matters causes boredom and confusion in the hearers.[156]

Aquinas not only reveals the didactic purpose of his "textbook," but also tells us that many, if not all, scholastic compositions of which he was aware were explicitly composed for the purpose of disputations. Aquinas' *Summa*, meanwhile, is structured along the lines of debate,

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[151] Gold (2007: Chapter 5, esp. p. 98 ff.).
[152] Smalley 1952: 66-82.
[153] Smalley 1952: 73; citing Dom Lottin for this "persuasive hypothesis" (Lottin 1947).
[154] See, e.g., Smalley 1952: 75.
[155] Dreyfus 2003: 112-113,138, 143, 221-224.
[156] McGinn 2014: 49.

proceeding by questions, objections, prooftexts, solutions, and answers to objections.[157] Moreover, it has become the subject of multiple commentaries, one of which is known to have come from teachings in a classroom-setting.[158]

To stay with Aquinas for a moment, McGinn divides his writings into three categories: commentaries, grand syntheses, and short disputations and treatises.[159] The second category, such as the *Summa* and his commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, synthesizes issues dealt with in the shorter disputations.[160] The second part of the third category, the treatises, consider specific topics and includes texts like his *On Being and Essence* and *On the Articles of the Faith and the Sacraments of the Church*.[161] Aquinas, of course, was not the only Medieval scholiast to take up doctrinal issues in separate compositions. And, in fact, we find similar texts throughout scholastic cultures. Though such texts treat their topics in some sense abstractly, taken out of their scriptural context, we can understand them as complementing commentaries. These treatises often lean heavily on scriptural citations. Moreover, by elucidating doctrines central to the tradition's scriptures, they aim to aid in the comprehension of those scriptures.

The Necessity of Comparison

Several different reasons motivate my attempt to put the Sui-Tang Buddhist scholiasts in this comparative framework. Importantly, doing so helps us direct our intuitions and suggests plausible extrapolations. In some areas, such as memorization and disputation, the Chinese scholiasts left us little to no explicit information on their practices. The evidence from these areas that does remain is but partial. This leaves us with little on which to base our interpretation. Uninterpreted, such data remains anomalous; interpreted based solely on our modern intuitions, it often becomes only more anomalous. In such cases, I suggest that, with appropriate caution, our understanding can be much enriched by drawing on what we know from other scholastic traditions.

Another major reason for sketching this comparative background is that it allows us to distinguish between global and local questions. Let me illustrate this point with two of the arguments made by Maria Heim in her monograph on the Pali commentator Buddhaghosa (5th century). She emphasizes that in his commentaries he presents not just, nor even primarily, propositional knowledge, but mostly aims to transmit interpretative skill.[162] While her point is well taken and her illustrations are useful, it should not come as a surprise. If we understand, as I would urge us to do, Buddhaghosa as a scholiast who is transmitting a tradition, this is exactly what we would expect—and it finds very direct parallels in other scholastic traditions. This applies also to her argument that Buddhaghosa again and again aims to show that the Buddha is omniscient.[163] The idea, however, that the scripture of one's tradition encompass everything knowable, that they represent an omniscient source, is virtually universal among commentators, as Henderson shows in his study of commentaries across religious

[157] McGinn 2014: 45-46.
[158] McGinn 2014: 2-3, 137 ff.
[159] McGinn 2014: 40-44.
[160] McGinn 2014: 41-43.
[161] McGinn 2014: 43.
[162] Heim 2018: 103-104.
[163] This is a theme throughout the book but figures especially in Chapter 1.

traditions.[164] Heim does note that this conception on the part of commentators has cross-cultural parallels, but from my perspective she fails to draw the important lesson from this observation.[165] That is to say, pointing out that Buddhaghosa treats the Pali Canon as representing an omniscient source tells us nothing special about him. And, if we wish to explain why Buddhaghosa presents the Buddha as omniscient, we should not look in the first place at his philosophy—or even contingent factors such as historical context—but why this is a universal assumption of scholiasts across traditions.

The situation here is analogous to a friend telling me that he has a dog that barks. This is not interesting—barking is simply what dogs do. Moreover, it does not stand it need of explanation: the explanation of how it has come to be that dogs, as a species, bark will explain all the relevant facets regarding my friend's dog. If my friend's dog barked in a very peculiar way, barks at odd moments, or does not bark at all, this would be interesting information; it would stand in need of a special explanation. The same applies to our study of commentaries and scholastic literature more broadly. Unless we approach the texts with an understanding of the assumptions and approaches natural to scholiasts, the questions we ask and answers we give lack proper context.[166] Accordingly, the aim of this dissertation is to provide the relevant context for the Sui-Tang exegetes, so that many of the aspects of their writings that strike modern readers as odd and in need of explanation, may come to make sense.

Chapter Overview

Having presented in this chapter a description of scholasticism, the rest of my dissertation argues that the Chinese Buddhist masters of the Sui and Tang dynasties fit the description. As I describe below, the four remaining chapters are organized primarily along these lines, describing the culture and the writings these masters within this framework. However, the more significant argument is that to when we understand the Chinese Buddhist scholiasts as such—as scholiasts—old problems resolve, and new ways of looking at their writings emerge. I explore some of these lines of thought at different points throughout the chapters; in some cases, they thread through multiple chapters. After I outline the chapters below, I briefly outline a few of these suggestions.

In Chapter 2 I sketch the lifeworld and activities of the Sui-Tang Buddhist scholiasts based on historical materials, such as prefaces and colophons as well as the representation of their lives in biographical texts. Synthesizing such materials, I paint a picture of the world in which scholiasts such as Chengguan studied scripture, lectured, practiced disputation, and composed commentaries and treatises.

While these materials reveal much about the life of the scholiasts, there is also much that they take for granted and simply do not articulate. Therefore, in the remaining chapters I look at the scholastic writings directly as a source for knowledge not about the thought of the scholiasts, but about their thinking—the conventions that governed the intellectual life of participants in the Sui-Tang scholastic culture.

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[164] Henderson 1991: 89 ff.

[165] Heim 2018: 15-17.

[166] While I take Heim's work as an example here, I see this problem in a fair amount the scholarship on Buddhist commentarial literature.

In Chapter 3, I present a broad survey of Chinese Buddhist scholastic literature. This reveals the shared assumptions and conventions of the scholiasts and allows us to reflect on their lecturing practices, hermeneutics and pedagogical methods, as well as the format of debates. In Chapter 4, by contrast, I offer a close reading a single passage of Chengguan's exegesis of the opening phrase of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, of any Buddhist sūtra in fact: *rushi wo wen* 如是我聞, "thus have I heard." Comparing his commentary to that of other Sui-Tang exegetes, we find that they all cite from the same pool of sources and discuss same issues. The picture that emerges from putting these texts side by side is that while these exegetes certainly had their preferences for certain texts and hermeneutical methods, at the end of the day, they were exegetes in conversation with other exegetes, sharing broadly similar assumptions, concerns, sources, and methods. This close reading also suggests that we can fruitfully think of such exegesis as an artform.

In Chapter 5 I argue that we can discern in the Sui-Tang scholastic world different fields of study: when commenting on different (sets of) scriptures, the scholiasts engaged different clusters of ideas, argumentative methods, and authoritative sources. Individual scholiasts, writing on one scripture or the other, would put on different hats, engaging in the discourse appropriate to the scripture at hand. Understanding their works in this way moves us beyond a simplistic focus on the author.

One of the main threads running through all these chapters is the understanding of the scholastic project as an educational endeavor. Throughout chapters 2 through 5, I consider the scholastic curriculum from different angles. What texts did the scholiasts study and assume their audience to know? In Chapter 4 and, to some extent in Chapter 3, we see that there was a broad base of texts studied and referenced by the scholiasts. In Chapter 5, however, the focus shifts and we see that this large base of scriptures was divided, as in other scholastic traditions, into different fields of study. While individual exegetes had mastered and would lecture on a wide variety of canonical texts, many of them were also known as specialists in one or more fields of study.

This ties in to several other threads are similarly connected to scholasticism's educational aspect. While the commentaries as we have them are literary documents, their composition was deeply entwined scholiasts' memorial culture as well as the oral delivery of exegesis. Above, I pointed to several effects that memory culture has on the shape of texts. In Chapter 2 I briefly treat the role of memorization in Sui-Tang Buddhism and make a few suggestions inspired by Carruther's study. I suggest, for example, that the Chinese Buddhist genre known as *kepan* 科判, elaborate outlines of scriptural texts, might reflect the making of divisions so essential for successful memory practice. In Chapter 3 especially, I pick up on the issue of textual division, discussing at length the organization of commentaries as well as the ways the commentators divided Buddhist scripture. Meanwhile, the intertextuality explored in Chapter 4 is also suggestive of memory practice, with commentators drawing from the same pool of textual pericopes and allusions, recycling the same set of tropes.

The oral background of commentarial literature also points us to the role of debate in Sui-Tang Buddhism. To date, this topic has received but little serious attention from modern scholars. Given the important place of debate in other scholastic cultures, however, I argue in Chapter 2 that the historical and literary sources from the Sui-Tang Buddhist scholastic world do suggest that debate was one of its central features. In the context of Chapter 2, I only aim to establish that this topic warrants our attention. I return to the topic in Chapters 3 and 4.

Another thread woven through several of the chapters is a different way of thinking about doxography ("dividing teachings;" *panjiao* 判教). I propose that we see the classifications and evaluations of different scriptures offered by the exegetes not so much as their abstract statements of truth, but as tools of thinking with texts—tools that other scholiasts in other cultures used as well. In my synopsis of Chengguan's commentary in Chapter 3, I discuss his use of different doxographical schemes at some length, comparing it with others' application of such schemes as well. I show that the Chinese Buddhist scholiasts often play with different classifications and present varying evaluations of texts based on context. This theme recurs in Chapters 4 and 5.

Chapter 2 — The Lives of Sui-Tang Scholiasts: A Sketch

Introduction

Like scholiasts in other cultures, the Sui-Tang Buddhist masters were occupied with the study of scripture; they memorized scripture; meditated on scripture; lectured on scripture; and disputed questions arising from their studies. These activities lie behind their writings—primarily commentaries and also treatises. These scholiasts were a subset of the male monastic community, although there were also nuns and some lay literati who participated in it. The monks especially, having mastered basic elements of their monastic training, traveled from monastery to monastery to study different scriptures with different masters. They would listen to their lectures, which often included disputations, at times quite lively. Their masters instructed them to them to recite and/or memorize texts or specific passages. Similarly, either under the instruction of these masters or at their own inclination, scholiasts-to-be would work through other texts on their own. The master-exegetes had mastered a wide variety of canonical texts and were able to lecture on any of them. At the same time, many of them specialized in particular fields of study. Such fields consisted of the study of a canonical text, such as the *Lotus Sūtra*, or a group of canonical texts, such as the Three Treatises (*san lun* 三論; three Madhyamaka texts).[167] Sometimes, the scholiasts' lectures made it into writing.

The basic facts of the above sketch are well accepted in the scholarly literature. But more important than the specifics is the way we bring them together. In this chapter, I synthesize what we know in a way that shows that much of what I said about scholastic cultures in Chapter 1 also applies to the Sui-Tang exegetes; that, with that comparison in mind, new light is shed on said exegetes. I tell this story, moreover, as necessary context for the study of the exegetes' writings. Those, after all, are the main subject of this dissertation. To understand them properly we need to know what kind of world they come from.

As I suggested in Chapter 1, one fruitful approach is to frame those writings as the products of a scholastic culture. The above sketch fits that framework well. The aim of this chapter is to work out many elements of this sketch. After two preliminary comments on my approach to the sources and on periodization, I first discuss the social standing of the scholiasts. Second, I consider some elements of the intellectual formation of young monks, pointing to the overlap between the devotional, contemplative, and scholarly. I also point to the role of memorization in their training. Many of these elements apply to Sui-Tang monastic formation in general. More specific to the formation of scholarly inclined monks, I describe how they travelled from master to master to study different scriptures, which we can understand as different fields of study. Third, I consider two further aspects of their culture: their lectures, demonstrating the oral background of the commentaries, and the practice of disputation.

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[167] Note that I use "canonical" here in a broad sense—that is, encompassing not only the scriptures that the tradition itself would term canonical in a strict sense, but also treatises and indigenous compositions that had become revered and authoritative objects of study. Sometimes they themselves became objects of commentaries. Zhanran, for example, authored a subcommentary on Zhiyi's *Great Calming and Contemplating* (*Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀; T1911), the *Great Calming and Contemplating: Completed to Transmit it Widely and Rectify [Misunderstandings]* (*Zhiguan fuxing chuan hong jue* 止觀輔行傳弘決; T1912).

Two Notes: Method & Periodization

Method: On Reading the *Biographies*

The main sources in this chapter are the *Biographies of Eminent Monks* by Huijiao, Daoxuan and Zanning. As John Kieschnick and others working such hagiographical materials have long pointed out, if these texts cannot be trusted on their historical details, they can nonetheless be used to help us understand the world from which they came.[168] Accordingly, whenever I cite vignettes below, I am not concerned with their point-by-point veracity. I am interested in the world they depict, in the sense they give us of the world of the learned Buddhist monks, of the conventions and norms ruling their lives.

Yet, my approach to the biographical collections also differs from Kieschnick's. One of his central methodological assumptions is that the biographies depict monastic ideals.[169] This assumption, as has been pointed out by Robert Campany and John McRae in their reviews of the book, is too simplistic.[170] The GSZ-compilers, and the sources on which they drew, not only filtered materials through their ideals of what a good monk ought to be—which they certainly did—but they balanced that with other aims and conventions, such as an aesthetic appreciation for witticism and playfulness, their special interest in the extraordinary, and, concomitantly, their abhorrence of wasting space recounting the obvious.[171] These motivations may overlap but may also work at cross-purposes. Consequently, absence of evidence may sometimes be symptomatic of widespread occurrence. In fact, given their appreciation for the unique, the biographers do not always depict the normative ideals of the tradition. In order to form a picture of the lives of the exegetes, we have to weigh their depictions against such considerations.

Periodization

Finally, a note is in order regarding the time period under consideration. I have been speaking of "Sui-Tang" scholasticism. However, some of the material from which I draw predates the Sui. Indeed, much of my sketch also applies to the preceding period and I consider them contiguous. By the Sui dynasty, however, the tradition reached a distinctive degree of maturity with the three great exegetes Huiyuan 慧遠 (523-592), Zhiyi 智顗 (538-597), and Jizang 吉藏 (549–624); genre conventions, accepted sources, and institutional support stabilized.[172] After the Tang, too, many of the same elements persist. However, there

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[168] Kieschnick 1997: 3-4.

[169] Ibid.

[170] E.g. Campany (2001: 656-657), McRae (2004: 127). Note that the latter cites correspondence with Kieschnick, who cedes this point of criticism.

[171] For a discussion of the sources used by the compiles of the biographies and their influence on the contents, see Shinohara (1988: esp. 8-9, 18-19).

[172] Much of this remains to be worked out further. The one area where we can be most confident is the stabilization of the commentarial genres (e.g., Kanno 2002; Kanno & Felbur 2015). Zürcher also notes that the Buddhist monastic community in China reaches a degree of intellectual sophistication starting in the sixth century and continuing through the Tang dynasty. He notes two important and related reasons for this. On the one hand, more and more members from the elite joined the monastic order; on the other, the government involved itself with the educational level of the Saṅgha, creating a baseline of literacy and an expectation of scholastic achievement (1989: 23-28). Note that I use the word "maturity" here without implying either strict necessity nor an evaluation; rather, I intend it in similar to how we distinguish between a young forest and a mature forest. Things did not need to develop exactly the way they did, but the way they turned out is the result of a period of development. Note in this regard the opinion of the tenth century Buddhist historian Zanning. He describes the

are also some marked differences, such as the crystallization of the various schools. Accounting for these shifts lies beyond the scope of this current project, though we can suspect that they had to do with major disruptions in the institutional support of Buddhism.[173] This periodization also correlates with the period in which, as Antonello Palumbo has recently argued, we should study Chinese Buddhism as a translocal, cosmopolitan phenomenon.[174]

Who Were the Scholiasts?

In the biographical compilations, the figures with whom we are concerned here are primarily those categorized as "exegetes" (*yijie* 義解). This is where Zanning places such masters as Fazang 法藏 (643-712), Wŏnhyo 元曉 (617-686), and Chengguan, as well as Kuiji 窺基 (632-686) and Wŏnch'ŭk 圓測 (613-696). We could indeed say that the tradition itself recognized something like what I am referring to here as "scholasticism." While I believe that this is true, and in itself an argument to look at the Sui-Tang masters in the manner I am suggesting, there are a few important caveats.

The first caveat is that we do well to remember that the categorization in the biographies, as categorizations are wont to, has an arbitrary component.[175] For example, while Chengguan is listed as an exegete, this does not mean that he had no experience in the practice of Chan, for example. As we see below, his biographies record that he studied with two different meditation masters. More to the point, Xuanzang, listed quite appropriately as a "translator" (*yijing* 譯經), engaged also in exactly those activities defining the scholiasts.[176] Translators in general seem to have functioned as much as exegetes as translators, as Mou Runsong has pointed out, using Paramārtha as his example.[177] Conversely, many of the "exegetes" fulfilled roles in translation projects, as I discuss below. Moreover, among the "practitioners of meditation" (*xichan* 習禪) in Daoxuan's XGSZ, we find Zhiyi, one of the Sui-dynasty's most prolific authors of commentarial texts. Besides illustrating the way in which the Sui-Tang masters' lives were entwined socially, such cases also point to an effect of the biographies' categorization: a monk's activities and interest may have been various, but the placing of his biography in this or that category will force the biographer to select for elements in his life that fit the respective categorization. Thus, while I will indeed draw mostly from the "exegetes" section, not all those whom we can describe as scholiasts are listed in that section.

Another way of making this point is to say that the scholastic activities were not exclusive to those listed as exegetes in the biographical collections. In fact, I believe that the approach to the study and transmission of Buddhist scripture of the scholiasts is the tip of the iceberg

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genre of full-fledged commentaries as contiguous with that of the earlier line-by-line commentaries and takes the monk Dao'an 道安 (312/314–385) as the earliest author in the latter genre and hence the earliest Chinese Buddhist commentator (chapter 17 in T2126; transl. in Welter 2018: 227-230). Eric Greene offers a fascinating look into the earliest phase of Chinese commentaries in his reading of a manuscript likely dating from the third or fourth century CE (Greene 2022).

[173] These disruptions may have already begun in the late Tang, with the suppression of Buddhism during the Huichang 會昌 era (841-846).

[174] Palumbo 2022: 359 ff.

[175] Cp. Kieschnick 1997: 8-9, 14; Wagner 1995: 80.

[176] See, e.g., T50, no. 2053, p. 260a22-23.

[177] Mou 1960: 18-21; cp. Tso (1973).

of the Sui-Tang Buddhist educational enterprise. As Erik Zürcher notes in his discussion of Sui-Tang Buddhist education:

> The highest level of this type of education was the domain of the tiny top of the clerical pyramid: the magistri, well-versed in Buddhist scriptural and scholastic literature. But also at a lower level the average monk had to possess a certain degree of literary skill. He had to memorize a considerable amount of text in order to be admitted into the saṅgha, and some of his daily activities required a degree of literacy no doubt far above that of the average layman."[178]

In other words, the difference between the average monk and the scholiasts at the top of the pyramid, to use Zürcher's image, is one of degree. The scholiasts were the intellectual elite of the Sui-Tang Buddhist Saṅgha similar to how concert-pianists are elite musicians: their training is not fundamentally different from amateur pianists; they have merely taken the same exercises and principles to a higher level of perfection. Likewise, while the great scholiasts were especially accomplished in their studies, we should most likely understand their studies as an extension of the basic curriculum in the Buddhist monastic order.

This pyramid, the Buddhist monastic order, included both monks and nuns. While it is certainly the case that the top of the clerical pyramid consisted of male monastics, that they left us most if not all of the commentarial writing, and that more records of their lives have come down to us, nuns too pursued Buddhist higher learning; in fact, some were remembered and respected as lecturers in their own right. Besides the SGSZ, Zanning wrote a work on the history of Buddhism in China, from its arrival until his own time, the *Topical History of Buddhism in China.*[179] Following his entry describing Zhu Shixing 朱士行 (third century) as the first monk to lecture on sūtras, we find a discussion of the nun Daoxin 道馨 (fourth century) as the first nun to lecture on sūtras in China in 368.[180] Zanning's entry echoes her biography recorded in the *Biographies of Eminent Nuns* compiled by Baochang 寶唱 (5th-6th century), where we are told that she had

> refined skill in pure conversation (*qingtan* 清談), especially regarding the *Shorter Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* (*Xiaopin* 小品). Her excellence lay in comprehending principles, not in laboring to speak eloquently. All those in the province (*zhou* 州) who studied the way took her as their master. She was the beginning of nuns lecturing on sūtras.[181]

As both Baochang and Zanning imply, Daoxin was certainly not the last nun to be respected as an exegete. This is confirmed in the biographies of some other nuns. For example, the *Biographies of Eminent Nuns* also contains an entry on Huihui 惠/慧暉(442-514/515), where we are told that she "studied [lit. listened*; ting* 聽] to the *Śāstra Establishing the Real* (*Chengshi lun* 成實論; *Tattvasiddhiśāstra*) as well as various sūtras such as the *Nirvāṅa Sūtra*"

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[178] 1989: 28.

[179] Lit. "The Great Song Topical History of the Sangha;" *Da Song sengshi lüe* 大宋僧史略 (T. 2126); see Welter 2018.

[180] T54, no. 2126, p. 239, b14-18; transl. in Welter 2018: 225-226.

[181] *Biquini zhuan* 比丘尼傳, T. 2063. 「雅能清談尤善小品。貴在理通不事辭辯。一州道學所共師宗。比丘尼[X]講經馨其始也。」 (T50, no. 2063, p. 936, b2-4). (The Taishō records a variant reading for *jiang* 講 as *song* 誦, which I ignore because it is clearly an inferior reading.)

and that "she lectured without respite, and meditated and recited unceasingly."[182] Yet, even if nuns were active in the scholastic world, given that our evidence primarily speaks about the monks, I will speak primarily with them in mind.

Many of these monks at least, I believe we must assume, lived in so-called national monasteries (*guo si* 國寺). Kenneth Ch'en describes these as follows.

> The national monasteries were accorded preeminent status in their respective communities; inhabited by highly educated monks, the elite in the monastic community; and they were supported by funds from the imperial treasury. We might say that the monks in these national monasteries were treated like members of the civil bureaucracy in having all their needs supplied by the state; they had no need to depend upon alms from ordinary laity for sustenance.[183]

These monasteries were located all over the empire.[184] This institution likely provided much of the backbone for Buddhist scholasticism to develop and sustain over multiple generations during the Tang.[185]

The members of the court and aristocracy went beyond financial support in their involvement with the Buddhist scholastic enterprise and participated in many of the same activities as the monastic "magistri." Many emperors supported Buddhist scholiasts and studied with them. At least according to some sources, Emperor Wu 武 (464-549) of the Liang dynasty 梁 (502-557) participated more actively, lecturing on sūtras and authoring a commentary.[186] As we will see in Chapter 4, some of his exegesis was remembered and transmitted. Members of the broader educated elite might lecture on Buddhist texts as well. Thomas Lee describes the aristocrat Ma Shu (522-581), who drew large audiences for his lectures on the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, the *Daode jing* and the *Yi jing*, as a "typical sixth century scholar."[187] More generally, members of the educated elite had the chance to interact with learned monks, use their libraries, and attend lectures and disputations because Buddhist monasteries often functioned as hostels for aristocrats studying for the exam or traveling through the empire.[188]

In the context of Chengguan's commentaries on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, two lay scholars stand out. The first is of Liu Qianzhi 劉謙之 (5th century). Both Fazang and Chengguan tell the story of this eunuch who accompanied one of the emperor's sons to the Wutai

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[182] 「聽成實論及涅槃諸經。(…) 講說不休禪誦無[43]輟。」(T50, no. 2063, p. 947, c9-11).

[183] 1976: 212

[184] Ibid.

[185] Indeed, the disbanding of these institutions toward the end of the Tang is likely a main cause in the decline of Sui-Tang Buddhist scholasticism.

[186] In the *Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs* (*Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀; completed in 1269) Zhipan 志磐 (1220–1275) reports that "Emperor Wu of the Liang lectured on a sūtra in the Zhonyun Palace with Śramaṅa Fabiao as the discussant."「梁武帝。重雲殿講經。沙門法彪為都講」(T49, no. 2035, p. 450, c10). Daocheng 道誠 (d.u.) gives the same report in his *Buddhist Lexicon* (*Shishi yaolan* 釋氏要覽; completed 1019) by Daocheng at T54, no. 2127, p. 295, b15. In his *Treatise Refuting Error* (*Poxie lun* 破邪論; completed in 626), Falin 法琳 (572-640) at some point lists a commentary by Emperor Wu on the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* in fifty fascicles (T52, no. 2109, p. 485, b22).

[187] 2000: 372.

[188] Ch'en 1976: 214 ff., 219; Lee 2000: 76, 376-377, 414.

mountains at some point during the Taihe 太和 era (477-499). Inspired by the devotion shown by the emperor's son in his search for a vision of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, and troubled by his own castration, he requested the court's permission to retreat into the mountains so as to engage in self-cultivation. After a period of arduous practice that included a twenty-one day fast, Liu Qianzhi, with his male member regrowing and a beard suddenly starting to appear, experienced a profound spiritual awakening. Thereupon, he proceeded to write a treatise on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* in six-hundred fascicles.[189] Though Fazang and Chengguan mention it as an important commentary in the history of the study of that sūtra, the text is, unfortunately, no longer extant. The other important lay figure in the history of exegesis on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* was Li Tongxuan 李通玄 (646-740), a contemporary of Fazang. His *Treatise on the Newly [Translated] Avataṃsaka Sūtra* is still extant.[190] We will look at one of his other texts in Chapter 3.

Buddhist writings from the hand of the important eighth century intellectual Liang Su 梁肅 (753-793) also still remain. Like two of his elders, Li Hua 李華 (ca.710-ca.767), Dugu Ji 獨孤及 (725-777), he was closely connected with Zhanran; Liang Su was also a disciple of Zhanran's student Yuan Hao 元浩 (d. ca. 817).[191] Especially significant among Liang Su's Buddhist writings are two works related to Zhiyi's *Great Calming and Contemplating*:[192] his *Overview of the Calming and Contemplating by [the Master from] Tiantai* introduces and summarizes the text in a refined literary style;[193] and his *Abridged Calming and Contemplating* condenses Zhiyi's ten volume text into three volumes.[194]

The existence of such lay Buddhist scholars complicates the claim that the top of the pyramid of Buddhist learning in Tang China consisted merely of monks. Lay literati participated in the Buddhist scholastic world too. However, in the present context I am focusing only on the monastic scholiasts. For the monks, to repeat a point made above, Buddhist scholastic learning was an extension of their vocation, a further perfection of the training that shaped had their lives from a young age. As far as we can tell from the biographies, monks in the Tang tended to ordain and hence start their Buddhist formation in their early teens. During those years, the literati had been busy memorizing classics and studying their interpretations. Both groups were highly literate and had highly trained memories containing a large range of texts and interpretative moves, but in a world prior to public education, their accumulated knowledge was very different. Thus, when literati draw upon ideas and hermeneutic moves from the Buddhist intellectual repertoire, the background against which we are to interpret this is generally to be different than if it were a Buddhist monk. In cases such as that of Li Tongxuan where a literatus shows remarkable fluency in the Buddhist discourse of his day, we must realize that this was, intellectually, quite a feat, one that marked him socially in one way

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[189] I am paraphrasing Chengguan's retelling of the story in his *Subcommentary* at T36, no. 1736, p. 114, b11-20. Fazang recounts it in his *Records of Miracles associated with the Avataṃsaka Sūtra* at T51, no. 2074, p. 177, c14-20.

[190] *Xin Huayan jing lun* 新華嚴經論; T.1739. See Gimello (1983) and Koh (2011). Li's dates are somewhat uncertain; I follow Koh's calculations (2011: 11).

[191] For these three thinkers and their Buddhist connections, both in socially and intellectually, see Tien 2009, esp. his biographical sketches of in chapter 2.

[192] *Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀; T1911.

[193] *Tiantai zhiguan tonglie* 天台止觀統例; found at T46, no. 1915, p. 473, c22 ff.

[194] *Shanding zhiguan* 刪定止觀; X55, no. 915, p. 690, b01.

or another as a figure in the margins.[195] Before, or least besides, an investigation of the intellectual affinities between the monastic and lay participants in Buddhist higher learning, we need to understand their respective formations, the strictures upon their encounters and engagements, their roles and the rules governing those roles. In this context, I am interested not in describing the confluences at the periphery of these different worlds, important and significant though they may be, but in the contours of the Buddhist scholastic world proper: that of the monks, and nuns, who carried the transmission of Buddhist higher learning.

Still, in describing that world we must deal with the connection with the "secular" elite in another sense: their social relations and support.[196] Above I already mentioned the importance of the national monasteries. Beyond that, the general pattern in the biographies indicates the importance of their relations with members of the court and other elite figures, though I do not want to pronounce it a universal characteristic of all Sui-Tang Buddhist scholiasts given the limitations of the evidence. We often find descriptions of close relationships with emperors and officials. In Chengguan's biography, for example, we read of his connections with the court as well as over a dozen members of the ruling class.[197]

In many ways, these elite figures facilitated the scholarly productions of the Buddhist monks. Quite concretely, their own interest in Buddhist doctrine led them to ask the monks for explanations, both orally and textually. In Chengguan's biography, we learn that quite a few of his shorter writings were composed specifically at the behest of a literatus: "minister of state Qi requested him to compose the *Synopsis of the Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (one fascicle), the *The Dharma Realm's Profound Mirror* (one fascicle), the *Contemplating the Interpenetration of the Three Sages* (one fascicle)."[198] Three other short texts were composed at the request of a crown prince: "when Shunzong 順宗 resided at the Spring Palace (i.e. was the crown prince), he once gave [Chengguan] instructions to compose the Ultimate Meaning (one fascicle), the *Essentials of the Mind* (one fascicle), and the *Dynamics of the Offenses Incurred by Eating Meat*."[199]

Lecture-series were also often sponsored by officials and/or the court. Again in Chengguan's biography, we read that while his original commentary on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*

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[195] Note the difference between a "figure on the margins" rather than a "marginal figure." Li Tongxuan's significance is partly derived from the fact that he moved between worlds.

[196] I mean "secular" here from the Buddhist perspective—i.e. "worldly." On their own terms, the premodern Chinese educated elite was of course not secular in the modern sense but deeply religious—that is, occupied with the binding (religio) of society with time-honored and transcendent principles.

[197] E.g., T50, no. 2061, p. 737c1-6 (transl. in Hamar 2002: 81).

[198] 「允齊相請述華嚴經綱要一卷。法界玄鑑一卷。三聖圓融觀一卷。」(T50, no. 2061, p. 737, c9-10); cf. Hamar 2002: 81. Note that my reading varies from Hamar's in that I do not take the next phrase—a list of sūtras upon which Chengguan wrote commentaries—as part of this sentence. While no clear break is indicated in Zanning's Chinese, it seems preferable to read that phrase as a separate pronouncement of his voluminous writing output in general. The three texts mentioned here are all extant—X240, T1883, and T1882, respectively. (The received edition for the second has *jing* 鏡 instead of *jian* 鑑 in the title.)

[199] 「順宗在春宮嘗垂教令述了義一卷心要一卷并食肉得罪因緣。」(T50, no. 2061, p. 737, b28-c1). Only the second of these three texts is extant. In the *Jingde Era Records of the Transmission of the Lamp* (*Jingde Chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄) the text is called the *Essential Points of the Mind—In Response to the Crown Prince's Question* (*Da huangtaizi wen xinyao* 答皇太子問心要). The text is also preserved with Zongmi's commentary. That version is titled *The Dharma Method of the Mind's Essentials in Response to Shunzong* (*Da shunzong xin yaofamen* 答順宗心要法門; X58, no. 1005, p. 426, a6-c12).

was delivered and written at the request of the abbot at his monastery, a few years later, "the military governor of Hedong, Li Ziliang, invited him to preach it again at the Chongfu monastery."[200] Similarly, we know that that Empress Wu Zetian 武則天 (624-705; r. 690-705) convened a large public lecture series on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* with Fazang as the lecturer.[201]

This last example also points to the material element of the support from the court and the elite for the scholastic culture. Whatever other functions this opulent lecture series may have fulfilled for the Empress, it certainly served as a material support for the Buddhist scholiasts. Though I know of no evidence that would provide us with a detailed picture, we have to assume that such support from the aristocracy was crucial for the monastic institutions where Buddhist higher learning thrived, including their libraries;[202] that it was necessary for at least some scholiasts to entertain relations with the elite for the sake of the scholastic enterprise, if not for the sake of the Saṅgha as a whole.

As I said above, however, I think we should be clear about the limitations of the evidence regarding the connections between scholiasts and the educated elite. It remains hard to say whether this was a universal characteristic of the scholiasts. Indeed, it seems at least likely that some scholiasts were inclined toward a more reclusive life and managed to stay away from involvement with the aristocracy. It is certainly true that some of the biographical materials do not mention any involvement with the educated elite on the part of learned monks. And yet, we cannot simply take such absence of evidence as evidence of absence. After all, the genre of the biographies dictates a terse and formulaic writing style that eschews repetition of facts taken to be obvious. Many of the biographies that do not mention interaction with elite figures may simply be taking for granted that the monk in question was expounding scriptures and writing tracts at the behest of the court and aristocrats. On the other hand yet again, the biographies might also be presenting a slanted picture. After all, when Zanning, for example, is composing biographies of monks during the Tang, he is relying on whatever material survived.[203] Especially biographical notes and information would have been most easily available in the case of monks who had been well-connected. For them, literati would have written epigraphs and transmitted biographical knowledge. Writings by well-connected monks would have been more likely to remain in circulation. As such, the most we can really say given the nature of the evidence is that there was clearly a *pattern* of engagement with elite individuals and that we have to assume that this fulfilled important functions for the flourishing of the Sui-Tang Buddhist scholastic culture, even if there may have been individual scholiasts who did not entertain such relations.[204]

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[200] 「河東節度使李公自良。復請於崇福寺講。」(T50, no. 2061, p. 737, b13-14); cf. Hamar 2002: 80.

[201] Chen 2007: 244-245.

[202] We have specific evidence of literati donating books to Buddhist monasteries. See, e.g., Ch'en 1976: 218; Lee 2000: 376; Wagner 1995: 19-20.

[203] The availability of information could often, in fact, be quite scant even in the case of monks whom we might expect to have been well known. See Forte's comments on Zanning's biography of Fazang (2000: 16). Consider also the case of Tankuang 曇曠 (c. 700-c. 788)—on whom, see Pachow 1979. For this prolific scholar no information is transmitted in any of the biographical collections (Pachow 1979: 17). All that we know of him comes from manuscript evidence from the Dunhuang libraries, including a preface where he comments briefly on his life (T85, no. 2812, p. 1068a15-17; translated below, but see also Pachow 1979: 18).

[204] An interesting avenue for future research would be to see whether biographies of monks in different categories differ in their emphasis on connections with the secular elite. As a hypothesis, I would expect that

Similar considerations apply to a final question regarding the social standing of the scholiasts: their family backgrounds. We might be tempted to assume that the scholiasts came from families of high pedigree. Zürcher seems to suggest as much in his article on Buddhist education when he says that the increase in the Saṅgha's educational level was correlated with the number of monks who came from elite backgrounds.[205] We should note however, and Zürcher is certainly not naïve in this regard, that the lines of influence here are not clear. While to some extent increase in the Saṅgha's learning may stem from higher numbers of monks from elite backgrounds, the increase in learning may also have been responsible for the fact that more young boys of elite background found their way into the Buddhist monastic order. It is, moreover, not clear how to interpret the evidence from the biographical materials in this regard. In the case of Zanning's SGSZ, we are presented with lengthy descriptions of aristocratic backgrounds of a number of monks, such as Kuiji 窺基 and Zhixuan 知玄.[206] Entries like these leave the impression that Zanning took special interest in emphasizing the elite background of monks whenever he could. As such, I suspect that in the many cases where we are told little to nothing about such background, there was not much to tell. Indeed, in many other entries, Zanning says of the monk's family and origin that he "still lacks details regarding his background."[207] In some cases we learn but a little more. For Chengguan, all that we are told is that his family name was Xiahou 夏侯 and that he was from Shanyin 山陰 in the Yue 越 district.[208] One might say that surely the accomplished scholiasts must have benefitted from elite education when they were younger. However, the age at which boys ordained was around the same age that they would have started their secular studies. Chengguan, for example, ordained at eleven years old.[209]

The Intellectual Formation of Young Scholiasts

These considerations lead us quite naturally to the issue of education. This topic, as we shall see, implies elements of the much broader monastic formation, though I will not endeavor to provide a full treatment thereof. In terms of intellectual formation, we can safely say that all young monks underwent some degree of education, attaining at least the basic literacy required for liturgical performance, and, most probably, attended lectures on scriptures and spent time on their own in studies.[210] Some biographies give us glimpses of the world of the young monk. I will here draw on one of those, Daoxuan's biography of Faxi 法喜 (572-632), to look at the basic elements on monastic education. Note that Faxi was remembered not as an exegete but as a meditation master. A short passage in his biography describes his life as a young monk, applying himself to his studies in between his menial duties in the monastery.

> He personally was the altar-servant. At day, he would cook with firewood. At night, he would recite sūtras. Since at the mountain dwelling there were no torches, he would burn firewood for light. Every evening, he would study and recite a single page by

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such connections are more important in biographies of exegetes and translators than in those of, for example, miracle workers.

[205] Zürcher 1989: 23-26.

[206] See, respectively, T50, no. 2061, p. 725b17 ff., and T50, no. 2061, p. 743b4.

[207] 「未詳何許人也。」, e.g. T50n2061_p0734a12.

[208] T50, no. 2061, p. 737a5. Cp. Hamar 2002: 77.

[209] Ibid.

[210] Zürcher 1989: 20.

himself. Passing the time like this, he thoroughly understood whatever he put his mind to. Although he studied widely in the categories of sūtras, he was partial to the *Lotus Sūtra* as his principal guide [宗]. He would often use the rest periods for meals to also recite a scroll. Otherwise, he focused on the practice of dhyāna, tying up his mind in front of him. Only when his mind would get hazy would he review. [211]

This passage points us to several themes. We first note that the point of this vignette about Faxi's studies is to emphasize his dedication and resourcefulness in the face of his duties as a young monk. That the newly ordained had such tasks is also implied in Chengguan's biography. There, however, we learn that "because Chengguan was exceptionally bright and outstanding, he was exempted from the duress of minor duties."[212] In some cases, apparently, teachers were on the lookout for young talent and would grant exceptions to standard expectations.

The passage about Faxi also illustrates an area where Chinese Buddhist practice overlaps with other scholastic cultures: the convergence of devotional practice and intellectual engagement with texts. We are told that Faxi made his way through texts by "reciting" (*songxi* 誦習) them—in other words, he would read the texts out loud sequentially. The *Eminent Monk* collections all contain a section for monks who specialized in reciting. Their biographies generally focus on stories of miracles that occurred in response to their recitation. However, as I pointed out earlier, we should not be dogmatic about the categorizations of the biographies. While reciting certainly is primarily a liturgical practice, it was certainly understood to have an intellectual component as well. In a note in-between entries in the section on recitation-specialists, Zanning comments more generally that "in reciting sūtras, what is valued is not quantity; rather, spiritual understanding is of the essence."[213] Indeed, in the description of Faxi's practice, it is clear that recitation led to understanding and that it was closely connected with study.

Another general characteristic of Sui-Buddhism that comes to the fore in the above passage is the broad range of monks' studies. Their education, especially that of the scholiasts, was broad, covering a wide range of different scriptures. As I suggested in Chapter 1, it is useful to think of these scriptures, or sets of them, as constituting different "fields of study." Monks were educated in many such fields, though they often had preferences for some specific text or set of texts, such as Faxi's preference for the *Lotus Sūtra*.

What Faxi's intellectual formation, which in Daoxuan's telling seems to have mostly self-directed, does not illustrate, is how the different fields of study structured scholastic education. Especially monks who were to specialize in exegesis often spent some years travelling between monastic centers to study scriptures under different masters. As Zürcher notes,

In the last phase of the novitiate, or shortly after full ordination, many monks (at least the "eminent" ones of whom we have biographies) enter a period of itinerant travel and study—a way of advanced training and deepening of knowledge and experience

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[211]「親所供奉。晝則炊煮薪蒸。夜便誦習經典。山居無炬。燃柴取明。每夕自課誦通一紙。如是累時。所緣通利。雖學諸經部類。而偏以法華為宗。常假食息中間兼誦一卷。餘則專以禪業繫念在前。纔有惛心便又溫故。」(T50, no. 2060, p. 587a28-b4).

[212]「觀俊朗高逸，弗可以細務拘。」(T50, no. 2061, p. 737a7-8). Cp. Hamar 2002: 77.

[213]「誦經不貴多，要在神解。」(T50, no. 2061, p. 863b3).

that curiously resembles the *Wanderleben* of medieval students in Western Europe."[214]

This was also common practice among the secular Chinese intellectuals at that time.[215] It is captured well by a pithy phrase in the biography of the exegete Xuanyue (n.d.; Tang-dynasty) which tells us that "he searched far and wide for teachers [or "knowledge" *zhishi* 知識] and investigated the profound texts."[216]Many other biographies of exegetes are more extensive in this regard, detailing the itinerary, the masters under whom they studied, and which texts those masters taught. In Chengguan's biography, right after we read that he was released from menial duties because of his talent, we read:

> Thereupon he visited famous mountains everywhere in pursuit of the secret storehouse. Equipped with his climber's gear, he was certain to reach the subtle mystery. In the Qianyuan period (758-760), he studied the vinaya according to the Xiangbu tradition under vinaya master Li 醴 (d.u.) at the Crimson Cloud Abiding Monastery in Runzhou. In Benzhou he studied the vinaya according to the Nanshan tradition under Tanyi 曇一 (d.u.). He visited Jinglin where master Xuanbi 玄璧 (d.u.) taught him the *Three Treatises* according to the Guanhe [masters].[217] That the study of the *Three Treatises* flourished in Jiangbiao was Chengguan's influence.[218] In the Dali period (766-779), he was taught the *Awakening of Faith* and the *Nirvāṅa Sūtra* at Tile Coffin Monastery. Further, at Fazang monastery in Huainan he learned the points of Wŏnhyo's *Commentary on the Awakening of Faith*, and he also got thoroughly acquainted with the great sūtra, the *Avataṃsaka*, under Fashen 法詵 (718-778) of the India Monastery (*Tianzhu si* 天竺寺). In the seventh year (i.e., 772), he went to Shanxi where he revisited his investigation of the Three Treatises under Dharma master Huiliang 慧量 (d.u.) of Chengdu. In the tenth year (i.e., 775) he went to Suzhou where he studied Master Zhiyi's *Calming and Contemplating* and his commentaries on sūtras such as the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* under Dharma master Zhanran 湛然 (711-782). (…)[219] He also visited master Zhong 忠 (= Huizhong 慧忠?; 675-775) at

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[214] 1989: 35-36: note 63. Cp. Kieschnick 1997: 121.

[215] See Lee 2000: 13, 55-57, 369, 369-370.

[216] 「遍求知識，探賾玄文。」(T50, no. 2061, p. 746a25-26).

[217] References to the *Guanhe Sanlun* 關河三論, the *Three Treatises [according to] Guanhe*, are scant. We find references in texts by Jizang. He refers, for example, to "old explanations from Guanhe" 「關河舊說」(T34, no. 1720, p. 376c21) and to "the old preface from Guanhe" 「關河舊序。」 (T45, no. 1853, p. 68a21-22). In these contexts, it refers to interpretations put forth by those in the circle around Kumārajīva (344-413), especially Sengrui 僧叡 (d.u.; 3rd/4th centuries). Fazang makes a similar connection (T42, no. 1826, pp. 218c29-219a2; see also the next footnote). The Song-dynasty monk Zhiyuan 智圓 (976-1022), in a subcommentary on a commentary on the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* by the eighth century literatus Liang Su 梁肅 (753-793), explains that "'The old explanations from Guanhe' refer to the masters west of the river in Guanzhong" 「關河舊解者，謂關中河西諸師也。」 (T38, no. 1779, p. 807a12).

[218] The biography here echoes a brief comment by Fazang about the history of the transmission of Madhyamika into China in his *Commentary on the Treatise on the Twelve Gates*. He says: "Although [the texts] were translated in Guanhe, they were then transmitted to Jiangbiao. This was Xing Huang (Fa)Liang's 興皇(法)朗 (507-581) influence." 「雖復譯在關河。然盛傳於江表。則興皇朗之功也。」(T42, no. 1826, p. 219a1-2). Of course, it is possible, if not likely, that there existed other sources on which both Fazang and Zannig drew.

[219] I am omitting a few lines that praise Chengguan's intelligence.

> Mount Niutou, master Qin 欽 (d.u.) of Mount Jing, and master Wuming 無名 (723-794) of Luoyang to inquire about the teachings on dhyāna according to the southern tenet. He also visited dhyāna master Huiyun 慧雲(d.u.) to understand the profound principle according to the northern tenet.[220]

A few centuries earlier, Falang (507-581) similarly travels from teacher to teacher, studying scripture after scripture:

> For his studies, he traveled to Great Clarity Monastery in Yangdu. There he learned the methods of dhyāna from dhyana master Baozhi 寶誌 (418-515). Also at this monastery, he listened to vinaya master Tuan's 彖(d.u.) lectures on the root text of the Vinaya. Furthermore, with master Xian 仙 (d.u.) of Southern Stream Monastery he studied the *Tattvasiddhi*; with master Jing 靖 (d.u.) of Bamboo Stream Monastery the Abhidharma.[221]

Another interesting glimpse of this practice comes not from a biography. In Tankuang's 曇曠 (c. 700-c. 788) preface to his *Explanation to Open up the Doctrine of Clear Introduction to the Mahāyāna Hundred Dharmas Treatise*,[222] a text we will encounter again below, he includes an autobiographical note. Regarding his studies, he tells us:

> First, in my native village, I focused on the *Treatise Establishing Consciousness-only* and the *Abhidharmakośa*. Later, having travelled to the capital Chang'an, I directed my attention to the *Awakening of Faith* and the *Vajra Sūtra*.[223]

One significant feature of this account is that no teachers are mentioned by name. The narrative centers around texts instead. I suspect that we should understand the texts studied as the focal point also when the teachers are listed, such as in the trajectories of Falang and Chengguan. Read in this manner, these itineraries are not descriptions of the monks' lineage affiliations (even if, of course, connections with prominent teachers conferred charisma); they are, rather, outlines of the curriculum they followed. At the same time, to study these texts clearly was understood to include attending lectures by learned exegetes—why else did Tankuang need to travel to different learning centers? Moreover, as I shall argue in Chapter 5, studying a given scripture implied studying surrounding exegetical literature.

While such peripatetic education is a pervasive pattern for the Sui-Tang scholiasts, such that we should assume it even when biographies do not explicitly mention it, some biographies do suggest that a given monk did not partake of this wandering life as part of their

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[220] 「遂遍尋名山旁求祕藏。梯航既具壺奧必臻。乾元中依潤州棲霞寺醴律師學相部律。本州依曇一隸南山律。詣金陵玄璧法師傳關河三論。三論之盛于江表觀之力也。大曆中就瓦棺寺傳起信涅槃。又於淮南法藏受海東起信疏義。却復天竺詵法師門。溫習華嚴大經。七年往剡溪。從成都慧量法師覆尋三論。十年就蘇州。從湛然法師習天台止觀法華維摩等經疏。(…)又謁牛頭山忠師。徑山欽師。洛陽無名師。咨決南宗禪法。復見慧雲禪師了北宗玄理。」(T50, no. 2061, p. 737a8-20).

[221] 「遊學楊都就大明寺寶誌禪師受諸禪法。兼聽此寺彖律師講律本文。又受業南澗寺仙師成論竹澗寺靖公毘曇。」(T50, no. 2060, p. 477b12-15)

[222] *Dasheng baifa ming men lun kai zongyi jue* 大乘百法明門論開宗義決; T2812.

[223] 「初在本鄉切唯識俱舍。後遊京鎬專起信金剛。」(T85, no. 2812, p. 1068a10-11).

training. A prime example is the biography of Kuiji. [224] It tells us that he ordained at seventeen years old and was made a disciple of Xuanzang's by imperial decree. At that point the biography tells us that he started living at the Vast Blessings Monastery (*Guangfu si* 廣福寺). Subsequently, he was selected, on account of his precociousness as a student, to move to the Great Compassion Monastery (*Da ci'en* 大慈恩寺) to study directly under Xuanzang. After a brief description of his intellectual acumen and success in his studies, he was ordered at age 25 to join in translation activities, by which we must presume are meant the projects led by Xuanzang. At that point, the biography starts detailing his career as a lecturer and composer of commentaries. Since he was under the auspices from Xuanzang for most of the first decade of his monastic life, the narrative suggests that Kuiji's training did not have a peripatetic phase, even if he later on did travel widely.

Still, even if Kuiji did not travel between different monastic centers, this does not mean that he was not exposed to different masters and their specialties. Later in life, after travelling to lecture at different centers, he returned to his original monastery (presumably either the Vast Blessings Monastery or the Great Kindness and Grace Monastery). There, we are told, he not only associated with his old colleagues in the translation workshop, but also had regular meetings with his senior Daoxuan, who is known both for his GSZ and for his specialty in the monastic code, upon which he wrote several important commentaries.[225] Unfortunately we are only told of the content of one encounter: Daoxuan, finding that hs psychic vision was obstructed by Kuiji's presence, inferred that he must be a great bodhisattva. [226] We do not otherwise know the content of their discussions. This is another case where I believe we should keep in mind that the biographies privilege the extraordinary. It seems highly probable that Kuiji's conversations with Daoxuan included doctrinal discussions regarding both of their various specializations. Even though this gives us no direct information about the educational formation of monks who did not travel between monastic centers, it does point to the fact that monastic centers sometimes housed different masters who specialized in different fields of study. Along these lines, Pachow described the masters at Western Clarity Monastery (*Ximing si* 西明寺), also in Chang'an, that "[i]t began with Xuanzang, one of the greatest scholars and translators, and the others were specialists in *Vinaya*, Buddhist history, linguistics, philology, and compilation of encyclopedia and commentaries."[227] Even when a monk did not travel around to study with different masters, he still got exposed to a variety of teachers as well as different fields of study. Of course, besides different teachers, monasteries also housed an array of students, ranging in age and experience. Though the biographical sources do not give us much insight into this issue, we may presume that senior monks and other students often played a large role in the intellectual formation of monks, for example by informal

[224] I am here summarizing T50, no. 2061, p. 725c9-15. I am aware of the questions concerning Kuiji's name and the general consensus that *kui* is a later addition. For ease of reference, I continue the use of the name Kuiji. As He points out in his thorough overview of this issue, calling the use of this name "incorrect," as some have done, is besides the point; the tradition, after all, has used the name for about a thousand years (2017: 64). Besides He's article (2017), see also Weinstein (1959: 130-133).
[225] T50, no. 2061, p. 726a26-27.
[226] T50, no. 2061, p. 726a27-b1.
[227] 1979: 24.

discussions to clarify the master's lectures, by helping each other with memorization, by practicing debate with each other, and so on.[228]

Besides the fact monasteries could house multiple masters, they likely also housed an array of students, ranging in age and experience. Though the biographical sources do not give us much insight into this issue, we may presume that senior monks and other students often played a large role in the intellectual formation of monks, for example by informal discussions to clarify the master's lectures, by helping each other with memorization, by practicing debate with each other, and so on.

Memorization

At this point, we have veered from the description of Faxi's studies as provided by Daoxuan toward the general conditions under which monks studied. It is worth considering more closely some of the aspects of his studies, both how they diverge and coincide with what was the norm. Starting with the latter, we note the fact that an integral part of his studies was the recitation of texts. I noted, in that regard, the overlap between intellectual and devotional pursuits. That connection goes deeper. To *recite* (*song* 誦) was not merely an act of invocation and devotion, nor even just a search for understanding, it also implied the internalization and retention of texts.[229] As Zürcher notes, speaking of the education of Buddhist monks in Sui-Tang China, "Training centered upon the memorization (*song* [誦], *nian* [念]) of considerable amounts of scriptural text."[230]

The general pattern of study for young monks, Kieschnick suggests based on evidence in the GSZ-materials, was that "the master provided the novice with a scripture, told him to study or memorize it, and perhaps drilled him briefly on its contents."[231] The master would then move the student on to a next text as he saw fit or, in some cases, "when a promising young monk reached a certain level of proficiency, his master allowed him to 'follow his own interests.'"[232] While the curriculum may have been rather ad hoc, memorization was its foundation. "Monks, with their head full of memorized knowledge," as James Benn puts it, "must have been like walking databases" containing in full such lengthy texts as the *Lotus*

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[228] Other types of sources gives us some insight into this issue. We get a particularly lively glimpse from comments about Shenxiu 神秀 (606?-706) in the *Platform Sutra*'s well-known verse contest. Famously, after the Fifth Patriarch announces this contest, all the monks decide that there is no point in them submitting a verse as they are certain that because "the Elder Shenxiu currently acts as the teaching master, he will certainly get [the Dharma-transmission]."[228] This is also the reason too that Shenxiu feels pressured to submit a verse himself: "none of the others will submit a verse since I am acting as their teaching master. I should write a verse and submit it to the master."[228] While the term I translate here as "teaching master," *jiaoshou shi* 教授師, is known as a technical term in the context of ordination rites where it refers to the senior monk who gives instruction in ritual performance (Skt. *karmācārya*). However, the *Platform Sutra*'s narrative clearly indicates that it was also used for a senior monk who functioned the right-hand of the main master in a monastery and who presumably also taught students. Other potential sources might be descriptions of different monastic roles in Vinaya-related material.

[229] Consider in this regard how Lee's study of education in traditional China, the entry for "memorization" says simply "see recitation" (2000: 752).

[230] Zürcher 1989: 35. Nugent highlights several other words that often imply memorization: *song* 誦, *ansong* 暗誦, *jisong* 記誦, *songyi* 誦憶, *songde* 誦得, and *jilan* 記覽 (2010: 74).

[231] Kieschnick 1997: 119.

[232] Ibid.

Sūtra, the *Mahāyāna-Mahāparinirvāṅa Sūtra*, and the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra.* [233] We can appropriately describe the world of the Sui-Tang Buddhist scholastics monks as a memory culture in Carruthers' sense.[234]

The evidence available in the case of the Chinese Buddhist monks is, unfortunately, much sparser than the European materials from which Carruthers draws. No higher-order reflections on the practice and significance of memorization come down to us from Chinese history. [235] The biographical records speak but occasionally of specific texts that were memorized—allowing Zürcher to point to the above list of three sūtras as commonly memorized texts. Biographies do offer praise—if short and stylized—for monks with exceptional memories. Of Kuiji, for example, we read:

> Reading but once through the hundreds of *skandhas* and the *vargas* [Indic textual divisions], he would not be mistaken regarding them—it took him no effort to recall them![236]

Similarly, we are told of Xuanyue 玄約 (d.u.) that after he entered the monastery he would "at day recite a thousand words and not need to study them again."[237] Even as such stories give us hardly any information about texts memorized—other than "lots"—nor about methods used for memorization, they underscore the esteem in which memory was held, taking its value for granted.

Notwithstanding its practical importance, the Chinese sources tell us little about the methods for memorization. Two further avenues for research might shed more light on the Chinese memory culture. First, I suggest we may be able to read more into the imagery implied by words used for thinking and composing. While this line of thinking is beyond the scope of the present study, I will give one example. In a rather inconspicuous note to a translated passage, Kieschnick tells us that "weaving was a metaphor for the thinking process."[238] This metaphor might be quite descriptive of the thinking process if we see it in the context of a memory culture. Consider the parallel with Medieval European practice. As Carruthers points

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[233] 1998: 115. This is Benn's review of Kieschnick 1997. See Zürcher for his suggestion that these texts were the most commonly memorized (1989: 35).

[234] This has also been argued by Nugent (esp. 2010: Chapter 2). He explicitly draws on Carruthers' work. Note, however, that I diverge from his discussion on two related points. According to him, a key difference between European and Chinese memory practices is that the latter relied on rote memorization whereas the former did not, relying instead on division (2010: 104, 108). I think this does justice to neither the European nor the Chinese practices. In the European context, Carruthers has emphasized that elaborate divisions of texts were typically applied to texts already memorized (e.g., 2008: 102-103; 1998: 30, 89-90). Regarding the Chinese context, it may be true that the Chinese sources do not tell us about divisions for the sake of memorization and that in some contexts, such as the poetry on which Nugent works, this practice was irrelevant, this does not mean that there is no evidence for elaborate textual divisions in Chinese materials. Indeed, this will be core to my argument in Chapter 3: the way the scholiasts composed relies heavily on practices reminiscent of European memory practices, and the way they read texts, too, relies on outlines that suggest that dividing texts was central to their engagement with them.

[235] Cp. Nugent 2010: 98; 2018: 159.

[236] 「凡百犍度、跋渠，一覽無差，寧勞再憶？」(T50, no. 2061, p. 725c13-14).

[237] 「日誦千言，更無再受。」(T50, no. 2061, p. 746a22-23).

[238] Kieschnick 1997: 184n.73. The term in question is *Zhuzhou* 杼軸, which Kieschnick translates from T50, no. 2059, p. 354c19-20.

out *textus* comes from the verb "to weave" (hence also "textile").[239] She says of Thomas Aquinas's contemporaries that "they understood that it was his memory which allowed him to weave together his astonishing works."[240] In a memory culture, the scholar, with a database of memorized texts, does not invent thoughts but "gathers his thoughts," bringing together authoritative passages into a coherent fashion. In the same vein, when Chinese monks would write, or more appropriately, *compose* (from *con + pōnō:* "to place together," and therefore "to arrange," to build," "to order") the verb used in Chinese is often, again, to *weave* (*bian* 編), sometimes in combination with "to fix" (*xiu* 修), a verb that suggests the ordering rather than creating of things.

The other approach is to read the Sui-Tang scholastic writings for traces of memory practice.[241] This will be one of the themes of Chapter 3, but I here already note two important aspects. Just like scholiasts elsewhere, their Chinese counterparts relied heavily on dividing texts, both the scriptures on which they comment and their own. In the previous chapter, I cited Even-ezra's description of how medieval European authors divide their writings endlessly. She might as well have been speaking of Chinese commentaries. Along these lines, one genre of Chinese Buddhist texts, *kepan* 科判/ *kewen* 科文, is consists of outlines of scriptural texts. Rather than being philosophical exercises attempting to find an inner logic in the scriptures, the primary function of such outlines, I suggest, may have been to aid in memorization.[242] The second aspect is the use of memorizable lists and interpretative grids, including doxographies. Like epic bards, as discussed in Chapter 1, preachers use such tools to organize their presentation, which is neither wholly spontaneous nor fully premeditated—or maybe better: is both at the same time. These are what make the accordion effect possible, condensing and expanding information ad infinitum.

Scholastic Praxis: Expounding Scriptures, Composing Commentaries, Disputing Doctrine

What comes to mind most readily when we think of the great Sui-Tang Buddhas masters are the textual remnants of their world. They composed voluminous texts, as well as shorter tracts, that fill significant portions of the East Asian canon and have drawn the attention of many scholars. Yet, as some scholars, especially Mou Runsong, have stressed, to understand these texts—indeed, their world—we need to start by seeing the exegetes not primarily as writers, but as expounders of scripture, as lecturers.[243]

The major genres of commentarial writing, as Jörg Plassen notes, "evolved at the borderline of orality and literacy."[244] Lecture-notes, whether in the sense of memory aids for the speaker or as notations made by the audience, were the basis for many of the textual compositions that remain.[245] As such, the historical materials often speak of lecturing and writing in the same breath, and sometimes texts still retain traces of their oral delivery.

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[239] Carruthers 2008: 14.
[240] Ibid.
[241] For a similar approach, see Nugent 2024: 173.
[242] Carruthers discusses schemes that were used as an overlay onto materials already memorized by rote. "The recollection devices of mnemonic art, like a Random-Access structure," she describes her own experience applying one to the Psalms, "took me where I wanted to go, in the order I had chosen and in the directions my mind had given to itself" (Carruthers 2008: xiv).
[243] Mou 1960; cp. also Plassen 2004.
[244] Plassen 2004: 598.
[245] Mou 1960: 1.

Since the textual and the oral were so deeply intertwined and because much of the evidence for the latter lies in the former, I start here with a discussion of scholiasts' written compositions, especially their traces of and relation to the oral context. This discussion will already touch on aspects of the actual public performance of exegesis. I thereafter consider some of its other elements, such as, most importantly, the role of the "discussant", and disputation.

Between Orality and Textuality

One reason why it is hard to discuss the oral delivery of commentaries separate from their written composition is that the biographies often mention them in the same breath without really distinguishing between the two processes. Take, for example, the following passage that we find early on in the biography of Kuiji:

> When he was 25, in response to an imperial command, he translated sūtras, and he lectured thoroughly on over 30 volumes of teachings of the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna. He focused his thoughts and kept his mind attentive as he ever so diligently wrote commentaries. Indeed, "he took on challenges and remained with his contemplations" and "in his approach he never veered off."[246] He wrote roughly a hundred volumes of commentary.[247]

Lecturing is here mentioned as one of three activities, alongside writing and translating, without any clear indication of their relation, let alone the direction of influence between them. Indeed, as we will see in what follows, these activities do turn out to be so deeply intertwined that they become hard to distinguish.

Nevertheless, the most basic relationship between oral exegesis and the written commentary was that the latter in some sense recorded the former—indeed, the word used for "commentary," *shu* 疏, originally meant "to record."[248] As Mou puts it, "expounding scriptures was the cause of which commentaries were the result."[249] The paradigmatic case is encapsulated in a pithy phrase Mou adduces from the biography of Huiyuan in the XGSZ "following his lectures, he produced commentaries. That is, the *Commentary on the Bodhisattva Stages Sūtra* (5 juan) and the *Commentary on the Ten Stages Sūtra* (7 juan)"—with "following" (*sui* 隨) having both the sense of temporal succession and of being the basis.[250] According to Mou, gradually exegetes starting writing commentaries intended as written works.[251] But, even then, their oral background remains.

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[246] I put these two phrases in quotation marks to signal that, as any educated reader in premodern China would have recognized, Zanning is citing from *Analects* 19.6 and *Book of Songs* (*Shijing* 詩經). My translation aims to make sense of these phrases within the context of the present passage.

[247] 「年二十五應詔譯經。講通大小乘教三十餘本。創意留心勤勤著述。蓋切問而近思。其則不遠矣。造疏計可百本。」(T50, no. 2061, p. 725, c14-17).

[248] Mou 1960: 3.

[249] 「講經其因，義疏其果也。」(Mou 1960: 1).

[250] 「隨講出疏。地持疏五卷。十地疏七卷。」(T50, no. 2060, p. 491c17-18); cited and discussed by Mou (1960: 15).

[251] Mou 1960: 17.

In Mou's survey of evidence from the GSZ and XGSZ regarding the lecturing and writing of commentaries, this basic relationship manifests in a variety of ways. Plassen helpfully summarizes the situation:

> Based on this external evidence [i.e., of the GSZ and XGSZ] rather than the texts themselves, we can distinguish different types. Some texts apparently were used by the Dharma master as scripts for his lectures. Other texts, most often labeled *ji* 記 ("record"), are but transcripts of such lectures written down by the disciples. Finally, there exists a group of "redacted" lectures rewritten by the master himself on imperial command or redacted by his disciples as "official writings" after his death.

One type to add to this list is that of commentaries written as literary texts.[252] However, even with such texts, the oral context is never far, as they participate in the same conventions as the rest of the commentarial literature.

While Plassen's brief and elegant overview gives a good sense of the general situation, his choice of the word "script" strikes me as unfortunate for the same reason that I speak of "lectures" and "lecturers" only with hesitation. These terms may invoke the image of a speaker reading a paper out loud. This is not the right image for the expositions delivered by the Sui-Tang scholiasts. The scholiast's lecture was more like a live performance where they improvised on themes than a rote reproduction of a prewritten score; much like the Jugoslavian bards of Milman Parry and Albert Lord, the moment of composition and performance coincide.[253] As Mou Runsong emphasizes in his discussion of the nature of Buddhist and Confucian lectures and commentaries and their relation, these "lectures" were ideally delivered extemporaneously, a point reinforced by recent work by Hou Xiaoming.[254] Insofar as a exegetes relied on notes, those were used as memory-aids rather than as scripts to be read out loud.

One manuscript offers fairly direct evidence of this: the *Prefatory Explanation for the Notes to Open up the Doctrine of Clear Introduction to the Mahāyāna Treatise on the Hundred Dharmas*, preserved in Dunhuang.[255] Pachow's opinion, which I follow here, is that the text should be ascribed to Tankuang. It is a primer to another composition by Tankuang, namely the *Notes to Open up the Doctrine of Clear Introduction to the Mahāyāna Treatise on the Hundred Dharmas*.[256] Pachow infers from notes at the midpoint and end of the text that it was delivered as oral lectures over the course of two or three days.[257] These notes mark the day at which a given section was completed, with the final note explicitly saying that it was on the thirteenth or fifteenth day that he finished expounding (*shuo* 說) it.[258] Even if we put aside our knowledge about the expectation of extemporaneous lecturing, the text itself suggests that *shuo* 說 indeed means not that the text was simply read aloud, but that it functioned as the basis for an oral exposition. The two portions are, respectively, roughly 2,000 and 1,500

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[252] Note that Plassen does assume the existence of this type later on in the same article (2004: 599).
[253] E.g., Lord 1981: 5.
[254] Mou 1960: 15; Hou 2022.
[255] *Dasheng baifa ming men lun kai zongyi xushi* 大乘百法明門論開宗義記序釋; T. 2811.
[256] *Dasheng baifa ming men lun kai zongyi ji* 大乘百法明門論開宗義記; T. 2810.
[257] 1979: 20 and p. 20 n. 16.
[258] They occur at T85, no. 2811, pp. 1066c20 and p. 1067c25. Pachow notes that the number is unclear (1976: 20 n. 16).

characters. Reading a single portion out loud cannot have taken more than 20 minutes, which seems short for a lecture. More likely is that Tankuang wrote this text as notes for his exposition, leaving these notes for himself to mark where he left off.

The SGSZ biography of Chengguan is another place that, on close reading, offers illuminating glimpses of the close connection between composing and expounding. I already recounted a later passage above, where the court is involved with both Chengguan's lecturing and composing. Early in the biography, we read of the start of his career as an exegete. We are told that when Chengguan was residing at the *Great Flower Ornament* (*Avataṃsaka) Monastery* (*Da huayan si* 大華嚴寺),

> the abbot (*sizhu* 寺主) Xianlin (active 8th-9th century) requested him to expound the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* [lit. "the Great sūtra;" *da jing* 大經] and explain the treatises. Because Chengguan was concerned that the old commentary on the *Avataṃsaka* was too complicated in its composition and too sparse in doctrine (*wen fan yi yue* 文繁義約), he thought about it for a long while. [It then occurred to him that] Mañjuśrī presides over wisdom and Samantabhadra presides over principle. These two sages combine into Vairocana. The interpenetration of the myriad practices is the doctrine of the *Avataṃsaka [Sūtra]*. Since I have travelled the realm of Samantabhadra and have anchored in Mañjuśrī's hometown, I would be cheating the two sages if I do not comment (*shu* 疏) on Vairocana.
>
> When Chengguan was about to compose his commentary, a golden-colored man suddenly appeared in a dream. Standing upright against the light, the man grabbed Chengguan and swallowed him whole, without chewing.
>
> Sweating profusely as he awoke, Chengguan was delighted: he took being swallowed into the light as a sign [that his commentary] would illuminate expansively.
>
> He started [composing the commentary] in the first year of the Xingyuan period (784) and finished in the third year of the Zhenyuan period (787). It was twenty scrolls total. Thereupon, he held a feast for a thousand monks to celebrate its completion.
>
> Later, he often thought about [the matter of] passing it on. Out of nothing, he dreamt that he transformed into a dragon. His august head lay on the Southern Terrace; his curling tail on the Northern Mountains. He soared through the sky, his scales and mane outshining the sun. Then, in an instant, the wriggling snake transformed into a thousand little dragons. Rising, they illuminated the sky. They then went their separate ways. Chengguan interpreted this to mean that branches of the teachings would spread far and wide.
>
> In the fourth year (788), Abbot Xianlin requested he lecture on his new commentary.[259]

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[259] 「時寺主賢林，請講大經，并演諸論。因慨《華嚴》舊疏，文繁義約，慬然長想：「況文殊主智，普賢主理，二聖合為毘盧遮那，萬行兼通，即[1]是《華嚴》之義也。吾既遊普賢之境界，泊妙吉之鄉原，不疏《毘盧》，有辜二聖矣。」觀將撰疏，俄於寤寐之間，見一金人當陽挺立，以手迎抱之，無何咀嚼都盡。覺即汗流，自喜吞納光明遍照之徵也。起興元元年正月，貞元三年十二月畢功，成二十軸，乃飯千僧以落成也。後常思付授，忽夜夢身化為龍，矯首于南臺，蟠尾于山北，拏攫碧落，鱗鬣耀日。須臾，

This passage is noteworthy for a number of things—such as the humanity of Chengguan's hesitation and also the fact that a dream gave him confirmation that he was on the right track, something that recurs throughout the biographies[260]—but for our purposes here two things stand out. The first is that we have here a clear instance where a commentary is written to be the basis for oral expositions. In fact, the very next line tells us that only a few years later, "in the seventh year (793), the military governor of Hedong, Li Ziliang, invited him to lecture upon it *again* at Eminent Blessings Monastery (*Chongfu si* 崇福寺)" (emphasis mine).[261] More interesting, although it does not demand attention in the context of the narrative, is that the passage suggests that it would have been standard practice for Chengguan to use an older commentary as the basis for his lectures. After all, it is implied that were it not for his apprehensions regarding the older commentary on the text, he would not have felt the need to compose a commentary of his own.

The practice of using other people's written commentary as the basis for one's own oral exposition is also mentioned by Mou. In fact, he specifically cites a passage from the biography of the sixth century monk Huibu 慧布 (d.u.) who wrote commentaries with the express intent that another monk would lecture on them.[262] Though originally, being more interested in the meaning behind scripture and in the practice of meditation, Huibu had intended not to take up preaching, meditation master Huike 慧可 (487-593) convinced him otherwise. At that point, not only did he start giving oral lectures, he also "wrote six horse-loads worth of commentaries which he brought back to Jiangbiao 江表 [the area South of the Yangzi River] and which he gave to Liang, for him to lecture."[263] This stand-in lecturer Liang was likely Falang 法朗 (517/518-581), a famous exegete who was certainly able to deliver his own expositions. Another telling case is that of the Tang Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (685-762; r. 712-756). After composing a commentary on the *Vajra Sūtra*, he invited exegetes to lecture on his commentary.[264]

It is hard to gauge to what extent it may have been common practice to lecture on the basis of commentarial notes composed by an earlier master. Anything we say in this regard must remain speculative, given that the evidence is meager. On the other hand, it might be exactly the near absence of evidence that suggests that this practice was pervasive. As I emphasized above, the biographical materials are dense and sparse, unlikely to bother telling us the most obvious things about the life of the monks. Their authors, Huijiao, Daoxuan, and

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蜿蜒化為千數小龍，騰[A8]躍青冥，分散而去。蓋取象乎教法支分流布也。四年春正月，寺主賢林請講新疏。」(T50, no. 2061, p. 737a28-b13; cp. T50n2064_p1004c06).

[260] The dreamlife of the exegetes would be a fascinating topic for future research. Kuiji's biography, for example, devotes a relatively long section to a dream that he retrospectively interprets as an exhortation to write a commentary on the *Sūtra on Maitreya's Ascension* (*Mile shangsheng jing* 彌勒上生經; T. 452); see T50, no. 2061, p. 726a4-18. He indeed wrote a commentary on the text, the *Commentary on the Sūtra on the Visualization of Maitreya's Ascension to the Tuṣita Heaven* (*Guan Mile shangsheng dousha tian jing zan* 觀彌勒上生兜率天經贊; T1772).

[261]「七年，河東節度使李公自良復請於崇福寺講。」(T50, no. 2061, p. 737b13-14).

[262] Mou 1960:

[263]「又寫章疏六駄。負還江表。並遺朗公令其講說。」(T50, no. 2060, p. 480c24-25). The Taishō records a variant reading for *zhang* 章 as *yi* 章. Also note that the CBETA editors have here corrected the *yi* 遺 as found in the Taishō edition to *qian* 遣 based on the Korean edition (for which they cite K32n1075_p0988b19).

[264] This is recounted briefly by Kieschnick (1997: 140).

Zanning, are more likely to tell us of unique and original compositions than to endlessly list each and every unoriginal lecture preached by an exegete based on another's commentary. Indeed, in neither Chengguan's nor Huibu's biographies was this issue the point of the passage in question. In Chengguan's case, it is mentioned to explain the fact that he wrote his own commentary; it is taken for granted that he would have lectured on an older commentary if he considered it suitable. In Huibu's case the extraordinary thing is not that he gave exegetical materials for oral exposition to Falang; rather, it is that he turned from his refusal to engage in exegesis to an active career as a preacher and composer of commentaries. In Chapter 3 I will return to this topic to look at some textual evidence of this practice.

Whatever the exact case might be in terms of lectures being based rather directly on older commentaries, it is certainly the case that the scholiasts' oral and written exegetical expositions echoed their elders'. In biographical materials, we find here and there mention of monks studying commentarial literature in preparation for lecturing.[265] The clearer evidence lies in the compositions themselves, which, as we shall see in the following two chapters, have parallel structures and often repeat each other, at times citing earlier works.

This connects to another aspect of the way the sources sometimes speak of the composition of written commentaries, namely as the clarification of an older commentary. In the brief biographical note in the preface to his *Explanation to Open up the Doctrine of Clear Introduction to the Mahāyāna Hundred Dharmas Treatise*,[266] Tankuang writes:

> Out of pity for those passing their time in vain, out of concern for those long deluded, I supplemented incomplete texts that had been designed in the past, expanding them into complete explanations; I trimmed complicated explanations by the venerable ones of old, simplifying them into brief expositions.[267]

Mou cites another such case.[268] His suggestion is that this practice mainly served to bring texts that still contained abundant traces of their oral background into a more literary mode such that they would be fit for use as written works.[269]

Though this interpretation fits the cases cited by Mou, I do not think it applies universally. Consider the narrative that explains why Yuanhui 圓暉 (8th century) composed his commentary on the *Abhidharmakośa*. In his biography in the SGSZ, we read that Yuanhui specialized in that text.[270] Assistant Minister in the bureau of rites Jia Ceng 賈曾 (?-727) took an interest in that text, often enlisted Yuanhui to talk about its teachings, and eventually requested him to set forth its broad outlines. Some aspects of the narrative up to this point remain unclear to me: did Jia Ceng enlist him to discuss (*tan* 談) the text together and subsequently ask him to present a formal lecture to set forth its outline (*lüe shen gengkai* 略伸梗概), or did he invite him to lecture (*tan* 談) on the text and then request him to distill this

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[265] E.g. Mou 1960: 15.
[266] *Dasheng baifa ming men lun kai zongyi jue* 大乘百法明門論開宗義決; T. 2812.
[267] 「余慷茲虛度慨彼長迷。或補前修之闕文足成廣釋。或削古德之繁猥裁就略章。」(T85, no. 2812, p. 1068a15-17). Cp. Pachow 1979: 18.
[268] Mou 1960: 18.
[269] Mou 1960: 18.
[270] T50, no. 2061, p. 734a11-22.

into a written commentary? In either case, the next section of the narrative reveals much about what it meant to prepare a commentary:

> He studied the commentary by Master Guang, the meaning of which was complicated and extremely difficult to penetrate. Further, according with the wish of Vinaya master Huaiyuan of Noble Goodness Monastery, he abbreviated the earlier commentaries in accordance with the structure. He gave the verses extra headings, and he cited the explanatory treatise, fully annotating it. It is very convenient. Students understand it easily. Later, it received much admiration and later Chongyi wrote the *Golden Flower Commentary*, in 10 volumes, explaining it.[271]

When we read in this passage that Yuanhui "abbreviated the earlier commentaries in accordance with the structure," the point is that he restructured and clarified the teachings, not that he reworked an originally oral style. In fact, one of the commentaries in the background here is that by Xuanzang's disciple Puguang 普光 (?-668?). Puguang's XGSZ biography speaks of him *writing* that commentary. Perusing that commentary, it indeed seems to be a refined composition. It may have benefitted from Yuanhui's efforts to organize it, but certainly it was not a set of lecture notes that needed literary polishing.[272] *Pace* Mou, then, the "rewriting" of older commentaries was not always a move from orality to textuality; it could also be a digesting of what the tradition had passed down.

In any case, this practice is one of the more glaring reasons why approaching the commentarial texts with a focus on their authorship can be misleading. This is not merely the case because writing a commentary also meant to digest and clarify older commentaries; it is also because the commentaries were delivered and composed by masters who often had heard the root-text explained. We get a lively example of this relationship in a famous anecdote in the biography of Wŏnch'ŭk. In his biography, we read the slanderous—and likely apocryphal—narrative about his clandestine attendance of private explanations of the *Treatise Establishing Consciousness-only* given by Xuanzang to Kuiji.[273] After teaching sessions, which one assumes happened over the course of weeks if not months, Wŏnch'ŭk would go back to his own monastery elsewhere in the capital and, based on Xuanzang's oral explanation, compose his notes—or as the text says literally, "he sewed and stitched together sections on the doctrine."[274] Then, when Xuanzang was about to be done giving his explanations, Wŏnch'ŭk rang the bell in his own monastery to announce to the assembly that he was going to lecture on the *Treatise Establishing Consciousness-Only*. The veracity of this story, rather doubtful, is beside the point for the purposes of the present discussion. What matters here is what is implied regarding the relation between oral lectures and written commentaries.

The practice ascribed to Wŏnch'ŭk in this anecdote, of composing notes taken during oral expositions into a textual commentary, was widespread. In many cases, however, the

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[271] 「究其光師疏義繁極難尋。又聖善寺懷遠律師，願心相合，因節略古疏——頌則再牒而釋，論乃有引而具注——，甚為徑捷，學者易知。後有崇廣著《金華鈔》十卷以解焉。」(T50, no. 2061, p. 734a17-20).

[272] See the *Commentary on the Abhidharmakośa* (*Jushe lun ji* 俱舍論記; T1821).

[273] The story can be found at T50, no. 2061, p. 727b6-9. For a discussion of the different sources regarding Wŏnch'ŭk's life and the provenance of the present anecdote specifically, see Cho (2005: 173-179). Cp. Kieschnick (1997: 121) and Hwang (2000: Chapter 1 & 2).

[274] 「緝綴義章」(T50, no. 2061, p. 727b7).

resulting composition would then be understood as authored by the original preacher, as mentioned by Plassen. A famous case is the *Great Calming and Contemplating* by Zhiyi.[275] There we see that oral lectures were a source for written commentaries and written compositions were the basis for oral expositions.

Translation & Exegesis

Something else to which the anecdote from Wŏnch'ŭk's biography points is the relation between translation and exegesis as we are told that Xuanzang, after translating the CWSL, gave an oral exposition of the text. There are several ways in which translation and exegesis were deeply entwined. As the example of Xuanzang's lectures shows, the lead-translators themselves were also exegetes. The virtues for which they were praised are proper to the scholiast. Of Devendraprajñā, for example, Zanning says that he "had thoroughly mastered the Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna and he understood both the ultimate and the mundane—among the magical arts and the practice of meditation, there was nothing that he did not comprehend."[276] Scholars of East Asian Buddhism are well aware that sometimes comments by the Indic scholar in charge of a translation team would make their way into the end-product. While this may give the impression that the distinction between translation and exegesis was not clear, the reverse is the case. As Tso Sze-bong discusses in his history of Buddhist translation in China, translation workshops were home to much exegetical activity—including both lectures and debates, most of which did not end up in the final translation.[277] Mou too emphasizes this aspect of the translation process.[278] As an example he points to a commentary by Paramārtha that was understood to be necessary for understanding the translated text itself.[279]

Another important side of translation as it related to the Sui-Tang scholiasts is their own participation in the endeavor. It seems to have been almost a rule that any respectable exegete was called upon to support translation work when a monk came from India with texts to be translated.[280] Participating in such projects must have been, as modern scholars would say, "intellectually stimulating"— learning directly from an Indic master, encountering new sources, collaborating with their peers in a collegial atmosphere. One specific instance of this, as I will discuss briefly in the following chapter, is the scholiasts' insight into philological matters and their knowledge, if superficial, of Sanskrit. It seems likely that they picked some of this up during translation work.

Another way their participation in such projects translated into their scholastic work is in that they sometimes composed commentaries on a text that they had helped to translate. Chengguan, after participating in the translation of the *Gaṅḍavyūha*, a stand-alone text that corresponds to the 39th chapter of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, authored a commentary on it, the *Commentary on the Avataṃsaka Sūtra Newly Translated During the Zhenyuan Period* on

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[275] *Mohe zhi guan* 摩訶止觀; T1911. See its own colophon and the opening of the preface, as well as the introduction to Swanson's translation of the text by Donner and Stevenson (2018: 5).

[276]「學通大小，解兼真俗，呪術禪門，無不諳曉」(T50, no. 2061, p. 719b7-8).

[277] Tso 1973. See also Boucher (1996: 94).

[278] Mou 1960: 17-21.

[279] Ibid.: 17.

[280] In fact, when studying the lives of Tang dynasty monks it might be interesting to ask ourselves why some scholarly inclined monks, such as Chengguan's older contemporary Zhanran, *did not* participate in translation projects.

imperial order.[281] Similarly, Fazang had been part of the team led by Devendraprajña (*Tiyunbore* 提雲般若; d.u.; active late 7th century) that translated the *Mahāyāna Treatise on the Non-differentiation of the Dharma Realm.*[282] Within a few years of the completion of this translation, he wrote a commentary on that text.[283] Similarly, as I discuss in Chapter 4, soon after Wŏnch'ŭk participated in the translation of the *Treatise on Prajñā* under the Indian master Divākara, he drew on that text in his commentaries.[284]

Disputation

In discussing exegesis so far I have mostly focused on the intertwining of the oral and textual. This focus has been natural for two reasons. The first is pragmatic, as one of the proximate goals of this dissertation is to better understand the intellectual practices that lie behind the volumes upon volumes of written commentaries. In reading these texts, part of my larger argument goes, it is essential to realize that they emerged out of a world of lectures, spontaneous performances where scholar-monks would riff off memorized knowledge and, often, previously prepared notes. The other reason for introducing the realm of Sui-Tang oral exegesis by way of its relationship with the written record is simply the nature of the evidence: many of these works and their colophons remain.

It remains fruitful, however, to look a bit further at what we can learn from the historical materials about the oral lectures. For one, this material can help us better understand the texts, even if indirectly: we get a fuller sense of the background of their composition as well as the intellectual practices and training of their composers. Yet, as said, the evidence when we look at the oral aspect of exegesis is more complex than when we focus on the textual, precisely because there is *less* evidence. The anecdotes about lectures are often amusing and those concerning debates are especially tantalizing. Regardless of the veracity of individual stories—which, in fact, I am generally inclined to take at face value—we should be cautious about generalizing, especially without bringing other materials in as further background. After all, as I have pointed out above, the GSZ-compilers had a special appreciation for unique and original stories, which may complicate our efforts to establish what was the norm.

The most convenient starting point for discussing the oral lectures is one of its central conventions, well established in the literature: the role of the *dujiang* 都講, the "discussant." This position is discussed in Zanning's *Topical History* as well as other descriptive works from within the tradition such as the *Buddhist Manual* by Daocheng 道誠 (n.d.; active 10th-11th century), completed in 1019.[285] The latter's entry on starts by succinctly defining the discussant as "the person who goes back-and-forth with the Dharma-master"—i.e. the one

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[281] *Zhenyuan xinyi huayan jing shu* 貞元新譯華嚴經疏; X. 227.

[282] *Dasheng fajie wuchabie lun* 大乘法界無差別論; T1626. For the date of its translation, see Forte (2000: 57-58); cp. Chen (2007: 18-19).

[283] *Commentary on the Mahāyāna Treatise on the Non-differentiation of the Dharma Realm; Dasheng fajie wuchabie lun shu* 大乘法界無差別論疏; T1838.

[284] *Bore lun* 波若論; T1515. The full title is *Treatise on the Vajra Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra Which Breaks Attachments While Not Harming Conventional Language* (*Jin'gang bore boluomi jing po quzhuo bu huai jiaming jing* 金剛般若波羅蜜經破取著不壞假名論).

[285] *Shishi yaojian* 釋氏要覽, T. 2127.

who challenges (*dui* 對) and prompts (*yang* 揚) the lecturer.[286] Zanning starts his description not with a definition, but with a statement explaining why discussants were needed:

> the reason that scholars have someone prompt them when they give public lectures is that without someone by their side to get them going and to keep them on their toes, it would be hard for them, seated on the high seat, to get things going on their own.[287]

After their opening statements, both Zanning and Daocheng proceed to give a brief series of anecdotes that exemplify this role and give it historical warrant. Both end by lamenting the deterioration in the role of the discussant by their own times. "Discussants nowadays merely recite the sūtra-text, neglecting to attack with questions," says Daocheng.[288] Daocheng echoes Zanning in his wording, though the latter's lament is slightly longer: he ends with the nostalgic observation that discussant in his day are "indeed mere simulacra of the discussants of old."[289]

Whatever had become of the discussant by the times of Zanning and Daocheng, up through the Tang the discussant was a prompter and debate-partner.[290] He was responsible for reading out the sūtra-text, for prompting the lecturer with questions, and for raising challenges to spur debate. He would ascend the high-seat along with the Dharma-master, and announce the title of the text, which the Dharma-master would then start explaining.[291] We get a glimpse of this role in a famous anecdote about Zhidun 支遁 (314-366) from the *New Account of the Tales of the World* compiled by Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403-444):

> Zhidun 支遁 (314-366), Xuxun 許詢 (c. 358), and other persons were once gathered at the villa of the Prince of Kuaiji, Sima Yu 司馬昱 (320-372). Zhidun acted as dharma master (*fashi*) and Xuxun as discussant (*dujiang*). Whenever Zhidun explained an interpretation there was no one present who was not completely satisfied, and whenever Xu delivered an objection everyone applauded and danced with delight. But in every case they were filled with admiration for the forensic skill of the two performers, without the slightest discrimination regarding the content of their respective arguments.[292]

This anecdote shows that the back-and-forth between lecturer and assistant could get contentious. Accordingly, when Zanning recounts this same story in abbreviated form in his entry on the discussant, he concludes, "from this we know that the discussant really would

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[286]「即法師對揚之人也」(T54, no. 2127, p. 295b15).

[287]「敷宣之士擊發之由。非旁人而啟端。難在座而孤起。」(T54, no. 2126, p. 239c21-22). Cp. the translation by Welter (2018: 241).

[288]「今之都講。但舉唱經文。而亡擊問也」(T54, no. 2127, p. 295b20).

[289]「蓋似像古之都講耳。」(T54, no. 2126, p. 240a4). Cp the translation by Welter (2018: 242). My interpretation of this passage diverges from his in that I take *sixiang* 似像 ("imitations") to be intended pejoratively, in keeping with the context.

[290] Lee, in his history of education in China, comments briefly on the lecture-style that developed in Buddhist China, including the role of the discussant (2000: 217-218)—oddly, though, he reverses the roles of the discussant and the Dharma-master. Welter, in his translation of Zanning's entry, translates *dujiang* as "director of lectures" (2018: 241; cp. p. 243 n. 1).

[291] Mou 1960: 23-24

[292] Transl. Mather (2002: 120); cp. Mou (1960: 24).

challenge the lecturer." [293] Moreover, such debates were performances: the debaters displayed artistic skill for which the audience, understanding the rules of the game, appreciated them.

Such anecdotes and descriptions of the discussant's role suggest that his function was a standard element in many lectures. However, the evidence does not allow us to deduce that it was a universal feature of lectures. It seems not reasonable to assume that there were different types of lectures. One striking account that gives insight into lecture formats comes from the diary of the Japanese pilgrim Ennin 圓仁 (793-864). There, we read of a lecture-cum-debate that he observed in a Korean monastery in Chang'an. Besides providing a useful glimpse into the ritual aspects surrounding lectures, it depicts a lively formalized disputation session preceding the lecture proper.[294] In this case, multiple discussants raise questions to the master. Note though Ennin elsewhere does speak of discussants, he here does not use that term, instead referring to "the questioners" (*wen wen zhe* 聞問者).[295] The lecture proceeded as follows. After a series of invocations, "the lecturer chanted the headings of the scripture and, dividing them into three parts, explained the headings." Then, names of donors were read and offerings were made.

> After that the debaters argued the principles, raising questions. While they were raising a question, the lecturer would hold up his chowry, and when a questioner had finished asking his question, he would lower it and then raise it again, thank [the questioner] for his question, and then answer it. They recorded both the questions and the answers. It was the same as in Japan, except that the rite of [pointing out doctrinal] difficulty was somewhat different. After lowering his hand at his side three times and before making any explanation, [a debater] would suddenly proclaim the difficulty, shouting with all his might like a man enraged, and the lecturer would accept the problem and would reply without raising problems in return. After the debate, he took up the text and read the scripture.[296]

Besides such large formal lectures that apparently did not have a discussant (in the specific form of the *dujiang*), it also seems that in smaller settings oriented more toward educating young monks than to a public performance of Buddhist erudition, there was no discussant. Consider the description of the how Jing'ai 靜藹 (6th century) would teach his students. After they had properly paid respects, he would sit down on his chair and then order his students to be seated around him.

> When they had finished seating themselves with utmost respect, Jing'ai would slowly take out the scriptures. He would then point to one passage at a time, explaining its

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[293] 「是知都講實難其人。」(T54, no. 2126, p. 239c27). "Lecturer," here, would more literally be "his person" (*qi ren* 其人). Cp. Welter (2018: 241). Daocheng cites the story too; see T54, no. 2127, p. 295b17-19.

[294] See also Howard Masang's comments on this passage for what it reveals about the ritual context of lectures and translation workshops (2023: 93 ff.).

[295] B18, no. 95, p. 43b15-16. Ennin uses the term *dujiang* in another description of a lecture; see B18, no. 95, p. 44a9. Unfortunately, he does not describe much beyond the ritual context there.

[296] Transl. by Reischauer (1955: 186-187). 「誓願訖。論義者論端舉問。舉問之問。講師舉麈尾。聞問者語。舉問了。便傾麈尾。即還舉之。謝問便答。帖問帖答。與本國同。但難。儀式稍別。側手三下後。申解白前。卒爾指申難。聲如大瞋人盡音呼諍。講師家([□@考]家恐蒙)難。但答不返難。論義了。入文談經。」(Q4, B18, no. 95, pp. 43b14-44a2).

> meaning in order that they might understand it. He would then ask members of his audience to explain their understanding of the line. Only when they had answered to his satisfaction would he continue with the next passage. If one of his listeners did not understand, he would explain it again. He lectured in this way every day without tire.[297]

The absence of any indication of a discussant in this account suggests that the function was not universal. All the same, lecturing in this intimate setting included a back-and-forth with the audience as Jing'ai engaged his students personally by asking them to give their interpretations and checking their understanding. Teaching scripture, whether with or without a discussant, was an interactive affair.

Indeed, even with a discussant present, it seems that members of the audience could also raise questions during lectures. Mou cites a story where Fawei 法威 (4th century), prompted by his teacher, walks into a lecture series by Zhidun and seeks confrontation in debate—"after going back and forth many times, Zhidun concedes [to Fawei]."[298] Another anecdote that features a monk walking in on a lecture and challenging the speaker concerns a monk on the margins: the siddha-like figure of Yuankang 元康 (7th century).[299] We learn nothing of his early life or under whom he studied, other than that in response to his devotions to Avalokiteśvara an eight-pronged deer appeared which he rode far and wide.[300] We are also told of that while "his physique was plump and short and he had an overbearing character," which fits the description of his entry into the capital where he debates a lecturer.[301]

> His mindset was rather playful and taunting. He said, "The followers of existence have not penetrated the nature of emptiness. With my little axle, I will crush them, forcing them to awaken to the genuine principle of reality!" Moreover, he wore a great wide robe stitched together with patches, and an enormous bamboo hat that was a *zhang* and two *chi* wide. His attire was exceedingly strange, and people were shocked to see it. When he entered the walls of the capital city, he saw a Dharma master lecturing on the scriptures and guiding a great assembly. Yuankang made for himself a bamboo mat and sat close to the master. They then exchanged questions and answers on the purport of the lecture with each turn numbering hundreds of words. Everyone was shocked that Yuankang's eloquence and dexterity in discussion could be like this. He further teased the Dharma master, saying, "A sweet peach does not bear fruit, and bitter chestnuts weigh down the branches of a tree." The lecturer responded, "A wheel-turning monarch has thousands of children, yet Xiangbo had no decedents." He was likely criticizing Yuankang's lack of followers. Yuankang then said, "A vermillion chest is red, while a lacquer chest is dark. If you were red, you would not be either pink or crimson, and if you were dark, you would neither be grey nor pitch black." Everyone in the assembly said, "The principles of his words are overflowing! Could it not be that he is a great being manifesting his traces?" The emperor was pleased to hear this and stated, "What generation lacks such a person?" He then ordered Yuankang to take up

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[297] 「藹徐取論文。手自指摘。一偈一句披釋取悟。顧問聽者所解云何。令其得意方進後偈。旁有未喻者更重述之。每日垂講此法。無怠。」(T50, no. 2060, p. 626a27-b1), as translated by Kieschnick (1997: 119).

[298] 「往復多番，遁遂屈，」(T50, no. 2059, p. 350b2-3). Cp. Mou (1960: 24-25).

[299] His biography in the SGSZ can be found at T50, no. 2061, p. 727b16.

[300] T50, no. 2061, p. 727b18-21.

[301] 「形擁腫而短，然其性情酋勇，」(T50, no. 2061, p. 727b17).

> residence in the Anguo Temple and lecture on the Three Treatises. Accordingly, Yuankang composed commentaries unraveling the principles of the *Treatise on the Middle Way*, and separately wrote The *Axis of Mysteries* in two volumes. He comprehensively elucidated the doctrinal points of the *Treatise on the Middle Way*, the *Treatise in a Hundred Verses*, and the *Treatise in Twelve Gateways*. We do not know what came of him in the end.[302]

This passage shows several things. For one, it is another indication that not only the discussant could challenge the lecturing master. It also shows that dexterity in debate was a highly valued skill—in the case of Yuankang, we read not only of the praise by the audience but also of the subsequent support offered to him by the imperial court.

The brief retelling we get of Yuankang's exchange with the lecturer also illustrates some of the points about reading the biographies that I made in the opening of this chapter. A first issue that plagues us is that part of the exchange remains obscure; witty references have become inaccessible. The issue that to me seems more serious is that it is precisely such witticisms that the historical record is predisposed to transmit. The impression may arise that the back-and-forth between an exegete and his discussant or some member of the audience was a bullying exchange of quips and insults that had little to do with serious doctrinal discussion.[303]

This is exactly how John Kieschnick depicts debate among the exegetes. Honing in on the martial language that surrounds mention of debate in the biographies, he suggests that the biographies "have little to say for cool-headed reasoning" and that "debate in the *Biographies* is marked instead by heated, emotional attacks, often of a very personal nature."[304] Insofar as this is meant only to apply to the evidence of the GSZ-materials as such, this depiction is, of course, accurate; to that extent, after all, he is simply reporting on the text. Kieschnick concludes that "the ideal of a skilled monastic debater was based on the model of battle rather than dialogue and took as its goal a crushing victory rather than subtle persuasion."[305] Though it is undeniable that such rhetoric surrounds reports on Chinese Buddhist disputation in the biographies, we have to keep in mind that many factors were at play in the compilation of the biographies. If we keep this caveat in mind and also look at other types of evidence, we find reason to believe that they were more than mere displays of wittiness; that they were opportunities for high-level doctrinal discussion.

The anecdote of Yuankang's debate is a good example of this. Zanning first notes that he went back and forth multiple times with the lecturer, in each case building arguments

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[302] I am grateful to Jackson Macor for his translation of this passage, which I have adopted here with only minor changes.「意為戲弄：說有之徒不達空性，我與輕軸碾之，令悟真理。又衣大布，曳納播，戴竹笠，笠寬丈有二尺。裝飾詭異，人皆駭觀。既入京城，見一法師盛集講經化導。康造其筵，近其座，便就所講義申問，往返數百言，人咸驚康之辯給如此。復戲法師曰：「甘桃不結實，苦李壓低枝。」講者曰：「輪王千箇子，巷伯勿孫兒。」蓋譏康之無生徒也。康曰：「丹之藏者赤，漆之藏者黑，隨汝之赤者非縑絳焉，入汝之黑者非鉛墨焉。」舉眾皆云：「辭理渙然，可非垂跡之大士也？」帝聞之，喜曰：「何代無其人？」詔入安國寺講此《三論》。遂造疏，解中觀之理。別撰《玄樞》兩卷，總明《中》、《百》、《門》之宗旨焉。後不測其終。」(T50, no. 2061, p. 727b22-c6). This story is partially paraphrased by Kieschnick (1997: 126-127).

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[304] Kieschnick 1997: 125. He discusses the martial metaphors surrounding debate (1997: 125-126).

[305] Kieschnick 1997: 127.

hundreds of words long. Yet, all that remains are the few pithy lines exchanged at the end of the debate. Nevertheless, it is the *entire* debate that is the cause of Yuankang's fame and the appreciation shown to him by the emperor, not merely the witty exchange.[306] If Zanning's account stresses the playful putdown that ends the debate, this may, I suspect, represent not his ideal of what a debater should look like but rather be the result of the collective memory as well as of aesthetic conventions. An account of the paragraph-length arguments that Yuankang exchanges with his opponent was likely never transmitted in the sources upon which Zanning drew in compiling the SGSZ for several reasons. It was likely not as memorable; it surely lacked the punch, it was too long for the biographical genre(s), or also, as I suggest below, because that type of material was proper to another genre. Whatever the exact set of reasons that led Zanning to present the anecdote in the way he did, representing an ideal debater was not the only one. In any case, even insofar as it was at play, it may also not be tightly correlated with the number of words dedicated to a given aspect of an anecdote. While Zanning comments but briefly on the largest part of the debate in this anecdote, it clearly carries weight and represents an ideal: Yuankang is praised for his "eloquence and dexterity in discussion."

What, then, *can* we infer about the practice of debate in Sui-Tang Buddhism? Were debates marked mostly by personal attacks and witty insults? Or was there space for cool-headed doctrinal reasoning? (And might those two options be a false dichotomy?) To answer these questions, we have to supplement the evidence from the biographies with other sources. In the next chapter I shall discuss evidence for disputation found in the commentaries and other scholastic texts. Just as they retain elements of their oral background, they preserve traces of the debates that happened at lectures.[307] The commentaries often include extended portions of questions and answers that I argue we can best understand as representing, even if indirectly, actual disputations—not, that is, as a mere literary conceit. There are also a few texts that present only question and answer, with one particular manuscript transcribing a disputation involving several known masters. I will discuss these sources and how we can approach them at the end of the next chapter, returning also to some further examples in Chapter 4. In these cases, ad hominem arguments are almost completely absent and instead we find extended engagement with issues of interpretation and doctrine.

Further, circumstantial support for the practice of disputation among the Sui and Tang Buddhist exegetes comes from Japanese materials. In a series of articles as well as a monograph, Asuka Sango has discussed debate practice in Heian 平安 period Japan (794-1185), with her earliest materials dating to the ninth century.[308] The picture that emerges from the material she presents, is one of a system of examinations, testing monks for their skill in lecturing and debate. A record of actual debates held in 1191 CE cited by Sango show the debaters deeply engaged with doctrinal issues, citing prooftexts, and pushing for clarity and consistency.[309] Based on her translations, in fact, the debates seem bereft of any levity.

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[306] That is how Kieschnick represents the story (1997: 127).

[307] Cp. Mou 1960: 24; Plassen 2004: 602.

[308] Sango 2011, 2012, 2015, esp. chapter 2.

[309] Sango cites from the *Record of Questions and Answers Discussed at the Golden Light Lecture* (*Saishōkō mondōki* 最勝講問答記) by the scholar-monk Sōshō 宗性 (1202– 1278) of Tōdaiji Temple 東大寺. It records debate sessions held between 1191 and 1261. For textual information, see Sango (2015: 147 n. 50; 2012 esp. pp. 250-251, 263-264).

After citing her examples, Sango offers some observations on what they reveal about Buddhist debate in premodern Japan. She emphasizes the high academic expectations of the participating monks and the describes the debate ritual as posing an "intellectual challenge."[310] "These debates," she notes more specifically, "were essentially an exegetical exercise revolving around quotations from canonical Buddhist texts." [311] Furthermore, bringing to mind the role of memory in the scholastic context, to "perform successfully in a debate, a monk needed to be able to recall relevant texts and passages and the manner in which they were explained in relevant commentaries. For example, when the questioner raised a question, the lecture master was supposed to know which text and to which part of that text the questioner was referring."[312] Given other evidence suggestive of debate among the Chinese exegetes, I think we can assume that the Japanese inherited at least some of their practice from them, even if in specifics the Japanese debate style may have developed differently.

Though the evidence from the Japanese case by itself is not conclusive, coupled with the hints in the biographies as well as the materials in the written commentaries a picture emerges that is consonant with scholastic practice around the globe. Whatever other conventions and aims were at play in their lecturing (and writing), the central function of the lectures was to transmit Buddhist scriptures and the interpretative skills they require. They served a pedagogical purpose. Certainly, lectures were also governed by expectations regarding eloquent delivery. When it comes to written commentaries, we can still appreciate the poetic elegance of, for example, Chengguan's compositions. Yet, a good commentary was not just a good piece of poetry; a lecture must have been more than an eloquent rambling on a text. In that vein, I suggest that while jokes and insults were appreciated as part of the debate culture—celebrated in the *Biographies*—debate as a whole had the same basic functions as lectures. Thus, we may assume that similar modes of reasoning were applied, and that the goal was not simply personal victory, but that debaters sought to sharpen their understanding of the Buddhist scriptures and pushed each other to come up with better ways of representing the Buddha's teachings. That people got involved in this game personally, feeling embarrassed to lose and proud at victory, need not surprise us. That is what happens with games. Debaters in the Tibetan scholastic tradition, as Georges Dreyfus recounts, get immersed in the game and identify with their team, even as the rules for debate are highly formalized.[313] Of course, in modern academia too, debates are standard fare; while people certainly "lose" and "win" these debates, and we fondly remember moves that were especially witty, the overall goal of the participants is an increased understanding (or truth, however that is understood). If these parallel cases apply and the intuitions are sound, the debates of the scholar-monks were for the most part scholarly arguments, using various modes of reasoning—logic, prooftexts—to analyze and interpret the scriptures. While debaters were appreciated for introducing levity, eloquence was the capacity to construct and express arguments.

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[310] Sango 2015: 41.
[311] Ibid.: 40.
[312] Ibid.
[313] Dreyfus (2003: 219-221, 261-263). Kieschnick, in his main prose juxtaposes the emotional involvement of Chinese debaters with, he implies, logical, cool-headed reasoning on the part of the Tibetan debaters; in a footnote, however, he points to literature that suggests that Tibetan debaters, too, get emotionally involved and then comments "Adherence to logic does not, after all, preclude a personal investment in the argument" (1997: 183-184 n. 65).

As we saw already in the example of Yuankang, exegetes were lauded for their ability in debate. In fact, it seems to have been understood not just as a nice skill to have, but as an essential aspect of the exegete's craft. As such, I think we must assume that debate-training, in some form or another, was part of the intellectual training of young monks. Indeed, one anecdote cited by Mou suggests that the ability to raise challenges and debate a lecturer were seen as requirements for one to start lecturing oneself.[314] Mou also cites an anecdote where a master dies as a result of being humiliated in debate.[315] Though extreme, the story underscores that, as Mou puts it:

> Whenever someone lectured on a sūtra, (*jiang jing* 講經), there must have been interaction with the audience [lit., "questions and answers," *wenda* 問答], there must have been challenges and objections. If one had no answer when asked a question, no response when challenged, then one was not fit to be a Dharma-master. As this story shows, this was even more important than one's very life.[316]

Conclusion

In important respects, then, the practice of the Sui-Tang scholiasts runs parallel to that of scholiasts in other cultures. Their engagement with texts combined the devotional and liturgical with the contemplative and intellectual; it relied, moreover, on memorization. Their own textual compositions, we saw as well, stemmed from the classroom environment. Pedagogy and specifically the role of memorization explain much of the style and format of their writings, as I will discuss in Chapter 3. There, I also return to the evidence for disputation, as well as to my suggestion that exegetes often lectured on scriptures by using their predecessors' commentaries. I have also suggested that some of the evidence in the biographies suggests that, just as in other scholastic cultures, the Sui-Tang exegetes divided their studies into different fields of study centered around scriptures rather than abstract knowledge. I develop this suggestion more fully in Chapter 5.

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[314] Mou 1960: 25-26; the story cited is found at T50, no. 2059, p. 370c13-18.

[315] Mou 1960: 26, though note that Mou's citation of the story is off by one fascicle; it is found at T50, no. 2060, p. 519a29-b5.

[316] 惟講經必有問答，必有辯難，問而不能答，辯而不能酬，則不足以爲法師，其重要有逾生命，於此故事中見之矣。Mou 1960: 26.

Chapter 3 — Dividing Texts and Organizing Commentaries

Introduction

The primary remnant of Sui-Tang Buddhist scholasticism is a large textual corpus. As we have seen, these texts are closely related to the scholastic classroom, to some extent recording or representing occasions of teaching, but in any case resting on similar pedagogical principles and practices. Reading this textual corpus against the background sketched in the preceding two chapters, we can discern traces of those principles and practices, such as their hermeneutics, their use of tools such as doxographies, their practical engagement of memory, and their practice of disputation. Looking at the Sui-Tang exegetes' works in this fashion, we see clearly that whatever their differences, they participated in a single culture—one overarching intellectual conversation. We see, that is, that these scholiasts shared conventions of composition, sets of themes to be discussed, and a curriculum that they studied and took for granted.

Discerning such traces in the scholastic texts is the aim of this chapter and to do so, I present a broad, but partial, survey of the literature. Rather than the content of their thought, the object of these investigations will be the scholiasts' thinking's style, themes, and sources. These exercises in distant reading will hopefully open up fresh ways of making sense of the Sui-Tang corpus. This chapter, I should emphasize, presents a broad, synchronic look. I leave aside here issues of historical development and change. Within the timeframe under consideration here, I believe most of the genre-conventions were stable. That holds true even if there is evidence suggesting that certain conventions become more stable or that some genres fell into disuse.[317] Moreover, ultimately my interest here is not in the conventions themselves but in what they reveal about the living world behind the texts.

This chapter consists of three parts. In the first, we look at the organization and general content of the most important and most voluminous genre: the scriptural commentaries. Throughout this section I draw on texts by various exegetes. At its core is a synopsis of one commentary, Chengguan's *Commentary on the Avataṃsaka Sūtra,* to illustrate what these texts look like. I then compare its organization with that of other commentators. This shows that, being part of a single culture, they worked creatively within the same conventions. I next consider several pedagogical aspects of scholasticism exemplified in the commentarial texts.

In the second part of this chapter, I survey several other types of scholastic writings. As it is not feasible within the scope of this dissertation to discuss and classify all their genres, this chapter is a prolegomenon to that eventual effort.[318] I first discuss several digests, which

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[317] Both suggestions—of crystallization and of disuse—are based on my own impressions of the corpus and relate, respectively, to the themes to be discussed in full-fledged commentaries and to the fading of the inclusion of extended disputations in polished commentaries. The evidence for neither is perfect as it is, and we must keep in mind, as I point out below, at the start of the second part of this chapter, that the textual corpus has serious limitations.

[318] To some extent, we can already find some limited discussions of different genres in the work of some modern scholars (e.g., Kanno & Felbur 2015; Plassen 2004). However, one issue with these attempts so far is the tendency to take certain elements in the titles of works as indicative of genres—e.g., such characters as *shu* 疏, *xuan* 玄, and *lun* 論—as though titles are a reliable indicator of genre. While this intuition is not wholly misguided—*shu*, for example, are indeed often full commentaries—its application has severe limitations. To

I suggest were likely used for memorization. I also return to my suggestion in Chapter 2 that Sui-Tang scholiasts often used other exegetes' commentaries as the foundation for their lectures on a given scripture. Third, I briefly discuss texts that are not directly associated with a single scripture. I argue that those are nevertheless still to be understood within the overarching scholastic project of transmitting the tradition's scriptures.

Lastly, I explore some of the textual evidence for disputation in Sui-Tang Buddhism in the third part of the chapter. Here, I will draw both on texts that only represent debate as well as extended question-and-answer sections in commentarial texts. I suggest that even if it is nearly impossible for us to get a direct look at the content of debates, such textual materials still give us a sense of the types of questions that were asked and the parameters within which one might answer. I conclude this section with observations on the conventions of Sui-Tang Buddhist disputation.

Part I: Complete and Thematic Commentaries

(Introductory Comments)

The literary products of the Sui-Tang exegetes underscore the claim that the archetypal genre of scholastic writings is the commentary. Though, as discussed in Part II below, they also composed other texts such as short doctrinal tracts and encyclopedias as well, these are dwarfed in comparison with their output in the form of commentaries. Moreover, as I shall argue below, those texts are best understood as deriving from the commentaries, supplementing them as study-aids. In approaching the Sui-Tang commentaries here, we will look primarily at their organization.

We may divide the commentarial genre into three subtypes. All of these include higher-order thematic discussions, which will play a central role below. Some include as an extra topic a line-by-line exposition of the scripture at hand. I refer to these as "expository commentaries." I will call commentaries lacking the line-by-line exposition "thematic commentaries."[319] The third type falls in-between these two, discussing the scripture not line by line but chapter by chapter.

This brief outline already reminds us of commentaries in other scholastic cultures. In Chapter 1, I discussed how commentarial texts throughout the world tend to treat a series of general topics before they expound the scripture in question line by line. These topics are often the same, often treating its purpose, its place in the canon, its history, and its author. As Martens suggests, speaking of the Antioch context, the treatment of such topics stems from the classroom: before going through a text word by word, teachers would give their students an overall sense of the text at hand.[320] As we will see below, the themes treated by Sui-Tang exegetes are remarkably similar.

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begin with, many full commentaries, to stick with the example, are not called *shu*. More importantly, many types of texts, especially those beyond commentaries, do not identify themselves by elements aspects of their title.

[319] These terms are intended only provisionally. I am hesitant to follow the scholarly convention of equating these two genres with writings called *xuan* 玄 and *shu* 疏, respectively, even though this is to some extent legitimate. On this topic see, for example, Plassen (2004: 598); and Kanno & Felbur (2015). While these terms are indeed regularly used in titles of the type of writing I have in mind, we also find other terms used instead—e.g., *zan* 贊/讚, literally "praise." For useful comments on both of these genres, see Plassen (2003: 270–71; 2010: 76–77).

[320] 2017: 20-22.

On the face of it, there may be nothing of interest in the way the Chinese Buddhist scholiasts organized their commentaries. Scholars have noted the general tenor of these divisions as well as some of their history before.[321] What more, one might ask, is there to say about them? Indeed, I should emphasize that I do not believe that we need a special explanation for either the fact that Sui-Tang scholiasts divided their writings in this way, or for the fact that these divisions are standardized to some extent. After all, we modern scholars also break our writing up into different sections: "acknowledgments," "introduction," and, after the body of the work, "conclusions" and "footnotes." Yet, a consideration of these modern divisions shows exactly why studying such divisions is of interest for understanding the culture that produces them.

To stick with the modern example for the moment, we may note that on some level, the reason for the standardization of these divisions is trivial: it makes scholarly works easy to use. Nevertheless, these standards are revealing about the sociological and ideological context of the works they govern. For one, they mark boundaries. Scholarly works are indeed easy to consult, but only for those with the proper training. In a similar vein, works that fail to adequately adhere to current standards are quickly perceived as being "on the fringe," regardless of their intellectual rigor. But these standard divisions not only reveal boundaries, they also codify assumptions shared by the academic community. To give a few examples of those: we can see "acknowledgments" as revealing the academic community's value for its own institutional tradition. Meanwhile, the introduction, the literature review it often includes, as well as the conclusion emphasize the new and the original, betraying a concern for intellectual lineage marked by an individualistic conception of the possession of ideas. On a more practical level, we may note the general expectation that the introduction and conclusion capture all of a study's main points, making it possible to quickly judge a book by what lies close to its covers—a feature resulting from the much-bemoaned lack of time for deep and sustained thought in the context of modern academic life.[322] For these same two points do I think we can learn a lot about Sui-Tang Buddhist scholasticism by studying the standard ways in which they organized their commentaries. It teaches us the broad boundaries of the scholiasts as a social group, and it gives us insight into their intellectual practices and concerns.

Thematic Commentaries: Wŏnhyo's Doctrinal Essentials of the Great Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra

A good entry point for discussing the three types of scriptural commentaries in the Sinitic context is Wŏnhyo's *Doctrinal Essentials of the Great Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra.*[323] Besides exemplifying a standard list of topics, this text shows us the close relationship between the two types of commentaries. It also contains some clues as to its possible pedagogical function. Wŏnhyo starts this commentary as follows:

> In explaining this sūtra, we distinguish six gateways:
>
> 1. describing its overall meaning;

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[321] Buswell (2007: 34-35; 2017: 140–41), Kanno (2002); Kanno & Felbur (2015); Jin (2007).

[322] E.g., Berg & Seeber (2016).

[323] *Da huidu jing zongyao* 大慧度經宗要; T1697.). Here and below, I use *pinyin* romanization to transliterate the titles of works by masters who were from Korea and participated in the broader Sinitic Buddhist world, such as Wŏnhyo and Wŏnch'ŭk. While I recognize their unique and important place in the history of Korean Buddhism, the use of a single transliteration system seems most accessible to those who do not read Sinitic characters.

2. revealing its purport;
3. explaining its title;
4. clarifying the situation that gave rise [to this teaching];
5. distinguishing the teachings [i.e., doxography];
6. expounding the text.[324]

This list of sections is consonant with the genre-conventions, as will become clear when we also discuss Chengguan's and other commentaries below. This list suggests two issues we might consider. The first concerns the relation between the different topics in the outline. Many modern scholars of East Asian Buddhism refer to these topics as "introductory" or as constituting a "preface."[325] I avoid these terms because, as Wŏnhyo's example just cited shows, the exegetes themselves do not mark these thematic sections as introductory. Rather, in their own outlines, they treat the line-by-line commentary section as on par with each of the individual thematic discussions. Indeed, texts such as Wŏnhyo's contain *only* these thematic discussions.[326] If their text does include a preface (*xu* 序) this precedes the thematic sections. Moreover, in their own outlines, the exegetes treat the line-by-line commentary section as on par with each of the individual thematic discussions. I have described scholasticism as being concerned with the transmission of (knowledge about) scripture, and these thematic discussions show us what the Sui-Tang exegetes considered to be *integral* knowledge in regard to their various scriptures.

Second, we should ask whether this is an expository commentary or only a thematic commentary. Based on this outline alone, we might judge this text to be an instance of the former. In actuality, however, the text does not include a line-by-line discussion. Instead, when we reach section six, Wŏnhyo says:

> **Section 6: Analyzing the text.**
> The extensive explanation is as [given] in the *Treatise [on the Great Perfection of Wisdom]*."[327]

This, rather abruptly, concludes the text. No actual line-by-line commentary follows. It is only a thematic commentary.

We might pause here for a moment to reflect on the function of this genre. The text, of course, clearly aimed to communicate knowledge about the *Great Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra*. Yet, the ending makes it clear that the audience for whom Wŏnhyo wrote had more than basic facility with the Buddhist intellectual tradition—after all, they are to consult *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* on their own. It may well have been a study-guide. Given my emphasis in the previous chapter on the oral background of much of the commentarial literature, it may have been a study-guide with a very specific aim: to help lecturers prepare for lecturing on this scripture. With this context, we can translate the line

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[324] 「將說此經，六門分別：初、述大意；次、顯經宗；三、釋題名；四、明緣起；五者、判教；六者、消文。」(T33, no. 1697, p. 68b22-23).

[325] E.g., Jin (2007); Buswell (2007: 34–35; 2017: 140–41).

[326] Another example, also by Wŏnhyo, is the *Doctrinal Essentials of the Lotus Sūtra* (*Fahua zongyao* 法華宗要; T1725).

[327] 「第六消文。依論廣釋。」 (T33, no. 1697, p. 74, a3). Given the context, I take *lun* 論 here as referring to the *Da zhidu lun* attributed by the Chinese tradition to Nāgārjuna.

that ends the commentary slightly differently—less static and more in line with the Chinese grammar.

> **Section 6: Analyzing the text.**
> Explain it extensively according to the *Treatise [on the Great Perfection of Wisdom]*."[328]

A would-be lecturer on the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* would have needed an example for two things, broadly speaking. First, he needed to be able to present the appropriate thematic discussions of the text and the interpretative tradition(s) of interpretation that had grown around it. Second, he would have to learn how to explain the scripture's technical terms and doctrinal moves. For the latter purpose, the DZDL would have served as a great resource, assuming our would-be lecturer had had enough training to make sense of that text. For the former, the DZDL would have been less useful. Although it contains much material relevant to the thematic discussions, for which it is an important source, it does not present these topics following the conventions as they had been crystallizing within China. Wŏnhyo's text, therefore, makes a lot of sense if read as a template for giving lectures on the sūtra.

As this brief look at Wŏnhyo's thematic commentary on the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* shows, a cursory look at these texts already suggests much of interest regarding the Buddhist scholiasts of the Sui and Tang dynasties. The brief synopsis of Chengguan's *Commentary on the Avataṃsaka Sūtra* provided below will illustrate the content of the various themes. When we then zoom out again, laying the themes treated in his commentary side by side with those treated by Wŏnhyo and others, such as Fazang and Wŏnch'ŭk, we can meaningfully compare these commentaries. This exercise will show the extent to which these exegetes adhered to the same norms and conventions in their compositions, indicating that they participated in a single scholastic world. Moreover, it will illustrate that world's intellectual concerns as well as their tools for thought.

The text under consideration here, Chengguan's *Commentary on the Avataṃsaka Sūtra,* is a well-crafted literary work. Indeed, it is a highpoint of scholastic composition in the Tang. Stylistically, we may note its poetic expressions and abundant use of parallel prose. Chengguan's careful editing is also clear from the internal cross-references within the work. It shows, moreover, in his consistency and the way he closely follows the divisions he outlines for his text. Still, given what we saw in Chapter 2, I believe we should see this text not merely as a fine literary document but also as a window into the scholastic classroom. As we learn from the SGSZ, Chengguan's extensive commentary originated in his preparations for lecturing on the sūtra. Barring some miraculous manuscript discovery, we will never learn exactly the relationship between the original notes, his oral delivery, and the editorial process by which he wrote his commentary as we have it. Maybe those notes were quite rough, consisting mostly of outlines and shorthand for topics to address. Or maybe the *Commentary* is in fact very close to the original notes, composed and written out as a way to organize the material in his mind before giving the oral expositions. The exact process will remain obscure to us. Nevertheless, both in its origin and by its participation in the commentarial genre-conventions, the *Commentary* is close to the oral classroom. Thus, even if we should not read it as a transcript of what he may have said or wanted to say, it still illuminates for us what transpired

[328] 「第六消文。依論廣釋。」 (T33, no. 1697, p. 74a3).

in Sui-Tang scholastic lecture series. Its intentional composition, meanwhile, makes it an even clearer exemplar of scholastic style.

One of the features that the *Commentary* shares with many high marks of scholasticism throughout the world is its density. In many passages it is at one extreme end of the "accordion-effect" mentioned in Chapter 1, collapsing information into the briefest remarks. Helpfully, Chengguan's *Subcommentary* fills much of this out. In the synopsis below, I base myself in principle on the *Commentary* by itself. Where necessary, however, I may refer to passages in the *Subcommentary*.

Synopsis of Chengguan's *Commentary*

The Opening and Outline

Chengguan's *Commentary* opens with a brief preface (*xu* 序). With its refined literary Chinese, it partakes in the genre of prefaces found at the beginning of much of premodern Chinese elite writing. Next, Chengguan presents a verse of homage to the three jewels of Buddhism: Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha. This feature of his text follows Indian precedent; it is found in Indic Buddhist commentaries and found in some, though not all, commentaries by Chengguan's predecessors. He then outlines the ten divisions—or "gateways" (*men* 門) as he calls them—of his commentary.

> In explaining the meaning of this sūtra, we will open up ten gateways:
>
> 1. the causes and conditions that gave rise to this teaching;
> 2. the basket and teaching to which it belongs;
> 3. the division of the doctrines;
> 4. the intended audience of this teaching;
> 5. the medium of the message from shallow to profound;
> 6. the purport and the intent, universal and specific;
> 7. the chapters and assemblies of the different versions;
> 8. the transmission and translation as well as miraculous responses;
> 9. a thorough explanation of the sūtra's title;
> 10. the line-by-line explanation of the meaning of the text.[329]

Gateway 1: The Causes and Conditions that Gave Rise to This Teaching[330]

The first topic is an exposition on the reasons why the Buddha taught the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. In keeping with that sūtra's predilection for lists of ten, Chengguan gives ten primary causes and ten supporting conditions because of which the Buddha taught this scripture. Foremost among these is that it is simply the natural course of affairs that buddhas teach this scripture after their awakening (cause no. 1). More specifically, it is based on causes created when practicing as a bodhisattva in previous lives (no. 2), and it is how he naturally responds to the capacities of his audience (no. 3). Furthermore, he wishes to reveal the splendor of Buddhahood (no. 5), to expound the stages of practice (no. 6) and the excellence of practice (no. 7), and to help his contemporaries and those in later times (no. 10). The ten conditions

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[329]「將釋經義。總啟十門。一教起因緣。二藏教所攝。三義理分齊。四教所被機。五教體淺深。六宗趣通局。七部類品會。八傳譯感通。九總釋經題。十別解文義 。」(T35, no. 1735, p. 503, c6-9).

[330] T35, no. 1735, p. 503, c10-p. 506, c24.

are more concrete, including such aspects as the timing of the teaching (no. 1), the place of its delivery (no. 2), the type of Buddha-body that spoke it (no. 3), the different omens preceding each chapter (no. 5), and the requests made by the interlocutors (no. 9).

Gateway 2: The Basket and Teaching[331]

In the second section, Chengguan discusses the place of the sūtra in the Buddhist canon and in relation to other Buddhist teachings. First, he offers a broad view of the entire Buddhist canon and the different ways of dividing it.[332] He primarily relies on four Indian Buddhist scholastic works: the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha,*[333] the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*,[334] the *Treatise on the Sūtra on the Buddhas' Abode,*[335] and the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom.*[336,337] Chengguan notes that the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, properly speaking, belongs to the *sūtra-piṭaka*, the "basket of discourses." But, he adds, we can also find elements that fit the other two traditional Buddhist "baskets" or collections of teachings: passages that emphasize ethical discipline, consonant with the content of the *vinaya-piṭaka*, and those that treat aspects of higher Buddhist learning, relating to the *abhidharma-piṭaka.*

When Chengguan locates the sūtra's teachings vis-à-vis other teachings found in the Buddhist canon, he takes us on a journey through a range of different doxographies proposed by various Buddhist masters (known in much of the scholarship by the Chinese term *panjiao* 判教). He cites a variety of opinions, grouped in a variety of ways, some anonymous and some named. For example, he gives the doxographies composed by Indian masters who had come to China, as well as those composed by Chinese masters.[338] He then dwells on two doxographies formulated by the Indian masters Śīlabhadra (Chinese: Jiexian 戒賢, 529–645) and Jñānaprabha (Zhiguang 智光, dates unknown) offering, respectively, doxographies that prioritize the Yogācāra teachings of the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*, or the emptiness teachings of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*.[339] Throughout this entire discussion, Chengguan provides

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[331] T35, no. 1735, p. 506, c24.

[332] T35, no. 1735, p. 506, c25–507c21.

[333] *She dasheng lun* 攝大乘論; T1593, T1594.

[334] *Dasheng zhuangyan jing lun* 大乘莊嚴經論; T1604.

[335] *Fodi jing lun* 佛地經論; T1530.

[336] *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論; T1509.

[337] Readers may note that I treat the last of these four, the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, as an Indian text. I am aware of the dispute regarding the origin of this text, including speculation that it originated in the circles of the translator Kumārajīva (344-413). However, the important points in this context are, firstly, that the Chinese exegetes understood this text to be of Indian provenance and, secondly, that its contents are indeed for the most part consonant with Indian Buddhism. Note that, in his posthumously published study, Stefano Zacchetti takes its Indian origin as a given (Zacchetti 2021).

[338] The masters who came from India include Bodhiruci (Chinese: Putiliuzhi 菩提流志, 572?-727), Kumārajīva (Jiumoluoshi 鳩摩羅什; 344-413), Dharmakṣema (Tanwuchen 曇無讖, 385–433), and Paramārtha (Zhendi 眞諦, 499–569). The masters from China include Huisi 慧思 (515-577) and Zhiyi 智顗 (538-597), the hermit Liu Qiu 劉虯 (438-495), Guangzhai 光宅 (i.e. Fayun 法雲; 467-529), and Xuanzang 玄奘 (602-664), as well as Fazang's disciple Huiyuan 慧苑 (673-743?). Chengguan also refers to Wŏnhyo 元曉 (617-686) as "Dharma Master Wŏnhyo from East of the Sea [i.e. Korea] of the early Tang" 「唐初海東元曉法師」 (T35, no. 1735, p. 510a20).

[339] The first report on the doxographies of these two masters is by Fazang, who states that he learned it from an Indian scholar-monk Divākara (Rizhao 日照); see e.g. T35, no. 1733, p. 111c8 ff.; T42, no. 1826, p. 213, a5 ff.) Interestingly, Chengguan notes that these two doxographies correspond to what he refers to as the Dharma-nature Tenet and the Dharma-Characteristics Tenet (T35, no. 1735, p. 510, b23-24).

citations from a variety of canonical texts as illustrations of different doctrines and/or to highlight problems with different doxographies.

After this thorough overview, Chengguan devotes a separate section to explaining in detail the fivefold doxography articulated by Fazang 法藏 (643-712). At the very outset of this discussion, though, he notes:

> If one divides the teachings based on their doctrines, there are five types of teachings. This is [the system] established by Xianshou [i.e. Fazang] and is extensively explained in a separate text.[340] It is mostly the same as that of [Zhiyi of] Tiantai, but it adds the sudden teaching (*dunjiao* 頓教).[341]

Chengguan is suggesting here that the choice for the fivefold scheme is somewhat arbitrary. This is echoed in the final part of his discussion of the doxographies. There, he shows that we can synthesize all the approaches.[342]

Gateway 3: The Division of the Doctrines[343]

The content of the third gate is not clear from its title, which suggests a doxographical discussion. In a way, this section is a continuation of that topic. Chengguan here gives a more elaborate account of the highest teaching according to Fazang's fivefold scheme, the teaching that he takes the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* to exemplify.[344] He illustrates this with citations mostly from the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra,* but also from the *Mahāparinirvāṅa Sūtra*,[345] the *Commentary on the Mahāyānasaṃgraha*,[346] and the *Treatise on the Ten Grounds Sūtra*.[347]

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[340] This might also be read as plural, but it seems likely that it refers to Fazang's *Avataṃsaka Essay on the Five Teachings* (*Huayan wujiao zhang* 華嚴五教章; T1866; transl. Cook 1970).

[341] 「以義分教。教類有五。即賢首所立。廣有別章。大同天台。但加頓教。」(T35, no. 1735, p. 512, b15-16). I take *tiantai* 天台 here as a metonym for Zhiyi.

[342] As he says himself, "even though we now establish the five [teachings], we can also combine the various explanations" 「今雖立五。亦會取諸說。」 (T35, no. 1735, p. 513, a25).

[343] T35, no. 1735, p. 514, a4–5.

[344] This amounts to an exposition of the various ways to talk about the perfect teaching, to think about the relations between phenomena (*shi* 事) and principles (*li* 理).

[345] "The *Nirvāṅa Sūtra* says, 'Buddha-nature is the ultimate truth of emptiness. The ultimate truth of emptiness is wisdom." 「故涅槃云。佛性名第一義空。第一義空名為智慧。」(T35, no. 1735, p. 514, b8-9; the original passage is at T12, no. 375, p. 767, c18-19).

[346] "Therefore, the *Treatise* says, 'In a dream, a year might pass. / Awake, and it was but a moment. / So, though immeasurable time might be, / A mere *kṣaṅa* encompasses all." (A *kṣaṅa* is very brief moment of time. Some sources suggest that it is 1/65th of the duration of the snap of a finger.) 「故論云。處夢謂經年。覺乃須臾[6]頃。故時雖無量。攝在一剎那。」(T35, no. 1735, p. 517, b24–26; the original passage is at T31, no. 1598, p. 419, a8-9).

[347] T35, no. 1735, p. 516, b12-13. This citation is most likely via Fazang. The original, worded quite differently, is in the *Treatise on the Ten Stages Sūtra* (*Shidi jing lun* 十地經論; T1522) at T26, no. 1522, p. 170, b19-20. Fazang cites this passage multiple times in the same form as Chengguan; sometimes he notes the source (e.g. T45, no. 1866, p. 502, b28-29). He cites this passage, too, in his commentary on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (T35, no. 1733, p. 124, b3-4). Since the context is here the same as Chengguan's, and because Chengguan echoes Fazang's subsequent comments nearly verbatim, it seems more than likely that Chengguan got this citation via Fazang's commentary.

Gateway 4: The Intended Audience[348]

In this short section, Chengguan lists a total of ten types of people: the first five are *not* the intended audience of the scripture; the second five are. While the latter list starts with a very limited audience consisting of those bodhisattvas who are at the level of the Perfect Teaching, it continues to include—in reverse order, making for a chiastic structure—all those who were listed in the former list of five. In this way, those who will end up slandering the text are listed as the first type of audience for whom the text is not intended. Yet, since having encountered the text will ultimately be a good influence on them in the long run, they are also listed as the tenth audience. In other words, the sūtra is appropriate for everyone. Throughout this discussion, Chengguan finds quotations from the sūtra as prooftexts, notably for the elements in both lists.

Gateway 5: The Medium of the Message: From Shallow to Profound[349]

In this section, Chengguan gives an account of the "substance" (*ti* 體) of the teachings. This is not, however, a discussion of the teachings themselves—not, that is, a discussion of their philosophical essence. Rather, this section treats the medium through which the teachings reach us.[350] Chengguan's discussion consists, once again, of ten sections. The first few of these engage this issue quite concretely, using Buddhism's technical discourse, drawn from *abhidharma* and *śāstra* literature, to discuss the nature of language, meaning, text, and, more specifically, the nature of the Buddha's speech. This shifts with the fifth section, where Chengguan states that *all* phenomena are media for the Buddhist teachings—after all, they all exemplify its truths. In a similar vein, the sixth section takes on the issue from the perspective of idealist discourse found in Yogācāra sources, analyzing what it means to hear the teachings if everything, including the teachings, are present within one's mind to begin with. The remaining subsections continue, along similar lines, to engage ever more profound perspectives in the analysis of the nature of the teachings.

Gateway 6: The Purport and the Intent, Universal and Specific[351]

This section consists of two parts. In the first, Chengguan offers a tenfold doxography that outlines the purport of the entirety of the Buddha's teachings. The first four deal with different Hīnayāna schools, such as Pudgalavāda, Sārvāstivāda, and Mahāsaṃghika. In the second of these four he also refers to a text from the Indian philosophical Sāṃkhya school,[352] as well as Confucian and Daoist texts.[353]

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[348] T35, no. 1735, p. 517, c21 ff.
[349] T35, no. 1735, p. 518, b9 ff.
[350] See Cho, *Language and Meaning*, for a treatment of this genre of discussions among Tang dynasty exegetes.
[351] T35, no. 1735, p. 521, a2 ff.
[352] He references in passing the *Treatise on the Seventy Golden Verses* (*Jin qishi lun* 金七十論) at T35, no. 1735, p. 521, b19. That text (T2137), translated by Paramārtha, is a commentary on the *Sāṃkhya kārikā*.
[353] He says, after enumerating doctrines found in some of the Hīnayāna abhidharma-systems, that "in this land [i.e. China], the two teachings of the Confucians and the Daoists are also none other than this" 「此方儒道二教亦不出此」 (T35, no. 1735, p. 521, b3). He goes on to cite from the *Daode jing* (*Laozi* 老子/*Laozi daode jing* 老子道經) and the *Book of Changes* (*Zhou yi* 周易). In the *Subcommentary*, Chengguan expands on those comments and also cites from the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (see T35, no. 1736, p. 103, c2 ff.).

In the second part, Chengguan focuses on the thrust of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* specifically. He first lists ten opinions of previous exegetes.[354] The tenth and final opinion is that of Fazang, according to whom the intent is "the dharma realm, causal arising, absolute principle, and cause and effect."[355] Chenguan explains at length how Fazang came to this conclusion based on a critical comparison of the previous exegetes' various opinions.[356] Chengguan basically agrees with this account, but also offers a critical note, namely that Fazang does not clearly distinguish the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* from the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*. For this reason, Chengguan adds to Fazang's definition the adjective "inconceivable."[357] Having defined the essence of the sūtra, he then goes on to gloss all the elements thereof.

Gateway 7: The Chapters and Assemblies of the Different Versions[358]

This section consists of four parts. In the first, Chengguan discusses the *Avataṃsaka*'s (legendary) history, recounting different recensions found in the mythical realm of the dragons, and in India. He also discusses the text, expanding the meaning of "text" in various ways, such that it embodies its own teachings. In that vein, for example, all of the Buddha's teachings, all phenomena in fact, *are* the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*.[359]

In the remaining parts, Chengguan approaches the text in ways that feel familiar to the modern scholar as he shows his philological side. In the second part, he compares the number of assemblies that occur in the 60- and 80-fascicle translations of the sūtra.[360] In the third part, he lists a number of sūtras that exist as independent works in the canon but correspond to chapters of the full *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*.[361] He also mentions a number of related texts that do not have a corresponding chapter in the full version and suggests that these should be

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[354] For example, he cites Lingyu 靈裕 (518-605) as having held that the thrust of the text is to clarify the object of the buddhas' awakening: the Dharma-dhātu (T35, no. 1735, p. 521, c25-p. 522, a1). As far as I can tell, no texts by Lingyu have come down to us. Chengguan also cites the opinion of the Indian monk Dharmagupta (Ch. [Damo]jiduo [達摩]笈多; ?-619) who was active as a translator in Chang'an during the Sui dynasty. He held that the thrust of the sūtra is the 42 stages of contemplative practice (T35, no. 1735, p. 522, a7-8). We also find the opinions of unnamed exegetes. Some, for example, held that the thrust is conditioned arising; others that it is consciousness-only (T35, no. 1735, p. 522, a1-4).

[355] 「十賢首以前各互闕故。總以因果緣起理實法界以為宗趣。」(T35, no. 1735, p. 522, a12-13). The surrounding discussion makes clear that these terms are to be treated as four separate items, even if their relation is open to interpretation (and indeed are interpreted in multiple ways by both Fazang and Chengguan). Fazang gives this as the sūtra's thrust in his *Record of the Search for the Mysteries of the Avataṃsaka Sutra* (*Huayan jing tanxuan ji* 華嚴經探玄記; T35, no. 1733, p. 120, a23) and *Outline of the Text and the Meaning of the Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (*Huayan jing wenyi wangmu* 花嚴經文義綱目; T35, no. 1734, p. 495, a19-20).

[356] It seems that the passage in Fazang's commentary is T35, no. 1733, p. 120, a22-28.

[357] T35, no. 1735, p. 522, a22-b3

[358] T35, no. 1735, p. 523, a23 ff.

[359] T35, no. 1735, p. 523, b22 ff.

[360] T35, no. 1735, p. 523, b22 ff.; the *Subcommentary* is much more extensive and detailed here: see T36, no. 1736, p. 110, c2 ff.

[361] T35, no. 1735, p. 523, c1-9. Modern scholars call these texts "proto-*Buddhāvataṃsaka*" based on the understanding that the larger text is the result of the coming together of various independent texts into the larger sūtra: see e.g. Nattier, "Indian Antecedents"). Chengguan understands the relationship the other way around: the shorter texts are offshoots circulating independently. He notes, "Such texts as these are all received according to the [capacities of the] recipients, [like] branches coming forth from a large trunk." 「此等並是隨器受持大本支出。」(T35, no. 1735, p. 523, c9).

understood as separate but related texts, though he leaves the question open, noting that he has not yet done detailed research.[362]

The fourth part is a brief overview of earlier commentaries. Chengguan mentions two Indian commentaries, namely those attributed to Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu.[363] Next, he mentions two of his Chinese predecessors in the exegesis of the sūtra. Interestingly, he mentions neither Fazang nor any of the exegetes cited above. Rather, he tells of two figures who practiced in the Wutai mountains and were devoted to the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* and who wrote commentaries on it.[364]

Gateway 8: The Transmission and Translation as well as Miraculous Responses[365]

Here, Chengguan first discusses the history of the translation of the text. He treats both the 60- and 80-fascicle versions of the *Avataṃsaka* in Chinese translations, as well as the corrected edition based on the latter. Next, he describes, in refined literary style, the kinds of miracles associated with the text. As he notes at the end, a full account of these is given in the *Record of the Transmission [of the Avataṃsaka Sūtra]*, a text by Fazang.[366]

Gateway 9: A Thorough Explanation of the Sūtra's Title[367]

Moving closer to commenting on the words of the sūtra proper, Chengguan here gives a detailed commentary on its title. He opens this discussion by emphasizing the conventional nature of language, and thus of names and titles. He echoes the *Daode jing* 道德經, a Daoist

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[362] T35, no. 1735, p. 523, c9-12. He mentions here the following three texts. (1) The *Dafangguang fohuayan jing xiuci fen* 大方廣佛花嚴經修慈分 (*Great and Expansive Buddha's Flower Ornament Sūtra's Section on Cultivating Kindness*; T306), translated by Devendraprajña (Ch. Tiyunbore 提雲般若, fl. late 7th century). (2) The *Vajra Garland Sūtra* (*Jingang man jing* 金剛鬘經), the identity of which remains obscure to me; a potential candidate is the *Mahāyāna Section on the Bodhisattva Practice of [King] Vajra Topknot* (*Dasheng jingang jishu pusa xiuxing fen* 大乘金剛髻珠菩薩修行分; T1130). The abbreviation of that title as *Jingang man jing* 金剛鬘經 seems likely enough (bearing in mind that *man* 鬘 and *ji* 髻 are easily mistaken for each other) and the content of that sūtra certainly has the flavor of texts in the *Avataṃsaka* family; moreover, it is listed as *Avataṃsaka*-related in the Tang-dynasty Kaiyuan catalog (T55, no. 2154, p. 569, b16-17). However, that translation (T1130) was done by Bodhiruci (Putiliuzhi 菩提流支; ?-527). In itself this presents no problem, but in a parallel passage to Chengguan's current discussion, Huiyuan (or perhaps rather Fazang) in the *Edited Notes* attributes both of these first two texts to Devendraprajña. (3) The *Great and Expansive Sūtra on the Tathāgata's Inconceivable State* (*Dafangguang rulai busiyi jing* 大方廣如來不思議境界經; T301), translated by Śikṣānanda (*Shichanantuo* 實叉難陀; fl. 7th century). Of this last text, there exists a parallel translation by Devendraprajña (T300).

[363] These are the *Commentary on the Ten Stages Treatise* (*Shi zhu piposha lun* 十住毘婆沙論 ; T1521) attributed to Nāgārjuna and the *Treatise on the Ten Stages Sūtra* (*Shi di jing lun* 十地經論; T1522) attributed to Vasubandhu. As Chengguan notes, both these commentaries only comment on the *Shidi pin* 十地品 ("Ten Grounds Chapter," chapter 26 in T279: T10, no. 279, p. 178, b28).

[364] The former, the lay-hermit Liu Qianzhi 劉謙之 (fl. 6th century during the Northern Qi), wrote a commentary 600 fascicles in length. Fazang tells his story in his *Records of Miracles associated with the Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (see T51, no. 2074, p. 177, c14-20); Chengguan gives his version in his *Subcommentary*: T36, no. 1736, p. 114, b11-20. The latter, Lingbian 靈辯 (477–522), reportedly attained profound insight into the scripture after carrying it on his head for a year and then proceeded to write a commentary in 100 fascicles. Fazang tells his story in his *Records of Miracles* at T51, no. 2074, p. 173, b24-c2; Chengguan's version is at T36, no. 1736, p. 114, b20-c1. To my knowledge, neither commentary survives. For a discussion of miracles stories related to the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra,* see Hamar (2011).

[365] T35, no. 1735, p. 523c22–23 ff.

[366] T2075. Note that Chengguan reproduces much of this material in his *Subcommentary* to the present passage (T36, no. 1736, p. 113, c18 ff.).

[367] T35, no. 1735, p. 524b4 ff.

scripture, as he announces that "within the nameless, I will force an analysis using ten gateways."[368] In the first, the most concrete, he explains the title of this sūtra and some of its chapters in terms of well-established categories—for example, whether the title is based on persons figuring in the text, the content, an analogy, or some combination of the aforementioned.[369] He also gives, in Chinese transliteration, the Sanskrit title of the text along with a literal translation.[370] The remaining nine sections are what we might call exercises in scholastic fractals which function as springboards for more philosophical discussions. He breaks up the title, explains every character (in ten different ways), and matches them with well-known doctrinal lists.

The final part of the explanation of the title treats the title of the first chapter. (He explains the titles of other chapters at the appropriate places in his line-by-line commentary.) Again, Chengguan gives the Sanskrit along with a literal translation.[371] He then glosses each character in the title, leading to minor doctrinal digressions, and ends with a very brief comment on the title of this chapter in the 60-fascicle version of the text.[372]

Beyond Identity and Difference: The Interpenetration of Commentarial Organization

While this synopsis hopefully communicates something of the flavor of Chengguan's *Commentary*, of his erudition and style, it will not be obvious just how it is embedded within commentarial conventions. Once we see those conventions, we understand the exegetes' playful variations.

Although Chengguan's is an original work, in many respects it follows in the footsteps of two works by Fazang: his *Record of the Search for the Mysteries of the Avataṃsaka Sutra*,[373] a commentary on the earlier 60-fascicle translation of the sūtra, and the *Edited Notes on the Avataṃsaka Sūtra*,[374] the commentary on the 80-fascicle translation which was partially written by Fazang and completed by his disciple Huiyuan 慧苑 (673-743?).[375] The outlines of

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[368] 「無名之中。強以十門分別。」(T35, no. 1735, p. 524, b6). Chengguan is alluding to chapter 25 in the *Daode jing*, where we find the phrase 「強為之名曰大。」, "forced to give it a name, I call it 'great'." See also the translation by Ivanhoe (2000: 171).

[369] For some comments on the standard elements in explaining sūtra-titles see Kanno (1994: 315–16) and Kanno & Felbur (2015: 458).

[370] His transliteration is 「摩訶毘佛略勃陀健拏驃訶修多羅」= *Mahā (*mohe*) vaipulya (*pifolüe*) buddha (*botuo*) gaṅḍavyūha (*jiannapiaohe*) sūtra (*xiuduoluo*). He translates this as the *Great and Extensive Buddha's Garland Ornament of Variegated Flowers* 「大方廣佛雜華嚴飾經」; see T35, no. 1735, p. 524, b20-22.

[371] His transliteration is *sa po lu ji yin na lai piao he nai ye bo luo po po na mang bo li wu duo* 薩婆嚕鷄印拏倏驃訶柰耶鉢攞叵婆 娜忙鉢里勿多」= *Sarva (*sa po*) lokendra (*lu ji yin na lai*) vyūha-naya (*piao he-nai ye*) nāma (*na mang*) parivarta (*bo li wu duo*). He translates this as "Chapter Called 'On the Dignity and Virtue Renown of the Adorned Dharma-Gateways of All the Rulers of the World'" 「一切世間主莊嚴法門威德名品」; see T35, no. 1735, p. 526, c1-4. In my translation I take *ming* 名 as representing *nāma* as we (likely) have it in the Sanskrit, which would correspond to a standard title-format in Sanskrit works where *x-nāma-parivarta*, with x standing in for sometimes very long compounds, meaning "the chapter named x." The title of this chapter in the 80-fascicle translation is "Chapter on the Wondrous Adornments of the World's Rulers" *Shi zu miaoyan pin* 世主妙嚴品. I am grateful for Meghan Howard's help in reconstructing the Sanskrit, based also on her understanding of the Tibetan.

[372] T35, no. 1735, p. 526, c19-21.

[373] *Huayan jing tanxuan ji* 華嚴經探玄記; T1733.

[374] *Xu Huayan jing lüe shu kan ding ji* 續華嚴經略疏刊定記; X221.

[375] *Xu Huayan jing lüe shu kan ding ji* 續華嚴經略疏刊定記; X221.

these commentaries are very similar to Chengguan's. Both are also divided into ten topics, following the sūtra's predilection for that number. The former commentary by Fazang follows the following outline:

> In explaining this sūtra, we will open ten gateways.
>
> 1. Clarifying wherefrom it arose;
> 2. the basket and division to which it belongs;
> 3. revealing and establishing the differentiation of the teachings;
> 4. determining the intended audience;
> 5. discussing the medium by which the teaching is taught;
> 6. clarifying the essence and intent that are taught;
> 7. fully explaining the sūtra's title;
> 8. clarifying the transmission and translation of the different versions;
> 9. discussing how to divide the text's meanings;
> 10. expounding according to the text.[376]

If we compare this with Chengguan's outline, two things stand out immediately: they use different titles for the same topics and they have ordered them differently. [377] The only topic in Fazang's text that has no counterpart in Chengguan's is the ninth, where he runs through a series of doctrinal grids by which he analyzes the sūtra's teachings.[378] He speaks here, for example, of the simultaneity of teaching and meaning, of principles and phenomena, of practice and level of attainment, of cause and effect, and so on.[379] Chengguan does include a discussion of these doctrines, largely copying Fazang to the dot, yet he does so in the context of his third section.[380] Instead of devoting a separate section to this discussion, Chengguan includes a section on the parsing of the sūtra in its different recensions (section 7). Fazang does, of course, discuss how to parse the text but does so at the opening of his line-by-line exposition.[381]

A more specific example of divergence between the structure of Chengguan and Fazang's commentary can be found in the discussion of the purport and intent—section 6 in both commentaries. In that section, Chengguan discusses the purport of the Buddha's teachings overall in general and the intent of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* in particular. Fazang, on the other hand, discusses the purport and intent of *only* the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* in his corresponding section.[382] Interestingly however, the corresponding section in Fazang's later commentary, the one edited by Huiyuan, does follow the same structure as Chengguan's.[383]

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[376] 「將釋此經略開十門：一明教起所由、二約藏部明所攝、三顯立教差別、四簡教所被機、五辨能詮教體、六明所詮宗趣、七具釋經題目、八明部類傳譯、九辨文義分齊、十隨文解釋。」(T35, no. 1733, p. 107b22-26).

[377] See, respectively, T35, no. 1733, p. 107, b22-26 and X03, no. 221, p. 570, a12-14.

[378] T35, no. 1733, p. 123b5 ff.

[379] T35, no. 1733, p. 123b5 ff.

[380] T35, no. 1735, p. 515a17 ff.

[381] T35, no. 1733, p. 125a18 ff. Since Fazang's former commentary was composed before the translation of the 80-scroll version, discussing the parsing comparatively was not yet relevant. Note also that Chengguan too discusses the parsing of the text (again) at the beginning of his line-by-line exposition (T35, no. 1735, p. 526c28 ff.).

[382] For Fazang's section, see T35, no. 1733, p. 120a6 ff.

[383] X03, no. 221, p. 589, a2 ff.

Overall, we can say that while Chengguan in many ways followed in Fazang's footsteps, he by no means followed him slavishly.

Nevertheless, Chengguan did clearly follow the tradition's conventions for writing commentaries. The tradition, that is, did not hand down a strict structure; it offered structures on which the exegetes varied. Comparing Chengguan's work to that of commentators writing on texts other than the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* gives us a better sense of the contours of the Sui-Tang scholastic world. The first point to make is that Chengguan is fully in line with tradition in his choice of themes to treat. This is not to say that his themes are placed in the same order as in other commentaries, nor that all commentators treat exactly the same themes. Within the tradition's confines, scholiasts had freedom to play with different structures. They knew these choices were somewhat arbitrary. This is shown by an intriguing short passage in the *Vajra Mirror* by Baoda 寶達 (d.u.).[384] This text is a commentary on another commentary, Daoyin's *Exposition of the Imperial Commentary on the Vajra Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, briefly mentioned in Chapter 2.[385] After an opening verse and some introductory remarks, Daoyin gives his outline as follows:

In expounding sūtras, we open five general gateways.

1. recounting the origin of the teaching;
2. clarifying the medium of the sūtra['s teaching] and its nature;
3. gathering the purport and the intent;
4. [discussing] the intended audience;
5. actually explaining the text.[386]

Before we consider Daoyin's outline in comparison with Chengguan's, let us look at Baoda's commentary on this outline:

> **In expounding sūtras, we open five general gateways.** This commentary interprets and expounds the imperial commentary on the *Prajñā Sūtra*.[387] **To open** means "to disclose." **General** means simplified and essential. You can understand the order of these five gateways on your own. The first four discuss the sūtras' meaning from a higher perspective; the fifth is the actual exposition of the sūtra-text. Another option in commentaries is to divide each of these five into two, thus coming to a total of ten gateways.[388]

While the way Baoda parses Daoyin's organization, as consisting of four items discussing the sūtra from a meta-level and then the line-by-line exposition, is clear enough, it is striking that he comments on the order of the themes discussed. His brief comment is the only instance yet where I have seen the scholiasts indicate that there is a logic to the order of the

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[384] *Jingang ying* 金剛暎; T2734. A biography of a monk by this name is found in the SGSZ, although it is unclear whether this is the Baoda in question (T50, no. 2061, pp. 846c14-847a1).

[385] *Yu zhu jingang bore boluomi jing xuanyan* 御注金剛般若波羅蜜經宣演; T2733.

[386] 「贊揚經注。略啟五門。一敘教興由。二明經體性。三攝歸宗旨。四所被根宜。五依文正解。」(T85, no. 2733, p. 9b4-5).

[387] This sentence is not fully clear to me, which is exacerbated by the fact that, at least in the edition of this text consulted (the Taishō edition), there is a missing character.

[388] 贊揚經注略啟五門者。此疏宣演□御注般若故之經。啟者開也。略則簡要之義也。五門生起次第可知。於中前四懸談經義。第五正釋經文。准疏中各開為二則為十門亦得。」(T85, no. 2734, p. 52, b12-18).

presentation. To Baoda's mind, unfortunately, this did not warrant further comment, as he left it up to his audience to analyse this by themselves.

Baoda's next comment is more telling for our present purposes. He indicates to his audience—let's say, his students—that while Daoyin's organization is standard for commentaries, exegetes can deviate from this format of five themes. Yet, he also indicates that even when commentators deviate from this, they still cover the same themes. Baoda is a little fanciful in the details of his explanation, namely that all those deviating from the fivefold format present ten themes, and that those ten are all already contained in the five. Still, in principle he is surely right, as we can easily see if we compare the three outlines we have seen so far—those by Wŏnhyo, Chengguan, and Daoyin. To some extent, Baoda is right that commentators sometimes treat some themes as two. The purport (*zong* 宗) and the intent (*zhi* 旨) of the text, for example, are discussed under one heading by Daoyin but under two by Wŏnhyo (see above). Ironically, while Chengguan's outline consists of ten themes, as compared to Wŏnhyo's six and Daoyin's five, he discusses the essence and purport under one heading, just like Daoyin. Indeed, some of the brevity of Daoyin's outline comes from the fact that he does not treat some standard themes. Importantly, he does not recount the history of its translation and compare of its different editions. He also does not include a separate section dedicated to explaining the sūtra's title, even if he does explain it at some point.[389] In the other direction, there is one element in Daoyin's themes that has no parallel in Chengguan's commentary. In the section where Daoyin discusses the sūtra's medium, he also discusses the sūtra's "nature" (*xing* 性). Here, Daoyin expounds briefly on three standard lists of natures—the perfected (y*uancheng* 圓成), dependent (*yita* 依他), and imagined (*you ji suo zhi* 由計所執) natures; defiled and undefiled (*youlou* 有漏; *wulou* 漏無漏); and wholesome, unwholesome, and neutral (*shan* 善; *e* 惡; *wuji* 無記).[390] Even if this discussion seems unique, we should note that it is an extension of the preceding treatment of the medium of the teaching. Along the lines of that topic, here Daoyin examines various perspectives on whether the Buddha's speech is, for example, impure (as all conditioned dharmas are) or pure.[391] As we see then, Daoyin's themes are drawn from the same pool as those of Chengguan—and those of Fazang and Wŏnhyo.

This pattern continues if we continue to look at commentaries by Sui-Tang exegetes. Consider the *Commentary on the Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* (*Jie shenmi jing shu* 解深密經疏; X. 369) by Wŏnch'ŭk 圓測 (613-696). That text consists of four sections, the fourth of which is the line-by-line commentary:

(1) the teaching's arising and its title;
(2) analyzing the sūtra's purport and substance;
(3) revealing its basis and audience;
(4) the actual explanation according to the text.[392]

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[389] T85, no. 2733, p. 17a28 ff.
[390] T85, no. 2733, p. 11c6 ff.
[391] T85, no. 2733, p. 11c10 ff.
[392] 將欲釋經四門分別。一教興題目。二辨經宗體。三顯所依為。四依文正釋 (X21, no. 369, p. 171, b17-18).

While at first sight this may look simpler than Chengguan's elaborate discussion, it turns out that many of the topics treated separately by Chengguan are treated in single sections by Wŏnch'ŭk. We already see this in the title of the first section. There, he gives us both the circumstances behind the sūtra's preaching and an explanation of its title. In the second section, he first gives a long account of the "substance" of the teaching—that is, the medium—which amounts to a highly technical discussion of the nature of language and then of the Buddha's speech in particular. This corresponds to gateway 5 in Chengguan's *Commentary*. Within that same section, Wŏnch'ŭk discusses different doxographical schemes to make sense of the overall thrust of the Buddha's teachings and to resolve their contradictions. In the third section, he discusses how to classify scriptures. After a brief listing of different ways of dividing the Buddhist scriptural canon, he discusses at length various doxographies proposed by both Chinese and Indian exegetes that classify scriptures according to their content and/or place in the Buddha's teaching career. Although no separate section is devoted to the translation of the text and a comparison of its different versions, Wŏnch'ŭk devotes a subsection to this topic at the start of his commentary on the text proper.[393] He lists the various translations, compares the chapters they do and do not contain, and discusses their titles. Thus, apart from recounting miracle stories associated with the sūtra, Wŏnch'ŭk's chapters hit on all the same elements as Chengguan's *Commentary*.

The same thing applies to Wŏnch'ŭk's two other extant sūtra commentaries: although there are slight divergences in their organization, all the major themes just mentioned are treated.[394] We see similar outlines, covering the same themes, in the commentaries by other well-known Sui-Tang exegetes such as Kuiji 窺基 (632-682),[395] Zhanran 湛然 (711-782),[396] and Wŏnhyo 元曉 (617-686),[397] and lesser-known exegetes such as Huizhao 慧沼 (648-714),[398] Dingbin 定賓 (fl. first half of the 8th century),[399] Yuanhui 圓暉 (fl. ca. 718–742),[400] and Liangben 良賁 (717-777).[401] The one topic that exegetes regularly omit is the treatment of the

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[393] X21, no. 369, p. 179, a11 ff.

[394] Woncheuk's two other extant commentaries are his *Commentary on the Sūtra for Humane Kings* (*Renwang jing shu* 仁王經疏; T1708) and his *Commentary on the Prajñā-pāramitā-Heart Sūtra* (*Boreboluomi xin jing zan* 般若波羅蜜多心經贊; T1711).

[395] E.g., his *Commentary on the Vimalakīrti Sūtra* (*Shuo Wugoucheng jing shu* 說無垢稱經疏; T1782) and his *Commentary on the Chapter on Ultimate Reality of Prajñā in the Large Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* (*Da boreboluomiduo jing bore liqu fen shuzan* 大般若波羅蜜多經般若理趣分述讚; T1695).

[396] E.g. his *Commentarial notes on the Vimalakīrti Sūtra* (*Weimo jing shuji* 維摩經疏記; X340).

[397] I referred earlier to two of his digests that follow the format of full-fledged commentary but leave out the line-by-line commentary: his *Doctrinal Essentials of the Great Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* (*Da huidu jing zongyao* 大慧度經宗要; T1697) and his *Doctrinal Essentials of the Lotus Sūtra* (*Fahua zongyao* 法華宗要; T1725). See as well his *Commentary on the Sūtra for Humane Kings* (*Renwang jing shu* 仁王經疏; T1708).

[398] E.g., see his *Commentary on the Most Supreme, Regal Sūtra of Golden Light* (*Jin'guangming zuisheng wang jing shu* 金光明最勝王經疏; T1788).

[399] E.g., see his *Commentary on the Roots of the Four-Part Bhikṣu Discipline* (*Sifen biqiu jie ben shu* 四分比丘戒本; T1807.

[400] See the outline of his *Volume of Commentary Commenting on the Abhidharmakośa's Verses* (*Jushelun song shu lunben* 俱舍論頌疏論本; T41, no. 1823, p. 813, c2-3). See also the treatment of his *Commentary to the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* (*Lengqie abaduoluo baojing shu* 楞伽阿跋多羅寶經疏), extant only at Dunhuang, spread across three manuscripts in Chinese and Tibetan as discussed by Howard (Masang) & Goodman (2022).

[401] See his *Commentary on the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra on [how] Humane Kings Protect the Country* (*Ren wang huguo boreboluomiduo jing shu* 仁王護國般若波羅蜜多經疏; T1709).

nature of language (the "medium of the message"). The inclusion of the formal preface and a verse of homage are also optional. Other than that, they all work with the same materials and building blocks, building commentarial edifices that at once closely resemble each other and diverge in intricate and creative ways. In that sense, Baoda's comment holds true: exegetes vary on the same themes in the way they compose their commentaries.

Scholastic Pedagogy: Or, How to Enter the Hermeneutic Circle

Having surveyed the commentarial genre from the perspective of its organization, we now consider this genre from a different angle. Understanding the aim of the commentaries to be didactic and their background, at least archetypically, the classroom, I aim to draw lessons regarding Sui-Tang scholastic pedagogy in a series of short discussions of specific aspects of the commentarial genre. These discussions take their cue from the comparative perspective of Chapter 1 as I try to make sense of the regular density of the commentaries, their inclusion, side by side, of alternating opinions (sometimes without even arbitrating), and their use of doxography.

One related line of research that I will leave unexplored but will mention briefly is the reconstruction of the curriculum, or at least the uncovering of the shared textual resources of the Sui-Tang scholiasts. In my synopsis, I have already noted some of the texts on which Chengguan relies. Contrary to the general perception that these masters represent a "Sinicized" Buddhism, many of these are works well-known in the Indo-Tibetan tradition. Close attention to the texts they cite and allude to throughout their writings would allow us to sketch the outlines of what an educated monk could be expected to have studied.

The Accordion Effect: Entering the Hermeneutic Circle Everywhere at Once

In Chapter 1, I emphasized that the knowledge scholiasts seek to transmit goes beyond the propositional; they also teach skills and ways of thinking. Bearing this in mind, we can start to understand some of the otherwise puzzling aspects of the commentarial style. I pointed to what Cabezón has termed the accordion-effect. It is not hard to see how this effect connects with memory practice, using the principle of substitution. Relatedly, it is connected to the oral context of scholastic works: expandable lists are a useful tool for preaching. At the same time, I think we can also see the accordion-effect as an expression of the hermeneutic circle: one can only understand the part in relation to the whole, while understanding the whole depends on grasping the individual elements. As a student, one has to enter everywhere at once.

This dynamic and its pedagogical implications also help explain why many of Chengguan's comments remain obscure on their own. Often, he presupposes detailed knowledge of the sūtra under discussion and of doctrines and scholastic categories associated with it. This is especially striking with respect to some of the shorthand references used in the exegesis of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. Take, for example, the discussion of the tenth supportive condition in Gate One, the buddhas' empowerment, or blessing, of the various speakers. This is how Chengguan opens that section.

> Now, the Sage does not always respond. His responding depends strictly on sincerity. When one's mind merges with the absolute, one receives the buddhas' empowerment. However, if it is the Buddha himself who is speaking, no empowerment is needed as in the seventh assembly. If it is spoken by people, it requires an empowerment from higher-up. The eighth assembly, as it concerns practice based on the Dharma, does not differ from what came before and thus, for brevity's sake, there is no empowerment

there. Also, because [the interlocutors in that case] do not enter into *samādhi*, there is no empowerment there. In all other cases there are [empowerments].[402]

By itself, this passage is impenetrable. Making sense of Chengguan's comment without knowing quite precisely some of the narrative elements in the sūtra, or the referents of its different "assemblies" (*hui* 會), is impossible. But things start falling into place if one knows that these assemblies are the nine sets of chapters into which exegetes divided the sūtra based on the fact that each set occurred at a given location. One might then realize that, in the sole chapter that makes up the eighth assembly, *Transcending the Mundane* (Chapter 38), the speaker indeed neither enters into a meditative absorption nor receives empowerment from the buddhas.[403] Moreover, this assembly is contiguous with the previous one in two senses: it is set in the same location as the preceding chapters—the Dharma Hall of Universal Radiance (*pu guang fatang hui* 普光法堂會)—and, as the scholiasts read the text, it continues with the same topic as the preceding assembly: spiritual practice. Lastly, the seventh assembly is unique in that a number of its chapters are spoken by the Buddha himself rather than by bodhisattvas. None of this background, however, is provided by Chengguan in the immediate context, with even his *Subcommentary* remaining silent.[404] The reader is expected to either already have the relevant background knowledge or to pick it up at the relevant junctures and then have a deeper understanding at the second reading.

"Think for Yourself!"

At points, the Sui-Tang exegetes are often quite explicit that they are teaching ways of thinking rather than mere content, expecting their students to apply what they learned. Consider in this regard the passage from Baoda's commentary translated above, where he tells his readers "you can understand the order of these five gateways on your own."[405] In this case, it remains unclear to me what underlying logic readers are expected to see. But in many cases, commentators exemplify this or that pattern in their interpretation before saying "the rest should be contemplated according to this," leaving remaining passages to be understood by their audience.[406]

Let me give one example from Zhiyan's *Methods for the Search for the Avataṃsaka Sūtra's Mysteries, Its Classification, and Its Thorough Understanding*.[407] This text, five scrolls long, presents thematic discussions followed by relatively extensive summaries of the sūtra's

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[402] 「第十依能加者。夫聖無常應。應于克誠。心冥至極。故得佛加。然若佛自說則不俟加。如第[4 七]九會。因人有說。要假上加。其第八會。行依法修。不異前故。略無有加。[□□]二七不入定。故無有加。餘皆具有。」(T35, no. 1735, p. 506, c13-17). In my translation, I follow the variant readings recorded in the Taishō, stemming from a Tokugawa print of the text, as those make more sense when compared to the content of the sūtra.

[403] *Lishijian pin* 離世間品; see T10, no. 279, p. 279, a5 ff.

[404] It is not until the fifteenth fascicle of the *Subcommentary*, when commenting on a passage in the third fascicle of the *Commentary* (in the context of the seventh gate). that Chengguan gives a brief gloss on the nine assemblies, noting precisely to what fascicles they correspond: see T36, no. 1736, p. 110, c8-14. Chengguan does point out, in the *Subcommentary*, that in the opening line of this passage he is offering a creative paraphrase of a passage in the Confucian classic, the *Shangshu* 尚書; he then supplies the original passage in context (T36, no. 1736, p. 34, a8-10).

[405] 「五門生起次第可知。」(T85, no. 2734, p. 52b16-17).

[406] 「餘可思準。」(e.g., T35, no. 1735, p. 581c7). This is the way Chengguan often phrases it. Other exegetes have different ways of saying this.

[407] *Da fang'guang fo huayan jing suoxuan fenqi tongzhi fanggui* 大方廣佛華嚴經搜玄分齊通智方軌; T1732)

chapters. After an opening paragraph which summarizes the history of the sūtra's translation into Chinese, Zhiyan gives the following outline:

> In analyzing the text and its doctrines, we distinguish five gateways:
>
> 1. Praising the excellent way in which the the Sage responded to the situation.
> 2. Clarifying the canonical divisions.
> 3. After analyzing the teachings, explicating the purport and the intent that are explained, and the medium of the explanation.
> 4. Explaining the title.
> 5. Explaining the divisions of the text.[408]

The first four of these are consonant with the way Chinese Buddhist scholiasts organized complete and thematic commentaries. In the fifth section, Zhiyan introduces a few doctrinal grids for understanding the text and treats the text chapter-by-chapter. In discussing the first chapter, for example, he explains why the Buddha is the teacher of the first chapter, and provides glosses of a few individual terms and lines in the chapter, such as "thus have I heard" and "Magadhā."[409] He also ties his discussion at the chapter-level back to the larger level of analysis, applying the doctrinal grids he introduced earlier as well as the division of the text into different assemblies. This text exemplifies how to apply the tools for the analysis of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* in the form of divisions and interpretative grids.

The word "exemplify" seems especially apt because often the text gives us one example of a mode of interpretation and then tells the reader to fill the remainder in themselves. Take for example the following excerpt from Zhiyan's comments on the twentieth chapter of the sūtra, "Bodhisattvas Gather Like Clouds in the Tuṣita Heaven to Praise the Buddha" where ten bodhisattvas take turns to offer verses in praise of the Buddha.[410]

> Further, among the ten bodhisattvas, the first is called Vajra Banner. This illuminates that his nature is ultimately real and can eradicate the heaps of characteristics. Standing high above worldly ways, it signals the outcome of the battle. That is why he is called Vajra Banner. You can understand the [other bodhisattvas'] characteristics [on your own].
>
> The verses in this chapter all reveal the Buddha's virtues from the perspective of dedication and skilful means. Therefore, the teaching serves to explicate the characteristics of skill-in-means. Contemplate the rest accordingly.[411]

Even if the exact interpretation remains unclear in my translation, this passage illustrates that Zhiyan is not merely offering interpretations, but instead offers methods that his readers are

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[408] 「今分判文義，以五門分別：一歎聖臨機德量由致、二明藏攝分齊、三辨教下所詮宗趣及能詮教體、四釋經題目、五分文解釋。」(T35, no. 1732, p. 13c5-7). This translation, especially, must be considered tentative as some items here seem somewhat jumbled.

[409] For the discussion of why the Buddha teaches this first chapter, see T35, no. 1732, p. 16a8-10. Note, by the way, that Chengguan's *Essential Outline* contradicts this; in that text, Samantabhadra is understood to have taught Chapter One. For the discussion of "thus I have heard" and "Magadhā," see T35, no. 1732, p. 16b15-23.

[410] In the earlier translation of the sūtra (the 60-scroll version), which is the version available to Zhiyan, this chapter starts at T09, no. 278, p. 478c20. This corresponds to the twenty-third chapter in the later translation, the 80-scroll version, which starts at T10, no. 279, p. 115a12.

[411] 「又十菩薩中，初名金剛幢者，明自體真實，能消殄相累，超世之道標別勝負，故名金剛幢也。餘相可知。此中諸偈並約迴向方便顯其佛德，即以此教為詮善巧相也，餘准思之。」(T35, no. 1732, p. 2b5-9).

to use, following his example. If we can discern the interpretative moves he used to explicate the name Vajra Banner, we can apply those as well to the names of the other bodhisattvas in this chapter—Firm Banner, Banner of Courage, Nocturnal Light Banner, and so forth. Similarly, once we understand how the intention behind the verses applies to the first verse, we can ourselves practice applying this principle to the other verses.

Parsing Sūtras: The Grid Par Excellence

One essential tool for thinking used by the Sui-Tang scholiasts is what I am calling interpretative grids. These are easily memorized lists that organize either a text or a set of ideas. When they outline scripture, they likely also functioned to aid memorization of the entire text. But beyond that, they also allowed for interpretative exploration. Above I already referenced one such scriptural outline: that which divides the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* into different assemblies, locations, and topics. By assuming his audience knows this set of grids, Chengguan can explain very succinctly why the 38th chapter of the sūtra does not start with the Buddha giving his blessing.

For a more explicit example of the interpretative moves that such grids allow, we turn to Jizang's *Profound Discourse on the Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, a variation on a chapter by chapter commentary.[412]

The outline of this text is very simple:

1. The title.
2. The purport.
3. Explaining the assemblies and locations.[413]

Jizang's thematic headings here are fewer than in most other comparable texts, including his own (see the discussion of his *Profound Discourse on the Lotus Sūtra* in Part III below). In fact, the discussions under the first two headings cover much more than just the title and the purport. Under both headings, totalling six scrolls, he includes extended doctrinal discussions in question-and-answer format. In the final two scrolls, Jizang discusses the organization of the text. Jizang starts by criticizing other exegetes' ways of dividing the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* and putting forth his own schema. On his analysis, the text takes place in two locations, the Āmrapālī garden and Vimalakīrti's room, and consists of four assemblies. We can summarize his analysis as follows:

- The first assembly, at the Āmrapālī garden, consists of chapters 1, 3, and 4.
- The second assembly, in Vimalakīrti's room, consists of only chapter 2.
- The third assembly, in Vimalakīrti's room, consists of chapters 5 through 10.
- The fourth assembly, back at the Āmrapālī garden, consists of chapters 11, 12, 13, and 14.

Having argued for this schema, Jizang continues to analyse this in different ways. In a relatively brief section, for example, he contrasts the symbolic implications of the two teaching locations as follows:

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[412] *Jingming xuan lun* 淨名玄論; T1780.

[413] 「第一名題、第二宗旨、第三敘會處。」(T38, no. 1780, p. 853a17-18).

> The Āmrapālī garden is the place of the Buddha; the room is the place of the Bodhisattva. The Āmrapālī garden is the place of monastics; the room is the place of the laity. The Āmrapālī garden is a place that has come about due to others' efforts; the room is a place that has come about due to one's own efforts. The Āmrapālī garden was a retreat place built for the Buddha by the laywoman Āmrapālī; the room where the layman elucidated unprecedented teachings had come about due to his own pure karma. The Āmrapālī garden is outside the city; the room is inside the city. The Records of Master Faxian says "they are three li [i.e. 1.5 km, 0.9 mile] apart."[414]

He also analyses how this schema of assemblies matches with the oft-used tripartite analysis of sūtras into their introduction (*xufen* 序分), the actual teaching (*zhengjing* 正經; *zhengzong* 正宗), and the entrustment (*liutong* 流通).[415] Further, he discusses the assemblies' different teachers, their different topics, and goes on to apply several more doctrinally oriented dichotomies—whether, for example, a given section focuses on causes or on results.

While such divisions can only make sense to students familiar with the sūtra, knowing them helps one become even more familiar. They are affordances for interpretative work, moreover, and help in remembering not only the text at hand, but also the interpretations given by Jizang or others.

More Grids: Another Perspective on Doxographies

Doxographies as used by Chinese Buddhist scholiasts before the Song, I believe, are to be understood in a similar vein: as grids that allow for information storage and that make possible interpretative play. In a rather basic sense, doxographies are an indispensable tool for scholiasts. Since they presume their canon to be meaningful and, in some sense, consistent from beginning to end, stratifications of teachings according to their audience or relevance at different stages of the spiritual path are helpful in dealing with scriptural inconsistencies.[416]

The practice of creating *panjiao* 判教 ("classification of the teachings") is often depicted as specific to East Asian commentators.[417] The origin of these systems is supposed to lie in the hermeneutic predicament of Chinese Buddhists confronted with a canon containing a staggering variety of diverging if not contradictory teachings. Moreover, they are taken to be specific to the different Chinese Buddhist schools (especially Tiantai and Huayan), representing their attempt to put their own teachings above those of other schools. It is clear, however, from the material that Chengguan presents that he, and other Chinese exegetes, understand the practice of categorizing the Buddhist teachings as contiguous with the concerns of Indian exegetes. And in fact, it seems that he is right about this: I see no reason to doubt the veracity of his references to Indian sources. Note, also, how Wŏnch'ŭk is explicit

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[414] 「菴園為佛處，方丈為菩薩處。菴園為出家處，方丈為在家處。菴園他業所起處，方丈自業所起處。他業所起處者，菴羅女園為佛起精舍，明未曾有室是居士淨業所起也。菴園在城外，方丈在城內。顯公傳云：相去三里。所言四會者，一菴園會、二方丈會、三重集菴園、四再會方丈。以此分經，實為允當也。」(T38, no. 1780, p. 898a5-12). This translation was the product of a team that I led during the 2023 Summer Seminar in Reading and Translating Buddhist texts at the Dharma Realm Buddhist University.

[415] T38n1780_p0898a23 ff.

[416] Henderson (1991: 106–121; 1998: 167); Cabezón (1994: 62–73).

[417] For an illustrative sample, see the entry "Jiaoxiang panjiao" in Buswell & Lopez (2013). Peter Gregory's account is more nuanced, but in both his introductory and concluding comments he stresses the same point (1991: chapter 3); cp. Gregory (1983).

about including views of both Chinese and Indian masters. Moreover, for the most part, the various types of classifications (such as by style of teaching, by profundity of content) listed by Chengguan are distributed evenly over Indian and Chinese scholiasts. The exception to this might seem to be the practice of lining up the Buddha's life with the progressive content of his teachings. At a closer look, this does not hold true either. Take, for example, his brief discussion of the perspective of Paramārtha (Chinese: Zhendi 眞諦; 499-569), whom he takes to represent an Indian view. These comments come right after a discussion of Chinese masters who divide the teachings into three periods:

> Now we explain the accounts [current] in the Western regions. Based on the *Sūtra of Golden Light*, Tripiṭaka Master Paramārtha established the teaching of the three wheels—that it was turned, illuminated, and upheld. This is also basically the same as [the preceding accounts], though there are minor differences with regards to the periodization. That is to say, in the first seven years [of his teaching career, the Buddha] expounded the four truths. This is called turning the Dharma-wheel. After those seven years, he expounded *prajñā*. [That is, he] simultaneously turned and illuminated the two wheels as he illuminated existence with emptiness. After thirty years, he simultaneously turned, illuminated, and upheld [the wheel] as he simultaneously illuminated emptiness and existence and upheld the previous two [wheels].[418]

This passage is reminiscent of the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*'s outline of the Buddha's teaching career. But Paramārtha goes beyond that by ascribing a specific number of years to each phase. Also, as we learn from the immediate context in Chengguan's discussion, the context of the teachings associated with the three periods do not coincide with that sūtra, but rather consists of sūtras such as the *Sūtra of Golden Light*, the *Śrīmālādevī Siṃhanāda Sūtra*, and the *Lotus Sūtra*.[419] While one might plausibly claim that Paramārtha's account is possibly influenced by the fact that he was responding to his Chinese environment, the similarity with the doxography found in the *Saṃdhinirmocana sūtra* already serves to make the basic point that Indian Buddhists, too, sometimes stratified the Buddha's teachings as a progression during his

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[418] 至敘西域中說。真諦三藏。依金光明。立轉照持三輪之教。亦大同此。而時節小異。謂七年前說四諦。名轉法輪。七年後說般若具轉照二輪。以空照有故。三十年後具轉照持。以雙照空有持前二故 (T35, no. 1735, p. 508, c16–21). To paraphrase this periodization: the first seven years after his awakening, the Buddha preached the Hīnayāna teachings; the next thirty years, he preached *prajñāpāramitā* teachings (along with Hīnayāna); the final seven years he preached a teaching revealing universal buddha-nature. (The content of the third teaching is obvious in the context of Chengguan's exposition; see also below.) For the relevant passage in the sūtra (which is terse and open to multiple interpretations), see T16, no. 664, p. 368, b11. Unfortunately, for Paramārtha's interpretation here I have not been able to locate a source-text (which is not an anomaly with texts of his). However, it is worth noting that Huizhao 慧沼 (648-714), in his commentary on this sūtra-passage, records two different interpretations of "turning, illuminating, and upholding," the second of which coincides with Paramārtha's interpretation as recorded here (T39, no. 1788, p. 242, c21–p. 243, a14). To prove the point, Huizhao goes on to supply quotations from the *Commentary on the Lotus Sūtra* (*Fahua jing lun* 法華經論; T1520) attributed to Vasubandhu. The citations from the said *Commentary* concern how the Buddha differentiates between different types of audiences and what he teaches them (T26, no. 1520, p. 13, b19 ff.).

[419] The relevant passage is T35, no. 1735, p. 508, c6–16.

lifetime.[420] They, too, sought to make sense of differences and contradictions. This is one area where a cross-cultural reading of scholastic works pays off: it allows us to see that commentators throughout the world faced similar problems in their canonical texts and approached them with similar methods.

This brings us to the claim that the Chinese exegetes used doxographies as polemical tools against other schools. This might be true later on in East Asian Buddhist history, but Chengguan's treatment does not support this view. For one, he does not even group the doxographies according to schools. This applies as well to Wŏnch'ŭk's discussion of the different doxographies. Moreover, as mentioned above, Wŏnch'ŭk ends his discussion by showing how to understand the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*'s place within *multiple* doxographies. Chengguan, for his part, ends up using Fazang's fivefold doxography, but explicitly states that it is basically the same as the fourfold schema of Zhiyi, who came to be considered the founder of the Tiantai school, typically considered a rival of Huayan by modern scholars. If, however, Fazang's system had been devised as a Huayan attempt to trump Tiantai, we should expect its addition to be a higher layer. Instead, the Sudden Teaching added by Fazang comes in between the third and the fourth layers of Zhiyi, keeping the Perfect Teaching in its place of honor.

One might point out that Chengguan does ultimately settle for the fivefold system of his "Huayan" predecessor Fazang. However, if this is supposed to argue for Chengguan's allegiance to the Huayan school, this puts the cart before the horse. It is not hard to come up with plausible accounts of why Chengguan followed Fazang's lead. The latter was an esteemed master and the author of well-respected texts and commentaries, including a full-fledged commentary on the entire *Avataṃsaka Sūtra.* [421] Moreover, the teacher under whom Chengguan studied the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, Fashen 法詵 (718-778), was likely a second-generation student of Fazang.[422] With this in mind, we do not need to think of Chengguan's use of Fazang's system as motivated by a sectarian impulse to attack the doctrines of those who preferred Zhiyi's system.[423] Rather, he was following in the footsteps of an earlier exegete of the *Avataṃsaka*, while drawing widely on resources of the tradition. As I will show in Chapter 5, when Chengguan lectured in the context of other fields of study, he likely favored other doxographies.

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[420] This point is in no way original to me. In fact, Gregory discusses Indian stratifications of the Buddhist teachings at some length (1991: 93–104). See also Gómez (2005); Cabezón (1994: 62–73); Thurman (1983); Bond (1988).

[421] In fact, in the received canon, Fazang's commentary is one of only two full-fledged commentaries predating Chengguan's, the other being the former's disciple Huiyuan's *Xu Huayan jing lüe shu kan ding ji* 續華嚴經略疏刊定記 (*Completed and Edited General Commentary on the Avataṃsaka Sūtra with Editorial Notes*: X221), in which Huiyuan completes his master's commentary on the then-recent new translation of the sūtra. As an aside: it is often noted in reference works that "contemporary scholars" rejected Huiyuan's work. While it may be true that Chengguan criticizes Huiyuan at points, he critically evaluates many other exegetes, including Fazang; moreover, he also cites Huiyuan approvingly throughout his *Commentary*.

[422] Hamar 2002: 36–37.

[423] To be sure, the point is not that there were no real disagreements. On the contrary: Chengguan is by no means shy to argue strongly against ideas associated with Tiantai, such as "inherent evil" *xinge* 性惡; see his discussion at T36, no. 1736, p. 8, b1 ff. (Though note that he elsewhere affirms this concept; see T36, no. 1736, p. 323, c21–27 and T36, no. 1736, p. 619, a22–27.)

Transmitting Alternate Opinions

Another aspect of Sui-Tang commentaries is that, in discussing a given topic, the author often does not merely provide what is deemed to be the correct account. Instead, he may give a fairly extensive recital of various perspectives held by previous exegetes. Although in some cases he arbitrates among the different views and offers a final verdict, it often seems as though the final verdict is not the main point of these passages—at least it is not the only point. In Chapter 4 we will see situations where a multiplicity of accounts is offered without a clear hierarchy.

I suspect that the intended audience, scholar monks in training, was to learn two other things from such passages, beyond the final verdict. First, they need to know the various alternative views simply because they form part of the tradition and its history. Second, they need to learn interpretative skills. When Chengguan in Gateway Two discusses a variety of doxographies and evaluates them from different angles, he may not so much be making arguments about the right interpretation, but offering hermeneutic performances that teach his audience interpretative skills and showcase acceptable interpretive moves.[424]

Part II: Other Genres

Commentaries in the form discussed above are by far the predominant form of Sui-Tang Buddhist scholastic writing; their background, the expounding of scripture, undoubtedly the main scholastic activity. Other textual forms have also come down to us. In many ways, these texts come from the same background. While their shape can be markedly different, their basic aim is the same as that of the commentaries—communicating knowledge and interpretation of Buddhist scripture. Since these other genres often highlight specific elements of scholastic pedagogy and practice, they are important to consider in the context of this project.

Some of these other texts are quite close to the commentarial genre. I think of these texts as study guides for particular scriptures. These might include some discussion of higher level topics, like thematic commentaries, but mostly contain entries discussing terms and doctrines found in the sūtra, or pertinent to its study. A good example, with a telling title is Zhiyan's *Miscellaneous Entries on the Chapters, Gateways, and So Forth in the Avataṃsaka Sūtra.*[425] As such texts tell us little about the Chinese Buddhist scholiasts that we cannot glean from the commentaries proper, I leave them aside, turning instead to other genres.

Whereas in the first part of this chapter, I treated the commentarial genre's conventions apart from what they show us about the scholiast's way of teaching and thinking, in treating some of the other genres below I do not do so. One reason for this is that it is easier to interpret textual forms when we imagine their original function and/or origin. This relates to the second reason, namely that the number of texts of a given type is often very limited. In some cases, texts even seem unique in the conventions they follow.

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[424] Consider in this regard Holtz's comments on the oral nature of certain texts in Jewish Midrash, describing them as "a kind of public performance in which the preacher (*darshan* in Hebrew) tried both to instruct and to entertain through his skill in public performance": *Finding Our Way,* 23. Holtz refers to Heinemann's insightful and imaginative study of a particular sermon-type found in Midrashic literature, "The Proem."

[425] *Huayan jing neizhangmen dengza kongmu* 華嚴經內章門等雜孔目; T1870.

In dealing with such limited numbers of texts as well as unique types, I believe it is important to keep in mind some lessons from the Dunhuang manuscript finds.[426] We know from the manuscript archive retrieved from Dunhuang that the received canon does not represent the actual corpus of texts in circulation during the Tang in at least two senses. First, many compositions never made it into the received canon. There are many texts, including scholastic compositions, that we possess only because of the Dunhuang finds. Some of these are by authors we know otherwise; others are by exegetes who would have been lost to history. Dunhuang, we should assume, was one library and/or scholastic center among many. Each of them would have had scholiasts in residence whom we may not know about. Each of those scholiasts would have been composing texts that may now be lost. The received corpus thus only presents us a portion of what was actually in existence. This is also true in a second sense: entire genres of texts were not transmitted at all, only coming down to us in the accidental archive of Dunhuang. Many of these are of a practical nature, such as lecture notes or anthologies.

For a full reconstruction of Sui-Tang scholasticism, consideration of these lost genres will be valuable. With the partial exception of the commentaries on commentaries, in this present dissertation I do not address such lost genres (for want of skill and time). It is the former point that is of importance in this context because it allows, if not forces, us to read texts as exemplars of types. Full commentaries, though we surely miss large quantities, survive aplenty in the received canon, but when it comes to other texts the situation is different. Sometimes we find a few texts that are alike in their structure and style, though lacking any other relationship. In such cases, I believe we can assume that these texts may represent instances of a genre that has otherwise been lost; that they were both composed according to the same conventions. Texts of a unique style too might be instantiations of lost genres.

In what follows, I will discuss a few of these genres. As I noted in the preamble to this chapter, this effort will not be exhaustive. After a brief comment on what I will call study guides, I treat three broad groups of texts. First, I treat a number of texts in which scholiasts outline scriptures with sparse summary comments. The main function of such texts, I suggest, is to aid with memorization. Second, I discuss some textual evidence that supports my contention in Chapter 2 that scholiasts often lectured on scripture based on already existing commentaries. Like the commentarial genre discussed above, these two types of texts underscore the centrality of scripture in scholasticism. Some Sui-Tang texts, however, are not concerned with a single scripture or coherent set of scriptures. This is the third group of texts I will discuss here. Though that literature is vast, my brief discussion will suggest that these texts, too, are ultimately to be understood as born from scriptural exegesis and intended as aids in scriptural study.

Before I discuss any of those types of texts more extensively, I want to briefly comment on a genre that is closely related to the scriptural commentaries

Outlining Sūtras

In discussing the commentarial genre, I noted that between the commentaries that provide only thematic discussions and those that also give a line-by-line treatment of the

[426] I am indebted to Meghan Howard Masang and Amanda K. Goodman for my understanding of the Dunhuang archives and how to interpret the evidence. My comments here are based on personal communication with both on 09/15/2023.

entire sūtra in question, we find another type in which the sūtra's chapters are summarized. Some texts, however, only present such summaries. In some cases, this seems to preserve a chapter-by-chapter commentary that for whatever reason lacks thematic discussions in the beginning. One instance where I suspect this is the case is Zhiyi's *Textual Explanation of the Wondrous Dharma Lotus Sūtra*.[427] Its treatment of the chapters is similar to what we find in Zhiyan's *Methods for the Search for the Avataṃsaka Sūtra's Mysteries, Its Classification, and Its Thorough Understanding.*[428] I would count that text as belonging to the commentarial genre.

However, in other texts that treat sūtras chapter-by-chapter, we encounter a wholly different style—different styles, in fact. These texts, moreover, generally lack thematic discussions, though sometimes they include a paragraph on one or a few standard themes. As far as I can see, based only on an informal survey, in the received canon all such texts treat the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, with the exception of Zhanran's *The Meaning of the Lotus Sūtra*.[429] I suspect there may well have been commentaries that only provide chapter-digests of other texts as well, but that they have simply not been transmitted. At the same time, the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*'s immense size and complexity also calls for this type of commentary, encouraging exegetes to compose them and, given their use, for them to be transmitted.[430] Below, I discuss a few of these scriptural outlines: three on the *Avataṃsaka*, by Chengguan, Zhanran, and Li Tongxuan, and the one on the *Lotus* by Zhanran again.

Chengguan's *Essential Outline*

One such outline-text that illustrates the genre's particularities very well and at the same time contains some explicit suggestions regarding its function goes back to Chengguan. The SGSZ tells us that he wrote an outline of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. We read:

> "At the request of minister of state Qi, he composed the *Essential Outline of the Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (one scroll)."[431]

While there is a text by that title in the Taishō, it has gone through some editorial changes along the way. The Taishō version was edited by the Ming dynasty monk Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清 (1546-1623). This version is a full 80 scrolls, much longer than a single scroll. The main reason for this length is that it includes the entire sūtra.[432] Besides this addition, the editor also copied in material from Chengguan's *Commentaries* in between sections of sūtras. He left out line-by-line commentary but included explanations of the chapter sequence as well as the purport of different sections. Moreover, a short introduction in the beginning seems likely by Hanshan as well: it refers to Chengguan's *Commentaries* as *Qingliang shu* 清涼疏, an unlikely way for Chengguan to refer to his own works.[433] Moreover, this introductory note has echoes

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[427] *Miao fa lianhua jing wenju* 妙法蓮華經文句; T1718.

[428] Another oddity of Zhiyi's *Textual Explanation* that supports this is its very first line which refers the reader to its earlier explanation of the title of the sūtra (T34, no. 1718, p. 1b23).

[429] *Fahua jing dayi* 法華經大意; X27, no. 583.

[430] As will become clear in the discussion below, however, this issue cannot be explained by suggesting that this genre was a special feature of the "*Huayan zong*."

[431]「允齊相請述《華嚴經綱要》一卷」(T50, no. 2061, p. 737c9). Cp. Hamar 2002: 81.

[432] Based on some representative samples.

[433] X08, no. 240, p. 487c19.

nowhere else but in another text by Hanshan on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra.*[434] If we leave the introduction as well as the sūtra and commentary aside, we are left with a rather short text of 123 lines that easily fits within a single scroll and likely represents something close to Chengguan's original *Essential Outline*.[435]

We can divide the text into four parts. As mentioned above, Chinese exegetes divided the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* into nine assemblies based on the different locations and speakers. In the first section of the *Essential Outline*, the assemblies are listed along with their speaker(s), and their overarching topic. The text also notes which scrolls each assembly consists of and how many chapters. (The interlinear note then supplies the exact chapter titles.) The first assembly reads as follows:

1. The assembly at the bodhimaṅḍa. Bodhisattva Samantabhadra expounds on the Dharma-gateway of Tathāgata Vairocana's environmental and proper cause and fruition. This spans the first through the eleventh scroll and consists of six chapters.

   (That is, the chapters "Marvelous Ornaments of the Worlds' Rulers," "The Tathāgata Manifests his Characteristics," "Samantabhadra's Samādhi," "The Coming into Being of the Worlds," "The World 'Flower Treasury'," and "Vairocana.")[436]

It seems to me that these basic divisions of the text must have been memorized. In the context of this text, this is clear because having this division memorized is essential to make sense of the second section, which takes up the larger part of the text. There, two doctrinal superstructures, five rotations and four parts (*wu zhou si fen* 五周四分), are laid over the division into assemblies.[437] To read this grid, one needs to know details not given here, including not only the division into assemblies, but also each individual chapter's content. After this, we get a summary exposition on the "four dharma-realms" before the text concludes by repeating in short form Chengguan's standard commentary on the sūtra's title.[438]

Given the context I have sketched in Chapter 1, it is not hard to understand the purpose of a text like Chengguan's *Essential Outline,* with all its brevity. By introducing and playing with the basic divisions of a book of scripture, it helps the reader to solidify his or her grasp and understanding of these exegetical tools as well as of the scripture in question. In the case of the *Essential Outline*, this is made explicit quite elegantly.

> The outline given above explains the overall purport of the entire sūtra. Those who recite the text ought to first understand its divisions and become adept at contemplating its principles. That way, when face to face with the text, they will enter into the boundless dharma-realm in thought after thought.

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[434] See X73, no. 1456, p. 827c10.

[435] What remains here still includes brief (and quite helpful) interlinear notes.

[436] 「初會菩提場。普賢菩薩說毗盧遮那如來依正因果法門。自第一卷至十一卷。共六品經。六品者。(世主妙嚴品　如來現相品　普賢三昧品　世界成就品　華藏世界品　毗盧遮那品)。」(X08, no. 240, p. 487c21-24)

[437] This section starts at X08, no. 240, p. 488b15.

[438] For a discussion of the four dharmadhātus, see Hamar 1998.

> Because the sūtra's text is as vast as the ocean, containing limitless doctrines, those who lecture on the sūtra can use the five rotations and four parts so that the doctrines cohere.
>
> Those who practice contemplation, [by using these divisions along with the rotations and parts,] when face to face with the text, will naturally come to match [with the truth].
>
> This is a general outline of the text's divisions. In terms of its principles, each chapter has its own purport.[439]

I am unsure whether this paragraph is of Chengguan's hand. The last line seems to point forward to the way Hanshan collated the sūtra text with Chengguan's commentary. Thus, Hanshan may have added this paragraph, or he might just have added the last line to something already written by Chengguan. In either case, it testifies to the tradition's own understanding of the use of texts like this. Recalling that "to recite" (*song* 誦) implied memorization, we see that the *Essential Outline* is almost as explicit about the connection between division and memorization as Victor of Saint Hughes. Besides being clear about the pedagogical function of division, it also speaks to the pedagogical use of interpretative grids. Lastly, it puts all of this in a contemplative context as well, reminding us that these texts were learnt by heart rather than by head.

Zhanran's *Skeleton*

Many of the same pedagogical principles seem to be at play in other digests as well, even if they do not explicitly tell us. Consider Zhanran's *Skeleton of the Avataṃsaka*, which spans two scrolls and provides summaries for each individual chapter.[440] This, for example, is what Zhanran tells us about chapter 2:

> Chapter 2, "The Tathāgata Reveals his Characteristics"
>
> (In scroll six. Wishing to expound the supreme Dharma, [the Buddha] first reveals his supreme characteristics. Because his characteristics come about due to the principles and, in turn, they express the principles, he first reveals them so as to make a flag indicative of principle.

「如來現相品二(卷六，欲說勝法先現勝相，相依理成還為理表，故先現之作理標幟)

> The bodhisattvas as well as all the world's rulers think, "What is the level and the state of the buddhas like? And their empowerment? Their fearlessness? Their samādhi? Their

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[439] 「右上所列乃全經大旨。凡誦此經者。必先了其章段。精熟理觀。則臨文念念證入無邊法界。由經文浩瀚攝義無邊。故釋經者以五周四分科斷。使義有所歸。觀者臨文自然契會。此科文之大綱也。若其理趣。就于各品自有指歸。」(X08, no. 240, p. 489a22-b2).

[440] Or, maybe more literally the "*Skeletal Shape of the Avataṃsaka*," *Huayan gumu* 華嚴骨目; in full the *Skeletal Shape of Contemplative Methods of Vows and Practice of the Vast and Expansive Buddhāvataṁsaka Sūtra*, *Da fangguang fo huayan jing yuanxing guanmen gumu* 大方廣佛華嚴經願行觀門骨目; T1742.

ungraspability? Their eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, mind, light, and sound."[441] (…)[442] In their verses, they ask, "How is it that the buddha's eyes are limitless?" etc.[443] Knowing what is on their mind, the Buddha emits light from in between the teeth in his mouth. Within the light rays, a voice speaks verses causing bodhisattvas of the ten directions to assemble.

In the light, these bodhisattvas spoke verses saying, "In order to help living beings,// He purifies his own conduct."[444] And, "within each dust mote are limitless bodies,// Which in turn reveal kṣetras of variegated adornment.// All the kṣetras of the three time periods,// Manifest fully within a single kṣetra." [445]

Further, a bodhisattva [manifesting] in the Tathāgata's white tuft of hair—one of his characteristics—spoke a verse saying, "The Buddha's body fills the dharma realm,// Appearing everywhere to living beings.// According to conditions, he never fails to respond to stimuli,// Yet always dwells on the bodhi seat.// Within each hair pore of the Tathāgata,// Are seated Buddhas as many as the dust motes in all kṣetras,// Surrounded by an assembly of bodhisattvas,// Proclaiming the supreme practices of Samantabhadra."[446]

(This chapter is dedicated to fully elucidating the Tathāgata's characteristics by revealing that the one is replete with the many, that the retribution proper subsumes the environmental retribution.)[447]

What exactly does this type of summary accomplish? Let us first note that the *Skeleton of the Avataṃsaka* offers practically no interpretative remarks, and though its headings do refer to the different assemblies of the sūtra, these play no further role in the summaries. Zhanran simply offers straightforward recounting of each chapter by pulling out and stringing together short pieces from the sūtra. We do well to ask, then, what kind of reader would be served by this type of summary. It is, after all, not a digest in the modern sense of the word; it does not replace reading the sūtra itself. Instead, the way it pulls from the root-text requires the reader to have sufficient background knowledge, in effect to have read the text and be able to recall, at least in general outline, the passages to which Zhanran alludes. Someone consulting the *Skeleton* after having read the sūtra would solidify his or her overall recall of the text and its

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[441] This is an abridged quote from the opening of the chapter. In the sūtra text itself, the questions are all fully written out: "What is the level of the buddhas like? What is the state of the buddhas like?" etc. (T10, no. 279, p. 26a20-27).

[442] An interlinear note here states that the previous sentences are abridged—see the previous note.

[443] See T10, no. 279, p. 26b23. This is indeed a line representative of the verse, though it comes toward to end.

[444] T10, no. 279, p. 29b21-22.

[445] Stringing together lines at T10, no. 279, p. 29b28 and p. 19c1.

[446] T10, no. 279, p. 30a6-10.

[447] 「如來現相品二(卷六，欲說勝法先現勝相，相依理成還為理表，故先現之作理標幟)
諸菩薩及一切世間主作是思惟：「云何諸佛地境界、加持所行力、無所畏、三昧、無能攝取眼耳鼻舌身意光聲(一一皆有云何諸佛字)。」頌中云「佛眼云何無有量」等。佛知其念，面門齒間放光，光中說偈，十方菩薩皆悉來集。諸菩薩光中說偈云「即以利益諸眾生，而為自行清淨業。」又云「一一塵中無量身，復現種種莊嚴剎。三世所有一切剎，一剎那中悉能現。」又如來白毫相中有菩薩而說偈曰：「佛身充滿於法界，普現一切眾生前，隨緣赴感靡不周，而恒處此菩提座。如來一一毛孔中，一切剎塵諸佛坐，菩薩眾會共圍繞，演說普賢之勝行(此品只是具明如來相好以一具多、以正攝依)。」」(T36, no. 1742, p. 1050a22-b6).

significant details. Moreover, I suspect that for such readers, the text may have functioned as a florilegium, marking some verses as especially worthy of memorization. Understood as a study aid, this text reveals aspects of the Chinese memory practice.

Li Tongxuan's Scroll-by-Scroll Recounting

Li Tongxuan, in a rather peculiar outline of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, seems to adopt another strategy to solidify one's internalization of the sūtra, combining the physical structure of the text with dense summarizing remarks. In his *Brief Scroll-by-Scroll Recounting of the Overall Meaning of the Vast and Expansive Buddhāvataṁsaka Sūtra* he provides at most two lines of commentary on each individual scroll of the text. This way of organizing the outline is especially odd given that some of the sūtra's chapters span less than a single scroll whereas others cover multiple. It makes some sense, however, if we keep in mind, as Carruthers emphasized in the European context, that the physical lay-out of texts was often used to aid in memorization. Medieval monks, for example, were advised to always use the same copy of a text for the purposes of memorization.[448] Li's scroll-by-scroll commentary might rest upon a similar principle, tying his brief summarizing remarks to scrolls such that his readers would associate his comments with their physical experience of reading and reciting from the text in physical form. As with Zhanran's "summaries," Li's comments are too dense to be meaningful for someone who has not read the sūtra. This, for example, is all he says about scroll six, which coincides with Chapter 2, "The Tathāgata Reveals his Characteristics."

> The great assembly jointly asks a question mentally and the Tathāgata responds by revealing his characteristics. Light rays and voices summon those with affinities and a new assembly gathers from the ten directions like clouds.[449]

Understanding this passage without familiarity with the chapter in question is impossible. Li's dense lines only summarize the sūtra insofar as one already knows the sūtra.For example, without context we could take *guang sheng* 光聲 ("lights and voices") also as two singulars ("a light and a voice"), or as "the voice of the light," which would not be out of the ordinary in the extraordinary context of the *Avataṃsaka*. To read Li correctly here, one needs to be familiar with the narrative and know that in response to the questions by the bodhisattvas and the rulers, the Buddha emits an array of light rays that travel to buddhalands in the ten directions where voices emerge from them that induce bodhisattvas there to come to him.[450] The way these dense lines invoke, if not require, more complete explanations calls to mind Nugent's analysis of the *Qian zi wen* discussed in Chapter 1. If that analogy has merit, Li's scroll-by-scroll summary is best understood as a series of memory pegs that aid one in solidifying one's familiarity with the sūtra text, doing so in a fashion linked to the text in its physicality.

Commenting Via Commentaries

One of my more novel suggestions in Chapter 2 was that when Sui-Tang scholiasts lectured on a given scripture, they often did so based on an earlier commentary. Recall that Chengguan, when asked to lecture on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, decides to write his own

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[448] Carruthers 2008: 100, 117–118, 157, 310.

[449] 「大眾同與念請，如來現相以酬，光聲召於有緣，十方新眾雲集。」(T36, no. 1740, p. 1008c23-24).

[450] T10, no. 279, pp. 26b29-27a6.

commentary *out of dissatisfaction with what was available.* So far, I have found two examples of such subcommentaries.

I already discussed one of these examples briefly above: Baoda's *Vajra Mirror*, a commentary on Daoyin's *Exposition of the Imperial Commentary on the Vajra Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra.*[451] This text only comes down to us as a manuscript from Dunhuang. Baoda's text is a line-by-line subcommentary on Daoyin's. The part of Baoda's text that survives is his treatment of Daoyin's thematic discussions. He makes his way through this text by offering a line-by-line exposition in the same way that commentaries on sūtras were typically presented. Though Baoda at times goes on lengthy digressions, these all ultimately start as expositions of Daoyin's text.[452]

The other example has a more interesting relation with the commentary upon which it comments: Huizhao's *Determination of the Meanings of the Profound Praise of the Lotus Sūtra*.[453] The commentary that it takes as its object is Kuiji's *Profound Praise of the Wondrous Dharma Lotus Sūtra*.[454]Overall, Huizhao's is a rather chaotic text in terms of its structure. The lack of editorial attention suggests to me that we are dealing with a relatively unedited text based on classroom notes. Moreover, we are not dealing with lectures so much as a seminar-setting: much of the text consists of questions and debate.

While I will return the issue of disputation in this text in a separate section below, there are two points about the questions and answers worth noting here. First, the questions clearly show, and assume, a thorough knowledge of Kuiji's text. Second, the questions seem to lead their own life. The opening question at the very start of the text is a case in point: it hones in on a detail 187 lines into Kuiji's text and then veers off. (We will discuss this in more detail in Part III below.) In his expositions too, Huizhao often departs from Kuiji. For example, Kuiji offers a very organized exposition of the various reasons for which the Buddha taught the *Lotus Sūtra*. This list figures in the background of the opening discussion in Huizhao's text. Yet, Huizhao also expounds on a list of his own that has no clear relationship to Kuiji's.[455] After that, he cites and expounds a list of ten reasons given by Jizang—again, something Kuiji does not mention.[456]

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[451] Respectively: *Jingang ying* 金剛暎; T. 2734; and *Yu zhu jingang bore boluomi jing xuanyan* 御注金剛般若波羅蜜經宣演; T2733.

[452] A case in point is his commentary on the reasons for the preaching of the *Vajra Sūtra*. Before he delves into the specifics of Daoyin's commentary, which adduces different lists of reasons from Indic śāstras on the text, he discusses the overarching reason, for which he offers a famous quotation from the *Lotus Sūtra* to the effect that the only reason for the Buddha's appearance in the world is his wish to bring beings to buddhahood (T85, no. 2734, p. 52b23-25; paraphrased from T09, no. 262, p. 7a21-28). Baoda gives a lengthy exposition of this phrase from the *Lotus Sūtra*, drawing on Kuiji's commentary on the text. It is worth noting, though tangential, that Baoda ultimately glosses the *Lotus Sūtra* passage by saying that the Buddha "teaches the Dharma because he wishes to help absolutely all beings to become buddhas" (T85, no. 2734, p. 52c19), a reading of the text that is at odds with Kuiji's interpretation.

[453] *Fahua xuan zan yi jue* 法華玄贊義決; T1724.

[454] *Miaofa lianhua jing xuan zan* 妙法蓮華經玄贊; T1723.

[455] Compare Kuiji's discussion at T34, no. 1723, p. 651b4 ff with Huizhao's discussion at T34, no. 1724, p. 857b8 ff.

[456] T34, no. 1724, p. 859a3 ff.

In many places, however, Huizhao does track the *Profound Praise* closely. In these cases too, there is a clear presumption that his audience knows that text well. Take, for example, the discussion of how the sūtra and its chapters get their titles.[457] Without going into any of the details of the discussion, we note that Huizhao first marks that he is speaking of this section—"the gateway on how the sūtra obtains its title"[458]—and then immediately quotes from the *end* of Kuiji's discussion—"in the *Commentary* it says (…)."[459] Huizhao's ensuing comment does not elucidate the much longer discussion in the *Profound Praise*; he expounds merely the phrase he cites.

He does not only expound on minute details of Kuiji's text, however. Still within the same section, Huizhao zooms out and gives an overview of different ways that sūtra-titles are formed, a useful meta-discussion for understanding Kuiji's commentary.[460] Huizhao thereafter offers the following revealing comment.

> Now, those who study this, should first [be able to] explain the general [ways for forming] titles and then explain this sūtra[']s title]. Explaining this sūtra's title comes in two parts. First, we explain it according to the *Commentary*; then, we offer a different explanation.[461]

While the function of this comment is to structure the text and signal what is coming ahead—namely, Huizhao's *own* explanation of the sūtra's title— we might read it also as a reflection of Huizhao's overall relation with Kuiji's text. That is to say, while he relies on it in giving explanations and uses it as a jumping board for further discussions, he does not perceive it as the final word.

We get another glimpse into this complicated relationship by looking at some of the line-by-line commentary. The manuscripts as we have them only retain one scroll and it is unclear whether there was more. But already within this scroll, Huizhao comments on the opening of the sūtra. I will comment in more detail on his exposition of the phrase "thus have I heard" in Chapter 4.[462] For now, however, we note that his exposition is independent from Kuiji's. It draws from the pool of tropes and sources available to all Sui-Tang exegetes. As such, some of its discussion is reminiscent of Kuiji's, but certainly not more so than that of other exegetes.

Next, Huizhao skips a few phrases and discusses "they had eradicated the outflows," which the sūtra's introduction says of the arhats in the audience.[463] Kuiji' discussion of this phrase consists of five parts where he (1) offers a general discussion of the term outflows (*shi zong ming* 釋總名); (2) lists the main categories of outflows (*lie ming* 列名); (3) discusses their essence, relating which of the categories of outflows occur in which of the three realms (*chu*

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[457] For Kuiji's discussion, see T34, no. 1723, p. 657c3 ff.; for Huizhao's, see T34, no. 1724, p. 860a12 ff.

[458] 「經得名門」(T34, no. 1724, p. 860a12). Curiously, Huizhao uses *men* 門 as the term for this section, something that Kuiji does not do.

[459] 「疏中云依順體義處中，因出世報者。」(T34, no. 1724, p. 860a12-13). Kuiji's text is at「依順體義、處中因、出世報 (…) 」(T34, no. 1723, p. 658c12-14).

[460] T34, no. 1724, p. 860c22 ff.

[461] 「然學之者，應先敘通名，後敘此經。此經名中分之為二：初依疏辨，後述異明。」(T34, no. 1724, p. 861a23-24). Note that I am reading the alternative *ming* 明 instead of 名.

[462] Huizhao's discussion is at T34, no. 1724, p. 863c18 ff. Compare with Kuiji's at T34, no. 1723, p. 662a4. (But also, for more context see Chapter 4.)

[463] 「諸漏已盡」(T09, no. 262, p. 1c20-21).

ti 出體); analyzes the how the different categories of outflows do and do not operate together (*lihe feili* 離合癈立; lit. "[how they] separate and combine, terminate and occur"); and (5) explains the basis for the names of the categories of defilements (*de ming suocong* 得名所從).[464] Huizhao's text marks explicitly that he comments on the first and third of these. In his comments on the first, his commentary expands on Kuiji's with citations from the *Abhidharmakośa* (as *Jushe* 俱舍; T1558) and the *Mahāyānābhidharma-samuccaya-vyākhyā* (as the *Dasheng za ji* 大乘雜集; T1605). His comments on the third section only discuss a specific technical controversy related to Kuiji's passage but not mentioned by him.

Kuiji's passage on the defilements ends by noting that "because there is not only one defilement, the [sūtra] says ['they had cut off] all [defilements]'"[465] Immediately after this, Kuiji says "however, there is another explanation based on the *Yogācārabhūmi*, but because it is complicated we will stop here."[466] This is a perfect moment for Huizhao to expand: he duly supplies a relevant citation from the *Yogācārabhūmi*, which states that all defilements ultimately are a form of ignorance (and thus are in a sense one).[467] He offers some further comments as well, including another viewpoint represented by a relevant citation from the *Abhidharmakośa*.[468]

Overall, then, the impression we get from Huizhao's commentary is very different than that from Baoda's: Huizhao and his students came into the classroom having familiarized themselves with Kuiji's commentary but did not limit themselves to it. Kuiji's commentary helped supply context for their study of the *Lotus Sūtra*, but they also approached the text without reference to the commentary.

It would be interesting to uncover more commentaries on commentaries. But even if examples remain far and few between, this does not undermine my suggestion in Chapter 2 that it was standard practice for the exegetes to lecture on sūtras by using earlier commentaries. Such texts likely never made it into writing. One would use an earlier commentary as a basis for one's oral lectures, not for the writing and polishing of a subcommentary whether by oneself or by one's students. If, like Chengguan, one found earlier commentaries wanting, one might write out notes for one's own commentary. On the other hand, when using someone else's commentary, no notes were needed. After all, the earlier commentary functioned as one's notes: you would just study it deeply, memorize its lists, look up further citations. Students may have also been more likely to edit their notes from a master's lectures into an edited work if it did not rely on a previous commentary. This may have something to do with their appreciation for their master's original composition. It may also be due to the complicated intertextual nature of lectures via an earlier commentary. It is simply not an easy task to edit a complex discussion into a well-organized commentary.

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[464] At T34, no. 1723, p. 667c1 ff.

[465]「此漏非一故名為諸。」(T34, no. 1723, p. 667c24).

[466]「然依《瑜伽》更有別釋，繁故且止。」(T34, no. 1723, p. 667c24-25).

[467] T34, no. 1724, p. 864b13-16. This abridges the passage in the *Yogācārabhūmi*, found at T30, no. 1579, p. 802a13-19.

[468] T34, no. 1724, p. 864b16-18. The original is at T29, no. 1558, p. 107b26-c1.

Doctrinal Digests and Encyclopedias—(Seemingly) Independent Texts

While the genres discussed so far all concern a single scripture, we also find texts that do not do so. These include doxographical texts, treatments of individual doctrines, and encyclopedic treatments of a broad range of terms and concepts salient to the tradition. My concern here is not with proposing a detailed division of these types of texts. Moreover, since we have already discussed many aspects of Sui-Tang scholastic pedagogy in the preceding sections, in the present section I will not mine these texts for new insights on this topic. Rather, my interest in this present section lies in understanding the relation between the commentarial effort and the composition of independent texts. I will suggest that these latter genres were secondary to the commentaries. Put differently, the function of these texts was to *complement* the work done by the commentaries.[469]

There are several angles from which we can get at this point. First, we may simply note the ratio of texts: commentaries and other texts relating to a single scripture outnumber independent tracts by far. This is true whether we look at the received canon or the Dunhuang corpus. This also emerges from looking at texts authored by exegetes that are mentioned in the biographies. Commentaries are the rule; other texts the exceptions. This is illustrated nicely if we think about this issue from a second angle: the direction of development. Many of the independent texts, I suspect, developed *from* the commentaries. Texts such as doxographies and doctrinal tracts were composed to *complement* the lectures masters would give on scriptures. In some cases, such as Zhiyi's *The Four Teachings*, we can see this very directly.[470] That text, a systematic discussion of various levels of teachings, is taken verbatim from his *Profound Commentary on the Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, adding only a brief paragraph by way of a preface.[471] *The Four Teachings*, then, is not really an independent tract.

A third angle on this issue is provided by glimpses regarding the composition of such texts that we get in the biographical materials. In some cases, these indicate that many stand-alone texts originated directly from the exegetical context. Take for example Fazang's *Treatise on the Golden Lion*.[472] Because of its brevity and accessibility, it has been translated multiple times to introduce "Huayan" thought. Note, however, how the SGSZ biography of Fazang describes it as originating from oral commentary:

> Fazang lectured on the new translation of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* for Empress Wu Zetian. When he came to the doctrine of Indra's net, the ten profound perspectives, the ocean seal samādhi, the integration of the six characteristics, the objects of the universal eye—all doctrines belonging to the doctrinal net of generals and specifics associated with the *Avataṃsaka*. Overwhelmed, the empress did not understand them. Fazang then pointed to a golden lion guarding the palace and used it as an analogy. Based on this, he composed a doctrinal perspective (*yimen* 義門) that was straightforward and accessible called "The Essay on the Golden Lion." It lists the

[469] Of course, as noted in Chapter 1 using the example of Aquinas' *Summa Theologicae*, over time sometimes such independent tracts can come to be treated as scripture in themselves. In the Chinese context, we might see an instance of this with Zhanran writing the *Notations on the Great Calming and Contemplating to Transmit it Widely and Rectify [Misunderstandings]* (*Zhiguan fuxing chuan hong jue* 止觀輔行傳弘決; T1912), a commentary to Zhiyi's *Great Calming and Contemplating* (*Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀; T1911).

[470] *Si jiao yi* 四教義; T1929.

[471] *Weimo jing xuan shu* 維摩經玄疏; T1777; see p. 532b13 ff.

[472] *Jin shizi zhang* 金師子章; T1881.

characteristics of ten general and specific perspectives. By this means, the Empress came to understand the essential points. [473]

The pattern suggested here is informative: while lecturing on a scripture, the master finds himself inspired and comes up with an especially useful or pithy manner of presenting things. This presentation then becomes the basis for a new composition. Even if, as discussed by Cheng Jinhua, there are questions about this story's details, the story still shows that the Zanning and his sources thought of this as a plausible origin for a text.[474]

A similar case can be found in Zhiyan's *Avataṃsaka Ten Profound Gates of the One Vehicle*.[475] This tract expounds ten images illustrating the mutual dependence of phenomena and principles. Though I am unaware of any narratives regarding its origin, several elements suggest that it too emerged out of the exegesis of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. First, Zhiyan himself, in the opening of the text, refers to that scripture as the basis of the exposition.[476] Second, while it cites many texts, its citations of that sūtra specifically follow standard Sui-Tang conventions for citing one's root text.[477] Lastly, this treatise's ten gates also come up briefly in his commentary on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*.[478] There, they are offered as an interpretative grid for understanding the sūtra's different parts and its relation to other Buddhist teachings. As a teaching, then, it clearly stems from the exegesis of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. We get one further hint as to its origin in the colophon, which claims that Zhiyan composed the *Ten Gates* based on oral instructions by his master Dushun. Thus, while the ten gates as an exegetical trope seem to have originated in lectures on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* and was used in that context by Zhiyan himself, it was also transmitted outside of that direct context, though never losing its connection to the scripture. Later exegetes such as Fazang, Chengguan, and also Li Tongxuan, continued to use the list (though its exact form evolved) in their commentaries on the sūtra. Many other (seemingly) independent tracts, I believe, invite a similar analysis of their origin in the commentarial literature: upon analysis they will turn out to be collations of tropes and grids that find their proper application in scriptural exegesis.

While the texts by Zhiyi, Zhiyan, and Fazang texts treated likely emerged from lectures on sūtras, other texts focus either on individual doctrines or bring together discussions of

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[473] 「藏為則天講新《華嚴經》。至天帝網義、十重玄門、海印三昧門、六相和合義門、普眼境界門，此諸義章皆是《華嚴》總別義網，帝於此茫然未決。藏乃指鎮殿金獅子為喻，因撰義門，徑捷易解，號《金師子章》，列十門總別之相，帝遂開悟其旨。」(T50, no. 2061, p. 732a22-27). Cp. Chen 2007: 178-179.

[474] For Chen's discussion of this story and its sources, see Chen (2007: Chapter 7).

[475] *Huayan yisheng shi xuan men* 華嚴一乘十玄門; T1868.

[476] It remains ambiguous how exactly Zhiyan conceived of the relationship between the exposition on dependent origination and the sūtra. We might read his comment as saying that he understands this teaching to be *based* on that scripture. But we might also read it to say that he will *apply* this teaching to the scripture. This would yield the following translations: "I will here use the purport of this one sūtra, the *Avataṁsaka*, to fully illuminate the dependent arising of the dharma-realm." Or, "I will here fully illuminate the dependent arising of the dharma-realm, applying it to this one sūtra, the *Avataṁsaka*." 「今且就此華嚴一部經宗。通明法界緣起。」(T45, no. 1868, p. 514a27-28).

[477] E.g., when citing other scriptures, it gives their titles; when citing the *Avataṁsaka*, it typically says only "the sūtra says" *jing yun* 經云.

[478] T35, no. 1732, p. 15a29 ff.

different doctrines.[479] These are exemplified by such texts as Huizhao's *Collected Exhortations on Arousing Bodhicitta*[480] and Kuiji's *Essays on the Forest of Meanings in the Mahāyāna Dharma Garden*.[481] Neither of these texts contain direct evidence of their connection with sūtra-lectures. Still, I believe we should see them as developing from scriptural exegesis. One indication is that these texts sometimes rely quite heavily on scriptural sources and provide expositions of select passages. For example, while Huizhao's exposition is organized around the understanding of bodhicitta, *not* around a scriptural passage, it does draw heavily on scriptural sources—citing at length passages from the *Yogācārabhūmi*, the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṁkāra*, and a variety of Mahāyāna sūtras.

A more important indication of the close relationship of these texts with scriptural exegesis lies in the similarity between these doctrinal discussions and the way exegetes explain concepts when encountered in the course of a sūtra-commentary. This is illustrated very nicely if we look at Huizhao's *Commentary on the Sūtra of Golden Light*.[482] The first time the root-text mentions bodhicitta is when in its narrative a group of devas in the audience, inspired by the discourse so far, give rise to bodhicitta.[483] Although by this point the commentary has already mentioned the term several times, it is this occurrence in the sūtra that spurs Huizhao to offer an explanation of the term that takes up virtually a full page in the Taishō.[484] Although this is still significantly shorter than his stand-alone treatment of bodhicitta, which consists of three scrolls, we find some significant connections. Importantly, the topics he treats overlap significantly, though not completely. Moreover, in the commentary Huizhao relies heavily on exactly those texts that also feature prominently in his stand-alone treatise. This does not show, of course, that Huizhao composed his stand-alone treatise on bodhicitta based on this moment in the commentary—although this might well be the case. It does show that this type of explanation occurred in commentaries naturally. The skills needed for composing a treatment of a given doctrine were trained in the context of lecturing on scriptures. Didactically, then, we might also best conceive of these texts as intended to aid students get a grasp of doctrines which they will encounter again and again as they study Buddhist scriptures.

This conception of the relation between the genres also has implications for how we study the thought of Sui-Tang scholiasts. We cannot read independent tracts as the place where the masters worked to develop their ideas, with commentaries as a secondary genre, a place where these ideas are applied imperfectly given the genre's restrictive conventions. On that account, the primary place to look when studying these masters is their independent tracts. Rather, commentaries are the true home of the various tropes and motifs developed by the exegetes. Their expression there is not restricted; rather, the commentarial context is what gives meaning to the ideas. The scholiasts primarily taught texts, not ideas.

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[479] Note that these genre distinctions are a useful heuristic but remain arbitrary. Huiyuan's *Essays on the Doctrines of the Mahāyāna* (*Dasheng yi zhang* 大乘義章; T1851), is an encyclopedia that contains both entries on a broad range of doctrines and also contains entries on exegetical grids—namely, the organization of the Buddhist canon and teachings.

[480] *Quan fa putixin ji* 勸發菩提心集; T1862.

[481] *Dasheng Fayuan yilin zhang* 大乘法苑義林章; T1861.

[482] *Jin guangming zuisheng wang jing shu* 金光明最勝王經疏; T1788.

[483] T16, no. 665, p. 406c15-17.

[484] T39, no. 1788, pp. 202c8-203b23.

Part III: Disputation

Against the backdrop of the pervasive practice of disputation in scholastic traditions, I suggested in Chapter 2 that several lines of evidence point to its practice in Sui-Tang Buddhist scholasticism too. Besides the testimony in the biographies and the practice of debate in Japan, another important area to consider is the textual corpus. These texts bear witness, albeit indirectly to varying extents, to the practice of debate. One text in particular, the *Record of Doctrines* (discussed below), records an actual sixth century debate. We also find disputation represented in commentaries or tracts.

If we read the commentaries as abstract arguments written by philosopher monks in the solitude of their cells, it is easy to understand extended question-and-answer sections in commentaries and tracts as mere literary conceit. There is something to this intuition. After all, even insofar as these texts are based on lecture notes, they still went through some amount of editing. Chengguan's *Commentary* is a case in point: it is clearly a well-crafted literary document, even if it retains aspects of the commentarial preaching style. There, questions and answers occur but rarely and are always rather stylized. In other texts, however, these discussions seem closer to life. The questions seem to lead a life of their own, at times distracting the author from the plan of his lecture. Sometimes it seems that the interlocutor has an agenda of his own, attempting to back the master into a corner. In these cases, it is hard to escape the sense that we are getting a glimpse into a classroom conversation. Thus, although it was not intended as a transcript of a debate, it may still reflect the world of debate. Across commentarial literature, the nature of this reflection differs depending on how a given commentary was composed. We might expect, for example, that texts written based on notes taken at actual lectures may represent more of what transpired in a debate than texts compiled originally in preparation for lectures. And still, even insofar as the back-and-forth with an interlocutor in a written text may sometimes be a literary conceit, its efficacy as such would have depended on its believability to an audience familiar with the practice of debate.

Jizang *Discussing the Lotus Sūtra*

In many ways, Jizang's *Profound Discourse on the Lotus Sūtra* is a perfect example of the commentarial genre. Touching on many of the standard themes, its outline is as follows:

1. The method for expounding on scripture.
2. The overall meaning.
3. An explanation of the title.
4. Establishing the purport.
5. Resolving doubtful points.
6. Explaining the doctrines according to the text.[485]

Two exceptional themes treated by Jizang are section 1 and 5. The first presents a fascinating discussion of the ideal Buddhist preacher.[486] To the fifth we will return momentarily.[487] The sixth section would seem to consist of summaries of the sūtra's chapters. A few things about these, however, diverge from what we have seen so far. Jizang discusses only a select number

[485] 「一弘經方法、二大意、三釋名、四立宗、五決疑、六隨文釋義。」T34, no. 1720, p. 361a6-7.

[486] This passage has been discussed, with partial translations by Plassen (2004: 603-605).

[487] The fifth section is not clearly marked in the Taishō edition. On my reading, it consists of scrolls 4, 5, and 6, though it is possible that scroll 3, which I take to be part of section 4, "establishing the purport," belongs to this section as well.

of chapters. These discussions, moreover, are neither expositions in the commentarial style nor the neat, if dense and opaque, summaries and divisions of the outline texts discussed above. What we get instead are extended discussions, mostly in question-and-answer format, of select topics. While these generally start from aspects of these chapters, they meander quite freely away from the text especially as the interlocutor(s?) raise questions regarding fairly tangential points of Jizang's analysis.

Take, for example, the discussion of Chapter 11, "The Appearance of the Jeweled Stupa." Jizang starts with a brief report on the way a number of earlier exegetes interpreted this chapter, concluding with a brief critique of their positions. He takes the interpretation of the unfortunately obscure master Yin 印 (n.d.) as the most complete.

> Daolang from Hexi said, "What came before opens up the three to reveal the one. [Now] the elucidation of the essence of the *Lotus* is complete. From here on, [the sūtra] explains the perspectives on the resultant state: that the Dharmakāya is eternal, and that truth neither persists nor perishes."
>
> The *Annotations* explain, "The Way does not persist or perish. Past and present are a single matter. Thus, the stupa emerging from the earth is used to express that the Buddha's passing into nirvāṅa was not a cessation. He with whom one could sit face to face,[488] who appeared so minutely as sixteen feet tall—he was not real." Master Daosheng's interpretation was the same.
>
> Dharma master Yin said, "The chapters so far elucidate that the teachings of the three vehicles are provisional while the words of the one vehicle are true. From here onward until Chapter 21, "The Spiritual Powers of the Tathāgata," [the text] illuminates that the form is provisional while the body is real; that [the Buddha's] being born as a prince was not his birth; that his passing into nirvāṅa was not a cessation. This chapter starts to reveal those points. Further, it validates that what was said before was true to the utmost, and it makes sure that the assembly at that time would proclaim far and wide what had been said above.
>
> Fayun of the Light Abode Temple (光宅寺) said, "This chapter validates that what was said in the preceding chapters was not vain and it puts out orders looking for people to proclaim this sūtra."
>
> My evaluation: The first three masters only explained this chapter as opening up the latter part [of the sūtra]; Fayun only as establishing the former. It was master Yin who explained it in both ways at once, as concluding what came before and opening up what comes after. Investigating the sūtra from beginning to end, we find that Yin's explanation is superior.[489]

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[488] *Jiao yan jie xiang* 交莚接嚮. My interpretation of this phrase remains conjectural.

[489] 「河西道朗云：「上來開三顯一，明法華體竟。從此去辨果門，謂法身常住理非存沒。」注解云「道非存亡，古今一揆。然則裂地誦塔以表雙林非滅，交莚接嚮微顯丈六非真。」生公意亦同矣。印法師云：「上來明三乘之教為權，一乘之言為實。自此以下至〈神力品〉，明形權身實，王宮非生、雙樹非滅，此品始開其端。又亦證上所說至當之極，亦督時會宣通上之所說也。」光宅云：「此品證上所說不虛，

We may note a few things regarding this opening statement. First, tangential to our present discussion but significant in the broader project, we can note the exegetes' interest in understanding the organization of scripture; how to them, each chapter must be understood within the larger textual arc. More to the point, we see that Jizang's comments take up only a small portion of the section dedicated to Chapter 4. It seems to serve mostly as a starting point for the ensuing conversation. The rest of the section consists only of questions and answers, occasionally interrupted by a heading marking the topic of the next question.

The first questions seek to clarify elements of the opening statement. The interlocutor asks, for example, how this chapter validates what came before and opens the next part of the sūtra and what types of validation there are.[490] After a few more questions of this type, however, the interlocutor takes a more challenging posture, no longer asking for clarification, but suggesting that Jizang is wrong. The passage is worth translating in full as it reveals much about the type of arguments made.

> *Question:*
>
> You have only explained that "The Appearance of the Jeweled Stupa" validates what came before, which corresponds with Fayun's outline. How does it clarify root and trace?
>
> *Answer:*
>
> A verse in the text says, "The Tathāgata Many Jewels and myself,// And the here assembled transformation buddhas all know this meaning."[491] Now, the Sage's words might be approachable [lit. "close"], but his meaning is obscure [lit. "far"]. We cannot treat them as equal in our search [for the Buddha's intent]. Because the Buddha feared that we would get caught up in the words and miss their purport, he proclaimed that "[only the buddhas] know this meaning" to jolt us into understanding this. If the meaning was only to uphold and preach [this sūtra], this is the surface level of the words—how could that be a case where "the meaning is hard to know"?! Also, why then would he go through the trouble of proclaiming that "(…) know of this meaning."
>
> Further if the "The Appearance of the Jeweled Stupa" only functioned to validate what came before, then why would [the Buddha] go through the trouble of emitting lights to gather the [manifestation] buddhas? Why would he open the stupa and sit beside

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命覓弘經人也。」評曰：初三師但為開後，光宅唯為成前。印公則兩而兼之，謂結前開後。考經始終，印釋為長矣。」(T34, no. 1720, p. 433b14-25).

[490] See T34, no. 1720, p. 433b25 and p. 433c2.

[491] This is from the verse spoken by Buddha Śākyamuni at the end of Chapter 11, "The Emerging of the Stupa." Jizang understands this verse differently from how Kubo & Yuyama's translation takes it (2007: p. 174). That translation reads *yi* 意 ("meaning") as "intention," referring to the vow to uphold and study the *Lotus Sūtra* after the Buddha's demise that the audience is encouraged to make. Jizang seems to take *yi* 意 as having a broader, or maybe rather double meaning, referring (also?) to the intention behind the appearance of the stupa. That he reads the text this way is confirmed by his brief treatment in his *Commentary on the Lotus Sūtra* (T34, no. 1721, p. 591a14-23). Watson's translation keeps the verse ambiguous in this regard, translating as follows: "Many Treasures Thus Come One, I myself, and these emanation Buddhas who have gathered there, surely know this is our aim" (1993: 178).

[the Tathāgata Many Jewels]. What would be the meaning thereof? For that reason, we know that it clarifies root and traces.

Question:

This is just the vow that Many Jewels had made ("when my stupa is opened, division body buddhas will gather"). It does not symbolize the doctrine of the root and traces.

Answer:

If it weren't because of Many Jewels' fundamental vow, then how would the division body buddhas gather to reveal the doctrine of the root and traces? You ought to realize that this meaning is revealed therein.

Further, Many Jewels truly had this vow. How is that? All buddhas each have their vow, just like Śāriputra vowed that when he becomes a buddha, he will proclaim the three vehicles in his pure land.[492] The fundamental vow of Many Jewels is that this stupa will elucidate root and traces. Because confused beings will think that since he is in the stupa, he will certainly already have passed, the stupa is used to show that the dharmakāya is eternal.

Question:

If that is the case, all buddhas could use the welling forth of a stupa to elucidate root and traces. Why does only Many Jewels do so?

Answer:

Your question is right on. Only Many Jewels took this as his vow, and that is why he elucidates root and traces.

Also, this is how the vow of Many Jewels is revealed: by way of the appearance of the stupa, this ancient buddha reveals that the dharmakāya is eternal; by way of his fundamental vow, the manifestation bodies gather to reveal that the root is singular. Using such limited phenomena [to illuminate] the pervasiveness of principle—this is truly the great skill of a perfected man.

Also, we can reveal the vows and practices of Many Jewels in terms of cause and result, which are all directed to helping beings. That is to say, the appearance of the stupa is the result that helps beings; the making of the original vow is the cause for helping beings. Along these lines, the praise from the stupa is a practice that helps beings; since it accords with his fundamental vow, it is a vow to help beings.[493]

Also, the welling forth of the stupa of Many Jewels, this ancient buddha joins the gathering, and because of his fundamental vow, transformation bodies gather like clouds. At that point, the assembly, seeing this with awe, think it remarkable, and come

[492] Jizang here refers to the Buddha's prediction of Śāriputra's buddhahood in Chapter 3 of the *Lotus Sūtra;* the specific line in question is at T09, no. 262, p. 11b24-25. In Jizang's *Commentary on the Lotus Sūtra* (*Fahua yi shu* 法華義疏; T1721), this leads to a brief back and forth of questions and answers (T34, no. 1721, p. 517c5).

[493] The praise in question likely refers to the voice heard by the assembly just after the stupa emerges in the beginning of the chapter (T09, no. 262, p. 32b27-c2).

to revere the *Lotus Sūtra*, thus extensively planting [causes] for goodness. Because it has such great benefit, it accords with his fundamental vow.

Question:

What is the proof that the welling forth of the stupa is an esoteric elucidation of root and traces?

Answer:

Just investigate the *Lotus Sūtra*. The text's meaning is clear enough. Then, see the Chapter *Gaṅḍavyūha* of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (scroll 41): "One of his spiritual guides was the Elder Peacefully Abiding who had attained the Dharma gate 'Not Passing Away.' He perceived that none of buddhas of the past had passed away. Opening the stupa of the Buddha Candana, he obtained samādhi and wisdom." [The phrase] "none of buddhas of the past had passed away" is exactly the *Lotus Sūtra's* elucidation of the non-passing of the stupa. [These passages] should be taken as complementary.[494]

While this is only a snippet of a much longer exchange of questions and answers, it conveys some of the flavor of such passages. The types of questions we see here are quite typical. As we saw above, Jizang started his discussion of this chapter by saying that he agreed with master Yin's perspective. On that view, the "Emerging of the Jeweled Stupa" is a pivot point in the sūtra, at once wrapping up the previous chapters by offering a confirmation with a rather stunning miracle, and introducing the themes that run throughout next ten chapters. Yet, the discussant points out that so far Jizang has only explained the chapter as a confirmation of what came before. Therefore, he suggests, Jizang is really just agreeing with Fayun, not with Yin.

Whereas this first question might still be read as an attempt to have Jizang clarify his position, the ensuing questions take on a more combative tone. Jizang's original answer argues two points. He first cites a brief passage from the sūtra which he argues should be read as an indication that the appearance of the stupa had a deeper meaning. Next, he suggests

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494 「問：但明現塔證所說不虛，唯應如光宅所明，云何用此開於本迹？
答：下偈云「多寶如來及與我身，所集化佛當知此意」者，夫聖人言近而意遠，不可齊事而求之佛，恐尋言失旨，故唱當知此意以驚悟之耳。若意唯存受持弘宣者，則已顯之於言，豈曰此意難知？復何煩唱言當知此意也。又若現塔但為證前說者，何煩放光集佛、開塔並坐？意在何耶？故知皆為開本迹耳。
問：此乃是多寶本願，開我塔必須集分身佛，亦非表本迹義也。
答：若不詑多寶願，何由得集分身佛明本迹義耶？當知此意顯於茲矣。又多寶實有此願。所以然者，諸佛各有誓願，如身子成佛願於淨土而說三乘。多寶本願因此塔以開本迹，以惑者皆謂居在塔者必是身已滅亡，故寄塔以表法身常住也。
問：若爾，一切佛皆得以塔涌開於本迹，何止多寶耶？
答：實如所問。但多寶即以此事為願，故開本迹也。又所以明多寶願者，以塔現故，寄古佛以明法身常；以本願故，集化身以顯本一。以事約而理周，蓋是至人之善巧也。又示多寶因果願行皆悉益物，明塔現謂果益物，舉本願謂因利緣。又涌塔讚嘆謂行益物，稱於本願謂願利緣。又多寶塔涌現則古佛降莚，以本願故化身雲集，時會奉覩則起奇特心，尊敬《法華》廣植諸善，有斯大益故稱本願也。
問：何以之證涌塔是密開本迹耶？
答：初但尋《法華》，文義已顯。後見《華嚴．法界品》四十一卷「善知識中有安住長者，得不滅度法門，見過去諸佛皆不滅度，開栴檀佛塔戶即得三昧智。」過去佛不滅，即《法華》開塔不滅，宜為符契。」(T34, no. 1720, p. 434a1-b2).

that many of the miracles in the chapter would have been unnecessary if the chapter was only to be a confirmation of what came before. The discussant responds only to this second point. He suggests an alternative explanation: the Buddha Many Jewels appeared in this fashion because he had vowed to do so. While this is not made explicit, it would not have been lost on the audience that this argument has clear foundation in the sūtra itself.[495] Not surprisingly, then, Jizang has to cede the point to some extent: yes, these appearances came about because of the Buddha's vow, but the reason for the Buddha's vow was to elucidate the teaching regarding root and traces.

The next question too is combative. If the point of Many Jewel's vow was to elucidate root and traces, then all buddhas, the discussant suggests, could teach this doctrine in this way too; there is nothing unique, in other words, that makes that only Many Jewels should appear in such a way. Jizang has little to offer in response to this. He acknowledges the point, and continues by analysing Many Jewels' vow from an ad hoc interpretative grid. The final question by the discussant is one more attempt to get Jizang to substantiate his support for Yin's exegesis. Jizang answers this first, and curiously, by stating that it is obvious if one reads the sūtra; he then uses a passage from the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* as prooftext.

It is hard to escape the impression that this passage, like many similar ones in Jizang's corpus, represents the types of discussions that transpired at scholastic lectures. The movement from clarifying questions to challenges makes sense if we think of the role of the discussant as discussed in Chapter 2. This discussant has an agenda of his own and the cadence of the discussion is such that the presentation is not wholly linear. This makes it hard to conceive of this passage as a pure literary fiction crafted to convey Jizang's argument.

These observations also apply to section 5 of Jizang's text, "Resolving Doubtful Points." Here, we find no opening statement; only long exchanges of questions and answers. As with the later discussions of chapters, we find headings marking the topic under discussion. If we read the text as a purely written composition, we might translate the first two of these headings as follows.

> First, we clarify the meaning of the One Vehicle—that is, we explain the doctrine of the three being brought back to the one.[496]
>
> Next, we discuss the four phrases.[497]

However, read more as a report of an actual teaching-session, we might opt for the past tense: "first, we clarified the meaning. (…). Next, we discussed the four phrases." The first of these two topics references doctrines directly relevant to the study of the *Lotus Sutra*. This goes as well for the second topic, as becomes clear when we look at its first question:

> *Question:*

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[495] See the beginning of the verse at the end of the chapter; T09, no. 262, p. 33c20 ff.

[496] 「初明一乘義即釋會三歸一義。」(T34, no. 1720, p. 388c20).

[497] 「次論四句。」(T34, no. 1720, p. 389a20-21).

> What is the difference between "unifying the three and returning to the one," "refuting the three and returning to the one," "opening the three to reveal the one," and "doing away with the three to establish the one"?[498]

These four phrases, of course, are all maxims coined by exegetes studying the *Lotus Sūtra.*

This question, and its answer, highlight an interesting aspect of the expectations in these exchanges. All four of these phrases are found in commentaries on the *Lotus Sūtra*. Although the evidence is limited and not clear-cut, it seems like these different maxims were favored by different exegetes. The phrase "opening the three to reveal the one" (*kai san xian yi* 開三顯一), for example, is used abundantly by Fayun in his *Notes on the Meaning of the Lotus Sūtra*.[499] He uses the phrase "unifying the three and returning to the one" (*hui san gui yi* 會三歸一) but sparsely. On the other hand, that phrase is a staple in *Lotus*-related texts by Jizang himself.[500] In texts by Zhiyi, the phrase also occurs, though not as often.[501] The other two phrases are much rarer in the received corpus of texts. Besides occurring a few times in some of Jizang's works, the phrase "refuting the three and returning to the one" (*po san gui yi* 破三歸一) is also used by Huiyuan 慧遠 as a shorthand for the teachings of the *Lotus Sūtra* in his *Essays on the Doctrines of the Mahāyāna*.[502]

If we look at the way these phrases are used in these various sources, referring to the way the *Lotus Sūtra* reveals that the differentiation between the three vehicles in the buddha's teachings was a mere expedient and that ultimately there is just one vehicle, the path to buddhahood. This would have been clear to Jizang and his audience, even as there were debates as to the exact relation between the one and the three vehicles.[503] Though this issue was discussed by exegetes at the time, there does not seem to be a stable connection between positions in that debate and the use of the phrases used in the present question.

The present question, it therefore seems to me, is asking Jizang to differentiate between items that are not by nature clearly differentiated. Their main difference, it seems, lay in who coined a given phrase. But this is not what the question is getting at: it asks about the difference between the phrases themselves, not the intention of those who used them. It is common enough for questions in commentaries by Jizang to refer explicitly to other masters' explanations and ask to clarify and/or critique them.[504] It seems to me, therefore, that the interlocutor is intentionally playing with Jizang, pushing him to come up with differences between identical items. Jizang, in any case, does not take the question as referring to the phrases' origin, but answers it as though it had asked about the different meanings of the phrases. He takes the bait.

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[498] 「問：會三歸一、破三歸一、開三顯一、廢三立一，有何異耶？」(T34, no. 1720, p. 389a20-21)

[499] *Fahua yi ji* 法華義記; T1715. The text is also known as *Fahua (jing) yi shu* 法華(經)義疏.

[500] E.g., in the present text as well as in his *Commentary on the Meaning of the Lotus* (*Fahua yi shu* 法華義疏); T1721.

[501] E.g., in his *Textual Exposition on the Wondrous Dharma Lotus Sūtra* (*Miaofa lianhua jing wenju* 妙法蓮華經文句; T1718) and his *Profound Meaning of the Wondrous Dharma Lotus Sūtra* (*Miaofa lianhua jing xuan yi* 妙法蓮華經玄義; T1716).

[502] *Dasheng yi zhang* 大乘義章; T1851.

[503] See also Jizang at T34, no. 1722, pp. 646c28-647a24.

[504] see, e.g., T34, no. 1720, p. 416b4-5.

Answer:

As for "unifying the three and returning to the one," there is the unifying of the teaching, unifying of practices, and unifying of conditions. Unifying the teachings: first [the Buddha] had opened up the teaching of the three vehicles and the five vehicles, but now he reveals that there is only one path. Since the goal is singular, the teachings that express it, too, are one. Therefore, all of the teachings are the one vehicle teaching.

Unifying the practices: "What you all practice is the bodhisattva path."[505] The Tathāgata originally spoke of there being three different practices. He taught [beings] to cultivate three different types of practices to direct them to the one goal. [But] since the goal to which they are directed is one, how could the practices directed to it be three?

As for, unifying people: the reason for the Tathāgata's appearing in the world is to teaching bodhisattvas, not to teach other people. Since what the three types of people practice is the bodhisattva path, these practitioners are all bodhisattvas. That is why the text says, "I only taught this for the sake of bodhisattvas" and "I do not have any śrāvaka disciples."

By unifying the teachings, the [Buddha's teaching career] consists of only one period. Unifying the practices and the people, they all become buddhas in the future.[506]

Jizang answers the invitation by at once equating the phrases *and* suggesting how they might be read differently. While in a strict sense, the suggested distinctions are not based in the relevant sources (i.e., the usage of the maxims by other exegetes), they arguably accord with the teachings of the *Lotus* and its interpretative tradition. To modern readers who expect him, as a great thinker, to be engaged in a systematic articulation of truths or, at least, draw precise historically accurate distinctions between his predecessors, this passage is deeply unsatisfying. If, however, being a great thinker is not defined by one's rigidity but by one's ability to use the tradition's resources to creatively respond to challenges, Jizang has shown that he fits the bill.

Even though the teachings of the *Lotus Sūtra* feature throughout the entire discussion, the connection becomes tangential at times. The third topic is the nature of "vehicles" (*sheng* 乘; Skt. *yāna*).[507] This topic lies close to the heart of the *Lotus.* However, the longer the discussion continues, the less clear the connection is. One area where we may observe this is in the prooftexts used. After a few clarificatory questions, the interlocutor challenges Jizang by suggesting that his explanation is at odds with the DZDL.[508] We also find both parties making use of the *Larger Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* (*Dapin* 大品)[509] as well as the

[505] Note this allusion to the *Lotus Sūtra* by way of a verbatim citation; see T09, no. 262, p. 20b23-24.
[506] 「答：會三歸一者，有會教、會行、會緣。言會教者，昔開三乘五乘之教並為顯一道，所表之道既一，能表之教亦復無二，故一切教皆名大乘教也。會行者，汝等所行是菩薩道。如來昔說有三行者，為趣一道故令修三行。所期之道無二，能趣之行豈三耶？所言會人者，如來出世本為教菩薩，不教餘人。三人所行既是菩薩道，能行之人皆成菩薩也，故文云「但為教菩薩」，「無聲聞弟子。」但會教正是一時，會行及人遠令至佛也。」(T34, no. 1720, p. 389a21-b3).
[507] T34, no. 1720, p. 389b22.
[508] T34, no. 1720, p. 389c2-3.
[509] E.g., T34, no. 1720, p. 390a15-17; p. 390b28.

Mahāyānasaṃgraha.[510] Furthermore, "vehicles" remains the topic of discussion for a long time, even if under different headings. Under these headings are discussions of the "riding out" (*yunchu* 運出) of the vehicles, their accessories (*sheng ju* 乘具), their movement away (*dongchu* 動出), their obstacles (*sheng zhang* 乘障), and more.[511]

A most striking moment occurs in the section on the accessories of the vehicles. Much earlier, a question had already been raised regarding the nature of vehicles. Jizang answered by defining the nature of vehicle as permeating both cause and result, specifying that "the resultant vehicle has the myriad virtues as its essence; the causal vehicle has the myriad practices as its essence."[512] In the section on the accessories of the vehicles, the interlocutor asks "What is the meaning of 'vehicle'?" In his response Jizang uses two scriptural authorities to define "vehicle" as ultimately relying on thusness-buddha-nature (*zhenru foxing* 真如佛性).[513] The next question pursues this topic and asks in what way thusness-buddha-nature is the essence of vehicle.[514] Jizang's response, notably, neither references nor echoes the earlier exchange on this topic. Thus, even if Jizang's text is well-edited in literary terms, it still retains some of the spontaneity of live debate. What was at stake was the master's interpretative dexterity, not his rigid adherence to a single system of definitions.

Huizhao's Determination of the Meaning of the Profound Praise of the Lotus Sūtra

Another text that gives us a window into classroom discussions is Huizhao's *Determination of the Meaning of the Profound Praise of the Lotus Sūtra*.[515] I already discussed this text in Part II as it is an interesting example of a commentary that uses another commentary—namely, Kuiji's thematic *Profound Praise of the Wondrous Dharma Lotus Sūtra*. Huizhao's text, in terms of its organization, is rather chaotic. This lack of editorial attention suggests to me that we are dealing with a relatively unedited text based on classroom notes, one that brings us fairly close to an actual classroom.

Much of this text consists of questions and answers. The text, in fact, opens with a question that assumes Kuiji's commentary.

> *Question:*
>
> There are two types of bodhisattvas: those who awaken directly and those who awaken indirectly. The *Commentary* gives two explanations. Which is correct?[516]

The "*Commentary*" here is Kuiji's. The first topic discussed there is the origination of the sūtra. He lists a number of different reasons, each of which he discusses in detail.[517] In good

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[510] E.g., T34, no. 1720, p. 390c24-26; p. 391b1-3.

[511] Respectively, T34, no. 1720, p. 390b18; p. 390b26; p. 392a13; and p. 392a25.

[512] 「答：乘通因果。果乘以萬德為體，因乘以萬行為體。」(T34, no. 1720, p. 389b22-24).

[513] T34, no. 1720, p. 390c21-26. Note that Jizang's citations here are odd. He gives no title for the first, though in another text he cites the same lines as coming from Vasubandhu's *Treatise on Consciousness-Only* (*Weishi lun* 唯識論; T1588; see T33, no. 1716, p. 779b28-c1). That text, however, contains no parallels to Jizang's citation. Similarly, while Jizang does cite a source, the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha*, for the second part of his answer, that text contains no parallels to his comment.

[514] T34, no. 1720, p. 390c26.

[515] *Fahua xuan zan yi jue* 法華玄贊義決; T1724.

[516] 「問：菩薩有二，謂頓、漸悟，疏有二釋，何者為長？」(T34, no. 1724, p. 854c6-7).

[517] Starting at T34, no. 1723, p. 651b4-7.

scholastic style the second of these, that the sūtra was spoken "in order to dispel doubts and attachments," itself consists of two items, "dispelling doubts" and "dispelling attachments."[518] The discussion of the latter, again, breaks into two: the attachments of śrāvakās and of bodhisattvas. As the question references, once again, the bodhisattvas are divided into two groups.[519] The first group consists of those who start out on the Buddhist path with the resolve for buddhahood. These Kuiji says have "awakened directly" (*dun wu* 頓悟). This is not to say that they realize full enlightenment in an instant. On the contrary, they still need to go through innumerable lives before they do so. The "awakening" here is their setting their minds on the Mahāyāna. This is why the other group is said to have awakened indirectly (*jian wu* 漸悟). Kuiji, as well as Huizhao, adheres to the gotra-theory according to which beings have seeds (or natures) predisposing them to the different forms of awakening—as arhats, pratyekabuddhas, and buddhas. Some beings have "unfixed" seeds, allowing them to attain any of those types of awakening. For them, it is even possible to resolve upon buddhahood even after they have already become arhats.[520] In that case, in Kuiji's terminology, they have come to ("awakened to") the Mahāyāna indirectly. He also offers a slightly different version of this bifurcation. On this second account, when beings resolve upon the Mahāyāna *at any point* after having set out on the Hīnayāna path—that is, also if they have not yet attained arhatship—they are said to have awakened to the Mahāyāna only gradually.

We need this background not only to make sense of the opening question in Huizhao's subcommentary on Kuiji, but also to make sense of his answer.

> Answer:
>
> When [bodhisattvas] have already realized the truth, their awakening is called direct. When they have attained the stages of the noble ones and then resolve upon [buddhahood], their awakening is called indirect. This is better than [defining indirect awakening as including] those who have not yet attained the stages of the noble ones because in that case the truth has not been realized yet.
>
> If we say that those who have confidence[521] awaken indirectly [to the Mahāyāna], then when people of who have fixed Mahāyāna-seeds, before they have ever heard of the Mahāyāna, start to practice and learn of the Hīnayāna, although they are not headed toward [the Hīnayāna goal], but do have trust [in that path]—how can they be said to awaken indirectly?
>
> Those who have confidence [in the Hīnayāna path] should not be said to be indirectly awakened [to the Mahāyāna]. Those who resolve upon [buddhahood] before they have attained the stages of the noble ones too do not attain awakening indirectly.
>
> [Now, one might say,] if that is the case, when that kind [of person] has only a limited number of births left [as a result of attaining a noble state], his number of remaining

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[518] 「二為破疑執」(T34, no. 1723, p. 651b5). The discussion starts at p. 652b19.

[519] This discussion is found at T34, no. 1723, p. 653a18 ff.

[520] This particular aspect of Kuiji's gotra-theory is implicit in his present discussion. He explicitly states this in discussing different types of arhats in the immediately preceding section—see T34, no. 1723, p. 652c6 ff.

[521] I am understanding *xinwu* 信悟 here as synonymous with *xinjie* 信解, which is the faith in and understanding of the path to awakening necessary to walk it rather than the end goal of the path.

> births will not be many [and therefore his case is analogous to that of arhats who resolve upon the Mahāyāna and he should be said to be awakened indirectly].
>
> That is not the case, however. As long as such a one is directed toward the Hīnayāna goal, he has only a limited number of births left. [But,] when he turns to direct himself toward the Mahāyāna, his number of remaining births is not fixed [anymore].

After this dense argument, the interlocutor follows up with an even more technical question pointing out what seems to be a problem in Huizhao's argument.[522] As Huizhao implies in his argument above, when someone on the Hīnayāna path who has only a limited number of births left changes course and resolves upon buddhahood, the number of his remaining births is no longer fixed. As the interlocutor points out, when an ārya being is said to have only a limited number of births left, this is because they are no longer creating new karma. To claim, as Huizhao does, that one can then change to having a nonfixed number of births left implies that one is now once again creating karma, which should be impossible given what it means to stop creating karma in the first place.

Explicating the technical subtleties of Huizhao's response to this challenge would take us too far afield from the project at hand. After all, our present aim is not to understand his treatise as such, but to mine it for clues about the debate-conventions in the culture of which he was part. Regarding that aim, we may still note that his answer to this follow-up question consists of two alternative explanations. Unless questions concern straightforward facts ("what are the four noble truths?"), the appropriate response is not a singular and final answer. Again, what these discussions convey is not mere factual knowledge but also, and arguably more importantly, ways of thinking.

This same point is also illustrated by Huizhao's answer regarding the sudden and gradual types of bodhisattvas. Instead of simply stipulating the correct answer and moving on, Huizhao is expected to argue for a position. Note, moreover, that his answer consists of a logical argument; it does not rely on a prooftext. This is notable, to my mind, because Kuiji's text is quite clear that he favors the first of the two accounts as given above. The point of the discussion is to articulate who was the intended audience of the *Lotus Sūtra* and why. Kuiji says,

> Although we might say [the sūtra] was preached for those two types of bodhisattvas, properly speaking it was only preached for those who awakened gradually. That is why this sūtra says, "The bodhisattvas hearing this Dharma,// Have already severed the nets of doubt." The teaching is also for those awakened directly who are not yet clear regarding this principle.[523]

The use of the quotation suggests that he reads it in a very particular way. That these bodhisattvas have "already severed the net of doubt," he implies, should be read as an indication that they have already become arhats. If that is correct, it may well be that Kuiji expected his readership to be familiar enough with the sūtra for the second line of the verse

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[522] In what follows I am paraphrasing T34, no. 1724, p. 854c14-16.

[523] 「雖亦可為二菩薩說，正宗唯為漸悟者說。故下經云：「菩薩聞是法，疑網皆已除」，義兼頓悟於理未爽。《」(T34, no. 1723, p. 653b5-7).

to come to mind: "Twelve hundred arhats,// All attain buddhahood"—further proof, that is, that these bodhisattvas were already arhats.[524]

Moreover, another term used by Kuiji for these bodhisattvas, is "śrāvakas who have retrogressed and again resolved upon bodhi" (*tui yi huan fa daputixin* 退已還發大菩提心; in short *tui putixin shengwen* 退菩提心聲聞;), a technical term of sorts that Kuiji introduced in the preceding section.[525] As defined there, these arhats, with seed that is not fixed, come to aspire to buddhahood. This category must be either coterminous with the bodhisattvas who awaken indirectly (on the first version) or a subset (on the second version). Though there is some ambiguity in the bodhisattva-section, overall Kuiji treats these as synonymous.[526] That means that for him the preferred version of the bifurcation into directly and indirectly awakened bodhisattvas is the first, according to which it includes only arhats who aspire to become buddhas, not śrāvakas who change course in general.

All that is to say that instead of constructing a logical argument, Huizhao could also simply have cited from Kuiji's text to establish which of the versions is the correct one. Why does he instead construct an argument by logic? By the same token, since Kuiji's intention is obvious enough, why does the interlocutor ask the question in the first place? I suspect this may have been fully conventional. Maybe, in asking about this obvious point in Kuiji's text, the interlocutor was not seeking for the answer so much, but challenging Huizhao to defend that position. In that case, to use Kuiji's commentary as a prooftext would have been beside the point.

If this is the right way to understand this exchange, we might note something else about the question: its relation to Kuiji's commentary is somewhat tangential. Recall that this section of Kuiji's commentary is part of the discussion on why the Buddha preached the *Lotus Sūtra.* Concluding this present section, Kuiji says that the Buddha's aim was to teach those of the two vehicles that their fruition is not the highest, to teach indirectly awakened bodhisattvas that they too can attain buddhahood, and to teach directly awakened bodhisattvas not to attach to the idea that one can only attain buddhahood by means of the Mahāyāna.[527] The question that opens Huizhao's commentary does not engage the Buddha's

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[524] 《妙法蓮華經》卷 1：「千二百羅漢，悉亦當作佛。」(T09, no. 262, p. 10a21-22).

[525] T34, no. 1723, p. 652c12-22.

[526] The ambiguity lies in a moment where they two categories appear side by side as though they are separate. He cites the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha*'s explanation of the meaning of ekayāna, which says that this teaching aims to draw in one type and to support the rest (T31, no. 1594, p. 151b15-20). Kuiji identifies the former as śrāvakas who have retrogressed and again resolved upon bodhi and the latter as indirectly awakened bodhisattvas (T34, no. 1723, p. 653b7-11). This is puzzling because, logically speaking, the two categories cannot be exclusive—if they are not identical, then at the least the retrogressed śrāvakas are a subset of the indirectly awakened bodhisattvas. Moreover, this seems to be at odds with other statements in this present section, including the passage just translated but especially the concluding remarks where Kuiji returns to his actual topic—the reason the Buddha preached the *Lotus*—and says that the aim of the sūtra is to teach those of the two vehicles that their fruition is not the highest, to teach indirectly awakened bodhisattvas that they too can attain buddhahood, and to teach directly awakened bodhisattvas not to attach to the idea that one can only attain buddhahood by means of the Mahāyāna (T34, no. 1723, p. 653b19-25). Of these three categories, only the second, explicitly identified as directly awakened bodhisattvas, is line with how Kuiji speaks of the retrogressed śrāvakas. Note also that he earlier cites statements made by Śāriputra and Kāśyapa in the *Lotus Sūtra* that identify them as belonging to this second category, while he explicitly calls them śrāvakas who have retrogressed and again resolved upon bodhi (T34, no. 1723, p. 653b11-15).

[527] T34, no. 1723, p. 653b19-25.

reasons for teaching the sūtra. Since the terminology used is clear enough, the question is not instrumental toward understanding Kuiji's comment on the issue. In fact, the ensuing exchange never touches on it, continuing to treat only technical issues. The discussion, that is, is what we moderns might call a scholastic exercise: splitting hairs over technical trivialities. "Exercise," however, might be exactly the right word: rather than simply as a source of truth, Kuiji's text was a jumping board for training in ways of thinking with the tradition.

As we saw with the questions above, such training allows for creativity—stimulates it, in fact. Of course, as we might expect in a training-context, we also find places where the questions are clearly not creative. Students need to learn how to formulate questions, need to show that they have got the basic protocols and sources down. In Huizhao's commentary, one passage in particular strikes me as an example of this: the questions regarding the opening phrase of the sūtra "thus have I heard."[528] I will return to this section in the next chapter, discussing it alongside other exegetes' treatment of the same phrase. Here it will suffice to note that the exchange plays with variations of some of the standard issues in the exegesis of said phrase. The interlocutor here seems to be filling a conventional role, more so than in the discussion that opens the text.

If we allow ourselves to imagine for a moment the type of classroom environment from which Huizhao's commentary might have arisen, I suggest we are looking at a discussion between a master and his highly informed students. It is clearly not a disputation-exercise, even if we find extended exchanges: the teacher has things on the agenda. For the most part, however, the questions are highly specialized: the students had clearly done their homework. They were familiar with the intricacies of Kuiji's commentary and—as we will discuss at more length in Chapter 5—with the sources and themes pertaining to the study of the *Lotus Sūtra.*

The *Record of Doctrines*

A rare Dunhuang find gives us a particularly enlightening glimpse into Chinese Buddhist disputation: the manuscript of the *Record of Doctrines*.[529] This is the only text known to me that appears to be a transcription of a debate, or series of debates, between Buddhist masters in the sixth century. We know a remarkable number of details regarding its original setting, including the names of its participants.

The structure of the exercise was as follows. The masters in attendance took turns explaining a particular doctrine—the dharmakāya, the four noble truths, the one vehicle, the three jewels, the ten stages of the bodhisattva path, and so forth. After the master had given a brief exposition, others would challenge it. In many cases, after one of the participants had put forth a series of questions, another would take over the role of discussant and continue the exchange.

The questions asked are sometimes clarificatory, but mostly challenges. Such objections generally follow the format of a *reductio ad absurdum*: "if, as you say, *X*, then *Y*. But since *Y* cannot be, *X* must be wrong." Take, for example, the discussion of the four impartial minds (*si deng xin* 四等心).[530] First, master Fa'an presents a brief exposition on this list. In his explanation, he emphasizes that the practitioner holds attitudes of kindness, compassion,

[528] T34, no. 1724, p. 863c18 ff.
[529] *Yi ji* 義記, discussed and transcribed in Irisawa, Mitani, & Usuda (2014).
[530] 2014: 193 ff.

sympathetic joy, and equanimity toward living beings impartially—hence their name. To roughly paraphrase the exchange, when Zhishun questions Fa'an, he hones in on this issue: if they all apply equally to all living beings, then what sets equanimity apart as a separate item? Fa'an responds by saying that when one cultivates kindness, even though it is to be impartial, the focal point is wishing others well. The underlying impartiality is what one cultivates in equanimity, which is therefore primary. Zhishun later also asks why, if that is the case, equanimity is the last item of the list instead of the first.

This text is our most direct evidence that the Chinese Buddhist scholiasts would on occasion gather specifically to engage in disputation. Unfortunately, as far as I know, it is the only surviving text that displays such a format. Therefore, we cannot know to what extent this particular type of debate is representative of standard practice. The style of argument with its use of reductio type challenges, seems to fit well with the other examples we have seen.

Questions and Answers Regarding the Avataṃsaka Sūtra

A few texts in the received canon seem to represent disputation exercises like the *Record of Doctrines*, though with differing structures. The *Questions and Answers Regarding the Avataṃsaka Sūtra* is a good example. The origin of this text is somewhat unclear. While the Taishō canon ascribes it to Fazang, this ascription has long been doubted. The arguments in question have been helpfully summarized by Boudewijn Walraven.[531] He summarizes the work by the Korean scholar Kim Sanghyŏn which argues that this text was, in fact, the lost *Record of the Copper Cave* by Uisang 義湘 (625-702), Fazang's fellow student under Zhiyan.[532] His argument is based on the fact that surviving citations of the latter text all find strong parallels in the *Questions and Answers Regarding the Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. As it seems to me that there might be other possible explanations for this overlap between what does survive of Uisang's text and the text at hand, I remain agnostic as to the exact authorship of the text. In any case, the text came from the circle around Zhiyan.

As an example of the discussions in this text, let us look at this exchange regarding the identity of buddhas and living beings.

> *Question:*
>
> As for [the idea that] buddhas and living beings are part of the same causal matrix: if buddhas fully express buddhahood, then there are no living beings; if living beings fully express the state of living beings, there are no buddhas. In that case, how could there be those who teach and those who are taught?
>
> *Answer:*
>
> The full expression of buddhahood does not negate the full expression of the state of living beings. When the state of living beings is fully expressed, this does not negate the full expression of buddhahood. It is not the case that there are no living beings when buddhahood is fully expressed; nor that there are no buddhas when the state of living beings is fully expressed. Although they join perfectly in nonduality, they do not merge

[531] 1996. I have not consulted the works which he summarizes.
[532] *Tong dong ji* 銅洞記.

with each other. How could it be that there is no one teaching and no one taught?! Although it is not the case that there is no subject and object, there is no subject and object.

Question:

The buddha fully expressed being awakened; living beings fully express being deluded. If buddhas and living beings are one, then they should both be deluded. How then could there be a buddha who teaches? If living beings and buddhas are one, then they should both fully express awakening. How then could there be those who are taught?

Answer:

There are two perspectives. Insofar as the state of living beings is fully expressed, we can say that there is no one teaching. And, insofar as buddhahood is fully expressed, we can say that there is no one being taught. Insofar as they are both fully expressed, they are dual, and thus we can say that there are those teaching and those taught. Dharmas, unobstructed and unhindered, do not exist in a singular way; thus, we can say that it works as appropriate. In the Sage's exposition, it is like space transforming space. Never apply views based on discrimination onto causally arisen dharmas.

Question:

When buddhas observe deluded living beings, is their observation deluded or awakened? [It cannot be] deluded, since delusion cannot observe delusion—how then *could* it observe delusion?! [Nor can it be] awakened observation, since awakening is not the same as delusion. Therefore, it cannot reach it by observation. How could [buddhas then] see living beings?

Answer:

In that vein, the Buddha says, "I and you are no different. It is you who diverge from this meaning." The Buddha perceives that living beings are wholly identical with himself, but they do not know that they themselves are buddhas. Thus pointlessly experiencing all forms of suffering, throughout the long eons [the Buddha] has compassion for beings, knowing that they are of the same substance, never abandoning them. He cultivates alongside them; attains accomplishments alongside them. He shared in their suffering and their happiness. Not even for a moment does he abandon them. It is in this sense that the sūtra speaks of the greatly compassionate ox.[533] This is to illustrate his parental care. [534]

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[533] An image for the Buddha from the *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṅa Sūtra* (T12, no. 375, p. 838a9).

[534] 「問。若佛與眾生同一緣起者。[10]以佛者全佛無眾生。以眾生者全眾生無佛。若爾[11]云何有能化所化之義乎。

答。全佛不捨全眾生。全眾生時不捨全佛義。非全佛無眾生。非全眾生無佛。雖冥無二而不相參。豈得無能化所化之義。雖非無能所而非有能所。

問。佛全覺人。眾生全惑。若佛與眾生一者俱惑是耳。何有能化佛。[12]以眾生與佛一者俱全覺人是耳。何有所化乎。

答。有二義。全作眾生故無能化亦得。全佛是故無所化亦得。全[13]全作二故有能所亦得。無障無礙法不有於一故隨須皆得。其猶如虛空化虛空。在於聖說也。莫為緣起法中隨分別情所計見。

A few aspects of this passage are of note. Similar to the *Record of Doctrines*, we find no clarificatory questions, only challenges. These, once again, tend to follow a *reductio ad absurdum* format. But, more specifically, here that these present two options that both have accepted premises, but lead to contradictory results. Unlike the *Record of Doctrines*, this text does not offer stand-alone explanations as the foundation for the disputation. The questions, instead, introduce their own topics. However, the issues with which this passage deals—the contradictions that arise from the non-duality of buddhas and living beings—are also found elsewhere using similar language.[535]

I suggest that, like the *Record of Doctrines,* the *Questions and Answers Regarding the Avataṃsaka Sūtra* represents one possible format of disputation exercises. Here a given master confronted by one or several discussants who each bring up this or that question. While these questions were not tied to a preceding explanation of a topic, I suspect that they were standard issues for debating.

Huisi: Meaning of the *Lotus Sūtra*'s "Peaceful Practices"

A final text I will discuss here is Huisi's *Meaning of the Lotus Sūtra's Peaceful Practices*. Unlike the previous two texts, this short tract does not consist only of questions and answers. Yet, it is also not a conventional commentary on a sūtra. The type of classroom-setting that it seems to depict is one wherein Huisi presents a brief sermon to his students and the students thereupon get to ask him questions about it. This opening sermon is a lyrical description of the *Lotus Sūtra,* its teachings, and the path of practice based on it. It concludes with a verse that summarizes these themes.[536]

The bulk of this text, however, is taken up by a by questions and answers, many of which ask about aspects of the verse or about the preceding answer. Compared to other texts that represent a disputation, we find some curious elements. For example, we find some cases where the interlocutor raises multiple questions at once while the answer only responds to one or a few of these. The opening salvo of questions is a case in point. Here, the interlocutor picks up on a couple of lines at once, including this line from about three quarters of the way in the verse: "The *Wondrous Dharma Lotus Flower Sūtra, / Is the Great Mahāyāna?*"[537] This is the opening salvo:

> *Question:*
>
> Why is it called "*Wondrous Dharma Lotus Flower Sūtra*"? Why does it speak of "the meaning of the one vehicle"? Why does it speak of "tathagatagarbha"? Why does it speak of "Mahāyāna" [in transcription, *moheyan* 摩訶衍]? Why does it speak of "great

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問。佛見惑眾生時中。惑見耶覺見耶。若惑見者惑不見惑。何能見惑。若覺見者覺非惑。故即不及見。云何能見眾生乎。
答。二俱得。二俱不得。所以者何。言二俱得者。若非惑不得見惑故。得以惑見。以他非自知故。既云自惑見故。見者即非惑。故亦得以覺見。是故佛言我與汝不異汝自為別此意。佛見眾生全吾身是。而自佛[14]是汝不知。徒自受諸苦故。永劫起同體大悲不捨眾生故。同修同成同苦同樂。暫時無捨離時也。是故經云大悲牛也。此以疏況親也。」(T45, no. 1873, p. 600a29-b23).

[535] The first scroll of Jizang's *Commentary on the Vimalakīrti Sūtra* contains a lengthy discussion of non-duality that touches on similar concerns; see T38, no. 1780, pp. 859a14-862a17.

[536] *Fahua jing anle heng yi* 法華經安樂行義; T1926.

[537] 「妙法蓮華經　　是大摩訶衍」(CBETA 2022.Q4, T46, no. 1926, p. 698b5-6)

> Mahāyāna"? The *Larger Sūtra on the Perfection of Wisdom* says that *mahā* [*mohe* 摩訶] means "great" and that *yāna* [*yan* 衍] means "vehicle" as well as "reaching the other shore." How could there further be a *great* Mahāyāna? Why does it speak of the "meaning of living beings"?[538]

The answer that follows gives only a word-by-word exposition of the title of the sūtra. None of the other terms are defined though living beings and one vehicle are mentioned in passing. It is almost as if the interlocutor did not allow Huisi to respond to the rest of his questions, as the next question picks up on a key aspect of this answer, the explanation of "flower."

What is also noteworthy about this text is the way its answers flow seamlessly between doctrinal exposition and meditation instructions. The third set of questions follows up on the opening statement of the first answer, asking "What is the wonder of living beings? What is the Dharma of living beings?"[539] The answer starts descriptively, speaking of how the six faculties, used to contemplate emptiness, are really quite miraculous. It then moves on to speak specifically of the eye:

> What are its kinds? There are two: that of ordinary beings and that of sages. That of ordinary beings lacks understanding. Because the eye sees form, craving arises in the mind. Craving is an instance of ignorance.[540] Creating karma is called "formations" [*xing* 行; lit. "walk," "travel"]. Based on one's karma, one experiences results, moving [*xing* 行] all throughout the six destinies, reborn as a god, human, and so on. Therefore, it is called "formations." The unbroken continuation of this is called "a seed" [?]. This is called the [ordinary beings'] kind [of eye].
>
> As for the [sages'] kind [of eye]: by relying on a good teacher, one is able to understand well.
>
> [That is,] when your eye sees form, you contemplate as follows. *In this seeing of form, what is it that does the seeing? Is it the eye? Is it the mind-consciousness? Is it space that makes seeing possible?*[541] *Is it form that itself sees when encountering the mental consciousness?*
>
> *If [the last option] were the case, then the blind should see forms. The same would apply if form itself could see. As for [the option that] space makes seeing possible: the clarity of space lacks awareness [*wuxin 無心*]; it neither perceives nor is it able to see form. As for [the option that] it is the eye-consciousness that sees form: consciousness does not have its own substance but only comes into being in dependence on a*

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[538] 「問曰。云何名為妙法蓮華經。云何復名一乘義。云何復名如來藏。云何名為摩訶衍。云何復名大摩訶衍。如大品經說摩訶言大。衍者名乘。亦名到彼岸。云何更有大摩訶衍。云何復名眾生義。」(T46, no. 1926, p. 698b17-21)

[539] 「問曰。云何名眾生妙。云何復名眾生法耶。」(T46, no. 1926, p. 698c17-18).

[540] More literally, maybe: "As for craving, ignorance is craving." 「愛者即是無明為愛。」(T46, no. 1926, pp. 698c29-699a1).

[541] This translation remains provisional. "Space" makes sense as the medium between the eye and the object. I am taking the character *ming* here in the sense that "space gives the clarity for seeing [to occur]?" 「空明見耶。」(T46, no. 1926, p. 699a5).

multitude of conditions. Because these conditions too are empty of any nature, they can neither come together nor dissipate.

Contemplate these carefully, one by one. In searching for the eye, you will not find it nor its name.[542]

After some ten more lines of this account of contemplative practice, the answer reverts to a more descriptive mode. This brief excursus reminds us of the varied goals of the exegetes. While the other disputation-texts, including extended passages in commentaries, seem to represent exercises for cultivating clarity regarding definitions and doctrinal distinctions, in this question-and-answer session we see other elements of the tradition being transmitted. This makes sense if we understand it as occurring in a classroom-setting where the teacher concerned with the broad development of his students. The sermon and the summarizing verse, then, were jumping boards for a discussion of Buddhist teaching and practices.

Concluding Observations: Sui-Tang Debate Style

If we look at the discussions in these passages and texts as a whole, a few patterns emerge. The most straightforward point is that the questions come in two broad types: clarificatory and challenging. Of course, the former type of question can be a challenge in disguise—as with the opening question in Huizhao's text. Challenges do not put forward alternative answers but come in two forms. Either they point out a contradiction between the present explanation and some other source, or they take the form of a *reductio ad absurdum*. Moreover, overall the discussions revolved around doctrine, not around practice (narrowly conceived). Huisi's text, with its inclusion of practical meditation-instructions, seems to be an exception. This need not mean, of course, that masters did not discuss practically oriented issues with their students in the way of Huisi. Rather, I it seems likely that those were simply not the appropriate topic for conversation during a commentarial lecture or a disputation exercise.

We looked at only two texts that represent dedicated disputation-exercises, the *Record of Doctrines* and Fazang's *Questions and Answers Regarding the Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. Though this sample is too small to make definitive statements, one observation we may make is that in neither of those, the questions are clarificatory. Each question by the interlocutor presents a challenge. On the other hand, in the case of commentaries that include lengthy discussions, questions are often in the first place clarificatory, though challenges do occur as well. This difference, of course, makes sense given their different pedagogical contexts. The primary aim of commentarial lectures is for students to learn the scripture at hand and the traditional tools for interpreting it. The way this knowledge is further internalized in disputation is by challenging it.

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[542] 「云何名種種。有二。一名凡種。二名聖種。凡種者。不能覺了。因眼見色生貪愛心。愛者即是無明為愛。造業名之為行。隨業受報。天人諸趣遍行六道。故稱行也。相續不絕名之為種。是名凡種。聖種者。因善知識善能覺了。眼見色時。作是思惟。今見色者誰能見耶。眼根見耶。眼識見耶。空明見耶。為色自見意識對耶。若意識對盲應見色。若色自見亦復如是。若空明見。空明無心。亦無覺觸不能見色。若眼識能見。識無自體假托眾緣。眾緣性空無有合散。一一諦觀。求眼不得。亦無眼名字。」(T46, no. 1926, pp. 698c28-699a9).

Concluding Comments

The genre conventions as well as the interests and pedagogical methods used by the scholiasts in their various writings reveal a single scholastic culture. The exegetes taught scripture and its interpretation. In expounding specific scriptures, they treated standard topics, running largely parallel to those treated by commentators around the world. These discussions reveal much about their interests. One particular area to which future research might return is their discussions of the history of the translation of texts. These often showcase their philological acumen, as they compared different translations and editions of sūtras. A related area of interest is their engagement with Sanskrit. Although I remain doubtful that many of these scholiasts had mastered that language, they clearly took great interest in it, reporting on original Sanskrit titles, explaining Sanskrit etymology, and so forth.[543]

In treating the Sui-Tang commentaries and related tracts as scholastic works, we find evidence in such domain as their memory practice and their teaching of interpretative skill. Specifically, I have pointed to interpretative grids as one of the tools for thinking used by these scholiasts and argued that doxographies are a specific instance hereof. I return to this suggestion in Chapters 4 and 5. Another area to which I will return with a further illustration in Chapter 4 is disputation. In this chapter, we already saw that the written corpus can be fruitfully read for traces of debate among Chinese Buddhist scholiasts, and based on this material I outlined some of the parameters of this practice.

[543] This relates to the issue first investigated by Van Gulik, *Siddham*, and more recently engaged by Kotyk, "The Study of Sanskrit," namely to what extent the Chinese Buddhists knew and understood Sanskrit. This would be an intriguing topic for further research.

Chapter 4 — Thus Did They Preach: The Art of Exegesis

Preamble

Scholiasts think in scripture. With their memory banks full of scripture and snippets of commentary, they expound scripture, whether in lectures or written compositions, by stringing together citations and allusions. Not only does this apply to the level of words and phrases, but also to their organization. As I noted in Chapter 1 and 2, just as with the epic bards famously studied by Albert Lord, performance and composition happen simultaneously. Both the bards and the scholiasts improvise on the basis of models and memorized motifs. Haun Saussy describes such oral traditions as marked by collective composition, modularity, iterability, and virtuality. Though he speaks of poetry specifically, these descriptions apply as well to the work of the Sui-Tang scholiasts. Saussy defines them as follows:

> In collective composition, the right to determine the content of a performance is distributed widely throughout the community of performers; even where a norm exists, it does not exclude variation or improvement. Modularity: poems are combinations of preformed units that can be put together variously; any two different works in a tradition will tend to have many of these units in common. Iterability: a poem is not a final result but only one exemplar in a series of recitations, and to be preserved it must be recomposed again and again, modularly, by members of the collective. Virtuality: what is passed on and learned from poet to poet, if this is seen as occurring, is not the poem itself, a determinate series of words from beginning to end, but rather a recipe or strategy for making a poem that will answer to such-and-such a description. Conversely, no particular rendition of a poem exhausts the possibilities of the poem's tradition.[544]

These characteristics naturally suggest analogies in the realm of music. Jazz improvisation, for example, works similarly.[545] In his wide ranging, and fascinating, work on jazz improvisation, the ethnomusicologist Paul Berliner cites one of his informants, a famous performer in the 1970s and 80s, as saying:

> “Improvisation is an intuitive process for me now,” Arthur Rhames asserts, “but in the way in which it's intuitive;” he adds, “I'm calling upon all the resources of all the years of my playing at once: my academic understanding of the music, my historical understanding of the music, and my technical understanding of the instrument that I'm playing. All these things are going into one concentrated effort to produce something that is indicative of what I'm feeling at the time I'm performing.”[546]

Berliner, dispelling the idea that the spontaneity of improvisation implies a lack of preparation, comments that “[t]here is, in fact, a lifetime of preparation and knowledge behind every idea that an improviser performs.”[547] The same would have been true of a scholiast speaking extemporaneously.

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[544] Saussy 2016: 72.
[545] Berliner (see below) points explicitly to Albert Lord’s work as an inspiration in his introduction (1994: 4).
[546] Berliner 1994: 16.
[547] Berliner 1994: 17.

But this analogy with music, I believe, goes beyond the parallels in the role of memory and the concomitant use of motifs and recurring structures. Humans enjoy music. We love, to speak with Christopher Small, to music, which he defines as "*to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing.*"[548] On Small's analysis, the basis for our enjoyment of music is that it allows for an "exploration, affirmation and celebration of relationships," for the experience of our embeddedness in the ideal web of patterns in which we, as biological organisms, participate.[549] Small emphasizes that music puts us in touch with a vision of the ideal order of the world. To him, this explains his distaste for Western orchestral symphony musicking, which he understands as an embodiment of imperialism and oppression. Strikingly, Roger Scruton comes to a very similar understanding of the appeal that music has for mankind, even as his musical tastes are the mirror opposite.[550] Scruton understands music as a particular form of coordination in which we as rational beings take special pleasure—that is, an engagement with patterns, with structure, with organization.

Whether or not Scruton and Small are correct in their assessment that we enjoy coordinated activities because they afford us a vision of the proper order of society or the universe, it seems undeniable that humans relish perceiving patterns that permutate and transform.[551] Scruton offers dancing and sports, whether observed or performed personally, as other examples of such coordinated activities that allows us humans an opportunity to enjoy "[a] pleasure that rises above every practical purpose."[552] We can extend this list by pointing to the appeal (to some) of mathematics and of chess. As one plays and observes more games, one's enjoyment of the game grows and one can appreciate the mastery of a world champion. The same applies to poetry: the better you understand the genre, the more you may savor poems.[553] The more jazz you hear, the more you come to love jazz.

A similar effect applies to scholastic commentaries. Although a Buddhist (and/or a scholar) may have many other reasons for delighting in studying a given commentary, such as doctrinal interests, I believe such literature is shaped in ways that answer our intrinsic interest in patterns. The giving of commentary is a coordinated activity on multiple levels. In Chapter 3, we saw how the exegetes play with their organization of their compositions. I also mentioned the use of outlines and interpretative grids. These provide rhythm to an exposition, sometimes even forming a canon of overlaying themes. Such structures make not only for the patterning of a given commentary, but also, more significantly, create playful resonances with other commentaries. Just as the n^{th} performance of a jazz composition is, at least when in

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[548] Small 1998: 9. The same definition is repeated nearly verbatim in a lecture by Small (1999: 12).

[549] Small 1998. The phrase in quotation marks is cited from p. 209 (where Small makes a slightly different point). That music is about our experience of ideal relationships is the red thread through the book; see esp. pp. 13, 219). Cp. Small 1999: 13-20.

[550] Scruton 1999: 337-339.

[551] Truthfully, my own inclination is to think that Scruton and Small are wrong in this regard and that our enjoyment of order and pattern cannot be analyzed as being for some higher order reason; it is simply a fact, just as we naturally crave sugar. Of course, this is not to say that we might not be able to explain it by reference to, for example, our evolutionary history as embodied organisms or the effects of complicated pattern-cognition on our brain.

[552] Scruton 1999: 337.

[553] I suspect this is especially true of poetry in its more traditional forms, where initiation into the rules governing the form is less obscure than with much modern poetry.

capable hands, all the more riveting due to the ways it varies from the original, the exegetical performance succeeds in its conversation with the broader tradition. This is not just true on the aforementioned levels of organization—on much smaller scales, too, we find that the commentators playfully echo each other, engaging their audience by reorganizing familiar material, by making clever allusions, by revealing ever new ways of relating information. Scholastic texts, then, need to be read as they were woven: intertextually.

Along these lines, I present a close reading of a commentarial passage in this chapter, showing what it means to read the commentaries intertextually. Two facts make this a challenge. The first is that there is no single fact to be illustrated but rather constellations of connections that pave new ways of reading. Second, "intertextuality" is a somewhat vague concept that can be applied to all communication, or even all thought. Literary critics and historians have made the most diverse claims about the meaning of a term-of-art like "intertextuality." Under this heading they have also made broad-sweeping statements regarding such things as the persistence of ideological homogeneity, the unerasable presence of the reader in the work, and even the nature of human subjectivity. With such broad application, intertextuality seems to lack real analytic use.

Yet, as elusive as the term may be, speaking of intertextuality evokes intuitions that are of the essence when we read Sui-Tang scholastic works. It reminds us of the constant presence of other text in any instance of textual composition and consumption, whether verbal/auditory or in writing. It suggests we bracket the foregrounding of the author and his intentions, and turn our attention instead to what else is present in the text. I will argue, then, not so much that it is correct to say that the Sui-Tang scholiasts thought in texts and with texts, *that* their works echoed each other, that their differences sometimes were allusions. Rather, I aim to show *how* they did these things.

To do so, I take as starting point a specific passage of commentary, the commentary on the stock-phrase "thus have I heard" (*rushi wo wen* 如是我聞), the opening-line of (almost) all Buddhist sūtras. Reading Chengguan's exposition of this phrase alongside its parallels in the work of other exegetes, I seek to uncover the intertextual web within which we are to situate his commentary. Having a good sense of this web gives us further insight into Sui-Tang Buddhist scholastic pedagogy and curriculum. It also, frankly speaking, makes reading the commentaries a lot more fun.

And this, ultimately, is the argument that motivates this chapter: there is a real joy in reading commentaries. Whatever else it might also be, exegesis is an art. Understood in this light, we can move away from a myopic focus on their propositional content and toward an understanding of the commentaries, and the lectures with which they were intertwined, as performative.

"Thus Ought One Preach"

Before going into the details of the commentaries, let me outline what commentaries on "thus have I heard" would typically look like. Imagine an exegete in the Tang dynasty who had been invited to give a lecture on some sūtra. To prepare for this, he had reviewed the text and solidified it in his memory, reviewed scriptures and treatises in the same textual family, and perused some commentaries by earlier masters. He might have revisited notes he had taken when attending lectures on the text as a young student. Once the lecture series starts, after the appropriate ceremonies, our exegete starts his exposition by going through a number

of standard topics—the sūtra's title, how it fits in with the rest of the Buddha's teachings, why the Buddha spoke it, and so forth. After these topics, he moves on to the exposition of the text proper. He first comments on the title of the first chapter, says some things about the overall structure of the text, and then, finally, starts the line-by-line exegesis.

The first line to expound upon is the phrase "thus have I heard." What has the exegete's education prepared him to say? What does his audience expect? Expounding the phrase means both to give an overall sense of what the phrase means and to go through the words one by one—two projects that, of course, inform each other. One might start on either side of the hermeneutic circle. If our exegete starts with the overall meaning of the phrase, he must first address the fact that, as anyone faintly familiar with Buddhist scriptural literature knows, it occurs in the opening of (nearly) every sūtra. Expounding the phrase would surely include an explanation of why this is so. The basic account to be given for this references the creation of the Buddhist canon after the Buddha's passing into parinirvāṅa. When Ānanda recounted the Buddha's discourses from memory, he would preface them by saying "thus have I heard." This basic account, however, invites further explication. For now, on the level of the phrase as a whole, we might ask *why* Ānanda prefaced the sūtras thusly. Different scriptural sources give different accounts of this. Some texts say simply that he did so because the Buddha had instructed him to do so. In other sources we find it emphasized that the phrase is uttered to affirm that the sūtra came from the Buddha and not Ānanda or some other mere mortal. Yet other sources give a more tantalizing narrative: when Ānanda ascended the high seat to recite the sūtras, his body took on the characteristics of the Buddha's. Some in the audience thereupon thought the Buddha had returned to preach to them whereas others thought that a buddha from elsewhere had come to teach. To quell such confusions, Ānanda made sure to say that what he was about to recite had been heard by him—he was only the messenger.

One should note as well that the phrase is not the only standard element in the opening of sūtras. They also include an indication of the time (*yishi* 一時, "at one time"), a location (e.g., Śrāvastī), an audience (typically 1,250 arhats and in Mahāyāna sūtras also a host of bodhisattvas), and so on. Different lists of such required elements circulate among exegetes. Some exegetes use one; some reference multiple versions. Regardless of the exact number, the common understanding is that they are included to help those who hear and/or read the sūtra have faith in the text. Mentioning faith might well spur an exegete to go on a lengthy tangent praising the virtues of faith and emphasizing its importance. There are some beautiful verses on the topic of which you could remind the audience.

At this point, many exegetes will also want to give a word-by-word explanation of the phrase, especially since at this point they are only just starting to give their line-by-line exposition of whichever sūtra they are expounding. The Chinese phrase can be conveniently split into two parts: *rushi* 如是—"like this," "thus"—and *wo wen* 我聞—"I heard." The basic semantic meaning of "thus" in the present context is not obscure, though it is still appropriate to explain it. For this one might cite relevant passages from Indic śāstras. In exegesis, however, one is not limited to the literal meaning. Thus, many an exegete will play with other meanings of the word. Interpret it, for example, as denoting absolute reality, "thusness." Or take the two Chinese characters apart into "like" (*ru* 如) and "this" (*shi* 是). "This," or "correct" (another meaning of *shi* 是), might then refer to the way things really are, while "like" refers to the provisional, the attempt to capture reality in words, as the sūtra does. Many earlier Chinese

exegetes have provided such explanations, often neatly packed into conveniently short slogans—easy to memorize, easy to cite. By bringing these into the discussion, the entire tradition is presented—"made present."

Next one should explicate the meaning of "I." On the surface, this seems straightforward: as mentioned above, this refers to Ānanda. Several issues arise, however. If there is a discussant, he will likely raise the standard objection that since the Buddha taught that there is no self (*wuwo* 無我; lit. "no-I"), the sūtra contradicts basic Buddhist doctrine. This provides an excellent opportunity to draw the distinction between ultimate and conventional levels of truth: explain in what sense there is said to be no self, and why it is still appropriate to speak of a self. The sūtras and śāstras contain lots of relevant material on this issue.

Another problem one may need to deal with regarding the "I" is whether Ānanda really heard it. After all, we know he was not present at all the Buddha's discourses. The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*'s narrative starts right after the Buddha's awakening. Ānanda, according to some sources, was born that very same night. How, then, can Ānanda claim that he heard that sūtra? This applies to more scriptures. After all, having ordained at age twenty, it was still ten years later that Ānanda became the Buddha's attendant. A full thirty years of the Buddha's preaching were never heard personally by him. Yet, all the same, sūtras from that period start by saying "thus have I heard." Several canonical sources help solve this conundrum. Some texts explain that older monks and/or gods later repeated those earlier sūtras to Ānanda, others that the Tathāgata himself taught them to him. Different sources describe how Ānanda could recall those texts by entering a special kind of meditative absorption. Chinese exegetes point to various sūtra-passages that speak of various śrāvakas, including Ānanda, as emanations of bodhisattvas. This way, his personal presence at the Buddha's discourses becomes a moot point, the story about the council a pious fiction.

Lastly, one needs to discuss the meaning of "heard." The conventions of medieval Chinese Buddhist exegesis turn this into an opportunity to show one's mastery over the Abhidharma tradition, engaging accounts found in Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna, especially Yogācāra, treatises. These texts analyse what it means to hear, whether it is the ear or the mind that hears and enumerating the number of factors involved—ranging up to eight in some traditions. Presenting the Abhidharma treatises side by side gives the audience a sense of the issues at stake. In giving listing these various views, an exegete may arbitrate between them, evaluating their merits. This is not necessary, however. As with the explanation of the word "thus," what is more important than giving the "right" account is giving an inclusive presentation of the tradition.

Commenting Comparatively

Though Jaroslav Pelikan spoke specifically of florilegia when he compared them to mosaics "all of whose tiles have come from somewhere else," his ensuing comment applies broadly to scholastic works: "a myopic examination of the tiles, or of the spaces between the tiles, misses the whole point, which is in the relation of the tiles to one another and of the mosaic to other mosaics."[554] In fact, we might as well understand the passages of commentaries that discuss "thus have I heard" as florilegia. If we were to take away citations, we would mostly be left with organizational signposts. Take those away, and nearly nothing remains. When we look at

[554] 1984: 74.

the sources from which the exegetes draw—sūtras, śāstras, and sometimes earlier exegetes—we find that they all draw from the same pool. Clearly, those texts were part of the Sui-Tang Buddhist curriculum. To this extent, the commentators' use of citations from them may be seen as simple influence rather than a case of "intertextuality." More is at play, however. In their use of quotations, the exegetes echo each other's work. In any given exegesis, then, the exegetical tradition is present as a symphony of echoes. This is not at the expense of creativity and innovation as commentators direct these echoes, orchestrating them into a new whole. There is, accordingly, a nearly endless variety in how expositions of "thus have I heard" are structured and in what combination of sources they bring together. Below, I go through the explanation of the phrase, starting mainly from Chengguan's texts. His as well as Wŏnch'ŭk's commentary on the phrase are translated in appendices A and B to give the reader a sense of what such a commentary looks like in full, and to give the opportunity to read two such passages side by side.

1). The General Meaning of "Thus Have I Heard"

Let me be more specific. In the opening of his exposition on "thus have I heard," Chengguan cites the *Treatise on the Sūtra on the Buddhas' Abode* (or FDL), a text translated by Xuanzang.[555] This text, which is ascribed to an exegete at Nālandā in India whose name in Chinese is Qin'guang 親光, generally reconstructed as *Bandhuprabha, is a commentary on the *Sūtra on the Buddhas' Abode* (*Fodi jing* 佛地經; T680), also translated by Xuanzang.[556] This short mahāyāna sūtra explicates the characteristics of buddhahood, specifically the four wisdoms described in Yogācāra texts.[557] In the present context the Yogācāra elements of the text are not relevant. Rather, Chengguan refers to the text because of its exposition of the phrase under discussion.

Of course, when Chengguan cites the FDL, he does so because it is a useful source for understanding what "thus have I heard" means. But he also does so because he has heard his own teachers refer to that text when expounding the phrase and has read commentaries that similarly refer to that treatise. As a survey of other Tang-era commentaries shows, soon after its translation by Xuanzang, the FDL became a standard work to reference when explaining "thus have I heard." Other scholiasts who cite this passage in the context of commenting on the stock-opening phrase, in commentaries on a variety of texts, include Kuiji,[558] Wŏnch'ŭk,[559] Fazang,[560] Huiyuan,[561] Daoyin 道氤 (668–740),[562] and Liangben.[563] We also find it cited in this context in two commentaries of unknown authorship found in Dunhuang.[564] Given a culture

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[555] *Fodi lun* 佛地論; T1530.

[556] The author's name is sometimes reconstructed as *Prabhāmitra. The partially parallel text in Tibetan is ascribed to Śīlabhadra. I thank Jonathan A. Silk for generously sharing his unpublished notes on this text (9/1/2022).

[557] The text is translated, with a very brief introduction, by Keenan (2002).

[558] T33, no. 1695, p. 27, c3-16; T34, no. 1723, p. 662, c7-21; T37, no. 1758, p. 332, a5-17; T38, no. 1772, p. 279, b5-18; T38, no. 1782, p. 1003, a19-b3.

[559] T33, no. 1708, p. 362, c12-22.

[560] T35, no. 1733, p. 126, c5-8.

[561] X03, no. 221, p. 598, c12-17.

[562] T85, no. 2733, p. 20, c24-p. 21, a3.

[563] T33, no. 1709, p. 436, b13-21

[564] T85, no. 2781, p. 540, b19-26 and T85, no. 2741, p. 148, b5-13.

where everyone would use that text in this context, Chengguan was expected to do so. It probably came naturally to him.

Yet, while his use echoes earlier exegetes, he gave his own spin on it. In his *Commentary*, Chengguan gives the FDL pride of place. This is how his exposition on "thus have I heard" opens.

> Now we have come to the first of those [ten items in the sūtra's introduction]: "Thus have I heard." It means, "I once personally heard the teachings of such a sūtra from the Buddha." In this regard, the *Treatise on the Sūtra on the Buddhas' Abode* says, "The transmitter of the Buddha's teachings says, 'These things are what I have heard in the past.' The word 'thus' is explained as having four senses. First, in the sense of a comparison. Second, in the sense of instruction. Third, as the answer to a question. Fourth, as a confirmation."[565] This is [explained] in full in that treatise. There are other explanations too, but their meanings do not differ from these. This entire phrase constitutes both the "confirmation" and "that it was heard."

The central piece here, found in-between the simple paraphrase of "thus have I heard" and a series of signposts that locate the phrase within different analyses of the sūtra's introductory section, is a citation from the FDL. That Chengguan cites the text should come as no surprise, given its abundant use by other exegetes. When comparing their different usages, however, we find playful differences lurking in the sameness.

A first point of interest is that Chengguan cites the FDL *here*, when explicating the overall meaning of the phrase. Many others cite the passage when they comment separately on the meaning of "thus." This is the case, for example, in Wŏnch'ŭk's *Commentary on the Saṁdhinirmocana Sūtra*, where the exposition of the phrase is organized in the same way as the account I gave above. Wŏnch'ŭk adduces many different sources when he discusses "thus," dividing them into Chinese masters (giving eight different explanations), Indian masters (responsible for three explanations), and finally three Indic treatises. He cites the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* (the *Da zhidu lun*; DZDL), an Indic commentary on the *Diamond Sūtra*, and the FDL. In contrast to this, Chengguan interprets the passage from the FDL as applying more broadly to the entire phrase "thus have I heard."

The comparison with Wŏnch'ŭk leads us to a second point: Chengguan's conciseness. We see this first with his brief, gnomic citation of the FDL which stands in contrast to Wŏnch'ŭk's longer, and clearer, citation. Presumably, his citation was intended to call the entire relevant passage to his audience's mind. They would be cued for this because they had studied the text (ideally) and, more specifically, because the wider passage was discussed often in commentaries in this context. That Chengguan relies on his audience's background knowledge is not in itself remarkable. Sui-Tang scholiasts often abbreviate their treatments. Nonetheless, he goes far in this respect, especially since he allots such an important place to the FDL, seeing it as *the* authoritative source for interpreting "thus have I heard."

Chengguan's commitment to brevity in his *Commentary* is further illustrated by the fact that he *only* cites the FDL. Herein, he contrasts sharply with many other exegetes who seem to revel in giving long series of authoritative sources side by side. Chengguan folds those

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[565] T26, no. 1530, p. 291, c8-11. Cp. Keenan's translation (2002: 5).

other sources into his commentary by gesturing toward their existence and noting that "their meanings do not differ from [the FDL's four meanings]." Coming upon Chengguan's brief gesture, an informed audience would fill in the blanks. Those alternate sources are present, but only in their absence.

We see here that Chengguan is not only commenting on the sūtra at hand. He is also, almost explicitly, invoking the larger exegetical tradition. In fact, I believe his conciseness should be read as a tool for fostering mastery over said tradition. Besides relying on the erudition of his audience, he engages their analytical intellect: knowing the "other explanations" to which Chengguan gestures, attentive readers would have puzzled over his comment that those explanations are all included in the FDL's four meanings. In turn, of course, analyzing these correspondences affords better memorization of the relevant sources by turning the FDL passage into a mnemonic that can hold the other accounts.

If we move now to Chengguan's *Subcommentary* on the passage cited above, we find that it demonstrates these points. It also gives us a chance to discern further intertextual echoes. Skipping over a brief passage that maps out the *Commentary's* discussion, we come to the explanation of the FDL passage. Chengguan discusses it line by line.

> First, "in the sense of a comparison: as when we say 'he is thus rich as Vaiśravaṅa.'"[566] [In other words,] the Dharma, thus transmitted and heard, was spoken by the Buddha. In that way, what the Buddha spoke is parallel to Vaiśravaṅa while what I am now transmitting is like the wealthy person. So, the Buddha's speaking is parallel to Vaiśravaṅa. My transmission now is parallel to the wealthy person. In this way [the text] is comparable to the Buddha speaking.
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> There is also an explanation that says, "Thus are the words like I heard them in the past."[567] In this sense, what was heard in the past is compared to what is heard in the present. In that way, it is said to be used in the sense of a comparison.

Though my aim in this chapter is not to discuss the content of the passages at hand, let me briefly explicate the FDL's treatment of "thus," especially the first sense. The key to understanding the four explanations is to read them as lexicographic reports on the usages of the Sanskrit word *evam*, which accounts for a certain awkwardness in the Chinese discussion (as well as in English translation). The present explanation is that *evam* can be used in a standard construction for comparisons: "evam *X*, tathā *Y*" (parallel to "yathā *X*, tathā *Y*"), literally meaning "just like *X*, so is *Y*." With Vaiśravaṅa being a patronym for the god of riches, Kubera, the *Treatise's* explanation makes sense as an illustration of a comparison.

If Chengguan's *Commentary* tends to be on the contracted side of the accordion effect, systematically abbreviating the exegetical tradition, his *Subcommentary* is on the expansive side. Here, what was brief is now said in full and much of the implicit is made explicit. Here, he explicates the FDL's first meaning of "thus," i.e. in the sense of an analogy. Or rather, he channels the exegetical tradition's understanding thereof.

That is to say, the passage is a pastiche. Most obviously, these two paragraphs start with citations from the FDL itself. The citation marks in the translation might be misleading as

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[566] Citing T26, no. 1530, p. 291c11-12.

[567] 「謂當所說如是文句，如我昔聞。」(T26, no. 1530, p. 291c23).

Chengguan does not mark it as a citation, although I presume that their origin would have been clear to his scholastic peers. More importantly—and this would not have been lost on a Tang-era audience either—the ensuing elaboration resonates with other commentaries, even repeating verbatim material found elsewhere. Consider how this item from the FDL is explained by other exegetes. In his many commentaries, Kuiji gives roughly similar explanations. Here is what he says in his *Commentary on the Section on Reality of the Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*.[568] I underline phrases that occur verbatim in Chengguan's *Subcommentary*, with double lines for FDL citations.

> "In the sense of a comparison: as when we say 'he is thus rich as Vaiśravaṅa.'" The Dharma, thus transmitted and heard, was spoken by the Buddha. It is certainly a skillful cause for blessings and happiness. Alternatively, 'As for what I am about to say, thus are the words like I heard them in the past.'[569]

Note that Kuiji's second citation from the FDL includes slightly more than Chengguan's. Wŏnch'ŭk, in his *Commentary on the Saṁdhinirmocana Sūtra*, also gives that fuller citation. He, however, does not give the first.

> In the sense of a comparison. That is to say, '*As for what I am about to say,* thus are the words like I heard them in the past.' (Here what was [heard] in the past is compared to what is [heard] in the present.)[570]

These two examples, though easy to multiply, will suffice to illustrate the basic pattern: Chengguan's exposition is a mosaic built not only of material taken from primary sources but also of phrases circulating among exegetes. Given the state of the evidence, it is hard, if not impossible to trace exact lines of influence.[571] Such an exercise would be beside the point given that Chengguan, we must assume, had been exposed to many relevant sources—many of which, likely, no longer survive. It is more interesting to see what the exegetes do with the material they have available.

Take, for example, the question of whether the FDL presents two alternative ways of interpreting "thus" as a comparison or only one. The text itself is somewhat ambiguous, offering the two different paragraphs in slightly different places. Some Tang-era exegetes read these as two distinct alternatives. The comparison is either between two items—comparing Ānanda's words with those of the Buddha—or between one item viewed temporally—comparing words uttered in the present and the past. However close these two accounts might be, Kuiji marks them as alternatives (by using *huo* 或). Wŏnch'ŭk, by contrast, presents

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[568] *Da bore boluomiduo jing bore liqu fen shuzan* 大般若波羅蜜多經般若理趣分述讚; T1695.

[569] 「依譬喻。如有說言：如是富貴如毘沙門。如是所傳所聞之法如佛所說，定為利樂方便之因。或當所說如是文句如我昔聞。」(T33, no. 1695, p. 27c3-6).

[570] 「故第一云。如是總言依四義轉。一依譬喻。謂當所說。如是文句。如我昔聞。(此即以昔喻今)」(X21, no. 369, p. 181b1-2). Woncheuk gives the exact same explanation in his *Commentary on the Sūtra for Humane Kings*; see T33, no. 1708, p. 362c13-14.

[571] It is interesting to note that the generation of Kuiji and Woncheuk was the first to make use of the FDL. Much of the material explaining the FDL's passages recycled by exegetes is first found in their works. This does not mean, of course, that their generation was especially original. Much of his explanations likely stemmed from Xuanzang's oral commentary (e.g., during the translation process). Xuanzang, in turn, likely understood the text as it had been taught to him in India. Beyond the FDL and other new translations, as we shall see, they both also extensively cite works translated earlier as well as earlier exegetes.

the temporal explanation as *the only explanation*, implying that both of the FDL's glosses make the same point. The same presentation is given in the *Commentary on the Diamond Sūtra* by Daoyin[572] and the *Completed Commentary on the Avataṃsaka* by Huiyuan (and Fazang).[573]

Chengguan not only presents the twofold account, but insists that they are alternatives. He marks them as separate explanations by introducing the second with the phrase "there is also an explanation that says" (*yi you shuo yan* 亦有說言). More interestingly, he seems to incorporate a quite elegant echo from Wŏnch'ŭk's commentary. When Wŏnch'ŭk ends his explanation, he adds a brief concluding phrase ("what was [heard] in the past is compared to what is [heard] in the present" 此即以昔喻今). In the surviving commentaries, this is the only place we find this phrase. Chengguan uses a very similar construction to cap his explanation of the temporal interpretation ("in this sense, what was heard in the past is compared to what is heard in the present" 則以昔聞喻今聞也). What is more, in the context of Chengguan's commentary, that phrase itself picks up on the way Chengguan capped the other, preceding interpretation ("in this way [the text] is comparable to the Buddha speaking" 此則以佛說為喻也). While the earlier capping phrase is not perfectly parallel, the two are clearly meant to work together to separate the two interpretations. Chengguan, by imitating the structure found in Wŏnch'ŭk's text, marks that he differs from him. If we read Chengguan's discussion on its own, these phrases appear as nothing more than further glosses on the FDL that also function as signposts. Read alongside Wŏnch'ŭk's text, they retain those functions, but in addition provide a subtle reaction to Wŏnch'ŭk and other exegetes who take the FDL to present only one option.

The final paragraph of Chengguan's commentary on the first sense of "thus" leaves the FDL behind. It reads as follows.

> In that vein, there is an explanation of "thus" that says: When two dharmas are alike, that is called "like" (*ru* 如). When a single dharma is without fault, this is called "correct" (*shi* 是). To be alike is to be comparable.

While several things about this passage are worthy of note, I will here focus solely on its place in the structure of Chengguan's commentary.[574] Why does he introduce this explanation of "thus" here? On my reading, he is making good on his claim in the *Commentary* that "there are other explanations too, but their meanings do not differ from [the four senses in the FDL]." Those "other explanations" were present only in their absence. Here, Chengguan presents to his audience one alternative, one they likely knew, and points out that it can be understood in the FDL's sense of a comparison. We might say that he represents the exegetical tradition by not only repeating knowledge but organizing it anew—re-presenting it.

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[572] T85, no. 2733, p. 20c24-26.

[573] 「二依譬喻。謂當所說如是文句。如我昔聞。」(X03, no. 221, p. 598c12-13).

[574] The other main point of note regarding this passage is its provenance. Considering this reminds us of the incomplete state of our sources. Clearly, this analysis is Sinitic, as it relies on separating *rushi* into two words. But while Chengguan cites this explanation of "thus" according to the conventions proper for reporting something found circulating in the tradition, I have not been able to locate any parallels, even partial, to this passage. It seems highly unlikely to me that Chengguan would have fabricated this explanation himself and couched it as though he found it elsewhere. The passage, therefore, reminds us that much of the written and oral exegesis from the period does not survive.

Similar patterns of intertextuality and of re-presenting the tradition continue as we move along in the *Subcommentary*. The explanation of the second sense of "thus" goes as follows.

> *Commentary*: "Second, in the sense of an instruction." That is to say, "Listen thus to what I have once heard."[575] That is, this is the instruction of the transmitter of the Dharma [i.e. Ānanda]. Or one might say that it is the instruction of the Buddha. That is to say, "Thus is what was said by our Buddha. Listen carefully." It is as when people say, "You should recite thus a sūtra or treatise."[576]

Besides presenting the FDL's two glosses that are found through the commentarial literature, this passage also illustrates yet another way in which commentators echoed each other. Above we saw that commentators would recycle each other's phraseology, with Chengguan repeating verbatim material also found in works by exegetes such as Kuiji and Wŏnch'ŭk. Here, Chengguan's comment between the citations does not repeat exact words found in earlier commentaries, but paraphrases analysis found elsewhere. In the surviving corpus, only texts by Kuiji give this interpretation—that the two citations refer to Ānanda and the Buddha, respectively. He says,

> Second, in the sense of an instruction. It is as when people say, "You should recite thus a sūtra or treatise." Herein, "thus" refers indirectly [lit. "distantly"] to the Buddha's instruction and directly [lit. "close"] to the instruction of the Dharma-transmitter. Or, when one states the time and the audience, [one says,] "Listen thus to what I have once heard."[577]

This passage, and/or passages in texts now lost, clearly lies behind Chengguan's analysis. His audience, in other words, encounters something new that yet was not new.

Chengguan's commentary on the FDL's third sense of "thus" simply provides that text's own gloss without any further explanation.

> *Commentary*: "Third, as the answer to a question." "That is to say, the assembly asks, 'What you are about to say now, is that truly what you have once heard [from the Buddha]?' In response there is the answer, 'Thus I have heard.'"[578]

This passage is parallel to nearly all other surviving commentaries that treat the FDL—compare, for example, parallel passages by Wŏnch'ŭk,[579] Kuiji,[580] and Liangben.[581] All of them offer nothing but the second gloss found in the FDL itself. [582]

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[575] T26, no. 1530, p. 291c23-24.
[576] T26, no. 1530, p. 291c12-13.
[577]「二依教誨。如有說言汝當如是讀誦經論。此中如是遠即佛之教誨。近即傳法者之教誨也。或告時眾如是當聽我昔所聞」(T33, no. 1695, p. 27, c6-9)
[578] The FDL passage is at T26, no. 1530, p. 291c21-22.
[579] T33, no. 1708, p. 362, c15-17 and X21, no. 369, p. 181, b3-4 (translated in appendices A and B).
[580] E.g., T38, no. 1782, p. 1003, a25-27, T33, no. 1695, p. 27, c9-10,
[581] T33, no. 1709, p. 436, b16-17.
[582] That none of the exegetes us it makes sense as it is not clear how it illustrates this sense of "thus." T26, no. 1530, p. 291c13-14.

In three commentaries from Dunhuang, however, we do find more. The first of these is the *Commentary on the Vajracchedikā Sūtra* by Tankuang 曇曠. Presenting the FDL's four senses of "thus" out of order, he gives the following commentary on what should be the third.

> [Tankuang] First, "as the answer to a question." This shows that [the text] is not a personal [creation] and does not have the fault of being hearsay. That is, at the council, "the assembly asked [Ānanda], 'What you are about to say now, is that truly what you have once heard [from the Buddha]?' In response he answers, "Thus I have heard.'"[583]

Besides repeating exactly what we find in other commentaries, Tankuang adds a brief explanatory comment about the import of the sentence. This sentence is repeated in two later commentaries, both apparently written by the Dunhuang-based Sino-Tibetan translator Facheng. His connection with Tankuang's textual legacy is well documented.[584]

The first text is the *Notes Determine the Meaning of the Extensive Gloss to the Commentary on the Mahāyāna Sūtra on the Four Dharmas.*[585] Its treatment of "thus have I heard" proceeds very similar to other Tang commentaries. Facheng's commentary on the four senses distinguished by the FDL repeats that by Tankuang, including the wrong order as well as the phrase added to the third sense.

The second text is Facheng's *Notes from the Oral Commentary on the Mahāyāna Rice Stalk Sūtra as It Was Heard*.[586] Here, the commentary on "thus have I heard" is very brief and includes no citations or references to authoritative texts, including the FDL. Yet, in the following comments, Facheng clearly echoes Tankuang. (I underline the phrase that parallels Tankuang's text.)

> When it says "I have heard," these two words show that [the sūtra] was personally heard [by Ānanda] and not his personal realization. That is to say, it was heard by him personally and <u>does not have the fault of being hearsay</u>. That is why it says "I." Because it was merely heard and not realized [by Ānanda], it says "heard."[587]

Facheng repeats part of Tankuang's explanatory comment, though not in the context of explaining the FDL passage. Instead, he uses it in explaining the second half of the phrase "thus have I heard." Facheng creatively repurposes the line found in Tankuang, composing a new commentary with old building blocks.[588]

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[583] 「一依問答。顯離自離說傳聞過失。謂結集時眾咸問言。汝當所說。昔定聞耶。故即答言如是我聞。」(T85, no. 2735, p. 70, a11-13).

[584] Howard 2023: 194-195.

[585] *Dasheng sifa jin lun guangshi kaijue ji* 大乘四法經論廣釋開決記; T2785; see T85, no. 2785, p. 559b29-c1. This text is briefly discussed, with further references, by Howard Masang (2023: 221).

[586] *Dasheng daogan jing suiting shu* 大乘稻芊經隨聽疏; T2782.

[587] 「言我聞者。此二顯其親聞非自證也。[＊]為自親聞無傳聞過失。所以立我。但聞非證故。立於聞。」(T85, no. 2782, p. 546c14-16). Note that I follow the alternate reading *wei* 謂 instead of *wei* 為.

[588] What might make this case even more interesting is that, according to Meghan Howard Masang, this commentary might well be a translation by Facheng rather than an original work (personal communication; December 15th, 2023). That would mean that Facheng used a phrase he found in Tankuang and himself used in another commentary to translate a passage from Tibetan into Chinese, suggesting a target-oriented approach to translation.

When we come to the fourth sense of "thus," virtually all Tang-era commentaries again simply repeat glosses from the FDL.[589] Still, we see interesting differences in what exactly is cited. Chengguan cites all the relevant glosses from the FDL.

> *Commentary*: "Fourth, in the sense of assent." "That is, at the council the assembly of bodhisattvas made this request, 'You ought to speak as you heard it [from the Buddha].' The bodhisattva who transmits the teachings then assents, saying, 'I will speak thus. I will speak according to what I have heard.'"[590] [2]
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> [It is as when one says,] just as I have heard, "I shall contemplate thus, I shall act thus, I shall speak thus, and so forth."[591] [1]
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> Further, assent [can also mean] "that one can have faith that a given matter is thus. That is, 'Regarding such a dharma, I have heard in the past that it is thus. It is to be explained in this way and certainly not otherwise.'[592] [3]

The three glosses in this presentation are out of order when compared to the FDL. There, the second gloss given by Chengguan comes first as marked by the numbers in square brackets. Only one set of surviving commentaries simply cites all its glosses in the original order: the various commentaries by Kuiji.[593] Most exegetes give only the second gloss (i.e., the first in Chengguan's text), presumably because this one most clearly illustrates how to understand this sense of "thus" in the context of "thus have I heard."[594] Others add also the third gloss.[595] Chengguan, we might say, follows Kuiji insofar as he cites all three glosses.[596] Yet, he does so with a twist, as he simultaneously honors the tradition of privileging the middle gloss.

Chengguan caps his treatments of the FDL with a summary statement. After relying heavily on citations from that canonical text, we seem to move back to his own voice.

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[589] The only exception to this I have seen is a brief explanatory comment in Woncheuk's *Commentary on the Sūtra for Commentary on the Sūtra for the Benevolent Kings* (T33, no. 1708, p. 362c19-22).

[590] For this passage in the FDL, see T26, no. 1530, p. 291c16-19.

[591] For this passage in the FDL, see T26, no. 1530, p. 291, c14-15.

[592] For this passage in the FDL, see T26, no. 1530, p. 291c19-20.

[593] E.g., T33, no. 1695, p. 27, c11-16; T37, no. 1758, p. 332, a12-17; T38, no. 1772, p. 279, b13-18; T34, no. 1723, p. 662, c16-21; T38, no. 1782, p. 1003, a27-b3.

[594] Examples can be found in anonymous *Commentary on the Ullambana Sūtra* from Dunhuang (T85, no. 2781, p. 540, b23-26), Tankuang's commentary on the *Vajracchedikā Sūtra* (T85, no. 2735, p. 70, a15-17), the commentary on the *Avataṁsaka Sūtra* completed by Huiyuan (X03, no. 221, p. 598, c15-17), and Woncheuk's commentary on the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* (X21, no. 369, p. 181, b4-6.).

[595] E.g., in Woncheuk's *Commentary on the Sūtra for the Humane Kings* (T33, no. 1708, p. 362, c17-21), Liangben's commentary on the *Sūtra for the Humane Kings* (T33, no. 1709, p. 436, b17-21), Daoyin's commentary on the *Diamond Sūtra* (T85, no. 2733, p. 20, c28-p. 21, a3), and an anonymous commentary on the *Diamond Sūtra* from Dunhuang (T85, no. 2741, p. 148, b9-13).

[596] Chengguan's presentation here is close to Kuiji also with a rather trivial, but potentially revealing detail. The beginning of the third gloss. The FDL reads: "Also, the word 'thus' means that it can be determined with confidence" 「又如是言。信可審定。」(T26, no. 1530, p. 291, c19). Chengguan's commentary leaves out the phrase here translated as "determined" (*shending* 審定), reading instead "that something is thus" (*shi shi rushi* 是事如是). This is but a minor change that arguably makes no difference to the content. What is of interest, however, is that the other commentators who cite this phrase give the correct version of the FDL except for Kuiji in his many commentaries (just cited).

> It is with these four senses that all sūtras start with "thus I have heard." These four senses all are all present in the general meaning [of the phrase given] above. It has no other senses.

Yet even this line is not "truly" Chengguan's voice. The first sentence occurs in the same form in several commentaries by Kuiji in the conclusion of the treatment of the FDL.[597] Even the glue holding together the mosaic is recycled.

The final comment in this last passage echoes the statement in the *Commentary* that "there are other explanations too, but their meanings do not differ from [the four senses in the FDL]." The next passage in the *Subcommentary* will expound on that line. In order to make sense of that passage, however, we first need to look at the treatment of "thus have I heard" in the *Edited Notes*, the commentary on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* that was started by Fazang and later edited and completed by his disciple Huiyuan. Chengguan's discussion here, as we will see shortly, is explicitly dependent on that text.

While many commentaries offer explanations of "thus have I heard" from disparate sources side by side, the *Edited Notes* brings together material from various sources into a list of nine alternative explanations. Overall, the commentary is organized quite differently from Chengguan's. It first discusses "thus" and "I have heard" separately as, respectively, pointing to "faith" and "that it was heard." It then puts those together to discuss the phrase as a whole.

> Finally, we discuss the meaning of "faith" and "that it was heard" together. Overall, there are nine explanations. Six of these come from the *Treatise on the Sūtra on the Buddhas' Abode.*
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> 1). "'Thus have I heard,' generally speaking, shows that it has been heard. 'The transmitter of the Buddha's teachings says, 'These things are what I have heard in the past.'"[598]

2). "In the sense of a comparison: 'These words thus are comparable to what I heard in the past.'[599]

3). "In the sense of an instruction: 'Listen thus to what I have once heard.'[600]

> 4). "In the sense of an answer to a question." "That is to say, it is asked, 'What you are about to say now, is that truly what you have heard [from the Buddha]?' In response there is the answer, 'Thus I have heard.'"[601]
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> 5). "In the sense of assent. "That is, at the council the assembly of bodhisattvas made this request, 'You ought to speak as you heard it [from the Buddha].' The bodhisattva who transmitted the teachings then assents, saying, 'I will speak thus. I will speak according to what I have heard.'"[602]

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[597] T34, no. 1723, p. 662, c21-22; T38, no. 1782, p. 1003, b3-4; T37, no. 1758, p. 332, a17-18.
[598] 「如是我聞者，謂總顯己聞、傳佛教者，言如是事我昔曾聞。」(T26, no. 1530, p. 291c8-10).
[599] 「謂當所說如是文句，如我昔聞。」(T26, no. 1530, p. 291c23).
[600] T26, no. 1530, p. 291c23-24.
[601] The FDL passage is at T26, no. 1530, p. 291c21-22.
[602] T26, no. 1530, p. 291c16-19.

6). In the sense of nothing added or subtracted. "That is, 'Regarding such a dharma, I have heard in the past that it is thus. It is to be explained in this way and certainly not otherwise.'[603]

7). As the *Treatise by Guṅadatta* says, "'Thus I have heard' shows that this sūtra was realized and expounded by the Buddha, the World Honored One, and not made by oneself."[604]

8). Master Long Ear [explains it] based on the three jewels. That is, "In terms of the Buddha Jewel, 'What the Buddha spoke is what I heard. What I heard is what the Buddha spoke.' In terms of the Dharma Jewel, 'What I heard is an explanation according to the truth. This true teaching is what I heard.' In terms of the Saṅgha Jewel, 'What I heard is what the bodhisattvas heard together. What the bodhisattvas heard together is what I transmit.'"[605]

9). Dharma Master Yun of the Liang dynasty says: "As for 'thus have I heard,' when one is to transmit some Dharma that was heard, one should first present this passage that says 'Thus a sūtra-teaching was heard by me from the Buddha.'"[606]

There is something to each of these explanations. Here, however, we should rely on the following three explanations: the explanation of Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom as marking faith, the explanation of the Treatise on the Sūtra on the Buddhas' Abode as having the sense of not increasing or decreasing, and the explanation of Master Yun.[607]

Chengguan hones in on this passage in order to make the argument that there are no explanations of "thus have I heard" beyond that of the FDL. He starts out by analyzing the first six meanings in the *Edited Notes*, which all come from the FDL.

> *Commentary*: "There are other explanations too, but their meanings do not differ from the above." In the *Edited Notes*, nine senses are distinguished. It gets the first meaning

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[603] While the gloss used here is found at T26, no. 1530, p. 291c19-20, the FDL defines "thus have I heard" as having the sense of there being nothing added or subtracted T26, no. 1530, p. 292a3-4.

[604] T25, no. 1515, p. 887a24-25. I follow Harrison in taking Guṅadatta as the Sanskrit underlying Ch. *Gongdeshi* 功德施. See Harrison (2023: 171-172).

[605] I have not been able to locate the original source of this explanation—see below. Note that the translation does not capture the Chinese phraseology, which plays on *ru* 如 and *shi* 是.

[606] The master in question is Fayun 法雲 (467-529). Though the wording has been changed somewhat, this explanation is drawn from his *Notes on the Meaning of the Lotus Sūtra* (*Fahua jing yi ji* 法華經義記; T33, no. 1715, p. 576c24-29). Interestingly, before the present explanation, Fayun cites two Sinitic explanations which divide "thus" into its two Chinese characters. He dislikes these, offering this instead.

[607] 「後合釋信聞中略有九說。佛地論中。自有六解。一云如是我聞者。謂總顯己聞。傳佛教者。言如是事我昔曾聞。二依譬喻。謂當所說如是文句。如我昔聞。三依教誨。謂結集時。阿難告眾。如是當聽。我昔曾聞。四依問答。謂有問言。汝當所說音定聞耶。故此答言如是我聞。五依許可。謂結集時。諸菩薩眾。咸共請言。如汝所聞。當如是說。傳法菩薩。便許彼言。如是當說如我所聞。六依傳無增減。謂如是法。我昔曾聞。此事如是。齊此當說。定無有異。七功德施論云。如是我聞者。顯示此經是佛世尊現覺而演。非自所作。八長耳三藏。依三寶釋。謂依佛寶故言。如佛所說是我所聞。如我所聞是佛所說。依法寶故言。如我所聞是稱理之說。如彼稱理之教。是我所聞。依僧寶故言。如我所聞是諸菩薩同聞。如諸菩薩同聞。是我所傳。九梁朝雲法師云。如是我聞者。將傳所聞之法。先當提舉一部。謂如是經教。我於佛聞。上來諸說。雖各有理。然今且用三家所說。謂智度論信相釋。佛地論無增減釋。雲法師釋。」(X03, no. 221, pp. 598c10-599a3).

> by counting the overall meaning as the first sense. Next, it uses the four discussed above. In that way it gets to five. For the sixth, it takes the second explanation of "assent" that says "that one has confidence that one can say that something is thus" as the sixth meaning. However, this is a second explanation of the fourth sense, "assent," given by master Great Vehicle [i.e., Kuiji]; not a separate meaning. Even if it has a different explanation, it is overall the same as "assent."

The bottom line of Chengguan's critique of the representation of the FDL in the *Edited Notes* is that it overcounts the number of different explanations. The upshot of this is that he is left with a simpler version. Specifically, there are two aspects of the *Edited Notes´* use of the FDL to which Chengguan objects. First, that commentary takes the FDL's succinct statement of the general meaning of the phrase "thus have I heard" as a separate sense of the phrase. Though Chengguan does not say as much, he implies that for him, this general meaning is the sum total of the four separate senses and should not be taken in isolation. The next issue for Chengguan relates to the final sense of "thus" as described by the FDL. As we saw above, some commentators only give one of the FDL's glosses whereas others, especially Kuiji and Chengguan, present more. The *Edited Notes* presents two of the glosses as though they were distinct. From Chengguan's perspective (and it is hard to disagree with him on this), this is an incorrect reading of the FDL. In making this statement, Chengguan comments at once on how we ought to read the FDL *and* on how we ought to interpret the commentarial tradition. He singles out as an authority Kuiji, whom as we saw cites multiple glosses. This, according to Chengguan, is not to be read as an indication that these glosses are separate senses.

As he goes on to analyze the remaining explanations listed by the *Edited Notes*, he shows that other explanations current in the exegetical tradition fold into the FDL's four senses.

> Further, it takes the seventh explanation from Guṅadatta's *Treatise*, which says: "'Thus I have heard' shows that this sūtra was realized and expounded by the Buddha, the World Honored One, and not made by oneself."[608] However, this is really the same as the overall meaning of the *Treatise on the Sūtra on the Buddhas' Abode.*

The seventh explanation in the *Edited Notes* is taken from the *Treatise on Prajñā* by Guṅadatta (*Gongdeshi* 功德施), an Indic commentary on the *Vajra Sūtra* translated by *Divākara (*Dipoheluo* 地婆訶羅/*Rizhao* 日照; 614-688).[609] The present citation is in fact the full extent of that *Treatise*'s commentary on "thus have I heard."[610] Chengguan takes no issue with it as such but faults the *Edited Notes* for presenting this as different than the FDL's explanations.

Yet, even if in some sense he considers it superfluous, Chengguan has good reason for citing the *Treatise on Prajñā* as it had become part and parcel of the exegetical tradition. As soon as this treatise was available in Chinese, exegetes started using it. Many cite its brief comment

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[608] T25, no. 1515, p. 887a24-25.

[609] *Bore lun* 波若論; T1515. The full title is *Treatise on the Vajra Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra Which Breaks Attachments While Not Harming Conventional Language* (*Jin'gang bore boluomi jing po quzhuo bu huai jiaming jing* 金剛般若波羅蜜經破取著不壞假名論).

[610] Found at T25, no. 1515, p. 887, a24-25.

on “thus have I heard” when expounding that phrase.[611] One major exception to this are Kuiji’s commentaries. It is likely that he had never seen the text, or saw it only very late in his life, too late to incorporate the text in his works. The SGSZ biography of Divākara, the translator of the *Treatise*, tells us that he came to China during the reign of Emperor Gaozong (r. 649-683) and “in the fifth month of the fourth year of the Yifeng period [676–679] he presented a memorial asking if he could translate the palm-leaf scriptures that he had brought.”[612] Having started translating scriptures in 679, Divākara continued to his death in 688. Kuiji passed away in 682, making it unlikely that he ever had the chance to see the *Treatise on Prajñā*, let alone incorporate it into his works. His older contemporary Wŏnch’ŭk, who outlived him by more than ten years, did refer to the text in his commentary. In fact, he had been one of the “certifiers of meaning” (*zhengyi* 證義) in Divākara’s translation group.[613] Fazang, only slightly younger than Kuiji, adopted the text in a way that suggests that he too had read the entire text. Besides the citation of the text in the *Edited Notes*, which may have been added by Huiyuan (though I find that unlikely), he also cites the text throughout his earlier commentary on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*.[614] For example, when commenting on passages in the HYJ that use the metaphors of dreaming and of lightning, he adduces the *Treatise on Prajñā*’s explanation of this imagery in the *Vajra Sūtra*’s famous verse.[615] He also cites its explanation of three types of offerings.[616] Interestingly, he there refers to it as the “new commentary on the *Vajra Prajñā Sūtra*” reflecting the fact that it was a recent addition to the set of Indic commentaries on the *Vajra* translated into Chinese.[617]

This quick adoption of the *Treatise on Prajñā* by the Sui-Tang scholiasts highlights an aspect of their culture that I have hitherto not emphasized: their ongoing research into new materials. Though, as I have emphasized, transmitting the tradition was one of their core responsibilities, this did not entail an intellectual standstill. Instead, they were receptive to newly available texts as well as old materials. Wŏnch’ŭk gives us a clear example of this, as he encountered the text in his sixties or seventies and still incorporated it into his works. Ongoing reformulation, research, and (re)discovery are, as I emphasized in Chapter 1, essential elements in the transmission of tradition. From within the tradition, such innovation will always seem faithful and, accordingly, we should recognize that from the perspective of the Chinese exegetes the *Treatise on Prajñā* was in fact part of their tradition—the broader

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[611] E.g., Woncheuk cites it both in his *Commentary on the Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* (X21, no. 369, p. 181, a23-24; translated in appendix B) and his *Commentary on the Sūtra for Humane Kings* (T33, no. 1708, p. 362, c7-9); Daoyin in his commentary on the *Vajracchedikā Sūtra* (T85, no. 2733, p. 20, c23-24); and an anonymous commentary on that same sūtra found in Dunhuang (T85, no. 2741, p. 148, b3-5).

[612] 「以天皇時來遊此國。儀鳳四年五月表請翻度所齎經夾。」(T50, no. 2061, p. 719, a21-22).

[613] T50, no. 2061, p. 719, a28-29.

[614] Modern scholars often treat the *Edited Notes* as though we should see it as Huiyuan’s composition. I am sceptical of this position. If we go by Huiyuan’s preface, he had Fazang’s thematic discussions as well as his notes for the commentary on the sūtra up to its 27th chapter as his basis (X03, no. 221, p. 570a6-9).

[615] Fazang’s treatment of the dream-metaphor is at T35, no. 1733, p. 386, a9-13. For the original, see T25, no. 1515, p. 896, c22-26. The lightning-metaphor is treated at T35, no. 1733, p. 387, b19-21. The passage in the treatise is at T25, no. 1515, p. 896, c26-27.

[616] T35, no. 1733, p. 162, b17-19. For the original, see T25, no. 1515, p. 888, b26-28. Elsewhere he mentions “all Prajñā commentaries 「諸本般若論釋」 (T35, no. 1733, p. 384, a4).

[617] 「新《金剛般若論》」(T35, no. 1733, p. 162b17). The other texts he may have had in mind are T1510, T1511, and T1512. Two other Indic commentaries, T1513, and T1514, were translated during his lifetime by Yijing (635-713); though I suspect not, I am not certain whether or not Fazang used these.

tradition of Buddhist learning that spanned from the Western regions to the Middle Kingdom. Indeed, it is my impression—one I hope to substantiate in future research—that the Chinese exegetes took special interest in Indic sūtra commentaries, even though but few were available. The exegetes often cite them and use them as models. Those commentaries offered them valuable glimpses into the exegetical practices of their Indic predecessors and peers.

The next source cited in the *Edited Notes* and discussed by Chengguan seems to also point to the interest of the Chinese exegetes in the exegesis of Indic masters. Many exegetes cite this same explanation that they say goes back to a master known to them as Long Ear (*Chang'er* 長耳), likely the translator Narendrayaśas (517-589).[618] Chengguan's response to the *Edited Notes* says the following.

> For the eighth, it cites Tripiṭaka Master Long Ear's explanation based on the Three Jewels.[619] When Dharma master Great Vehicle [i.e., Kuiji] uses this, he does so to explain "thus" on its own. It is to be cited below.[620]

Chengguan's basic point seems to be that the explanation ascribed to Long Ear applies not to the whole phrase "thus have I heard" but specifically to "thus." This makes some sense, as the explanation riffs on the word "thus" analyzing its two parts in Chinese (*ru* 如 and *shi* 是) in relation to the Three Jewels. In making this point, Chengguan again relies on the authority of Kuiji. In his various commentaries, Kuiji indeed adduces Long Ear's explanation when he expounds the word "thus" separately. Chengguan will do the same.

That Chengguan explicitly cites the precedent set by Kuiji as authoritative is worth dwelling on. It speaks to the high regard in which Kuiji was held by Tang dynasty scholiasts. In turn, this reveals the vast extent to which these scholiasts lived in a shared world. Chengguan's reliance on Kuiji's authority, however, is not as straightforward as it might seem. While Chengguan cites and follows Kuiji's precedent in this instance, in other cases he does neither. Take his use of the FDL. Chengguan privileges that text, citing its four senses of "thus" as illustrations of the meaning of the full phrase "thus have I heard." In doing so, Chengguan breaks with precedent. No other commentaries that I have seen foreground the FDL in this way, including Kuiji's. Chengguan's problem with the *Edited Notes*, thus, is not simply that it goes against established precedent. This is to be expected of thoughtful exegetes. Rather, the issue is that it does so for no good reason—in fact, it does so wrongly. This point is only made silently.

Chengguan also remains silent about the fact that the *Edited Notes* cites an alternate version of Long Ear's explanation. The version found in the *Edited Notes* finds a full parallel only in Fazang's earlier commentary on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*.[621] As above, this passage reads:

> In terms of the Buddha Jewel, "What the Buddha spoke is what I heard. What I heard is what the Buddha spoke." In terms of the Dharma Jewel, "What I heard is an explanation according to the truth. This true teaching is what I heard." In terms of the

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[618] Funayama 2014.

[619] I have been unable to locate the original passage by Long Ear (Narendrayaśas 517–589) in which this explanation would appear. Chengguan briefly explains this position below in the *Subcommentary*.

[620] I remain doubtful about the translation of these two sentences. Chengguan does indeed take up Long Ear's explanation below (T36, no. 1736, p. 130, b21-28).

[621] T35, no. 1733, p. 126b29-c5.

> Saṅgha Jewel, "What I heard is what the bodhisattvas heard together. What the bodhisattvas heard together is what I transmit."

The version used by other exegetes, including Kuiji and Chengguan, says the following.

> First, in terms of the Buddha: the buddhas of the three times speak similarly and without contradiction. Therefore, it is "like." Because they speak similarly, it is "this." Second, in terms of the Dharma: real characteristic of dharmas is not different throughout time. Therefore, it is said to be "like." It is spoken in just this way. Therefore, it is "this." It is spoken in accord with thusness. Therefore, it is "this." Third, in terms of the Saṅgha: what Ānanda heard from the Buddha and what he transmits are not different. Therefore, it says "like." It is forever free from faults. Therefore, it is "right."[622]

Chengguan clearly knew both versions. Since he comments on the *Edited Notes'* use of the explanation, we know he was familiar with its version. In that response, he says that Long Ear's explanation "is to be cited below." When he does cite it, in the separate discussion of "thus," he gives the alternate version just translated. Chengguan, in other words, understood these versions as in some sense identical. He could assume, moreover, that his audience shared in this understanding.

The conflation of these two different versions reveals the scholiastic mind's interest in structure over content. These two versions are quite different, but two structural elements recur. In both cases, we find three different explanations, one for each of the Three Jewels, that treat "thus" as consisting of two words, the Chinese characters *ru* 如 and *shi* 是. It may well be that both versions originated with the same exegete, playing on this basic structure. Yet, it may also have been a later exegete who devised a variation on the structure. In either case, the association with Long Ear and similarity in structure suffices to treat them as identical.

The possibility of playing with a structure like this to come up with new versions is illustrated neatly by Li Tongxuan in his parallel passage in his commentary on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*.

> Further, following Tripiṭaka master Long Ear, we can explain it in terms of the Three Jewels. First, in terms of the Buddha: "What the Buddha spoke is what I heard. What I heard is what the Buddha spoke." Also, Dharma master Fazang explains it according to the Dharma as follows: "What I heard is an explanation according to the truth. This true teaching is what I heard." Further, we now explain it according to the Dharma as follows: [it says] "thus" (*ru* 如) because all dharmas are thus; "this/correct" (*shi* 是) because they are identical with the buddhas. That is why it says "thus."

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[622] The wording is practically the same across different commentaries. See, for example, Kuiji (T33, no. 1695, p. 27b14-20), Woncheuk (T33, no. 1708, p. 362, b22-27), and Dingbin (X42, no. 733, p. 293, a7-10). In Chengguan's *Subcommentary*, the passage is the same but gets interrupted with comparisons to other explanations of "thus." See T36, no. 1736, p. 130b21-28. Kuiji's version reads: 「真諦及長耳皆云：「如是有三：一、就佛，三世諸佛共說不異名如，以同說故稱是。由斯可信，以同說故。二、就理，明諸法實相古今不異，故名為如。如如而說，故稱為是。既稱理言，不增不減決定可信，故稱如是。三、就人，以阿難望佛教所傳不異故名為如，無非曰是。」」(T33, no. 1695, p. 27b14-20).

> With the true self of the Dharma realm's great wisdom, I heard the Buddha expound the true sūtra of the Dharma realm's great wisdom. It is in that sense that is says "thus have I heard," clarifying that the nature of master and disciple is the same.[623]

Li's presentation suggests that he knew that there were two different versions circulating. After citing the explanation for the Buddha, he points to Fazang as giving a different explanation. Oddly, both citations are parallel to the version found in Fazang's commentary and the *Edited Notes*. His explanation seems to trail off, as only explanations based on the Buddha and Dharma Jewels are presented. It might be that Li assumed his readers would fill in the blanks based on their knowledge. Li himself also fills in the blanks, but not by simple reliance on his memory. Rather, he imitates the structure to come up with a (partial) third version of "Long Ear's explanation based on the Three Jewels."

Regarding the last of the nine explanations cited in the *Edited Notes*, Chengguan says the following

> The ninth is drawn from Dharma master Yun of the Liang dynasty, who said "when one is to transmit some Dharma that was heard, one should first present this passage that says, 'Thus a sūtra-teaching was heard by me from the Buddha.'" This too is fully identical with the *Treatise on the Sūtra on the Buddhas' Abode*'s general meaning.

This critique reveals little new about Chengguan's operations. As with the treatment of Guṅadatta's explanation, Chengguan's critique of the *Edited Notes* is again that this explanation adds nothing to the FDL's. We do learn something interesting if we consider the fact that this citation was used at all. One of my key points throughout this chapter is that much of what the scholiasts do is transmitting the exegetical tradition. At the same time, I aim to show that this transmission is not a mere repetition of one's forebears. Not only was there much freedom in how an exegete organized one's presentation, they also incorporated new finds. We saw this with the swift adoption of Guṅadatta's explanatory comment. The present citation from master Yun reveals a similar situation: the fresh discovery and incorporation of material from older commentaries.

The citation from master Yun, it turns out, is rare among exegetes. Among surviving commentaries, the first time it is cited is in the in the *Edited Notes*. After that, it gets picked up by Chengguan and, via him, by Zongmi in his *Subcommentary Explaining the Doctrines of the Great Commentary on the Sūtra of Perfect Awakening*.[624] The fact that Fazang (or Huiyuan) introduced this citation suggests that he had read master Fayun's *Notes on the Meaning of the Lotus Sūtra* and decided that its explanation of "thus have I heard" was worth citing. He was, in other words, not just transmitting what he had learned from his immediate

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[623] 「又依長耳三藏約三寶釋，一約佛，謂如佛所說，是我所聞，是佛所說。又依藏法師釋約法云：謂如我所聞，是佛所說。又如稱理教是我所聞。又今(通玄)約法釋云：如者，諸法如故。是者，即是佛故。故言如是。以法界大智之真我，聞佛說法界大智之真經，故言如是我聞，即明師弟體一。」(T36, no. 1739, p. 776b29-c6).

[624] *Yuanjue jing da shu shi yi chao* 圓覺經大疏釋義鈔; X245. Zongmi clearly relies on Chengguan for this citation. In his comments on "thus have I heard," he too foregrounds the FDL's explanation. He then cites the explanations by Guṅadatta and master Yun, to whom he refers to as "Dharma master Yunguang of the Liang dynasty" (梁朝雲光法師). After both of these citations he notes that they are the same as the FDL's (X09, no. 245, p. 542b24-c4).

predecessors, but also improving on that by incorporating materials drawn from his own reading.

Chengguan ends his comments on the *Edited Notes* by citing his own words from the *Commentary* above.

> This is why [the *Commentary*] said "There are other explanations too, but their meanings do not differ from the above."

There is a certain elegance to Chengguan's analysis of the *Edited Notes.* As an argument, his critique shows that we can keep the explanation of "thus I have heard" simple and brief. If we think about this passage pedagogically, it is a gateway to complexity. Making the argument that there are no explanations beyond the FDL's offers Chengguan the occasion to discuss at least some of the other explanations current in the exegetical tradition. In this way, he still manages to give his student a broader exposure to the tradition. Yet, by organizing the tradition under the FDL's headings, he also keeps it manageable.

2). Separate Explanations of "Thus"

After presenting the FDL for an account of the meaning of "thus have I heard" as a whole, Chengguan proceeds to analyze the individual words. Although I will discuss some of the specific passages of his commentary below, I will first outline the overall structure of this section so that we can compare this with other commentaries and also because it brings up some interesting points regarding the use of doxographical schemas.

In the present section, Chengguan continues with his approach of simplifying the exegetical tradition as he condenses and organizes different explanations. In this case, however, he does not use a single text as his framework. Instead, he presents a number of explanations which he classifies according to how they explain the meaning of "thus." For example, he first cites the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* and Sengzhao.

> The *Treatise on Wisdom* says: "Faith is the means by which one enters the great sea of the Buddhadharma; wisdom is the means by which one crosses [to the other shore]. The faithful say, 'This matter is thus.' The nonbelievers say, 'This matter is not thus.'"[625]
>
> In that vein, Sengzhao says, "'Thus' signifies faith. With faith one accords with the principles that are spoken. When one accords [with the principles], the path of the teacher and the student is accomplished. The sūtras [by themselves] are not strongly bound; if there is no faith, they are not transmitted. Therefore, it is said 'thus.'"[626]

Quite appropriately, Chengguan categorizes this as an explanation of "thus" in terms of faith.

For the next passage, Chengguan does not cite a source. In the *Subcommentary*, he, like other exegetes when they use this passage, notes that it comes from the *Comments on the Sūtra of Immeasurable Meanings* by Liu Qiu 劉虯 a text that appears to be no longer extant. This account says:

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[625] This an abridged citation from the *Dazhidulun*'s explanation of "thus" (T25, no. 1509, p. 63, a1-4). The full citation is given in the *Subcommentary.*

[626] T38, no. 1775, p. 328, a12-14.

> There is also an explanation that says, "When the Sage expounds the Dharma, it is only to reveal thusness (*ru* 如). Only by being thusness (*ru* 如) is it correct (*shi* 是)." This is an explanation in terms of the truth (*li* 理) that is being expounded.

Chengguan classifies this Sinitic explanation as one that focuses on the truth. In this context, he offers a higher-order comment on his categorization of these explanations in his *Subcommentary,* noting that he orders them from narrow to broad. Indeed, the next item is broader than Liu Qiu's. It says:

> Next there is Tripiṭaka Master Paramārtha who says, "That the truth does not contradict the mundane is called 'like.' That the mundane accords with the truth is called 'this.' Because of the nonduality of the truth and the mundane it says 'like this.'"[627] This is from the perspective that explains principle and phenomena.

As I commented in Chapter 3, often the scholiasts give us alternatives without much evaluation. This explanation ascribed to Paramārtha—one of two ascribed to him by the Tang scholiasts, as we see below—is clearly at odds with the preceding explanation by Liu Qiu: whereas the latter reads *ru* as referring to thusness, Paramārtha's explanation takes it to refer to the conventional. Yet, while Chengguan is clearly not oblivious to their differences—after all, he classifies them differently—he is not interested in arbitrating which one is correct. Instead, he lets them stand as alternate perspectives, Paramārtha's being the slightly broader explanation.

After this, Chengguan goes on to cite an explanation by Emperor Wu of the Liang, according to which "thus" indicates that "such words were spoken by the Buddha." This he classifies as an explanation that interprets the phrase in terms of the sūtra's wordsin terms of the phenomena explained. Next, he cites explanations by Daosheng and Jingying Huiyuan, which he classes as an explanation in which the teaching that is expounded corresponds to phenomena and principle. Finally, he cites one by Daorong, which he classes as a foremost instance of the stimulus-response relationship (*ganying* 感應) relationship

Chengguan next notes that these explanations exhaust the relevant possibilities. He says:

> The explanations above are each a single viewpoint. There are more explanations, but although their words differ, their meaning is the same.

As in his commentary on the overall meaning of the phrase "thus have I heard," Chengguan digests the tradition by applying an interpretative structure, which in this case he seems to create ad hoc. In his *Subcommentary* on this passage, he shows how his framework incorporates other explanations in circulation as well. This, for example, is how he deals with the explanation of "thus" by Long Ear:

> In terms of the former, [the *Commentary*] says "There are more explanations, but although their words differ, their meaning is the same." For example, Tripiṭaka Master Long Ear explains it based on the Three Jewels, as follows. First, in terms of the Buddha: The buddhas of the three times speak similarly and without contradiction. Therefore, it is said to be "like." Because they speak similarly, it is "this." This is more or less similar to Emperor Wu['s explanation]. Second, the explanation in terms of the Dharma: The

[627] I have not been able to ascertain an original source for this.

> real characteristic of dharmas is not different throughout time. Therefore, it is said to be "like." Because it is the Tathāgata who speaks, it is "this." This is like Liuqui[']s explanation that] when sages speak the Dharma, it is only in order to reveal thusness. Third, the explanation in terms of the Saṅgha: What Ānanda heard from the Buddha and what he transmits are not different. Therefore, it is "like." It is forever free from faults. Therefore, it is "right." This is the same as the overall meaning of the *Treatise on the Sūtra on the Buddha's Abode*. This is why [the *Commentary*] said, "Although their words differ, their meaning is the same."

For each part of Long Ear's explanation, Chengguan shows that it is parallel to one or another of the explanations he already cited. He does similar operations for other interpretations of "thus" circulating among the exegetes. In this way, just as with his use of the FDL above, he gets to transmit the traditional explanations while at the same time organizing knowledge thereof efficiently.

It is important to note that even though his present categorization may be ad hoc, Chengguan understands it as analogous to other doxographical schemes. At the end of the section, he says:

> One should set forth "thus" differently, according to the level of teaching.

Expounding this in his *Subcommentary*, Chengguan invokes the scheme of the five teachings and gives brief explanations for how each of them views the relation between ultimate and conventional truth. It remains unclear how the relation between these two schemes is to be understood. Nonetheless, it is clear that Chengguan understands his categorization of the different explanations of "thus" as similar in type to the doxographical scheme of the five teachings. In this way, this passage illustrates my suggestion, made in previous chapters, that such schemes are pragmatic tools whose value is not established in the abstract but in the context of organizing and interpreting scripture.

While Chengguan organizes the material on "thus" according to this ad hoc doxographical grid, other exegetes find different ways to structure the same materials. Liangben's *Commentary on the Sūtra for Humane Kings* contains no statement of the general meaning of "thus have I heard." Instead, he delves right into the analysis of its constituents. To explain "thus" he cites explanations from the following six sources without indicating any particular order.

- Dharma master An (An fashi 安法師; Dao'an?);
- Liu Qiu's *Commentary on the Sūtra of Immeasurable Meanings*;
- Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty;
- Paramārtha;[628]
- Fazhi (法智; Dharmajñāna);
- The FDL.[629]

After that, he says: "I only briefly cite these six texts. See other commentaries for extensive explanations."[630] While Liangben does not indicate in any way whether there is a logic behind

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[628] Note that while Chengguan also cites a passage he attributes to Paramārtha, it is a different one.
[629] Liangben's list is found at: T33, no. 1709, p. 436b4-21.
[630] 「略引六文，廣如餘記。」(T33, no. 1709, p. 436b21-22).

the order of these six explanations, we may note that his list consists of two sets of three: three interpretations by Chinese masters and three of Indic origin.

Dividing explanations according to geographic origin was a viable organizational principle, as we see from Wŏnch'ŭk's commentaries. In his *Commentary on the Saṁdhinirmocana Sūtra* he organizes the explanations of "thus" by explicitly grouping them according to where they are from. He first gives eight by Chinese masters.

- Sengzhao;[631]
- Zhiyi;[632]
- An unattributed explanation (the one cited by Chengguan as coming from Paramārtha);[633]
- Jingying Huiyuan;[634]
- Jingying Huiyuan;[635]
- An explanation from the *Commentary on the Lotus Sūtra* (*Zhu fahua* 注法華; non-extant) by Daorong;[636]
- Fayun;
- Emperor Wu of the Liang.

He then goes on to cite three explanations by masters from India:

- Bodhiruci's *Treatise of Vajrasena;*[637]
- Long Ear's explanation based on the Three Jewels;[638]
- Paramārtha.

He concludes with three citations from Indic texts:

- DZDL;[639]
- Guṅadatta's *Treatise on Prajñā*;[640]
- FDL.[641]

Wŏnch'ŭk does not indicate or imply any hierarchy between these sets of explanations, nor any classification in terms of the meaning of the explanations. Herein, his approach is wholly different from Chengguan, who classes them according to their meaning and implies a hierarchy among them. Still, Wŏnch'ŭk's organization shares with Chengguan's organization

[631] T38, no. 1775, p. 328, a12-14.
[632] T38, no. 1778, p. 568, b20-21. Interestingly, this quote occurs in the *Short Commentary on the Vimalakīrti Sūtra* (*Weimo lüeshu* 維摩經略疏) that was edited by Zhanran on the basis of a text by Zhiyi.
[633] See, e.g., Chengguan's *Subcommentary* at T35, no. 1735, p. 529a18-19.
[634] For Huiyuan's text, see T38, no. 1776, p. 423c28-29.
[635] For Huiyuan's text, see T38, no. 1776, p. 424a17-19.
[636] See, e.g., Chengguan's *Subcommentary* at T35, no. 1735, p. 529a23-27. Curiously, Kuiji ascribes this to Sengzhao; see T33, no. 1695, p. 27b3-6.
[637] T25, no. 1512, p. 800c8-22. On this text, see Harrison (2023: 169-171). I follow Harrison's transliteration of the author's name as Vajrasena (ibid.: 178-179).
[638] Woncheuk cites the version of this that is also cited by Chengguan.
[639] T25, no. 1509, p. 63, a1-7.
[640] T25, no. 1515, p. 887, a24-25.
[641] X21, no. 369, pp. 180c17-181b8.

the virtue of being organized: it makes the list(s) of explanations manageable in a didactic context.

Another exegete who divides explanations of "thus" according to their origin is Dingbin in his subcommentary on the *Commentary on the Four-Part Vinaya* by Fali 法礪 (569-635).[642] The latter comments but briefly on the meaning of "thus." Since he is commenting on the Vinaya, he understands Upāli to be the origin of the opening phrase.

> Upāli says: The Buddha's words are thus, which indicates that it is the Dharma that was heard. It is said to be "like" (*ru* 如) because it is spoken in accord with truth and is without perversions. Because it is [heard and reported] just as it was spoken, it is said to be "like this" (*ru shi* 如是). This is an explanation according to the Dharma.
>
> If one explains it in terms of the transmission, [we can say that] what Upāli transmitted is not different from what the Buddha spoke. Therefore it is "like." Because it is [heard and reported] just as it was spoken, it is said to be "like this" (*ru shi* 如是). The teaching like this, I personally partook of the Sage speaking it. That is why it says "I have heard."[643]

Although my analysis here is synchronic, I cannot help making an observation about the diachronic development of the commentarial genre in the Tang: Kuiji seems to be somewhat of a breaking point. Commentaries after him cite the same range of sources, often organized in similar ways. This is not to say that Kuiji was an innovator, as he too was working with questions and materials the tradition had handed down. Nevertheless, Fali, who was active just before Kuiji, uses none of the sources that become so widespread after him.

Dingbin's *Subcommentary* brings Fali into the Tang. Commenting on the passage just cited, he lists explanations by ten Chinese exegetes and then two by Indic masters. In the second list, he only Long Ear and Paramārtha (with an interlinear note referring to Vajrasena's *Commentary on the Vajra Sūtra*).[644]

> The first list consists of the following:[645]
>
> - Sengzhao,
> - Zhiyi,
> - Anonymous. (Chengguan attributes this to Paramārtha.)
> - Jingying Huiyuan—two explanations.
> - Baogong 寶志 (418-515).
> - Daorong
> - Fayun:
> - Emperor Liang of the Wu dynasty

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[642] *Si fen lü shu* 四分律疏; X731. Dingbin's text is the *Ornamental Notes on the Doctrines of the Commentary on the Four-Part Vinaya* (*Si fen lü shu* 四分律疏飾宗義記; X733).

[643] 「憂婆離云。佛語為如是指出所聞之法。說當宗方無顛倒過。曰如。如說者是。故曰如是。此約法釋。若就傳持解者。憂婆離所傳。不異佛說曰如。如說者是。故曰如是。此如是之教。親飡聖說。故曰我聞。」(X41, no. 731, p. 816b12-16).

[644] X42, no. 733, p. 293a7-13.
[1] 來字疑剩。 [2] 定決疑決定。

[645] X42, no. 733, pp. 292c6-293a4.

- Liu Qiu's *Commentary on the Sūtra of Immeasurable Meanings*;

As I read it, Dingbin's list is not merely a random collection of whichever explanations he could find. He is not trying to be exhaustive. Would he have wanted, he surely could have added more. In fact, when he introduces this list, he explicitly says that he will represent the Sinitic tradition by bringing together ten explanations.[646] Without getting into numerology, we note that a list of ten, while still manageable, suggests expansiveness.

But, we ought to note, the above list consists of only nine items in Dingbin's numbering (which takes Huiyuan's two explanations as a single item). Immediately after the ninth, he notes:

> Within the present *Commentary* there are also two explanations. The first explanation takes "thus have I heard" as referring to the substance of the Buddha's words. The next explanation is similar to the first of Huiyuan's [two] explanations listed above.[647]

That is to say, while Fali's second explanation, "in terms of the transmission," is identical with Huiyuan's and thus need not be counted separately, his explanation "according to the Dharma" *does* amount to a separate account. Putting that one at number ten, the number of completion, Dingbin's commentary playfully claims that Fali's text is an integral part of the tradition.

One thing that becomes obvious when we list the exegetes' use of various standard explanations in this way is the way their sources overlap. While there are all sorts of divergences—in their choice of what to include; in their organization—it is clear that they are drawing from a shared pool of standard resources.

Although this list of sources is typically used in explaining "thus," exegetes took the freedom to use them elsewhere depending on how they organized their commentaries. We saw earlier that in discussing the overall meaning of the phrase "thus have I heard," Chengguan foregrounds the FDL, a text that most exegetes use specifically to explain "thus." Similarly, while many exegetes, including Chengguan, cite Sengzhao and the DZDL in explaining "thus," those texts get pride of place in some of Kuiji's commentaries, such as his *Profound Praise of the Wondrous Dharma Lotus Sūtra*.[648]

There, Kuiji explains "thus have I heard" in three parts.[649] He explains, first, the origin of the phrase, recounting the relevant story from the Buddha's final days; second, the reason for it; and, third, he expounds it word by word. The function of the phrase, says Kuiji, is:

> to inspire living beings to have faith. The *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* says, "'Thus have I heard' engenders faith. To receive with faith and practice with reverence is what engenders wisdom. One enters [the Dharma] by means of faith. One crosses over [suffering] by means of wisdom. Faith is the foundation for entering the Dharma. Wisdom is the profound art of the ultimate. With faith, one can accord with the principles that are spoken. When one accords [with the principles], the path of master and disciple is

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[646] X42, no. 733, p. 292c6-7.

[647] 「今此疏中。復有二釋。一釋意云。即佛語體。名為如是。次釋意者。同上遠法師初釋也。」(X42, no. 733, p. 293a4-6.).

[648] *Miao fa lianhua jing xuan zan* 妙法蓮華經玄贊; T1723.

[649] T34, no. 1723, p. 662a4 ff.

perfected. By means of faith one can follow the Dharma that is being spoken. By following [that Dharma] the two paths of speaking and listening, [and thus] teacher and student, are established."[650]

Kuiji follows this with an exposition in ten parts on the importance of faith.[651] He draws from a variety of sources. These are mainly Buddhist texts: the *Sūtra for Humane Kings*, the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha*, the *Mahāvibhāṣā* (T1545), *Treatise Proclaiming the Sage's Teaching* 顯揚論 (顯揚聖教論; T1602), the *Yogācārabhūmi*, the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, and the *Treatise Establishing Consciousness-only* (*Cheng weishi lun*). In the last two items, Kuiji cites texts from the Chinese classicist tradition, presenting passages from the *Analects* (12.7) and the *Zuo Tradition*.[652]

Since we have good reason to believe that Chengguan was well acquainted with Kuiji's commentarial oeuvre and in some cases explicitly follows him, it is interesting to see how he diverges from him. Two points stand out to me. The first issue is that the passage by Kuiji just cited conflates two separate sources: the DZDL and Sengzhao. Chengguan, like many other exegetes after Kuiji, cite both separately and correctly. Yet, the way Chengguan cites them side by side is reminiscent of Kuiji. If, as I suspect, it was Kuiji materials that inspired Chengguan, he corrected Kuiji's conflation silently. That Chengguan based his usage of these sources on Kuiji is also suggested by the fact that both use the phrases from DZDL and Sengzhao to explicitly address the theme of faith. And yet, whereas Kuiji has a section specifically devoted to the topic, Chengguan nests it under the explanation of "thus."

3). How Did Ānanda Learn the Sūtras?

After his discussion of "thus" (*rushi* 如是), Chengguan discusses the second half of the phrase: "I have heard" (*wo wen* 我問). Just as in the template presented at the beginning of this chapter, his discussion includes a technical discussion of the nature of hearing, drawing from Abhidharma and Yogācāra literature, and a consideration of the meaning of "I." In the latter, he deals with two questions: why does Ānanda speak of an "I" if Buddhism teaches there is no self? And, since he was not present at many of the Buddha's discourses, how could Ānanda have heard all of them? It is this last issue on which I will focus here, commenting only briefly on his treatment of no-self and skipping entirely the treatment of hearing.

What I want to point to in regarding his treatment of no-self is that Chengguan again applies a doxographical scheme. He organizes his answer according to three different teaching levels: dharma characteristics (*faxiang* 法相), no-characteristics (*wuxiang* 無相), and Dharma-nature (*faxing* 法性). The first two offer what we may call, respectively a Abhidharma/Yogācāra and a Madhyamika account. He describes the third as follows.

> From the point of view of the Dharma-nature [Tenet] the purport of this *Sūtra* [is transmitted] by the Dharma-transmitting bodhisattvas [who] by means of the true self that is the nonduality of self and no-self, use the wondrous ear in which faculty and object are

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[650] 「立之所以者，為令眾生生信順故。《智度論》云：「如是我聞，生信也。信受奉行，生智也。信為能入、智為能度，信為入法之初基，智為究竟之玄術，信則所言之理順，順則師資之道成，由信故所說之法皆可順從，由順故說聽二徒師資建立。」(T34, no. 1723, p. 662a15-20).

[651] T34, no. 1723, p. 662a20 ff.

[652] For the passage in the *Zuo Tradition*, see Durrant, Li and Schaberg (2016: 24-25).

neither identical nor different to hear the gateway to the Dharma of the unobstructed Dharma Realm.

In his *Subcommentary*, Chengguan adduces quotes from the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* and *the Nirvāṅa Sūtra*. It seems appropriate to call this a Tathāgatagarbha perspective, as long as we do not assume that for Chengguan this implies a hypostatizing of the self. It includes, as he says, the very notion of no-self.

By speaking of Ānanda as a bodhisattva, this passage also already alludes to Chengguan's answer to how Ānanda could have heard all the sūtras. After citing several different options, all mentioned in the template above, Chengguan's preferred solution is to look at sūtras, such as the *Lotus*, that describe Ānanda and other śrāvakas as having long since awakened and being, in reality, highly accomplished bodhisattvas. On this view, the story about Ānanda as the Buddha's assistant is a convenient fiction that makes sense of Buddhist history for those of lower capacities.

Chengguan's treatment of these issues, of course, has close parallels in other commentaries. I will start here, however, from a text that takes a rather different shape, returning to Huizhao's *Determination of the Meanings of the Profound Praise of the Lotus Sūtra*, discussed already in Chapter 3. Although the sources and concerns there are the same as other commentaries', his treatment of "thus have I heard" seems closer to a classroom discussion than a polished literary work such as Chengguan's compositions. Thus, we will look first at Huizhao's text and compare that with other commentaries in the hope of getting a sense of the relation between classroom discussions and polished compositions.

Did Ānanda Transmit All the Sūtras? Huizhao's Disputation

While much of Huizhao's *Determination of the Meaning of the Profound Praise of the Lotus Sūtra* consists of comments and discussions based on Kuiji's *Profound Praise of the Lotus Sūtra*, at times he comments on the sūtra directly. The discussion of "thus have I heard" is such a case.[653] After a very brief comment, a disputation follows. I here translate the passage in full. Note, once again, the argumentative parameters of this dispute. The discussant's role is to bring up challenges based on contractions either between the master's explanation and scriptural sources, or between different scriptures. From both sides, arguments rely heavily on scriptural citations and their interpretation.

> We now explain "thus have I heard." All [commentators] say [that this means], "Ānanda personally heard this from the Buddha."
>
> *Question:*
>
> Since Ānanda left the householder's life twenty years after the Buddha attained awakening, how can the sūtras all say "I have heard"?
>
> *Answer:*

[653] This discussion, translated below, occurs at T34, no. 1724, pp. 863c18-864a23. The passage is reproduced in *Notes on the Determination of the Profound Praise of the Lotus Sūtra* (*Fahua xuanzang jueze ji* 法華玄贊決擇記; X637), a text consisting of explanations by the Tang dynasty monk Chongjun 崇俊 (n.d.), edited in the Song by Faqing 法清; see X34, no. 637, p. 159a5 ff. This text, as I briefly noted in Chapter 3, is another example of a commentary on a commentary.

The Buddha repeated them for him. How do we know this? The *Sūtra on the Bodhisattva Dwelling in the Womb* explains extensively how the Buddha enumerated all that he had expounded. When coming upon one that he had not heard, Ānanda would say "I did not hear this." The Buddha then ordered him to listen and spoke it for him. [654] [Alternatively,] because Ānanda has obtained the Samādhi "Buddha's Awakening," he could retain them all.[655]

Question:

If that is the case, then why does the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* say the following? [It says,] "When Ānanda [at the first council] was about to ascend the high seat, he faced the direction where the Buddha had entered into nirvāṅa, and spoke this verse:

> When the Buddha first preached the Dharma,
> I did not see him then.
> **This is how I heard it transmitted:[656]**
> The Buddha at Vārāṅasī
> For the five bhikṣus
> Turned the Dharma Wheel of the four noble truths."[657]

Answer:

The text of the *Treatise on the Perfection of Wisdom* says so because it follows another school (*ta yu bu* 他餘部).[658] We may also explain that [Ānanda] "heard it transmitted" in the sense that the Buddha repeated for Ānanda what he had once expounded for the five bhikṣus.

Question:

If that is the case, then why does the *Treatise on Entering the Mahāyāna* say, "Ānanda did not retain the Dharma exhaustively." It also cites the *Madhyamāgama*, which says, "Śakrodevānām Indra told Uttara, 'Venerable, I have obtained the ability to read others' minds and when I observe all living beings in Jambudvīpa, not a single one can fully retain the Buddhadharma other than you, venerable; others cannot.'" [The *Treatise* concludes,] for this reason, you should know that Ānanda did not fully retain [the Dharma].[659]

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[654] *Pusa chu tai jing* 菩薩處胎經; T384. The passage alluded to here starts at p. 1015b13.

[655] The point is here made only in passing, and the discussant does not pick it up. I discuss one possible source for this idea below, in the discussion of Woncheuk's treatment.

[656] Emphasis mine.

[657] Huizhao abridges the passage from the DZDL; see T25, no. 1509, p. 69, b10-b17.

[658] This phrase is odd, and as an argument I have seen it nowhere else. The idea seems to be that the DZDL was of a different Buddhist sect in India.

[659] *Ru dasheng lun* 入大乘論; T1634. This is a abridged from an extended discussion of the status of Mahāyāna scriptures of that text. A key point in this discussion concerns the limites of Ānanda's transmission. See T32, no. 1634, p. 36c24 ff. For my reconstruction of *Yuduoluo* 欝多羅 as Uttara I have the following reasons. First, these characters are generally used in transcriptions of words containing the Sanskrit *uttara* (e.g., Skt. *uttarakuru*, Ch.

Further, [the *Treatise* says that] "in the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* the Buddha tells the Deva Treasury of the Pure Sun, 'What Ānanda retains is but little; it is not the complete words. What he does not retain is boundless. In full [what I understand] even fills worlds many as dust motes in the ten directions, all of which Ānanda cannot retain. It is just like this."[660]

Answer:

This applies to when the Buddha had not yet repeated them for him. Alternately, we might explain that what the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* says applies to Dharmas that the Buddha had realized but not yet expounded. When it says that [Ānanda] could not retain them, this is as [when the Buddha says] that what he has not yet expounded is like the leaves in the forest [as opposed to leaves in the hand]. Also, Ānanda could retain Dharmas that were expounded in this realm; what was expounded in other pure lands in the ten directions, Ānanda could not retain.

Question:

If Ānanda was not a bodhisattva, he could not retain what was expounded in other [lands]. But, since he was a bodhisattva appearing as a śrāvaka, could he really not retain it? If he could not, then why does Indra in the *Āgama* say to Uttara "not a single being can fully retain the Buddhadharma other than you, venerable; others cannot." After all, Uttara was also a śrāvaka.

Answer:

It is because he was at the causal stage and because he abided[661] in a body that manifests characteristics in this world that, with regard to what was spoken in other [pure] lands, it is said that he could not retain them.

Also, [your claim that Ānanda did not retain all the sūtras] would contradict the *Sūtra on the Bodhisattva Dwelling in the Womb*, which says "he could retain them all." If it were not like that, there would be a contradiction. That is why we bring them together in this way. All the texts are free from faults.[662]

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yuduoluo jiuluo 欝多羅究留洲; Skt. *uttarāsaṁga*, *yuduoluoseng* 欝多羅僧). Second, a figure of the name of Uttara appears in Pāli texts where the parallels in Chinese Āgama translations give us *Yuduoluo* 欝多羅. Incidentally, he is the protagonist in *Anguttara Nikāya* 8.8/ *Za Ahan jing* 282 (T02, no. 99, p. 78a22) where Indra asks him whether something he taught came from the Buddha. Uttara's answer, as translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu, is "In the same way, deva-king, whatever is well said is all a saying of the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Rightly Self-awakened One. Adopting it again & again from there do we & others speak." (*Anguttara Nikāya* 8.8; transl. by Thanissaro Bhikkhu, see https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an08/an08.008.than.html (last accessed 7/5/2024).

[660] My translation of the final phrase remains tentative. This is an abridged citation from the *Treatise on Entering the Mahāyāna*, which in turn cites the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*. See T32, no. 1634, p. 37a7-21. The parallel passage in Kumārajīva's translation of the text is at T15, no. 642, p. 642a1-13. Note that in his translation, the Deva is called *Jing yue zang* 淨月藏, "Treasury of Pure Moon." Cp. Lamotte's translation (1998: 211).

[661] Reading the variant *chu* 處 instead of *ju* 據.

[662] 「解如是我聞，皆云阿難親從佛聞者。
問：如佛成道二十年後阿難方始出家，云何諸經皆言我聞？

This is the extent of Huizhao's treatment of "thus have I heard." Interestingly, it has no overlap at all with Kuiji's commentary, which is more extensive but contains no sustained treatment of how Ānanda heard the sūtras when he was not present at their delivery. Only from passing remarks do we learn Kuiji takes for granted that "I" refers to Ānanda and that Ānanda heard the sūtras directly from the Buddha.[663] In that sense, Kuiji's commentary might well be in the background here. After all, the discussant objects exactly to those two points. We might also speculate that Huizhao and his students discussed this topic at some length precisely because Kuiji does not deal with it. They might have found his overall treatment of "thus have I heard" clear and/or not interesting to discuss.

An earlier commentary that does discuss this topic is Jizang's *Commentary on the Sūtra for Humane Kings.*[664] While his commentary does not bring up the idea that Ānanda was a bodhisattva, he does draw on many of the sources that become standard for discussions of this topic. He divides his treatment into two parts. The first of these suggests that the Buddha repeated the sūtras for Ānanda before entering nirvāṅa. In this context, Jizang paraphrases a passage from the *Sūtra on Dwelling in the Womb*. He also draws on the *Sūtra on Repaying Kindness*,[665] the *Sūtra on Śāriputra's Inquiry,*[666] and the DZDL.[667] In the second part of his discussion, Jizang offers an alternative for which he cites Vajrasena's commentary on the *Vajra Sūtra.* This text claims that there were three Ānandas, responsible for transmitting, respectively, the śrāvaka, pratyekabuddha, and bodhisattva canons.[668]

If we compare Huizhao's dispute with Jizang's treatment, we find some clear resonances as well as striking divergences. Both the discussant and the defendant in Huizhao's text draw from texts to which Jizang refers as well. The citation from the *Sūtra on Dwelling in*

答：佛重為說。何以得知？《菩薩處胎經》具廣分別，佛歷問所說，不聞之者阿難言不聞，佛勅聽為說，阿難得佛覺三昧，悉能受持故也。
問：若爾，何故《智度論》云：阿難將昇高座說經之時，向佛涅槃方而說偈言，佛初轉法輪，爾時我不見，如是展轉聞，昔於波羅奈，為五比丘眾，轉四諦法輪？
答：《智度論》文隨他餘部故作是說。又釋，佛初在彼為五人說，後更重為阿難再說，云展轉聞。
問：若爾，《入大乘論》云：阿難持法不盡明，二十年前皆悉不持。又引《中阿含》說：釋提桓因語鬱多羅言，尊者！我得他心，觀閻浮提一切眾生，無有盡能受持佛法，唯除尊者，餘不能了。以是因緣當知阿難非悉能持。又《首楞嚴經》中佛為淨日藏天子說：阿難所持小不足，言不受持者，乃有無量。乃至廣云復滿十方微塵世界，皆如阿難不能盡持，亦復如是。
答：據佛未加未重為說故作說。又解，《首楞嚴經》據佛所悟未說之法，云不能總持，如言未說如林中葉等。又若此處所說之法阿難能持，於餘十方諸淨土說，阿難不持。
問：若阿難陀非大菩薩餘不能持說，既是菩薩化作聲聞何不能持？[*無能云何阿含云唯除尊者餘不能了鬱多羅者亦聲聞故
答：在因位故，處顯相身在此界故，於餘處說云不能持，在此界中。*]又違《處胎》云悉能持，不爾相違，故作此通，諸文無過。」(T34, no. 1724, pp. 863c18-864a23). Note that the passage in the final question and answer, marked with square brackets and asterisks [*…*], is presented differently in the Taishō. I here reorganize the text based on variants (as noted in the Taishō) and my understanding of the arguments.

[663] T34, no. 1723, p. 663b16-18. As far as I can tell, Kuiji does not treat this issue either.

[664] *Ren wang bore jing shu* 仁王般若經疏; T1707. The topic is discussed on p. 316b21-c14.

[665] (*Da fangbian fo*) *bao en jing* (大方便佛)報恩經報恩經; T156. The passage paraphrased by Jizang starts at p. 155c17.

[666] *Shelifu wen jing* 舍利弗問經; T1465. The passage abridged here by Jizang is at p. 902c20-21.

[667] The passage cited is at T25, no. 1509, p. 69b12-16.

[668] The *Vajrasena Commentary* itself is more gnomic than Jizang's paraphrase; see T25, no. 1512, p. 800c26-27. Jizang's paraphrase is at T33, no. 1707, p. 316c9-12.

the Womb provided by Jizang must be what the defendant in Huizhao's passage had in mind. Moreover, the passage from the DZDL cited in brief by Jizang is cited in slightly fuller form by Huizhao's discussant. There, the discussant cites it because it seems to imply that senior monks transmitted some sūtras to Ānanda. For Jizang, however, this DZDL passage offers the same account as *Sūtra on Dwelling in the Womb*—that is, the Buddha repeated the sūtras for Ānanda. The possibility of reading the DZDL in this way is pointed out by Huizhao's defendant. There are also some less subtle divergences. For example, the *Sūtra on Repaying Kindness* is cited by Jizang but not by Huizhao, whereas the *Treatise on Entering the Mahāyāna* is cited only by the latter. Similarly, Huizhao's discussion does not touch on the idea that there were three different Ānandas, while Jizang does not mention the idea that Ānanda was in fact a bodhisattva. The analogy with musical performance offered at the beginning of this chapter applies here once again. The scholiasts are playing with old motives, twisting them in new ways, and using, where they can, interpretative freedom.

Our impression of this dynamic is strengthened if we look at how other commentators treat the same issue. Wŏnch'ŭk's discussion of the topic starts with a citation from the Vajrasena commentary that recounts three councils.[669] The first, with 500 arhats in attendance, occurred right after the Buddha's nirvāṅa. The second was convened by śrāvakas in a time when Buddhism was under persecution. The third was convened by the Buddha himself in between two world systems, gathering numberless śrāvakas and bodhisattvas. The upshot of this passage for Wŏnch'ŭk is that not all the sūtras, in fact, were transmitted by Ānanda. Vajrasena states that Subhūti reported the *Vajra Sūtra* at this last council. Even at the second council, on his telling, monks opened their recitation of sūtras by saying "thus have I heard," implying they had heard it not from the Buddha personally but from some other monk. Wŏnch'ŭk also briefly cites two brief lines from different texts ascribed to Paramārtha. These too open up the possibility that not all texts were transmitted by Ānanda.[670]

This also seems to be the point of two brief citations from texts by Paramārtha, neither of which seems to be extant.

So far, Wŏnch'ŭk's discussion has nothing in common with either Jizang's or Huizhao's. Like Jizang, he draws on Vajrasena's *Vajra Sūtra Commentary*, but for wholly different

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[669] Vajrasena's is at T25, no. 1512, p. 801a3-17. Woncheuk's citation, see X21, no. 369, p. 182a22-b9.

[670] See X21, no. 369, p. 182b9-11. Neither of the two texts survives. The first, the *Notes on the Seven Topics* (*Qi shi ji* 七事記), seems to have been an exposition of seven aspects found in the introductions of sūtras. Several references to this text survive in the commentarial literature. Woncheuk himself also cites it in his *Commentary on the Sūtra for the Humane King* (*Renwang jing shu* 仁王經疏; T1708; see) to explain, for example, the seven topics (T33, no. 1708, p. 362, a27-b5). The Silla monk Pyowon 表員 (dates unknown; 8th century) cites this text in his *Questions and Answers Regarding the Essential Points of the Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (*Huayanjing wenyi yaojue wenda* 華嚴經文義要決問答; X237) for its explanation of the epithet "buddha." An author of two Vinaya commentaries, Dingbin 定賓 (dates unknown; 8th century) gives a citation that explains the reason Ānanda had to preface sūtras with "thus have I heard" (see X42, no. 733, p. 291, b12-19). Huiyuan 慧苑 (673-743?) cites its explanation of the term "buddha," telling us that Paramārtha got this from a text called the *Zhenshi lun* 真實論 (X03, no. 221, p. 595, b17-21), and paraphrases the explanation of the seven topics in general (X03, no. 221, p. 598, b4-8). Chengguan also gives the former passage, followed by extensive glosses (T36, no. 1736, p. 120, b18-19 ff.). The other text, the *Notes on the Views of the Schools* (*Buzhi ji* 部執記) seems to be cited only by Woncheuk, apart from a citation in the *Edited Notes* (X03, no. 221, p. 600b8-9). The latter text paraphrases a discussion by Paramārtha to which Woncheuk does not refer.

purposes. Yet, after this first part of his answer, Wŏnch'ŭk says: "To comment on this: such explanations contradict the *Sūtra on Repaying Kindness*."[671] He goes on to cite that sūtra's account. As we saw, this text is also used by Jizang and Huizhao. Wŏnch'ŭk, however, provides an abridged citation from the text, showing that its account is more nuanced than the other two exegetes had let on. In the sūtra, the Buddha gives four accounts to explain how Ānanda learned the sūtras he had not personally heard. The first is that devas had reported them to Ānanda; the second that the Buddha implanted them in Ānanda's mind; the third that he heard them from other bhikṣus; and the fourth that Ānanda heard them from the Buddha.[672] Even if that sūtra passage, presented in full, does present itself differently from how it is used by Jizang and Huizhao, Wŏnch'ŭk uses it to give an authoritative account to prove that the sūtras were, in fact, all transmitted via Ānanda. This is underscored by Wŏnch'ŭk's adducing yet another explanation of how Ānanda learned all the sūtras. He cites a text called *Vajra Flower Sūtra* that says that Ānanda had attained a special type of meditative absorption that enabled him to hear and remember sūtras that the Buddha preached in his absence.[673] This same passage is cited by other exegetes also, including Huizhao in another commentary, even if the sūtra seems no (longer?) extant.[674]

This is the end of Wŏnch'ŭk's discussion of the question how Ānanda heard sūtras spoken before his time. On the whole, while he offers some contrary opinions from commentarial literature, his preferred view is that Ānanda did personally transmit those sūtras, even if Wŏnch'ŭk remains agnostic about how exactly he learned them. His conclusion, thus, is neither the same nor wholly different from that presented by Jizang and defended in Huizhao's text.

There is still, however, a tail to his discussion. Above, we saw that Jizang cites the *Vajrasena Commentary* for the alternative view that there were in fact three Ānandas. In Wŏnch'ŭk's text, this issue does come up, but not in the context of the question as to how Ānanda learned all the sūtras. Immediately after that answer, the interlocutor asks "Since Ānanda was a śrāvaka, how could he retain the Mahāyāna sūtras?"[675] Wŏnch'ŭk responds to this issue with the idea that there were three Ānandas. The textual situation here is murky. He first cites a passage very similar to what Jizang extrapolates from the *Vajrasena Commentary*, but cites it as coming from a text called the *Sūtra of the Mahāyāna Collection of Dharmas*—a text that is hardly ever mentioned and seems not extant.[676] He also notes that the same idea is mentioned by Paramārtha in his *Commentary on the Vajra Sūtra*—another non-extant text—as coming from the *Sūtra on King Ajātaśatru's Repentance*—yet another non-extant text. It

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[671] 「解云。如是等說。違報恩經說也。」(X21, no. 369, p. 182b11-12).

[672] T03, no. 156, pp. 155c17-156a9. Woncheuk's abridged citation is at X21, no. 369, p. 182b12-19.

[673] *Jin'gang hua jing* 金剛華經. This text seems to be non-extant.

[674] For Huizhao's citation of this passage in his *Commentary on the Most Royal Sūtra of Golden Light* (*Jin guangming zuisheng wang jing shu* 金光明最勝王經疏; T1788) see T39, no. 1788, p. 184b16-18. The earliest citation seems to be by Jizang, in his *Commentary on the Meaning of the Lotus Sūtra* (*Fahua yi shu* 法華義疏; T1721); see T34, no. 1721, p. 455a11-12. Chengguan also cites this passage in his *Subcommentary*; see T39, no. 1788, p. 184b16-18.

[675] 「問。阿難既是聲聞。如何能持大乘經典。」(X21, no. 369, p. 182b22-23).

[676] *Dasheng faji jing* 大乘集法經. Woncheuk also cites it in his *Commentary on the Sūtra for Benevolent Kings* (). We also find it in Dingbin's subcommentary on Fali's *Commentary on the Four-Part Vinaya* (X42, no. 733, p. 292c1-5). The text is also mentioned in this context by Chengguan (T36, no. 1736, p. 133a15) and Zongmi (X09, no. 245, p. 545a14-15).

seems that by indicating that he knows that last sūtra reference via Paramārtha's commentary, Wŏnch'ŭk admits not having access to it, likely because it was never translated. As we saw in Huizhao's disputation, it was acceptable to cite sūtras even if they are known only as they occur in translated commentaries.

Though my impressions in this regard are admittedly subjective, my sense is that the appearance of the interlocutor in Wŏnch'ŭk's text is more polished, more fictionalized than in Huizhao's tract. This is partly based on how instrumental the questions seem to be in the organization of the text as a whole—as opposed to some other commentaries in which the interlocutor seems to have his own agenda and distracts from the natural flow of the commentaries. In this present case specifically, it seems to me that Wŏnch'ŭk is intentionally making sure that he treats the idea that there were three different Ānandas while at the same time avoiding the issue of how Ānanda heard sūtras spoken in his absence. We saw Chengguan make similar moves above in relation to earlier exegetes: retaining materials but organizing them differently.

We might also compare Wŏnch'ŭk's section in his *Commentary on the Saṁdhinirmocana Sūtra* with his *Commentary on the Sūtra for Humane Kings*.[677] His treatment in the latter text is nearly verbatim the same as what I outlined above, with one major exception. There, he does not discuss the idea with which he opens in the *Saṁdhinirmocana Commentary*: the idea that not all sūtras in fact were transmitted by Ānanda himself. Accordingly, he does not cite Vajrasena's discussion of the different council and the two texts by Paramārtha. This leads to two observations. First, we may note the close resemblance between his two texts. We often, but not always, can find such close, word-by-word correspondences when we have multiple commentaries from the same exegete. A good example is the many commentaries of Kuiji. This clearly has implications for how we think about the composition of these texts. Clearly, in these cases we are dealing with a situation where the writing was predominant. Maybe these commentaries originated as notes to prepare for lectures. When composing such a text, one might as well copy-paste what one found to work when lecturing on other texts, especially with standard thematic discussions or in discussions of set terms or phrases (such as "thus have I heard"). This leads us to the second issue we may note, namely the divergence between Wŏnch'ŭk's two commentaries. How do we account for the difference between them? One possible answer is be that his *Saṁdhinirmocana Sūtra* was a later composition. Since composing the earlier commentary, he had learned of the alternative—that Ānanda in fact did not transmit all the sūtras—maybe upon a fresh reading of sources, such as Vajrasena's text, or in a discussion. He decided that even while he did not favor this idea, he would incorporate it in his standard comments on the issue at hand. If this conjecture has any merit, it suggests once again the scholiasts' ongoing dedication to learning and integrating into their understanding and teaching of new materials.

Another text we might briefly consider here is Fazang's commentary on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. In a short passage he treats the very same issues.[678] In his text, the interlocutor asks, with reference to a standard understanding that śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas could not perceive the Buddha preaching the *Avataṃsaka*, "When [the Buddha] expounded this sūtra, those of the two vehicles were as though deaf and blind. How can it be that Ānanda said 'I have

[677] In the latter, the discussion appears at T33, no. 1708, p. 363b15-27.
[678] T35, no. 1733, p. 126b6-26.

heard'?"[679] Fazang gives two answers. The first is that it was in fact Ānanda, referring to the idea that there were three Ānandas. For this, he claims to base himself on the *Sūtra on King Ajātaśatru's Repentance*. His second explanation is that certain esoteric teachings, like the Perfection of Wisdom or the *Lotus Sūtra*, were not heard and transmitted by Ānanda but by bodhisattvas, specifically by Mañjuśrī. For this, he cites the DZDL,[680] the *Nirvāṅa Sūtra*,[681] and the *Sūtra on Mañjuśrī's Nirvāṅa.*[682] Note how in Fazang's text, the two questions asked by Wŏnch'ŭk are cleverly merged into one. Note as well how he is clearly aware of the general trend in responding to this issue, given his reference to *Sūtra on King Ajātaśatru's Repentance*, but in the second part of his answer adduces sources we have not seen in the other parallel discussions. He is saying the same thing differently.

In Chengguan's treatment of the issue, we find a similar move as what we have seen in previous cases: he organizes and folds in the exegetical tradition. He presents four possible options as to how Ānanda learned sūtras from before his time. The first three of these are provisional; the last ultimate. All elements of the former class we already encountered, though Chengguan manages to add in a few extra scriptural citations. The first option is that Ānanda learned the sūtras from others. For this, Chengguan draws on the *Sūtra on Repaying Kindness,* the *Nirvāṅa Sūtra*, and the DZDL. Note, however, that his implied interpretation of these texts differs from some other exegetes. For example, from the DZDL he cites the same passage we also saw in Huizhao and Jizang. Chengguan reads it in the manner of Huizhao's discussant. The second option is that the Buddha repeated the sūtra for Ānanda. For this, Chengguan again cites the *Sūtra on Repaying Kindness.* The third option is that he knew them by accessing a special samādhi. For this idea, which we saw in Wŏnch'ŭk, Chengguan also draws on the *Vajra Flower Sūtra* and the *Lotus Sūtra*. The fourth, ultimate view is that Ānanda was actually a bodhisattva appearing provisionally as a śrāvaka.

Above, I briefly gestured toward Chengguan's answer to the topic at hand: Ānanda, in reality, was a highly accomplished bodhisattva, appearing as a śrāvaka as skillful means. If, that is, Ānanda was a highly accomplished bodhisattva who merely manifested as a śrāvaka, the details of that manifestation are no longer relevant. As support for this, he cites the *Sūtra on the Inconceivable State* and the *Lotus Sūtra*. In none of the commentaries I have treated so far does this idea figure, except, notably, in Huizhao's text. There, in the final question, the discussant assumes that Ānanda was not a mere śrāvaka; he was instead a bodhisattva. While somewhat at odds with his line of attack—namely, that Ānanda did not hear all sūtras directly from the Buddha—the discussant brings this point up to undermine an argument made by the master. The discussant in Huizhao's text does not mention these or any other sources. Yet, given the parameters of these disputations, he must have had sources in mind that he could assume his audience knew and would accept. This in turn suggests that, even if it is not represented much in the commentarial literature, the argument itself was invoked regularly in discussions on the topic. That this was an accepted point, for which there was good

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[679] 「問：說此經時，二乘人等竝如聾盲，豈得阿難而稱我聞？」(T35, no. 1733, p. 126b6-7).

[680] Fazang references two passages from the DZDL. The first, while presented as a direct citation, is in fact a pithy summary of a longer discussion that starts at T25, no. 1509, p. 754b12. The second I have not yet been able to locate.

[681] *Da banniepan jing* 大般涅槃經; T375. For the passage paraphrased, see p. 850b8-10.

[682] *Wenshushili banniepan jing* 文殊師利般涅槃經; T463. For the passage to which Fazang alludes, see p. 480c20-22.

scriptural evidence, would explain why the defendant does not simply refute the idea that Ānanda is more than a śrāvaka, attempting instead to qualify his bodhisattvahood. If this is all correct, it once again shows that our window into the Tang dynasty scholastic conversations is very limited; that ideas and conversations that were taken for granted either did not survive or, in many cases just as likely, were never written down, leaving only allusive traces.

Chengguan does refer to the idea that there were three Ānandas. But, like Wŏnch'ŭk, he separates it from the question how Ānanda heard the sūtras. In the *Commentary*, after stating the above three provisional and one ultimate accounts in brief, Chengguan says "it is just because the teachings are given differently according to potentials."[683] He gives two different explanations of this line in his *Subcommentary*. The first is that it refers to the four accounts given above. This is a rather natural reading of the *Commentary* by itself. The second interpretation is quite different—remarkably so, given that this is Chengguan's alternate reading of his own writing (!). On this account, the line refers to the three different Ānandas. For this, he refers to texts that by now are familiar: the *Sūtra of the Mahāyāna Collection of Dharmas* the *Vajrasena Commentary*, and notes that Paramārtha's C*ommentary on the Prajñā* cites the *Sūtra of Ajātaśatru's Repentance*.

Concluding Comments

In recent work, Hou Xiaoming has pointed out that in the biographies, a central evaluative criterium for exegetical lectures was "novelty" (*xin* 新) or "novelty and difference" (*xinyi* 新異).[684] In light of the readings presented in this chapter, I would suggest that what exegetes looked for in judging each other's lectures was not doctrinal innovation but rather novelty in the mode of presentation—freshness, we might say. Seen in this light, this criterion confirms the understanding of exegesis as an art that I suggested at the beginning of this chapter. As with many other forms of art, one's appreciation of commentaries grows as one's exposure increases.

Besides shifting our understanding of what it meant to lecture or compose a commentary away from ideological content and toward the parameters of performance, this perspective also highlights several other elements of the Sui-Tang scholastic culture. In any commentary, as we saw, other commentaries are present too, whether they be on the same scripture or another. Their composers and their audience, accordingly, were steeped in this style of learning—in the questions, the sources, the aesthetic—regardless of supposed sectarian affiliation. This understanding of the commentaries also underscores, again, the central role of memorization in the Sui-Tang scholastic culture. Moreover, our reading illustrated other elements of scholastic pedagogy as well, especially the use of interpretative grids such as doxographical schemata.

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[683]「但隨機教別，故見聞不同。」(T35, no. 1735, p. 529b23-24).

[684] Hou 2022: 114 ff., 139-140.

Chapter 5 — Fields of Study in Sui-Tang Scholasticism

Preamble

The Sui-Tang scholiasts, as has become clear in preceding chapters, were trained broadly in the study of the Buddhist scriptural canon and the accumulated exegetical tradition around it. We have seen that their relation to this knowledge—the way they organized it, the methods by which they transmitted it—have striking parallels in other scholastic cultures. In this chapter, I return to one last aspect of scholastic pedagogy to which I pointed in Chapter 1, namely the organization of knowledge. Drawing especially on Dreyfus, I pointed out that scholastic "fields of study" are organized around (sets of) scriptures. My contention here is that the same applies to Sui-Tang scholasticism: we can discern clusters of ideas, doctrines, and tropes around different (groups of) scriptures. Individual scholiasts, when lecturing on one scripture or the other, would engage in the appropriate discourse—we might say that they would code-switch as they moved between different fields of study.

Understanding Sui-Tang commentaries in this way moves us beyond a simplistic focus on the author. *Pace* Barthes, the authorship concept remains useful—the scholiasts *do* hold certain views across their works and recycle stylistic choices.[685] Nevertheless, they were also remarkably flexible in putting on different "hats." One way to illustrate this shadowy authorship is the following thought-experiment. What would happen if we had all the texts by the exegetes but lacked author-attributions? Would we be able to correctly recognize sets of texts written by the same author? Or would we be misguided by our assumptions about the consistency of authors? John Powers suggests the former in his discussion of the authorship of the *Commentary on Just the Maitreya Chapter* (Skt. *Āryamaitreyakevalaparivarta bhāṣya*), a commentary on part of the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sutra*. Several scholars have raised doubts about its traditional attribution to Jñānaprabha on the basis of its divergence on philosophical positions taken in his *Differentiation of the Two Truths.*[686] Powers, on the other hand, suggests that these philosophical divergences might be because Jñānaprabha is speaking to different audiences in these texts. In a footnote he elaborates:

> Although this is not the occasion to develop this idea fully, there is a basic problem in studies by contemporary scholars who try to decide that different texts could not have been written by the same author on the basis of differences of thought or style. The problem with this approach is that it tacitly assumes that every author has a uniform philosophical view and writing style throughout his/her life, but this is patently false, as can be seen in any number of contemporary authors, who write from different perspectives and utilize different styles, adapting their writing to the needs of particular works. An example would be Jean-Paul Sartre, who wrote in a variety of styles and genres. Many of the works known to have been written by Sartre would have to be rejected according to the implicit rules of the methodology of contemporary scholarship which holds that differences in thought and style necessarily indicate differences in authorship.[687]

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[685] Barthes 1977: 142-148.
[686] Powers 1992: 54-63. Cp. Eckel 1987: 31-34.
[687] Powers 1992: 55 n. 23.

Imagine, in this vein, that we had all of Chengguan's texts, but without their authorship known. We would easily recognize the same hand at work in the commentaries on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, his *Subcommentary,* and his stand-alone translation of the *Gaṅḍavyūha.*[688] More pertinent is the question what we would make of two of his shorter treatises that have nothing to do with the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*.

Take, for example, his short treatise on the five skandhas, the "Contemplation of the Aggregates" (*Wuyun guan* 五蘊觀; X1004).[689] This text opens by asking: "How should ordinary people who desire liberation engage in spiritual practice?"[690] The answer is rather disappointing if one is looking for an exposition on Buddhist practice based on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. Chengguan instructs his reader to engage in a systematic contemplation of, first, the selflessness of persons and then of dharmas. For the first contemplation, he offers standard definitions of the aggregates based on technical abhidharma-literature. For the second, he recites generic arguments for the emptiness of the aggregates. The essay closes with a section that can, as I have suggested elsewhere, be read as a critique of certain subitist orientations.[691] Even there, Chengguan does not draw on any themes, imagery, or vocabulary from the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* or the exegetical tradition around it. If all that survived of this text was a manuscript with the colophon missing (and absent scriptural catalogues), we would likely not ascribe this text to Chengguan.

Another case in point is a brief and enigmatic text attributed to Chengguan in response to a request by the crown prince Li Song 李誦 (761-806) who was to become Emperor Shunzong 順宗 (r. 805-806), the *Essential Points of the Mind—In Response to the Crown Prince's Question*.[692] The text's inclusion in *Jingde Era Records of the Transmission of the Lamp*,

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[688] The *Commentary on the Avataṁsaka Sūtra as Newly Translated in the Zhenyuan Year* (*Zhenyuan xinyi huayan jing shu* 貞元新譯華嚴經疏; X227).

[689] X1004. For a translation, see De Vries 2015: 124-125. Though the evidence for Chengguan's authorship of the text is not rock-solid, I take it to be authentic. The "received" edition of the text—i.e., that given in the *Xuzang jing*—does not list a manuscript source. It is cited in full and with attribution to Chengguan in a text by Zhifu 志福, a monk active during the Liao dynasty (916-1125) (X46, no. 775, p. 154, b3-c1). The note in his entry in the Buddhist Studies Authority Database entry argues that he must have been active during the Daozong 道宗 era (1055–1101) (<https://authority.dila.edu.tw/person/?fromInner=A000500>, accessed 11-14-2022). This places the text and its attribution to Chengguan to the late 11th century at the latest. During that same time, Ŭich'ŏn 義天 (1055–1101) compiled his catalog of texts in circulation in which he lists the *Contemplation of the Aggregates* in the Huayan-section (T55, no. 2184, p. 1166, c22). Even though Ŭich'ŏn lists no author for the text, I take this entry to support Chengguan's authorship. In any case, even if Ŭich'ŏn did not understand the text to have been authored by Chengguan, since its contents betray no such connection, Ŭich'ŏn must have taken its author to be one of the known authors of commentaries on the *Avataṁsaka Sūtra*.

[690] 『問：凡夫之人欲求解脫。當云何修。』(X58, no. 1004, p. 425, b9).

[691] De Vries 2015: 36-37.

[692] *Da huangtaizi wen xinyao* 答皇太子問心要. This is how the text is titled in its occurrence in the *Jingde Era Records of the Transmission of the Lamp* (*Jingde Chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄; T51, no. 2076, p. 459, b23-c22). The text is also preserved with Zongmi's commentary. That version is titled *The Dharma Method of the Mind's Essentials in Response to Shunzong* (*Da shunzong xin yaofamen* 答順宗心要法門; X58, no. 1005, p. 426, a6-c12). The SGSZ recounts ever so briefly that "Emperor Shunzong, one time when he was at the spring palace, had [Chengguan] write the *Ultimate Meaning* (1 scroll), *The Essentials of the Mind* (1 scroll), as well as *The Offenses Incurred by Eating Meat.*"「順宗在春宮嘗垂教令述了義一卷心要一卷并食肉得罪因緣。」(T50, no. 2061, p. 737, b28-c1). For a full translation of the text along with a discussion, from rather different starting points, see Poceski (2023).

a Chan history, is a good indicator of its genre.[693] Chengguan's writing here, bereft again of any elements inspired by the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, is very different from the highly systematized scholastic expositions that make up the bulk of his writings. Here, he is evocative and poetic, surprising the reader with sudden shifts in perspective. The text, it would seem, is meant as an inspiring invitation to meditative practice—though, the text also warns against "practice" and its concomitant delusion that one might attain something. Given such themes and the poetic style, this text is right at home among the Chan poetry collected by Daoyuan 道原 (d.u., fl. ca. 1000) in the final volumes of the *Transmission of the Lamp*.

At least once in this text, Chengguan clearly alludes to Chan-lore. He writes,

> If in your search for the truth you reject the false, this is like exhausting yourself trying to flee from your own shadow. If you embrace the false as the truth, this is like standing in the shade—your shadow disappears.[694]

Chengguan is here picking up on imagery found in the letter written by layman Xiang 向 (d.u.) to Huike 慧可 (487-593), the master later recognized as the second Chan patriarch. The letter, as reproduced in the XGSZ, opens as follows:

> Shadow is cast by your body and echoes follow after sound. If you exhaust yourself in trying to cast your shadow, this is because you do not realize that your shadow is your body's. If you raise your voice to stop the echoes, this is because you do not realize that sound is where echoes come from. Seeking *nirvāṅa* by eradicating afflictions is analogous to seeking your shadow without your body. Seeking buddhahood seperate from living beings is analogous to searching for echoes by silencing sounds. Thus, delusion and awakening are a single path; delusion and wisdom are not different.[695]

Although, ultimately, the philosophical use they make of the relation between the shadow and the body is different, Chengguan's wording indicates that he had this letter in mind when he wrote the *Essential Points*. An interlinear note present in at least one manuscript tradition of the *Transmission of the Lamp* already points this out.[696] This would not have been lost to his educated readership.

What is notable here is not that Chengguan knows or even engages with Chan-tropes. In some of his scholastic writings, we find extensive engagement with Chan. For example, in his commentary on *Entering the Dharma Realm*,[697] a stand-alone text that corresponds to the 39th chapter in the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, he offers a lengthy treatment of different views on the gradual or sudden nature of the path.[698] In that context, he discusses a wide range of Chan

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[693] *Jingde Chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄; T2076. For a discussion of that text and its compilation, see Welter 2004.

[694]「若求真去妄。如避影以勞形。若體妄即真。似處陰而影滅。」(X58, no. 1005, p. 426, b3-4).

[695]「影由形起響逐聲來。弄影勞形。不知形之是影。揚聲止響。不識聲是響根。除煩惱而求涅槃者。喻去形而覓影。離眾生而求佛。喻默聲而尋響。故迷悟一途愚智非別。」(T50, no. 2060, p. 552, a29-b4)

[696] T51, no. 2076, p. 221, b20-22.

[697] The full title is: *Entering into the State of Inconceivable Liberation and the Vows and Practices of Samantabhadra*; *Ru busiyi jietuo jingjie puxian hengyuan pin* 入不思議解脫境界普賢行願; T293. Known in Sanskrit as the *Gaṅḍavyūha*. Chengguan's commentary is the *Commentary on the Avataṃsaka Sūtra Newly Translated During the Zhenyuan Period* (*Zhenyuan xinyi huayan jing shu* 貞元新譯華嚴經疏; X227), which he wrote by imperial order (Hamar 2002: 54-55; 2019: 644).

[698] Starting at X05, no. 227, p. 64, a20.

sayings. However, in that case, he is still writing as a scholiast, organizing in rational fashion these various teachings, and thus stands apart from the Chan-discourse. In the *Essential Points*, on the other hand, he participates in that discourse.

The *Essential Points* is a rather extreme case. Chengguan engages not only a different set of doctrines and themes, but does so in a style that diverges from the standards to which he adhered in his exegetical works. We see the same with Daoxuan. On the one hand, he left us commentaries on the monastic code that follow the commentarial conventions; on the other hand, he wrote the XGSZ, a work that participates in wholly different genre conventions. In both cases, the difference is vast—as vast as that between Sartre's ironic and playful prose in *The Words* and his sustained analytical writing in *The Imaginary*.[699] Such cases, even if exceptional, elegantly illustrate that the scholiasts were not beholden to one style of writing or a single set of doctrinal themes. When appropriate, they switched from one discourse to another.

In the present context, more subtle forms of hat-switching interest me: instances where exegetes remain within their scholastic conventions, but change their presentation depending on what scripture or set of scriptures they are expounding. We might imagine a master who normally specializes in the exegesis of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*—let's say Chengguan—being invited to expound Nāgārjuna's *Verses on the Middle.* In doing so, he would draw on other Madhyamaka sources as well as *Prajñāparamitā Sūtras* and emphasize the teaching of emptiness as the highest insight and the most supreme teaching of the Buddha. Naturally, the standard doxographies and tropes when lecturing on the *Avataṃsaka* would not be appropriate. Unfortunately, no commentary on the *Verses on the Middle* by Chengguan survives, although we are told in the SGSZ that he composed one. [700] The goal of this chapter is to argue that if we did possess that commentary, it would be a "Madhyamaka text." This gives a fresh perspective on Sui-Tang scholarship, offering a new account of the origin of the different "schools" of Chinese Buddhism. This perspective, once again, also shows the performative element of scriptural exegesis.

To make this argument, I will do two things in this chapter. In the first part, I will show one particular scholiast switching hats. Since a large variety of commentaries by Fazang survive, his materials present an excellent case to test my hypothesis. I will survey his writings and suggest that his works can be divided into three groups: *Avataṃsaka*-inspired ("Huayan"), Prajñāpāramitā/Madhyamaka, and Tathāgatagarbha. These are three fields of study, centered around one or several scriptures and implying certain doctrines, sources, and exegetical tropes. For each of these groups, moreover, earlier commentaries exist—an exegetical tradition. One is likely to draw on them. In the second part of this chapter, I show that these fields have some degree of coherency. I will first show that when other scholiasts comment on Tathāgatagarbha texts, they engage the same doctrines, sources, and tropes as Fazang in that context. I then take one particular text, the *Vajra Sūtra*, and show that specific expectations governed the composing of commentaries on it.

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[699] Sartre 1964; 2004.

[700] T50, no. 2061, p. 737, c10-11. It also says that he composed commentaries on the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra.* Later biographies give more specific lists of texts (Hamar 2002: 32).

Fazang Beyond the *Avataṃsaka*

Fazang's oeuvre is especially useful for the question driving this chapter because it spans a range of scriptures. His works related to the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* are well-known and include both his full-length commentary as well as shorter stand-alone works. Yet he also wrote on other texts, such as the *Awakening of Faith*, the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, Sūtra on the Secret Ornament,*[701] the *Heart Sūtra* and the *Twelve Gates Treatise* attributed to Nāgārjuna. Since Fazang is commonly understood as a Huayan-master, those commentaries are generally understood as a Huayan interpretations of their respective root-texts. My claim here is that as a Tang-era scholiast, Fazang had been educated in the exegesis of the sets of scriptures that tradition deemed important. He specialized in *Avataṃsaka*-studies. But, as occasion demanded, he engaged with other fields of study as well. When he did so, writing a commentary on the *Awakening of Faith* for example, he worked within the discourse of what we might call Tathāgatagarbha-studies, adopting interpretations and drawing on resources understood to be appropriate to a set of texts in which the *Awakening of Faith* is central. I should note in this regard that these differences are emphatically not an outcome of Fazang's own development over time: laid out chronologically, his works jump between these different fields.[702]

One striking place where we can see this is in the commentaries' thematic discussions where he lays out his doxography. Famously, when Fazang expounds the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, he lays out a fivefold doxography.[703] This culminates in the Perfect Teaching (*yuanjiao* 圓教). He describes this teaching as follows:

> Fifth, the perfect teaching. This illuminates that a single stage is identical to all stages, that all stages are identical to a single stage. In this vein, the ten stages of faith subsume the five stages and the accomplishing of full and perfect awakening. Relying on Samantabhadra's Dharma realm, replete with the multifariousness of Indra's net and both the host and his assembly, it is called the perfect teaching. It is explained in sūtras such as this one.[704]

If we take this as Fazang's final view, he believed that the highest teaching is that which teaches the mutual identity of the various stages on the path based on an understanding of the interpenetration of phenomena, and that this teaching is exemplified by sūtras such as the *Avataṃsaka.* This surface reading, however, has several issues.

First, as we saw with Chengguan in Chapter 3, before presenting the fivefold scheme, Fazang discusses at length several alternative doxographical schemes that he does not necessarily dismiss. In fact, after he lays out the fivefold scheme, he goes on to enumerate several alternatives.[705] Although the content of the highest teaching remains the same in these alternatives, this shows that Fazang was less wedded to the fivefold scheme than is commonly assumed. Two further observations are more important. In his commentaries on

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[701] *Dasheng miyan jing* 大乘密嚴經; T681, T682.

[702] See the partial list of texts laid out chronologically by Chen Jinhua (2007: 37). This list is partial since it gathers only texts relevant to the study of Fazang's life.

[703] T35, no. 1733, pp. 115c4-116b2.

[704] 「五圓教者，明一位即一切位、一切位即一位，是故十信滿心即攝五位成正覺等，依普賢法界帝網重重主伴具足，故名圓教，如此經等說。」(T35, no. 1733, p. 115c17-20).

[705] T35, no. 1733, p. 116a9 ff.

other scriptures, Fazang does not provide this fivefold doxography at all. What he puts on top, moreover, seems to depend on the scripture at hand.

Take the discussion of doxography in his *Commentary on the Twelve Gates Treatise*.[706] He first comments that while there is a plethora of alternate schemata that are taught, he won't bother expounding on them. Instead, he recounts the doxographies he claims to have learned personally from Divākara, whom he asked about the issue during a translation workshop. Based on this conversation, Fazang presents two alternate doxographies that he ascribes to Śīlabhadra and Jñānaprabha. We can validly term their perspectives Yogācāra and Madhyamaka. The former is in the lineage of Maitreya and Asaṅga, relying on texts such as the *Saṁdhinirmocana Sūtra* and the *Yogācārabhūmi*; the latter in the lineage of Mañjuśrī and Nāgārjuna, relying on the *Prajñāparamitā Sūtras* and the *Verses on the Middle*. Śīlabhadra's doxography follows the *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra* in distinguishing three teachings:

1. Hīnayāna (four noble truths; denying the self, affirming dharmas' existence).
2. Prajñāpāramitā (emptiness).
3. Yogācāra (mind-only).

This system is described as going from one extreme (affirming dharmas) to the other extreme (simply affirming emptiness) and finally finding the middle in the affirmation of the existence of the dependent (*paratantra*) and perfected (*pariniṣpaṅṅa*) natures. We might call this the pendulum model.

This contrasts with Jñānaprabha's Madhyamaka model in which the teaching of emptiness becomes progressively more thorough. He lists the same three teachings but orders them differently.

1. Hīnayāna (four noble truths; denying the self, affirming dharmas' existence).
2. Yogācāra (denies the external world; still affirms the mind and mental dharmas).
3. Prajñāpāramitā (complete emptiness).

These two different systems are clearly at odds if we take them as accounts of which teachings contain the highest truth: one affirming the ultimate reality of the mind while the other teaches complete emptiness (Madhyamaka). After presenting these two systems at some length, Fazang deals with the question of how they relate to each other—which one, that is, is better? We might expect Fazang to come out with a verdict on which is correct. In some sense, Fazang refuses to bite the bullet, as he avoids giving a straightforward answer. While it is true that Fazang's answer is roundabout, in my reading he does give a substantive answer: in terms of the content of the teachings, he strongly prefers the Madhyamaka account of Jñānaprabha.

This preference is clear if we pay attention to the distinctions that he makes in his roundabout answer. He makes two major moves. The first is to deny that we should take either doxography as an account of the chronological order of the Buddha's teaching career. Fazang adduces scriptural citations to prove this point. The upshot of this argument is that we can now not use any hints of chronology in the Buddha's teaching career to argue for which teachings are more ultimate than others. The second move is to distinguish between two metrics for ordering teachings: their degree of inclusivity versus their degree of subtlety.

[706] *Shi'er men lun zong zhi yi* 十二門論宗致義; T1826. For the doxographical discussion, see p. 213a4-c23.

Fazang then shows that if you use the former metric, Śīlabhadra's doxography, with the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* coming at the top, is the most complete. Whereas the Hīnayāna teachings are given to śrāvakas only and the *Prajñāpāramitā* teachings to bodhisattvas alone, the *Saṃdhinirmocana* is taught to both groups. The issue here, it should be noted, is merely the inclusivity of the audience and not, as one might expect, the idea that in the latter scripture the Buddha teaches śrāvakas that they too can become buddhas, as he does in the *Lotus Sūtra*. The *Saṃdhinirmocana* does not teach *ekayāna* in that sense. On its view, becoming an arhat is a legitimate goal of Buddhist practice. Thus, the point is simply that the Yogācāra teachings speak to two audiences at the same time, helping both groups attain their respective goals. Fazang summarizes this account as follows:

> [the Buddha] first expounded only the Hīnayāna and then exclusively the Mahāyāna. In those two respective teachings, the other is lacking, and that is why they are not ultimate. Finally, he expounded the two teachings simultaneously, being inclusive of those of both propensities. In this way, the teaching is complete, and that is why it is the ultimate. It is not that there is a distinction between shallow and profound in regards the truth.[707]

Note that Fazang is quite emphatic that the criterion of inclusivity does not imply a hierarchical evaluation of the teachings' doctrinal content.

Fazang goes on to problematize this view, however. A related point: having discussed how the *Samdhinirmocana* indeed comes out as an ultimate teaching if we apply the metric of inclusivity, Fazang also cites the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* and the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* to show that the perfection of wisdom is *also* taught to both śrāvakas and bodhisattvas. In other words, in terms of inclusivity, the Yogācāra account does not necessarily trump the Madhyamaka account.

Next, Fazang discusses the issue using another metric and concludes his treatment of doxography. The criterion here is the extent to which a given teaching reveals the truth, allowing Fazang to simply reiterate the progressive teaching of emptiness found in Jñānaprabha's account. He says:

> Second: gathering in those of different potentials to enter the Dharma: the perspective from which truth is revealed ever more subtly. This is what Jñānaprabha established.
>
> That is to say: first, [the Buddha] speaks of the mind and its objects as both existing. This does not yet penetrate the emptiness of nature. Next, he reveals that objects are empty while the mind is existent. This already reveals the emptiness of nature to some extent. Finally, he reveals fully and equally that the mind and its objects are both empty. This, at last, is the ultimate teaching.
>
> Put in terms of dependent arising: first, [the Buddha] explains [the links] as actually existent. Next, he explains them as seemingly existent. Finally, he at last speaks of them as empty.

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[707] 「又初唯說小教。次唯大乘。此二言教各互闕。故名非了。後具說二教。用攝二機。此則教具。故名了義。非是理有淺深。」 (T42, no. 1826, p. 213c1-4).

> According to this way of outlining things (?, *ci wen* 此文), whether the three teachings are ultimate or not ultimate is clarified based on the gradual increase in the teaching of the truth because entry into the Dharma proceeds along gradual stages.
>
> If you fixate on the idea that this is a chronological model, then when you classify the scriptures, you will certainly run into contradictions. It can be understood in this way.
>
> Also, Śīlabhadra's way of classifying the teachings understands the most inclusive to be the ultimate teaching. Jñānaprabha's classifies the teachings according to truth, taking the profundity of the truth to be the ultimate teaching. Thus, the starting point of both explanations is different. Herein you can see how the teachings are ordered clearly; which are superior and which inferior; which shallow and which profound.[708]

Although Fazang is careful to retain the validity of both doxographic systems, his overall presentation in this context is quite clear: in terms of truth, the Madhyamaka presentation wins out.

A wholly different picture emerges in Fazang's commentaries on texts that present a Tathāgatagarbha based viewpoint. The clearest examples are his *Notes on the Meaning of the Awakening of Faith*[709] and his *Commentary on the Mahāyāna Treatise on the Non-differentiation of the Dharma Realm.*[710] Fazang also wrote on two related texts that synthesize Tathāgatagarbha and Yogācāra perspectives: the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* and the *Sūtra on the Secret Ornament.*[711] I will discuss the former below but leave the former aside here, since its first scroll does not survive and we therefore do not have its thematic discussions.

The *Mahāyāna Treatise on the Non-differentiation of the Dharma Realm* is a Tathāgatagarbha text ascribed to Sāramati (*Jianhui* 堅慧).[712] Fazang wrote his commentary within a few years of its translation. He had, in fact, been part of the group that translated the text in 689 under the Indian master Devendraprajña (*Tiyunbore* 提雲般若; n.d., active in the late 7th century).[713] His commentary, therefore, is another illustration of the scholiasts' ongoing interest in new textual material and of the cross-over between translation and exegesis. In his thematic discussions, as expected, he includes a brief section on doxography. He divides this into two parts, of which the former gets but a very brief treatment:

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[708] 「二約攝機入法。顯理增微門者。智光所承立也。謂初說心境俱有。不達性空。次顯境空心有。已顯一分性空。後心境俱空。平等具顯。方為了義。又於緣生。初說實有。次說似有。後方說空。此文並是入法有漸次。顯理有增微。以明三教了不了義。若定執前後。定判經文。亦有違害。準可知耳。又戒賢約教判。以教具為了義。智光約理判。以理玄為了義。是故二說。所據各異。分齊顯然。優劣淺深。於斯可見。」(T42, no. 1826, p. 213c14-23).

[709] *Dasheng qixin lun yi ji* 大乘起信論義記; 1846. His doxographical discussion is at p. 242a25-243c8.

[710] *Dasheng fajie wuchabie lun shu* 大乘法界無差別論疏; T1838.

[711] *Dasheng miyan jing* 大乘密嚴經; T681, T682.

[712] *Dasheng fajie wuchabie lun* 大乘法界無差別論; T1626.

[713] For the date of its translation, see Forte (2000: 57-58; referenced by Chen 2007: 18-19).

> "First, we discuss the various explanations. These are [the systems] such as the three teachings established [respectively] by Śīlabhadra and Jñānaprabha, all explained in my *Commentary on the Avataṃsaka Sūtra*.[714]

We might understand this section as scholastic shorthand. There is a lot to say about the topic, and an able lecturer or student should at this point bring in the appropriate information. Fazang cues us as to what he thought was most important: the two Indic doxographical systems. Note that he does not refer to the fivefold doxography here, even as he refers his readers to his own *Search for the Mysteries of the Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. Clearly, then, Fazang was not wedded to that doxography as always the most appropriate.

Moreover, while Fazang seems to be somewhat enamoured of the systems of Śīlabhadra and Jñānaprabha, as we read on we realize that he is not singularly attached to these either. The second part of his doxographical discussion in the *Commentary on the Mahāyāna Treatise on the Non-differentiation of the Dharma Realm* presents a doxography appropriate to the text at hand.

> 2: We determine the tenet based on the present teachings. The tenets of the sūtras and śāstras that have been transmitted eastward [to China] to this day, whether of the Hīnayāna or the Mahāyāna, are of four types:
>
> 1. The tenet that holds that dharmas based on characteristics: sūtras such as the āgamas and śāstras such as the vibhāṣa.
> 2. The tenet of true emptiness and no-characteristics: sūtras such as the *Prajñāpāramitā* and śāstras such as the *Verses on the Middle*.
> 3. The tenet of mind-only and dharma characteristics: sūtras such as the *Saṁdhinirmocana* and śāstras such as the *Yogācārabhūmi*.
> 4. The tenet of tathagatagarbha and dependent arising: sūtras such as the *Laṅkāvatāra* and the *Secret Ornament,*[715] and śāstras such as the *Awakening of Faith* and the *Ratnagotravibhāga*.
>
> To explain these four. First, in terms of the vehicles: the first only includes the Hīnayāna. The next two teach the three vehicles. That is to say, these two tenets both hold that those who have the fixed nature pertaining to the two vehicles do not become buddhas. According to the last tenet there is only the one vehicle because it holds that those of the two vehicles who have entered nirvāṅa too become buddhas. The three tenet system of Jñānaprabha and the eighth chapter of the Liang translation of the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* give a similar explanation.[716]
>
> Second, in terms of consciousness. The previous two teach that there are only six consciousnesses. The latter two both speak of the eighth consciousness. The first teaches that the sixth consciousness exists; the second that it is empty. Among the latter two, the first teaches that the eighth consciousness only has the aspect of arising

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[714] 「第三顯教分齊者有二門。一敘諸說。謂戒賢。智光各立三教等。並如華嚴疏中說。」(CBETA 2022.Q4, T44, no. 1838, p. 61c6-7)

[715] *Dasheng miyan jing* 大乘密嚴經; T681, T682.

[716] I have yet been unable to find the passage to which Fazang must be alluding here. The eighth chapter of the text starts at T31, no. 1593, p. 129a26.

and perishing, while the latter teaches that the eighth consciousness is joined with the tathagatagarbha, and both arises and perishes and does not arise and perish.

Third, in terms of dharmas. The first simply teaches that they exist; the second simply that they are empty. The third teaches that they are both empty and existent. That is to say, in this [third] tenet, the imagined nature is empty while the dependent nature is existent. The fourth teaches that dharmas are neither empty nor existent. That is to say, this tenet holds that the tathagatagarbha, following conditions, becomes the ālayavijñāna—a case of truth penetrating phenomena. It holds that the other-dependent dependent arising has no nature and is the same as thusness—phenomena penetrating truth. In this explanation, truth and phenomena penetrate each other and emptiness and existence fuse such that the two extremes are both transcended. These four tenet, with regard to dharmas have many different explanations.

Fourth, in terms of persons. The first is established by the various Hīnayāna masters such as Dharmatrāta; the second by Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva, etc.; the third by Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, etc.; the fourth by Aśvagoṣa, Sāramati, etc. Other [masters] can be understood in this way too, divided according to the doctrines of these [four] tenets. The present treatise corresponds to the fourth.[717]

If, going back to the thought experiment raised in the beginning of this chapter, we were to read this passage without knowledge of its author's other works, we would likely conclude from this doxographical discussion that this author believed that this division of the Buddha's teaching into four tenets, culminating in Tathāgatagarbha, is the best account. Yet, even when read on its own, the passage already contains indications that Fazang is not wedded to this particular system. When he discusses the way the four tenets relate to the vehicles, he portrays Yogācāra and Madhyamaka as teaching that the three vehicles are separate and that those with śrāvaka- and pratyekabuddha gotras cannot attain buddhahood; only Tathāgatagarbha texts teach *ekayāna*. At the end of the paragraph, however, he throws a wrench in this clear picture. He notes that in Jñānaprabha's system, the highest teaching—Madhyamaka!—also teaches *ekayāna*. He also alludes to a passage from what he understands to be a Yogācāra text, the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* as translated by Paramārtha, that also teaches ekāyāna. Fazang is perfectly well aware, that is, that these doxographies are useful tools that cannot be taken too literally, as they simplify nuanced distinctions. When we read this passage in the wider context of Fazang's oeuvre, the sense that he thought of this doxography as ultimately correct vanishes completely. It is one among several possible interpretative frames

[717] 「二述現宗。謂現今東流一代聖教。通大小乘及諸權實。總有四宗。一隨相法執宗。謂阿含等經。婆沙等論二真空無相宗。謂般若等經。中百等論。三唯識法相宗。謂深密等經。瑜伽等論。四如來藏緣起宗。謂楞伽密嚴等經。起信寶性等論釋此四宗。略舉四義。一約乘者。初唯小乘。次二具三乘。謂此二[2]乘宗。同許定性二乘不成佛。後唯一乘。以此宗許入寂二乘亦成佛故。智光三教。及梁論第八。並同此說。二約識者。初二唯說六識。後二具說八識。於中初說六識有。後說六識空。後二中。初說八識唯是生滅。後說八識通如來藏。具生滅不生不滅。三約法者。初唯說有。二唯說空。三說亦空亦有。謂此宗許遍計所執空。依他圓成有。四說非空非有。謂此宗許如來藏隨緣成阿賴耶識。即理徹於事也。許依他緣起無性同如。即事徹於理也。以理事交徹。空有俱融。雙離二邊故云也。此四約法。就多分說。四約人者。初是小乘諸師達磨多羅等所立。二是龍猛聖天等所立。三是無著世親等所立。四是馬鳴堅慧等所立。餘隨宗義別。並準可知。此論正當第四宗攝。」(T44, no. 1838, p. 61c7-29).

that he applies to the Buddhist canon. This particular fourfold doxography he thought best suited for framing the *Treatise on the Non-differentiation of the Dharma Realm*.

One of the texts cited by Fazang as representative of the final tenet in the fourfold system is the *Awakening of Faith*. It is therefore no surprise that in his commentary on that text, his doxographical discussion proceeds along broadly similar lines: it consists of two parts and the latter culminates with the same fourfold system. One major difference is that here Fazang does write out the first part, discussing at length the systems of Jñānaprabha and Śīlabhadra as well as a range of different criteria by which either one is appropriate. Although this discussion is more extensive and nuanced than that in his *Commentary on the Twelve Gates Treatise*, here too Madhyamaka comes out highest in terms of subtlety of doctrine. This makes the transition to the section's second part somewhat awkward if we expect consistency in thought (rather than dexterity with tools), and yet the second part repeats the exact same fourfold doxography we saw above.

Though much of the passage is repeated verbatim and all of it is structurally the same, there is one interesting divergence. It is significant not for its difference from the other version but in how it relates to the preceding discussion of Jñānaprabha and Śīlabhadra. There, he favored the former in terms of doctrinal profundity, repeating Jñānaprabha's outline of the gradual progression of understanding toward the insight into emptiness. Here, Fazang gives a similar outline of the fourfold doxography. He says:

> Among these four, the first is the explanation that accords with phenomena and holds on to characteristics; the second the explanation that brings together phenomena to reveal the truth; the third the explanation that relies on the truth to clarify the differences between phenomena; the fourth the explanation that merges truth and phenomena without any obstruction. According to this [final] tenet, the tathagatagarbha, by following conditions, becomes the ālayavijñāna. This, then, is how truth pervades principle. Also [according to this tenet], conditioned arising dependent on other [phenomena], i.e., the lack of nature, is identical to thusness. This, then, is how truth pervades principle.[718]

Like Jñanaprabha's system, Fazang explains this doxography as listed in ascending order of depth of understanding. Yet, the two systems are quite dissimilar. In the former, Madhyamaka trumps Yogācāra; in the latter, Yogācāra is placed higher, though it is superseded by Tathāgatagarbha, a teaching not even listed in Jñanaprabha's system. It is clear, then, that Fazang's presentation is context dependent.

Somewhat tangentially we might note another aspect of the doxographical discussion in the commentary on the *Awakening of Faith.* After his presentation of the two Indic systems, a disputation follows, as an interlocutor raises the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* as a problematic case for these doxographies.[719] This sūtra, according to its own framing narrative, is preached right after the Buddha's awakening. The two doxographies, however, both have the Buddha starting his teaching career by teaching Hīnayāna. The bottom line of the ensuing discussion,

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[718]「此四之中。初則隨事執相說。二則會事顯理說。三則依理起事差別說。四則理事融通無礙說。以此宗中許如來藏隨緣成阿賴耶識。此則理徹於事也。亦許依他緣起無性同如。此則事徹於理也。」(T44, no. 1846, p. 243b28-c4).

[719] T44, no. 1846, p. 243a12-b22.

which draws on other scriptures too, is that a literalist understanding of doxographies based on chronology does not work. Along these lines, Fazang adds a brief note in the end of his presentation of the fourfold doxography in this commentary. He says that "among these four tenets there is no clear chronology; they are interspersed throughout the sūtras and śāstras."[720] Again, Fazang shows that these doxographical schemes are useful tools that are yet not to be taken literally.

This same picture arises yet again if we look at Fazang's thematic commentary in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*.[721] Like the *Awakening of Faith,* this text combines Yogācāra doctrines with essential Tathāgatagarbha teachings such as the presence of buddha nature in all living beings and the fundamental purity of consciousness. For these reasons, it too belongs to the Tathāgatagarbha family of texts. Fazang's commentar contains two sections where doxography is discussed: section 3, "Revealing the Distinctions Among the Teachings,"[722] and section 9, "Elucidating the Divisions of the Text's Meaning."[723] In the former, Fazang first points his readers to his commentary *Avataṃsaka* for a broader discussion. Then, with regard especially to the sūtra at hand, he recites the fourfold doxography with minor variations. That he gives the fourfold doxography here was to be expected. After all, he lists the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* as representative of its fourth and highest teaching.

The discussion in the ninth section, illustrating once more the exegetes' flexibility in the use of doxographical schemata, is more curious. Among standard thematic topics, it is one of the rarer ones. The title, moreover, does not always indicate the same content. We encountered it in the synopsis of Chengguan's *Commentary on the Avataṃsaka* in Chapter 3. There it is a discussion of the highest teaching to which the *Avataṃsaka* belongs. In Fazang's own *Avataṃsaka* commentary, this heading marks a treatment of different doctrinal grids according to which one can look at the sūtras teachings. Specifically, Fazang there lists the so-called ten profound gates (*shi xuan men* 十玄門).[724] In his commentary on the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra,* this section similarly lists ten doctrinal topics. However, this list, which we might also understand as grids for organizing understanding, is wholly different.

1. Perspectives on conditioned arising, emptiness and existence.
2. Perspectives on the root and branches of the consciousnesses.
3. Perspectives on the real and false essence of mind.
4. Perspectives on the seeds of the fundamental consciousness.
5. Perspectives on the buddha nature's pervasiveness.
6. Perspectives on those of the two vehicles turning their mind [toward the Mahāyāna].
7. Perspectives on the expansion and contraction of stages and practices.
8. Perspectives on the non-obstruction of hindrances and antidotes.
9. Perspectives on being at ease whether situations are adverse or favorable.
10. Perspectives on the eternality of buddhahood.[725]

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[720] 「然此四宗亦無前後時限差別。於諸經論亦有交參之處。」(T44, no. 1846, p. 243c6-7).

[721] *Ru lengqie xin xuanyi* 入楞伽心玄義; T1790.

[722] 「顯教差別」(T39, no. 1790, p. 426b26 ff.)

[723] 「明義分齊」 (T39, no. 1790, p. 430c2 ff.).

[724] T35, no. 1733, p. 123a27 ff.

[725] 「一緣起空有門、二諸識本末門、三識體真妄門、四本識種子門、五佛性遍通門、六二乘迴心門、七行位卷舒門、八障治無礙門、九違順自在門、十佛果常住門。」(T39, no. 1790, p. 430c3-7).

Many, though not all, of these topics have clear doxographical implications. In many cases, Fazang cites divergent opinions that go back to different (sets of) Buddhist scriptures and arbitrates between them, organizing their teachings on the topic at hand into a hierarchy. We should also note that while this list may seem far-reaching, all these topics are treated in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*. Moreover, in Fazang's discussions, this sūtra's teaching consistently come out as the highest.

In the first of the ten topics, a discussion of the relation between emptiness and existence, Fazang once again mentions Jñānaprabha and Śīlabhadra. He starts the discussion by stating that "with regard to the nature of dependent arising, the various masters in China attach to either emptiness or existence and are unable to bring them into harmony."[726] Therefore looking to Indian sources, he points to works by Bhāvaviveka (*Qingbian* 清辨) and Dharmapāla (*Fahu* 護法) who continued, respectively, the lines of Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga. Jñānaprabha and Śīlabhadra are mentioned as representing these two lines. Crafting a historical narrative, Fazang argues that the contradiction between the two schools rests on a misunderstanding. After all, he says, Asaṅga wrote a commentary on the *Verses on the Middle* and Vasubandhu wrote a commentary on Āryadeva's *Hundred Verse Treatise*.[727] Whereas Nāgārjuna taught that existence is no different from emptiness, Asaṅga taught, in turn, that emptiness is no different from existence. Later generations, however, either mistook the Madhyamaka teachings for nihilism or the Yogācāra teachings as affirming existence. This led to the development of the two as separate schools. This is where the work of Bhāvaviveka and Dharmapāla comes in: Fazang sees these figures as both, once again, correcting misguided approaches to emptiness and existence. "The two masters," as he puts it, "both refute one extreme such that together they reveal the middle way. In this way, they work together rather than refute each other."[728] Yogācāra and Madhyamaka, that is, are not to be understood as presenting different teachings, but as correctives that together point to the truth, the middle way.

Read on its own, this discussion is an elegant proposal of how to understand the rivalling truth claims we find in Yogācāra and Madhyamaka sources. But recall now Fazang's comparisons of the two systems as taught by Jñānaprabha and Śīlabhadra. There, when it came to their respective truth claims, Fazang prioritized the former's Madhyamaka perspective as superseding anything Yogācāra may have to say on the nature of existence. Read from a philosophical perspective, Fazang is contradicting himself. How do we resolve such contradictions without reference to chronological development nor by performing interpretative acrobatics? The sensible route, I submit, is to understand Fazang as using tropes

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[726] 「於緣起性，此土南北諸師各執空有，不足為會。」(T39, no. 1790, p. 430c7-8).

[727] T39, no. 1790, p. 430c13-14. The commentary by Asaṅga that Fazang has in mind is the *According with the Treatise on the Middle* (*Shun Zhonglun* 順中論), in full *Entering the Great Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra in by According with the Treatise on the Middle Shun Zhonglun yi ru dabuorebolomijing* 順中論義入大般若波羅蜜經; T1565. Ido not know of a commentary on the *Hundred Verses Treatise* by Vasubandhu. Kumārajīva's translation of the *Treatise* (T1569) includes a commentary by a certain Vasu (*Posou* 婆藪). It seems that some of the Chinese exegetes understood this to be shorthand for Vasubandhu. As Jackson Macor points out to me, this is Jizang's understanding in his commentary on the *Treatise* (personal communication, April 9th, 2024).

[728] 「此二士各破一邊、共顯中道，此乃相成非相破也。」(T39, no. 1790, p. 430c20-22).

and playfully exploring the possibilities afforded by interpretative grids even as there remains at the core a set of stable convictions (e.g., regarding the nature of emptiness).

With the final text that I will discuss here we return to the Prajñāpāramitā/Madhyamaka context: Fazang's *Brief Commentary on the Heart Sūtra*.[729] This commentary is brief indeed, treating only a few of the standard thematic discussions, and treating those but summarily. Oddly, this work lacks any discussion of doxography. The closest we get is the very brief discussion of the section of the canon to which it belongs. There Fazang says:

> 2. The basket to which [this sūtra] belongs. Among the three baskets, it belongs to the sūtra basket. Among the two baskets, it belongs to the bodhisattva basket. Among the provisional and ultimate teaching, it belongs to the ultimate teaching.[730]

In the final line, Fazang uses the simplest doxography possible—the bifurcation of the teachings into provisional and ultimate. Moreover, as we saw in preceding instances, Fazang frames the text at hand as belonging to the highest teaching. Indeed, the commentary consistently discusses emptiness as the highest insight while alternative Buddhist teachings are not mentioned, or at least do not receive doctrinal attention. Writing on the *Heart Sūtra,* Fazang has switched to a different discourse that prioritizes emptiness and makes all else irrelevant.

Another angle from which we can approach the idea of "fields of study" is by looking at the use of source texts. My basic proposition in this regard is that around a given scripture (e.g., the *Vajra Sūtra*) or set of scriptures (e.g., those Tathāgatagarbha family), there was a web of other scriptures that were considered relevant sources. In other words, when an exegete such as Fazang provides a commentary on the *Awakening of Faith,* for example, he is predisposed to cite related texts such as the *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanāda Sūtra,* the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra,* and the *Ratnagotravibhāga.*

I intentionally use the word "predisposed" here. Besides the field to which the text at hand belongs, other factors are at play too in steering the exegete to cite this or that text. Not all citations are equal. In any given exegetical work, we can expect to find references, citations, and allusions to a common core of texts. Especially when these occur in the context of thematic discussions, they do not reveal anything about a subcanon belonging to a field of study. Furthermore, specifics in the text at hand may steer an exegete to an otherwise unrelated text. For such reasons, we cannot simply list all the textual references in a given commentary in working toward reconstructing subcanons. Rather, we have to simultaneously read widely and be sensitive to context.

Interestingly, as I have kept track of textual references in my explorations of the commentarial literature, I have found that textual families that emerge are remarkably familiar to the modern Buddhologist. Fazang's commentaries, for example, lean on either of two scriptural families, Tathāgatagarbha and Madhyamaka. (This is excluding his commentaries on the *Avataṃsaka* for reasons I will discuss later.) To forestall the objection

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[729] *Bore boluomiduo xinjing lüe shu* 般若波羅蜜多心經略疏; T1712.

[730] 「第二、藏攝者，謂三藏之中契經藏攝，二藏之內菩薩藏收，權實教中實教所攝。」(T33, no. 1712, p. 552b9-11).

that I am simply projecting our modern historical and philosophical understandings, I will provide a relatively detailed survey of the citations in Fazang's *Brief Commentary on the Heart Sūtra* below. This commentary provides an excellent opportunity for such work since, given its brevity, we can be exhaustive in our treatment. Let me also note, however, that such groupings of texts are often exactly what the commentators themselves suggest in doxographical discussions like those we saw above.

In Fazang's commentary on the *Heart Sūtra*, I count a total of nine times that he either cites or mentions a text. Two of these texts fall clearly within a Prajñāpāramitā/Madhyamaka framework: the *Larger Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* and the *Verses on the Middle.* Fazang cites a verse from Chapter 24 of the latter in explaining that emptiness and existence make each other possible.[731] He cites the former three times, though, oddly, only one of them occurring verbatim in the sūtra.[732] The other two come from other sources. One is an abridged citation from the *Verses on the Middle.*[733] The other one is in Fazang's comments on the *Heart Sūtra's* line "because there is nothing to attain,"[734] which prompts him to say "the *Larger Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* says 'one attains because there is nothing to attain.'"[735] Though in perfect accord with the Prajñāpāramitā teachings, it comes not from said sūtra but from the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*.[736] Even if these citations are imprecise, they still show the *Larger Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* in commenting on a text such as the *Heart Sūtra.*

These two texts, accounting for a total of four out of nine textual references, may seem like a meagre harvest given my goal of showing that in lecturing on the *Heart Sūtra* Fazang was predisposed to use such texts as the above. However, context is of the essence here and it is important to point out that the citations discussed above all occur in Fazang's treatment of the substance of the *Heart Sūtra*. Not all citations can be understood that way.

Take for example a citation from the DZDL that opens the first of the thematic discussions, on why the sūtra was taught. While this text is, in my experience, often related specifically to the Prajñāpāramitā literature, the present citation cannot be counted as such. It is cited purely in the context of the thematic discussion and, in fact, Fazang also cites it, in exactly the same place, in his commentary on the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*.[737]

Some of Fazang's other citations make sense in their respective contexts. When he cites the *Lotus Sūtra*, which is not a text the exegetes typically associate with this context, he does so specifically when commenting on Avalokiteśvara. That sūtra dedicates its 25th chapter

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[731] See T33, no. 1712, p. 553b5-6. The passage in the original text is at T30, no. 1564, p. 33a22-23.
[732] T33, no. 1712, p. 554b3-4. For the original, see T08, no. 223, p. 238c24.
[733] In the same context as the citation from the *Verses on the Middle,* Fazang cites the *Larger Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* as saying "if dharmas were not empty, there would be no path, no result, (etc.)." 「《大品》云，若諸法不空，即無道、無果等。」(T33, no. 1712, p. 553b4-5). I have not been able to locate anything similar in the relevant sūtra literature. However, in Chapter 24 of the *Verses on the Middle,* the first half occurs in an important verse that famously pivots the discussion to showing that emptiness is, in fact, needed to make sense of the Buddhist teachings and the path. In this way, Fazang's line is an appropriate summary of that chapter.
[734] 「以無所得故」(T08, no. 251, p. 848c13-14).
[735] 「《大品》云，無所得故而得。」(T33, no. 1712, p. 554b10-11).
[736] T14, no. 475, p. 548c21-23.
[737] T39, no. 1790, p. 425c20-22. The original is worded slightly differently; see T25, no. 1509, p. 57c25.

to a discussion of that bodhisattva. He cites it when commenting on the sūtra's line "when [Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara] was practicing the profound prajñāpāramitā,"[738] as follows:

> It says "when" because this bodhisattva sometimes enters the two vehicles' contemplation of the emptiness of persons. Thus, the *Lotus Sūtra* says "for those who can be liberated by one appearing as a śrāvaka, [he appears as a śrāvaka to expound the dharma]."[739] Since this is not one of those times, the sūtra says "when he was practicing the profound…"[740]

The context for this scriptural reference is specifically Fazang's explication of why the *Heart Sūtra* would stipulate so precisely that Avalokiteśvara was practicing the profound Mahāyāna contemplation of emptiness. It is no surprise in that context that Fazang would be led to draw from the *Lotus Sūtra*, a natural source for discussing Avalokiteśvara given that it dedicates a full chapter to him.

A similar case is a brief mention of the *Mahāyānābhidharmasamuccayavyākhyā*.[741] Coming to a line in the sūtra where a series of abhidharmic categories is denied, Fazang notes that "these three lists are explained in full in treatises like the *Vyākhyā*."[742] Just like it is appropriate to cite Chapter 25 of the *Lotus Sūtra* when discussing Avalokiteśvara, referring to Abhidharma texts is more than reasonable in this context. We find a similar case in Fazang's citation of the *Treatise on the Ten Stages* by Vasubandhu. In explaining the *Heart Sūtra's* praise of its mantra as a "mantra equal to the unequalled,"[743] he cites that treatise's commentary on the phrase "equal to the unequalled."[744] Again, Fazang is led to this text for its very specific explanation of the phrase in question.

There remain four citations from texts that are of the Yogācāra and Tathāgatagarbha families. These texts too are cited by Fazang because of very specific issues that arise in discussing the *Heart Sūtra*. He does not cite them to bring in their doctrinal orientation. The first Tathāgatagarbha text he uses here is the *Ratnagotravibhāga*.[745] Fazang does so in his extended commentary on the central lines from the *Heart Sūtra:* "Śāriputra, form does not differ from emptiness, emptiness does not differ from form. Form is emptiness. Emptiness is form. Feeling, cognition, formations, and consciousness are like this too."[746] After explaining this as addressing confusion about emptiness on the part of śrāvakas, Fazang reads it as indirectly addressed to bodhisattvas as well. Though I have not been able to find the original passage in *Ratnagotravibhāga*, Fazang says he bases himself on that text in discussing three

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[738] 「觀自在菩薩行深般若波羅蜜多時」(T08, no. 251, p. 848c6).

[739] 「應以聲聞身得度者，即現聲聞身而為說法」(T09, no. 262, p. 57a25-26).

[740] 《般若波羅蜜多心經略疏》：「言「時」者，謂此菩薩有時亦同二乘入人空觀，故《法華》云，應以聲聞身得度者，即現聲聞身等。今非彼時，故云行深時也。」(T33, no. 1712, p. 552c22-24).

[741] *Dasheng apidamo zaji lun* 大乘阿毘達磨雜集論; T1605; abbreviated as *Duifa lun* 對法論.

[742] 「釋此三科，具如《對法》等論也。」(T33, no. 1712, p. 554a13).

[743] 「是無等等咒」(T08, no. 251, p. 848c18).

[744] T33, no. 1712, p. 554c22-24. For the original, see T26, no. 1522, p. 131c6-8.

[745] *Baoxing lun* 寶性論; T1611.

[746] 「色不異空，空不異色，色即是空，空即是色；受、想、行、識，亦復如是。」(T08, no. 251, p. 848c7-9).

ways bodhisattvas can be confused regarding emptiness.[747] He shows how the *Heart Sūtra's* line can be read as addressing all three of these. (I am putting citations from the sūtra in **bold**.)

> First, they confuse emptiness as being something different from form, grasping at emptiness outside of form. Here, [the sūtra] clarifies **that form is not different from emptiness**, thereby severing that confusion.
>
> Second, they confuse emptiness with the annihilation of form, grasping at a nihilistic emptiness. Here, it clarifies that **form is emptiness**, that it is not the case that emptiness is the annihilation of form, thereby severing that confusion.
>
> Third, they confuse emptiness as being a thing, grasping at emptiness as something that exists. Here, it clarifies that **emptiness is form**, that one cannot use emptiness to grasp emptiness, thereby severing that confusion. With these three confusions eradicated, true emptiness reveals itself.[748]

In this neat show of exegetical skill, Fazang adduces the *Ratnagotravibhāga* not for its central teaching, buddha nature, but for a very specific structure for discussing the interpretation of emptiness. He uses this as a grid for his interpretation of a line in the sūtra.

The one Yogācāra text he cites is the *Madhyāntavibhāga*.[749] The passage cited by Fazang, half a line and some of the commentary, explicates emptiness as the absence of the grasper and what is grasped.[750] The context for this citation is the *Heart Sūtra's* line "all dharmas are characterized by emptiness."[751] It turns out that this Yogācara treatise is a very appropriate source for discussing this line: the verse cited by Fazang is introduced by the question "How is one to understand the characteristic of emptiness?"[752] While Fazang does not cite this introductory comment, it seems likely that this comment was what made this line especially relevant to him. In other words, just as with the citation of the *Treatise on the Ten Stages*, what led Fazang to cite the *Madhyāntavibhāga* is a very specific resonance in its language.

This is also the case with two citations from Tathāgatagarbha texts that he adduces in commenting on the *Heart Sūtra*'s line "[dharmas] neither increase nor diminish, are neither defiled nor pure, neither increase nor diminish."[753] Fazang analyses this line from three perspectives: according to stages of the path, as applied to dharmas, as objects of contemplation.[754] In the first of these, he explains the three elements in the sūtra's line up as

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[747] T33, no. 1712, p. 553a20-25.

[748] 「依《寶性論》云，空亂意菩薩有三種疑。一、疑空異色，取色外空。今明色不異空，以斷彼疑。二、疑空滅色，取斷滅空。今明色即是空，非色滅空，以斷彼疑。三、疑空是物，取空為有。今明空[*]即色是，不可以空取空，以斷彼疑。三疑既盡，真空自顯也。」(T33, no. 1712, p. 553a20-25). Note that I read the variant *jishi* 即是 instead of merely *ji* 即 at the location of the asterisk.

[749] *Zhongbian fenbie lun* 中邊分別論; T1599.

[750] 「《中邊論》云，「無二有此無，是二名空相」，言「無二」者，無能取、所取。有言，「有此無」者，有能取、所取。無是二、不二，名為空相。」(T33, no. 1712, p. 553b27-c1). For the original, see the verse at T31, no. 1599, p. 452b10-11 and commentary at p. 452b12-13.

[751] 「是諸法空相」(T08, no. 251, p. 848c9).

[752] 「云何應知空相？」(T31, no. 1599, p. 452b9).

[753] 「不生不滅，不垢不淨，不增不減」 (T33, no. 1712, p. 553c2).

[754] 「就位釋」(T33, no. 1712, p. 553c4 ff.); 「就法釋」 (p. 553c17 ff.); 「就觀行釋」 (p. 553c21 ff.)

corresponding to the stage of an ordinary being, to that of a practitioner on the path, and to that of a buddha. After expounding on these, he refers to the *Buddha Nature Treatise*.[755] He states that the text distinguishes three types of buddha nature: that of an ordinary being, that of a practitioner, and that of a buddha.[756] After his paraphrase, he notes: although buddha nature is singular, it is divided into three according to the stages. In this context, emptiness is the same. It too can be divided according to the stages."[757] Immediately after this, Fazang refers to the *Treatise on the Non-differentiation of the Dharma Realm*, which contains another version of the same structure.[758]

One last reference in Fazang's text is not to a scripture as such, but, interestingly, to the exegete and meditation master Zhiyi. He does so at the very end of his discussion of the core line of the sūtra (translated already above). Here, Fazang applies the text to the practice of meditation. He says:

> (4) We explain it in terms of meditation practice.
>
> First, contemplating that **form is emptiness** constitutes the practice of calming. Contemplating that **emptiness is form** constitutes the practice of contemplation. Since emptiness and form are nondual, [these two contemplations] appear in a single thought. Only this, the joint practice of calming and contemplation, is ultimate.
>
> Second, seeing that **form is emptiness** one realizes great wisdom and does not dwell in saṁsāra. Seeing that **emptiness is form** one realizes great compassion and does not dwell in nirvāṅa. Since form and emptiness are nondual, the mental states of compassion and wisdom are not different—the practice of non-abiding.
>
> Three, great master Zhiyi established the teaching of the three contemplations in a single thought based on the *Necklace Sūtra*: [759] (1) The contemplation of the provisional entering into emptiness—**emptiness is form**. (2) The contemplation of emptiness entering the provisional—**form is emptiness**. (3) The contemplation of the equality of emptiness and the provisional—form and emptiness are **not different**.[760]

Contrary to the widespread interpretation of Fazang as representing a rival school of interpretation to that of Zhiyi, in this passage Fazang apparently finds it appropriate to cite him as an authority. In the specific context of interpreting the phrases on the relation between

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[755] *Foxing lun* 佛性論; T1610. T33, no. 1712, p. 553c12-14.

[756] I have not been able to locate any such discussion in the treatise itself.

[757] 「佛性唯一，就位分三；今真空無異，亦就位分異。」(T33, no. 1712, p. 553c14-15).

[758] T33, no. 1712, p. 553c15-16. The passage in the treatise uses different language; see T31, no. 1626, p. 893a7-9.

[759] *Pusa yingluo benye jing* 菩薩瓔珞本業經; T1485. For a discussion of the importance of this text in Zhiyi's writings, see Swanson (1989: Chapter 3).

[760] 「四就觀行釋者有三，一、觀色即空以成止行，觀空即色以成觀行，空色無二，一念頓現，即止觀俱行，方為究竟。二、見色即空，成大智而不住生死；見空即色，成大悲而不住涅槃；以色、空境不二，悲、智念不殊，成無住處行。三、智者大師依《瓔珞經》立一心三觀義，一、從假入空觀，謂[*] 色即是空故；二、從空入假觀，謂空即是色故；三、空、假平等觀，謂色、空無異故。」(CBETA 2022.Q4, T33, no. 1712, p. 553b16-24) Note that I read the variant *se ji* 色即 instead of merely *ji* 即 at the location of the asterisk.

form and emptiness in the *Heart Sūtra* according to different meditative practices, Zhiyi's schema of the three contemplations is an appropriate source.

With these nine plus one textual references in Fazang's *Brief Commentary on the Heart Sūtra* we find the following: to some extent, the citations are (supposed to be) from texts conceptually related to the scripture at hand. When Fazang draws on other texts, he does not do so in order to bring in Buddhist doctrines from outside the *Heart Sūtra.* Rather, it is the sūtra itself or the flow of his exegesis that bring him to cite even passages from Tathāgatagarbha texts as relevant in expounding emptiness according to the Prajñāpāramitā. Note in this regard also what texts Fazang does *not* cite. One important scripture that he leaves completely unmentioned—I have not found even allusions—is the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra.* Even though he was a specialist in that text, he did not force it into his exposition of the *Heart Sūtra*.

The scope of the present project does not allow me to go through other commentaries in similar detail. That will have to await future efforts. What I will do here is report on what is found if one surveys Fazang's textual references in his other commentaries with a similar methodology. We will first stay in the context of emptiness teachings, looking at his *Commentary on the Twelve Gates Treatise*. This commentary is much longer than Fazang's treatment of the *Heart Sūtra.*

As I mentioned above, it is not always particularly fruitful to look at texts cited in the context of the standard thematic discussions if we wish to find what textual associations came naturally to the exegetes. These discussions, after all, are standardized, often lifted from commentaries on wholly different texts. On the other hand, since the exegetes often juxtapose different textual families in these broader doctrinal expositions, they end up giving us a lot of information about what texts the exegetes grouped together. As this requires a degree of granular attention to doctrinal context beyond the scope of this present project, I will leave such investigations for future work. My informal impression is that they categorize Yogācāra, Madhyamaka, and Tathāgatagarbha texts for the most part as modern Buddhologists would. This is in line with what we find when we look merely at the line-by-line commentaries. Fazang's use of textual references in his treatment of the *Twelve Gates Treatise* is scant, as his discussion is very dense and highly technical. Among his sources, the most significant are the following two:

- Nāgārjuna's *Verses on the Middle*
- The *Hundred Verses Treatise* (*Bailun* 百論)

There are some other texts that Fazang cites, but, as in his *Brief Commentary on the Heart Sūtra,* he does so in very specific contexts. For example, when discussing Nāgārjuna's reasons for composing the treatise, he cites a passage from the *Yogācārabhūmi* that explains the proper motivations for composing treatises.[761] One odd exception to this is his use of the *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṅa Sūtra*. Fazang cites this text three times in his line-by-line

[761] 「是瑜伽論菩薩造論六意之中。」(T42, no. 1826, p. 220a7-8). For the original, T30, no. 1579, p. 658, a11-17.

commentary when explicating the *Treatise*'s arguments.[762] Yet, we should note that, as above, these passages are all examples that help expound on dependent origination and emptiness. Fazang is not citing the *Mahāparinirvāṅa Sūtra* to bring in its teachings on buddha nature.

In his exposition on the *Heart Sūtra*, Fazang did not cite the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* at all. Here, he cites it once, giving the following verse:

> All dharmas are ultimately empty,
> Without even a hair's worth of characteristics.
> They are empty, indistinguishable,
> Just like space.[763]

Given the vast scope of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra,* it is no surprise that it includes verses appropriate to the topic of emptiness. As when he expounds the *Heart Sūtra*, he is not trying to force his *Avataṃsaka* specialization onto his interpretation of the *Twelve Gates Treatise.*

That Fazang draws on different texts in different contexts becomes clearer when we compare the references in the emptiness-centered texts just discussed with those in his commentaries on Tathāgatagarbha texts. Since his commentary on the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* does not include a line-by-line commentary, I will not treat it here. On the other hand, his *Commentary on the Sūtra on the Secret Ornament*, of which only the line-by-line exposition survives, is a useful source for our purposes.[764] Not counting texts such as the *Saṁdhinirmocana Sūtra*, which he cites a number of times to contrast it with the teachings of the *Secret Ornament*, his main sources in expounding this sūtra are the *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanāda Sūtra* and the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*.

Again, it is worth considering for a moment texts that he cites rarely or not at all. Again, he cites the *Avataṃsaka* but once.[765] Meanwhile, and more significantly, texts that were important in his exposition of the *Heart Sūtra* and *Twelve Gates Treatise* are wholly absent: as far as I can tell, he does not cite the *Verses on the Middle* or the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* at all.

Fazang's *Commentary on the Mahāyāna Treatise on the Non-differentiation of the Dharma Realm* is rich in textual references, citations, and allusions. It is therefore an especially

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[762] Fazang's first citation of the sūtra is at T42, no. 1826, p. 230b5-7. For the original, which he abridges quite heavily, see T12, no. 375, p. 843a4-7. The second place where he cites the sūtra is at T42, no. 1826, p. 222c12-15, where he paraphrases and abridges three passages that occur in close proximity in the sūtra, respectively at T12, no. 375, p. 775c19-20, p. 776a2, and p. 775c19-20. (I am somewhat uncertain about this third reference.) The third citation, this time a verbatim citation, occurs at T42, no. 1826, p. 220b24-25 with the original at T12, no. 375, p. 776a6-8

[763] 「經云。諸法畢竟空。無有毫末相。空無有分別。同若如虛空。」(T42, no. 1826, p. 216a11-13). The verse in the sūtra is at T09, no. 278, p. 558a10-11. Note a minor variant: whereas the sūtra reads "all dharmas are empty of a fundamental nature" 諸法本性空, Fazang reads "all dharmas are ultimately empty" 諸法畢竟空. A mistake that is easy to make with a memorized verse.

[764] *Dasheng miyan jing shu* 大乘密嚴經疏; X368. Apparently, this is another case where Fazang comments on a text that he had helped translate (Hamar 2007: 196 n. 9).

[765] I am not exactly sure about the passage in question. My best present understanding is that Fazang, in commenting on the vows made by bodhisattvas according to the sūtra, gives the three essential vows in Buddhism: to stop doing all evil, to do all good, and to save all living beings. Right after this, presumably with regard to the third of these, Fazang says "vast in the sense of limitless, as explained in the *Avataṁsaka*" 「度一切眾生。廣則無量。如華嚴說。」 (X21, no. 368, p. 141a11-12). (The passage in the sūtra on which Fazang comments does not include the word *guang* 廣; see T16, no. 681, p. 730b23-27.)

useful source for our present project. Evaluating his references as I have outlined above, we find that the following texts are especially important here:

- The *Ratnagotravibhāga*
- The *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanāda Sūtra*
- The *Awakening of Faith*
- The *Sūtra on Neither Increase Nor Decrease*[766]
- The *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*
- The *Mahāparinirvāṅa Sūtra*
- The *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*
- The *Buddha Nature Treatise*
- The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* – specifically the Chapter 20, "The Tathāgata's Arising from the Nature."[767]

Note that while some of these, especially the first three, are cited abundantly, others in this list are cited but a few times. For example, Fazang cites the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* but once, alluding to it once more. In line with the approach I outlined above, the reason I include it here is that both of those citations are pivotal to his arguments, bearing directly on his explication of the text at hand.[768]

Fazang's use of the the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* in this commentary is interesting. By calculating citations, this text would seem to be very important. However, many of those citations are of no particular import. Where they are connected to the topic at hand, Fazang picks verses from the text that deal with Tathāgatagarbha. It is worth noting in this regard that Fazang explicitly marks three of these as coming from the chapter, "The Tathāgata's Arising from the Nature."[769] Modern scholars see this text, which in its early history circulated independently, as one of the earliest texts in the Tathāgatagarbha genre and an important inspiration for the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*.[770]

One text has a rather ambiguous position in this commentary: the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha*. It is adduced a couple of times. At points, explicitly referring to Paramārtha's translation, Fazang uses it as a Tathāgatagarbha text, citing teachings on buddha nature and the dharmakāya.[771] Once, however, he groups it with the *Treatise Establishing Consciousness-only,* juxtaposed with Tathāgatagarbha texts.[772] We will see this text again as we turn to our final commentary: Fazang's *Comments on the Meaning of the Awakening of Faith*. There, he clearly uses it as fitting among the Tathāgatagarbha texts.

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[766] *Buzeng bumie jing* 不增不減經; T668. For a study and translation of this text, see Silk 2015.

[767] 「如來性起品」(T09, no. 278, p. 611b1 ff.); Skt. *Tathāgatotpattisaṃbhavanirdeśa*.

[768] His citation presumes that his readers know the sūtra, and ends with a quick abridged paraphrase of the entire text (T44, no. 1838, p. 71b13-16). For the original, see T16, no. 666, p. 457b28-c1. Fazang's allusion to the sūtra is at T44, no. 1838, p. 71c24-26, where he references its simile of the image in its cast at. For the original see T16, no. 666, p. 459a26 ff.

[769] 「如來性起品」(T09, no. 278, p. 611b1 ff.); Skt. *Tathāgatotpattisaṃbhavanirdeśa*.

[770] Zimmerman 2002: 54, 61, 65-67; Jones 2021: 160 n. 29. For a study and translation of this chapter, see Chien/Poceski 1993.

[771] T44, no. 1838, p. 66a27-b1 and p. 74c23-24. I have not yet been able to locate the original passages.

[772] *Cheng weishi lun* 成唯識論; T1585. The passage is at T44, no. 1838, p. 67c15-16.

In expounding the *Awakening of Faith*, Fazang cites and paraphrases and mentions many texts. When we pick out those that he deems appropriate to the text at hand, significant sources are:

- *The Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanāda Sūtra*
- The *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*
- The *Mahāyānasaṃgraha.*
- The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*
- *The Ratnagotravibhāga*
- The *Mahāparinirvāṅa Sūtra*

Three further texts that he uses more rarely but also associates with the teachings of the *Awakening of Faith* are the *Sūtra on Neither Increase Nor Decrease,* the *Sūtra of Golden Light*,[773] and the *Madhyāntavibhāga*. The first thing to note here is the overlap with the sources Fazang uses in expounding the *Secret Ornament Sūtra* and the *Treatise on the Non-differentiation of the Dharma Realm*. In contrast, relatively speaking, there is nearly no overlap with the Prajñāpāramitā/Madhyamaka commentaries. Fazang does cite, for example, the *Twelve Gates Treatise* and *Verses on the Middle*. But each is cited only once and is of no particular importance. Insofar as Fazang uses the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* in this commentary, it is within the framework of the text at hand. He is not interpreting *Awakening of Faith* via the lens of the *Avataṃsaka*. The latter is such a vast text, touching on such a range of Buddhist doctrines, that it has materials that can be used in any context.

This is the reason that doing a similar survey of sources used in expounding the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* would not prove fruitful: all the various scriptures the scholiasts studied were adduced in the explication of that sūtra. What sets the study of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* apart from other fields of study in Sui-Tang scholasticism is not the sources on which it rests, but a series of tropes and exegetical motives. This is how we are best to make sense of what is often framed as "Huayan doctrine." But that argument will have to be put aside for now.

This survey of Fazang's doxographical schemata and his sources across his various commentaries has shown that these elements were highly sensitive to context. Just as Powers pointed out is the case with some modern authors such as Sartre and suggests is the case with Indian exegetes—coincidentally his example is Jñānaprabha—Fazang offers different presentations depending on the scripture on which he was lecturing or writing. He would "switch hats" as he moved from expounding one type of scripture to the next. If my argument thus far has succeeded, I have shown that this is the case with Fazang. What I have not yet shown is that these "hats" were in some sense stable traditions around given scriptures. That requires looking at works by a variety of exegetes and showing that significant aspects of their commentaries on a given scripture use the same range of sources and/or interpretative tropes as others in the same context. As presenting a full-fledged survey is beyond the scope of this present work, I offer some preliminary explorations, including first a quick look at Tankuang's commentarial oeuvre and then brief forays into individual works by several other exegetes.

[773] *Jin guangming jing* 金光明經; T664.

Tankuang's Trajectory

Although not known other than via manuscripts that survived in Dunhuang, Tankuang provides another interesting case. In Chapter 2 I already cited his brief autobiographical note describing the course of his studies. There, he says:

> First, in my native village, I focused on the *Treatise Establishing Consciousness-only* and the *Abhidharmakośa*. Later, having travelled to the capital Chang'an, I directed my attention to the *Awakening of Faith* and the *Vajra Sūtra*.[774]

As it happens, his surviving compositions all fall within these fields. He wrote a commentary on the *Vajra Sūtra* and the *Awakening of Faith*. Though he did not write directly on the *Treatise Establishing Consciousness-only*, he did produce two commentaries on the *Mahāyāna Treatise on the Hundred Dharmas*, a text translated by Xuanzang: the *Notes to Open up the Doctrine of Clear Introduction to the Mahāyāna Treatise on the Hundred Dharmas* and the *Explanation to Open up the Doctrine of Clear Introduction to the Mahāyāna Hundred Dharmas Treatise*. He also wrote a commentary on his own preface to the former as well as a commentary on *The Gradual Path to Awakening in the Mahāyāna* by Zhizhou 智周 (668-723).[775]

If we start with this latter field, focusing only on the former treatise, we see that Tankuang indeed clearly associates *Treatise on the Hundred Dharmas* with the *Treatise Establishing Consciousness-only*. In both of his commentaries on the former he relies heavily on the latter. Moreover, in the *Explanation to Open up the Doctrine of Clear Introduction to the Mahāyāna Hundred Dharmas Treatise*, he also draws explicitly on the *Commentary on the Treatise Establishing Consciousness-only* (*Weishi shu* 唯識疏),[776] which I take to be Kuiji's *Explicating Comments on the Treatise Establishing Consciousness-only*.[777] Other important sources from which he draws are as follows:

- The *Treatise on the Sūtra on the Buddhas' Abode*
- The *Abhidharmakośa*
- The *Yogācārabhūmi*
- The *Abhidharmasamuccaya*[778]
- The *Abhidharmasamuccayavyākhyā*[779]
- The *Mahāvibhāṣā śāstra*[780]
- The *Treatise Proclaiming the Sage's Teaching*[781]
- The *Mahāyāna Treatise on the Five Aggregates*[782]

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[774] 「初在本鄉切唯識俱舍。後遊京鎬專起信金剛。」(T85, no. 2812, p. 1068a10-11).

[775] *Dasheng rudao cidi* 大乘入道次第; T1846. Tankuang's commentary is called *Opening and Determining the Gradual Path to Awakening in the Mahāyāna* (*Dasheng rudao cidi kaijue* 大乘入道次第開決; T2823).

[776] T85, no. 2812, p. 1085a21.

[777] *Cheng weishi lun shuji* 成唯識論述記; T1830. In Chengguan's writings, it is clear that *Weishi shu* 唯識疏 refers to Kuiji's work. See, for example, his citation at T36, no. 1736, p. 95a15-17, which abridges Kuiji's comments at T43, no. 1830, p. 230b15-25. See also Chengguan's citation at T36, no. 1736, p. 99c20-27, which corresponds to Kuiji's text at T43, no. 1830, p. 252a29-b6.

[778] *Dasheng apidamo ji lun* 大乘阿毘達磨集論; T1605.

[779] *Dasheng apidamo zaji lun* 大乘阿毘達磨雜集論; T1606.

[780] *Apidamo da piposha lun* 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論; T1545.

[781] *Xianyang shengjiao lun* 顯揚聖教論; T1602.

[782] *Dasheng wuyun lun* 大乘五蘊論; T1612; *Pañcaskandhaka-prakaraṅa*.

We note immediately that these are all texts translated by Xuanzang. With the exception of *Abhidharmakośa,* they are all concerned with Yogācāra doctrine.

This is also how Tankuang categorizes the text in his doxographical discussion at the beginning of the *Notes to Open up the Doctrine of Clear Introduction to the Mahāyāna Treatise on the Hundred Dharmas*.[783] There, he first gives a threefold division: heretics, Hīnayāna Buddhist teachings, and Mahāyāna teachings. After a brief discussion of the different Hīnayāna schools, Tankuang distinguishes two Mahāyāna schools.[784] His brief summary of the first, what we would call Madhyamaka, says:

> First, the tenet [that holds that] in the ultimate meaning, all is empty. This consists of such treatises as the *Twelve Gates Treatise,* the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, the *Prajñā Lamp Treatise,*[785] and the *Mahāyāna Treatise on the Jewel in the Hand*,[786] which based themselves on [sūtras such as] the *Prajñāpāramitā* in explaining that dharmas are empty and do not go beyond the two truths.[787]

This school stands in contrast to what we would call Yogācāra, which Tankuang calls the tenet that applies logic to the perfect truth. As representative texts, he lists the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha,* the *Yogācārabhūmi, Treatise Proclaiming the Sage's Teaching,* [788] *Abhidharmasamuccayavyākhyā,* the *Treatise Establishing Consciousness-only*, and the *Madhyāntavibhāga*, which, he says, base themselves on the *Saṁdhinirmocana Sūtra*.[789] After his discussion of Madhyamaka and Yogācāra, in a move reminiscent of Fazang's discussions above, Tankuang adds on a third category of Mahāyāna teachings that speaks of the perfect fusion of the Dharma nature and is based on texts such as the *Awakening of Faith*.[790] Tankuang concludes his doxographical discussion stating that "this present treatise is included in the tenet that applies logic to the perfect and ultimate truth"—i.e., Yogācāra—and then explain briefly how the text fits into that category.[791]

Unlike Fazang who consistently let the scripture at hand come out on top of the doxographical scheme he discussed, Tankuang does not clearly mark this particular doctrine as the highest here. In the next thematic discussion, however, he does suggest so. This section, "revealing to what it belongs," places the text at hand within a series of rubrics: different divisions of the Buddhist canon, different vehicles, and the different periods of the buddha's teaching career.[792] The third of these he opens by saying that "the ancients have established various lists of teaching periods, from just one period to five. None of these can be completely

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[783] T85, no. 2810, p. 1047a1 ff.

[784] This starts at T85, no. 2810, p. 1047b28.

[785] Bhāvaviveka's *Prajñāpradīpamūlamadhyamakavṛtti; Bore deng lun* 般若燈論; 1566.

[786] *Dasheng zhang zhen lun* 大乘掌珍論; 1578. This is another text by Bhāvaviveka.

[787] 「一勝義皆空宗。即十二門論智度中百般若燈論掌珍論等。[13]依般若等無相空教。說一切法不離二諦。」(T85, no. 2810, p. 1047b29-c2).

[788] *Xianyang shengjiao lun* 顯揚聖教論; T1602.

[789] T85, no. 2810, p. 1047c12-14.

[790] T85, no. 2810, p. 1047c24-25.

[791] 「今此論者即大乘中應理圓實究竟宗收。」(T85, no. 2810, p. 1047c25-26).

[792] 「顯所歸」(T85, no. 2810, p. 1048a2).

proven. As this is very complicated, I do not explicate these here."[793] He then uses the schema found in the *Saṁdhinirmocana Sūtra*, which is the same as Śīlabhadra's seen above. Although he does not explicitly spell this out, within that schema the *Treatise on the Hundred Dharmas* would be at the highest level.

All of this might make it seem as though Tankuang was a Yogācāra scholar through and through, partial to the teachings handed down by Xuanzang. Yet, he wasn't. In expounding the *Treatise's* body he does stay within that particular framework, but like Fazang, he was a scholar of many hats—three, at least. While this emerges most clearly when we look across his commentaries, as we will do below, even within the *Notes to Open up the Doctrine of Clear Introduction to the Mahāyāna Treatise on the Hundred Dharmas* there are signs that his scope was much broader.

An interesting passage in this regard occurs in his discussion of the line introducing the first category of dharmas listed in the *Treatise.* While his root-text, in standard Yogācāra fashion, announces that there are eight consciousnesses, he notes that there are variant lists. This difference is one of fundamental doctrinal import, touching on fundamental conceptions of the nature of the mind—exactly the pivot between Yogācāra and Tathāgatagarbha. Tankuang, however, refrains from arbitrating between these perspectives, instead noting that they are context dependent. This is the passage:

> *Treatise:*
>
> 1: mind dharmas. There are eight kinds: [visual consciousness, auditory consciousness, olfactory consciousness, gustatory consciousness, tactile consciousness, mental consciousness, the manas consciousness, and the storehouse consciousness].[794]
>
> *To explain:*
>
> ()[795] The various teaching [systems] explain this, the mind dharma, in different ways. In the Hīnayāna and preliminary Mahāyana, when according with the situation, only six consciousnesses are taught. These, moreover, are held not to arise simultaneously, instead a single consciousness arises successively each moment. Sūtras such as the *Laṅkāvatāra* speak of nine consciousnesses, dividing the storehouse consciousness into two parts, pure and impure. The *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* has a total of twenty-one consciousnesses by combining the six consciousnesses with the faculties, objects, and consciousnesses.[796] Sūtras such as the *Saṁdhinirmocana* (, the *Abhidharma Sūtra*, and

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[793] 「言歸時者。古立教時多少不定。謂從一時乃至五時。皆無正據。恐繁不敘。」(T85, no. 2810, p. 1048a23-25).

[794] For context I am adding, in brackets, part of the original text that Tankuang does not cite here. (He cites and comments on it after this present comment.)「第一心法，略有八種：一眼識、二耳識、三鼻識、四舌識、五身識、六意識、七末那識、八阿賴耶識。」(T31, no. 1614, p. 855b20-22)

[795] I am leaving out a few phrases where Tankuang is signposting and telling the reader where in the treatise we are.

[796] Tankuang explains this statement in his *Explanation to Open up the Doctrine of Clear Introduction to the Mahāyāna Hundred Dharmas Treatise*, citing Aśvabhāva's commentary on the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* as translated by Xuanzang. See T85, no. 2812, p. 1075a24-b4.

the *Treatise Establishing Consciousness-only*) [797] establishes seven names for the different parts [of the storehouse consciousness]. The *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* explains a tenet that holds that there is only one consciousness—not distinguishing the former six consciousnesses [i.e., the visual, auditory, etc.], it speaks of only three [i.e., the perceptual consciousness, manas, and the storehouse consciousness].[798] [This is all to say that] these various teachings differ. Here, limiting ourselves to the substance [of the storehouse consciousness], we speak simply of eight consciousnesses, as the number in the various teachings can be expanded or contracted.[799]

The technical details of this discussion, fascinating though they are, need not concern us here. At present all I wish to point out is that within Tankuang's discussion of a Yogācāra text within a properly Yogācāra framework, he shows awareness that this is but one of several different systems. After this relativizing note, however, he goes right on expounding Yogācāra as taught in the texts translated by Xuanzang. In fact, in his discussion of the storehouse consciousness in the next passage of commentary Tankuang does mention as one of its three names "pure consciousness" (*amoluo* 阿末羅, Skt. **amalavijñāna*). [800] Importantly, however, this comment stays within the range of proper Yogācāra teachings, as he immediately adds that this only applies this consciousness in the case of buddhas.

What shows Tankuang's position as a participant in the general Tang dynasty Buddhist scholastic culture rather than a doctrinaire yogācārin more clearly are the thematic discussions that open *Notes to Open up the Doctrine of Clear Introduction to the Mahāyāna Treatise on the Hundred Dharmas*. For example, when he discusses different vehicles in his third section, he reports on various possible lists—ranging from one vehicle all the way up to five vehicles.[801] He does not evaluate these different accounts. Rather, as I read him, he understands them as alternate grids for classifying the teachings. His sources, therefore, are worthy of note. Without any hierarchical implications, he refers to the *Lotus Sūtra,* the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha,* the *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanāda Sūtra*, and the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*. Yet, what is most telling about this passage is that he marks it as an abbreviated version of the same explanation that he has given elsewhere. Moreover, it is that context, says Tankuang, that he has discussed how these different grids relate to each other.[802] The commentary to which Tankuang points is, notably, his work on the *Awakening of Faith*.

Tankuang's works on the *Awakening of Faith* form an extremely interesting counterpoint to his Yogācāra commentaries. He wrote two tracts on the text: the *Extensive Explanation of the Mahāyāna Treatise on the Awakening of Faith*[803] and the *Brief Commentary*

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[797] In square brackets I am supplying texts from Tankuangs subcommentary. See 「等即等取阿毘達磨經及唯識論。」 (T85, no. 2812, p. 1075b5-6). On the *Abhidharma Sūtra,* see Brunnhölzl (14-60).

[798] I remain unsure about the exact interpretation of this sentence. It seems to allude to the discussion in Aśvabhāva's commentary to the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* at T31, no. 1597, p. 339c21-29.

[799] 「論。第一心法略有八種　開曰。(…)謂此心法諸教異說。若小乘前及大乘中。隨轉理門但說前六。仍亦不許一念並生。故於見在隨起一識。楞伽經等開阿賴耶染淨二位說有九識。若攝大乘依前六識根境識三立十一識。深密等經於阿賴耶通分位立七種名。攝論所說一意識宗不開前六。但總說三。如是等教處處非一。今剋體說但有八種。諸教多少隨開合故。」(T85, no. 2810, p. 1050b16-26).

[800] T85, no. 2810, p. 1051b9-13.

[801] T85, no. 2810, p. 1048a14 ff.

[802] T85, no. 2810, p. 1048a20-21.

[803] *Dasheng qixin lun guang shi* 大乘起信論廣釋; T2814.

on the Mahāyāna Treatise on the Awakening of Faith.[804] Unfortunately, of the former work only fascicles 3, 4, and 5 have survived while, presumably, the first fascicle of that work would have contained the discussion to which he refers in commenting on the *Hundred Dharmas*. The *Brief Commentary*, meanwhile, contains only two very brief thematic discussions. Tankuang discusses the "intention for the composition" of the *Awakening of Faith* as well as its "tenet and purport."[805] Nothing in those sections betrays his background in Yogācāra studies. He offers a standard exposition of the *Awakening of Faith.*

Indeed, in terms of its content, Tankuang's commentaries on the *Awakening of Faith* teach a Tathāgatagarbha perspective. What is more, in doing so it engages scholarship that had grown around the text. Japanese scholars have already long ago pointed out that in these commentaries, Tankuang draws from the relevant commentary by Fazang, and also engages Wŏnhyo's commentary.[806] Tabulating Tankuang and Fazang's scriptural sources, Hirai Yūkei points out that not only do they share a fair number of sources, Tankuang sometimes gives exactly the same citation.[807] If we look at what sources Tankuang uses specifically to explicate the text at hand, as I have above, we find the following texts featuring prominently:

- The *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*
- The *Ratnagotravibhāga*
- The *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanāda Sūtra*
- The *Mahāparinirvāṅa Sūtra*
- The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*
- The *Sūtra of Golden Light*

He also uses, if more rarely, the *Sūtra on Neither Increase Nor Decrease* and the *Sūtra of Golden Light*. The texts Tankuang naturally associates with the *Awakening of Faith* are exactly the same texts as Fazang uses.

At the same time, I should note that Tankuang does draw on Abhidharma and Yogācāra sources quite significantly in this context, citing such texts as the *Mahāyānābhidharmasamuccayavyākhyā,* the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha, the Yogācārabhūmi,* and the *Treatise Establishing Consciousness-only*. However—and this is crucial—he does so not to frame the *Awakening of Faith* within their doctrines. Rather, Tankuang uses them to clarify technical terminology that the treatise uses in its technical discussions of the mind and its functions against the backdrop of its Tathāgatagarbha orientation.

This divergence in Tankuang's use of sources becomes all the more poignant if we compare the sources in the previous sets of commentaries to his scriptural references in his *Commentary on the Purport of the Vajra Prajñā Sūtra*.[808] Tathāgatagarbha texts such as the *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanāda Sūtra,* the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, the *Mahāparinirvāṅa Sūtra,* the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra,* or *Ratnagotravibhāga* are either not mentioned at all or play a very minor role. Similarly, Abhidharma and Yogācāra texts play no significant role. Insofar as they are cited, this is because of very specific cues in the sūtra itself. For example, he does cite the

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[804] *Dasheng qixin lun lüe shu* 大乘起信論略述; T2813.

[805] 「初造意者」(T85, no. 2813, p. 1089b1); 「明宗趣者」 (T85, no. 2813, p. 1089b13).

[806] Hirai: 1976. I gratefully acknowledge Jackson Macor's kind help in understanding this article.

[807] Hirai 1976: 82-83.

[808] *Jin'gang bore jing zhi zan* 金剛般若經旨贊; T2735.

Mahāyānābhidharmasamuccayavyākhyā, but only for its specific comments on the meaning of *vajra* when he explains the sūtra's title.[809] In a similar vein, while Tankuang does cite the *Yogācārabhūmi* a few times, he does so for its explanation of the twelve links of dependent origination, for a discussion of dustmotes (which figure prominently in the *Vajra Sūtra*), and for its instructions on the patient bearing of abuse. The latter topic is relevant in the context of the sūtra's story about how King Kaliṅga tortured the Buddha in his past life.[810]

It turns out, however, that this last citation from the *Yogācārabhūmi* seems to be a false attribution.[811] For our present purposes, this is most revealing. As with the *Awakening of Faith*, it turns out that Tankuang is drawing on work by earlier exegetes' commentaries on the *Vajra Sūtra*. The citation form the *Yogācārabhūmi* is also given by Daoyin, in exactly the same location, in his commentary on the *Vajra Sūtra*, if slightly more ambiguously, as coming from the *Bodhisattva Stages*.[812] That citation, possibly, was intended to refer to the *Sūtra on the Bodhisattva Stages,* a precursor to parts of the *Yogācārabhūmi*.[813] Indeed, in that text, we find the passage cited by Daoyin and Tankuang.[814] It seems likely that Tankuang based his citation on Daoyin's, mistakenly assuming that the reference was to the *Yogācārabhūmi*. This is all the more likely given that this is not the only place where Tankuang's commentary runs parallel to Daoyin's: close comparison of the two commentaries, as Hirai has shown, reveals that Tankuang must have been consulting Daoyin's text. [815]

This, however, is not where the story of the *Yogācārabhūmi* citation ends. Daoyin, on his turn, was not original in using this passage either. According his biography, Daoyin too wrote on a range of scriptures, penning a Yogācāra treatise as well as a commentary on the *Lotus Sūtra*.[816] Yet, just like Fazang and Tankuang, when he comments on the *Vajra Sūtra,* he operates in its specific context. The present citation is a case in point as its use in this context goes back (at least) to Kuiji.[817] In commenting on a given scripture, one would not only use appropriate doxographies and relevant sources, but would also rely on previous exegetes' explanations. These, of course, are not wholly different issues: the answer to what sources count as relevant is partly determined by tradition, as we will see momentarily.

In treating Tankuang's *Commentary on the Purport of the Vajra Prajñā Sūtra* I have thus far pointed only to sources he does not cite, cites but a few times, and/or cites in relatively unimportant situations. When we turn to the sources that he is predisposed to cite, we find that he mainly and overwhelmingly cites from Vasubandhu's *Commentary on the Vajra Sūtra.*[818] Two other sources that he also cites as appropriate to the text at hand, if less often,

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[809] T85, no. 2735, p. 68a2-15.
[810] T85, no. 2735, p. 93a9-18. The sūtra passage is at T08, no. 235, p. 750b14 ff.
[811] Searches in the text and specifically in the 42nd fascicle, which includes the chapter on patience, yield no meaningful results.
[812] T85, no. 2733, p. 24b12-16.
[813] *Pusa dichi jing* 菩薩地持經; T1581.
[814] T30, no. 1581, p. 918b28-c2.
[815] Hirai 1976: 73, 89 n. 3.
[816] T50, no. 2061, pp. 734c29-735a1.
[817] T40, no. 1816, p. 750c1-6.
[818] The *Treatise on the Vajra Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra; Jin'gang bore boluomi jing lun* 金剛般若波羅蜜經論; T1511. See Harrison (2023: 168).

are also Indic commentaries on the sūtra: those by Asaṅga and Guṇadatta.[819] That it would be these sources, so clearly aligned with the *Vajra Sūtra*, that Tankuang would cite is already interesting.

But what is more, in using these texts to expound on the *Vajra Sūtra*, Tankuang followed long-established practice. In Jizang's *Commentary on the Meaning of the Vajra Sūtra*, for example, many texts are cited. [820] Generally he names the text he cites, but when he refers to Vasubandhu's commentary, he consistently uses the phrase "the *Treatise* says" (*lun yun* 論云). Jizang also cites, Vajrasena's treatise, though much less often. Kuiji too relies heavily on Vasubandhu's exposition when he himself expounds the sūtra. Daoyin as well cites extensively from the Indic commentaries, though he seems to rely more on Asaṅga's text than Vasubandhu.[821] It is to that text that Daoyin refers to with the phrase "the *Treatise* says" (*lun yun* 論云). Clearly, then, there was an understanding that these texts were particularly appropriate in explicating the *Vajra Sūtra.*

While it is tempting to follow this path and trace out in more detail the pool of texts associated with the *Vajra Sūtra* across different exegetes' works, I will leave this to future work. Instead, I will comment briefly on the doctrinal aspects of Tankuang's exposition of the *Vajra Sūtra*. As we should expect by now, Tankuang's commentary operates within the doctrinal parameters of the sūtra. In negative terms, we find no treatment of tathāgatagarbha or pure mind, nor of mind-only, or the *ālayavijñāna* and such. Though Tankuang's thematic discussions do not include a doxography that puts the sūtra in the context of the Buddhist canon as a whole, his framing of the text in his discussion of the "origin of this teaching" and its "tenet and the purport" is revealing.[822] In the former, Tankuang starts by stating that "on the whole, sūtras and treatises have these four intentions: (1) pulling beings out of suffering; (2) bringing them happiness; (3) inspiring them to practice; and (4) helping them to reach the fruition."[823] Under the first two headings, he states how by leading beings to understand emptiness (for which he uses phrases alluding to the sūtra) they can transcend suffering and attain happiness, respectively. Under the third heading, Tankuang draws on Asaṅga's commentary which lists six goals of the sūtra: (1) severing confusion; (2) inspiring confident understanding; (3) coming to a deep understanding of the doctrine; (4) not retreating; (5) bringing delight; and (6) ensuring that the Dharma remains for a long time.[824] In his brief comment thereon, Tankuang of course affirms that the *Vajra Sūtra* fulfills all these aims. The most interesting comment, however, is in the discussion of how the *Vajra Sūtra* brings beings to buddhahood. Here, he cites Guṇadatta commentary saying "the Buddha's teachings all belong to either of the two truths: conventional truth and ultimate truth."[825] Tankuang goes on to comment on the two truths in his own words, consonant with (Sinitic) presentations of Madhyamaka, portraying this understanding as the essence and ultimate aim of the Buddha's

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[819] Asaṅga's commentary is also called the *Treatise on the Vajra Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra; Jin'gang bore boluomi jing lun* 金剛般若波羅蜜經論; T1510b.

[820] *Jin'gang bore jing yi shu* 金剛般若經義疏; T1699.

[821] Referring to T1510a/b.

[822] 「初敘教興」(T85, no. 2735, p. 67a10); 「顯宗趣者」 (T85, no. 2735, p. 67b21).

[823]「依經及論。總開四義。一為拔苦。二為與樂。三令起行。四令得果。」(T85, no. 2735, p. 67a10-11).

[824] T25, no. 1510a, p. 759a24-26 / T25, no. 1510b, p. 768a16-19.

[825] 「論云佛所說法。咸歸二諦。一者俗諦。即人及法差別假相。二者真諦。」(T85, no. 2735, p. 67b8-10). For the original, see T25, no. 1515, p. 887a15.

teaching.[826] In short, insofar as he tells us in his commentary on the *Vajra,* Tankuang here portrays its teachings on emptiness as the highest.

As with Fazang, these different presentations of the Buddhist teachings do not track Tankuang's chronological development. According to his report on his studies, he first studied Abhidharma and Yogācāra*,* and then the *Awakening of Faith* and the *Vajra Sūtra*. If we follow Pachow's dating, Tankuang wrote his commentaries in the reverse order.[827] He first wrote his commentary the *Vajra Sūtra* (between 756-764), followed soon by his two commentaries on the *Awakening of Faith* (both by 762). Finally, he wrote his commentary on Zhizhou's outline of the path (before 774), then the two texts on the *Hundred Dharmas Treatise* (before 774). His commentary on the preface of the longer of those is dated to 781. This may give the impression that Tankuang over time found his way back to the Yogācāra materials, but we should note two things. First, his commentaries on the *Awakening of Faith* and the *Vajra Sūtra* are in close proximity, possibly overlapping. More importantly, in the same period as his Yogācāra commentaries, when he was residing at Dunhuang, he composed a text called *Twenty-two Questions on the Mahāyāna,* which Pachow surmises was written at the request of the Tibetan King Khri-srong-lde-tsan (second half of the 8th century).[828] In this text, which Pachow dates to 781-786, Tankuang goes against "orthodox" Yogācāra teachings, by denying the validity of the gotra theory and teaching universal buddha nature,[829] as well as by equating the *ālayavijñāna* with the *tathāgatagarbha* in line with the teachings of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* and the *Awakening of Faith*, citing explicitly the *Sūtra on the Secret Ornament*.[830] Tankuang, while steeped and versed in the teachings of Yogācāra texts, was not beholden to those teachings.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have taken two Tang dynasty Buddhist scholiasts, Fazang and Tankuang, and shown that throughout their respective careers, they studied different domains of Buddhist scriptural knowledge and preached on a variety of scriptures. In doing so, they stayed within the philosophical context of the given scripture, celebrating its teachings as the highest, consulting works of exegetes who had written on it, and citing sources appropriate to the text. Exegesis, as I have stressed, is performative. Even while scholiasts might specialize in certain fields, they shared a broad base of knowledge *and* they could move between different fields. Thus, Fazang was not a Huayan scholar who gave a Huayan interpretation of the *Heart Sūtra* and the *Awakening of Faith*. Tankuang was not a Faxiang follower who wrote a Yogācāra interpretation of the *Awakening of Faith* and the *Vajra Sūtra*. Both were broadly trained scholiasts capable of engaging different scriptures within their proper intellectual context.

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[826] T85, no. 2735, p. 67b8-19.

[827] Pachow 1979: 28-32.

[828] *Dasheng ershi'er wen ben* 大乘二十二問本; T2818. See Pachow 1979: 32-43.

[829] This is the topic of the eighteenth question in the text, see T85, no. 2818, pp. 1188c4-1189b20. Summarized by Pachow (1979: 53-54). Note that Tankuang explicitly says at the end of this section that the *Lotus Sūtra* is more authoritative than the *Saṁdhinirmocana Sūtra*. Ironically, the phrase he uses at the very end of the text to say that the teaching that there are three vehicles is merely provisional is associated with Xuanzang's translations (*sui zhuan li men* 隨轉理門).

[830] This is the topic of the eighteenth question in the text, see T85, no. 2818, p. 1190b14-c11. Summarized by Pachow (1979: 56-57). At the end of this section, Tankuang is explicit that he does not follow the teachings of the *Treatise on Establishing Consciousness-only* here.

In Chapter 1 I mentioned briefly that one of the problems that besets the study of Sui-Tang exegetes is the framework of different schools (*zong* 宗) of East Asian Buddhism. While it has been pointed out that such narratives rest on developments later and elsewhere—in the Song and in Japan, that is—they have remained the implicit understanding when scholars approach the scholastic literature. Thinking of Sui-Tang scholasticism as made up of different fields of study around different (sets of) scriptures, as I have suggested here, allows for an account of the prehistory of these schools. The doctrinal schools, even sects, of later East Asian Buddhist history—such as Huayan, Faxiang, and Sanlun—were inventions based on what in the Tang were merely subtraditions that had grown around sets of scriptures. While in the Tang, certain exegetes were surely drawn more to this or that scripture, specialization was rarely if ever fully exclusive. The articulations of a sūtra's teachings, including interpretative grids and hermeneutic moves, that exegetes used in the context of a given scripture were not, for the most part, doctrines which they professed regardless of context.

I say "for the most part" as it does seem that there were several fault-lines which exegetes generally did not cross. Although Tankuang seems to be somewhat of an exception to this, my general impression is that these concern controversial issues that were introduced with Xuanzang's translations: one either believed in the mind's fundamental purity or not; one either believed in universal buddha-nature or the theory of five gotras, and, relatedly, one either believed there to be one vehicle or three. These questions, however, did not determine whether one engaged with that corpus of texts. For example, while Chengguan did not compose commentaries on Yogācāra texts, he was clearly versed in the *Treatise Establishing Consciousness-only,* as we can see in extended discussions based on this text embedded in his *Commentary* and *Subcommentary.*[831] Although I have not looked at it extensively, Kuiji's commentary on the *Lotus Sūtra* seems to be another case in point: while he insists on a reading of the sūtra that is consonant with gotra theory, he shows that he is well versed in the sources for its study, including works by previous exegetes.

Much more work remains to be done to flesh out what these fields consisted of and how individual exegetes interacted with them. With Fazang and Tankuang we saw that there was a pool of sources that both associated with Tathāgatagarbha scriptures. Did all exegetes who worked on such scriptures draw from this same pool? Also, what scriptures did they group together. The Tathāgatagarbha texts make an intuitive group also for modern scholars. Things are a little less obvious with Madhyamaka/Prajñāpāramitā materials. The two texts in that realm by Fazang draw on texts that we would expect. However, while we would class the *Vajra Sūtra* with those texts, the Chinese exegetes seem to associate it with a different pool of sources.[832] We might see if this holds up beyond the commentaries which I have consulted. Along the same lines, we could look what other scriptures inspired their own fields. With regard to individual exegetes, we might ask on how many different scriptural fields an exegete would typically lecture and/or write commentaries over the course of his career. In Tankuang's case, we find three fields. These correspond to his course of study as reported in his

[831] See, e.g., the lengthy passage starting at T36, no. 1736, p. 244c13. In this scroll, he cites the *Treatise* multiple times, often immediately followed by "to explain this" (*shiyue* 釋曰), marking Chengguan's own paraphrase in more standard Chinese (!).

[832] Tankuang does not seem to be exceptional in not making significant use of Prajñāpāramitā/Madhyamaka sources such as the *Larger Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* and the *Verses on the Middle* in explaining the *Vajra Sūtra*, as an informal search through Daoyin's commentary shows.

autobiographical note. Is this also the case if we compare the output of other exegetes with their range of commentaries? To answer such questions, surveys at once more comprehensive and detailed, looking across both different exegetes and scriptures, are needed.

Appendix A: Chengguan on "Thus have I heard"

The passage translated below is Chengguan's discussion of the phrase "thus have I heard" in his *Commentary* and *Subcommentary.*

The Chinese text for the *Commentary* can be found at T35, no. 1735, p. 529a6-b24; that of the *Subcommentary* at T36, no. 1736, pp. 129c9-133a17.

Commentary:

[p529a] Now we have come to the first of those [ten items in the sūtra's introduction]: "Thus have I heard." It means, "I once personally heard the teachings of such a sūtra from the Buddha." In this regard, the *Treatise on the Sūtra on the Buddhas' Abode* says, "The transmitter of the Buddha's teachings says, 'These things are what I have heard in the past.' The word 'thus' is explained as having four senses. First, in the sense of a comparison. Second, in the sense of instruction. Third, as the answer to a question. Fourth, as a confirmation."[833] This is [explained] in full in that treatise. There are other explanations too, but their meanings do not differ from these. This entire phrase constitutes both the "confirmation" and "that it was heard."

Subcommentary:

[p129c] *Commentary:* "I once personally heard…" The *Commentary* consists of two parts. First it introduces the older explanations. Next it clarifies what we accept and reject. Within the first, there are again two: first a general explanation of the [words of this] "faithful hearing" and next a separate explanation. Within the former, there are two parts. First, it gives a general explanation. Second, we explain the words "thus…" as having four senses.

First, "in the sense of a comparison: as when we say 'he is thus rich as Vaiśravaṅa.'"[834] [In other words,] the Dharma, thus transmitted and heard, was spoken by the Buddha. In that way, what the Buddha spoke is parallel to Vaiśravaṅa while what I am now transmitting is like the wealthy person. So, the Buddha's speaking is parallel to Vaiśravaṅa. My transmission now is parallel to the wealthy person. In this way [the text] is comparable to the Buddha speaking.

There is also an explanation that says, "Thus are the words like I heard them in the past."[835] In this sense, what was heard in the past is compared to what is heard in the present. In that way, it is said to be used in the sense of a comparison.

In that vein, there is an explanation of "thus" that says: When two dharmas are alike, that is called "like" (*ru* 如). When a single dharma is without fault, this is called "correct" (*shi* 是). To be alike is to be comparable.

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[833] T26, no. 1530, p. 291, c8-11. Cp. Keenan's translation (2002: 5).
[834] Citing T26, no. 1530, p. 291c11-12.
[835] 「謂當所說如是文句，如我昔聞。」(T26, no. 1530, p. 291c23).

Commentary: "Second, in the sense of an instruction." That is to say, "Listen thus to what I have once heard."[836] That is, this is the instruction of the transmitter of the Dharma [i.e. Ānanda]. Or one might say that it is the instruction of the Buddha. That is to say, "Thus is what was said by our Buddha. Listen carefully." It is as when people say, "You should recite thus a sūtra or treatise."[837]

Commentary: "Third, as the answer to a question." "That is to say, the assembly asks, 'What you are about to say now, is that truly what you have once heard [from the Buddha]?' In response there is the answer, 'Thus I have heard.'"[838]

Commentary: "Fourth, in the sense of assent." "That is, at the council the assembly of bodhisattvas made this request, 'You ought to speak as you heard it [from the Buddha].' The bodhisattva who transmits the teachings then assents, saying, 'I will speak thus. I will speak according to what I have heard.'"[839]

[It is as when one says,] just as I have heard, "I shall contemplate thus, I shall act thus, I shall speak thus, and so forth."[840]

Further, assent [can also mean] "that one can have faith that a given matter is thus. That is, 'Regarding such a dharma, I have heard in the past that it is thus. It is to be explained in this way and certainly not otherwise.'[841]

[p130a1] It is with these four senses that all sūtras start with "thus I have heard." These four senses all are all present in the general meaning [of the phrase given] above. It has no other senses.

Commentary: "There are other explanations too, but their meanings do not differ from the above." In the *Edited Notes*, nine senses are distinguished. It gets the first meaning by counting the overall meaning as the first sense. Next, it uses the four discussed above. In that way it gets to five. For the sixth, it takes the second explanation of "assent" that says "that one has confidence that one can say that something is thus" as the sixth meaning. However, this is a second explanation of the fourth sense, "assent," given by master Great Vehicle [i.e., Kuiji]; not a separate meaning. Even if it has a different explanation, it is overall the same as "assent."

Further, it takes the seventh explanation from the Guṅadatta's *Treatise*, which says: "'Thus I have heard' shows that this sūtra was realized and expounded by the Buddha, the World Honored One, and not made by oneself."[842] However, this is really the same as the overall meaning of the *Treatise on the Sūtra on the Buddhas' Abode.*

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[836] T26, no. 1530, p. 291c23-24.
[837] T26, no. 1530, p. 291c12-13.
[838] The original passage is at T26, no. 1530, p. 291c21-22.
[839] For the original, see T26, no. 1530, p. 291c16-19.
[840] For the original, see T26, no. 1530, p. 291, c14-15.
[841] For the original, see T26, no. 1530, p. 291c19-20.
[842] T25, no. 1515, p. 887a24-25.

For the eighth, it cites Tripiṭaka Master Long Ear's explanation based on the Three Jewels. When Dharma master Great Vehicle [i.e., Kuiji] uses this, he does so to explain "thus" on its own. It is to be cited below.[843]

The ninth is drawn from Dharma master Yun of the Liang dynasty, who said "when one is to transmit some Dharma that was heard, one should first present this passage that says, 'Thus a sūtra-teaching was heard by me from the Buddha.'" This too is fully identical with the *Treatise on the Sūtra on the Buddhas' Abode*'s general meaning.

Commentary:

[p529a] As for the detailed explanation, we first explain "thus" as the establishing of faith.

The *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* says: "Faith is the means by which one enters the great sea of the Buddhadharma; wisdom is the means by which one crosses [to the other shore]. The faithful say, 'This matter is thus.' The nonbelievers say, 'This matter is not thus.'"[844]

In that vein, Sengzhao says, "'Thus' signifies faith. With faith one accords with the principles that are spoken. When one accords [with the principles], the path of the teacher and the student is accomplished. The sūtras [by themselves] are not strongly bound; if there is no faith, they are not transmitted. Therefore, it is said 'thus.'"[845]

Subcommentary:

[p130a] *Commentary*: "In that vein, Sengzhao said…" The explanation by Sengzhao that follows simply uses the intent of the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*; it does not have a different principle. It is for that reason that the *Commentary* says, "In that vein Sengzhao said."

Further, there are those who expand Sengzhao's comment by saying "Faith is the access to the basis of the Dharma. Wisdom is the mysterious skill of the ultimate. With faith one complies with the principle that is spoken. When one complies, the path of the teacher and the student is accomplished. By means of faith one can follow the Dharma that is being spoken. By following [that Dharma] the two paths of speaking and listening, of the teacher and the student, are established."[846]

This, again, has been added by later people to the [explanations] of the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* and Sengzhao. Although there are more words, there is indeed no difference in meaning. Therefore, the commentary includes the different meanings while it establishes the detailed explanation. Although the meanings are the same, the words are

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[843] I remain doubtful about the translation of these two sentences. Chengguan does indeed take up Long Ear's explanation below (T36, no. 1736, p. 130, b21-28).

[844] This an abridged citation of the explanation of "thus" in the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* (T25, no. 1509, p. 63, a1-4). The full citation is given in the *Subcommentary.*

[845] T38, no. 1775, p. 328, a12-14.

[846] This addition occurs in several commentaries by Kuiji (T37, no. 1758, p. 331, b17-20; T33, no. 1695, p. 27, c18-21; T34, no. 1723, p. 662, a17-20).

different and on the surface they do not go together. [p130b] As the later people did not know the various traditions, they all came up with different explanations.

Commentary:

[p529a] There is also an explanation that says, "When the Sage expounds the Dharma, it is only to reveal thusness (*ru* 如). Only by being thusness (*ru* 如) is it correct (*shi* 是)." This is an explanation in terms of the truth (*li* 理) that is being expounded.

Subcommentary:

[p130b] *Commentary*: "There is also an explanation that says, 'when the Sage expounds the Dharma…'" Beginning here, we give explanations, going from the narrow to the most encompassing. This first position only focuses on "thusness" [*ru* 如]. This is the explanation of Liu Qiu, in his *Comments on the Sūtra of Immeasurable Meanings.*[847]

Commentary:

[p529a] Next there is Tripiṭaka Master Paramārtha who says, "That the truth does not contradict the mundane is called 'like.' That the mundane accords with the truth is called 'this.' Because of the nonduality of the truth and the mundane it says 'like this.'"[848] This is from the perspective that explains principle and phenomena.

As for the explanation "Such words were spoken by the Buddha," this only focuses on [the words] that explain [the truth].

Subcommentary:

[p130b] *Commentary*: "As for the explanation …" This is the explanation of Emperor Wu of the Liang.[849] This explanation explains both phenomena and principle from the sole perspective of [the words] that explain [the truth].

Commentary:

[p529a] Or some say, "'Like' signifies that the words correspond with principle. The mutual accord of words and principle is called 'like.' 'Right' [*shi* 是] signifies the absence of faults. This elucidates that [the teaching] speaks of phenomena in the way phenomena exist, and of truth in the way truth exists." This shows that ["thus"] shows that the teaching that is expounded is in accord with principle and phenomena.

Subcommentary:

[p130b] *Commentary*: "Or some say, "Like' signifies that the words correspond with principle...'" Both what expresses [the teaching] and what is expressed include phenomena

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[847] Liu Qiu did write a preface to the *Sūtra of Innumerable Meanings*, but I have been unable to ascertain where this explanation appears, if it does so at all (T55, no. 2145, p. 68, a9-c15).

[848] I have not been able to find the original source for this.

[849] I have not found an original text for this explanation. It does occur, along with its attribution to Emperor Wu, in other commentaries—e.g., one by Jizang (T34, no. 1721, p. 454, b13-14); one by Kuiji (T33, no. 1695, p. 27, b12-13); and one compiled by Liangben (T33, no. 1709, p. 436, b7-8).

and truth. Truth here means the patterns of reality, not just suchness. This is from Daosheng's explanation of the *Lotus Sūtra*.

Commentary: "This elucidates that [the teaching] speaks of phenomena in the way phenomena exist…" That is, in his explanation of the meaning, Huiyuan more or less draws from Daosheng's perspective on the Dharma. This means that Daosheng's is the same as Huiyuan's meaning. So, he [Huiyuan] says in full, "First, the explanation according to the Dharma: Ānanda related that what was spoken by the Tathāgata *as* [*ru* 如] all dharmas are. Therefore, it says 'like.' This elucidates that [the teaching] speaks of phenomena in the way phenomena exist, and of truth in the way truth exists. He spoke of causes in the way that causes exist, and of results in the way results exist. Words that accord with [*ru* 如] the Dharma correspond with truth and therefore it says 'thus.' Since what goes against the Dharma is called wrong, words that accord with the Dharma are said to be 'right' [*shi* 是]."[850] Although this is a lot of words, the words correspond to patterns of reality. In that way, he does not contradict Daosheng.

Commentary:

[p529a] Ronggong [i.e., Daorong] says, "'Thus' is the epitome of stimulus-response. 'Like' means according with propensities. 'Right' means being without fault. By being without fault, living beings become the stimulus. By according with situations, the Tathāgata responds. The sūtra is a verbal teaching that originates in the stimulus-response. Therefore, it says 'thus.' It fully accords with conditions."

Subcommentary:

[p130b] *Commentary*: "Ronggong says, "'Thus' is the epitome of stimulus-response." This is taking the word "like" as the Buddha's response and the word "right" as the stimulus from [beings'] propensities. Therefore, this is again more expansive than what came before.

[The statement] starting with "the sūtra brings about" onwards responds to an objection. It is feared that someone might object that *if 'like' is the affect and 'right' is the response, then why doesn't it say, 'by affect-response I have heard'?"* This [statement] is a response to that.

There are those who take this as being the explanation of the *Commentary on the Lotus* but really, in that commentary Liuqiu relies on the teaching of Ronggong.[851]

Commentary:

[p529a] The explanations above are each a single viewpoint. There are more explanations, but although their words differ, their meaning is the same.

Subcommentary:

[850] This passage is found in Huiyuan's 慧遠 (334 – 416) commentary on the *Nirvāṅa Sūtra* (T37, no. 1764, p. 616, a28-b3) and his commentary on the *Sūtra on Limitless Life* (T37, no. 1745, p. 92, c16-20).
[851] Indeed, a very similar passage is cited by Jizang as coming from a *Commentary on the Lotus,* which seems non-extant (*Zhufahua* 注法華; see Jizang: T34, no. 1721, p. 454, a26-28).

[p130b] *Commentary*: "The explanations above…" We come to the second part where we now clarify what we accept and reject. Herein, there are two parts. First, we continue the general overview. Then we come to the actual sifting through.

In terms for the former, [the *Commentary*] says ''There are more explanations, but although their words differ, their meaning is the same.'' For example, Tripiṭaka Master Long Ear explains it based on the Three Jewels, as follows. First, in terms of the Buddha: the buddhas of the three times speak similarly and without contradiction. Therefore, it is said to be "like." Because they speak similarly, it is "this." This is more or less similar to Emperor Wu['s explanation]. Second, the explanation in terms of the Dharma: the real characteristic of dharmas is not different throughout time. Therefore, it is said to be "like." Because it is the Tathāgata who speaks, it is "this." This is like Liuqui['s explanation that] when sages speak the Dharma, it is only in order to reveal thusness. Third, the explanation in terms of the Saṅgha: what Ānanda heard from the Buddha and what he transmits are not different. Therefore, it is "like." It is forever free from faults. Therefore, it is "right." This is the same as the overall meaning of the *Treatise on the Sūtra on the Buddha's Abode*. This is why [the *Commentary*] said "although their words differ, the intention is the same."

Further, Baogong explains it as dispelling five forms of slander. "First, with 'thus' the sūtra dispels the slander of having additions, i.e. attachment to existence. [p130c] Therefore, it says 'thus.' Second, with 'thus' the sūtra dispels the second slander of having parts subtracted, i.e. attachment to nonexistence. Third, with 'thus' the sūtra dispels the third slander of contradiction, i.e. attachment to both existence and nonexistence. Fourth, with 'thus' the sūtra dispels the fourth slander of non-delusion, i.e. attachment to neither existence nor nonexistence. Fifth, with 'thus' the sūtra dispels the fifth slander of non-elaboration that is attachment to the absence of neither existence nor nonexistence."[852] [Dispelling] these five forms of slander are wholly included in the words corresponding with principle [as explained by Daosheng and Huiyuan].

Further, Tripiṭaka Master Paramārtha has an explanation from the perspective of the two truths that dispels [attachment to] existence and nonexistence, then dispels [attachment to] both and to neither, and so forth. In that way it is not different from the previous explanation. Therefore, it said, "Although their words differ, their meaning is the same."

Although I have set forth a number of approaches, there are many further explanations. But, again, although their words may differ, their meaning is the same. As I am afraid there are too many, I will not set them forth.

Commentary:

[p529a] From the perspective of living beings' faith, it should be explained according to both the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* and the *Treatise on the Sūtra on the Buddhas' Abode.* When confronted with the "a" and "u" (of non-Buddhists),[853] it should be [explained] according to Paramārtha's explanation. [p529b] I will now elaborate on that. Non-

[852] I have been unable identify to the source of this explanation. It is quoted in other texts—e.g., by Kuiji (T38, no. 1772, p. 279, c1-6; T34, no. 1723, p. 663, a6-12; T33, no. 1695, p. 27, b8-10). Note that the last of these is heavily abridged. More significantly, only in the second one is it ascribed to Baogong. In the other two, Kuiji refers to the author of this explanation as 瑤公 *Yaogong.*

[853] Supplied according to the *Subcommentary.*

Buddhists say that “a” means nonexistence and “u” means existence. Although the myriad dharmas [indeed] do not go beyond existence and nonexistence, these [non-Buddhist views] are nihilistic or eternalistic. We now say that “like” means true emptiness and “this” means wonderful existence. Since there is no truth apart from the mundane, emptiness does not imply nihilism. Since there is no mundane apart from the truth, there is existence without eternalism. This is the refutation of false tenets in order to reveal the Middle Way. All the teachings [given by the Buddha] throughout his lifetime do not go beyond this. That is why it says “thus.”

When relying on the tenet of the *Avataṃsaka*, the unobstructed Dharma Realm is said to be “like” and just that this is without fault is “this.”

One should, according with the teaching-levels’ profundity, set forth “thus” in different ways.

Subcommentary:

[p130c] *Commentary*: “From the perspective of living beings’ faith…” Now we have come to the second part, the actual sifting through. Herein there are two parts. First, we affirm three general meanings. Then we ascertain the meaning according to the [*Avataṃsaka’s*] tenet.

The text between [the above cited passage and the following] can be understood [by itself]. [The *Commentary* says,] “When confronted with the “a” and “u” of non-Buddhists”: the *Treatise in One Hundred Verses* says, “Non-Buddhists affirm that “a” and “u” are auspicious.”[854] The *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* says, “In the past, Brahmā had 72 syllables that he taught to the world in order to transform living beings. Later, living beings’ merit decreased and so Brahmā swallowed 70 syllables, leaving one on each of his horns. These were ‘a’ and ‘u.”’[855] Also transcribed with different characters, these are light and heavy in Sanskrit.[856]

The rest [of the *Commentary*] is clear.

Commentary: “When relying on the tenet of the *Avataṃsaka*…” [Now we are] at the second part where we ascertain the meaning according to the [*Avataṃsaka’s*] tenet. This is explained from the perspective of [different levels of] teaching. The various teachings were dealt with above. Here we first present the perfect tenet.

Then [the *Commentary* says], “One should, according with the teaching-levels…” This is explained relying on the five teachings. As “thus” is a word that corresponds with principle, it reveals the two truths. In that regard, in the Hīnayāna, although persons and dharmas are both considered worldly truth, ultimate truth is understood to be the emptiness of persons. In the Preliminary Teaching, the four kinds of truth and convention stand in opposition. In the Final Teaching, the two characteristics of phenomena and principle, truth and convention fuse. This is how Paramārtha explained it. Four, in the Sudden Teaching truth and convention are

[854] I have been unable to locate anything to this effect in said text.
[855] Idem. And in fact, the only occurrences of similar explanations come after Chengguan.
[856] The different transcription Chengguan refers to here reads *ou* 嘔 instead of *you* 優 for the syllable “u.”

both forgotten. Only when words are obliterated and thought is let go does one mesh with principle.

It is like how the *Sūtra on Impermanence* [teaches] that it is by means of birth, old age, sickness, and death that one can arouse renunciation, and so forth.[857] In that way ["thus"] is said to be a word that corresponds with principle. Explanations different from this cannot be said to be correct. The other teachings can be understood.

Commentary:

[p529b] [We now explain] the second [part], "I have heard," which is the accomplishment of hearing. [This is said] when one wants to transmit something to those who haven't heard it before. If one has [heard] words but does not transmit them, then that is useless. [The real] value lies not in being able to speak, but in being able to transmit. Thus, we now explain "I have heard."

Subcommentary:

[p130c] *Commentary*: "[We now explain] the second [part], 'I have heard' which is the accomplishment of hearing." The *Commentary* now has three different parts. First it explains the meaning in general.

Commentary:

[p529b] "I" stands for Ānanda. "Heard" means to have heard personally.

Subcommentary:

[p130c] Next, "'I' stands for Ānanda…" This is the general explanation.

Commentary:

[p529b] *How can it speak of an "I"?* [Response:] It is a provisional appellation for the aggregates.

Subcommentary:

[p130c] Then [it says,] "*How can it speak of an 'I'?*..." Now we give a deeper explanation to resolve difficulties. Herein there are two parts: first, an explanation of "I" and "heard"; then an explanation of hearing. Within the former, we first adduce the explanation of "I" as an appellation for the aggregates, common to all teaching.

Commentary:

[p529b] *What kind of "hearing" is intended here?*

Subcommentary:

[p130c] Next, [in reply to] "*What kind of 'hearing' is intended here?*" we give a deeper explanation of "hearing." With both "I" and "hearing" we first adduce explanations.

Commentary:

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[857] I have not been able to establish which *sūtra* this refers to.

[p529b] Explained from the perspective of the teaching of Dharma characteristics [i.e., Abhidharma] of the Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna, there are three explanations. First, it is the ear that hears, not consciousness. Second, it is consciousness that hears, not the ear. Third, hearing happens by a coming together of conditions. Then there are also [explanations that give] four conditions, eight conditions, and so on.

Subcommentary:

[p130c] *Commentary*: "Explained from the perspective of the teaching of Dharma characteristics [i.e., Abhidharma] of the Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna…" [p131a1] In this case, the explanations differ according to the teaching. Herein there are three [different teachings]. First, that of Dharma-Characteristics; second, that of No-Characteristics; third, that of the Dharma-nature. The first, Dharma-Characteristics, includes both the Small Vehicle and the Preliminary Teaching. Herein there are two. First there is the explanation proper; then we resolve objections.

First, we now set forth the three [explanations] of the Hīnayāna. The Sarvāstivāda school has three doctrines.

First, the master Dharmatrāta [states that] it is the ear that hears, not consciousness. That is, although there is only hearing once discriminatory awareness [has arisen] based on the faculty, the actual essence of hearing lies in the faculty, not the consciousness. Seeing and so forth are the same as hearing in this respect. As the *Abhidharma Heart Śāstra* says

> It is the eye that sees matter in its own domain.
> It is not the eye consciousness that sees.
> Nor cognition, nor a combination.
> After all, one sees not beyond obstructions.[858]

Second, master Wonderful Sound [states that] it is consciousness that hears, not the ear [as] the ear is without awareness.

Third, the master(s) of the *Satyasiddhiśāstra* [states that] there is hearing by a combination [of conditions].

The above three are all similar to [positions in] the *Abhidharmakośa* and the twenty-third section of the *Vibhāṣā.*

[Now] we set forth the three [explanations] of the Mahāyāna.

First, [some say that] it is the ear that hears, not consciousness. As the *Commentary on the Mahāyānasaṃgraha* says in fascicle two, "What is the characteristic of the sphere of the ear? That it can hear sounds."[859] [Likewise,] the *Yogācārabhūmi* says in chapter thirty-five, "Countless are sounds, but it is by directing attention that there can be hearing."[860]

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[858] *Za apitan xin lun* 雜阿毘曇心論; T1552: Dharmatrāta's **Saṃyuktābhidharma-hṛdaya-śāstra.* See T28, no. 1552, p. 876, b20-21). Cp. the translation by Dessein (1999: 55).

[859] I have not been able to locate the original for this.

[860] Chengguan is misquoting the text from the *Yogācārabhūmi*. The original text reads: "Again and again it is by the arriving of sound that hearing can arise. That is why it is said to be the ear." 「數數於此聲至能聞。故名為耳。」(T30, no. 1579, p. 294, a1-2).

Second, [some say that] it is consciousness that hears, not the ear. As the *Liang Mahāyānasaṃgraha* says, "Hearing has three meanings. First, the essence of hearing is the ear consciousness. Second, the object of hearing is sound. Third, the result of hearing is the hearing-discrimination. It is only the hearing-consciousness that is the actual hearing."[861]

Third, [some say that] it is by a combination [of conditions] that hearing occurs. The *Treatise on the Sūtra on the Buddhas' Abode* says, "Hearing is when the ear-faculty gives rise to consciousness so that the sound-object is received."[862] The *Yogācārabhūmi* says, "To hear is to listen. That is, the ear-faculty gives rise to ear-consciousness to receive the teachings."[863]

Commentary: "Then there are also [explanations that] have four conditions, eight conditions..." These explain the meaning of hearing as a combination [of conditions] similar to [the last account of both] the Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna. But when those speak of a combination, that is only of the faculty and consciousness. Now [these other explanations] include all conditions and therefore it says, "four" or "eight." Now, these four or eight are the conditions for the arising of consciousness. If one would take the hearing as well as the bringing about of consciousness, then one gets five or eight [conditions respectively]. That is why the *Commentary* says, "And so forth."

As for [the account] with four [conditions], this is a Hīnayāna [teaching]. One is space; two is the faculty; three is the object; four is attention. In this vein the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* says, "At a time when the ear-faculty is not impaired, the sound is in a place where it is audible, and attention is directed to hearing, the combination of sense, object, and attention is [what accounts for] the coming about of ear-consciousness. Following the arising of the ear-consciousness, the mind-consciousness arises and only then can one distinguish the various causes and conditions; only then does one hear the sound."[864] To explain this: "The sound is in a place where it is audible" refers to space.

The second: [Hearing] requires sensory attention, which is the faculty. In that sense, the chapter on the six faculties in the *Verses on the Middle* is called the "Chapter on the Six Senses." An old [master] said, "'Sense' is the designation for the faculty when it includes the meaning of [its corresponding] consciousness. 'Object' means object of perception. Attention is the faculty of the mind." If you add these up there are five [conditions—the above listed four plus the ear-consciousness] that give rise to ear-consciousness.[865]

When it says [above] that "following the arising of the ear-consciousness, the mind-consciousness arises," it is the case that the mind-consciousness arises at the same time; it is

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[861] The original passage in the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* has the first and second items reverseed and gives more details with the third (T31, no. 1595, p. 173, c11-13).

[862] No such comment occurs in the FDL. However, the same citation also occurs in Huiyuan's *Continued Notes* (X03, no. 221, p. 599, a15-16).

[863] This does not occur in the *Yogācārabhūmi* but, rather, is found in a short exposition on that text ascribed to "bodhisattvas such as Jinaputra" translated by Xuanzang (T30, no. 1580, p. 887, b12-13).

[864] This citation does not appear in the *Treatise on the Perfection of Wisdom*. It is cited in a commentary ascribed to Zhiyi 智顗 (538 - 597) and Guanding 灌頂 (561 - 632) as coming from the *Great Treatise* 大論 *Dalun* (T33, no. 1705, p. 256, a22-23). That commentary seems not to be Chengguan's source, however. Zhiyi's commentary stops with 作意欲聞 ("and attention is directed to hearing") while Chengguan's goes on. That the rest of this paragraph is part of the citation is borne out by the fact that Chengguan adds an explanation (釋 *shi*) of this passage in what follows.

[865] This passage remains unclear to me: What is the extra condition so that we now get to five?

not a condition [for ear-consciousness]. [p131b] If we were to discuss it from the viewpoint of distinguishing sounds, then the mind-consciousness that arises at the same time is also a condition. [When] various causes and conditions [come together], one hears—this sums up the above.

In the case of [the account] with eight [conditions], to the four [conditions] discussed above four more are added, so that we get: One is space; two is the faculty; three is the object; four is attention; five is the basic support, the eighth consciousness; sixth is the support for defilement and purity, the seventh consciousness; seventh is the support for discrimination, the sixth consciousness; eight is the seed. The seed is the support for causes and conditions. All conditioned dharmas rely on this support as apart from this support there cannot arise any causes or conditions. The support for discrimination is the sixth consciousness. The support for defilement and purity is the seventh consciousness. The basic support is the eighth consciousness. The faculty is the support for the object.

Scroll four of the *Treatise Establishing Consciousness-only* says, "Consequently, the five [material] consciousnesses have a simultaneous support that is fourfold: the five material organs and the sixth, seventh, and eighth consciousnesses, because if one of them is missing, [the five material consciousnesses] do not evolve. The supports differ, because of a common object [the five organs], because of discrimination [by the sixth consciousness], because of impurity and purity [in the seventh consciousness], and because of being the root [on the part of the eighth consciousness]."[866]

It is as the verse that says:

> The eye's mind comes from conditions nine
> While the ear's just born from eight
> From seven come nose, tongue and body,
> The last three from five, three, four.
> Then add succession to them all,
> And each gets an extra one.

To explain this: "The eye's mind comes from conditions nine": [On top of the eight conditions for hearing] we have to add light since in the dark one cannot see. The ear does not require light. [For nose, tongue, and body, the verse speaks of] seven [conditions] because it also leaves out space as these three [rely on] immediate perception. The last three are the sixth, seventh, and eighth [consciousnesses]. The sixth consciousness has five conditions. We further leave out defilement and purity as well as discrimination [as] discrimination is the consciousness that arises and defilement and purity is the faculty on which it relies. The seventh consciousness either has three or four [conditions]. It has four [since] we leave out defilement and purity since those make up the consciousness that arises [i.e., the seventh itself]. The sixth consciousness is left out because it is the faculty, and this seventh [consciousness] is the consciousness. Further, the eighth is left out because the eighth is general.[867] There are said to be three when the object is left out as well since the object [in this case] is a faculty. "Three" is said in reference to the eighth [consciousness], which only

[866] T31, no. 1585, p. 20, c12-14, as translated by Cook (1999, p. 121-122).

[867] The reasoning here is unclear to me, but it seems to me that the four conditions that are ascribed, by exclusion, to the seventh consciousness are faculty, object, attention, and seed.

has seeds, attention, and faculty [as its conditions]. It can also be said to have four [conditions] if we further add object [as a condition]. It comes about due to the condition.

Commentary:

[p529b] Although [hearing] is by means of the ear, calling it with a general term, it says, "I have heard." Although dharmas have no self, it says "I have heard" because the language is more convenient and in accord with worldly usage. It is not said here with a view of self.

Subcommentary:

[p131b] *Commentary*: "Although [hearing] is by means of the ear…" Second, resolving objections. This has two parts. First, there is this question: *Since it is the ear that hears, why does it say "I have heard"?* Therefore, in order to resolve this, it is clarified that "I" is an inclusive term as it includes all the faculties—eyes, ears, and so forth. This is the [point made by] the *Treatise on the Sūtra on the Buddhas' Abode*.[868]

Second, there is this question: *The entirety of the Buddha's teachings expounds no-self. How is it that Ānanda, who has entered into principle and is a sage, says "I have heard" like an ordinary person?* This is resolved in the following way. "Although dharmas have no self" states the point of the question. When it then says, "Because the language is more convenient…" this resolves it. In this case, we have first established what is correct. Then, with "it is not said here out of arrogance," we distinguish what is wrong.

This is all [in accord] with the purport of two treatises. The first of these is the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* which itself has three further ways of explaining why [although] there is no self, [sages do] say "I." [p131c] First, it says, "Further, in [terms of] worldly dharmas one speaks of a self, but this is not spoken of within the ultimate meaning. For this reason, all dharmas are empty, without a self. Although by reason of worldly dharmas one speaks of a self, it has no real essence."

Second, it says, "Further, worldly speech has three bases: first, what is untruth; second, arrogance; third, [conventional] designation. The former two are impure, but the last one is pure. All of these three apply to common beings' [speech]. Practitioners who have seen the path have two: view of self and [conventional] designation. Sages only have one type of speech: [conventional] designation. In their minds they do not reify dharmas as real, but, according with worldly people, they use such speech when communicating. The Buddha's disciples all use 'I' in accordance with mundane [usage] without fault."

Third, it says, "Further, if someone attaches to the mark of no-self, to the reality of all dharmas, [taking all else to be] deluded speech, this person will raise the objection, *How can [the sūtra], given that the true characteristic of all dharmas is no-self, say 'Thus I have heard'?* Now, all the Buddha's disciples know that all dharmas are empty and without any existence. Regarding them, they have no attachment in their minds. They are also not attached to the true characteristic of all dharmas. How much the less do they have any attachment in their minds regarding non-self?! Because of this meaning, one should not object by saying, 'How come it says 'I'?'"[869]

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[868] This must be the passage at T26, no. 1530, p. 291, c24-26.
[869] Cited, with minor variations, from T25, no. 1509, p. 64, a26-b11.

To explain this: These above three [passages starting with] "further" are based on first, according with worldly usage; second, refuting wrong views; third, not attaching to no-self.

The second is based on scroll six of the *Yogācārabhūmi,* which says, "Generally speaking, there are four reasons [the sūtras] say 'I have heard.' One, the convenience of worldly language. Two, according with worldly [usage]. Three, in order to dispel and resolve the fear of non-self. Fourth, in order to proclaim the loss of self and other so that [the audience] arouses a mind of resolute faith and understanding. There is a similar exposition in the ninth fascicle of the *Treatise Proclaiming the Sage's Teaching*[870] and in the thirtieth fascicle of the *Mahāyānābhidharma-samuccaya-vyākhyā*"[871]

To explain this: This is basically the same as the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*. The first reason in the *Yogācārabhūmi* does not appear in the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom,* which does not bring out [the point] on convenience. The second reason is the first in the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*. The third reason is the third in the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom.* That is, attaching to no-self is the same as the fear of no-self. [One might think], *If there is no self, who is it that practices?* Therefore, it does not speak of no-self. Attachment brings fear. It does not speak of no-self in order to prevent attachment. [Thus] this fear naturally disappears. The fourth is the same as the second [in the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*]—that is, going along with the ways of the world so that [the audience] arouses a mind of resolute faith and understanding.

We already know that the two treatises have the same meaning, although their words differ. Therefore, now [we clarify how] the explanation of the *Commentary* includes both of these treatises, taking [the points where] their words are in accord.

[When the *Commentary* says,] "The language is more convenient," this corresponds to the first meaning in the *Yogācārabhūmi*. [When it says,] "In accord with worldly usage," this is the second meaning in the *Yogācārabhūmi* and the first in the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*. [When it says,] "It is not said here out of arrogance," this corresponds to the second type of speech distinguished in the second meaning of the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*.

[p132a] So, relying on the meaning of the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom,* Mahāyāna masters have established three types of self. First, the self of deluded attachment—this is the false self. Second, the conventional self—that is, the bliss, purity, impermanence, and self [taught] in the *Mahāparinirvāṅa Sūtra* in order to dispel the [wrong views of the] two vehicles and [established] by necessity as a provisional designation. This is also included in the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* 's [category of speech] conventional designation. But while in the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* this is a worldly convention, this convention is based on a supramundane dharma. Third, the self [posited in order to] disseminate [the teachings]. This is precisely the third kind of speech, the conventional "I," in the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom.*

There is a further question in regard to this: *Is it in regard to the Buddha speaking Dharma that [Ānanda] says "I have heard" or does he say "I have heard" regarding the*

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[870] *Xianyang shengjiao lun* 顯揚聖教論; T1602.

[871] The original passage is found at T30, no. 1579, p. 307, b27-c1.

Buddha's not speaking Dharma? The teaching of foundational substance and shadowy appearance applies here. Because this was already seen [when we discussed] the essence of the teaching, the *Commentary* does not ask this.[872]

Commentary:

[p529b] Based on the [tenet of] No-Characteristics, the self is non-self and hearing is non-hearing since they are empty, arising from conditions. But because this does not deny the validity of provisional language, this is a non-hearing form of hearing.

Subcommentary:

[p132a] *Commentary*: "Based on the [tenet of] No-Characteristics…" The No-Characteristics Tenet includes the three teachings—the Preliminary Teaching, the Sudden Teaching, and the True Teaching. If one only says that the self is non-self and that hearing is non-hearing, this is an entry-level Great Vehicle [teaching], i.e., the meaning of the Preliminary Teaching. If one says that with subject and object both extinguished, there is no hearing or non-hearing and no self or non-self, that by transcending thought [truth] is suddenly revealed, this is the meaning of the Sudden Teaching.

There are two [ways of reading] "since they are empty, arising from conditions." First, if one reads it as going with what came before it, it is the reason for the two teachings [to say] that there is no self. Second, if one reads it as going what comes after—"this does not deny the validity of provisional language, this is a non-hearing form of hearing"—this is the meaning of the True Teaching. That is, because of the non-obstruction of phenomena and principle, hearing is non-hearing. This is the teaching of non-duality.

Therefore, the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* says, "[Question:] In what sense is 'hearing' hearing? Is it the ear-faculty that hears? Or is it the ear-consciousness that hears? Or is it the mind-consciousness that hears? It cannot be the ear-faculty that hears, since that has no awareness. It cannot be the ear-consciousness that hears because that, existing for but a single moment, cannot discriminate. Also, it cannot be the mind-consciousness that hears. Why? The first five consciousnesses cognize the five objects and then the mind-consciousness cognizes [those] consciousnesses. The mind-consciousness cannot cognize a presently existing sense object. It only cognizes the five objects that existed in the past or will exist in the future. Were the mind-consciousness able to cognize presently existing objects, then even someone who is blind and deaf should be able to cognize sights and sounds. Why is this? Because his mind-consciousness is not impaired.

Answer: It is not the ear-faculty that can hear, nor is it the ear-consciousness nor the mind-consciousness. This phenomenon of hearing sounds comes about through a combination of many causes and conditions. One cannot point to a single dharma that can hear sounds. Why? The ear-faculty cannot hear sound because it lacks awareness. Consciousness cannot hear sound because it has no physicality and [therefore] does not

[872] This refers to an earlier section in the *Subcommentary* where the phrase 本質影像 *benzi yingxiang*, "roots and shadows," is discussed as an explanation for the idea that buddhas have no physical appearance other than what is necessary in response to beings (T36, no. 1736, p. 70, a17-21).

obstruct and has no locality. Sound cannot know sound because it has no awareness nor is it a faculty."[873]

To explain this: The above passage explains that there is no hearing when the characteristics are separated. [The *Treatise*] goes on to say, "At the time when the ear-faculty was not impaired…"[874] This explains that it is by the combining [of conditions] that there is hearing. This was already cited in [the discussion on] the Tenet of Dharma-Characteristics. [p132b] Now [the *Commentary*] clarifies that this—[the teaching that] there is hearing by virtue of a combination [of conditions]; that hearing is non-hearing—is the meaning of the True Teaching.

It is as Liugong says in his notes on the *Lotus Sūtra*, "The skandhas and āyatanas do not have a ruler that is a self. The reception of what is inanimate by listening is called 'hearing.' When one deeply illuminates conditioned arising, one realizes the emptiness of dharmas. If such a person attends to the cause of life, then he focuses and becomes completely detached to things and to self."[875]

To explain this: The beginning of this [passage] is also the meaning of the Preliminary Teaching. From "when one deeply illuminates conditioned arising" onwards, it is the meaning of the True Teaching. Thus, all of this belongs to the Tenet of No Characteristics.

Further, [the *Commentary*] says, "This is a non-hearing form of hearing." This important meaning should be drawn from in scroll nineteen of the *Nirvāṅa Sūtra* and in the chapter "Ten Grounds." It basically means that it is non-hearing because phenomena do not obstruct principle. And that, because principle does not obstruct phenomena, it is hearing.

Commentary:

[p529b] From the point of view of the Dharma-nature [Tenet] the purport of this *Sūtra* [is transmitted] by the Dharma-transmitting bodhisattvas [who], by means of the true self that is the nonduality of self and no-self, use the wondrous ear in which faculty and object are neither identical nor different to hear the gateway to the Dharma of the unobstructed Dharma Realm.

Subcommentary:

[p132b] *Commentary*: "From the point of view of the Dharma-Nature [Tenet]…" Third is the explanation of the Dharma-Nature Tenet which reveals that it is just the meaning of the Perfect Teaching. When it speaks of "the true self that is the nonduality of self and no-self" this includes the meaning of two sūtras. First, the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* says, "The meaning of no-self is the nonduality of self and non-self."[876] Second, the *Nirvāṅa Sūtra* says, "Among dharmas that are non-self, there is the true self. Therefore, we pay homage to the Unsurpassed

[873] T25, no. 1509, p. 64, b19-c2.
[874] This is the first line of how the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* continues its discussion (T25, no. 1509, p. 64, c2).
[875] I have not been able to locate the origin of this citation. The first twelve characters are also found in Jizang's exposition on the *Lotus Sūtra* (X27, no. 582, p. 443, b16).
[876] T14, no. 475, p. 541, a20.

Honored One."[877] These are precisely in accord with the present meaning which is that, while verbally it accords with the world, the mind engages in reality—the true, sovereign self.

Commentary: "the marvelous ear in which faculty and object are neither identical nor different to hear." As both faculty and object arise from conditions—it is because of the faculty that one speaks of an object and because of the object that one speaks of the faculty; they entail each other—they are said not to be different. Because the two characteristics are distinct, they are said not to be identical. This is the marvelous ear—what does it not hear?

Commentary:

[p529b] As for the sūtras not heard by Ānanda, they are either said to have been transmitted to him, repeated to him by the Tathāgata, or naturally understood by him by attaining a deep samādhi. These are all explanations by means of traces. In truth this [*Sūtra*] was propagated by the shadows and echoes of the great bodhisattvas. This is well attested in the *Sūtra on the Inconceivable State*.[878] It is just because the teachings are given differently according to potentials that what [the audience] sees and hears is different.

This concludes the section that reveals that it was heard.

Subcommentary:

[p132b] *Commentary:* "As for the sūtras not heard by Ānanda…" This is a second objection, that regarding things not heard [by Ānanda]. That is, someone may ask, *Ānanda was born on the night of the Buddha's enlightenment. He went forth from the householder's life when he was twenty years of age and when he reached thirty the Tathāgata ordered him to be his attendant. It was only from then he was thirty onward that he was present when the Tathāgata preached. How is it that the sūtras that Ānanda did not hear also start with 'I have heard'?*

The [*Commentary*] is replying to this. The reply has four meanings which basically divide into two. The first three are based on what is provisional whereas the last one reveals what is true.

First, "They are either said to have been transmitted to him." This is mentioned [in the sūtras] multiple times. One [example] is scroll 6 of the *Sūtra on Repaying Kindness,* which says that the sūtras Ānanda did not hear were either heard [by him] from bhikṣus or that there were gods relating them to Ānanda.[879] A second [example] is based on scroll 40 of the *Nirvāṅa Sūtra,* "After my nirvāṅa, the sūtras not yet heard by Ānanda should be bestowed by preaching bodhisattvas. That which Ānanda has heard, he can spread himself."[880] A third [example] is scroll two of the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, which says, "(Kāśyapa and Ānanda were at Rājagṛha compiling the Tripiṭaka.)[881] At that time the Elder Great Kāśyapa said

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[877] T12, no. 374, p. 590, a20.
[878] See the citation below, in the *Subcommentary*.
[879] The sūtra Chengguan is drawing from is answering exactly the same issue that Chengguan is dealing with. See T03, no. 156, p. 155, c17-26.
[880] T12, no. 374, p. 602, a9-10. Note that Chengguan seems to be citing T374 rather than T375 given that this passage does not occur in scroll 40 in the latter edition of the text, even though this passage is exactly the same in both editions (T12, no. 375, p. 850, b8-10).
[881] This first sentence does not actually occur in the *Treatise*.

to Ānanda, 'The Buddha entrusted you with upholding the treasury of Dharma. You should repay the Buddha's kindness. Where did the Buddha first preach the Dharma? [p132c] All the Buddha's great disciples who could uphold the treasury of Dharma have already passed into stillness. Only you remain. You should now compile the Treasury of the Buddha's Dharma in accord with the Buddha's intention and out of compassion for living beings. Then, Ānanda bowed to the assembled monks and then sat on the lion's seat. The Great Kāśyapa then spoke this verse:

"The Buddha, sacred king of lions,
Had Ānanda as his son.
Now seated on the lion's seat
He looks upon the assembly from which the Buddha is absent.
In this assembly of greatly virtuous ones
There is no Buddha—it has lost the awesome deity.
As when it's night without a moon
There's an empty sky without clarity.
As greatly wise people say,
You, son of the Buddha, should proclaim:
At what place did he first speak?
You should reveal that now."

"The Elder Ānanda then focused his mind and joined his palms. Facing the direction where the Buddha entered into nirvāṅa, he said this:

"When the Buddha first preached the Dharma,
I did not see him then.
This is how it was told to me:
The Buddha at Vārāṅasī
Opened for the five bhikṣus
The gate of ambrosia
Speaking on the Dharma of the Four Noble Truths,
The truths of suffering, its origin, cessation, and the path.
Ājñātakoṅḍinya
Was the first to realize the path,
And eighty-thousand gods
Heard that he realized the path."[882]

Based on such texts that speak of Ānanda learning these sūtras by others transmitting them to him, the [*Commentary*] says that "they are either said to have been transmitted to him."

Commentary: "repeated to him by the Tathāgata." Scroll 6 of the *Sūtra on Repaying Kindness* explains how when Ānanda was ordered to be the Buddha's attendant, he made three requests from the Buddha. First, he did not want to receive robes because of the Buddha.

[882] In the *Treatise on the Perfection of Wisdom,* the last line of this verse states that these gods ''also embarked on the path.'' For the original section (with a few other minor variants), see T25, no. 1509, p. 69, a27-b16.

Second, he did not want to receive special requests [because of] the Buddha. Third, whatever Dharma he had not yet heard, he requested [the Buddha] to preach that again.[883] Before the Tathāgata entered nirvāṅa, he spoke [the sūtras] again for Ānanda.

Commentary: "naturally understood by him by attaining a deep samādhi." The *Vajra Flower Sūtra* says, "Because he attained the Samādhi "Sovereign Awareness of the Dharma Nature," Ānanda could remember all the sutras preached by the Tathāgata before as if he was there in person."[884] The *Nirvāṅa Sūtra* also says, "Ānanda was an erudite gentleman. Whether or not he was present, he could naturally understand the meaning of permanent and impermanent."[885] At the end of the chapter on predictions in the *Lotus Sūtra* it says:

> World Honored One, it is extraordinary!
> You make me remember,
> Boundlessly many Dharmas of Buddhas past,
> As if I heard them today.
> I now have no further doubts
> But dwell securely on the Buddha's path.
> Acting expediently as your attendant,
> To protect the Dharma of all Buddhas.[886]

This is to say, only after receiving a prediction did [Ānanda] understand that he too acted expediently. That it was an expedient to serve as an attendant is a case of the hidden revealing the truth.

Commentary: "These are all explanations by means of traces…." We now reveal the truth. [p133a] Herein, this phrase concludes what came before. What follows actually reveals the meaning of the truth. [The *Commentary*] says, "This is well attested in the *Sūtra on the Inconceivable State*." That sūtra says, "At that time there were also thousands of koṭis of bodhisattvas appearing as śrāvakas who came to sit in the assembly. The names of their leaders were Śāriputra, Maudgalyāyana, and so forth, up to Ānanda, Devadatta, Upānanda, and so forth. All of them had, already for a long time, been practicing the six pāramitās, drawing near to the Buddha's awakening. It was in order to transform the multitudes that they took birth on this defiled earth and appeared as śrāvakas."[887]

To explain this: these great bodhisattvas revealed the basis by means of skillful means. That is why this is the explanation of the truth. It is like as in the chapter "Five Hundred Disciples [Receive Predictions]" of the *Lotus Sūtra.*

> "Listen carefully, all of you bhikṣus,
> The path practiced by the Buddha's disciples,

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[883] Chengguan is drawing from the same passage as above; see T03, no. 156, p. 155, c22-26.
[884] I have not been able to find the original source for this citation, if there is one.
[885] Fazang quotes this passage (T35, no. 1733, p. 126, b4-5) and Huiyuan does so too (X03, no. 221, p. 599, c22-23). The actual passage in the *Nirvāṅa Sūtra* has a slightly different reading in the last phrase (T12, no. 374, p. 428, a28-29).
[886] T09, no. 262, p. 30, a12-15.
[887] This text is abridged from T10, no. 301, p. 909, a18-29. The way it is abridged here is exactly the same as in Huiyuan's commentary (X03, no. 221, p. 599, c23-p. 600, a3).

By their good studies and skillful means
Is inconceivable.
Knowing that the assembly takes delight in lesser Dharmas
And fears great wisdom—
For that reason—the great bodhisattvas,
Appeared as śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas."[888]

This is what that text says. Likewise, in the section on Ānanda it says, "Acting expediently as your attendant, / To protect the Dharma of all Buddhas."[889] This is an explanation of the great expedient.

Commentary: "It is just because the teachings are given differently according to potentials." This also has multiple meanings. First, the explanations above are given according to potentials. Second, it says, "It is just because the teachings are given differently according to potentials that what [the audience] sees and hears is different" from the point of view of there being three kinds of Ānandas who uphold the three baskets. This is explained in the *Sūtra of the Mahāyāna Collection of Dharmas*. The *Mysterious*[890] cites *Vajrasena's Treatise*; Paramārtha's commentary on the *Prajñā* cites the *Sūtra of Ajātaśatru's Repentance*; and so on. Those [sources] explain it similar to this.

[888] T09, no. 262, p. 28, a9-13.
[889] This was quoted above too. See T09, no. 262, p. 30, a15.
[890] I remain as yet unsure to what "mysterious" *xuan zhong* 玄中 here refers. I suspect that 玄 *xuan* is short for 華嚴經探玄記 *Huayanjing tanxuan ji*, Fazang's *Record of the Search for the Mysterious*.

Appendix B: Wŏnch'ŭk on "Thus have I heard"

The passage translated below is Wŏnch'ŭk's discussion of the phrase "thus have I heard" in his *Commentary on the Saṁdhinirmocana Sūtra*, including also some of Wŏnch'ŭk's preceding comments on the introductory section.

The Chinese text can be found at X21, no. 369, pp. 180a12-182c7.

[p180a] As for the section that deals with the circumstances, there are two: (1) the section that establishes faith and (2) the section on the circumstances that give rise [to the teaching].

There are three differences between these two sections.

(1) Differences in their names. They are called the preface that establishes faith and the preface that describes the circumstances that give rise [to the teaching]. They are also called the universal preface and the specific preface. The section that establishes faith begins with the phrase "thus have I heard." It inspires faith in living beings. It is the same in all sūtras and thus is called the universal preface. The section on the circumstances that give rise [to the teaching] is [the description of] the circumstances that give rise to the actual teaching [of a given sūtra], such as the Buddha emitting light. It is different for each sūtra and is thus called the specific preface.

(2) Differences in their time. The circumstances surrounding the Tathāgata are called the preface preceding the sūtra. What was requested by Ānanda is called the preface that postdates the sūtra. Thus the times at which the two prefaces were spoken is different.

(3) Differences in the person. The first is the Tathāgata's preface: in the various sūtras, these are the Tathāgata's circumstances. The second is Ānanda's preface, because Ānanda spoke this preface responding to the request [at the council].

In the present sūtra as well as in the *Sūtra on the Buddhas' Abode* there is only the section that establishes faith; there is no section on the circumstances.[891] [Yet, in these texts], the circumstances that give rise [to the teaching] are described within the section that establishes faith.[892]

As for the section that establishes faith, there are three points: (1) analyzing the number of topics; (2) discussing the intent of the preface; (3) explaining the topics one-by-one.

In analyzing the number of topics, there are three explanations.

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[891] The *Fodi jing* 佛地經 (T680). A short Mahāyāna sūtra translated by Xuanzang. It deals with the characteristics of buddhahood, specifically the four wisdoms described in Yogācāra texts.

[892] Note that in both texts the Buddha does in fact emit light, which may seem to contradict Woncheuk's comment. However, his point has to be understood against the background of the distinction between the two types of prefaces. As we see below, the preface that establishes faith also includes the description of the location, the audience, and so forth. In both sūtras the narrative elements describing the circumstances is given in the course of the description of the location.

(1) Tripiṭaka Master Paramārtha's *Notes on the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* speaks of seven topics.[893] The first is "thus," which stands for the teachings heard. This volume of text and principles is certainly worthy of faith. The second is "I," which expresses the person who heard them, i.e., Ānanda. [p180b] Third, "heard": he personally got these sounds and their meaning. Fourth, "at one time" reveals that the teachings heard were appropriate to the moment. Fifth, "the Buddha, the World-Honored One" refers to the teacher who taught. Sixth, "dwelt in" describes the location. Seventh, "great bhikṣus" makes clear that it was not heard in private.

However, these seven topics come down to just four points. First, "thus" refers to the teachings heard. Next, "have I heard" refers to the person who heard them. The first two authenticate the teachings heard. The final two authenticate the person who heard them. This is all extensively explained in Paramārtha's *Notes on the Seven Topics*.[894]

(2) Based on Nāgārjuna's *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* we can distinguish six topics within the prefatory section: (1) faith, (2) listening, (3) time, (4) host, (5) location, and (6) assembly. The *Lamp Treatise* by Vasubandhu also distinguishes six topics. Therefore, it has a verse that says:

> The former three tell us about the students,
> The latter three show that the teacher is real.
> The various sūtras, all you may find,
> Begin in just this very way.[895]

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[893] I have not been able to locate this text and suspect it does not survive. The only other reference I could find to it is in a commentary on the *Vajra Sūtra* that survives only as a Dunhuang manuscript: Baoda's *Vajra Mirror.* Baoda refers to Paramārtha's text as proof that the *Prajñāpāramitā* collection consists of eight texts and quotes it as saying that the seventh text is not yet extant in China (T85, no. 2734, p. 62, a1-2).

[894] I have not been able to locate this text and suspect it does not survive. There are several references to this text. Woncheuk himself, in his *Commentary on the Sūtra for the Humane King* (*Renwang jing shu* 仁王經疏; T1708) refers to it in a discussion parallel to the present in virtually identical wording. Interestingly, there he implies that this entire explanation can be found in Paramārtha's *Notes on the Seven Matters* and he does not mention the *Notes on the Prajñāpāramitā.* See T33, no. 1708, p. 362, a27-b5.) The Silla monk Pyowon 表員 (dates unknown; 8th century) cites this text in his *Questions and Answers Regarding the Essential Points of the Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (*Huayanjing wenyi yaojue wenda* 華嚴經文義要決問答; X237) for its explanation of the epithet "buddha." An author of two Vinaya commentaries, Dingbin 定賓 (dates unknown; 8th century) gives a citation that Woncheuk also gives below, explaining the reason Ānanda had to preface sūtras with "thus have I heard" (see X42, no. 733, p. 291, b12-19). Huiyuan 慧苑 (673-743?) cites its explanation of the term "buddha," telling us that Paramārtha got this from a text called the *Zhenshi lun* 真實論 (X03, no. 221, p. 595, b17-21) and also paraphrases the same explanation Woncheuk just gave here (X03, no. 221, p. 598, b4-8). Chengguan also gives the former passage, though followed by much more extensive glosses (T36, no. 1736, p. 120, b18-19 ff.).

[895] This reference and quotation are puzzling. "*Lamp Treatise"* (*Deng lun* 燈論) is a standard abbreviation for a text not by Vasubandhu but by the Madhyamaka author Bhāvaviveka, the *Explanation of the Prajñā Lamp Treatise* (*Bore deng lun shi* 般若燈論釋; T1566). This text, however, contains neither the verse nor, in fact, anything relevant to the topic at hand. Interestingly, we find a similar reference to "Vasubandhu's *Lamp Treatise*" in a number of other exegetical texts. Notably, the earliest instance I have been able to locate is in Jizang's *Commentary on the Meaning of the Lotus* (*Fahua yi shu* 法華義疏; T1721)*,* using the alternate version of the verse (T34, no. 1721, p. 454, a2-4). Woncheuk himself cites it in his *Commentary on the Sūtra for the Humane King* with a slight variation in the verse—the final foot reads, "All Dharma gateways are like this,"「 法門皆如

(3) According to the *Treatise on the Sūtra on the Buddhas' Abode* by *Bandhuprabha, they are all included in five categories: (1) completely revealing that it has been heard, (2) when the sūtra was spoken, (3) the speaker, (4) the location, (5) the audience.[896]

Discussing the intent of the preface

Question:

Why is it that in the beginning of all sūtras there is the phrase "thus have I heard" and so forth?

[Answer:]

Paramārtha's *Notes on the Seven Topics* says, "In order to dispel three doubts." It says, "Also, the *Detailed Vinaya*[897] explains that when Ānanda ascended the high seat in order to proclaim the canon, his body became like the Buddha's, replete with the primary and secondary characteristics. When he would come down from the high seat, he would revert to his normal appearance. Observing this miracle, those in the audience suspected either of three things: (1) that the Great Master Śākyamuni, out of his great compassion, has emerged out of *nirvāṅa* and was once again proclaiming the profound Dharma; (2) that other World-Honored Ones had come from other directions; or (3) that the Bhikṣu Ānanda, being a younger cousin of the Buddha, could be the successor of his older cousin and thus himself had become a buddha. In order to dispel these ideas, [Ānanda] stated the seven topics—'thus have I heard' and so on. Hereby he clarified that he had personally heard this from the Buddha and that he was not the Buddha who had emerged out of nirvāṅa; that he was not a buddha who had come from other directions; and that he had not himself become a buddha and now was proclaiming sūtras of his own accord."[898]

是。」(T33, no. 1708, p. 362, b7-9). Kuiji cites the same verse, although notably only half of it, when he explains the opening of the sūtra in his *Commentary on the Section on Reality of the Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (*Da bore boluomiduo jing bore liqu fen shuzan* 大般若波羅蜜多經般若理趣分述讚; T1695). Dingbin cites it in his *Doctrinal Notes that Adorn the Tenets: A Commentary on the Four-Part Vinaya* (*sifen lu shu shi zong yiji* 四分律疏飾宗義記; X42, no. 733, p. 291, a3-5). Langben 良賁 (717-777), in his commentary on the *Sūtra for the Humane King*, gives the same comment (i.e., that there are six topics) and then cites the verse as found in Woncheuk's present text (T33, no. 1709, p. 436, a26-28). Fachong 法崇 (d.u., 8th c.) cites the verse in its alternate form in the same context, in his *Doctrinal Notes on the Traces of the Teachings in the Sūtra on the Supreme Dhāraṅī of the Buddha's Crown* (*Foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing jiaoji yiji* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼經教跡義記; T39, no. 1803, p. 1014, c23-25). Daoyin 道氤 (668-740) cites it in his *Preaching that Expounds on the Vajra-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* (*Yuzhu jin'gang bore boluomi jing xuanyan* 御注金剛般若波羅蜜經宣演; T85, no. 2733, p. 20, a12-15), a Dunhuang manuscript. It also occurs in another Dunhuang manuscript that does not list an author, the *Commentary on the Vajra-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* (*Jin'gang bore jing shu* 金剛般若經疏; T85, no. 2741, p. 147, b21-23).

[896] This is the commentary on the sūtra Woncheuk referenced just above, translated by Xuanzang. The text lists these five topics to be treated in a sūtras' preface at T26, no. 1530, p. 291, c3-5.

[897] *Weixi lü* 微細律. This text seems to be non-extant. It is cited, in association with Paramārtha, in several other Tang-era commentaries as well (e.g., T33, no. 1695, p. 27a26 ff., T33, no. 1708, p. 362a17 ff., T33, no. 1709, p. 435c17-21).

[898] See above for comments on the *Notes on the Seven Topics*. This passage is also cited by a number of other exegetes. Kuiji, in his *Commentary on the Section on Reality of the Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (T1965) cites it, although his citation is abridged and differs in its wording (T33, no. 1695, p. 27, a26-b3). Kuiji also cites this

The *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* says, "the time, location, and people [i.e., speaker and audience] are stated so as to cause living beings to have faith." [899] Furthermore, in the second scroll of that *Treatise*, it says:

> At the time when the Buddha entered nirvāṅa, he was between the śāla trees in Kuśinagara. He laid down with his head toward the North and would soon enter nirvāṅa. At that point, Ānanda, who had not yet eradicated affection, because he had not yet transcended craving, fell into sorrow and regret from which he could not lift himself up. The Elder Aniruddha then told Ānanda, "You are the one who guards the treasury of the Buddha's Dharma. Don't be like an ordinary person, letting yourself fall into sorrow and regret. [p180c] All conditioned dharmas are impermanent. How can you be anxious and sorrowful?! What is more, the Buddha, the World-Honored One, entrusted the Dharma to you. Being all anxious and upset, you will lose what you received. You should ask the Buddha, *How should we practice after your nirvāṅa? Who will be our teacher? How should we live with foul-mouthed Chandaka?* (The Dīrghāgama, scroll four, says, "How should we live with Chandaka [*Channu* 闡弩]?")[900] *What words should be at the beginning of the Buddha's sūtras?* Ānanda asked the Buddha these questions and the Buddha told him, "Practice the four foundations of mindfulness. Take the discipline and sūtras as your teacher. Deal with the bhikṣu Chandaka with the Brahma-like method.[901]

Dīrghāgama sūtra number four as well as *Ekottarikāgama* number 36 both explain the Brahma method as not speaking with someone.[902] It is explained there extensively [i.e., in the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*] that all the Buddha's sūtras begin with the words "thus have I heard" and so forth. The account in the *Sūtra of the Mahāyāna Collection of Dharmas* and the *Latter Part of the Mahāparinirvāṅa Sūtra* is basically similar to the *Wisdom Treatise*.[903] Since I fear it would become too wieldy, I will not expound on them here. In the

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passage, again in slightly different wording, in his *Profound Commentary on the Wondrous Lotus Sūtra* (*Miao fa lianhua jing xuan zan* 妙法蓮華經玄贊; T34, no. 1723, p. 662, c22-p. 663, a1); again in his *Penetrating Comments on the Amitābha Sūtra* (*Amituo jing tong zanshu* 阿彌陀經通贊疏; T37, no. 1758, p. 332, a18-25), though note that the attribution to Kuiji might be spurious (Weinstein 1959: 130). He also cites it in his *Commentary on the Vimalakīrti Sūtra* (*Shuo Wugoucheng jing shu* 說無垢稱經疏 T38, no. 1782, p. 1003, b4-10). It is also cited in the *Records of the Transmission of the Lotus* (*Fahua chuanji* 法華傳記; T51, no. 2068, p. 49, c18), though there, curiously, the portion cited by Woncheuk and Kuiji is split up and its actual substance precedes the citation from Paramārtha's *Notes* and is attributed to the DZDL.

[899] I have not yet been able to locate the source of this citation.

[900] The comments in parenthesis are interlinear notes of which the origin is obscure. Many more follow below. I suspect these are by Woncheuk himself (this seems supported by the insertion just below; see below). In any case, they fit with the general content and style of Tang dynasty commentaries, suggesting that they were added within that period. The passage referenced is indeed in the fourth scroll of the Chinese Dīrghāgama; see T01, no. 1, p. 26, a17-21.

[901] See T25, no. 1509, p. 66, b22-c2.

[902] The Dīrghāgama reference is the same as above, T01, no. 1, p. 26, a17-21; the *Ekottarikāgama* quote is in fact at the very beginning of the 37th scroll, see T02, no. 125, p. 751, c7-14. Note that this comment is in line with the interlinear citation from the *Dīrghāgama* just above, lending credence to the supposition that that interlinear note, and by extension those below, are by Woncheuk himself. Alternatively, this present comment might have originally been an interlinear note that got inserted into the main text.

[903] No text by the name *Gathering Dharmas Sūtra* (*Ji fa jing* 集法經) seems to exist independently. Rather, it seems that Woncheuk is referring to a long citation embedded in the DZDL which recounts the events after the

Great Compassion Sūtra it is Upāli who instructs Ānanda to ask those questions.[904] In this way the sūtras and treatises explain things differently. [Though if we understand that] the two persons both instructed [Ānanda], [the texts] have the same meaning and do not contradict each other.

[0180c11]**Explaining the topics one-by-one based on the sūtra text**

When it says "thus have I heard," this covers three of the seven topics: what is heard, the listener, and that he personally got these sounds and their meaning. From among the six topics, it covers faith and hearing. From among the five topics, it covers the first: completely revealing that it has been heard.

To continue, in the *Treatise on the Buddhas' Abode*, "thus have I heard" is explained in three ways: (1) a general explanation of "thus have I heard"; (2) an analysis of [the elements of] "thus have I heard"; and (3) an explanation of the meaning when [those elements] are combined.[905]

(1) The general explanation. In transmitting the Buddha's teachings, Mañjuśrī, Ānanda, and others used these words: "The profound phrases and meanings that were spoken in this way have been heard by me at one point."[906] (*Vajrasena's Commentary* says, "Of the three Ānandas it was the Mahayāna Ānanda who transmitted the Mahāyāna teachings.)[907]

(2) The analysis. We will first discuss "thus" and then "I have heard." There are various explanations of "thus."

(The masters in this land [i.e., China] have eight explanations overall. Their meaning is as is often explained [? *yi ru chang shuo* 義如常說]. These eight explanations are as follows:

Buddha's passing, including Ānanda's recitation of the teachings at the first council; see T25, no. 1509, p. 67, a12-p. 70, b12. The next reference is to a translation done during the Linde 麟德 period (664-665) of a text understood to supplement Dharmakṣema's earlier translation of the *Mahāparinirvāṅa Sūtra* (see DDB entries for [大般涅槃經後分] by Charles Muller and [涅槃經] by Michael Radich). The relevant passage occurs at T12, no. 377, p. 901, c6-9. It is noteworthy that Woncheuk is citing this text as it gives us a terminus post quem for the composition of this commentary. He gives the same reference in his *Commentary on the Sūtra for the Humane King* (T33, no. 1708, p. 362, a13).

[904] The *Dabei jing* 大悲經 (T380) indeed reproduces the scene where Ānanda asks several final questions, including how to format the sūtras. See T12, no. 380, p. 971, b11ff. However, I have not been able to find the place where Upāli (*Youpoli* 憂波離) instructs Ānanda to do so; in fact, I have not found any mention of Upāli in the text (neither by searching for his name, including alternate transliterations, nor by skimming pivotal sections of the text.

[905] While Woncheuk is here following the structure that he perceives in the *Treatise on the Buddhas' Abode*, his following comments do not follow the *Treatise* in its content. The relevant portion of the *Treatise* is at T26, no. 1530, p. 291, c8-p. 292, a11. Note that while the general explanation immediately below is very brief, the detailed explanation makes up the bulk of the present translation. The third, the explanation that combines the elements, is the final paragraph of this translation.

[906] I am emending on the basis of the reading found in the parallel discussion found in Woncheuk's *Commentary on the Sūtra for the Humane King* where the text reads: 「如是所說。甚深句義。我昔曾聞。」 (T33, no. 1708, p. 362, b17). The present text has *deng* 等 instead of *ju yi* 句義.

[907] The *Treatise of the Vajra Immortal* says, "There are three Ānanda's, belonging to the Great, Small, and Medium Vehicle, who transmitted the Dharma treasuries of the three [respective] vehicles." See T25, no. 1512, p. 800, c26-27.

(1) An explanation in terms of faith and following. "Thus" is an expression that one has faith and that one follows. Indeed, if there is faith, one can accord with the principles that are spoken; if one accords [with those principles] the way of the master and disciple is completed. Since the sūtras do not go beyond the limit [of that way], they are not transmitted if there is no faith. For that reason, it says "thus." This is Master Sengzhao's explanation in his *Comments on the Vimalakīrti Sūtra*.[908]

(2) An explanation in terms of text and meaning. The text is "like" and reality is "this." The text's skillful explanations are "like" and that reality is not wrong is "this."[909] This is the explanation of Dhyāna Master Zhiyi in his *Notes on the Vimalakīrti Sūtra*.[910]

(3) An explanation in terms of the ultimate and provisional truth. That the ultimate does not contradict the conventional is called "like" and that the conventional accords with the ultimate is called "this." This explanation has been transmitted.[911]

(4) An explanation in terms of the disciple. It says "like" because what Ānanda reported was just *like* the Buddha's words. It says "this" in order to exclude those that merely resemble something *like* that.[912]

(5) An explanation in terms only of the Buddha. It says "like" because the Dharma expounded by the Buddha as reported by Ānanda was exactly like that expounded by the buddhas of the past. What is expounded by all buddhas is correct, not false. Thus it also says "right" ["this"; *shi* 是]. The above two explanations are given by Dharma Master Huiyuan.[913]

(6) An explanation in terms of the Buddha and the disciples. When it says "thus," this is an omen based on the stimulus and response. It says "like" because [the Buddha] accords with the capacities [of living beings]. It says "right" ["this"; *shi* 是] because [the beings] are free from contention [*fei* 非, the opposite of *shi* 是]. Living beings, free from contention, are the stimulus. The Tathāgata, according with their capacities, is the response. The transmitter of the sūtras, in order to mark that the teachings emerged

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[908] See T38, no. 1775, p. 328, a12-14.

[909] There is a pun at play that only works in Chinese, given that *shi* 是 can mean both "this" and "right."

[910] T38, no. 1778, p. 568, b20-21. Interestingly, this quote occurs in the *Short Commentary on the Vimalakīrti Sūtra* (*Weimo jing lüeshu* 維摩經略疏) that was edited by Zhanran on the basis of a text by Zhiyi. No explanation of "thus have I heard" is found in Zhiyi's more extended commentary, the *Profound Commentary on the Vimalakīrti Sūtra* (*Weimo jing xuanshu* 維摩經玄疏; T1778).

[911] Although I have not been able to find a source for this interpretation, other commentators citing this explanation attribute it to Paramārtha—e.g., Huiyuan 慧苑 at X03, no. 221, p. 598, b23-24; Chengguan at T35, no. 1735, p. 529, a17-19 and X05, no. 227, p. 72, a19-21.

[912] The earliest source for this explanation that I have been able to locate is Huiyuan's 慧遠 *Notes on the Meaning of the Vimalakīrti Sūtra* (*Weimo yi ji* 維摩義記). Huiyuan already notes that "this explanation, focusing on Ānanda, has been transmitted from of old." 「昔來相傳就阿難釋。」(T38, no. 1776, p. 423, c27-29). It is also cited by Huiyuan 慧苑, who attributes it to Huiyuan 慧遠 (X03, no. 221, p. 598, c7-8). It is also cited, without providing a source, in a Dunhuang manuscript of which the authorship is unknown, *Profound Explanations of the Lotus Sūtra* (*Fahua jing xuan zanshi* 法華經玄贊釋; X34, no. 639, p. 948, c5-6).

[913] See the note above for the previous explanation's location. Explanation 5 is also found in Huiyuan's *Notes on the Meaning of the Vimalakīrti Sūtra*; see T38, no. 1776, p. 424, a17-19. The *Profound Explanations of the Lotus Sūtra* gives a similar explanation at X34, no. 639, p. 948, c18.

out of this stimulus-response relationship said "thus." [p181a] This explanation is found in the *Comments on the Lotus Sūtra*.[914]

(7) Master Guangzhai says, "When it says 'thus': When [Ānanda] was about to transmit what he had heard, he first identified the entire text, [saying, as it were] 'such a sūtra as this is what I personally heard from the Buddha.' In other words, it is what 'I have heard.'"[915]

(8) Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty says, "When it says 'thus,' this means 'words *like this* were spoken by the Buddha.' That is why it says thus."[916]

The various explanations like this cannot be fully recounted.)

The Indian masters give three diverging explanations.

(1) Bodhiruci's *Vajrasena Commentary* says, "Explaining [thus/*rushi* 如是/*evam*] in terms of the common usage, there are many approaches. In summary, there are four broad types: (1) arousing bodhicitta thus, (2) teaching others, (3) analogy, and (4) defining.

(1) Arousing bodhicitta thus. One thinks to oneself, 'I should arouse bodhicitta and cultivate good practices thus.'

(2) Teaching others thus. One teaches those before one, 'You should arouse bodhicitta and cultivate good practices, and so forth, thus.'

(3) 'Thus' in the sense of a comparison. [As in:] 'This person's magnificent virtues are radiant like the light of the sun. His wisdom is deep and extensive

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[914] I have been unable to locate the original source for this. We do find another citation of this same explanation in the *Profound Explanations of the Lotus Sūtra* where it is specified as being the explanation of Liu Qiu in his commentary on the *Lotus Sūtra*. The *Profound Explanations* goes on to cite an explanation of this by one Dharma Master from Zhou (*Zhou Fashi* 州法師; n.d.). See X34, no. 639, p. 948, a12-b2.

[915] Guangzhai is an alternate name of Fayun 法雲. This comment, in different wording, is found in his *Notes on the Meaning of the Wondrous Dharma Lotus Sūtra* (*Miaofa lianhua jing yiji* 妙法蓮華經義記). His comment is worth translating in full: "Now when it says, 'thus,' this is the first part of the universal preface. There are those who explain this as follows: 'The text is "thus" and "this" is reality.' There are also those who say, 'like' means 'not different' and 'this' [/'right'] means 'without fault." The position we follow here is that the two characters have no separate meaning. Properly speaking, they together refer to the entire sūtra; it is the object of 'I have heard.' That is to say, 'such a sūtra as this is what I heard at the Buddha's side."「今言「如是」者，此是通序之第一也。有人解言：「文則稱如，理則稱是。」又有人言：「如明無異，是辨無非也。」今一家所習，言如是兩字更無別意，正為總舉一部經為我聞作詮敘，言如是一部經，我佛邊聞也。」(T33, no. 1715, p. 576, c24-29) Note that the first explanation here reported by Fayun is in fact Zhiyi's explanation (no. 2 in Woncheuk's comments above). Many other exegetes give Fayun's explanation in near-identical wording to Woncheuk here—e.g., Jizang (T34, no. 1721, p. 454, b11-13), Kuiji (e.g., T33, no. 1695, p. 27, b10-12; T34, no. 1723, p. 663, a12-14), and Huiyuan 慧苑 (X03, no. 221, p. 598, c24-p. 599, a3).

[916] I have not been able to locate a source for this citation. It is cited similarly by many other exegetes—e.g., Kuiji (T33, no. 1695, p. 27, b12-13; T34, no. 1723, p. 663, a14-15; T38, no. 1772, p. 279, c8-9; T38, no. 1782, p. 1003, b22-23), and Fachong (T39, no. 1803, p. 1016, c5-6). Liangben also cites Emperor Wu in this context but adds a little bit at the beginning: "'Like' refers to the Dharma and 'this' [/'right'] is a word denoting definiteness. [It means] 'words *like this* were spoken by the Buddha.'" 「梁武帝云：「如即指法。是即定詞。如斯之言是佛所說。」」(T33, no. 1709, p. 436, b7-8).

like the ocean. His appearance is graceful just like the full moon.' (And so forth—as the text extensively explains.)[917]

(4) Confirming that it is thus. ''Thus did I see, hear, and so forth.'"

When it says 'thus' here [in the sūtra], only the fourth, 'thus' in the sense of a confirmation, applies. It refers to when Subhūti said, 'I heard these teachings from the Buddha. What I say is neither more nor less. It is without faults and flaws. It is definitely thus. There are no faults in the transmission.' That is why it says 'thus.'" (To explain: The meaning here is basically the same as *Bandhuprabha's.)[918]

(2) Tripiṭaka Master Long Ear[919] gives three explanations.[920]

(1) In terms of the Buddha: The buddhas of the three times speak similarly and without contradiction. Therefore, it is "like." Because they speak similarly, it is "this."

(2) In terms of the Dharma: The real characteristic of dharmas is not different throughout time. Therefore, it is said to be "like." It is spoken in just this way. Therefore, it is "this." It is spoken in accord with thusness. Therefore, it is "this."

(3) In terms of the Saṅgha: What Ānanda heard from the Buddha and what he transmits are not different. Therefore, it says "like." It is forever free from faults. Therefore, it is "right."

(3) Tripiṭaka Master Paramārtha explains "thus" as having the meaning of confirming. It has two aspects: the text and the truth. The text is what explains and the truth is what is being explained. It is as he extensively explained.[921] To summarize the meaning of his explanation: Both the text and the truths in what Ānanda transmitted were just like what the Buddha had expounded. That is why it says "thus."

There are [broadly speaking] three explanations in the treatises.

(1) The first scroll of the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* says, "The intention behind 'thus' is faith. Faith is what allows one to enter into the great sea of the Buddha's wisdom. Wisdom is how one crosses it. The faithful say, 'This matter is

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[917] My parentheses here mark not an interlinear note but rather Woncheuk's own intrusion on his quotation to mark that he is abridging. In fact, he leaves out only one more analogy from the *Treatise of the Vajra Immortal*: "He is strong and valiant like a king among lions." 「勇健雄猛如師子王」(T25, no. 1512, p. 800, c16-17). The point of this passage seems to be that the Sanskrit *evaṃ* can also be used in analogies, with the construction "*yathā…evaṃ…*", "just as [the sea is deep], just in that way his wisdom is deep." Cp. the interpretation of the FDL discussed in Chapter 4.

[918] T25, no. 1512, p. 800c8-22. The reference to *Bandhuprabhā is to the FDL; see T26, no. 1530, p. 291, c8 ff.

[919] Funayama Toru has suggested that Tripiṭaka Master Long Ear *Chang'er sanzang* 長耳三藏 is an alternate name for the translator Narendrayaśas; see Funayama 2014.

[920] Note that these explanations in fact presuppose the Chinese *rushi* 如是.

[921] That is, the reader is supposed to know or at least refer to Paramārtha's text, which I suspect is identical to the aforementioned *Notes on the Seven Topics*. This is also suggested by Liangben's citation of this explanation as coming from *Paramārtha's Notes* (T33, no. 1709, p. 436, b8-11); cp. Liangben's other reference to that text at T33, no. 1709, p. 435, c18; T33, no. 1709, p. 436, a22.

thus.' The nonbelievers say, 'This matter is not thus.'"[922] It is as extensively explained there.

(2) Guṅadatta's *Treatise on Prajñā* says, "'Thus have I heard' indicates that this is realized and expounded by the World Honored One and not made by oneself."[923]

[p181b] (3)The *Treatise on the Sūtra on the Buddhas' Abode* gives four explanations. In the first scroll it says, "Overall, 'thus' can be explained in four ways:

> (1) In the sense of a comparison. That is to say, 'What I am about to say, the text in this way [i.e., 'thus'; *rushi* 如是], is as I have once heard it.' (Here the present [text] is likened to [what was heard in] the past.)
>
> (2) In the sense of an instruction. That is to say, when one states the time and the audience, [one says,] 'Listen thus to what I have once heard.'
>
> (3) As the answer to a question. That is to say, someone asked, 'What you are about to say now, is that truly what you have once heard [from the Buddha]?' Whereupon one replies, 'Thus have I heard.'
>
> (4) In the sense of assent. That is, at the council the assembly of bodhisattvas said, 'What you have heard, you should speak thus.' The Dharma-transmitting bodhisattva thereupon confirmed this, saying, 'I will speak thus as I once heard.'"[924]

There are three masters who have given the following interpretations regarding these four explanations: One says that of these four, only the fourth one applies. The second says that of these four, only the latter two apply. The third says that all four of them apply. It is all as extensively explained [in that text].

The analysis of "I have heard."

On the basis of the body of the five aggregates, those such as the Dharma-transmitting bodhisattva and Ānanda provisionally posit a self. The ear-faculty gives rise to a cognition that hears what is spoken. Therefore, it says, "thus have I heard." As such, the *Treatise on the Sūtra on the Buddhas' Abode* says, "'I' is the worldly convention for the aggregates. 'Hearing' is when the ear-faculty has given rise to cognition that has auditory experience. Because [the sūtra] leaves aside such analysis and focuses on the general, it says 'I have heard.'"[925]

[Explaining "I"]

Question:

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[922] See T25, no. 1509, p. 63, a1-7. Woncheuk's citation is abridged and slightly altered.

[923] T25, no. 1515, p. 887, a24-25. The full title of this text is the *Treatise on the Vajra Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra Which Breaks Attachments While not Harming Conventional Language* (*Jin'gang bore boluomi jing po quzhuo bu huai jiaming jing* 金剛般若波羅蜜經破取著不壞假名論). A translation of an Indic commentary on the *Vajra Sūtra* by *Divākara (*Dipoheluo* 地婆訶羅/*Rizhao* 日照; 614-688).

[924] Woncheuk is abriding and clarifying the commentary at T26, no. 1530, p. 291, c10-24.

[925] SeeT26, no. 1530, p. 291, c24-26.

In the Buddhadharma, there is no person or self. How then is it that the sūtras all say "I have heard"?

Explanation:

There are various explanations of this point. According to Nāgārjuna's tenet, there are four siddhāntas used to explain "I have heard."

(The Sanskrit word "siddhānta" is explained variously. Some do not translate it because it is polysemous. Others do translate it. Some translate it as "proven proposition." Some translate it as "mark of a guideline."[926] Some translate it as "sealed." Some translate it as "fixed." Some translate it as "ultimately." With this variety of translations, it is difficult to come to a final decision. The Dhyāna Master [Huisi] of Nanyue says, "Just like 'great nirvāṅa' this term combines the foreign language and Chinese. *Xi* is a Chinese [lit. "Sui dynasty"] word whereas *tan* is a foreign word. *Xi* means 'universal.' *Tan* translates as 'giving.' Using four dharmas, the Buddha gives universally to living beings. That is why those [four dharmas] are called *xitan*." This is the explanation given by Master Zhiyi in his *Notes on the Vimalakīrti Sūtra*.[927] According to the four-scroll *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* there are four types [of siddhānta]. Thus, in the second scroll, the annotation says, "'siddhānta' either means 'proposition,' 'established,' or 'logic.'")[928]

The meaning of the four siddhāntas is as explained in the first scroll of the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*.[929]

> (1) The conventional siddhānta. For example, the aggregates are taken to be a self—as in "thus have I heard." Conventionally, [such a person] exists; in ultimate truth, it does not.
>
> (2) The siddhānta specific to each individual. [The Buddha] expounds the Dharma having considered a person's mental activity. In regards to some issue, that person may or may not listen. For those who hold annihilationist views, he speaks of the continuity of rebirth. For those who hold eternalist views, he says that there is no self.
>
> (3) The antidote-siddhānta. For example, the contemplation of impurity is an antidote for desire. In the case of anger, it does not apply.

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[926] I take *mo* 墨 as *shengmo* 繩墨 based on a passage later in the same commentary (T38, no. 1777, p. 547, c20-23). I am indebted to Meghan Howard Masang for her insight on translating this term (personal communication, 05/10/2024).

[927] This is from Zhiyi's *Short Commentary on the Vimalakīrti Sūtra* (*Weimo lüeshu* 維摩經略疏; T38, no. 1777, p. 520, b21-26). The explanation by Huisi inappropriately cuts the Chinese transliteration of *siddhānta* up into two parts *xi* and *tan*, taking the former to be a translation rather than a transliteration. I take *mo* 墨 as *shengmo* 繩墨 based on a passage later in the same commentary (T38, no. 1777, p. 547, c20-23).

[928] The relevant passage of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* occurs at T16, no. 670, p. 493, a5-16. However, it is not clear to me how this passage is taken to speak of four types of siddhāntas. Some manuscript traditions include an interlinear note here identical to that cited by Woncheuk here. A variant reading of this note has *mo* 默 "silent" instead of *li* 理 "logic" (or "principles"). That variant reading makes no sense to me. It might be that *mo* 默 is a scribal error for *mo* 墨 (used as just above; see previous footnote).

[929] The DZDL gives a list of four siddhāntas at T25, no. 1509, p. 59, b18-20, and proceeds to explain them in detail. Woncheuk's following comments are mostly pulled from that explanation.

(4) The ultimate siddhānta. That is to say, the true characteristic of all dharmas is beyond the reach of language; it is where mental activity ceases. A verse in that regard says:

All is real and nothing is real,
All is both real and unreal too,
[p181c] And nothing is real or unreal—
Such is the truth of all dharmas.

(An extensive explanation of this verse can be found in scroll three of the *Treatise on the Middle*.)[930]

Also, that treatise says: "Furthermore, conventional speech is of three types: (1) false, (2) conceited, and (3) provisional." It is in terms of the third type that [the sūtra] says "I." This is like the *Yogācārabhūmi*'s [discussion of the] "provisionally designated self."[931]

Question:

Why does the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* not say "no-self and no no-self" as it does in the questions on the true characteristic in the *Treatise on the Middle*? Why does it instead say "no-self?"[932]

Answer:

There is no contradiction. In the conventional siddhānta, [the Buddha] says there is a self. In the ultimate truth, he says there is no self. [When he speaks] specific to each individual, he sometimes says there is a self or that there is no self, in order to dispel both types of attachment. He can also say, "There is no-self and no no-self." Thus, the *Treatise on the Middle* says:

Buddhas might say there is a self
Or they might say there is no self
But in terms of dharmas' truth
There is no-self and no no-self.[933]

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[930] The verse in the DZDL corresponds to verse 18.8 in the *Treatise on the Middle*. There it is translated differently though it amounts to the same meaning except for the final line, which reads "This is all the buddhas' teaching." 「 一切實非實　　亦實亦非實　非實非非實　　是名諸佛法」(T30, no. 1564, p. 24, a5-6). There is indeed an extended commentary on the true characteristic of dharmas in the third chapter of the *Treatise on the Middle.* Curiously, in a wholly different context, Chengguan cites verse 18.8 from the *Treatise on the Middle,* ascribing it to the DZDL; see T36, no. 1736, p. 43, c9-10.

[931] *Yuqie* 瑜伽 is a standard abbreviation for *Yuqie lun* 瑜伽論, i.e., the *Yuqie shi di lun* 瑜伽師地論 (T1579). As far as I have been able to find, that text contains no specific discussion of the self as a provisional designation *jiashuo* 假說. There is, however, an extended discussion of emptiness that talks about provisional designation (T30, no. 1579, p. 488, a22-23 ff.). There is also a discussion of no-self that briefly speaks of the self as provisionally designated (T30, no. 1579, p. 307, a23-24).

[932] See the following discussions and relevant footnotes below for these allusions.

[933] This is verse 18.6 from the *Treatise on the Middle* (T30, no. 1564, p. 24, a1-3). This must also be the source for the phrase in the question. Curiously, however, the present text, in both cases, switches the *wu* 無 and *fei* 非 around. The *Treatise on the Middle* reads 「無我無非我」 whereas Woncheuk has 「非我非無我」, a difference in negation valences that is almost impossible to capture in translation. He cites it this way too in the parallel discussion in his *Commentary on the Sūtra for the Humane King* (T33, no. 1708, p. 363, a7-8).

For someone with an extreme attachment to the self, [the Buddha] says that the absence of a self is the characteristic of reality. When he needs to dispel both attachments in someone, [the Buddha] says that the characteristic of reality is that there is no-self and no no-self. Both cases are based on a single purport. Further, in the *Nirvāṅa Sūtra*, [the Buddha] speaks of the true self as the characteristic of reality.[934] You should understand this according to the principle.

According to Maitreya's tenet, there are four reasons that a self is provisionally designated on the basis of the aggregates. To that point, the sixth scroll of the *Yogācārabhūmi* says:

> The Bhagavān said, "Bhikṣus, you should know that there are four reasons that I provisionally speak of there being a living being: (1) because of the convenience of conventional speech; (2) in order to accord with conventions; (3) in order to dispel the fear [that arises when one says] there definitely is not a self; and (4) in order to make known the good points and the faults of oneself and others so that [the audience] will have firm faith and understanding."[935]

Scroll nine of the *Treatise Proclaiming the Noble Teaching* and the thirteenth scroll of the *Abhidharma-samuccaya-vyākhyā* give the same explanation as the *Yogācārabhūmi*.[936]

[Explaining "have heard"]

As for "have heard," there are various explanations. According to the Sarvāstivāda tenet, it is the ear that hears, not the consciousness. According to the scholar Dharmatrāta, it is the consciousness that hears, not the ear—see scroll 13 and onwards in the *Mahāvibhāṣā*.[937]

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[934] "True self" (*zhen wo* 真我) is indeed one of the significant teachings in the *Mahāyāna Nirvāṅa Sūtra*; see, e.g., T12, no. 375, p. 653, c11-15.

[935] The quote is somewhat abridged and altered from, indeed, the sixth scroll of the *Yogācārabhūmi*; see T30, no. 1579, p. 307, b24-c2. Curiously, the original text reads *wo* 我 ("self" or "I") instead of instead of *youqing* 有情 ("living being"). Dingbin in his *Doctrinal Notes that Adorn the Tenets: A Commentary on the Four-Part Vinaya* (*Sifen lü shu shi zongyi ji* 四分律疏飾宗義記) cites the text as Woncheuk does while providing useful interlinear glosses. My translation has been helped by those glosses. Since the fourth item remains somewhat opaque in translation, here is Dingbin's comment: "This means that if we did not establish this and that living being, then one would not know the difference between ordinary beings and noble ones, and so forth." 「謂若不立此彼有情，即不能知凡聖差別等。」(X42, no. 733, p. 293, a18-23). In other words, without using conventional speech, the path would become unintelligible and therefore beings would have no way to understand and believe in karma ("the good points and the faults of oneself and others"). The parallel passage in the *Abhidharma Treatise* (see below) explains this item as follows: "Revealing the good qualities and the faults of oneself and others: If one were not to establish the differences between living beings and instead only speak of the pure and defiled characteristics of all dharmas, then [for ordinary beings], everything would be lacking in distinctions and [those beings] would not be able to understand that such-and-such a person has such-and-such faults, whether already eradicated or yet to be eradicated; or that such-and-such a person has such-and-such good qualities, whether already realized or yet to be realized."「顯示自他具德失者：若離假立有情差別，唯說諸法染淨相者，是則一切無有差別，不可了知如是身中如此過失，若斷未斷，如是身中如此功德，若證未證。」(T31, no. 1606, p. 753, a18-21).

[936] The *Treatise Proclaiming the Sage's Teaching* (*Xianyang shengjiao lun* 顯揚聖教論) indeed contains the same passage in the ninth scroll; see T31, no. 1602, p. 525, b15-21. The thirteenth scroll of the *Abhidharma-samuccaya-vyākhyā* indeed contains the same four reasons, albeit in somewhat different wording, along with an explanation; see T31, no. 1606, p. 753, a7-22.

[937] Said text at scroll 13 indeed discusses this issue, albeit in regards to visual perception, and refers to Dharmatrāta (*Fajiu* 法救); see T27, no. 1545, p. 61, c8-9.

According to the Sautrāntika tenet, it is the consciousness that hears, not the ear—see scroll six of the *Tattvasiddhi Treatise.*[938] According to the Dṛṣṭāntika scholars, it is the combination [of ear, sound, and consciousness] that hears—see scroll thirty of the *Mahāvibhāṣā Treatise*.[939]

Now, in the Mahāyāna, the Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna offers two explanations: (1) Since it is the divine eye that sees form, we can infer that it is the ear that hears; (2) it is contact that hears. Although these two explanations are found in the first scroll of the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, the latter one is correct. This is because when he actually explains "have heard," he says that it is contact.[940]

In Maitreya's tenet, there are three explanations.

> (1) It is the ear that hears, not the consciousness. As the *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, scroll one, says, "What is the characteristic of the ear-dhātu? That it can hear sounds."[941] Similarly, the *Yogācārabhūmi* says, "It is called the 'ear' because, again and again, when sound reaches it, it can hear."[942]
>
> [0182a] (2) Another is that it is the consciousness that hears, not the ear. As the *Commentary on the Yogācārabhūmi* says, "'To hear' means 'auditory perception.'[943] That is, the ear-faculty gives rise to the ear-consciousness because one is hearing spoken teachings."[944] Similarly, scroll one of the *Treatise on the Sūtra on the Buddhas' Abode* says, "'To hear' means that the ear-faculty gives rise to a consciousness that listens to and accepts [the teachings]."[945]

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[938] I have not yet been able to locate a relevant passage in scroll six of the *Tattvasiddhi*. In that scroll, there is merely a brief note to this effect; see T32, no. 1646, p. 288, b17-18. An extended discussion of the nature of percept that is directly relevant, again using visual perception as the case-study, can be found in the fourth scroll; T32, no. 1646, p. 267, a7-p. 268, a10.

[939] See T27, no. 1545, p. 61, c10-11.

[940] This is indeed the interpretation offered in the explanation of "[thus I] have heard" in the first scroll of the DZDL; see T25, no. 1509, p. 64, b26-c10.

[941] This is a paraphrase of the original passage, which says: "What are the characteristics of the eye-dhātu? The eye can perceive forms that are present. It is the ripening of a collection of seeds [from?] the ālayavijñāna. This is the characteristic of the eye-dhātu. The characteristics of the ear-, nose-, tongue-, and tactile-dhātus are the same [*mutatis mutandis*]." 「眼界何相？謂眼曾現見色。及此種子積集異熟阿賴耶識是眼界相。如眼界相，耳，鼻，舌，身，意界相亦爾。」(T31, no. 1605, p. 663, b11-13). For a translation from the Sanskrit, see Rāhula & Boin-Webb (2001: 4). This discussion is indeed found in the first scroll.

[942] See T30, no. 1579, p. 294, a1-2.

[943] This is hard to capture in English. The verb hearing is glossed with a synonym. In the absence of a fitting synonym in English, a more direct translation would yield the rather unhelpful "'To hearˈ means 'to hear.'" 「聞謂聽聞。」

[944] T30, no. 1580, p. 887, b12-13. This is from the *Commentary on the Yogācārabhūmi* (*Yuqie shi di lun shi* 瑜伽師地論釋) by Jinaputra (*Zuishengzi* 最勝子). The comment comes in the context of the three types of wisdom—that from study (lit. "hearing"), reflection, and meditation.

[945] T26, no. 1530, p. 291, c25. This is in the context of that *Treatise*'s comments on "heard" in "thus have I heard." This explains why it says that the consciousness "listens to and accepts" the teachings, though this does seem to blur Abhidharmic-type analysis and conventional description of the listener's mental state.

(3) Alternatively, one can argue that it is neither the ear nor consciousness that hears.[946] In this case it is the combination that hears. As the second scroll of the *Abhidharmasamuccayavyākhyā* says:

> Question: Is it the eye that sees physical form, or is it the consciousness and such that see?
>
> Answer: It is not the eye that sees physical form and clearly it is not the consciousness and such that see, because all dharmas lack causal power. It is based on the combination [of factors] that "seeing" is provisionally established.[947]

The "ear" and so forth are just like this, as is extensively explained in that [text].

As for why the treatises differ: To show the primary basis for hearing sounds, texts such as the *Yogācārabhūmi* say that it is the ear that hears. Emphasizing the teaching of [mental] discrimination, texts such as the *Treatise on the Sūtra on the Buddhas' Abode* says that it is consciousness that hears. To show that dharmas lack any substantive functioning, the *Treatise on the Perfection of Wisdom* and the *Abhidharmasamuccayavyākhyā*[948] [teach that] it is the combination [of factors] that constitutes hearing. All of them are based on this or that teaching; they are not in contradiction.

(Question: "If dharmas lack substantive functioning, then the ear should be unable to hear. If they lack substantive functioning, cognition should be unable to take [sound] as its object." A back and forth shall be had on this issue.)

If we explain hearing according to the principle of mind-only: In the first scroll of the *Treatise on the Sūtra on the Buddha's Abode* it says that there are two doctrines upheld by masters. Thus, that *Treatise* says:

> Some hold the doctrine that it is by the supreme supporting cause of the Tathāgata's compassionate vows that the characteristics of the text arise in the hearer's consciousness. These characteristics of the text, though most directly arisen based on the good roots [of the listener], are said to be [caused by] the Buddha speaking based on their predominant condition. It says "I heard" because [an object] manifests in one's mind by the power of the ear faculty.
>
> Others hold the doctrine that the characteristics of the text arose in the Tathāgata's mind. These characteristics, because they are good roots arisen from the Buddha's [wish to] benefit others, are said to be spoken by the Buddha. Although the listener's

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[946] This line in the Chinese is odd, seemingly suggesting that this third explanation holds that it is the ear that hears and not consciousness (*er wen fei shi* 耳聞非識). However, this must reflect an issue with the text given what follows.

[947] T31, no. 1606, p. 703, b12-14.

[948] One suspects an error in the textual transmission here: The position represented is clearly parallel with the account of the *Abhidharmasamuccayavyākhyā* just cited. Indeed, the text seems to refer to that text. However, this is not fully clear as the name of the Chinese Buddhist lay exegete Liu Qiu (438-495) is interjected into the title, such that we read: *Za liu qiu ji lun* 雜劉虯集論. Liu Qiu's relevance in the present context is unclear.

mind cannot [directly] perceive them, a portion resembling them appears [in his mind], and that is why it says "I heard."[949]

To comment on this: Of these explanations by the two [groups of] masters, reported in the *Treatise on the Sūtra on the Buddha's Abode*, the first is by Nāgasena. He held that physical form, sounds, etc., do not exist in buddhahood. The doctrine of the other masters does allow there to be physical form, sounds, etc., in buddhahood. Great Master Xuanzang and Bodhisattva Dharmapāla followed the latter explanation. It is just as when earlier [masters] explained the root and shadow, existence and non-existence.

Question:

Ānanda was born on the night of the Tathāgata's Awakening. He only became his attendant twenty years later. He could not have personally heard the sūtras spoken before that. How then can it be that all sūtras say "I heard"?

[*Answer:*]

Bodhiruci's *Vajrasena Commentary* says, "After the Tathāgata's passing, there were three occasions when the canon was compiled. First, five hundred bhikṣus compiled the canon in Indra's cave nearby the city of Rājagṛha. [p182b] These bhikṣus, all arhats such as Śāriputra, each said 'As for such-and-such a sūtra, thus I have heard: The Buddha spoke it at such-and-such a place.'"

"Later, an evil king destroyed the Buddhadharma. Afterward, seven hundred bhikṣus gathered to restore the canon. They all said, 'Such-and-such a sūtra I heard from such-and-such a bhikṣu.' They did not claim to have heard them from the Buddha. This restoration of the canon was done by hīnayānists.

"Further, the Tathāgata was once outside the Cakravāḍa mountains [which encircle the world system] without yet being in another world. Limitless buddhas gathered with him there in between two worlds. After they had spoken their buddha speech, they compiled the Mahāyāna canon. [For this,] the disciples eighty koṭis of nāyutas of arhats, were also gathered, as well as an assembly of bodhisattvas numbering as many as sands as are found in limitless and boundless Ganges rivers—incalculable. They were all gathered there. At that time, the bodhisattvas and śrāvakas all said, 'Thus have I heard: The Tathāgata at such-and-such a place spoke such-and-such a sūtra.'"

Tripiṭaka master Paramārtha, in his *Notes on the Seven Topics,* says, "When something is heard firsthand, one says 'Thus have I heard.' When something is heard second-hand, one says 'I have heard thus." Also, in his *Notes on the Views of the Schools,* he says, "When something is heard firsthand, one says 'I have heard.' When something is heard secondhand, one says 'what was heard.'"

To comment on this: Such explanations contradict what is said in the *Sūtra on Repaying Kindness*. According to that sūtra, there are three explanations: (1) Ānanda heard the sūtras secondhand; (2) he was able to read the Buddha's conventional thoughts; (3) the Buddha spoke them again for him. Thus, in the sixth scroll it says:

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[949] For the original, see T26, no. 1530, pp. 291c26-292a3.

> The teachings spoken by the Buddha in the first twenty years were not heard by Ānanda. How can he say "I have heard"?
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> Answer: The devas spoke them for Ānanda. Or, he learnt them from other bhikṣus. Or, the Buddha entered into his conventional mind such that Ānanda knew them. Or, Ānanda had requested from the Buddha: "The teachings you have expounded in the first twenty years, speak them all [again] for me." Because of the Buddha's superb skill, within a single line of a single teaching, he expounded limitless Dharmas. He could take limitless Dharmas and [summarize them] into a single line. By means of the coarse, the Buddha showed the details. Ānanda was able to apprehened them because of his quick and sharp powers of retention."[950]

We may also comment that the *Vajra Flower Sūtra* says that Bhikṣu Ānanda had obtained the samādhi "Royal Ease in the Awareness of the Nature of Dharmas." By means of this samādhi, he could remember sūtras that had been spoken before [in his absence] as though he had heard them himself. It was the same with all events that had happened in past lives: He remembered them all. It was just like Katyāyana who had obtained the power of knowing according to one's wishes (?) and could remember all the sūtras spoken by the Buddha. Ānanda was just like that.[951]

Question:

> Since Ānanda was a śrāvaka, how could he retain the Mahāyāna sūtras?

Answer:

As the *Sūtra on the Compilation of the Mahāyāna Dharmas* explains, there were three Ānandas: (1) Ānanda, who retained the śrāvaka Dharmas; [p182c] (2) Ānanxian (?, *A'nanxian* 阿難賢), who retained the pratyekabuddha Dharmas; (3) Ānanhai (?, *A'nanhai* 阿難海), who retained the Mahāyāna Dharmas. *Vajrasena's Commentary* gives the same account as that sūtra.[952] Tripiṭaka master Paramārtha and [Vajrasena's] *Commentary on the Vajra Sūtra* cite the *Sūtra on King Ajātaśatru's Repentance's* explanation of the three Ānandas. Among the three Ānandas, it was the third who retained this sūtra. Therefore, there is no problem.

(3) The explanation of the meaning when [the elements] are combined.

As the *Treatise on the Sūtra on the Buddha's Abode* says, "Know that the intent behind saying 'thus have I heard' is [to indicate] avoiding the fault of having anything added or subtracted or having other sections. That is to say, it means, 'I heard such a Dharma from the Buddha. It was not transmitted to me by others. It shows that the listener was capable, such that nothing that was heard has the fault of having anything added or subtracted or having other sections.'"[953] It is all as explained there.

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[950] Woncheuk is abriding the original at T03, no. 156, pp. 155c17-156a1.
[951] This seems to be an allusion to a passage about Katyāyana in the *Abhidharma-vibhāṣa-śāstra* where we are told that he was able to expand short teachings (T28, no. 1546, p. 65a2-6).
[952] The brief passage in *Vajrasena's Commentary* to which Woncheuk alludes is at T25, no. 1512, p. 800c26-27. Vajrasena does not give the names mentioned here.
[953] T26, no. 1530, p. 292a3-7.

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