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THE FORMULATION OF INTRODUCTORY TOPICS AND  
THE WRITING OF EXEGESIS IN CHINESE BUDDHISM<sup>1</sup>

TAO JIN

As a guide to the interpretation of *sūtras*, introductions in Chinese Buddhist commentaries almost always present a wide range of topics that allow commentators to survey the texts they comment upon from various different perspectives. The formulation of these introductory topics varies with commentators and, in many cases, also with commentaries of the same commentator. While, for example, Zhiyi (538–597) adheres steadfastly to his famous model of “five aspects of profound meaning” (*wuchong xuanyi*), regarding the “title” (*ming*) of the work, the “essence” (*ti*), “central tenet” (*zong*) and “function” (*yong*) of the religious truth taught in it, and the “characteristics” (*xiang*) that set one *sūtra* apart from another on the basis of these four aspects,<sup>2</sup> his slightly younger contemporary

<sup>1</sup> This paper is adapted from a chapter of my 2008 dissertation, “Through the Lens of Interpreters: the Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna in Its Classical Re-presentations;” an earlier version of this chapter was presented in the 2005 Annual Meeting of American Academy of Religion. I want to thank the anonymous reviewer of the JIABS for his or her careful and insightful comments and suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the structural relationship of these “five aspects,” see below, section three: Elaboration of teaching: from essence to its manifestations. The topic of “characteristics” is designed to differentiate a particular *sūtra* from others, or to determine its position in a tradition by comparing its “characteristics” with those of others. A commentary of the *Sūtra of the benevolent kings* (*Renwanghuguoboruoqing shu*) thus spells out this sense of “differentiation” as follows: “‘Teaching’ (*jiao*) refers to the words with which sages edify the people, and ‘characteristics’ differentiate similarities from differences (in various such teachings)” (T33n1705p255b9). It is perhaps for this sense of “differentiation” that the topic of “characteristics” is often used

Jizang (549–623) appears to be much less focused and organized in his exegetical attention – indeed, he has never really settled on any set of introductory topics, sometimes even allowing the list of his inquiries to be rampantly open,<sup>3</sup> and occasionally also finding it convenient to borrow Zhiyi’s “five aspects.”<sup>4</sup> Such examples abound in Chinese Buddhist commentaries and, together, they amply demonstrate the variation in the formulation of introductory topics in the writing of exegesis in Chinese Buddhism.

This variation draws our attention to the breadth and depth of commentators’ introductory surveys, for it asks us to think about what questions different commentators raise in their introductions, and how they in their respective ways understand, organize and present these questions – with the former reflecting the breadth of a survey and the latter, the depth. Put in other words, such a variation directs our attention, not to what is said in commentaries, but to how it is said, or, using the words of this article, not to the content of exegesis, but to the writing of exegesis.

This attention to the writing of exegesis is, apparently, not something new. In his magnum opus on the history of Chinese Buddhism, Tang Yongtong touches upon the issues of origination and methods of the Chinese Buddhist exegesis;<sup>5</sup> Mou Ransun explores the relationship between *sūtra* lectures and commentaries in his 1959 comparative study of the Confucian and Buddhist exegesis from, particularly, the perspective of rituals performed during

to discuss the practice of doctrinal classification (*panjiao*).

<sup>3</sup> For example, he has ten topics in *Milejing youyi* (T38n1771), and these ten still do not seem to have exhausted all that he wants to ask about that *sūtra*, because his tenth topic “clarification of miscellaneous issues” (*zaliaojian*) is made, apparently, to include more or “miscellaneous issues.”

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the introduction of his *Renwangboruojing shu*, T33n1707.

<sup>5</sup> Tang, *Hanwei liangjin nanbeichao fojiaoshi*, pp. 114–20 & 546–52.

those lectures;<sup>6</sup> Ōchō Enichi's 1979 "Shakukyōshikō" presents a comprehensive inquiry into the evolution of the Chinese Buddhist exegesis;<sup>7</sup> the conference on and the subsequent publication of *Buddhist Hermeneutics* in 1988 look at the "principles for the retrieval of meaning," an indispensable element in the interpretation of *sūtras*;<sup>8</sup> and, in his 1999 study of Chinese *prajñā* interpretation, Alexander Mayer assigns three levels of significance to Buddhist interpretation, namely, exposition, exegesis, and hermeneutics.<sup>9</sup> This list has been continuously growing in recent decades.<sup>10</sup>

While scholars have approached the writing of exegesis from all these various perspectives, the formulation of introductory topics has remained largely an unexplored subject. This subject entails such questions as: What questions are generally asked to introduce a *sūtra*? How are these questions related to each other or, in other words, how do commentators categorize their inquiries in different ways? And, more importantly, how do the asking and re-asking of these questions expand and deepen the exegetical inquiry into *sūtras* and, in that sense, contribute to the development in the writing of exegesis in Chinese Buddhism? This article thus aims to address these previously unanswered questions by focusing its attention on the formulation of introductory topics in Chinese Buddhist commentaries.

<sup>6</sup> Mou, "Lun rushi liangjia zhi jiangjing yu yishu," pp. 353–415.

<sup>7</sup> Ōchō, "Shakukyōshikō," pp. 165–206.

<sup>8</sup> Lopez, ed., *Buddhist Hermeneutics*, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Mayer, "The *Vajracchedika-sūtra* and the Chinese *Prajñā* Interpretation."

<sup>10</sup> Continuously broadened and deepened in recent years, the scholarly attention to the writing of exegesis has been mostly focused on a number of major topics, such as the practice of "matching of meaning" (*geyi*) in the initial stage of Buddhism's introduction into China, *sūtra* lectures, *sūtra* translation, relationship among Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist exegesis, and relationship between Buddhist exegesis and popular literature, and between Buddhist exegesis and literary theory.

While it is difficult to give a conclusive list of all introductory topics actually used in Chinese Buddhist commentaries, several themes in the introductory inquiries appear to be more recurrent than others. Even it is difficult to reproduce the exact course in which these themes evolved, such a course can be seen roughly as characterized by a movement of commentators' attention from brief thematic discussions, which rely heavily on the explanation of title, to elaborations of the introductory survey from various perspectives. Hence the following list of seven themes, on the basis of which the formulation of introductory topics is to be treated below in seven sections:<sup>11</sup>

1. title
2. introductory summary
3. elaboration of teaching
4. arising of teaching
5. central tenet
6. medium of truth
7. classification of teachings

The first two revolve around title and its role in the writing of an introduction, and the remaining five elaborate upon the process of introductory survey, with the third as a general discussion and the last four as discussions of a few specific themes frequently examined in that elaboration. As a general pattern of discussion, each of the seven sections is engaged primarily with two tasks, i.e., a general overview of a particular theme and a look at the introduc-

<sup>11</sup> Well-known as they may be, these seven themes have apparently not exhausted all questions commentators have asked of their *sūtras*. They also look, for example, at the audience of teaching, among many others, and this theme gives rise to such introductory topics as Jizang's "number of people attending (Buddha's) assembly (of Dharma)" (*hui ren duoshao*, T38n1771) and "believers and followers" (*tuzhong*, T35n1731 and T38n1780), Won'chuk's "sentient beings (for whom) the teaching is intended" (*suowei youqing*, T33n1708), Wonhyo's "categorization of people" (*juren fenbie*, T37n1747), Kuiji's "clarification of the time (in which) and the faculties (for which) the teaching (is given)" (*bianjiao shiji*, T43n1830), and many of Fazang's "faculties (for which) the teaching is intended" (*jiaosuo beiji*).



tory topics formulated on that basis, though not necessarily always distinctly in such an order.

### 1. Explanation of work title

To most Chinese Buddhist exegetes, explanation of title is perhaps the most natural and most logical first step in the writing of introduction. Located in the beginning of a text, title is naturally the first thing that catches a commentator's attention, and, perceived as embodying the central tenet of a *sūtra*,<sup>12</sup> it is treated, logically, as the most ideal platform for a thematic survey of that *sūtra*. It is probably for this reason that the Chinese Buddhist exegetes always start their exegesis with an effort to *kai-ti*, or to "lay out the subject matter (through the explanation of title),"<sup>13</sup> and it is for this same reason that almost all commentaries contain a section on title and, in many cases, such a section begins a commentary. In fact, the

<sup>12</sup> For example, in his *Wuliangshoujing yishu*, Huiyuan lists ten types of title, five of which, i.e., 1<sup>st</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup>, are represented as embodying central tenet, either completely or partially (T37n1745p91b16–b23). Even when it does not fall into one of these five categories, commentators still tend to use title to discuss central tenet in their introductions. For an example see Wonhyo's "main ideas" (*dayi*) (T38n1773p299b1–b29) in his *Mileshangshengjing zongyao*, where the "main ideas" of teaching are summarized through a discussion of the future Buddha Maitreya (i.e., "Mile" in Chinese), after whom the *sūtra* is named.

<sup>13</sup> The word *ti* in *kai-ti* refers to "subject matter" instead of its more obvious meaning of "title," although the word itself can be understood in both ways. Thus, to *kai* (i.e., open) *ti* is to "lay out the subject matter." However, if we take a look at the content of *kai-ti-xu*, (i.e., introduction laying out the subject matter), such as those in Jizang (ex., T34n1722p633b12) and Kuiji (ex., T33n1695p26a19), it is quite clear that the laying out of *ti* as subject matter relies heavily on the explanation of *ti* as title. In that sense, it would be not unreasonable to suggest that, in the context of Chinese Buddhist exegesis, when a commentator sets out to *kai-ti*, he thinks not only of the "subject matter," but also of the "title" that embodies such a "subject matter."

introductory sections in many early commentaries are devoted almost entirely to the explanation of title.<sup>14</sup>

The interest in title is expressed in two different perceptions about its role in the writing of commentaries. On the one hand, believed to embody central tenet, title is sometimes treated as a means of exegesis, i.e., title is sometimes used to summarize and bring out the central tenet of a *sūtra* as a way to begin a commentary.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, however, the increasing attention to title itself also allows it to be treated as an end of exegesis, i.e., an introductory topic in its own right, which can be examined for its various aspects, such as those philological, textual, biographical,<sup>16</sup> typological and etc. A typological analysis of title by Huiyuan is given below as an illustration:

The title of a *sūtra* (is formed) differently, and (its formation) contains many varieties. Some (are formed to) reflect the Dharma (of the *sūtra*); some (are formed) from the perspective of the person (who teaches the Dharma); some, in accordance with the event (in which the Dharma is taught); some, to follow the metaphor (of the Dharma); some, to dwell upon the person and the Dharma; some, on (both) the Dharma and the metaphor; some, on (both) the event and the Dharma. Such examples are simply innumerable.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, the introductions in Dao'an's *Renbenyushengjing zhu* (T33n1693), Sengzhao's *Zhu weimojiejing* (T38n1775), and the ten commentaries compiled in the *Dapanniepanjing jijie* (*The Collected explanations of the Nirvāṇasūtra*, T37n1763; hereafter referred to as the “*Collected explanations*” for the sake of convenience).

<sup>15</sup> This role will be discussed further in section two: Summary of teaching as pre-introduction.

<sup>16</sup> Because the discussion of title sometimes includes a discussion of author; see also the discussion of the close association between “intention,” “author” and “title” (as well as the notes thereof) in section four: Accounting for the arising of teaching: intention, conditions and transmission.

<sup>17</sup> T37n1764p613b15–b17.

The interest in title finds its most sophisticated expression in Zhiyi's commentaries, where the two perceptions of its role fuse and the examination of title becomes extremely complex. On the one hand, Zhiyi sometimes devotes an entire commentary to the explanation of title, making title ostensibly the only task and therefore the end of his exegesis; but on the other hand, he subsumes various issues surrounding a *sūtra* under the framework of the explanation of title, clearly treating title as a means to his exegesis. Take, for example, his multi-level discussion of the title *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra*.<sup>18</sup> At the first level, he divides the title into *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* and *sūtra*.<sup>19</sup>

This explanation of title can be divided into two sections: Section one explains the specific name (i.e., *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*), and section two explains the general name (i.e., *sūtra*).

By thus making the first section “specific,” and the latter “general,” the commentator presents and contrasts these two aspects of significance and, in doing so, links this specific work to a larger context of similar *sūtras*. At the second level, the commentator further divides the “specific” name of *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* into *Vimalakīrti* and *nirdeśa*:

This explanation of specific name can be divided into two sections: Section one explains *Vimalakīrti*, and section two explains *nirdeśa*.<sup>20</sup>

In doing so, the commentator separates issues related to the person who speaks the Dharma and issues about the Dharma spoken by that person. At the third level, he specifies the issues related to the person, listing them as translation, practice, classification of teachings, and a basis-ramification (*ben-ji*) relationship, i.e.,

First, the explanation of *Vimalakīrti* is divided into four sections: 1. Translation of the name and explanation of its meanings; 2. Explanation (of the name from the perspective of) three contemplations; 3.

<sup>18</sup> See his *Weimojing xuanshu*, T38n1777p524b05–554b18.

<sup>19</sup> T38n1777p524b6.

<sup>20</sup> T38n1777p524b18–b19.

(Explanation of the name from the perspective of) the four-teaching classification; 4. (Explanation of the name from the perspective of) the basis and the ramifications of Vimalakīrti.<sup>21</sup>

Each of these four perspectives receives still further divisions, and such a bifurcation continues for several more levels, exploring issues related to the title in further and greater details, an act that reinforces the impression of the complexity and therefore maturity in the treatment of title.

The importance of title, however, diminishes in the eyes of commentators over the time, a situation characterized not only by the disappearance of the kind of exegesis devoted exclusively to the discussion of title after Zhiyi and his disciple Guanding, but also by a steady movement of the title section away from the beginning or the most prominent position in introduction and, consequently, its relegation to the status of a regular introductory topic. In works by Dao'an (312–385) and Sengzhao (384–414), and in the *Collected explanations* (before or early 6<sup>th</sup> century),<sup>22</sup> explanation of title alone constitutes introduction; in Zhiyi (538–597), title is always the first of his “five aspects of profound meaning;” in Jizang (549–623), title is not always in the first place; in Zhiyan (602–668), title is the fourth in the list; in Wonhyo (617–?), title is either third or fourth; in Fazang (643–712), title is generally always in the seventh place. These examples are by no means comprehensive and such a trait of change must not necessarily be representative, but the diminishing of exegetical attention to title is simply unmistakable, a situation that indicates a general tendency to look beyond title for more specified inquiries into *sūtras*.

The introductory topics derived from the theme of title are generally formulated on the basis of two words, namely, *ti* (title) and

<sup>21</sup> T38n1777p524b24–b26.

<sup>22</sup> While serious doubts have been raised about the attribution of the *Collected explanations* to Baoliang, the time placement of the work has not been questioned. See, for example, Ōchō, pp. 182–186, for a discussion of its authorship.

*ming* (name), with the latter generally referring only to the key words of a title, rather than its entirety.<sup>23</sup> Chief among all title-related introductory topics are *shi-ti*, *shi-ti-mu*, *shi-ming*, *shi-ming-ti*, *shi-ti-ming* and their derivatives, and all can be translated as “explanation of title.”

## 2. Summary of teaching as pre-introduction

With the development in the writing of exegesis, introductions to commentaries gradually attain a relative independence from the interlinear textual expositions (*suiwen jieshi*), and this independence culminates in the appearance of such exegetical works as Zhiyi’s “profound meaning” (*xuanyi*) and “profound commentary” (*xuan-shu*), Jizang’s “wandering thoughts” (*youyi*) and “profound treatise” (*xuanlun*), Wonhyo’s “doctrinal essentials” (*zongyao*),<sup>24</sup> etc.

<sup>23</sup> See the “Explanation of title” (*shiming*) section in the *Collected explanations* in T37n1763p380b2–b29, where the compiler put together only the explanations of *nirvāṇa*, the key word in the title *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*.

<sup>24</sup> This type of exegetical works, though generally treated as an independent commentary (see Ōchō’s discussion of the *gendan jidai*, pp. 193–200), is by nature and origin only a very special type of introduction in commentary.

In the sense that the size of such a work is disproportionately bigger than is commonly expected of a regular introduction and that it usually appears as an independent work, it is treated as a commentary in its own right, as is evidenced by its inclusion in Ui’chon’s *Sinp’yon chejong kyojang ch’ongnok* (T55n2184), a catalogue of Buddhist commentaries.

However, such a work is first and foremost an introduction by nature, for, like other introductions, it approaches a *sūtra* by presenting a set of general and mostly thematic questions without getting into detailed interlinear textual exposition. In explaining the function of his “profound meaning,” Zhiyi is very clear about such a feature: “The teaching in this *sūtra* is deep and far-reaching, and the purport of its words is unfathomably abstruse. If (we) explain (the *sūtra*), relying only on its writing (i.e., its words and sentences, and therefore its interlinear textual exposition), (what is clarified) is only its individual issues, while its ultimate tenet can never be brought out clearly. (What we are obliged to do, however) is also to briefly reflect upon (its) abstruse and subtle

(meanings) in order to uncover its central tenet of the ‘inconceivable’ (truth). (For this reason, we) present, here, the five aspects of profound meaning before the text (i.e., the interlinear textual exposition)” (T38n1777p519a6–a9). That is, a “profound meaning” is an introduction to the interlinear textual exposition, which he sees as the main text of a commentary. In fact, when Zhiyi (or Guanding, as the editor of Zhiyi’s lectures) introduces his completely interlinear textual exposition of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, namely, the *Words and sentences of the Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* (*Miaofalianhuaqing wenju*, T34n1718), he indicates that a *Profound meaning of the Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* (*Miaofalianhuaqing xuanyi*, T33n1716) precedes and thus prepares for this *Words and sentences*, saying: “A careful and comprehensive explanation of the subject matter of the *sūtra* has been made in a prior (work)” (T34n1718p1b23). This “prior (work)” is his *Profound meaning*. Put in other words, the thematic survey of the *Profound meaning* is by nature and origin the introduction to the interlinear textual exposition of the *Words and sentences*.

Jizang’s “wandering thoughts” and “profound treatise” and Wonhyo’s “doctrinal essentials” are apparently alternate forms of Zhiyi’s *Profound meaning*. The concluding sentence in Wonhyo’s “doctrinal essentials” on the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* (*Dahuidujing zongyao*) is more telling about the nature of such a work: “The fifth subject, the classification of teachings, having been thus discussed, the sixth subject, the interlinear exposition of text is to explain the *sūtra* in an extensive manner. Here ends the *Doctrinal essentials* on the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*” (T33n1697p74a2–a4). The first five subjects introduce and prepare for the sixth subject, i.e., the interlinear textual exposition, which Wonhyo chooses not to include in the *Doctrinal essentials*. The very fact, however, that he attaches the name of the sixth subject to the *Doctrinal essentials* suggests that Wonhyo sees a regular and full commentary as composed of both a “doctrinal essentials” and an interlinear textual exposition and, in that sense, he sees the *Doctrinal essentials* as the introduction to the latter.

Such a perception underlies the “wandering thoughts” and “profound treatise,” too, although no specific remarks to that effect have been found. In fact, the standard ten-section format in Fazang’s commentaries, which includes nine introductory sections and a section for interlinear textual exposition as the tenth, incorporates both a general introductory overview and an interlinear textual exposition in one work, a practice apparently derived from this same perception – it is only that Fazang’s introductory section is so much reduced in size, in comparison with those of Zhiyi, Jizang and Wonhyo and

For that reason, it is quite natural that an introduction should develop its own introduction, which, for the lack of better words and also for the purpose of distinction, is provisionally called in this paper a “pre-introduction.” Like an introduction, a pre-introduction also gives a thematic survey of *sūtra*, although only on the scale of a miniature,<sup>25</sup> and, in that sense, it is at once a summary of teaching and an introduction.

While there are different ways in the writing of a pre-introduction, it generally settles on a two-part format. The first part summarizes the central tenet, sometimes represented by the key words of title, such as *nirvāṇa*, “inconceivable” (*būsiyi*, or *bukesiyi*), and *prajñā* in the titles *Nirvāṇasūtra*, *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra*<sup>26</sup> and the titles of *prajñā sūtras*, respectively; the second part takes a brief excursion into the entire title, both as a conclusion to that summary and as an introduction to the main body of the introductory section. An example of such a format is given below in an abridged pre-introduction:

1. The Dao (of the *sūtra*) is abstruse, subtle, deep, far-reaching and unfathomable ... For this reason, the laying out of the *sūtra*'s central tenet in the beginning abides in the Dharma of non-abiding, and the elucidation of its purport in the end is attained through (the notion of) non-attainment ...
2. (The title) *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* ... the term *mahā* means ...; the term *prajñā* means ...; the term *pāramitā* means ...; the term *sūtra* means ...<sup>27</sup>

with his own interlinear textual exposition, that the two can be placed side by side in a perfect proportional relationship in the same commentary.

<sup>25</sup> The full thematic survey of *sūtra* in introduction is discussed in section five: Explanation of central tenet: *zong*, *zong-qu*, and other *zong*-related topics.

<sup>26</sup> Another of its Chinese name is *Bukesiyi-jietuo jing* (The *Sūtra of inconceivable liberation*), hence the key phrase *bukesiyi* or, simply, *būsiyi* (inconceivable).

<sup>27</sup> Jizang, *Dapinjing youyi*, T33n1696p63a27–b9.

It opens with a brief thematic survey through the explanation of *prajñā*, the key words in the title *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*. The term *prajñā* itself is not mentioned, but is identified as the “Dao” and assigned the attributes of “non-abiding” and “non-attainment.” The pre-introduction then concludes with a brief explanation of the title in its separate components, i.e., *mahā*, *prajñā*, *pāramitā* and *sūtra*.

The earliest instance of such a format can be found in Sengzhao’s introduction to his commentary on the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra*.<sup>28</sup> After Sengzhao, especially after Zhiyi and Jizang, such a format seem to have become and remained a general, although not necessarily universal, standard for the writing of pre-introduction.

Most pre-introductions are untitled. Occasionally, however, a rubric is assigned surrounding the word *xu* (introduction), such as the aforementioned *kai-ti-xu* (introduction laying out subject matter) in Jizang,<sup>29</sup> and *xu-wang* (literally, “introduction king,” i.e., introduction that captures the essence of teaching) in Jizang<sup>30</sup> and Guanding (561–632).<sup>31</sup> As discussed earlier, to *kai-ti* is to lay out subject matter (*ti*) through the explanation of title (*ti*). A *xuwang* performs the same task. As Guanding explains:

A *xuwang* expounds the abstruse intentionion, which explains the heart of a text, which does not lie beyond the ramifications (*ji*) and

<sup>28</sup> See his *Zhu Weimojiejing* in T38n1775p327a14–p328a9, where he discusses “inconceivable” (*busiyi*) in the first part and the entire title in the second part. This introduction is not as concise as later introductions of the same format and contains, between the two parts, a discussion of issues related to the translation of the *sūtra*, but the two-part format itself is quite clear.

<sup>29</sup> See his *Fahua youyi* at T34n1722p633b09.

<sup>30</sup> See his *Guanwuliangshoujing yishu* at T37n1752p233c13.

<sup>31</sup> See his introduction to his transcription of Zhiyi’s lecture on the *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra* at T33n1716p681a25 and T33n1716p681b25.



the basis (*ben*). A look at this purport (represented by the *xuwang* thus allows) all meanings to fall orderly into place.<sup>32</sup>

A pre-introduction occasionally also appears under the name of *dayi* (main idea).<sup>33</sup> Fayun (467–529) assigns such a rubric, retrospectively, to the pre-introduction in his commentary to the *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra*,<sup>34</sup> but Wonhyo uses the term most regularly – all his commentaries collected in the *Taishō*, except for the revised version of his *Qixinlun* commentary, begin with a *dayi*.

### 3. Elaboration of teaching: from its essence to its manifestations

Generally speaking, the development in the writing of introduction is accompanied by the elaboration of teaching from a general interest in central tenet to increasingly more specific discussions of various issues that are either based on, derived from, or related to central tenet. Analogically, the process of such an exegetical elaboration, from the general to the specific, can be described with the terms of a philosophical one that “elaborates” the absolute into the phenomenal, or “essence” (*ti*) into its “manifestations” (*de*).<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> T33n1716p681b19–b20.

<sup>33</sup> *Dayi* was also used for other, but related, purposes, such as the discussion of subject matter (see Jizang, *Niepanjing youyi* between T38n1768p230b10–p232b6) or the search for the intention of teaching (see Jizang, *Fahua xuanlun* between T34n1720p365a25–p371c9).

<sup>34</sup> See *Fahuajing yiji* at T33n1715p573a16.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, a formulation of the philosophical “elaboration” of “essence” into its “manifestations” in the *Collected explanations*, with *nirvāṇa* as the “essence” and “dharma body, true wisdom and ultimate liberation” as its “manifestations”: “Therefore, (the author) places it (i.e., *nirvāṇa*) in the beginning of the *sūtra* as (its) title, for it is (at once) the name of the essence (*ti*) and its manifestations (*de*). The name names the essence, and the essence naturally entails manifestations. The ‘essence’ is the root of sublime perfection and wondrous existence, and ‘manifestations’ refers to wisdom (*prajñā*), liberation (*nirvāṇa*), etc. The ‘manifestation’ is multifarious, but

Commentators usually do not agree on their choice of “manifestations,” or on the selection of perspectives for the elaboration of “essence.” In his commentary to the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*,<sup>36</sup> for example, Jizang summarizes, before giving his own, two schemes of elaboration in the explanation of *mahā*, a summary illustrating the diversity in the perception of “manifestations”:

In the elucidation of this *mahā* there are two schools. Recounting (the master of Zhuangyan Monastery),<sup>37</sup> the *Nirvāṇasūtra* master of the Zhaoti Monastery says: *Mahā* has ten meanings; (it means the “greatness,” i.e., *mahā*, of) first, object; second, person; third, essence; fourth, function; fifth, cause; sixth, effect; seventh, guidance; eighth, benefit; ninth, cessation; and tenth, the removal of sins ... Drawing on (the master of) the Kaishan Monastery,<sup>38</sup> Longguang observes: *Mahā* has six meanings; (it means the “greatness” of) person, object, essence, function, cause and effect. *The four remaining ones*, i.e., “guidance,” “removal of sins,” etc, *are included in the greatness of “function”* ... *The application, here*, (of these two schemes) *includes (the meaning of) “greatness” in only essence and function*. Why? Because (none of these) meanings lie beyond the frameworks of the middle and the provisional, and the ten meanings and six meanings explained by the two previous schools all belong to (the category of) “function.”<sup>39</sup>

The second school narrows down the first school’s ten aspects to six by incorporating the latter’s last four into its “function” (*yong*) aspect, and Jizang makes a much more drastic move to reduce all these aspects to only two, namely, the aspect of “function” when their distinctions are allowed “provisional” (*jia*) significance, and the aspect of the philosophical “essence” when these distinctions

the ‘essence’ is (marked by) oneness. (Put in other words,) names (*ming*, i.e., manifestations) may be various, but substance (*shi*, i.e., essence) remains invariable.” (T37n1763p379a17–a19)

<sup>36</sup> *Dapinjing youyi*, T33n1696.

<sup>37</sup> I.e., Sengmin.

<sup>38</sup> I.e., Zhizang.

<sup>39</sup> T33n1696p63b17–c13; italicization mine.

are viewed as ultimately non-existent from the perspective of the “middle” (*zhong*). Put in other words, *mahā* is the “essence,” and the ten, six and finally the two specific topics are its “manifestations” – this example shows that the effort to elaborate teaching has been under constant negotiation among various commentators, who expand or narrow down the scope of topics in accordance with their respective understandings about the “essence” and, in doing so, create the diversity in the perception of “manifestations.”

Despite this apparent diversity, commentators share a number of common focuses in their elaboration of teaching, such as the philosophical “essence,” “characteristics,” “function,” “wisdom,” “practice,” and “teaching,” and this elaboration of “essence” into its “manifestations” provides the basis for the formulation of introductory topics, for, when the “focuses” on these specific “manifestations” grow with the development in the writing of exegesis, these “manifestations” tend to take on definitive forms and thus become independent topics themselves. In other words, the erstwhile “focuses” become separate topics in the elaborated introductory surveys, a tendency to be illustrated below with two examples.

The first example is the eight-topic introduction of the *Collected explanations*, where the elaboration of “essence” allows its various “manifestations” to take on the forms of such independent topics as the philosophical “essence,” “root and being” (*ben-you*) and “cessation of names.” The full titles of the eight topics are as follows:

1. explanation of title (*shiming*)
2. elucidation of essence (*bianti*)
3. discourse on root and being (*xubenyou*)
4. discussion of cessation of names (*tanjueming*)
5. explanation of the word *mahā* (*shidazi*)
6. explanation of the word *sūtra* (*jiejingzi*)
7. clarification of the intention of teaching (*hejiaoyi*)
8. structural classification of text (*pankeduan*)

Except for the last two topics, the first six were devoted to the explanation of the title, *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, with the first four to the key words (*pari*)*nirvāṇa*, and the fifth and sixth to *mahā* and *sūtra*, respectively.<sup>40</sup> The discussion of (*pari*)*nirvāṇa* in the first four sections can be further divided into a general explanation of the “essence” in the first section, and specific analysis of the “manifestations” in the second, third, and fourth, a relationship illustrated in the table below:

- I. “essence”
  1. explanation of title
- II. “manifestations”
  2. elucidation of essence
  3. discourse on root and being
  4. discussion of cessation of names

The central tenet (i.e., the “essence”) is treated generally in the explanation of the title (*pari*)*nirvāṇa*, and is also treated specifically in the three following topics (i.e., in its three “manifestations”). In these three specific treatments of the central tenet, section two looks at *nirvāṇa* from, self-evidently, the perspective of the philosophical “essence;”<sup>41</sup> section three deals with the dynamic relation-

<sup>40</sup> To Ōchō, the discussion of the title takes place in 1<sup>st</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> sections – apparently, he has not noticed that the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> are also part of the discussion of title, although they are not as explicitly so identified. Cf. Ōchō, p. 185.

<sup>41</sup> The content of this section, built upon citations from several authors of the *Collected explanations*, which deal with not only *dharmakāya* (i.e., essence), but also *prajñā* (i.e., wisdom) and *nirvāṇa* (i.e., practice), gives the appearance that the compiler of the *Collected explanations* is not only treating the issue of “essence” in this section, but also the other two aspects. However, given the fact that he unmistakably identifies this section with the rubric of “essence,” that he deals with the other two in the two following sections, and that his task of compiling passages from others restrains him from fully focusing on “essence,” it would not be unreasonable to suggest that this section is intended primarily to discuss the issue of “essence.”

ship between “root” (*ben*) and “being” (*you*)<sup>42</sup> and, in that sense, looks at *nirvāṇa* from the perspective of its “function;” section four touches upon the provisional nature of words in the expression of truth and, in that sense, looks at *nirvāṇa* from the perspective of “teaching.” Thus, in the sense that the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> sections each reveals one specific aspect of the central tenet, which is represented by (*pari*)*nirvāṇa*, or that the three manifestations each reveal one aspect of the central tenet, this table presents a first-hand example of how the elaboration of teaching results in the formulation of independent introductory topics.

Zhiyi’s scheme of “five aspects of profound meaning” presents a more developed example of the formulation of introductory topics based on the elaboration of teaching. Of his “five aspects,”

title, essence, central tenet, function, characteristics

the rubrics bring out the nature of their respective topics more accurately than do those in the *Collected explanations*, for the topics of “root and being” and “cessation of names” in the *Collected explanations* have not spoken directly and explicitly about what precisely these two topics are meant to discuss; also, Zhiyi more consciously draws upon the “essence vs. manifestations” relationship when he explicitly applies such a relationship to “title” and “essence (philosophical), central tenet, and function” in his analysis of the five aspects. A section in the introduction to his *Profound commentary to the Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* (*Weimojing xuanshu*) provides just such an example:

<sup>42</sup> That is, between the absolute and the phenomenal. Such a *ben-you* relationship describes, apparently, the relationship between Daosheng’s “root” (*ben*) and its “activation” (*shiqi*), Sengliang’s “unconditioned” (*wuyin*) and “conditioned” (*yin*), Baoliang’s “true” (*zhen*) and the “conventional” (*su*), Fazhi’s “originally existent” (*benyou*) and “newly created” (*shizao*), and Fayao’s *nirvāṇa* and *samsāra*. In the sense that this *ben-you* relationship looks at two different aspects, Fazhi’s *benyou* corresponds only to its *ben* or the absolute aspect. See T37n1763p381a7–a24.

Section four, “the clarification of the general and the specific,” (re) organizes the previous five aspects into three. The first, highlighting only the person and Dharma, constitutes the general discussion;<sup>43</sup> the second, elaborating (teaching) into essence, central tenet and function, constitutes the specific discussion; the third, clarifying the characteristics of teachings, encompasses in its content both the general and specific discussions.<sup>44</sup>

The reason for such (a reorganization) is:

Since the first dwells upon the name of the person (i.e., *Vimalakīrti*), which encompasses the three aspects (i.e., essence, central tenet, and function), it is thus called “general (discussion).”

Since now (the second) is to differentiate between the aspects of teaching, it should differentiate between the essence, central tenet, and function, and is therefore called “specific (discussion).”

(The discussion from the perspective of) person is the general (discussion) of the specific (issues), and (the discussion from the perspectives of) the three aspects is the specific (discussions) of the general issue – thus, the general generalizes the specific, and the specific specifies the general.

The reason (why the second is a specific discussion) is: Since the name of the person is Jing-wugou-cheng (i.e., *Vimalakīrti*), *jing* (*vimala*, i.e., clean) describes the true nature, which, being pure and clean, stands for the essence; *wugou* (*vimala*, i.e., immaculate) describes the true wisdom, and (the practice as a) cause guided by and (the salvation as an) effect ascertained through (this) true wisdom constitute the central tenet of the *sūtra*; *cheng* (*kīrti*, i.e., name), being the expedient or

<sup>43</sup> This section presents a general discussion of teaching through the discussion of the key words of the title, i.e., *Vimalakīrti*, from the perspective of person, and *nirdeśa*, from the perspective of Dharma.

<sup>44</sup> This section compares the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* and other teachings, i.e., it presents a classification of teachings, with the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* as the central object of this comparison or classification, on the basis of their respective “characteristics.” Being a comparison with other teachings, it repeats the general and separate discussions undertaken previously for the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra*.

skillful (means of naming the unnamable), stands for the function of truth. (In short, this second) extends and elaborates (the first) and, for this reason, is called a “specific (discussion).”

Since (the third, i.e.,) “the characteristics of teachings,” compares the similarity and difference between various *sūtras*, it, in its content, encompasses both the general and specific (discussions).<sup>45</sup>

In short, the section on “title” summarizes the teaching of the text and is thus general in nature; the sections on “essence, central tenet, and function” each provide a specific perspective in the elaboration of this central tenet, and are thus specific in nature; and the section on “characteristics” encompasses at once the general and the specific. This relationship is better illustrated in the following rearrangement of the five aspects in this passage:

1. characteristics
2. (title, essence, central tenet, function)
  - a. (“essence”): title
  - b. (“manifestations”): essence, central tenet, function

As the table shows, the first level of the hierarchy, numbered with Arabic numerals, contrasts “characteristics” with the remaining four of the five aspects, and, in doing so, shows that the ultimate objective of Zhiyi’s five-aspect scheme is not set on the interpretation of one particular *sūtra*, but on all *sūtras*. Put in other words, this level shows that Zhiyi intends to establish a universal model for the writing of exegesis, an ambition explicitly stated in his reply to an imaginary query:

(One) asks: Is this five-aspect (scheme) designed for (the interpretation of) this *sūtra* alone, or (is it applicable) also to other *sūtras*? (I) answer: (Since) in the establishing of meaning various schools have placed their intention at various places (I) am creating here the five-aspect (scheme) as a general paradigm of interpretation for all *sūtras*.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> T38n1777p519b13–c1.

<sup>46</sup> I.e., although expressions may vary, this universal model can be used to adequately decipher the teachings in all *sūtras*; T38n1777p519c01–03.

It is for this reason that he divides the five aspects into “characteristics” and the remaining four – to discuss one particular text with these four subjects should ultimately lead to a comparison with all other *sūtras*, which can all be approached from these four perspectives! The second level of the hierarchy, alphabetically ordered, dwells upon one particular text, the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* in this case, by looking at its teaching from both a general perspective, i.e., the perspective of “title,” and specific perspectives, i.e., the perspectives of the philosophical “essence,” “central tenet” and “function” – clearly, the general perspective is that of the “essence,” and the specific perspectives are those of the “manifestations.”

As we can see from this analysis, the core of Zhiyi’s interpretation lies in the specific discussions of the philosophical “essence,” “central tenet” and “function.” It substantiates the general discussion of title and, together with it, prepares for a comparison with other *sūtras* from these same perspectives, thus creating what Zhiyi would believe to be the universal model of exegesis. For our present purpose, such a model (particularly the general topic of “title” and the specific topics of “essence, central tenet and function”) clearly brings out the “essence vs. manifestations” relationship, and, in doing so, illustrates how central tenet is elaborated into specific issues and, on that basis, how introductory topics are formulated.

Having thus examined the elaboration of teaching and its role in the formulation of introductory topics, the rest of this paper will dwell upon a small selection of the “manifestations,” which have appeared more frequently than others in the Chinese Buddhist exegesis and are thus, in that sense, the more representative. These include the introductory topics derived from the themes about the arising of teaching, central tenet, medium of truth, and classification of teachings.



#### 4. Accounting for the arising of teaching: intention, conditions and transmission

In their effort to account for the arising of teaching, commentators look primarily at the intention in the giving of teaching, the conditions through which a teaching arises, and the history of a teaching's transmission.

The exegetical attention to “intention” is generally expressed in the introductory topics surrounding the word “intention” (*yi*) itself, most notably the “intention of *sūtra*” (*jing-yi*),<sup>47</sup> “intention of teaching” (*jiao-yi*),<sup>48</sup> “intention of the coming (of the teaching)” (*lai-yi*),<sup>49</sup> “intention in the writing of the treatise” (*zaolun-yi*)<sup>50</sup> and etc. In some cases, the discussion of intention is closely associated with the discussion of author,<sup>51</sup> for, after all, the “intention” must be the au-

<sup>47</sup> See, for example, Jizang: *xushuo jingyi* in T33n1699; Won'chuk: *shuojingzhiyi* in T33n1708; Kuiji: *jingqizhiyi* in T34n1723.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, *xu jiaoxing yi*, Daoxun, T40n1804.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, *laiyimen*, Jizang, T34n1722.

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, *zaolunyi* in Jizang, T42n1825 and T42n1827.

<sup>51</sup> This close association between the issues of “intention” and “author” reminds us of the close association between the issues of “title” and “author” (sometimes also translator) in commentators' categorization of introductory topics. Huiyuan must have implied such a perception when he places his discussion of Aśvaghōṣa immediately after the discussion of the title of the *sūtra*, and this implication is explicated in Fazang's commentary to the same *sūtra*, when the commentator includes the discussion of author as an integral part of the discussion of title. In fact, Fazang appears to have always consciously grouped the issues of “title,” “writing” and “translation” together. As Zixuan has noted, Zongmi divides Fazang's nine introductory topics into two categories of the first six and the last three, with the latter including title, time of writing, and year of translation (See Zixuan, *Qixinlun bixiaoji* in T44n1848p0303a9–a28). Such a differentiation is probably not arbitrary, for the 6–3 division appears to be the standard format in most of Fazang's commentaries, though not without some slight differences in selection and organization of these topics.

thor's intention, and a look at the person responsible for the spreading of teaching is a good place to discuss the intention of doing so. Thus, for example, as soon as the name of the purported author Aśvaghōṣa is mentioned in the *Qixinlun* commentary attributed to Huiyuan, the attention is immediately directed to Aśvaghōṣa's purpose or "intention" in writing the treatise,

To say "written by Bodhisattva Aśvaghōṣa" is to present the name of the author of the treatise ... The reasons why the Bodhisattva wrote this treatise are ...<sup>52</sup>

and the section on author concludes with a reiteration of his intention:

Such is the intention for the writing (of this treatise).<sup>53</sup>

The exegetical attention to "conditions" is generally expressed in the introductory topics surrounding the words "cause" (*yin*) and "by way of" (*you*),<sup>54</sup> and gives rise to such topics as "that which to rely on" (*suo-yin*),<sup>55</sup> "direct cause and indirect cause" (*yin-yuan*),<sup>56</sup> "causes for arising" (*yin-qi*),<sup>57</sup> and "by the means of which" (*suo-you*).<sup>58</sup> Such an attention to conditions sometimes finds itself expressed as the indispensable qualities required of someone who gives the teaching. Zhiyan's (602–668) topic of "admiration for the sage's response to the individual circumstances and (for) the basis of (his) meritorious deeds (i.e., the giving of teaching)" (*tan-*

<sup>52</sup> T44n1843p175c12–c13.

<sup>53</sup> T44n1843p176a11.

<sup>54</sup> Meaning "by way of," *you* thus refers by extension to "means" or "basis."

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, Kuiji: T38n1782, T43n1829 and T44n1840.

<sup>56</sup> Here it means only "cause," without the distinction between direct and indirect causes. See, for example, *yinyuan* in Wonhyo's T38n1769 and T33n1697, where *yinyuan* is also called *uanqi*.

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, *yi zhang yinqi* in see Kuiji, T33n1700p125a18.

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, Kuiji: *zaolun suoyou* in T43n1834p979b18–c12.

*shenglinji*, *deliang youzhi*),<sup>59</sup> for example, singles out the understanding of “non-abiding” (*wuzhu*) and the aspiration for *bodhi* as the necessary spiritual preparation for Buddha’s giving of teaching.

The exegetical attention to the “history of transmission” is sometimes expressed as the topic of “origination” (*yuanqi*), which, primarily translating “dependent origination” (*pratītyasamutpāda*), is here simply referring to “historical development.” Jizang relates as a *yuanqi*, for example, Zhu Shixing’s adventure in Khotan to bring the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* back to China.<sup>60</sup>

While commentators account for the arising of teaching from the three perspectives of “intention,” “conditions,” and “transmission,” the first two are apparently more closely related to each other than to the third. The *yin* in Fazang’s accounting for the arising of teaching refers not only to “intention,” but also to “conditions,” as can be illustrated in the “ten *yins*” section in his *Qixinlun* commentary. It contains two major parts. Part 1, including *yins* 1 to 6, explains the following six conditions: 1<sup>st</sup>, insight of the teacher; 2<sup>nd</sup>, specific forms of the teaching; 3<sup>rd</sup>, pedagogical means; 4<sup>th</sup>, pedagogical tools; 5<sup>th</sup>, doctrinal basis; and 6<sup>th</sup>, powers to invoke for the giving of teaching. Part 2, including *yins* 7 to 10, explains the intention as the following four reasons: 7<sup>th</sup>, obligation to Buddha; 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, compassion of the author; 10<sup>th</sup>, benefits anticipated in the giving of teaching.<sup>61</sup>

The distinction between the intention, conditions and transmission is not always very clear. Thus, *yuanqi* is about the “transmission” of *sūtra* in one place,<sup>62</sup> but explains “reasons” in another,<sup>63</sup>

<sup>59</sup> T35n1732p13c8.

<sup>60</sup> See Jizang, T33n1696p68a24–b4.

<sup>61</sup> T44n1846p241a18–b24

<sup>62</sup> See Jizang, T33n1696p68a24–b4.

<sup>63</sup> See Jizang, *Shengman baoku* in T37n1744p4b26–5b12.

and is interchangeable with *yinyuan* in a third.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, Zhiyan dwells on *you* to discuss the attributes of teacher in one commentary, but with the same word explains “reasons” in a second.<sup>65</sup>

### 5. Explanation of central tenet: *zong*, *zong-qu*, and other *zong*-related topics

The explanation of central tenet is undoubtedly the most important step in the elaboration of introductory survey. While the aforementioned pre-introduction certainly touches upon central tenet with its reliance on the explanation of title, it offers only a summary of that central tenet and serves, as is obvious in its name, primarily as an introduction. It is only *zong* and its related topics that are designed primarily for the explanation of central tenet; indeed, it is probably for this reason that all Chinese Buddhist schools call themselves a certain *zong* – the identity of a certain school depends largely on its adherence to a particular type of teaching.<sup>66</sup>

*Zong* often appears in the forms of *zong-zhi*, *zong-yao*, *zong-ti*, *zong-qu*, etc. Since *zhi* stands for “purport,” *yao* for “essentials,” and *ti* for “essence,” the suffixation of the first three words to *zong* simply produces varied forms for the topic of *zong*; another word represented by *zhi* means “to arrive at” or, in Wonhyo’s words, “the intended destination of central tenet” (*yi-zhi*),<sup>67</sup> and in that

<sup>64</sup> See Wonhyo, *Dahuidujing zongyao* in T33n1697p68b23 and T33n-1697p72a19–p73a20.

<sup>65</sup> See *jiaoxing suoyou* (that through which the teaching arises) in *Jingangboruoboluomijing lueshu*, T33n1704p239a11.

<sup>66</sup> According to Yan Shangwen, the meaning or use of *zong* in the Buddhist context develops from “to revere,” to “central tenet” (i.e., that which is revered), and finally to “school” that “reveres” a particular tenet. See his *Suitang fojiao zongpai yanjiu*, pp. 1–16.

<sup>67</sup> This translation is meant to bring out its main idea. Translated literally, it means “the (destination which the teaching) is intended to arrive at.” See his discussion of *zongzhi* in, for example, his *Liangjuan wuliangshou jing zongyao*: “Section two, i.e., the clarification of *zongzhi*, (argues that)

sense this different *zong-zhi* represents a similar though more emphatic expression of *zong*, pointing to, in a sense, the culmination of central tenet. *Zong-qu* is a similar reformulation of *zong*, for the word *qu*, meaning “to approach,” is essentially not different from the second *zhi* in highlighting the “destination” of central tenet.<sup>68</sup> In some cases, commentators simply use *zong-qu* and *zong* interchangeably, apparently seeing no difference at all between the two.<sup>69</sup>

*Zong-qu*, however, was transformed into the most unique of all *zong*-related topics at the hands of Huayan scholars, i.e., it was re-conceptualized in such a way that the separate attention to and the combined use of these two words *zong* and *qu* produces a complex set of perspectives for the examination of central tenet.

The re-conceptualization of *zong-qu* can be observed in two related aspects. The first aspect is the conscious differentiation of *zong* and *qu*. While, in Huiyuan and Kuiji’s treatment, the two words have their respective emphasis, (i.e., *zong* for central tenet and *qu* for its destination,) the difference between the two is meant, as mentioned earlier, only to give an emphatic expression for the interest in central tenet and, in that sense, the differentiation between

this *sūtra* takes the cause and effect of the Pure Land as its central tenet, and the rebirth of sentient beings (in Pure Land) as its intended destination” (T37n1747p125c28–c29).

<sup>68</sup> Kimura’s suggestion that *zong* and *qu* point, respectively, to the philosophical and aspirational aspect of a *sūtra* probably better explains the *zong-qu* and also the *zong-zhi* relationship. See his “Kegonkyo shūshuron no reki-shi to yimi,” p. 255.

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, Huiyuan, “section four, i.e., the discussion of *zong-qu*, (argues that) the *zong* of this *sūtra* is the meritorious deeds of giving that bring about good fortune” (T39n1793p512c15); for another example, see Kuiji: “Section six asks: How many versions are there for this *sūtra* and what *zong-qu* does each of these versions clarify? (The commentator answers:) An exhaustive search for the versions of this *sūtra* comes up with four. (In the sense that) all explain the Pure Land, (this *sūtra* in its four versions) takes Pure Land as its *zong*” (T37n1757p313a15–a16).

the two is not significant. This difference is, however, highlighted and capitalized upon in Zhiyan's use, for the entire section of his *zong-qu* relies on the elaboration of both the *zong* and the *qu* of central tenet. The second aspect is the abstractification of *zong*, expressed in the replacement of its meaning "central tenet" with the meaning "to revere" or, more precisely, "that which is revered."<sup>70</sup> The former is derived from the latter, for "central tenet" must be something "revered" in a *sūtra*, and this replacement strips *zong* of its specific reference to "central tenet" and thus turns it into a more widely applicable term.

This new perception of *zong-qu* allows Zhiyan to present a more complex and subtle examination of central tenet or the religious truth of a *sūtra*.

To Zhiyan, religious truth can be approached from the perspectives of principle, practice, and teaching:

Section one explains the *zong-qu* from a general (perspective). This *sūtra* adopts (i.e., teaches as its *zong-qu*) three types of *prajñā*: first, the *prajñā* of reality (i.e., principle); second, the *prajñā* of contemplation (i.e., practice); and third, the *prajñā* of words (i.e., teaching). This is known because the *sūtra* below elucidates all three aspects of principle, practice, and teaching.<sup>71</sup>

By making no distinction whatsoever between *zong* and *qu* from this "general perspective," Zhiyan presents truth as comprising at once principle, practice, and teaching which, in Zhiyan's primary choice of expressions, are reality, contemplation and words, or, as in a unity of these three aspects – principle results from practice

<sup>70</sup> Fazang thus explains the nature of *zong*: "That which is revered in a text is called *zong*" (T44n1846p245b04). Zhiyan has not made a statement as explicit as this, but the way he treats *zong* and *qu*, as analyzed shortly, indicates that he also sees *zong* as generally "that which is revered" rather than the specific "central tenet," i.e., he also abstractifies the use of *zong*. For a discussion of *zong*'s various meanings, see Yan, *Sui tang fojiao zongpai yanjiu*, pp. 1–16.

<sup>71</sup> T33n1704p239b17–b19.

and is conveyed in teaching, practice is guided by principle that is conveyed in teaching, and teaching conveys principle that results from practice.

This unity, however, is brought out more vividly when Zhiyan applies his new scheme of *zong-qu*, in which, with the separation of *zong* and *qu* and the abstractification of *zong*, he allows each of the three aspects to be both the *zong*, i.e., the “revered” or simply the “means,” and the *qu*, i.e., the “destination” or the “end.” In other words, such a scheme allows the examination of truth to start anywhere from these three perspectives (or, by an extended application of this scheme, from perspectives not listed by Zhiyan) and still arrive at its destination. A rearrangement of principle, practice, and teaching in different *zong-qu* relationships produces five pairs of correspondence, and thus five perspectives for an elaborate examination of truth in its unity of the three aspects. Below is such an example in Zhiyan’s separate discussion of *zong-qu*:

Section two explains *zong* and *qu* separately from five perspectives:

The first (perspective) is the correspondence between teaching and (its) purport, i.e., (one) takes teaching as *zong* and (its) purport as *qu*; the second is the correspondence between the cause (of practice) and the effect (of realization), i.e., one takes cause as *zong* and (its) effect as *qu* ...;

the third is the correspondence between person and Dharma, i.e., (one) takes Dharma as *zong* and person (i.e., Buddha-hood) as *qu* ...;<sup>72</sup>

the fourth is the correspondence between principle and phenomena, i.e., (one) takes principle as *zong* and phenomena as *qu*;

the fifth is the correspondence between the object of perception (i.e., teaching)<sup>73</sup> and practice, i.e., (one) takes the object of perception as

<sup>72</sup> “Because (one) relies on Dharma to become the Buddha” (T33n1704 p239b24).

<sup>73</sup> “Because teaching, comprising objects of perception, is established to facilitate the practice” (T33n1704p239b26).

*zong* and practice as *qu* ...<sup>74</sup>

The first pair of the *zong-qu* correspondence, i.e., of teaching and its purport, indicates that “teaching,” as *zong*, conveys “principle” in its “purport” as *qu*; the second pair, of cause and effect, indicates that “practice” of cause, as *zong*, leads to the “effect” of realizing truth as *qu*, for the “effect” marks the realization of “principle;” the third pair, of “person” and “Dharma,” indicates that “principle” (i.e., Dharma), as *zong*, results in “practice” as *qu*, for the attainment of Buddhahood is the culmination of practice; the fourth pair, of principle and phenomena, indicates that the teaching of “principle,” as *zong*, gives rise to “practice” as *qu*, for the shift of attention from the absolute principle to phenomena is designed ultimately for the purpose of realizing principle, i.e., practicing it, in the phenomenal world; the fifth pair, of the object of perception and practice, indicates that “teaching,” as *zong*, provides guidance to “practice” as *qu*, the “object of perception” being the teaching itself.

Put in other words, the five pairs of *zong-qu* rearrange the three aspects of principle, practice, and teaching and present their unity from five different perspectives. Thus, the first pair states that teaching leads to principle; the second pair, practice to principle; the third and fourth pairs, principle to practice, although one focuses on “Dharma” and “person” and the other on “principle” and “phenomena;” and the fifth pair, teaching to practice. Despite this apparent diversity of perspectives, the ultimate purpose is to unfold the originally unified truth into its various aspects with what Zhiyan would believe to be the greater precision and subtlety.

Zhiyan’s re-conceptualization of *zong-qu* is further developed in Fazang’s explanation of central tenet. This development lies in two aspects. For one, he theorizes a perception which underlies Zhiyan’s treatment of *zong-qu*, but which has never been brought out explicitly; for the other, he further develops the separate perspectives, from which Zhiyan approaches the central tenet, by organiz-

<sup>74</sup> T33n1704p239b20–b26.



ing them into a unified and systematic relationship of a successively related and increasingly deepened progression of inquiries.

As discussed earlier, Zhiyan re-conceptualizes *zong-qu* by first separating *zong* and *qu* and then stripping them of their specific reference. In doing so, Zhiyan makes *zong* represent that which is to be relied on, i.e., a means, and *qu* as its objective, i.e., an end. Such a re-conceptualization allows one to approach the central tenet of a *sūtra* from a number of different perspectives. However, although this new perception of *zong-qu* underlies Zhiyan's discussion of central tenet, he has never spelled out this understanding explicitly, i.e., he has never moved his attention from the content of *zong-qu* to the nature of *zong-qu*. It is Fazang who consciously takes up the task of theorizing this previously unspoken perception:

That which the *sūtra* reveres is called *zong*, and the destination to which this *zong* leads is called *qu*.<sup>75</sup>

By not limiting the significance of *zong* to “central tenet,” although “central tenet” is “that which the *sūtra* reveres,” the new perception makes it possible to read different meanings into *zong* and, by extension, also *qu*, in the examination of central tenet.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>75</sup> T44n1846p245b04.

<sup>76</sup> In most of his other commentaries, Fazang has a slightly different theorization of *zong-qu*, i.e., “what the words express is called *zong*, and the destination to which this *zong* leads is called *qu*” (See, for example, T35n1733p120a7). “What the words express” is apparently a mere different formulation of “that which the *sūtra* reveres.” A similar statement Fazang makes in his other commentaries reinforces the same perception by rejecting any sense of distinction between *zong* and *qu*: “In the general discussion, *zong* is in itself *qu*.” (See, for example, T35n1734p495b6). Such theoretical assertions about *zong-qu* are manifested in his treatment of the subject, particularly in his formulaic expression in the separate discussions of *zong-qu*: “(The *sūtra*) takes ... as *zong* and ... as *qu*; or, the reverse (is also true)” (See, for example, T35n1734p495b4–b13). By emphasizing that *zong* and *qu* are interchangeable, Fazang gives the two a general applicability, i.e., he preserves only the sense of correspondence between the means and its end, but not their specific references.

While Zhiyan's *zong-qu* opens up the central tenet and presents a number of different perspectives for its understanding, he seems to have never paid attention to the relationship between these different perspectives. Fazang, however, takes it as his task to build a coherent relationship between them. He thus discusses the *zong-qu* of *Qixinlun*:

Section two shows *zong* and *qu* separately from, briefly speaking, five (perspectives). The first (perspective) is the correspondence between teaching and (its) purport, i.e., (one) takes teaching as *zong* and (its) purport as *qu* ...; the second is the correspondence between principle and phenomena, i.e., (one) takes the sampling of phenomena as *zong*, and the revelation of principle (therein) as *qu* ...; the third is the correspondence between the objects (of perception) and practice, i.e., (one) takes objects (of perception, both) ultimate and conventional, as *zong*, and the practice of mind contemplation as *qu*; the fourth is the correspondence between realization and faith, i.e., (one) takes non-retrogression of faith upon its formation as *zong*, and the ascendance onto *bhūmis* and the entry into realization as *qu*; the fifth is the correspondence between the cause (of practice) and the effect (of realization), i.e., (one) takes cause as *zong* and the accomplishment of effect as *qu*. Of these five (perspectives), subsequent ones arise from preceding ones in a successive and causal (progression), (a situation) understood when the explanation (i.e., the commentary) is referred to.<sup>77</sup>

Such a “successive and causal” relationship is more clearly outlined in Zixuan's explanation, where he supplies certain connections not apparent in Fazang's own discussion:

By “successive and causal (progression),” (Fazang means:) First, from teaching, its purport is obtained; second, from phenomena (presented as examples) of the purport, principle is revealed; third, by taking phenomena and principle as the object (of perception), one accomplishes the practice of calming and contemplation (*śamatha* and *vipaśyanā*); fourth, with (the practice of) calming and contemplation, (one) enters

<sup>77</sup> T44n1846p245b5–b12. The translation of the last sentence is taken from Dirck Vorenkamp's translation of this commentary. See his English translation, p. 53.

into the stages of realization (*bhūmis*); fifth, with such an entry, (one) attains the fruit (or effect of realization). Thus, taking turns to supply a basis for one another and delving from surface (levels) to deeper (levels), (the five steps) transmit the central tenet of the treatise.<sup>78</sup>

This relationship can be further elucidated in the following simplified rearrangement of the five perspectives, constructed on the basis of both Fazang and Zixuan's explanations. Extra words are added in brackets to bring out the connections between concepts at different levels, and the indentations in subsequent levels are designed to highlight Fazang's perception that "subsequent ones arise from preceding ones in a successive and causal (progression)":

- 1<sup>st</sup>: teaching vs. purport
- 2<sup>nd</sup>: phenomena (i.e., which manifests the purport) vs. principle (i.e., which is the purport revealed through phenomena)
- 3<sup>rd</sup>: object of perception (which is at once phenomena and Principle, or the provisional and the ultimate, and which, in the unity of the two, is also the purport) vs. practice (which contains calming and contemplation)
- 4<sup>th</sup>: faith (i.e., the initial stage of practice) vs. realization (i.e., the culmination of practice)
- 5<sup>th</sup>: cause (which includes practices from faith to realization) vs. effect (which is realization)

From the first and the most general perspective, one relies on Buddha's words (i.e., teaching as *zong*) to obtain the intended purport (i.e., purport as *qu*). The purport of this teaching is, however, manifested only in things to which sentient beings have access through their sense faculties (i.e., phenomena), and it is in these things (i.e., phenomena as *zong*) that one retrieves the principle intended by Buddha in his teaching (i.e., principle as *qu*), hence the second perspective. The teaching (i.e., the object of perception, which is also purport) that unites both phenomena and principle (also identified as the "the provisional" and "the ultimate" by Fazang himself),

<sup>78</sup> *Qixinlunshu bixiaoji*, T44n1848p312c26–c29.

however, is not sufficient in accomplishing the realization; thus, from a third perspective, one has to resort to practice (i.e., practice as *qu*) after retrieving the teaching (i.e., purport or object of perception as *zong*). Zixuan identifies the two major forms of practice as “calming and contemplation” (*śamatha* and *vipaśyanā*), but as Fazang has it, the two ends of the spectrum in the practice are faith at the beginning and realization at its conclusion, thus the fourth perspective, with “faith” as *zong* and “realization” as *qu*. The fifth perspective summarizes various forms of practice (from faith to realization) as the cause and its ultimate destination as the effect, hence “cause” as *zong* and “effect” as *qu*. In short, “teaching” leads to “purport,” which in turn leads to “principle,” which in another turn calls for “practice,” which in still another turn necessitates a progression of practices from lower stages to higher stages, which, as an inseparable whole, eventually leads to the ultimate realization. Such a system of five perspectives thus organizes them, as said earlier, into a unified and systematic relationship of a successively related and increasingly deepened progression of inquiries.

## 6. The medium of truth: *neng* vs. *suo*

Another subject in the elaboration of teaching is the means for the transmission of teaching or, in other words, the medium of truth. To Buddhists, the medium of truth is not only that which teaches truth, such as words and writings, but ultimately also that which is taught, i.e., truth itself. Put in Chinese Buddhist terminology, the medium of truth includes not only the *neng* aspect (that which teaches), but ultimately also the *suo* aspect (that which is taught).

Such a perception is often reflected in the debates among Buddhist scholars in their effort to determine what comprise(s) the medium of truth. Jizang records such a debate in his commentary on the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*:

In the explanation of medium (*ti*),<sup>79</sup> there are a total of four schools of views:

the first school argues that principle is the *sūtra* itself ... For, as Long-guang asserts, principle is that which imprints, and the writings are its imprints ...;

the second, i.e., the Dharma master Shi of the Lingmei Monastery, argues that ... the writings and principle, mutually expressing (each other), constitute the *sūtra* in their unity – neither of the two alone is the *sūtra* ...;

the third, i.e., the Dharma master Sheng of the Lingyao Monastery, argues that writings constitute the *sūtra* (from the perspective of) writings, and principle constitutes the *sūtra* (from the perspective of) principle – writings and principle is each in itself a *sūtra* ...;

the fourth, i.e., the Dharma master Zong of the Taichuang Monastery and the Dharma master Yaofa of the Baima monastery, consider teaching (i.e., writings) as the *sūtra*.<sup>80</sup>

The four schools have four different views about what comprise(s) the medium of truth. The first school sees truth itself (*suo*) as the medium; the second, a combination of both truth (*suo*) and writings (*neng*); the third, either truth (*suo*) or writings (*neng*); and the fourth, writings (*neng*) alone. While the four schools cannot agree exactly what the medium is, at least three of them accept that *suo* itself could be the medium, either in part or in full; also, the very fact that a choice has to be made between *neng* and *suo* suggests that both were perceived as potential but legitimate candidates for the medium of truth.

<sup>79</sup> Often referring to “essence” or “base,” *ti* in this case refers by an extension of meaning to “vehicle” or “means” through which Buddhist teachings are transmitted, hence the translation of “medium.” In this particular passage, the commentator uses “medium” interchangeably with *sūtra* for the apparent reason that a *sūtra* is one form of such media. For a discussion of another meaning of the same *ti* or “essence,” see section three: Elaboration of teaching: from essence to its manifestations.

<sup>80</sup> T33n1696p65b15–b26.

The inclusion of *suo* as the medium reflects the Buddhist perception of truth in its active aspect. While truth remains inaccessible to intellectualization in its quiescent and thus absolute state, it also actively manifests itself in the myriad of phenomena, i.e., phenomena constitute the media of truth. As Jizang concludes in his summary of these four schools, “each of the ten thousand *dharmas* is without exception a *sūtra* (i.e., medium of truth).”<sup>81</sup> In that sense, truth teaches itself, or truth is its own medium. This is exactly the argument made by the first school, which draws on Longguang to support its claim that truth or *suo* is the medium:

The principle is that which imprints, and the writings are its imprints.

What we have in the form of writings or *neng* is simply given to us by principle or *suo* itself. Using the metaphor in this remark, that which teaches (*neng*) is the “imprints” imprinted by that which is taught (*suo*), and writing is one form of such “imprints.”

A tension, however, exists between *neng* and *suo* in commentators’ minds, for they constantly attempt to accommodate these two perspectives in their discussion regarding the medium of truth, and this effort in turn suggests a tendency to separate *suo* from *neng* and, ultimately, to deny *suo* the role as medium of truth.

An obvious problem that arises regarding this issue is: If both *neng* and *suo* can serve as the medium of truth, why then is there this difference between the *neng* and *suo*? Or, simply, how shall the difference be accounted for? Some commentators attempted to reconcile this difference by interpreting *neng* and *suo* with the help of the two truths theory, arguing that the two are different from each other from the perspective of provisional truth, but are ultimately the same from the perspective of ultimate truth. In the discussion of the medium of truth in his *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* commentary, Kuiji makes just such an attempt by drawing on Bhāvaviveka and Dharmapāla. Below is an outline of this section:<sup>82</sup>

<sup>81</sup> T33n1696p65c3.

<sup>82</sup> T38n1782p1000b22–p1001c19

The medium of teaching has two aspects: The first is the writings that explain (truth), and the second is the purport that is explained (in the writings).

1. Bhāvaviveka

- a. From the perspective of provisional truth
  - 1) From the perspective of *suo*: All *dharmas*, conditioned or unconditioned, empty or existent, constitute the medium of truth;
  - 2) From the perspective of *neng*: The medium includes name,<sup>83</sup> sentence, paragraph, and treatise.
- b. From the perspective of ultimate truth: Both the *neng* and the *suo* are empty of self-nature ... (In the sense that the nature of) all *dharmas* is empty of self-nature, what (is there to be called) the teaching (i.e., *neng*) or principle (i.e., *suo*)?

2. Dharmapāla

- a. From the perspective of provisional truth
  - 1) From the perspective of *suo*: All *dharmas*, conditioned or unconditioned, empty or existent, constitute the medium of truth;
  - 2) From the perspective of *neng*: The medium includes voice, name, sentence and treatise.
- b. From the perspective of ultimate truth
  - 1) The medium that incorporates the characteristics into the *tathatā*
  - 2) The medium that incorporates all others into the mind
  - 3) The medium that incorporates the provisional into the substantial
  - 4) The medium that separates the provisional from the substantial

According to Kuiji, Bhāvaviveka and Dharmapāla each see the relative roles of *neng* and *suo* in conveying the truth from the provisional perspective and the ultimate perspective. From the provisional

<sup>83</sup> “(It or *ju*) is the same as the ‘name’ in Dharmapāla’s discussion” (T38n1782p1000b29).

perspective, *neng* and *suo* are different from each other, with name, sentence, paragraph and treatise in Bhāvaviveka, or voice, name, sentence and treatise in Dharmapāla as *neng*, and all *dharmas* as *suo*. From the ultimate perspective, however, this distinction simply disappears. As Bhāvaviveka explains, that which teaches and that which is taught are both void of self-nature and, in that sense, *neng* is not different from *suo*, or, “what (is there to be called) the teaching (i.e., *neng*) or principle (i.e., *suo*)?” Dharmapāla explains the same idea with different words: That is, from the ultimate perspective, the medium can be identified with either *xing* (*tathatā*) which encompasses all “characteristics,” or “mind” (*shi*) that gives rise to and thus also encompasses phenomena, or “substance” (*shi*) that constitutes the basis for the “provisional.” While the discussion of the fourth type of medium appears to separate the provisional from the ultimate, Dharmapāla sees the provisional as eventually derived from the ultimate, thus also integrating the *neng* and the *suo*.<sup>84</sup>

The significance in accommodating the *neng-suo* relationship in this provisional-ultimate framework lies in the fact that it represents a conscious effort to understand the relative roles of *neng* and *suo*, and that it suggests an increasingly stronger intention to distinguish the two as different topics. This can be illustrated in the following examples:

Jizang: Section two, explanation of the central tenet and the medium (*zong-ti*):

Sub-section one, explanation of medium;

Sub-section two, explanation of central tenet.<sup>85</sup>

Zhiyan: Section three,  
the central tenet being taught,  
and the medium that teaches.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>84</sup> I.e., “of all provisional *dharmas*, none has a separate essence, i.e., (each arises) on the basis of its respective source, and takes the substantial *dharma* as its nature” (T38n1782p1001a28–a29).

<sup>85</sup> T33n1696p65b13.

<sup>86</sup> T35n1732p13c07.



Won'chuk: Section two,  
 elucidation of the central tenet being taught,  
 and the medium that teaches.<sup>87</sup>

Wonhyo:  
 Next, explanation of central tenet;  
 Section three, explanation of the medium of teaching.<sup>88</sup>

Kuiji:  
 Section five, discussion of the medium;  
 Section six, discussion of versions of the *sūtra* and (their respective) central tenets.<sup>89</sup>

Fazang:  
 Section five, the medium that teaches;  
 section six, the central tenet that is taught.<sup>90</sup>

What these examples show first is a clear and increasing tendency to distinguish between *neng* and *suo*. *Neng*, i.e., medium of teaching, and *suo*, i.e., truth being taught, are expressed in different topics, and, in most cases, the words *neng* and *suo* are assigned to define the two different topics. What's more, the two topics are organized such that the connection between them becomes increasingly weakened. As we can see in these examples: Jizang includes *neng* and *suo* as two different parts of the same topic of "central tenet and medium;" Zhiyan and Won'chuk still see them as belonging to the same category, but equate and, in that sense, differentiate the two by making both rubrics parts of the title; Wonhyo, Kuiji, and Fazang simply treat them as two separate and independent topics. What these examples also show, however, is a clear perception of the mutual dependence of the two, for, in all these cases, the topics of *neng* and *suo* are always placed side by side. This suggests that, even when these commentators do not agree with the claim that

<sup>87</sup> T33n1708p359a24.

<sup>88</sup> T38n1769p239b19.

<sup>89</sup> T37n1757p310c29

<sup>90</sup> T44n1846p241a15–16

*suo* is in itself the *neng*, this view has apparently its hold on their understanding of the relationship between *neng* and *suo*.

### 7. Classification of teachings: textual and doctrinal orientations, and the *bu*-, *zang*- and *jiao*-classification

Still another subject in the elaboration of teaching is the categorization or classification of various specific teachings. The primary purpose for the classification of teachings is to determine the position of a particular teaching in a certain part or the entire body of Buddhist teachings. As we can see in all examples of such a practice, commentators always begin with a classification of various teachings, and always conclude with the identification or location of a particular *sūtra* in that classificatory scheme.

Generally speaking, classification of teachings is oriented either textually, or doctrinally, or both. A textual classification determines the position of a particular teaching from the perspectives of version and content, i.e., it asks to which of its many versions a particular text belongs, or into which of the three canonical categories, *sūtra*, *vinaya*, *abhidharma*, a text falls. A doctrinal classification determines the position of a particular teaching with the identification of the level of its doctrinal value, or in comparison with those of all other teachings.

These two types of classification appear, generally, in the forms of three types of topics, namely, *bu* (version), *zang* (*piṭaka* or collection) and *jiao* (teaching). While all three of them constitute a response to the increasing diversity of Buddhist teachings and subsequently the need to sort them out for the purpose of determining the position of a particular teaching, each has its specific way of classification.

The *bu*-classification is textually oriented, for it is a response to the diversity of texts, particularly the different versions, or sometimes different translations, of a *sūtra* in its transmission in China. As we can see in the relevant sections in Zhiyi's commentary on *Vajracchedikaprajñāpāramitāsūtra* and Jizang's commentary on the

*Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*, the purpose of both commentators is to locate their respective texts in the series, or various versions, of the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra*. Zhiyi lists eight versions, and identifies his text as the eighth;<sup>91</sup> Jizang outlines four classificatory schemes, each proposing a list of its various versions, and locates his text in each of these schemes.<sup>92</sup> The *bu*-classification in Jizang's commentary on the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* simply identifies his text as one of the translations of the *sūtra*.<sup>93</sup> This classification usually appears in the forms of *bu-lei* (versions and categories), *bu-dang* (or *bu-tang*, i.e., versions and kinds), and *bu-zhou* (versions and scrolls).<sup>94</sup>

The *zang*-classification is oriented both textually and doctrinally. Oriented textually, the *zang*-classification differentiates *sūtras* from the perspectives of subject matter and authorship, an act that results in the classification of *sūtra*, *vinaya*, *abhidharma* collections (i.e., the *Tripitaka*); oriented doctrinally, the *zang*-classification looks at the level of doctrinal sophistication and gives rise to the classification into Bodhisattva collection (*pusazang*) and *Śrāvaka* collection (*shengwenzang*) (i.e., the *Dvipitaka*). This two-fold classification generally appears as the topic of *zang-she* (i.e., inclusion in a certain collection), but occasionally also takes the forms of *ji-aofenqi* (differentiation of teachings)<sup>95</sup> and *jiaodaxiao* (i.e., whether

<sup>91</sup> See *Jingang boruo jing shu*, T33n1698p76a2–a7.

<sup>92</sup> See *Dapin jing youyi*, T33n1696p67c20–p68a23.

<sup>93</sup> See Jizang, *Fahua youyi*, in T34n1722p649c11–p650a03.

<sup>94</sup> See, for example, *bulei* in Jizang (T34n1721), Zhiyan (T33n1704) and Kuiji (T37n1757), *budang* in Jizang (T33n1696, T33n1699, T34n1722), and *buzhou* in Zhiyi (T33n1698), etc.

<sup>95</sup> See T37n1745, T37n1764 and T38n1776. These formulations of the subject are given only at the end of the section and the beginning of the next. In T37n1745, Huiyuan only uses *fen* (differentiation), apparently an abbreviated form of *jiao zhi fenqi* of the other two.

the teaching in question belongs to the Great Vehicle or the Small Vehicle).<sup>96</sup>

The most prevalent form of classification, *jiao*-classification, is doctrinally oriented. With the development of the Chinese understanding of Buddhism, the textual classification, in its differentiation of versions and of the collections of *sūtra*, *vinaya* and *abhidharma*, becomes increasingly inadequate in determining the position of a particular teaching in tradition; so it is the case with the doctrinal classification in the Bodhisattva and *Śrāvaka* collections, for the mere distinction between the two is simply incapable of explaining the complex relationship between, and thus the relative positions of, a vast array of teachings. The *jiao*-classification goes beyond, not only the textual classification, but also the relatively formulaic classification of the two collections, and allows commentators greater freedom in the classification of teachings, thus pushing the practice to a new level of sophistication. Its topics mostly carry the term “teaching” (*jiao*), hence “characteristics of teachings” (*jiaoxiang*),<sup>97</sup> “classification of teachings” (*panjiao*), “differentiation of teachings” (*jiaofenqi*), “differences in teachings” (*jiaobutong*), and “distinctinctions between teachings” (*jiaoyi chabie*).<sup>98</sup>

The origination of the *jiao*-classification, however, deserves some more attention. It probably begins as an effort to explain the intention of teaching. Almost all the authors of the *Collected explanations* make comparisons between earlier teachings and the teach-

<sup>96</sup> See, for example, Huiyuan, T37n1749 and T39n1793; Shandao, T37n1753.

<sup>97</sup> See the discussion of the “characteristics” as one of Zhiyi’s “five aspects of profound meaning” in section three: Elaboration of teaching: from essence to its manifestations.

<sup>98</sup> Given Zhiyi’s introductory topic of *panjing jiaoxiang* (differentiation of the characteristics of a *sūtra*, i.e., from those of other *sūtras*), *panjiao* is probably just a different formulation of *jiaoxiang*. The rest of them, with their unanimous emphasis on differentiation, are apparently other reformulations of the same topic.

ing to be commented upon in their commentaries, and all identify the earlier teachings as provisional and theirs as ultimate.<sup>99</sup> In that sense, the differentiation of teachings was aimed to explain the intention of teaching with a view to reaffirm the importance of their exegetical projects – this text, the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, gives the highest teaching and thus requires further explication. It is probably for this reason that the compiler sets aside a separate section for these differentiations of teachings, and defines it as an effort to “clarify the intention of teaching.” While the “intention of teaching” only implies a comparison or differentiation of teachings, this secondary objective gradually comes to the fore and occupies the center stage. That is, commentators gradually move away from the interest in justifying their exegetical projects, and begin instead to set their attention squarely on a comparison regarding the degrees of doctrinal sophistication, thus producing various forms of *jiao*-classification.

## Conclusion

The foregoing seven sections have examined the seven most recurrent themes that commentators in Chinese Buddhist history used in surveying *sūtras* in the introductions of their commentaries – most introductory topics in Chinese Buddhist exegesis were derived from or formulated on the basis of these themes. In these seven sections, this article has demonstrated the variation in the breadth and depth of introductory inquiry in commentaries. While the variation in breadth is reflected in the diversity of the themes and their derivative introductory topics, the variation in depth is expressed in the extended examination of and sometimes fluid perception of a subject – in the latter the variation unfolds a subject into its sev-

<sup>99</sup> See the formulaic expressions of “formerly ..., but now ...,” as illustrated in the example of the compiler’s statement: “Therefore (the Buddha) first (i.e., formerly) presents the teaching of expedience, which is to lay the basis for the perfect and permanent teaching here (in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*)” (T37n1763p381c15).

eral aspects, as shown in the elaboration of essence into its various manifestations; it expands the use of a certain topic, as illustrated in the re-conceptualization of *zong-qu* at the hands of the Huayan scholars; and, last but not the least, it extends and shifts the central focus of a certain subject, as seen in the transition from the “intention of teaching” to the “classification of teachings.” Such a variation both in breadth and depth, allows us to observe the ways in which commentators select, organize and present important questions in an introduction, and, in that sense, illustrates the extent of sophistication and complexity of the development in the writing of exegesis in Chinese Buddhist history.

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## Glossary

Aśvaghōṣa 馬鳴	<i>butang</i> 部黨
<i>Avatamsakasūtra</i> 華嚴經	<i>buzhou</i> 部軸
Baoliang 寶亮	<i>da</i> 大
<i>ben</i> 本	Dao’an 道安
<i>benyou</i> 本有	<i>dayi</i> 大意
<i>bhūmi</i> 地	<i>dharmakāya</i> 法身
Bhāvaviveka, or Bhavya 清辨	Dharmapāla 護法
<i>bianjiao shiji</i> 辨教時機	<i>dvipiṭaka</i> 二藏
<i>bianti</i> 辨體	Fa’an 法安
<i>bie</i> 別	Fayao 法瑤
<i>bodhi</i> 菩提	Fayun 法雲
<i>bu</i> 部	Fazang 法藏
<i>butang</i> 部黨	Fazhi 法智
<i>Bukesiyijietuo jing</i> 不可思議解脫經	<i>gendan</i> 玄談
<i>bulei</i> 部類	<i>geyi</i> 格義
<i>busiyi</i> 不思議	Guanding 灌頂

- hejiaoyi* 覈教意  
*hui ren duoshao* 會人多少  
 Huiyuan 慧遠  
*jiao* 教  
*jiaobutong* 教不同  
*jiaodaxiao* 教大小  
*jiaofenqi* 教分齊  
*jiaoqi* 教起  
*jiaoshe* 教攝  
*jiaosuo beiji* 教所被機  
*jiaoxiang* 教相  
*jiaoxing* 教興  
*jiaoxing suoyou* 教興所由  
*jiaoyi* 教意  
*jiaoyi chabie* 教義差別  
*jiao zhi fenqi* 教之分齊  
*jiejingzi* 解經字  
*jietuo* 解脫  
*jingqizhiyi* 經起之意  
*jingyi* 經意  
 Jizang 吉藏  
*ju* 句  
*jueming* 絕名  
*juren fenbie* 舉人分別  
*kaiti* 開題  
*kaitixu* 開題序  
 Kuiji 窺基  
*laiyi* 來意  
*laiyimen* 來意門  
 Li Tongxuan 李通玄  
*Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* 大般涅槃經  
*Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*  
 摩訶般若波羅蜜多經, 大慧度經  
*mahāyāna* 大乘  
*ming* 名  
*mingquan* 冥權  
 Mou Runsun 牟潤孫  
*neng* 能  
*nirvāṇa* 涅槃  
 Ōchō Enichi 橫超慧日  
*panjiao* 判教  
*panjing jiaoxiang* 判經教相  
*pankeduan* 判科段  
*parinirvāṇa* (般)涅槃  
*piṭaka* 藏  
*prajñā* 般若  
*pratītya-samutpāda* 緣起  
*pusazang* 菩薩藏  
*Qixinlun* 起信論  
*quan* 權  
*Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* 妙法蓮  
 華經  
*śamatha* 止  
*saṃsāra* 生死  
*sāstra* 論  
 Sengliang 僧亮  
 Sengmin 僧旻  
 Sengzhao 僧肇  
 Sengzong 僧宗  
 Shandao 善導  
*shengsi* 生死  
*shengwenzang* 聲聞藏  
*shidazi* 釋大字  
*shiming* 釋名  
*shimingti* 釋名題  
*shiqi* 始起  
*shiti* 釋題  
*shitiming* 釋題名  
*shitimu* 釋題目  
*shixiang* 實相  
*shizao* 始造  
*shizhi* 實智  
*shuojingzhiyi* 說經之意  
*su* 俗  
*suiwen jieshi* 隨文解釋  
*suo* 所  
*suowei youqing* 所為有情  
*sūtra* 經  
*Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修  
 大藏經  
 Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎  
 Tang Yongtong 湯用彤

Tanji 曇濟	yan 言
tanjueming 談絕名	Yan Shangwen 顏尚文
Tanyan 曇延	yao 要
Tanzhun 曇准	yi 意
tathatā 真如	yin 因
ti 題	yinqi 因起
ti 體	yinyuan 因緣
Tripitaka 三藏	yi zhang yinqi 一彰因起
tuzhong 徒眾	yizhi 意致
Üich'on 義天	yong 用
Vajracchedikaprajñāpāramitāsūtra 金剛般若波羅蜜經	you 由
Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra 維摩詰所 說經	youyi 遊意
vinaya 律	yuanqi 緣起
vipaśyanā 觀	zaliaojian 雜料簡
wenju 文句	zang 藏
Won'chuk 圓測	zangshe 藏攝
Wonhyo 元曉	zaolun suoyou 造論所由
wuchong xuanyi 五重玄義	zaolunyi 造論意
wuyin 無因	zhen 真
wuzhu 無住	zhi 旨
xiang 相	zhi 智
xiao 小	Zhili 知禮
xu 序	Zhixiu 智秀
xuan 玄	Zhiyan 智儼
xuanlun 玄論	Zhiyi 智顛
xuanshu 玄疏	Zhizang 智藏
xuanyi 玄義	Zixuan 子瑿
Xuanzang 玄奘	zong 宗
xubenyoun 敘本有	Zongmi 宗密
xu jiaoxing yi 序教興意	zong-qu 宗趣
xushuo jingyi 序說經意	zongti 宗體
xuwang 序王	zongyao 宗要
	zongzhi 宗旨
	zongzhi 宗致