

Sūtra Commentaries in Chinese until the Tang Period

The fervent composition of commentaries on Buddhist *sūtras* could well be said to be one of the characteristic features of East Asian Buddhism. Translation of Buddhist scriptures into Chinese began around the second half of the 2nd century CE. When the Chinese began to study Buddhist teachings in their own language, they responded to *buddhavacana* (words of the Buddha) with various forms of exegetical activity: the earliest surviving commentaries from China date most likely to, or shortly after, the time of An Shigao (安世高; fl. c. 148–180 CE). By that time, China had a long-standing tradition of composing commentaries on its own literary and philosophical texts, a tradition that scholars speculate may have provided a stimulus to early Chinese Buddhist exegetes (see Mou, 1960). Among the Buddhist writings as a whole, the Chinese considered *sūtras*, as opposed, for instance, to *śāstra* literature, as the most legitimate basis for investigating the Buddha's teachings, and it was the *sūtras* that received most of the commentarial attention. Generally speaking, when Chinese Buddhists sought to express their own position on a given doctrinal problem, they did not necessarily author independent tracts. Instead, they frequently resorted to the medium of *sūtra* commentary. At the same time, we must not overlook the fact that such collections as the *Hongming ji* (弘明集; Collection for the Propagation and Clarification [of Buddhism]; T. 2102) and *Guang hongming ji* (廣弘明集; Expanded Collection for the Propagation and Clarification [of Buddhism]; T. 2103) preserve quite a few independent tracts, and according to the catalogue section of the *Chu sanzang ji ji* (出三藏記集; Compilation of Notices on the Production of the Tripiṭaka; T. 2145), many more treatises were compiled by the early 6th century that no longer survive.

The first section of this entry focuses on Chinese *sūtra* commentaries in the earliest period, from their emergence in the second half of the 2nd century to roughly the beginning of the 5th century. The next section traces the emergence of new forms and strategies of commentary from the 5th to the early 7th century: since these strategies functioned as models for commentaries of later periods up until today, this section is the most detailed and extensive

one. Finally, in the third section, the entry offers a cursory overview of commentarial developments in later periods of Chinese Buddhist history (from the Tang onward) as well as of the commentarial traditions of Korea and Japan.

The Earliest Period: Commentaries from the 2nd to the 5th Century

It has long been accepted that the earliest type of *sūtra* commentary in China was the “interlinear” type (*zhu* [注/註]), the oldest surviving examples of which date to the 3rd and 4th centuries. The second main type, the “exposition of the meaning” or “expository” (*yishu* [義疏]) style, emerged during the Northern and Southern Dynasties, roughly from the 5th century onward (with ZZ 577 [*Miaofa lianhua jing shu*; 妙法蓮華經疏; Expository Commentary on the *Lotus Sūtra*] by Daosheng [道生], the important early 5th-cent. theorist and exegete, as a representative early example; see below). In an attempt to delineate the differences between these two types, Kogachi Ryūichi (2001) used commentaries to Confucian texts as his reference point. He defined the interlinear commentary as a form that reproduces entire passages from the original scripture; explanations are then appended to the quoted passages in such a way that the basic *sūtra* text is accorded priority, and the interlinear commentary itself does not stand independent of the subject scripture. By contrast, the expository style does not reproduce the entire text of the *sūtra* but includes only selected passages (duly abridged and edited by the author) to which comments are then added, resulting in a composition that must be regarded as the work of the compiler himself.

The transition from the interlinear to the expository format in Chinese Buddhist history may to some extent reflect the influence of a parallel move from the interlinear to the expository style in the exegetical literatures on the Confucian classics.

Other factors behind the transition may have been strictly pragmatic. As indicated above, the interlinear style of commentary entailed reproduction of original *sūtra* passages in their entirety, followed by

suitable segmenting and explanations placed immediately beneath the respective sections. Clearly, carrying out these operations on a text of unusually great length would have required a considerable investment of resources. Indeed, even in the case of later commentaries of the expository style, we find many examples in which the explanations tend to become shorter as one proceeds to the latter parts of the target text. When we further consider that new translations continued to be produced throughout this period, each presenting a new task for commentators, we may surmise that the move from the interlinear to the expository form presented itself as a practical convenience, or even a necessity.

In addition to such pragmatic concerns, the shift from interlinear to expository may be seen against its philosophic backdrop. Whereas interlinear commentaries were usually restricted to relatively superficial matters, such as the meanings of individual terms or problems of syntax, expository commentaries tended to take up the underlying themes of the text as a whole, as we can see, for instance, in Wang Bi's (王弼; 226–249 CE) and Daosheng's treatment of the Chinese classics and Buddhist *sūtras* respectively. Both Wang Bi and Daosheng prioritized the theoretical exegetical principle of “grasping the meaning and forgetting the words” (*deyi wangyan* [得意忘言]), which encouraged privileging the cardinal purport of the text over more specific textual matters.

Early catalogues inform us of numerous early interlinear commentaries that no longer survive. For instance, according to the *Chu sanzang jiji*, Zhi Qian (支謙; late 2nd–mid–3rd cent.) composed an interlinear commentary to the anonymous Han-period translation *Liaoben shengsi jing* (了本生死經; T. 708; T. 2145 [LV] 45b20–22), which has not been preserved. Likewise, the monk Kang Senghui (康僧會; ?–280 CE) of Sogdian descent authored interlinear commentaries on the *Sihemo jing* (私呵末經; T. 532; also known as *Sihemei jing* [私呵昧] and *Daoshu jing* [道樹經]) and on the *Fajing jing* (法鏡經; T. 322; T. 2145 [LV] 97a15); the former commentary has not been preserved, while of the latter only a few brief lines remain in the 7th-century anthology *Fayuan zhulin* (法苑珠林) by the Chang'an scholar Daoshi (道世; T. 2122 [LIII] 1000a1–2).

Three interlinear commentaries from the early period are still extant in their complete form. One is the two-fascicle anonymous commentary to the *Yinchiru jing* (陰持入經; T. 603), being An Shigao's translation of a text corresponding to

chapter 6 of the Pali treatise known as *Peṭakopadesa* (Zacchetti, 2002). The commentary is published under the title *Yinchiru jing zhu* (陰持入經注; T. 1694). In it we find some 15 citations credited to a “master” (“the master says”; *shi yun* [師云]) who has been variously identified as An Shigao, Kang Senghui, or even Zhi Qian (for a detailed discussion of this vexed problem, see Zacchetti, 2010, 154–156). In addition, we find in the *Yinchiru jing zhu* three instances of the phrase “one interpretation states” (*yi shuo yun* [一說云] or *yi shuo yan* [一說言]), which suggests that alternative interpretations were in circulation at the time of the text's composition. Citations from some 13 different *sūtras* appear in the commentary, as do three citations of *gāthās* (“a *gāthā* states”; *ji yue* [偈曰]): one from the *Fajing jing*, one from the *Sihemei jing*, and one from an as of yet unidentified source. We also find two citations simply from “a *sūtra*” (“a *sūtra* says”; *jing yue* [經曰]); here too the sources have not been determined. Finally, we see three citations introduced with the phrase “the *Anban* explanation states” (*Anban jie yue* [安般解曰]; for the *Anban*, see below). Evidence in the preface, also anonymous, as well as features of the text itself, suggests that this commentary was compiled during the 3rd century, in the Wu (吳) Kingdom Buddhist community revolving around the layman Chen Hui (陳慧) and Kang Senghui (Zacchetti, 2010; for a Japanese translation, see Ui, 1971); for an interpretation of its doctrinal orientation, see Lai, 1986).

Second is the interlinear commentary embedded in the text of the *Da mingdu jing* (大明度經; T. 225). The *Da mingdu jing*, a translation of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, comprises a total of six fascicles; the authorship of the first fascicle is unknown, while the remaining five (chs. 2–30) are reliably attributed to Zhi Qian (Nattier, 2008). The commentary is supplied only for the first fascicle, coinciding with chapter 1, *Xing pin* (行品). We do not know the identity of the commentator, although in view of the similarities between this work and the *Yinchiru jing zhu*, it has been suggested that both emerged from the same milieu, that is, the Wu Kingdom “school” of Kang Senghui (Nattier, 2008, 305). The commentary contains some 20 quotations introduced by “the master says” (*shi yun* [師云]): here too, as in the *Yinchiru jing zhu*, the “master” is not identified. In addition, there appear citations from the *Faju jing* (法句經; T. 210) as well as from the anonymous *Liaoben shengsi jing* (了本生死經; T. 708), from the *Dunzhenduoluo suowen rulai sanmei jing* (侏真陀羅所問如來三昧經; T. 624),

from the *Huiyin sanmei jing* (慧印三昧經; T. 632), and from a text referred to simply as *Anban* (安般, cf. T. 602; Zacchetti, 2008).

The third complete surviving interlinear commentary is the *Ren ben yu sheng jing zhu* (人本欲生經註; T. 1693) composed by the prominent early exegete, bibliographer, and organizer of the monastic *saṅgha* Dao'an (道安; 314–385 CE) on An Shigao's translation *Ren ben yu sheng jing* (人本欲生經; T. 14). This text also includes Dao'an's preface, the *Ren ben yu sheng jing xu* (人本欲生經序). The commentary cites three texts: *Yin chi ru jing*, *Faju jing*, and the *Qichu sanguan jing* (七處三觀經; T. 150A). In addition, we find in it text-critical remarks regarding the syntax or style of the translation, for example the expression “the sentence order is reversed” (*judao* [句倒]) appears six times (T. 1693 [XXXIII] 1b2; 1c19; 2b8; 3a29; 4a10–11; 5c5), statements that reflect a concern with orthography, for instance “[the character] *xian* should be *jian*” (*xian dang wei jian* [現當為見, T. 1693 [XXXIII] 1b2, 2b1), and comments that identify words that Dao'an saw as added or deleted in the process of transmission. Of particular interest are remarks comparing the Indian scriptural style with the Chinese: “Indian language is straightforward, having no qualms about elaborating in extensive detail” (T. 1693 [XXXIII] 4a23–24). This is the only surviving commentary by Dao'an, who is said to have written numerous other commentaries of the interlinear type, including on *Daodi jing* (道地經; T. 607; i.e. An Shigao's translation of Saṅgharakṣa's *Yogācārabhūmi*), *Yin chiru jing*, *Shi'er men jing* (十二門經), and *Anban shouyi jing* (安般守意經, see T. 2145 [LV] 39b16–40a8).

The three interlinear commentaries introduced above had been viewed by modern scholars as the oldest extant exegetical works in the Chinese Buddhist tradition. However, recent scholarship has identified a number of other commentaries that may reflect an even earlier period of commentarial activity in China.

One of these is the *Anban shouyi jing* (安般守意經; T. 602) itself. This text had long been considered a composite work in which An Shigao's translation of an Indian text is mixed together indiscriminately with commentarial material produced in the 3rd-century “school” of Kang Senghui (see e.g. Zürcher, 2007, 53). Given that An Shigao's translations hold immense value for the study of the Buddhism and of the Chinese language of the Later Han period, much scholarship on the *Anban shouyi jing* had consisted in efforts to disentangle An Shigao's text from the later interpretive material.

This understanding of the *Anban shouyi jing* has recently been challenged in view of the 1999 manuscript discoveries in the Kongō-ji (金剛寺) temple in Japan. The manuscript includes, among others, a text under an identical title, *Anban shouyi jing* (ms. K-ABSYJ). Detailed comparison of this text with that of the *Anban shouyi jing* (T. 602) has led S. Zacchetti (2008) to conclude that the latter is not, as previously assumed, a Han translation with interwoven commentary but rather in its entirety a commentary on a separate text, that is, on a version of the *Anban shouyi jing* similar to that represented in the Kongō-ji manuscript. Moreover, in view of the stylistic features and exegetical technique in the *Anban shouyi jing* (T. 602), as well as of four commentarial glosses appended at the end of the Kongō-ji manuscript, S. Zacchetti argues that while the *Anban shouyi jing* commentary was written down in the 3rd-century “school” of Kang Senghui, it should be seen as reflecting an oral exegetical tradition going back, at least in part, to An Shigao himself.

The second component of the Kongō-ji manuscript consists of three closely related anonymous texts: the long-lost *Foshuo shi'er men jing* (佛說十二門經), *Foshuo jie shi'er men jing* (佛說解十二門經), and a commentary on the topic of the “12 gates” (*shi'er men* [十二門]) central to the preceding two works. In-depth analysis of this commentary, which bears no title, has led S. Zacchetti (2003) to posit that it is likely one of the earliest Chinese exegetical works and to tentatively point to An Shigao as the author.

The Kongō-ji discoveries have also allowed a reappraisal of a previously known but largely ignored text, the *Ahan koujie shi'er yinyuan jing* (阿含口解十二因緣經; T. 1508). This text too is in all likelihood, as suggested by the word *koujie* (口解; “oral explanation”) in its title, not a *sūtra* translation but an exegetical composition produced in China, one that – like the *Anban shouyi jing* and the *shi'er men* commentary – seems to reflect an oral commentarial practice traceable to An Shigao (Zacchetti, 2004). The text shows stylistic similarities to the *shi'er men* commentary, although a more detailed comparison of these is necessary.

In conclusion, while it had previously been accepted that the earliest Chinese exegetical works are the interlinear commentaries from the 3rd century, only three of which survive in complete form, the texts just discussed may be tentatively said to represent an even earlier phase in the development of Chinese Buddhist exegesis. This phase appears to be represented by the *Ahan koujie shi'er yinyuan jing*,

the *shī'er men* commentary, the *Anban shouyi jing* (T. 602), and some passages in the *Yin chi ru jing zhu* (Zacchetti, 2003, 294, 294n184). Some of these works were written down in or shortly after the time of An Shigao (the *Ahan koujie shī'er yinyuan jing*, the *shī'er men* commentary), others later, in the 3rd century (the *Anban shouyi jing* [T. 602]; relevant passages of the *Yin chi ru jing zhu*), but all reflect a fundamentally oral tradition dating back to An Shigao and the community of his followers. Being oral in nature, they do not target specific words or phrases as the interlinear commentaries do but instead offer a freer approach to the basic text and to cited material. They also make frequent use of *mātrkāś*, numbered lists of technical terms, as a prop or script for oral explication. In addition, they make few if any concessions to native Chinese philosophical and aesthetic values: crude in form and highly technical in content, they appear to be aimed at a small group of Buddhist insiders, not at spreading the religion and making new converts.

Finally, a note is in order about two quasi-exegetical styles that seem to have enjoyed some currency especially in the 4th and early 5th centuries. First is the *chao* (抄; “extract”) format, wherein a digest is produced from a basic text. This was used by Zhi Dun (支遁) in the *Da xiao pin duibi yao chao* (大小品對比要抄), by Dao'an in the *Moheboluoboluomi jing chao* (摩訶鉢羅波羅蜜經抄), and by Huiyuan (慧遠) in the *Dazhidu lun chao* (大智論抄; see Zürcher, 2007, 410n97). Second is the *he* (合) strategy of reading *sūtras* synoptically, that is, by comparing their different existing translations (Zürcher, 2007, 99–100). This is exemplified by Dao'an's *He Fangguang Guangzan luejie* (合放光光讚略解), and by Zhi Mindu's (支敏度; c. 300 CE) *He Shoulengyan jing ji* (合首楞嚴經記) and *He Weimojie jing ji* (合維摩詰經). Unfortunately, none of these works survives, but we do have the prefaces to all of them.

Expository Commentaries from the 5th to the 7th Century

Two Early Examples

In the early 5th century, some commentaries began to show a tendency to analytically divide their basic *sūtras* into discrete sections. One such text is the *Jin'gang banruoboluomijing zhu* (金剛般若波羅蜜經注; ZZ 454; Interlinear Commentary on the *Jin'gang banruoboluomi jing*), attributed to Sengzhao (僧肇; 384–414 CE) but more likely a work of the poet and

statesman Xie Lingyun (謝靈運; 385–433 CE; see Ui, 1933; Ukai, 1992a; 1992b; Mayer, 1999). One distinctive feature of this text is its frequent use of the term “principle” (*li* [理]), a term that appears in Daosheng's commentaries as well. In terms of literary form, the text resembles Daosheng's writings. Further, we find in it various exegetical terms of art that often appear in later commentaries, such as “recounting firmly” (*shu cheng* [述成]), “concluding firmly” (*jie cheng* [結成]), or “establishing correspondence between doctrine and simile” (*he pi* [合譬]). The commentary begins with a section akin to a *sūtra* preface, although one not introduced as such, which includes an attempt to identify the “fundamental principle” of the text (i.e. the middle way or wisdom of emptiness), to explain its title, to parse the body of the *sūtra* into three sections (*fenke* [分科], i.e. emptiness of objects, emptiness of wisdom, and emptiness of the bodhisattva), and to position the *sūtra* within a four-stage history of the *Prajñāpāramitā* dispensation. All these features, while noteworthy here given the text's early date, are present in it in only a rudimentary form; they later became hallmarks of the expository style of commentary.

Another unique case, which we may call a hybrid, is the *Zhu Weimojie jing* (注維摩詰經; T. 1775; Interlinear Commentary to the *Weimojie suoshuo jing* [維摩詰所說經; T. 475]), traditionally considered a work of Sengzhao but compiled likely in the first half of the 6th century (Hanazuka, 1982; for studies of the *Zhu Weimojie jing*, see Usuda, 1977a; Kimura, 1987; for translations, see Carré, 2004; Institute for Comprehensive Studies of Buddhism of Taishō University, 2000). Like the main interlinear commentaries described previously, the *Zhu Weimojie jing* does not attempt to parse the text into three big sections. Instead, it reproduces the text of the *Weimojie suoshuo jing* in its entirety, incorporating into it the comments of Kumārajīva, Sengzhao, and Daosheng. Such reproduction of the complete text of the *sūtra* is representative of the interlinear format. In the case of the *Weimojie suoshuo jing*, the question has been asked whether its constituent commentaries, prior to their amalgamation into a single work, were interlinear or expository. We have good reason to believe that Sengzhao's commentary was interlinear, while Daosheng's was expository. A recent discovery of Sengzhao's commentary on the *Weimojie suoshuo jing* edited independently shows it to have been of the interlinear type before its incorporation into the *Weimojie suoshuo jing* (Usuda, 1977b; Kudara, 2002). As for Daosheng's contribution, Kudō Masaya

(2000b) has surmised that, in contrast to Sengzhao's, it might have been an expository work. Daosheng's *Miaofa lianhua jing shu*, the only one among his writings to survive *in extenso*, is an expository text. Moreover, regarding Daosheng's commentary to the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇamahāsūtra* (*Daban niepan jing*) included in the *Daban niepan jing jijie* (大般涅槃經集解; T. 1763), in view of the sheer size of the basic *sūtra* (the southern edition of the *Daban niepan jing* runs 36 fasc.) and of the fact that Daosheng's comments addressing specific passages are very few, we can infer that Daosheng's commentary on the *Daban niepan jing* also followed the expository format. All this leads us to surmise that Daosheng favored the expository style and that his commentary to the *Weimojie suoshuo jing* belonged to this genre.

Other early exegetes also commented on one version or other of the *Weimojie jing*. Sengrui's (僧叡; *fl.* early 5th cent.) *Pimoluojiedi jing yishu xu* (毘摩羅詰堤經義疏序; Preface to the Expository Commentary on the *Pimoluojiedi jing*), preserved in fascicle 8 of the *Chu sanzang ji ji* (T. 2145 [LV] 58c11–59a18), suggests that Sengrui authored an expository commentary on this scripture. Although no such work survives, some ten comments from Sengrui are cited in Daoye's (道液 or 道掖) 8th-century *Jingming jing jije guanzhong shu* (淨名經集解關中疏; T. 2777), which modifies the *Zhu Weimojie jing* by abridging some comments by Kumārajīva and Sengzhao and adding some by Sengrui and Zhiyi (智顓; 538–597 CE). Similarly, Kumārajīva's disciple Daorong (道融; dates unknown) seems to have composed an expository commentary on the *Weimojie suoshuo jing* (see T. 2059 [L] 363c27–29). An anonymous interlinear commentary on the *Weimojie jing* has been preserved in a manuscript from Dunhuang (P 3006). Shi Guopu (1998) conjectures that this work should be attributed to Dao'an (for a critique of Shi's position, see Nattier, 2008, 140n78).

Prefaces (*xu* [序]), such as Sengzhao's preface to the *Weimojie suoshuo jing* attached to the *Zhu Weimojie jing*, discuss on the whole such matters as the central concept of *sūtra*, the *sūtra's* title, and the particulars of its translation. Later, roughly from the 6th century onward (as shown in Tao, 2007), these topical *foci* develop into the so-called "profound-meaning" (*xuanyi* [玄義]) or "profound-treatise" (*xuanlun* [玄論]) commentarial literature typical of figures such as Jizang (吉藏; 549–623 CE) and Zhiyi.

Daosheng's *Miaofa lianhua jing shu*: The Oldest Surviving Expository Commentary

Surviving commentaries by Daosheng include those to Kumārajīva's translation of the Lotus Sūtra (*Miaofa lianhua jing* [妙法蓮華經; T. 262; hereafter *Fahua jing*]), Kumārajīva's *Vimalakīrtinīrdeśa* (*Weimojie suoshuo jing* [維摩詰所說經; T. 475]) and the *Dabanniepan jing* (大般涅槃經; T. 375, the southern version of Dharmakṣema's translation of the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇamahāsūtra*). Of these, his commentaries to the *Weimojie suoshuo jing* and the *Dabanniepan jing* do not exist as independent works but have been amalgamated with commentaries by other authors. For example, in the collection of commentaries on the *Dabanniepan jing*, the *Dabanniepan jing jijie* (大般涅槃經集解; T. 1763; see below), Daosheng's annotations are not mentioned at all for some 13 of the *sūtra's* 25 chapters. One possible reason for this is that, faced with the daunting task of combining meaningfully commentaries from as many as 18 authors, the compilers opted for an editorial policy that privileged the commentary of Sengliang (僧亮; *fl.* mid-6th cent.; for a partial translation of Sengliang's preface to the *Dabanniepan jing jijie*, see Lai, 1982, 104) and that did not accord Daosheng a central role.

As we noted above, Sengrui and Daorong are said to have composed expository commentaries to the *Weimojie suoshuo jing*, hence we cannot take Daosheng's *Miaofa lianhua jing shu* (妙法蓮花經疏; ZZ 577; for a study and translation of this commentary, see Kim, 1990) as the oldest representative of this genre; it is however the oldest extant complete work of this type. For this reason, and since this text exerted a major influence on *sūtra* commentaries of later periods, it deserves a closer look.

Daosheng's *Miaofa lianhua jing shu* does not include an independent preface, but prior to embarking on the passage-by-passage exegesis of the *sūtra*, it does offer a brief discussion of the circumstances of the commentary's production and the meaning of the *sūtra's* title, both features not unlike those found in a preface. This introductory section identifies the "thematic thrust" (*zong* [宗]; for a discussion of this key hermeneutic concept, see Tao, 2007, 56ff.) of the *Fahua jing* as the "great vehicle" (*dasheng* [大乘]) and classifies the doctrinal content of the *sūtra* according to the four "turnings" of the wheel of dharma (*sizhong falun* [四種法輪; ZZ 577, 1b19]: (1) dharma wheel of purity (*shanjing falun* [善淨

法輪), (2) dharma wheel of skill-in-means (*fangbian falun* [方便法輪]), (3) dharma wheel of the real (*zhenshi falun* [真實法輪]), and (4) dharma wheel without remainder (*wuyu falun* [無餘法輪]). When Daosheng wrote his text in the early 5th century, Chinese exegetes were showing increasing concern with determining the relationship among different *sūtras* by defining the unique “thematic thrust” of each – a practice akin to what would become “classification of doctrine” (*panjiao* [判教]; Ōchō, 1937). Here, however, we will focus on Daosheng’s own exegetical method, as evidenced by the section of his commentary that provides passage-by-passage exegesis of the basic *sūtra*.

(1) Before Daosheng engages the content of each chapter, he discusses the placement and significance of the chapter within the *sūtra* as a whole and offers an explanation of the chapter title. This feature is encountered widely in *sūtra* commentaries of later periods, such as those by Jizang, where it is referred to as the “reason of [the *sūtra*’s] origin” (*laiyi* [來意]).

(2) Daosheng broadly divides the text of the *Fahua jing* into three sections: (1) “assimilating the three causal paths to the one cause” (*sanyin wei yiyin* [三因為一因]; ZZ 577, 13b19), (2) “assimilating the three results [of the three paths] to the one result” (*sanguo wei yiguo* [三果為一果]; ZZ 577, 14a9), and (3) “assimilating the three persons [i.e. followers of the three paths] to the one person” (*sanren wei yiren* [三人為一人]; ZZ 577, 16b18). This division differs from the threefold parsing of a given *sūtra* into the sections of “preface” (*xu* [序]), “main discourse” (*zhengshuo* [正說]), and “dissemination” (*liutong* [流通]) that becomes standard in later periods. However, Daosheng does use the terms “preface” and “dissemination” when discussing the placement of individual chapters within the work as a whole. He also uses the expression “exposition of principle” (*lishuo* [理說]; ZZ 577, 10c2 and elsewhere; referring to the *sūtra*’s doctrine of one causal path and one result) in a way that resembles the idea of “main discourse.”

So-called analytic parsing (*fenke* [分科] or *kepan* [科判]) entails more than just this sort of generic division of a *sūtra*’s content. For instance, in Daosheng’s commentary, we find complex, multilayered divisions imposed on the section extending from the *Xu pin* (序品) chapter through the *Xinjie pin* (信解品) chapter. Multiple layers of division can be seen especially in the prose and verse sections on the “burning house” (the famous *Lotus Sūtra* parable of the Buddha as the father who lures his children out

of a burning house with promises of wonderful toy carts awaiting them outside) in the *Piyu pin* (譬喻品) chapter; indeed this section of the commentary is the analytically most developed. The complexity of Daosheng’s analytic parsing notwithstanding, if we compare it to the exceedingly dense analytic division in the commentaries of later figures such as Fayun (法雲; 467–529 CE) and Jizang, it amounts to little more than a general sectioning. Nonetheless, without doubt Daosheng’s “analytic parsing” stands in this regard as a forerunner to the commentaries of later periods.

(3) Daosheng reproduces only those *sūtra* passages for which he supplies explanations. In this respect, his technique differs from that of commentators such as Fayun. While Fayun provides direct commentary only on select sections of the *sūtra*, introducing them with such shorthand expressions as “from here on” (*cixia* [此下]) or “from [words such and such] on” (*yixia* [已下]), he ends up applying analytic parsing to the entirety of the *sūtra*’s contents.

In instances in which the passage in question is comparatively short, Daosheng reproduces the entire text; where it is longer, he presents it in abridged form using such expressions as “[the passage] from A to B” (A *zhi* [至] B). This approach continues to be used in commentaries of later periods.

Moreover, even though Daosheng presents the *sūtra* text whenever he introduces an analytic division, he does not reproduce the broader context of the section under discussion. Hence his manner of presenting the *sūtra* text can be characterized as incomplete.

(4) Daosheng explains names of individuals transliterated into Chinese using such expressions as “in Song it is” (*Song yun* [宋云]) or “in Song we say” (*Song yan* [宋言]). “Song” refers to the Liu Song dynasty (劉宋; 420–479 CE), under which Daosheng wrote most of his work. This format occasionally turns up in the *Zhu Weimojie jing* as well.

(5) Daosheng never cites other texts in order to legitimate his own interpretations (Ōchō, 1952), and only in two places does he introduce alternative readings by using the expression “another interpretation states” (*yi yi yun* [一義云]). By contrast, reference to and critique of various external sources, a strategy designed to advance the orthodoxy of one’s own position, are used frequently in later commentaries.

(6) In general, *sūtras* alternate expository prose and rhymed verse. Commenting on the *Fahua jing*, Daosheng posits four justifications for the presence

of verse in it. The verses (1) are preached for audiences in a time after the promulgation of the prose passages, (2) are for persons who have not yet understood the prose, (3) are preached in order to elaborate on the contents of the prose, and (4) are a natural expression of the elation inspired by the *sūtra*.

Daosheng's comments to the verses are actually quite brief; their central concern is to establish strict correspondence between the verses and the prose as parsed in his own framework of analytic division. That correspondence is expressed by the formula "A sets B to verse" (A *song* [頌] B), in other words, verse passage A is a versified rehearsal of prose passage B. This technique continues to be used in later commentaries.

Daosheng's basic interpretive perspective is predicated on his belief in the profound conceptual significance of the concrete phenomenal content of the *sūtra* (e.g. the emitting of radiant light, the quaking of the earth, and the manifestation of the jeweled stūpa), as well as of the similes (Ōchō, 1975). Recovering that deep significance from the surface level of text is the main task of the commentator: the words of the *sūtra* are like a weir or trap used to catch a fish or hare, and as soon as the meaning has been grasped, the words can, and should, be discarded.

Finally, a comment is necessary on the rhetorical structures that Daosheng uses to establish internal coherence in his interpretation of the *sūtra*. The first such structure concerns the transcendent nature of the enlightened sage (*shengren* [聖人]), the Buddha. The Buddha undertakes manifold activities, such as the preaching of the divergent teachings of the three vehicles (vehicle of the *śrāvakas*, vehicle of the pratyekabuddhas, and vehicle of the bodhisattvas) or entry into nirvāṇa, merely to accord responsively with the individual circumstances of ordinary humans (*fanfu* [凡夫]); in his own being, the Buddha exists in a manner that transcends such ordinary activities. Second, Daosheng adopts the concept of "stimulus and response" (*ganying* [感應]) for the purpose of explaining such parables as that of the burning house or the prodigal son. In this model, the salvific impetus (*ji* [機]) represents the constructive aspect of the sentient being that moves (*gan* [感]) the buddhas and bodhisattvas to manifest a response (*ying* [應]) and subsequently receives the response. Both of these rhetorical structures exerted a major impact on later *sūtra* commentaries. We should finally note Daosheng's frequent use of the concept of principle (*li* [理]), a term that Daosheng

employs most often in connection with the idea of the one vehicle. This concept is also in evidence in later *sūtra* commentaries.

The *Dabanniepan jing jijie* and Fayun's *Fahua yiji*

The *Dabanniepan jing jijie* (大般涅槃經集解; Assembled Explanations of the *Niepan jing*; T. 1763) and Fayun's *Fahua yiji* (法華義記; Notes on the Meaning of the *Fahua jing*; T. 1715) stand out not only among the few extant commentaries from the Liang period (梁; 502–557 CE) but also in the tradition of East Asian Buddhist commentary as a whole.

(1) The *Dabanniepan jing jijie*, in 71 fascicles, is a compendium of commentaries to the southern edition of the Mahāyāna *Dabanniepan jing* (T. 375) compiled from individual commentaries by some 18 monks ranging in time from Daosheng (late 4th–early 5th cents.), through the Liu Song, to the Southern Qi (南齊; 479–502 CE) and Liang periods. Problems of the text's compiler and of its transmission history are explored by Kanno Hiroshi (1986), who argues that, despite the common attribution to Baoliang (寶亮; 444–509 CE) of the Lingwei Monastery (靈味寺), the text was likely compiled by Falang (法朗; dates unknown) of the Jianyuan Monastery (建元寺). Falang is the same person as Huilang (慧朗), of whom we have a record in the *Dabanniepan jing jijie*.

The first fascicle of the *Dabanniepan jing jijie* comprises various prefaces to the *sūtra*, including the *Dabanniepan jing yishu xu* (大般涅槃經義疏序; Preface to the Expository Commentary on the *Niepan jing*) that Emperor Wu of the Liang composed (or had Fayun compose) for Baoliang, as well as prefaces by ten other dharma masters, including Daosheng, Sengliang, Sengzong (僧宗; 438–496 CE), and Baoliang himself. The prefaces are parsed by the *Dabanniepan jing ji ji's* compiler into eight topical categories:

1. explaining the title (*shiming* [釋名]);
2. determining the substance (of the *sūtra*; *bianti* [辨體]);
3. on original being (*shu benyou* [敘本有]);
4. on the transcendence of names (*tan jueming* [談絕名]);
5. explanation of the word "mahā" (in the title; *shi da zi* [釋大字]);
6. explication of the word "sūtra" (in the title; *jie jing zi* [解經字]);
7. revealing the doctrinal meaning (*he jiaoyi* [覈教意]); and

8. classifying the divisions (of the *sūtra*; *pan keduan* [判科段]).

To obtain this arrangement, the compiler identified statements in the prefaces that bore a common connection to each of these eight topics and placed these portions of the prefaces under their respective topical indices. In addition to the authors of the component prefaces, the first fascicle includes the names of eight other individuals of renown, notably Sengzhao and Fayun, as well as a number of comments attributed to them.

From the second fascicle on, the text launches into a passage-by-passage exegesis of the basic *sūtra*. It parses the 25 chapters in 36 fascicles of the *Dabanniepan jing* into a total of 2,864 passages, beneath each of which it groups the commentaries of the various masters. These include commentaries of nine out of the ten exegetes mentioned previously as authors of prefaces to the *sūtra* (Tanzhun's [曇准; 439–c. 515 CE] commentary actually does not appear at all), and of nine additional individuals, including Huilang and Zhizang (智藏; 458–522), making a total of 18 commentaries. Among these 18, Sengliang's commentary is cited 2,130 times, Sengzong's 1,145 times, and Baoliang's 1,081 times; by contrast, the commentaries of Huiling (慧令; dates unknown) and Zhizang are cited only once each. In addition to the 18 names cited above, the commentary of a certain Mingjun (明駿; dates unknown) is cited some 83 times, always as the last one in the sequence. This Mingjun might have been the editor or compiler of the *Dabanniepan jing jijie* or, perhaps more likely, a later commentator whose glosses were integrated into the original text after the compilation of the original work.

One of the outstanding features of the *Dabanniepan jing jijie* is the compiler's analytic division of the prefaces of the ten masters into eight topical categories, as described above. These eight topical categories show some commonalities with the topical rubrics seen in commentaries by later figures such as Zhiyi and Jizang. The *Dabanniepan jing jijie* then exhibits the earliest surviving example of this important interpretive strategy.

(2) The *Fahua yiji* basically consists of Fayun's lectures on the *Fahua jing* as recorded by one of his disciples. This disciple's identity remains unknown: all we can say is that he belonged to Fayun's scholastic lineage. He did not record Fayun's lectures word for word, but, in an apparent attempt to ensure for this work the status of the definitive commentarial text on the *Fahua jing*, he made a special point of introducing and critiquing alternative interpretations

current by his day. In view of the compiler's considerable contributions to the content of the text, it is possible to identify traces of his own critical position.

At the very beginning of the *Fahua yiji*, we find a section that might properly be called a general preface. It contains remarks on the doctrinal classification of the *sūtra*, an explanation of its title, and a basic breakdown of its contents. These three elemental themes figure also in the opening sections of the commentaries by Jingying Huiyuan (淨影慧遠; 523–592 CE). However, Fayun's *Fahua yiji* follows much more closely the model pattern of a *sūtra* preface.

After this opening section, there follows the commentary proper, which engages the *sūtra* passage by passage, beginning with the opening line, "Thus have I heard," and ending with the bodhisattva Samantabhadra's exhortations at the end of the final chapter. The structure is identical to that found in Jingying Huiyuan's commentaries and in Jizang's *Fahua tonglüe* (法華統略; ZZ 582), although Fayun's *Fahua yiji* stands out for its extremely detailed, architectonic parsing of the entire text of the basic *sūtra*. Indeed it appears that this comprehensiveness was for Fayun a cardinal objective. The analytic parsing witnessed in the *Fahua yiji* exerted profound influence on the later Zhiyi's and Jizang's commentaries to the *Fahua jing*.

Commentaries of the "Three Great Dharma Masters of the Sui"

Chronologically, Jingying Huiyuan was the first among the "three great dharma masters of the Sui" (*Suidai san dashi* [隋代三大師]), a traditional category that included also Zhiyi and Jizang. Here we will first look at the opening sections of Huiyuan's commentaries and at aspects of his exegetical style evidenced in his *Weimo jing yiji* (維摩經義記; T. 1776). Later, moving on to Zhiyi and Jizang, we will confine ourselves to their composition of commentaries of the "profound meaning" (*xuanyi* [玄義]), "profound treatise" (*xuanlun* [玄論]), and "survey of the meaning" (*youyi* [遊意]) styles that do not involve passage-by-passage explanation of the *sūtra* text, and we will only touch on the more salient points of their unique interpretive approaches.

Extant *sūtra* commentaries attributed to Jingying Huiyuan include the *Weimo jing yiji*, *Niepan jing yiji* (涅槃經義記; T. 1764), *Shengman jing yiji* (勝鬘經義記; ZZ 351), *Wenshi jing yiji* (溫室經義記; T. 1793), *Wuliangshou jing yishu* (無量壽經義疏; T. 1745), and *Guan wuliangshou jing yishu* (觀無量

壽經義疏; T. 1749; the latter work, the oldest surviving commentary on the *Guan wuliangshoufo jing* [觀無量壽佛經; T. 365], was translated and studied in Tanaka, 1990; for an overview of the chronology of Huiyuan's works, see Okamoto, 2010). The opening sections of these commentaries, those that precede the passage-by-passage exegesis, all contain fairly similar content, namely:

1. classification of the *sūtra* in relation to the two scriptural "canons," that is, the *śrāvaka* canon and the bodhisattva canon;
2. explanation of the *sūtra*'s title; and
3. general parsing of its contents into preface, main discourse, and dissemination.

The detail and depth of explanation vary among the commentaries. The *Guan wuliangshou jing yishu* divides the first section (the classification according to the two canons of the *śrāvaka* and bodhisattva) and the second section (explanation of the title) into "five essentials" (*wuyao* [五要]; see below), while the *Wenshi jing yiji* breaks them down into "six essentials" (*liuyao* [六要]), adding to the former list the category of "thematic thrust" (*zong qu* [宗趣]). While the explanations in the *Wenshi jing yiji* are overall quite brief, its rubric of "six essentials" merits a closer look.

The "first essential" section discusses the *śrāvaka* canon and the classificatory rubric of the twofold canon and points out that the *sūtra* at hand belongs to the bodhisattva canon.

The "second essential" focuses on the differences between "sudden" and "gradual" (*dunjian* [頓漸]) presentations of the teaching and states that the present text employs the gradual approach.

The "third essential" introduces the "threefold canon" (*sanzang* [三藏]) – the "*tripīṭaka*" of *sūtra* (*jing* [經]), *vinaya* (*lü* [律]), and *śāstra* (*lun* [論]) – and situates the present scripture in the *sūtra* canon.

The "fourth essential" deals with the thematic thrust (*zongqu* [宗趣]) of the *sūtra*, which it locates in the practice of charity as the main causal factor in the generation of merit.

The "fifth essential" explains the circumstances of and rationale behind the setting up of *sūtra* titles: the text at hand, we are told, derives its title both from the person who preached it (the Buddha) and from the dharma preached therein (the *sūtra* uses the metaphor of bathing to discuss the healing powers of the Buddha: it "speaks of bathing the monks"; *shuo xiseng* [說洗僧]).

The "sixth essential" addresses the differences among five sorts of persons who might preach the

dharma (i.e. the Buddha, a saintly disciple, a *deva*, a divine immortal [*shenxian* (神仙)], and an apparitional person produced by magic) and asserts that this *sūtra* was indeed preached by the Buddha.

Next comes an analysis of the *sūtra*'s title. In Huiyuan's other commentaries of the *yiji* type as listed above, this section on the title is longer than in the *Wenshi jing yiji* and includes discussion of some of the "six essentials." Finally, we find introduced the familiar threefold division of the *sūtra*'s contents into preface, main discourse, and dissemination.

On the whole, Huiyuan adopts this threefold division in most of his commentaries. One important divergence from this pattern is seen in his *Niepan jing yiji*, in which he divides the basic text not into three but into five sections of "preface" (*xufen* [序分]), "revealing the merits" (*xiandefen* [顯德分]), "merits acquired through cultivation" (*xiuchengdefen* [修成德分]), "refuting the heretical and conforming to the correct" (*poxie tongzheng fen* [破邪通正分]), and "demise of the Tathāgata and the rite of his cremation" (*rulai miedu zhewei gongyang fen* [如來滅度闍維供養分; according to Huiyuan, this final section of the *Niepan jing* was never transmitted to China). The threefold division reemerges in the *Weimo jing yiji*, a text that stands out for its extraordinarily complex analytic parsing.

One major feature found exclusively in Huiyuan's commentaries is a propensity for linguistic analysis (Kanno, 1984). For instance, first, Huiyuan points out differences between the word order or syntax in a given Chinese translation of a *sūtra* and the word order used in the general run of texts composed originally in Chinese. Second, he singles out particular words from the basic *sūtra* (notional words or functional particles) and submits them to analysis using a number of set patterns, for instance "A means B" (A *wei* [謂] B *ye* [也]), "A is analogous to B" (A *you* [猶] B *ye* [也]), "A has the meaning of B" (A *shi* [是] B *yi* [義]), "A functions as B" (A *zhe* [者] B *ci* [辭]; used chiefly in explanations of functional particles), and "A connotes or means AB" (A *wei* [謂] AB; used to set the target character within a more familiar two-character compound). Third, through attention to the specific grammatical context, Huiyuan explains why certain auxiliary particles appear and what function they perform in a given passage. This preoccupation with syntax, almost never seen in Zhiyi or Jizang, is particularly noteworthy.

While Zhiyi is credited with the authorship of numerous *sūtra* commentaries, most of them were in fact produced in later generations, while the *Miaofa lianhuaqing xuanyi* (妙法蓮華經玄義;

T. 1716; translated in large part in Swanson, 1989, 157–256), *Miaofa lianhuajing wenju* (妙法蓮華經文句; T. 1718), *Weimojing xuanshu* (維摩經玄疏; T. 1777), and *Weimojing wenshu* (維摩經文疏; ZZ 338) were compiled and edited by Zhiyi's disciple Guanding (灌頂; 561–632 CE). It has been argued that in his work as editor-cum-compiler of Zhiyi's commentaries, Guanding often took advantage of the writings of Jizang (Hirai, 1985). Jizang in turn was the main systematizer of the Sanlun (三論) school. He approached the Mahāyāna scriptures from the theoretical perspective of “emptiness of the unattainable” (*wusuode kong* [無所得空]; Skt. **anupalambhasūnyatā*) and composed commentaries on more than ten of them.

Zhiyi and Jizang developed a novel format for *sūtra* commentaries. This format differs from the interlinear style and can be seen as a subgenre of the expository form. Zhiyi's *Miaofa lianhuajing xuanyi* and *Weimojing xuanshu*, as well as Jizang's *Fahua xuanlun* (法華玄論; T. 1720), *Jingming xuanlun* (淨名玄論; T. 1780), and *Fahua youyi* (法華遊意; T. 1722), do not include passage-by-passage exegesis of their respective basic *sūtras* but strive synthetically to bring out their “profound” (*xuan* [玄]) meaning. In this respect, they can be seen as a new mode of commentary that seeks to unpack and expand on the thematic contents of *sūtra* prefaces typical of earlier periods. For example, in his *Miaofa lianhuajing xuanyi*, Zhiyi strives to provide a synthetic exposition of the *Fahua jing* from the vantage of “five modes of profound meaning” (*wuchong xuanyi* [五重玄義]) and indeed posits that this approach should be employed in commentary writing generally. The “five modes” include the following:

1. explanation of title (*shiming* [釋名]);
2. definition of substance (of the *sūtra*; *bianti* [辨體]);
3. explication of thematic thrust (*mingzong* [明宗]);
4. determination of function (*lunyong* [論用]); and
5. classification of doctrine (*panjiao* [判教]).

These “five modes” seem to have influenced Jizang's *Renwang banruo jing shu* (仁王般若經疏; T. 1707), with slight differences in the sections on “substance” and “thematic trust.”

In Zhiyi's *Miaofa lianhuajing xuanyi*, the “explanation of title” consists in an analytic breakdown and extensive analysis of the *sūtra*'s title, *Miaofa lianhua jing*. The “definition of substance” specifies the main ontological concern of the *Fahua jing* as no less than the ultimate reality of all phenomena

(for Zhiyi, ultimate reality is the substance of all Mahāyāna *sūtras*, not just of the *Fahua jing*). The “explication of thematic thrust” centers on problems of cause and effect in the context of the Buddha's self-cultivation or of the religious path more generally. The “determination of function” discusses the two wisdoms of provisional and ultimate reality or truth in their three aspects (of self-cultivation, training of others, and simultaneous self-practice and conversion of others) as the functional power of the *Fahua jing*'s ability to sever doubts and arouse faith. The “classification of doctrine” attempts to place the *Fahua jing* in relation to the manifold teachings delivered over the entire span of the Buddha's preaching career.

In Zhiyi's *Weimo jing xuanshu* (維摩經玄疏; T. 1777), the structural organization of the commentary proceeds, in sequence, through the four *siddhāntas* (*xitan* [悉檀], i.e. *Shijie xitan* [世界悉檀; worldly *siddhānta*], *Gege weiren xitan* [各各為人悉檀; *siddhānta* for individual needs], *Duizhi xitan* [對治悉檀; corrective *siddhānta*], and *Diyiyi xitan* [第一義悉檀; *siddhānta* of the supreme truth]), the three contemplations (of emptiness, of the provisional truth, and of the middle way), and the four types of teaching (the Tripitaka teaching [*sanzang jiao* (三藏教)], the shared teaching [*tong jiao* (通教)], the separate teaching [*bie jiao* (別教)], and the perfect teaching [*yuan jiao* (圓教)]).

A different pattern is seen in Jizang's *Fahua youyi*. Here Jizang structures his exegesis around the following “ten topics” (*shimen* [十門]):

1. the “reason of [the *sūtra*'s] origin” (*laiyi men* [來意門]), which is a teleology of the existence of the *sūtra* as a whole and of its individual chapters;
2. the “thematic thrust” (*zongzhi men* [宗旨門]), which, as opposed to clarifying the concrete thought and pedagogy set forth in the *Fahua jing*, offers an examination of the conception of “cause and effect” (*yinguo* [因果]) or religious practice and its results, seen as implicit in the *sūtra*, hidden beneath the level of its literal meaning;
3. the “explanation of title” (*shi mingti men* [釋名題門]);
4. the “classification of doctrinal orientation” (*bian jiaoyi men* [辨教意門]), which, predictably, entails an attempt to establish the position of the *Fahua jing* within the entire spectrum of the Buddha's teachings;
5. the “exoteric and esoteric” (*xianmi men* [顯密門]), which subdivides the two chief pedagogical approaches of “Hinayāna” (aimed at *śrāvakas*) and “Mahāyāna” (the purview of bodhisattvas) into

exoteric and esoteric types, resulting in an organization of the entirety of the Buddha's teaching into a total of four categories: exoteric Hīnayāna and esoteric Hīnayāna and exoteric Mahāyāna and esoteric Mahāyāna;

6. the "three and the one" (*sanyi men* [三一門]), which centers on the relationship between the three vehicles and the one vehicle, a concept central to the *Fangbian pin* (方便品) chapter of the *Fahua jing*, as well as to much East Asian engagement with the *Fahua jing* in general;

7. the "efficacious function" (*gongyong men* [功用門]), which promotes the idea that the enormous salvific power of the *Fahua jing* arises from the text's possession of the ten "inconceivable" features (*buke siyi* [不可思議]) such as the "inconceivable" power of the *sūtra* to overcome the distinctions among the three vehicles or its presentation of an "inconceivable" number of the Buddha's emanations and an "inconceivable" size of his assembly;

8. the "dissemination of the *sūtra*" (*hongjing men* [弘經門]), which centers on the methods of preaching this scripture, as well as on the types of persons capable of taking up this task;

9. the "affiliations of the text" (*budang men* [部黨門]), which sorts out the relationship between different translations of the *Fahua jing* and the various texts in the extended *Fahua jing* cycle (*Fahua bu* [法華部]), and as such it represents a mode of historical research into the *sūtra*'s translation and transmission.

10. the "beginnings" (*yuanyuan men* [緣起門]) of exegesis on the *Fahua jing*, which it traces to Daorong, a member of Kumārajīva's translation team.

Another distinctive feature of Zhiyi's and Jizang's commentaries is their deployment of a novel strategy for the elucidation of specific passages by scrutinizing them from a number (usually four) of systematically predefined perspectives. For instance, in the *Miaofa lianhuajing wenju*, Zhiyi specifies the following perspectives:

1. origin (*yinyuan* [因緣]);
2. doctrinal orientation (*yuejiao* [約教]);
3. roots and traces (*benji* [本迹]); and
4. mind contemplation (*guanxin* [觀心]), where the passage in question is approached through the trademark Tiantai (天台) conceptual trio of provisional (*jia* [假]), empty (*kong* [空]), and middle (*zhong* [中]).

A slightly different, though also fourfold, set of perspectives is invoked by Jizang in his *Sanlun xuanyi* (三論玄義; T. 1852). Here the meaning is elucidated in the following ways:

1. by analysis of the constitutive names (*yiming shiyi* [依名釋義]);
2. by reference to "the teaching of principle," that is, the "middle" (*lijiao shiyi* [理教釋義]);
3. by demonstration of "mutual dependency (of dualistic opposites)" (*huxiang shiyi* [互相釋義]); and
4. without resorting to any particular method (*wufang shiyi* [無方釋義]).

Jizang repeats this scheme almost verbatim in his *Erduyi* (二諦義; T. 1854). Although these strategies are not used with full consistency by either Zhiyi or Jizang, nevertheless they figure as prominent features of their commentaries.

While the preceding passages have centered on expository commentaries from the 5th to the 7th century, this period saw also the production of other forms of commentary. One noteworthy example is the *Fahua jingwen waiyi* (法華經文外義; one fasc.; available in a Dunhuang manuscript in the Shanghai Museum under the catalogue number 15 [3317]; published in Fang, 1996; it bears the date of Datong 11 [i.e. 545 CE]). An outstanding feature of this work is its question-and-answer format, rather informal, even rhapsodical in style, reminiscent of Huisi's (慧思; 515–577 CE) *Fahua jing anlexing yi* (法華經安樂行義; T. 1926) and of the section of Jizang's *Fahua xuanlun* that follows after the fourth fascicle.

While Zhiyi and Jizang specialized in expository works, they also wrote commentaries of the interlinear type. A case in point is Jizang's voluminous *Fahua tonglüe* (法華統略; ZZ 582). Here, prior to his passage-by-passage exegesis, Jizang includes an extensive introduction that largely reproduces the positions developed in his *Sanlun xuanyi* and *Fahua xuanlun*, while the commentary itself follows the format of the works of Jingying Huiyuan and of Fayun's *Fahua yiji*. A number of Zhiyi's commentaries show similar features.

Tang and Post-Tang Commentaries

Commentarial genres developed by the 7th century – mainly the interlinear format of the earlier period and the expository styles of the Liang and Sui – continued to function as models for commentary writers in the Tang period and beyond. In view of this, no special description is necessary of the formal aspects of *sūtra* commentaries produced in and after the Tang.

One important development in this period is the emergence of the subcommentary. As state

patronage of Buddhist groups from the Sui period onward encouraged the establishment of institutionally discrete “schools” of interpretation and monastic practice (*zong* [宗]), subcommentaries began to be written on the exegetical works from the earlier epochs now enshrined as foundational for the respective schools. For example, Zhanran (湛然; 711–782 CE), the sixth patriarch of the Tiantai sect and its most important systematizer after Zhiyi, wrote, among other works key to this tradition, the *Fahua xuanyi shiqian* (法華玄義釋籤; T. 1717) and *Fahua wenju ji* (法華文句記; T. 1719) in response to Zhiyi’s *Miaofa lianhua jing xuanyi* and Guanding’s *Miaofa lianhua jing wenju*, respectively (see Hibi, 1966; Penkower, 1993).

The most significant of the new Tang dynasty schools from the perspective of commentary production were arguably the Faxiang (法相) school based on the *sūtra* and *śāstra* translations by Xuanzang (玄奘; 602–664 CE) and the Huayan (華嚴) school founded *de facto* by its putative third patriarch, Fazang (法藏; 643–712 CE). At the risk of oversimplification, we can say that the *sūtra* commentaries of the Faxiang and Huayan sects developed from general *sūtra* prefaces as well as from interlinear commentaries and as such are formally similar to pre-Tang exegetical works. One special characteristic of Faxiang commentaries is the high regard exhibited in them for Xuanzang’s new translations of both mainstream and Mahāyāna treatises, particularly the *Cheng weishi lun* (成唯識論; T. 1585). One of Xuanzang’s leading disciples, Kuiji (窺基; 632–682 CE), wrote, among others, a commentary on Xuanzang’s *Banruoboluomiduo xin jing* (般若波羅蜜多心經; T. 251), the *Xin jing youzan* (心經幽贊; T. 1710; trans. Shi & Lusthaus, 2001). Like an interlinear commentary, it reproduces the entirety of the basic text – made easier by the brevity of the latter – yet for every section, it offers systematic structured analysis reminiscent of expository works.

Fazang inherited and systematized the exegetical patrimony of the earlier Dushun (杜順; 557–640 CE) and Zhiyan (智儼; 602–668 CE; see Gimello, 1976). A distinctive characteristic of this exegetical tradition was its predominant focus on the *Buddhāvataṃsaka*. The Huayan school’s putative fourth patriarch, Chengguan (澄觀; 738–839 CE), wrote, among many others, the magisterial *Huayan jing shu* (華嚴經疏; T. 1735) in 60 fascicles and an autocommentary on the same, the 90-fascicle *Huayan jing suishu yanyi chao* (華嚴經隨疏演義鈔; T. 1736).

Throughout the Song period and later, commentaries and subcommentaries continued to be

produced on a large scale to the *sūtras* at the center of individual schools, but simultaneously a number of nonaffiliated *sūtras* – those that never came to be enshrined as foundational by the disparate sects – were gaining popularity, such as *Yuanjue jing* (圓覺經; T. 842), *Shoulengyan jing* (首楞嚴經; T. 945), and *Lengqie jing* (楞伽經; T. 671, T. 672), as reflected in the voluminous production of commentaries on these texts.

The emergence of the Chan school’s rhetoric of immediacy can be seen as a radical response to the basic challenge of Buddhist exegesis. That challenge had been to make the Buddha’s awakening experience accessible again here and now, in an age – and, in the East Asian case, a land – far removed from that of the Buddha (for an exploration of related theoretical issues, see Lopez, 1998). Chan rhetoric turned against the established scholastic answer to this problem, which had privileged textual interpretation as the surest way of recovering definitive meaning (Skt. *nītārtha*; Chn. *liaoyi* [了義]). For Chan exponents, that meaning, being nothing other than the Buddha’s awakening, must be available “without reliance on words and letters” (*buli wenzi* [不立文字]), in a “special transmission outside of the teachings” (*jiaowai biechuan* [教外別傳]). Armed with this premise, Chan masters replaced the *sūtra* commentary with histories of lineage transmission, recorded sayings of awakened masters, and the *gong’an* (公案) collections. While these novel genres could not have developed without the momentous shifts in the social, political, and cultural context in the Song period, including the rapid spread of printing technologies, we may see them as a response to the same hermeneutical concern that motivates the commentarial impulse.

The Late Imperial Period also saw the progressive weakening of traditional boundaries between lay and monastic Buddhist scholarship, with laypersons commonly composing commentaries on *sūtras* (e.g. the Confucian iconoclast Li Zhuowu’s [李卓吾; 1527–1602] *Huayan jing helun jianyao* [華嚴經合論簡要; ZZ 225]) and Buddhist savants targeting non-Buddhist works. As an example of the latter, Ouyi Zhixu (藕益智旭; 1599–1655) wrote a commentary on the *Yijing* (易經), the *Zhouyi chanjie* (周易禪解; see Lo, 2008), and on the four books of Confucianism, *Sishu chanjie* (四書禪解), while Hanshan Deqing (憨山德清; 1546–1623) authored one on the *Zhuangzi* (莊子), the *Zhuangzi neipian zhu* (莊子內篇註; fragments translated in Ziporyn, 2009; see also Epstein, 2006; for a comprehensive list of Late Ming commentaries, see Shi Shengyan, 1992). These

shifts necessarily impacted the forms and strategies of exegesis, shaping the trends that, despite the upheavals of modernity, continue until today.

Sūtra Commentaries in Korea

Korean Buddhism developed on foundations inherited from China, and in terms of form, Korean commentaries show no fundamental differences from their Chinese models. In the Silla period, Wōnch'ūk (圓測; 613–696 CE) traveled to China by sea, studied under Xuanzang as one of his two main disciples alongside Kuiji, and wrote commentaries on Yogācāra *śāstras*, as well as on *sūtras*. The latter group of works includes his *Panya paramilda simgyōng ch'an* (般若波羅蜜多心經贊; T. 1711), being one of the earliest commentaries on the *Banruoboluomiduo xin jing* (般若波羅蜜多心經; T. 251; studies in Hwang, 2000; Choo, 2003; see also Lusthaus, 2003), *Inwanggyōng so* (仁王經疏; T. 1708) in six fasc., and, most important, the ten-fasc. *Haesimmilgyōng so* (解深密經疏; ZZ 369). The latter, an encyclopedic work of Buddhist doctrine, is of unique historical value in that it was translated into Tibetan and gained considerable status among Tibetan scholiasts. This translation, by Facheng (法成; Tib. Chos grub; ?–c. 865 CE), under the title *'Phags pa dgongs pa zab mo nges par 'grel pa'i mdo'i rgya cher 'grel pa* (D 4016/P 5517), was studied extensively by S. Inaba (1944; 1972; 1977; for a partial translation, see Muller, 2012c). E. Steinkellner (1989) opines that this commentary may have been instrumental in inaugurating in Tibet the practice of beginning a commentary with a table of contents (*sa bcad*), which effects a type of doctrinal parsing of the contents.

Wōnhyo (元曉; 617–686 CE) wrote numerous interlinear commentaries, but what stands out are his writings of the “doctrinal essentials” (*chong'yo* [宗要] type), the format of which resembles Jizang's “survey-of-the-meaning” (*youyi* [遊義]) texts. Examples include *Taehyedo kyōng chong'yo* (大慧度經宗要; T. 1697), a one-fascicle reading of Kumārajīva's translation of the Larger *Prajñāpāramitā* (T. 223), the *Pōphwa chong'yo* (法華宗要; T. 1725; trans. Muller, 2012a), the *Yōlban chong'yo* (涅槃宗要; T. 1769), and the *Muryangsu kyōng chong'yo* (無量壽經宗要; T. 1747; trans. Muller, 2012b). Wōnhyo's magisterial commentary on the *Vajrasamādhisūtra* (T. 273), the *Kūmgang sammaegyōng non* (金剛三

昧經論; T. 1730), was translated and studied by R. Buswell (2007).

Ūijōk (義寂; late 7th–early 8th cents.), an expert in the Vijñaptimātra and Pure Land schools, wrote, among 25 commentaries on a wide variety of scriptures, the three-fascicle *Muryangsu kyōng sulūiki* (無量壽經述義記), partially preserved in the form of quotations in other texts. Ūijōk's exegetical approach, in contrast to that of Kuiji and Wōnch'ūk, rested on a belief in the compatibility of the various Mahāyāna philosophic orientations. Taehyōn (大賢; dates unknown) from the mid-Silla period specialized in Vijñaptimātra. Among his more than 50 works, which include important studies of the *Cheng weishi lun* as well as commentaries on a variety of Mahāyāna texts, we find the *Pōmmanggyōng kojōkki* (梵網經古述記; T. 1815), which was later studied extensively in Japan. The term *kojōkki* (古述記; traces of the ancients recorded) figures in the titles of a number of his works.

In the Koryō period, Kyunyō (均如; 923–973 CE), a Hwaōm (華嚴) scholar and gifted proselytizer (see Buzo & Prince, 1994), authored the *Sōk hwa-ōm-gyo pun-giwōn-t'ong ch'o* (釋華嚴教分記圓通鈔; K1510a) in ten fascicles, as well as other Hwaōm-related texts. In the Chosōn era, Chinul (知訥; 1158–1210) established the groundwork for the Chogye order (曹溪宗), and, influenced by the thought of the lay hermit and scholar Li Tongxuan (李通玄; 635–730 CE, alternatively 646–740 CE), produced the *Hwaōm non chōryo* (華嚴論節要; text lost soon after its composition; a recension was discovered in 1941 in Kanazawa Bunko in Yokohama, Japan; repr. in HPC 4.767c–869c) in three fascicles and other works, some of which have been translated by R. Buswell (1983).

Sūtra Commentaries in Japan

If it is true that it was Prince Shōtoku (Shōtoku Taishi [聖德太子]; 572–622 CE) who authored the *Hokke gisho* (法華義疏; T. 2187), the *Yuimagyō gisho* (維摩經義疏; T. 2186; trans. Hubbard, 2012), and the *Shōmangyō gisho* (勝鬘經義疏; T. 2185; trans. Dennis, 2011), as tradition has it, then these three commentaries would have to be considered the oldest surviving Japanese texts. However, the problem of their authenticity has of late attracted considerable debate. Some scholars accept these works' traditional attribution to Shōtoku, others see them

as Chinese compositions, and yet others argue that they are the product of a Korean monk. More recently a new theory has emerged: on the basis of the analysis of the grammar of the unique honorific expressions in the texts, it has been suggested that they could not have been written in China but only on the Korean Peninsula, or possibly even in Japan (Kanno, 1989; Ishii, 2008; 2010).

Like the Korean, the Japanese commentaries, too, show no essential divergence from the Chinese models. In Japan, moreover, subcommentaries were frequently written to exegetical works composed in China, and, in the context of rivalry among the increasingly assertive sects, numerous commentaries were produced on the discrete texts that stood at the center of the respective schools.

For instance, Hōjibō Shōshin (寶地房證眞; 1136–1220 or 1131–1215) of the Tendai sect wrote voluminous subcommentaries to Zhiyi's *Miaofa lianhuajing xuanyi*. In the Pure Land school, many commentaries were composed on the *Guan wuliangshoufo jing*. Also, on account of the important position that tantric *mikkyō* (密教) practices came to occupy within the Japanese Shingon (真言) and Tendai schools, in comparison with the commentarial traditions of China in Korea, Japan saw the production of relatively numerous works on the *mikkyō* scriptures, mainly on the *Dainichikyō* (大日經; T. 848).

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