

**Assessing the Field of *Āgama* Studies
in Twentieth-century China:**

**With a Focus on
Master Yinshun's 印順 Three-*āṅga* Theory**

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Abstract

Between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century China experienced an important moment of transformation, involving shifts in the political system, social customs, and intercultural relations; an overall atmosphere that affected the religious domain as well. Buddhists responded to the new milieu by repositioning themselves in Chinese society, reinventing their cultivation practices, and reviving certain schools, teachings, and scriptures. This research explores the renaissance of *Āgama* studies in this Chinese context. In the first part of the chapter (section II), Stefania Travagnin provides an overview of the main voices of the new *Āgama* scholarship, their arguments and major works, with attention to the intellectual domain within which these protagonists, from Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929) to Lü Cheng 呂澂 (1896–1989) and Master Dongchu 東初 (1908–1977), were trained and operated. The impact of Buddhist publishing and the influence from Japanese Buddhist scholarship were important contextual factors that this part of the chapter also analyses. Travagnin then continues with an inquiry into Master Yinshun's 印順 (1906–2005) specific contribution to *Āgama* studies, with particular attention to his understanding and classification of the *Āgamas* according to doctrinal concepts such as the *aṅgas* (section III). The last part, by Bhikkhu Anālayo, addresses the ‘*aṅga* question’, and offers a critical assessment of the theory according to which during an early stage in the transmission of the early Buddhist discourses the three *aṅgas* of *sūtra/sutta*, *geya/geyya* and *vyākaraṇa/veyyākaraṇa* served as guiding principles of textual assemblage, comparable to the function of the scriptural collections now known as *Āgamas* or *Nikāyas* (section IV).

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References

I. Introduction

The study of the *Āgamas* in modern China, especially when it concerns the *Samyukta-āgama*, is often (or even always) associated with the figures of Lü Cheng 呂澂 (1896–1989) and Master Yinshun 印順 (1906–2005). While the latter proposed a new evaluation of early Indian Buddhism in a systematic way and a new edition of the *Samyukta-āgama*, it was the former who set the foundations for the research of Master Yinshun and others. Lü Cheng, in fact, pointed out that the order and structure of the *Samyukta-āgama* should be redefined via the *Vastusamgrahaṇī* (攝事分) section of the *Yogācārabhūmi*. Master Yinshun completed Lü Cheng's work, and at the same time put forward an understanding and classification of the *Āgamas* according to several doctrinal concepts such as the *siddhāntas* and the *āṅgas*.¹

¹ The four *siddhāntas* (Ch: *xitan* 悉檀), which appeared in Mahāyāna texts like the *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論 (**Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*, T 1509) and the *Fahua jing xuanyi* 法華經玄義 (T 1716), can refer to either four perspectives through which reality is perceived, or four modalities the Buddha used to preach the Dharma. Master Yinshun considered them in terms of 'preaching modes': 1) the *siddhānta* of supreme meaning (第一義悉檀) refers to preaching according to how the Buddha understands the world; 2) the corrective *siddhānta* (對治悉檀) is the preaching that aims to correct human beings with defilements by eliminate those defilements; 3) the individualised *siddhānta* (各各為人悉檀) means a preaching according to the abilities and understanding of the audience; 4) the worldly *siddhānta* (世界悉檀) refers to preaching according to the conventional understanding of the world. Master Yinshun relied mostly on the definition of *siddhānta* as described in the *Da zhidu lun*, T 1509 at T XXV 59b17–60b15. See also the notes that he took on the *Da zhidu lun* in Yinshun 2005: 1 [A001], 2 [A002],

This study aims to shed new light on Master Yinshun's *Āgama* scholarship, with special attention to his *aṅga* theory.

It starts with a survey by Stefania Travagnin of the historical background and the scholarly context before and within which Master Yinshun operated. Travagnin looks at monastics and lay Buddhists, including Lü Cheng, who wrote on the *Āgamas* from the late Qing 清 up to, and during, Master Yinshun's time, and analyses themes and questions that had been addressed (section II). In the subsequent part Travagnin then considers Master Yinshun's entire oeuvre, so as to unpack the development and shifts in his thought in parallel with his learning and also the availability at that time of Japanese scholarship on the subject (section III).²

In the last part (section IV), Bhikkhu Anālayo offers a critical assessment of the theory that during an early stage in the transmission of the discourses the three *aṅgas* of *sūtra/sutta*, *geya/geyya*, and *vyākaraṇa/veyyākaraṇa* served as textual collection, comparable to the function of the collections now known to us as *Āgamas* or *Nikāyas* (section IV).

231 [C028], 265 [D021]. For his definition of the four *siddhāntas* see Yinshun 1988: 126. Meaning and functions of the *aṅgas* is explained in detail in section IV of this chapter. The term *aṅga* was intended as a literary form, or a textual collection. In my view, Yinshun alluded to the *aṅgas* in both meanings, and sometimes also referred to them in the sense of division of teachings.

² Translations from Chinese in sections II and III of this chapter are Travagnin's, unless stated otherwise.

II. The State of *Āgama* Scholarship in Twentieth-century China: Voices, Publications and Arguments

This section explores *how* and *why* Buddhist scholars (monastics and laity) in twentieth-century China were interested in the *Samyukta-āgama*, and it therefore concerns the reception and domestication of these texts in a century that redefined features and methodologies of Chinese Buddhism. This is then a study of the context within which Lü Cheng and Master Yinshun were trained and then operated, and highlights other scholarly networks and forms of cooperation, so to give a brief yet comprehensive idea of the overall *Āgama* scholarship in those decades.

This research is based on various sources from the Republican period (1912–1949)³ and beyond: Buddhist periodicals; publications by the key figures (monastics and laity) of the Buddhist intellectual sphere; catalogues of scriptural presses and publishing houses; historical records and curricula of Buddhist seminaries. It looks at *Āgama* scholarship in four contexts: 1) publications and arguments (and thus circulation of debates in China); 2) East-Asian networks (transmission and exchanges of knowledge between Chinese Bud-

³ After the demise of the Qing 清 dynasty, that lasted from 1644 to 1912, and in light of the reforms in the intellectual and political system, China became a 'Republic' (*Zhonghua minguo* 中華民國). In this chapter, 'Republican period' and 'Republican era' refer to that first Republican regime in China that followed the imperial dynasties. The rule of the Nationalist Party (Guomindang 國民黨, better known as KMT) lasted until the instalment of the People's Republic of China (*Zhonghua renmin gongheguo* 中華人民共和國) and the coming to power of the Chinese Communist Party (*Zhongguo gongchandang* 中國共產黨) in 1949.

dhists and scholars in Japan and Taiwan); 3) *saṅgha* education (special attention to the courses on Indian Buddhism and the *Āgamas* that were running during the Republican period); 4) publishing (namely, the situation of the reprinting – and circulation – of the Chinese *Āgamas* in China in the first half of the twentieth century).

II.1 Towards a Revival of *Āgama* Studies? Preliminary Observations

The term ‘revival’ (*fixing* 復興) has been used (and often abused) to define crucial trends in modern Chinese Buddhism;⁴ and the same term has been used by intellectuals like Liang Qichao to label the new situation of *Āgama* scholarship. However, can we really talk of a revival (*fixing* 復興) of the study of the *Āgamas* (*ahan xue* 阿含學) in early twentieth-century China? According to the lay Buddhist scholar Zhang Mantao 張曼濤, the interest in the study of the *Āgamas* and other foundational texts representative of the so-called ‘original Buddhism’ (*yuanshi fojiao* 原始佛教) is a major feature of the new Chinese Buddhology in the twentieth-century. Zhang Mantao does not speak in terms of ‘revival’ though; in his view, this interest is something new, belonging to the modern Buddhology (*xiandai fojiao yanjiu* 現代佛教研究), and the main difference between the latter and the (Chinese) traditional Buddhist perspective (*chuantong fojiao* 傳統佛教).

As Zhang Mantao argued, this scholarship on the *Āgamas* and other early texts had a remarkable impact on the development of modern Buddhist studies in China, because: 1) it offered more knowledge about so-called ‘original Buddhism’, and also of the so-

⁴ For the debates on the concept of ‘revival’ (*fixing*), see Ji, Tian and Wang 2016, and Laliberté and Travagnin 2019.

cial background of India at the time of the Buddha; 2) those studies aimed not just to explain early Buddhism but also, and especially, to explore its links with the Mahāyāna; 3) the increased attention and value given to the *Āgamas* had an impact on the *panjiao* 判教 (systems of doctrinal classifications)⁵ as well. In fact, this traditional Chinese classification of teachings had located teachings and texts of 'early Buddhism' (defined in various ways, including 'original Buddhism', *yuanshi fojiao* 原始佛教, and 'Hīnayāna', *xiaocheng* 小乘) to the lowest position. This changed in the more recent *panjiao*, where early or original Buddhism was, by some Chinese Buddhists, set on a higher position in the doctrinal classification.

This initial section looks at the intellectual and religious framework that Zhang Mantao referred to. I list and briefly explain specific patterns that, in my view, defined the context wherein Buddhists, from the early twentieth-century, developed a strong interest in the

⁵ *Panjiao*, which literally means division of the teachings, is a system of classification of Buddhist teachings based on the chronological sequence, location, modalities and contents of the preaching of the Buddha with the purpose of having a precise interpretation of the Dharma. Each *panjiao* systematises Buddhist scriptures according to a particular hierarchy, with the text that represents the most complete and perfect teaching on top, and the other teachings (and texts) being read as preliminary steps to the final revelation. Each school compiled and proposed its own *panjiao*, which becomes a distinct feature of the school itself, and the way adopted by each school to claim the superiority of its own doctrine and scriptures. Although already adopted in India, the practice of compiling *panjiao* became popular in the history of Chinese Buddhism, especially from the Sui and the Tang dynasties. The most well-known *panjiao* in the history of Chinese Buddhism are the classification in 'five phases and eight doctrines' elaborated by Master Zhiyi 智顓 (538–397) of the Tiantai 天台 school (see Hurvitz 1962), and the division into 'five teachings and ten schools' formulated by Master Fazang 法藏 (643–712) of the Huayan 華嚴 school (see Cook 1977).

Āgamas. We will thus be able to make connections between this modern Chinese scholarship on the *Āgamas* and some earlier Japanese and European research on early Buddhism.⁶ In other words, this Chinese interest in the *Āgamas* needs to be contextualised also within the non-Chinese publications, and perceived, at least partly, as an effect of the overall ‘translation enterprise’ that developed in the Republican era. In doing so, we will also realise that Chinese Buddhists were somehow, perhaps more implicitly than explicitly, participating in the interest in looking for an ‘original’ Buddhism that had also animated Western scholars and the rest of the Asian region.

To begin with, the first half of the twentieth century featured a complex transfer of knowledge from Japan to China and Taiwan, including Japanese translations of early Western works on Buddhism, the following Chinese translation and reprinting in China of some of them, and the retrieval and return to China of canonical texts that had disappeared.⁷ The monk Mochan 墨禪 was among those who played a major role in that respect (Dongchu 1974, 989–992). Exchanges and translation activities were not restricted to Japan and Japanese; in fact, the 1930s and 1940s were also the years of mass translation of texts from Tibetan and Pali into Chinese.⁸ It is clear

⁶ Among the very first Western works on the topic translated into Chinese see *Hinduism and Buddhism, An Historical Sketch* by Charles Eliot (1864–1931), published in 1921.

⁷ For more about the Japanese impact on the creation of modern Chinese Buddhism, from the late nineteenth century to the 1930s, with information on channels and extension of the exchange, social and political issues involved, and the lists of the translated texts, see Welch 1968: 169–173, Sueki 2012, Schicketanz 2017, Laliberté and Travagnin 2019.

⁸ Several Chinese monks travelled and studied in Tibet during the Republican period; names include Dayong 大勇 (1893–1929), Nenghai 能海 (1886–1967) and Fazun 法尊 (1902–1980). The latter was author of several translations of Lama Tsongkhapa’s works, like the *Lam rim*

that the first half of the twentieth-century brought awareness of new texts and doctrinal positions, and this caused a reassessment of the traditional understanding and practice of Mahāyāna.

Secondly, Chinese research, analyses and arguments followed specific methodologies and pursued certain objectives. For instance, the interest in the *Āgamas* was part of the wider interest in early Indian Buddhism, as a way of reconstructing the origins of this tradition and the situation of the Buddhadharma and other Indian social and religious environments at the time of the Buddha (see the following section on Liang Qichao 梁啟超). Philology and philosophy were important components that encouraged these studies, but history and social studies were the leading angles in this modern Chinese scholarship. This research was certainly facilitated by the efforts of Chinese monks who visited India, Ceylon, and Myanmar, and contributed to this *new* discourse on 'original Buddhism', also by making direct translations of some Pāli *suttas*.⁹

Thirdly, besides an interest in the Buddha's time, these Chinese Buddhists studied the *Āgamas* in relation to their 'more popular' Mahāyāna texts and doctrine; more precisely, the study of the *Samyukta-āgama* was also seen as instrumental for a better understanding and reevaluation of the (Mahāyāna) Yogācāra.¹⁰

Fourthly, the study of the *Āgamas* was not limited to research on the *Samyukta-āgama*, but involved all the *Āgamas*. Some of these

chen mo (translated as *Putidao cidi guanglun* 菩提道次第廣論, translated between 1930 and 1934). For the exchange with Tibet see Welch 1968: 173–179 and Dongchu 1974: 992–997. For Fazun's translations see also Dongchu 1974: 993–995 and Travagnin 2009: 52–55. For the mission to India and Ceylon see Welch 1968: 179–183, Dongchu 1974: 997–1004 and Ritzinger 2016.

⁹ Welch 1968: 179–183; Dongchu 1974: 997–1004; Ritzinger 2016.

¹⁰ On this point, see also Ritzinger 2016.

Buddhist authors analysed and classified the *Āgamas* in general, and the *Samyukta-āgama* specifically, also in relation to the early Indian notion of the *aṅgas*, which is a point of contention with regard to Master Yinshun's work.

Finally, the Republican period is also characterised by the theorising of the concepts of *rensheng fojiao* 人生佛教 ('Buddhism for the Human Life') and *renjian fojiao* 人間佛教 ('Buddhism in the Human Realm'). The Buddhist voices explored below all participated in the formation of these new phenomena. How is this ideology, practice or propaganda connected to the study of the *Āgamas*? In which ways did reformer Buddhists find the doctrinal and scriptural authority and basis of their *rensheng fojiao* and *renjian fojiao* ideologies in passages from the *Āgamas*? On this topic, I would mention an article by the monk Fafang (1934), where he argued extensively how 'original Buddhism', which for him is the Buddhism at the time of the Buddha, was just *renjian fojiao*.

II.2 From Liang Qichao 梁啟超 to Lü Cheng 呂澂: Reframing the Chinese Mainstream Understanding of Mahāyāna

Who writes about the *Āgamas*, and especially about the *Samyukta-āgama*? Major Buddhist figures and prolific writers between the late Qing and the initial stage of the Republican period, such as Yang Wenhui 楊文會 (1837–1911), Ding Fubao 丁福保 (1874–1952), and Fan Gunong 范古農 (1881–1951), did not engage much either with the *Āgamas* or the *Samyukta-āgama*. Yang Wenhui, also known as Yang Renshan 楊仁山, is usually conceived of as the pioneer in the modernisation of Buddhism in China; he established the Jinling Scriptural Press (Jinling kejingchu 金陵刻經處) in 1866 to reprint

Buddhist scriptures and later, in 1908, he opened the Jetavana Hermitage (Zhihuan jingshe 祇洹精舍), a new model of Buddhist school for nurturing both monastics and laity, a school attended also by the monk Taixu and the layperson Ouyang Jingwu. Yang Wenhui classified the *Āgamas* as teachings belonging to the second period of preaching of the Buddha, and only briefly explained the division into four *Āgamas*. As for the *Samyukta-āgama*, Yang Wenhui stated that half of its contents were also found in the *Madhyama-āgama* and the *Ekottarika-āgama*. The Jinling Scriptural Press (Jinling kejingchu 金陵刻經處) reprinted the *Āgamas* and thus made them widely available in China.

Ding Fubao was a medical doctor and a Buddhist scholar, who is especially remembered for his famous dictionary *Foxue dacidian* 佛學大辭典 (1922). In this dictionary we can find some short entries on the four *Āgamas*, a general term that, Ding wrote, indicates what the Buddha originally said, and some of the scriptures belonging to 'Hīnayāna' (*xiaocheng* 小乘).

Fan Gunong studied Buddhism with important monks and lay Buddhist scholars in the first two decades of the twentieth-century, before he started, in 1929, to serve as general editor of the newly established Shanghai Buddhist Books (Shanghai foxue shuju 上海佛學書局). As discussed later, this press was also instrumental in printing new critical editions and studies on the *Āgamas*. In his own writings, however, Fan mentioned the four *Āgamas* only briefly, in his *Gunong foxue dawen* 古農佛學答問 (1935), and, similarly to Ding Fubao, in terms of core teachings of 'Hīnayāna' (*xiaocheng* 小乘).¹¹ As with Ding Fubao and Yang Wenhui, the concept of 'original

¹¹ See fascicle no. 6, titled 'Maintaining the Correct Dharma' (*huchi zhengfa* 護持正法), pp.18–19. That was the section about 'scriptures' (*jingdian* 經典).

Buddhism' (*yuanshi fojiao*) does not appear in Fan's reference either.

In the preface to his anthology *Jingdian yanjiu lunji* 經典研究論, Zhang Mantao (Zhang 1978: 1) listed the names of the laypersons Ouyang Jingwu 歐陽竟無, Lü Cheng 呂澂, Tang Yongtong 湯用彤, Wang Enyang 王恩洋, and especially the monk Yinshun as leading figures in the study of early Indian Buddhist texts; however, he also includes writings of the monks Dongchu, Fazhou 法周 and others in the book. A careful investigation reveals that in the Republican period, starting from the 1920s, there were two major networks of Buddhist intellectuals producing important works on the *Āgamas*, with major emphasis given to the *Samyukta-āgama* and the *Ekottarika-āgama*: the Ouyang Jingwu-centred network and the Taixu-centred network. These two networks included lay and monastic intellectuals, were based at Buddhist institutes, and thus associated with the new teaching and learning systems that characterised the Republican period.

As for the Ouyang Jingwu-centred network, scholars and teachers active at the China Inner Studies Institute (*Zhina neixue yuan* 支那內學院), namely Ouyang Jingwu 歐陽竟無, Wang Enyang 王恩洋, Lü Cheng 呂澂, and Nie Ougeng 聶耦庚, were the major authors we need to consider. The last two are mentioned as the main teachers at the school for the study of early Buddhism, the *Āgamas* and the *Samyukta-āgama*. Studies were all published in *Neixue* 內學, the journal of the China Inner Studies Institute. Ouyang Jingwu and his legacy concentrated on the reappraisal of Yogācāra, and then contributed greatly to the revival of this field of studies. The curriculum of the institute gave strong emphasis to language training, especially the study of Pali and Sanskrit.

Research outputs from the Taixu-centred network are associated with monks and lay scholars who operated closely with Master Taixu and published in the *Haichao yin* 海潮音; or they can be in-

ferred through an analysis of the curricula in force at seminaries like the Wuchang Buddhist Institute (Wuchang foxueyuan 武昌佛學院) and the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Institute (Hanzang jiaoliyuan 漢藏教理院). Master Taixu was also an important actor in the revival of studies on Yogācāra; however, in contrast to Ouyang Jingwu's institute, he kept a more traditionally Chinese approach.

Another pole of discussion on the *Āgamas* developed in Taiwan, in the first decades of the twentieth century, hence during the Japanese occupation. Publications of Japanese and Taiwanese scholars, such as the Taiwanese monk Zeng Jinglai (Sō Keirai) 曾景來 in periodicals such as *Nanying fojiao/Nan'e bukkūō* 南瀛佛教 prove the vitality of *Āgama* studies on the island.¹²

II.2.1 Liang Qichao 梁啟超 and the Revival of *Āgama* Studies

Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929) was a political intellectual who travelled extensively in Japan and the West, pushed for modernisation reforms, and served for a few years in the government of the Republic of China. Liang Qichao was also interested in Buddhism, and wrote on a number of subjects, including the *Āgamas*. Moreover, it was Liang Qichao who gave insights on how and why we could talk of a revival (*fixing* 復興) of the study of the *Āgamas* (*ahan xue* 阿含學) in China from the dawn of the twentieth century.

¹² This is the journal published by the South Sea Buddhist Association (Chinese: Nanying fojiao hui; Japanese: Nan'e bukkūō kai 南瀛佛教會), which was established in Taiwan in 1921 as a Japanese official reference organ to include all the Buddhist groups and activities in Taiwan. Run by Japanese, it involved also Taiwanese Buddhists. Articles published in the journal were mostly authored by Japanese intellectuals or monks, however some were also written by local Taiwanese.

Liang's article on the four *Āgamas* titled 'Shuo si ahan 說四阿含' (1920), later included in his famous anthology *Foxue yanjiu shiba pian* 佛學研究十八篇 (1935), is one of the few published in the collection edited by Zhang Mantao 張曼濤 on early scriptures (1978: 1–21). This lengthy piece starts with the definition of '*Āgama*', observations on when and how the Buddha had delivered these teachings, and the timing of their compilation (by the monastic community in the fourth month after the Nirvāṇa of the Buddha). Liang also remarked that the division into four *Āgamas* may have been in some way reminiscent of another corpus of sacred scriptures in India, the four *Vedas*, and that those four *Āgamas* related to the Five *Nikāyas*.

Liang touched upon two important issues often debated in Chinese Buddhism: the translation process of Buddhist texts into Chinese; and the sectarian affiliation of scriptures. Relying mostly on Japanese scholarship, Liang surmised that the *Ekottarika-āgama* reflected Mahāsāṅghika doctrine, and the *Madhyama-āgama* and the *Samyukta-āgama* were doing the same with the Sarvāstivāda.

Liang underlined the importance of studying the *Āgamas*, as they represented the first corpus of Buddhist teachings and scriptures; in the *Āgamas* we find details of all the core teachings of the Buddha (such as the four noble truths, causality, etc.), and concern with Buddhist practice. Liang also underlined the connection between the *Āgamas* and the Mahāyāna tradition, an argument that would be reiterated, in stronger terms, by Master Yinshun a few decades later and that made the latter the object of harsh criticism from Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhist circles. In a way similar to other scholars, Liang emphasised that these texts provided information on the social environment wherein the Buddha had lived. It is evident that Liang's research on the *Āgamas* is also part of his wider interest in Indian Buddhism (*yindu fojiao*) and 'original Buddhism' (*yuanshi fojiao*),

which were the main subjects of other essays, such as ‘Yindu fojiao gaiguan 印度佛教概觀’ and ‘Fotuo shidai ji yuanshi fojiao jiaoli gangyao 佛陀時代及原始佛教教理綱要’, also included in the *Foxue yanjiu shiba pian*. As did some other scholars, Liang used the term ‘original Buddhism’ (*yuanshi fojiao*), which, in his view, referred not only to Buddhism at the time of the Buddha but also to the first few centuries after his Nirvāṇa. At the same time, Liang also mentioned that, traditionally, the *Āgamas* and other early scriptures were termed ‘Hīnayāna’ (*xiaocheng* 小乘).

Liang reported difficulties in the development of the study of the *Āgamas* in China, due mainly to the recurrence of obscure India-related terms (i.e., often unclear to a Chinese audience), the lack of some fascicles from the scriptures, and the duplications of others. At the same time Liang did strongly encourage the revival of *Āgama* studies (*fixing* ‘*Ahanxue*’ 復興『阿含學』). He regarded these as the earliest teachings given by the Buddha, and scriptures that explain the Buddha’s core tenets (*genben yuanli* 根本原理). He also understood them as a study of Indian customs, places and figures. The *Āgamas*, Liang concluded, are a treasure trove of the culture of the East, and any angle of investigation on these texts certainly had value.¹³

II.2.2 Ouyang Jingwu 歐陽竟無: From a Mahāyāna and Yogācāra Perspective

Ouyang Jingwu 歐陽竟無 (1871–1943),¹⁴ also known as Ouyang Jian 歐陽漸, studied with Yang Wenhui in Nanjing, where he opened the China Inner Studies Institute (1922) to continue the mission of

¹³ Zhang 1978: 20: *Si ahan wei dongfang wenhua yi da baozang, wulun cong he fangmian yansu, jie you jiazhi* 四阿含爲東方文化一大寶藏，無論從何方面研索，皆有價值。

¹⁴ For a critical study of Ouyang Jingwu, see Aviv 2008.

education initiated by his teacher. In 1924 he established the periodical *Inner Studies Monthly* (*Neixue* 內學), which also published pieces about the *Āgamas* and the *Saṃyukta-āgama*. Ouyang became a well-known scholar of the Dharmalakṣaṇa and Consciousness-Only (*faxiang weishi* 法相唯識) tradition, which is the Chinese domestication of the Indian Yogācāra.

In his sole and somewhat short article about *Āgama* texts (1923), and specifically about the *Saṃyukta-āgama*, he wrote that 1) this constitutes the most important of the *Āgamas*; 2) the order of the *sūtras* was not correct and in need of revision; and 3) the *Yogācāra-bhūmi* should be used to reassess the structure of the *Saṃyukta-āgama*.¹⁵ In doing so, as Ritzinger (2016: 152) also pointed out, Ouyang gave more authority to the *Āgamas*, which were seen as closely associated to the Mahāyāna tradition, and not just Hīnayāna, in its pejorative sense.

II.2.3 Nie Ougeng 聶耦庚: Teaching the *Saṃyukta-āgama* in a Buddhist Seminary

Nie Ougeng was one of the key teachers at the China Inner Studies Institute, and a regular contributor to the monthly *Neixue*. His views on Buddhist history and scriptures followed those of the rest of the Ouyang Jingwu-centred network. For this reason, he built quite explicitly on Lü Cheng's work (1924) and, also similarly to Lü Cheng, he relied on the *Vastusaṃgrahaṇī* (攝事分) section of the *Yogācāra-bhūmi* to define the order and structure of the *sūtras* within the *Saṃyukta-āgama*. Nie published the famous work 'Za ahanjing yunpin lueshi 雜阿含經蘊品略釋' (1925).¹⁶

¹⁵ Chinese: *Geng yi yujia deng er xi zhengli zhi* 更依瑜伽等而悉整理之 (Ouyang 1923: 2).

¹⁶ For the position of the study of the *Āgamas* and Indian Buddhism within

II.2.4 Master Taixu 太虛: Locating the Study of the *Āgamas* within the Buddhist Reforms

Master Taixu (1890–1947) was well known for being a reformer and innovator in institutional and educational structures, but he remained clearly a traditional Chinese monk in his classification of teachings and positions towards Mahāyāna and early Buddhism. In fact, in his classification of teachings he labelled the *Āgamas* as the ‘Dharma common to the three vehicles’ (*sancheng gong fa* 三乘共法) (Taixu 1950 [1924]), and belonging to the tradition that he still named ‘Hīnayāna’ (*xiaocheng* 小乘) rather than ‘original Buddhism’. On the other hand, in a different essay on the contemporary situation of Buddhism in Ceylon, Master Taixu stated that local monks were following Hīnayāna doctrinal principles (*xiaocheng jiaoli* 小乘教理) but conducting a Mahāyāna practice (*dacheng xing* 大乘行) (Taixu 1940).¹⁷

Master Taixu did not author any cardinal work on the *Āgamas* or the *Samyukta-āgama*, but he did compile some explanations on translation and contents of each *Āgama* in his ‘Xiaocheng foxue gailue 小乘佛學概略’ (published in Taixu 1950 [1924]). ‘Hīnayāna’ is the term he generally used to define the tradition of those textual collections.

At the same time, a different position appears if we look at his reform of Saṅgha education and his theorising of *renjian fojiao*. Concerning his Saṅgha seminaries, their curricula, textbooks and teachers, the Wuchang Buddhist Institute adopted the Chinese trans-

the curriculum of the China Inner Studies Institute, and the role of Nie Ougeng as a teacher see Dongchu 1970: 712–724.

¹⁷ The talk ‘Cong baliyu xi fojiao shuodao jin pusa xing 從巴利語系佛教說到今菩薩行’, delivered in 1940 at the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Institute, was then included in the ‘Xuexing tonglun 學行通論’, of the *Taixu dashi quanshu* 太虛大師全書; for an analysis of Taixu’s revaluation of the Saṅgha in contemporary Ceylon see also Ritzinger 2016.

lation of the book *Shōjō bukkyō shiron* 小乘仏學史論 (1904), authored by the important Japanese scholar Funahashi Suisai 舟橋水哉, as a textbook as far back as the early 1920s (the same years when Lü Cheng published his important work).¹⁸ Later, in a lecture given at the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Institute (1945), Master Taixu proposed the inclusion of the study of the *Āgamas* in the curriculum of his seminaries. The curriculum included four subjects: 1) the study of Tibetan Buddhism; 2) the study of Indian Buddhism; 3) the study of Chinese Buddhism; 4) the study of contemporary Buddhism. The study of Indian Buddhism centred on the study of the *Āgamas*, but also included learning about the various Hīnayāna schools and early Mahāyāna. The main teacher assigned to this subject was a very young Yinshun, assisted by his peer Miaoqin 妙欽.¹⁹ Despite all this, Master Taixu continued to use the term ‘Hīnayāna’.

He (and others at that time, including Master Cihang 慈航) also quoted the *Āgamas* as the textual foundation of *rensheng fojiao* and built a strong connection between those texts and the (new) Mahāyāna practice.²⁰

¹⁸ The book was translated by the lay teacher Shi Yiru 史一如 (1876–1925), also known by his Dharma name Huiyuan 慧圓 (see Dongchu 1974: 681–682). He was fluent in Japanese, and at Wuchang he was teacher of Japanese language and of the so-called ‘Hīnayāna’. This textbook became the most adopted book in several Buddhist seminaries, but in a few years both the original Japanese text and its first Chinese translation were lost; hence, a second edition of the textbook was produced in 1933 on the basis of notes taken from the lectures given by Shi Yiru in the 1920s and titled somewhat differently, *Xiaocheng foxue gailun* 小乘佛學概論. This translation, published in 1934 at Wuchang, is still available and is currently re-printed in China.

¹⁹ The talk ‘Xiuchi yu yanjiu 修持與研究’ was later included in the ‘Xuexing tonglun 學行通論’ of the *Taixu dashi quanshu* 太虛大師全書.

²⁰ Among the most used passages, the following from the *Ekottarika-*

II.2.5 Master Liding 力定 and Master Fafang 法舫: The *Ekottarika-āgama* and the Discourse on 'Original Buddhism'

As a monk belonging to Master Taixu's entourage, Master Liding transcribed several of Taixu's lectures, but also, especially from the late 1920s to the late 1930s, wrote on the history of Indian Buddhism, and the *Āgamas* as part of that historical context.

Two major works of his, the 'Yindu fojiao zhi shengshuai 印度佛教之盛衰' (1929), and the later 'Si ahanjing zhi tiyao yanjiu 四阿含經之提要研究' (1950 [1934]), can be highlighted. In a chart from the first article, Master Liding summarised the events of the so-called first council (*saṅgīti*) after the passing of the Buddha as being the delivery of the Vinaya (*lū zang* 律藏) by the monk Upāli, and the recitation of the Dharma discourses (*fa jing zang* 法經藏) by the monk Ānanda; moreover, he identified these Dharma discourses with the content of the four *Āgamas*.

The article from 1935 was included later in Zhang Mantao's anthology as one of the few important pieces on the *Āgamas* from the Republican period (Zhang 1978: 75–142). This piece does not include elaborated arguments, but it does contain a long analysis of the *Ekottarika-āgama*, and the repetitive mention of an unpublished book on the *Āgamas* by Liang Qichao. We see again the usual Chinese emphasis on the history of the translation process.

Master Fafang 法舫 (1904–1951) was one of the disciples of Master Taixu who joined the mission to India and South East Asia. The limits and focus of this chapter do not allow for a detailed account of Master Fafang's study in India and Ceylon, or a proper

āgama may be quoted, EĀ 3 at T II 694a4–5: 佛世尊皆出人間，非由天而得也, "Buddhahood is achieved in the human realm, not in a divine birth."

analysis of his role in the mission. I will limit myself to a few notes about his contribution to the discourse on ‘original’ Buddhism that was also spreading in China in those decades, and how he investigated the *Āgamas* within that context.

Besides arguing that the same *renjian fojiao* proposed by his mentor Taixu was just Buddhism in its ‘origins’ (Fafang 1934: 41), in an earlier article, titled ‘Yuanshi fojiao zhi niaokan 原始佛教之鳥瞰’ (1931),²¹ Master Fafang (1931: 7–8) defined the teachings of ‘original’ Buddhism as embodied in the three-fold *Tripitaka* (*jing lü lun de sanzang* 經律論的三藏). The four *Āgamas* were listed as the *jing* 經 part of it. The four *Āgamas* are defined as the first textual collection of the Buddha’s teachings, as the scriptural canon of ‘original’ Buddhism (*yuanshi fojiao*), and also as the textual body of the ‘core doctrine’ (*genben sixiang* 根本思想) of the Buddhadharma. I would like to make two observations here: firstly, even if ‘original Buddhism’ was being revalued, and even associated with new Mahāyāna phenomena such as the *renjian fojiao*, the texts belonging to it are nonetheless labelled as ‘Hīnayāna’. Secondly, the four *Āgamas* are addressed only very briefly and in the following terms: the *Dīrgha-āgama* confutes (*po* 破) views and teachings of pre-Buddhist Indian religions; the *Madhyama-āgama* explains supramundane causation (*chu shijian yinguo* 出世間因果); the *Ekottarika-āgama* addresses mundane causation (*shijian yinguo* 世間因果); the *Samyukta-āgama* concerns the *dhyāna* of the higher realms (*shangjie ding* 上界定).

II.2.6 Master Yangzhen 楊真: Another Classification of the *Samyukta-āgama*

Yangzhen was a Buddhist monk who also assisted the famous Chan Master Xuyun 虛雲 in the transcription of his talks. At the same time,

²¹ I am grateful to Ester Bianchi for bringing this article to my attention.

he wrote notes on several *sūtras*, including the **Amitābha-sūtra* (*Fo-shuo amituo jing* 佛說阿彌陀經, T 366).

Among his articles we can also count ‘Za ahanjing jiaoyi dagang xu 雜阿含經教義大綱序’ (1942a); ‘Beichuan za ahan nanchuan xiangying bujing duixiao jiyao 北傳雜阿含南傳相應部經對校輯要’ (1948); ‘Za ahan jing jiaoyi dagang (shang) 雜阿含經教義大綱(上)’ (1942b); and ‘Za ahan jing jiaoyi dagang (xia) 雜阿含經教義大綱(下)’ (1942c). In these articles, Master Yangzhen outlined textual problems within the *Samyukta-āgama*: the fact that sections of the text were lost, as well as questions about the order of the *sūtras* and the structure of the entire collection.

Although he mentioned Lü Cheng’s seminal article (1924), which structured the *Samyukta-āgama* into ten recitations under four groups (四分十誦), Master Yangzhen explored the core teachings of the *Samyukta-āgama*, grouping them under the four noble truths (*si shengdi* 四聖諦) as, he argued, those are the first teachings of the Buddha and also the core of the *Samyukta-āgama*. Interestingly, a few years later Master Yinshun classified the chapters of the *Zhonglun* 中論 under the four noble truths too (Travagnin 2012).

II.2.7 Tang Yongtong 湯用彤: A Revaluation of Indian Buddhism

Although listed as an important *Āgama* scholar by Zhang Mantao (et al.), Tang Yongtong (1893–1964), a well-known scholar and historian of Chinese Buddhism, did not write anything specific on those texts, but he produced several studies on Indian philosophy and Indian Buddhism (see Tang 1944 for instance), and contributed by giving renewed attention, knowledge, and a fresh revaluation of Indian Buddhism in China. Being an expert in Pali, Tang Yongtong was often called on to supervise students of the China Inner Studies

Institute who wanted to specialise in that field, a fact that also shows the general interest in this textual and doctrinal tradition that was developing in China during those years.

II.2.8 Master Dongchu 東初: The *Āgamas* as the Real Teaching of the Buddhadharmā

The monk Dongchu (1908–1977) is mostly renowned as a historian of Buddhism and for his mission in the field of Saṅgha and lay education in Taiwan, but not as an expert in the *Āgamas*. His works include the volumes *Zhongguo fojiao jindaishi* 中國佛教近代史 and *Zhongri fojiao jiaotong shi* 中日佛教交通史, published in the 1970s, which are helpful in reconstructing the development of *Āgama* scholarship in twentieth-century China. It is important to remember that Dongchu was a monastic student of Master Taixu, hence he was educated in the same milieu of the seminaries run by Taixu and Ouyang Jingwu, although he was quite critical of Taixu's new structures of learning for the Saṅgha.

Master Dongchu also authored a rather long essay on the *Āgamas* in the early 1960s, which became part of his *Fofa zhenyi* 佛法真義, written in the late 1960s, where he explained the doctrinal contents of the texts. This article was included in Zhang Mantao's later collection, *Jingdian yanjiu lunji* 經典研究論集, as representative of early and crucial works on the *Āgamas* together with the articles by Master Liding 力定 and Liang Qichao 梁啓超.

II.3 Scriptural Presses and Publishing Houses: Reprinting the *Āgamas*

Besides research articles and textual classifications published in journals from *Haichao yin* 海潮音, *Neixue* 內學 to *Zangyao xiaokan*

藏要校刊,²² we can notice the efforts, by presses and publishers, to reprint the *Āgamas*, mostly under the umbrella title *Xiaocheng jing ahan bu* 小乘經阿含部, which again brings in the term ‘Hīnayāna’. Among others, the Shanghai Buddhist Books (*Shanghai foxue shuju* 上海佛學書局) catalogues in the 1930s include the titles of both canonical texts and critical studies on those texts.²³

Quite interesting is the brief description that accompanies the announcement of the publication of the book *Za ahanjing fenlei zuanyao* 雜阿含經分類纂要 from the list of new titles out in 1930. It reads: “The *Samyukta-āgama* is important for the study of the Dharmalakṣaṇa school [*faxiang zong* 法相宗]”. This book was authored by the monk Manzhi 滿智 (1903–1937), who was also part of the Taixu-centred network and active at the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Institute before he disrobed. This is in line with what was explained at the beginning of this section: the major scholars and writers on the *Samyukta-āgama* in the 1920s were from the China Inner Studies Institutes, and they were all Yogācāra scholars. The instrumental role of the study of the *Āgamas* for a better understanding of Yogācāra was often repeated in the first half of the twentieth century by both the Taixu-centred network and the Ouyang Jingwu-centred network.

II.4 Importing Japanese Scholarship

From the early twentieth century we have several Japanese works translated into Chinese by Chinese laity or monks during their periods of education in Japan. This started a transfer of knowledge within East Asia, but also led to a domestication of the imported knowledge.

The translated scholarship included works specifically on the

²² This was also published by the China Inner Studies Institute.

²³ The Shanghai Buddhist Books was established in 1929.

Āgamas or the *Samyukta-āgama*, and discussion on these collections in general works on Indian Buddhism, the life of the Buddha, and the historical/doctrinal/sociological context of ‘original Buddhism’ (*yuanshi fojiao* 原始佛教).

When it comes to the *Āgamas* in general, or the *Samyukta-āgama* in particular, the major ‘imported’ scholars include Funahashi Suisai 舟桥 水哉, Anesaki Masaharu 姉崎 正治 (1873–1949),²⁴ Akanuma Chizen 智善 赤沼 (1885–1937), and Maeda Egaku 前田 惠學.²⁵ Akanuma published the *Agon no bukyō* 阿含の佛教 in the 1920s, while his *Kanpa shibu shiagon goshōroku* 漢巴四部四阿含互照錄 came out in September 1929.²⁶ The latter was translated into Chinese after a short time, and reprinted later (in the mid-1980s) in other collections of translations of Japanese works.

Another scholar whose works were available (either in Japanese or in Chinese translation) in the 1920s is the already mentioned Zeng Jinglai (Sō Keirai).²⁷

²⁴ See his *Hanyi ahanjing* 漢譯阿含經 from 1909.

²⁵ He was later than the other scholars, although his work preceded Master Yinshun’s final writings on the *Āgamas*. See especially his *Genshi bukyō seiten no seiritsushi kenkyū* 原始仏教聖典の成立史研究 (published in 1966), where he also explained the division of the teachings into nine or twelve *āngas*.

²⁶ News of the Japanese publication appears on *Haichao yin* 海潮音, 12.3 (1931): 3.

²⁷ See for instance his article published in Japanese in *Nanying fojiao/Nan’e bukyō* 南瀛佛教 (1925). I am extremely grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers of this chapter who provided the following information: Zeng Jinglai (Sō Keirai) was a Taiwanese Buddhist monk who had studied under Nukariya Kaiten 忽滑谷 快天 as his advisor in the Komazawa University 駒澤大學 in Tokyo. The articles published in *Nanying fojiao/Nan’e bukyō* were also from his bachelor’s thesis written in the same university which was titled *Agon no bukyō kan* 阿含の仏陀觀.

The works by Maeda Egaku, published in the 1960s, affected Chinese Buddhists' later understanding of the *āṅgas* in relation to the *Āgamas*. Maeda and his arguments are often quoted in Yinshun (1971); however, Yinshun's positions are always more nuanced than how they had been presented by Maeda.

II.5 Lü Cheng 呂澂: The *Samyukta-āgama* via the *Yogācārabhūmi*

Lü Cheng became a key figure in the *Yogācāra* network led by Ouyang Jingwu. He also became well known as a historian of Buddhism, and a scholar of different traditions, schools and scriptures, which he could assess from different angles given his language skills.²⁸ He was often discussed in parallel with Master Yinshun, as they were two very similar figures in terms of background and scholarship.²⁹ For the purpose of this chapter, I am looking more closely at his works about Indian Buddhism – so as to also retrieve his position within the contemporary debate on 'original Buddhism' – and his articles about the *Āgamas*, especially those concerning the *Samyukta-āgama*.

His main work about Indian Buddhism is certainly *Yindu foxue yuanliu luejiang* 印度佛學源流略講.³⁰ The greatest value of this

²⁸ Lü Cheng could access sources in Japanese, Pali, Sanskrit, Tibetan, and also English.

²⁹ In 2000, Lan Jifu edited a three-volume collection titled *Yinshun lü cheng foxue cidian* 印順呂澂佛學辭典; in the introduction, the monk Chuandao 傳導 defined Master Yinshun and Lü Cheng as the 'columns' of twentieth-century Chinese Buddhology (二十世紀華人之佛學雙璧, p. vi), while Lan Jifu called them the two 'heroes' of the twentieth-century Chinese Buddhist world (二十世紀華人佛學界的二位青英份子, p. viii).

³⁰ The first draft of this work is dated back to 1954, and it was finally revised and finalised in 1979; it is now part of the fourth volume of the

book is the literature review offered at the beginning, which included Tibetan, Japanese and Western sources, and thus reveals which foreign scholarship was available in China around the mid twentieth century.

In contrast to other scholars, Lü Cheng does not use the term ‘Hīnayāna’ too often, and certainly when he does, it is in quite a peculiar sense. Instead, he discussed the history of Indian Buddhism in six stages. First, the time of the Buddha and the early stage of the Buddhist community after his Nirvāṇa is defined as ‘original Buddhism’ (*yuanshi foxue* 原始佛學). This phase is followed, in the following order, by the stage of so-called first sectarianism (*bupai foxue* 部派佛學), Early Mahāyāna (*chuqi dacheng foxue* 初期大乘佛學), Hīnayāna (*xiaocheng foxue* 小乘佛學), Middle Mahāyāna (*zhongqi dacheng foxue* 中期大乘佛學) and Late Mahāyāna (*wanqi dacheng foxue* 晚期大乘佛學). Lü Cheng argued that the term ‘Hīnayāna’ was coined by early Mahāyānists, hence the term could be used only after the inception of Mahāyāna, to indicate a new development in that pre-Mahāyāna ‘sectarian Buddhism’.

Ouyang Jingwu and other Buddhist figures seemed to already rely on Lü Cheng as the major authority in the field of *Āgama* studies by as early as the 1920s (Ouyang Jingwu 1923: 1); it will also become clear how instrumental his work was for the later accomplishments of Master Yinshun. Lü Cheng was also asked to contribute the entry on ‘*Āgama*’ for the *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism* published by the Ceylonese/Sri Lankan Government (1963), as proof of his international reputation on the subject.

Concerning the *Āgamas*, Lü Cheng followed mainstream positions, such as those of Master Taixu, and defined those teachings as teachings common to the three vehicles (*sancheng gongjiao* 三乘共教). At the same time, he also worked on innovative ways of dividing and reassessing the texts of the *Samyukta-āgama*.

As for the first point, he reported different views, from early Chinese Buddhists to contemporary Japanese scholars. For instance, he mentions that Sengzhao 僧肇 had proposed a division into ten recitations under four parts 四分十誦 (in 1909 Japanese scholarship advanced a division into eight recitations under twelve parts, 八誦十二部). As for the second point, we cannot forget his adoption of the *Vastusamgrahaṇī* as a way of redefining the order of the *Samyukta-āgama*: this then became the basis of Master Yinshun's works, and of that of other Chinese Buddhists right up to today.

In his *Yindu foxue yuanliu luejiang*, Lü Cheng remembered the nine *āṅgas* mostly as literary forms and topics used by the Buddha in his exposition of the Dharma; he called them *jiu fenjiao xingshi* 九分教形式. According to him, the *Āgamas* were perhaps not the first textual collections to be formed, but it is possible that the nine *āṅgas*³¹ were the first textual collections, which later served as the basis for the compilation of the *Āgama* collections (Lü Cheng 1991: 1922–1923). It has to be borne in mind that Lü Cheng expressed hypotheses, not firm convictions, and did not build a more articulated discussion as Master Yinshun instead did.

³¹ Here is Lü Cheng's list of the nine *āṅgas*: 1. *sūtra* (*jing* 經); 2. *geya* (*yingsong* 應頌); 3. *vyākaraṇa* (*jibie* 記別); 4. *gāthā* (*jisong* 偈頌); 5. *udāna* (*zi shuosong* 自說頌); 6. *ityuktaka* (*rushi yu* 如是語); 7. *jātaka* (*bensheng* 本生); 8. *adbhuta-dharma* (*weihuiyou* 未會有); 9. *vaipulya* (*fangguang* 方廣).

III. Master Yinshun 印順: The *Samyukta-āgama* and the *Aṅgas*

The monk Yinshun (1906–2005) was crucial in the history of modern Chinese Buddhism. Born at the end of the Qing 清 period, he started his study and practice of Buddhism in the 1920s, enrolled in Master Taixu’s new Buddhist seminaries, where he also taught afterwards, and eventually moved to Taiwan via Hong Kong in the early 1950s.³² Master Yinshun embodied the heritage of the Chinese ‘reform Buddhism’ that had developed on the mainland in the 1920s–1930s, a heritage that then became a core element in the formation of Taiwanese Buddhism in the second half of the twentieth century. Master Yinshun has been labelled as one of the main theorists of *renjian fojiao* 人間佛教 (‘Buddhism for the Human Realm’), and he is often remembered as the master of the nun Zhengyan 證嚴 (b. 1937), the founder of the international Buddhist NGO Tzu Chi Foundation (Ciji gongdehui 慈濟功德會). Master Yinshun was also a prolific writer and an educator. His comprehensive study of the history of Indian Buddhism, based mostly on Chinese sources, has had a strong impact on the development of Chinese and Taiwanese Buddhology.

³² It is possible to list as many as six autobiographies of Master Yinshun: *Pingfan de yisheng* 平凡的一生 (1994); *Youxin fahai liushinian* 游心法海六十年 (1985); ‘Wo zenyang xuanzele fojiao 我怎樣選擇了佛教’, in the *Wo zhi zongjiao guan* 我之宗教觀, 301–306 (1972); ‘Wo huainian dashi 我懷念大師’, in the *Huayu xiangyun* 華雨香雲, 299–308 (1973); ‘Anguan yaoqi 庵關遙寄’ (1973), in the *Huayu xiangyun*, 395–396; and the introduction to the *Shuo yiqie youbu wei zhu de lunshu yu lunshi zhi yanjiu* 說一切有部爲主的論書與論師之研究 (1968). See Hou 2008 for a thorough biographical account of Master Yinshun’s life.

Master Yinshun has been celebrated as one of the most eminent monks in modern Chinese Buddhism, but also highly criticised in the mainstream Chinese Buddhist environment. He became controversial for his re-evaluation of early Indian Buddhism, the repositioning of that tradition within the classical classification of teachings (*panjiao* 判教) that several Buddhist leaders, in the past and present have drawn up, and also in his sharp and articulated attacks on the traditional Chan and Pure Land practices. Master Yinshun's criticism of the cult of the Buddha Amitābha led to the burning of his books in a public square in Taizhong (Taiwan).³³ Moreover, his statement that the correct practice of the Dharma is represented by the *bodhisattva* path in its early formulation, and as embodied in Nāgārjuna's works, was quite different from the positions taken up by previous Buddhist leaders in their respective *panjiaos*.³⁴ Master Yinshun's argument that the *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* was a thorough restatement of the *Āgamas*³⁵ created a heated debate on his (apparent) neglect of the *Prajñāpāramitā* tradition.³⁶ As a result, he was often perceived as a betrayer of the Mahāyāna (and Chinese Buddhist mainstream) tradition.³⁷

³³ For more about this incident see for instance Yang 1991: 23 and Jiang 1989: 163–164.

³⁴ For a detailed study of his *panjiao*, in relation to the previous systems of classification, see Travagnin 2001.

³⁵ Yinshun 1950a: 17–24 and Yinshun 1984 [1993]: 209–216. Chinese: *Zhonglun shi ahajing de tonglun* 中論是阿含經的通論.

³⁶ The common Chinese (Mahāyāna) view was that the *kārikās* were directly linked to the *Prajñāpāramitā* scriptures and only through the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature, therefore indirectly, linked to the *Āgamas*. As Lan Jifu 藍吉富 stated, the *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* is the 'tonglun 通論' (thorough treatise) of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, and the *Prajñāpāramitā* is then connected to the *Āgamas* (Lan 1993: 224–225). See also Travagnin 2012: 261–267.

³⁷ The document *Jiaru mei you dacheng* 假如沒有大乘 ('If there were not

When it comes to the study of the *Āgamas* in general, and the *Samyukta-āgama* in particular, Master Yinshun was following the research trajectory of Lü Cheng, in a certain sense completing the work of the latter. Yinshun lectured and wrote on the *Āgamas* from the early 1940s until the late 1980s, making those texts a constant interest in his doctrinal and historical research. A particular distinctive trait of his work is the new edition of the *Samyukta-āgama*, which presents a defined punctuation and emendation to characters, and his categorisation of those texts (and the *Āgama* collections in general) according to the four *siddhāntas* and the *āngas*.

In this section I explore how Master Yinshun used the categories of *siddhāntas* and *āngas* (separately and sometime in combination) to classify or label these and other corpora of texts. First of all, I give an overview of how and when he encountered the *Āgamas*, and a chronology of his publications and arguments to provide the framework within which he operated.

III.1 Master Yinshun's 印順 Study of the *Āgamas*

The first considerable reading of the *Āgamas* dated back to 1932, when the monk Yinshun was on Mt. Putuo (Putuo shan 普陀山), having a period of retreat in the Tripiṭaka Hall (Yuezang lou 閱藏樓) at the Huiji Temple (Huiji si 慧濟寺), on the highest place on the mountain called Foding shan 佛頂山 or Pusa ding 菩薩頂. This retreat was undertaken in order to read the *Tripiṭaka* in its entirety. At that time, Yinshun had been a student of the Minnan Buddhist Institute (Min-

Mahāyāna'), that the senior monk Cihang 慈航 (1893–1954) wrote in 1953 to criticise Master Yinshun reflects well the common Chinese traditional atmosphere of that time. In the end, this document was never published, but parts of it are available in Dao'an 道安 1981: 1280–1284.

nan foxueyuan 閩南佛學院), under the guidance of teachers such as Masters Taixu and Daxing 大醒 (1900–1952) for a few months only.

At Minnan, following the curriculum arranged by Taixu, he had mastered only texts of the School of the Three Treatises (*sanlun zong* 三論宗), which is the first Chinese version of the Indian Mādhyamika, and those of the School of Consciousness-Only (*weishi zong* 唯識宗), namely the first Chinese rendition of Indian Yogācāra. In other words, he had acquired mastery of some mainstream Chinese Mahāyāna, but lacked a strong knowledge of pre-Mahāyāna Buddhism. A second observation is that Master Yinshun was on a solitary retreat (*biguan* 閉關), which he needed to deepen his understanding of the entire Chinese Buddhist canon, hence it was not planned to be a study of the *Āgamas* only. According to his memoirs, he spent the daytime reading through canonical scriptures he was not familiar with, and dedicated evening and night of each day to the review of *sanlun* and *weishi* texts.³⁸ Finally, the order he followed in reading these scriptures affected his hermeneutics of the teachings of Buddha. First, he read the *Prajñāpāramitā* scriptures in four months' time, then he directed his attention to the *Āgamas*, and in the end he read through the *Vinaya*. Yinshun read the *Long zang* 龍藏 edition of the canon.³⁹ It was a fast, almost ritualistic, and unguided reading. Yinshun (1993 [1984]: 8–9) wrote:

³⁸ Yinshun 1993 [1984]: 8.

³⁹ Printed during the Qing dynasty (1735–1738), the *Long zang* is formed by 718 sets, 7168 fascicles, 1660 texts. Holmes Welch provides important details on the availability of the *Long zang* in the first half of the Twentieth century China. Referring to data collected from different sources, Welch listed the purchase of the *Long zang* by several monasteries in the South of China. Referring to Boerschmann 1911, he includes the case of Foding on Putuo Mountain, as a monastery that received a copy of the *Long zang* in 1908. This probably was the edition of the canon that Master Yinshun read; see Welch 1968: 228 and 345.

Every day I read seven or eight fascicles (*juan* 卷) of scriptures (with each volume including an average of 9,000 characters). This was a quick reading, without any possibility to think over the contents. My memorization skills were never excellent, hence whatever I read got lost in the dark immediately. Nevertheless, this reading gave some results.

Once back at the Wuchang Buddhist Institute (1937), Master Yinshun continued his study of Indian Buddhism by reading Japanese secondary literature, especially the *Genshi bukkō shisōron* 原始佛教思想論 by Kimura Taiken 木村 泰賢, and the *Indo tetsugaku shūkyō shi* 印度哲学宗教史 edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠 順次郎 and Kimura Taiken 木村 泰賢, and Tāranātha's *History of Buddhism in India* through the Japanese translation by Teramoto Enga 寺本 婉雅. Although Lü Cheng had already published on the *Āgamas* by that time, Master Yinshun did not refer to those publications, or any of Lü Cheng's books, until he edited the *Samyukta-āgama* in the early 1980s.

Master Yinshun (1993 [1984]: 10) referred to this phase of learning (1932–1938) on Mt. Putuo and at Wuchang as crucial because it was then that he finally learned the original core of the Buddhādharma, and realised there was such a large divide between the Buddhādharma (*fofa* 佛法) and the Buddhism practiced in contemporary China (*zhongguo xianshi fojiao* 中國現實佛教).

This learning caused a substantial shift in Master Yinshun's writings. Whereas the first articles (and lectures) in the early 1930s were all about the Chinese *sanlun* and *weishi* schools, with a clear focus on China, in 1940 he started writing more substantially on the history of Indian Buddhism, including the Indian history of those Buddhist schools present in China, and paid considerable attention to the pre-Mahāyāna and the connections between pre-Mahāyāna and Mahāyāna.

A final observation: in 1938–1939, after reading and learning about the *Āgamas*, Master Yinshun had the opportunity to reside at the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Institute, and study under the guidance of the monk Fazun 法尊 (1902–1980). Fazun was a leading authority on the Tibetan tradition, and a remarkable translator of Tibetan texts into Chinese. Throughout his works, Master Yinshun acknowledged the impact that these two years had on his understanding and practice of Buddhism. As mentioned above, we detect in Yinshun a shift of attention from Chinese schools to pre-Mahāyāna Indian Buddhism, and a revaluation of the latter, from the early 1940s onwards. At the same time, however, his reading of the Tibetan traditions did not lead to the same result. On the contrary, he came to define the Tibetan (esoteric) tradition of Buddhism as ‘the final decline of Buddhism’ (*fojiao zhi mie* 佛教之滅).⁴⁰

III.2 Master Yinshun's 印順 Major Publications on the *Āgamas*

Master Yinshun produced publications specifically on the *Āgamas*, but also wrote about them in his books about Indian Buddhism or the general history of Buddhism, hence within the wider frame of the early Buddhadharmā. It is important to look at his publications diachronically, and contextualise them within his overall life, learning, and literary production. From that perspective, all his lectures and publications on the *Āgamas* (which he took as the core scriptures at the basis of early Indian Buddhism and referred to in terms of

⁴⁰ This expression is found in several of his writings, see for instance Yinshun 1985 [1943]: Chapter 17 of *Yindu zhi fojiao* is titled ‘Mijiao zhi xing yu fojiao zhi mie 密教之興與佛教之滅’. The same argument appeared even later in his *panjiao*; see Yinshun 1993 [1989].

‘original Buddhism’) followed his early works on Chinese *sanlun* and *weishi*, and most of them were completed at the same time as his works on the revaluation of Nāgārjuna.

Master Yinshun’s written output on the *Āgamas* can be divided into four stages. The first period dates to the 1940s. This phase includes sections from the first edition of the *Yindu zhi fojiao* 印度之佛教 (1943),⁴¹ the early articles ‘Ahan jiang yao 阿含講要’ (1945a and 1945b) and ‘Ahan jiangyi 阿含講義’ (1945c);⁴² the revisions of those articles that became part of the *Fofa gailun* 佛法概論 (1949);⁴³ sections from his *Weishi xue tanyuan* 唯識學探源 (1944),⁴⁴ *Xing-kong xue tanyuan* 性空學探源 (1950a)⁴⁵ and *Zhongguan jinlun* 中觀今論 (1950b).⁴⁶ In these early works, Master Yinshun was already adopting the *siddhāntas* as a lens through which to read the *Āgamas*. Also, these first works were completed while he was still in China, before moving to Taiwan.

⁴¹ It is in the introduction of this book, written in 1942, that Master Yinshun reported for the first time, in paraphrase, the passage from the *Ekottarika-āgama* that was often used even by others as the scriptural foundation of *renjian fojiao* 人間佛教, to stress that Buddha’s teachings were centred on human beings in their lifetime. The relevant sentence read as follows: 諸佛皆出人間，終不在天上成佛也 (Yinshun 1985 [1943]: 2).

⁴² These articles were used as drafts for the lectures he gave in 1944 at the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Institute (Hanzang jiaoli yuan 漢藏教理院).

⁴³ He gave 13 lectures on the *Āgamas* in 1944; most of the contents, once revised, became chapters 3–6, part of chapter 7, and chapter 8–12 of the *Fofa gailun*.

⁴⁴ This book includes a revised version of the talks given in 1940 at the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Institute (Hanzang jiaoli yuan 漢藏教理院).

⁴⁵ This book includes a revised version of the talks given in 1944 at the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Institute (Hanzang jiaoli yuan 漢藏教理院).

⁴⁶ This book includes a revised version of the talks given in 1947.

A second stage includes his later works on Indian Buddhism (1970s–1980s). Within a little more than ten years, Master Yinshun wrote (or rewrote) extensively on the subject: he revised the *Yindu zhi fojiao* (1985), composed the *Yuanshi fojiao shengdian zhi jicheng* 原始佛教聖典之集成 (1971), and wrote his final work on the history of Indian Buddhism, titled *Yindu fojiao sixiang shi* 印度佛教思想史 (1985). This is an important phase, as by that time he had become acquainted with new arguments from Japanese scholarship, and also engaged with Maeda's theory of the *āṅgas* to unpack the history of the composition of the *Āgamas*. Master Yinshun's position in Taiwan was already consolidated in those years, which are seen as the stage of his mature thinking.

The third phase (1980s) includes his critical edition of texts. This is when he also published his three-volume critical edition of the *Samyukta-āgama*, the *Za ahanjing lun huibian* 雜阿含經論會編 (1983), which was based on Lü Cheng's early discoveries. This kind of textual analysis resembled his new edition of *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論, which had been completed just a few years earlier, in 1979, and revealed a very different approach to texts from that which he had adopted in his earlier works on, for instance, the *Mūlamadhya-maka-kārikā*.

His concluding remarks are dated to the late 1980s. I would rely on the article 'Qili qiji zhi renjian fojiao 契理契機之人間佛教' (1993 [1989]) to understand Master Yinshun's final views on the *Āgamas*. This is a key piece of writing in his production, where he also discussed his *panjiao*, his own definition of *renjian fojiao*, and his understanding of *the* 'correct' Buddhist practice. It is thus a crucial article that includes Master Yinshun's final views on Buddhist teachings and practice. Moreover, it is important from the point of view of his own analysis of the *Āgamas* as well, since in this he draws

some cross-references between the first lectures in 1944 (where he had already adopted the four *siddhāntas* to read the *Āgamas*) and his studies from the 1970s (especially the *Yuanshi fojiao shengdian zhi jicheng*), merging the results, and thus bringing the *Āgamas*, *siddhāntas* and *aṅgas* in dialogue (Yinshun 1993 [1982]: 29–33). After in-depth research on Master Yinshun (e.g., Travagnin 2001, 2009, 2012 and 2013), I usually refer to this article as his ‘last will’ for his overall scholarship.

III.3 Master Yinshun’s 印順 Main Arguments on *Āgamas* and *Aṅgas*: Repositioning ‘Original Buddhism’

Master Yinshun’s first analysis in the 1940s opened up the issue of the Chinese misconception of the *Āgamas* as textual corpora of the ‘Hinayāna’ only. This was a misperception he opposed firmly, yet a misperception that was so strong and widespread around him that it pushed him to title his first book on the *Āgamas Fofa gailun* (‘On the Foundational Doctrine of the Buddhadharmā’)⁴⁷. As seen in the first part of this chapter, Master Yinshun was not alone in this revaluation of the contents of the *Āgamas*, and a new conception of the relation between those texts and Mahāyāna, even if his conclusions were more extreme than others.⁴⁸ He was not the only one who defined the *Āgamas* as the scriptures all three vehicles (Sanskrit *trīyāna*; Chinese *sancheng* 三乘) rely on.⁴⁹ As seen in the previous sec-

⁴⁷ Quoting from Yinshun 1949: 2: 以阿含經爲小乘的誤解，所以改提爲《佛法概論》。

⁴⁸ The atmosphere and debates in those decades have also been described by Ritzinger 2016: 152.

⁴⁹ As for Master Yinshun, he wrote clearly that in the *Fofa gailun* (1949:

tion, the monk Taixu and Lü Cheng held the same position.

The relevance of the *Āgamas* as the doctrinal basis of the Mahāyāna is explained further in his first substantial works on Chinese Mādhyamika (*Xingkong xue tanyuan*) and Chinese Yogācāra (*Weishi xue tanyuan*). In the latter, Master Yinshun underlined that the (Chinese) Yogācāra philosophy is also based on the *Āgamas* (Yinshun 1944: 4), since it is also rooted in the doctrine of dependent origination (*yuanqi* 緣起) (Yinshun 1944: 38). In his *Xingkong xue tanyuan*, he confuted another misconception about the *Āgamas*: contrary to the most common view held (in China), he argued that the *Āgamas* do not just discuss 'existence' (*you* 有), they include important explanations about 'emptiness' (*kong* 空) too, and in fact, he continued, it is based on the *Āgamas*' arguments on emptiness that Nāgārjuna construed his own *sūnyatā* doctrine (Yinshun 1950a: 15–98, especially 16). The relevance of the *Āgamas* in Nāgārjuna's thought is repeated, in stronger (and for Chinese highly controversial) terms, in the *Zhongguan jin lun*, where *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* is defined as a thorough restatement of the *Āgamas* (Yinshun 1950b: 17–20).

These early texts also explore the *Samyukta-āgama* for the first time, in terms of both dating and contents. He defined the *Samyukta-āgama* as the earliest textual corpus among the *Āgamas* (Yinshun 1944: 5; 1950a: 16 and 76–77).

The concept of *aṅga* is translated in Chinese in different ways, mostly as *fenjiao* 分教 (literally 'doctrinal divisions' or 'divisions of teachings') or *bujing* 部經 (literally 'textual collections' or 'groups of texts'), and the use of these terms seems to be interchangeable.⁵⁰

1): 阿含經是三乘共依的聖典。

⁵⁰ The recurrence of these translations are found in classical and popular dictionaries like Mochizuki Shinkō's 望月信亨 *Bukkyō daijiten* 佛教大辭典 (1909), and the *Foguang dacidian* 佛光大辭典 published by Fo-

According to Master Yinshun (1971: 476), the term *bujing* is an older translation of the term *aṅga*. This consideration, however, does not explain why he adopted both the variants in his writings. I would argue that he used the translation *bujing* when he wanted to refer to the *aṅgas* as textual collections, whereas he adopted *fenjiao* when he wanted to infer the nuance of divisions of teachings.

The first discussion of the *aṅgas* in the *Yindu zhi fojiao* (Yinshun 1985 [1943]: 72–79) might have appeared only in the revised version (1985), given the number of correspondences between this book and *Yuanshi fojiao shengdian zhi jicheng*, and some direct references to it. Nonetheless, some differences between these two books can be detected. In the *Yindu zhi fojiao*, he wrote about the *aṅgas* as he explained the three stages of formation of the *sūtras* (*xiuduoluo* 修多羅). The latter term identifies both the notion of ‘scripture’ (i.e., turning the Buddha’s Dharma teaching, *fayi* 法義, into the form of discourses) and one literary form (i.e., prose, the first *aṅga*) in which some of these teachings were expounded. In the *Yindu zhi fojiao*, the first three *aṅgas* are referred to as both literary forms (with a distinction between prose and verses, and a combination of both) and textual collections, and these collections are identified with the totality of the Buddha’s teachings. The further distinction between the first three (*sūtra*, *geya*, *gāthā*) and the following *aṅgas* (*nidāna*, *avadāna*, *jātaka*, *ityuktaka*, *adbhutadharma*, *upadeśa*) is that the first three encompass the Buddha’s direct teachings, while the second group includes also other topics and the intervention of the Buddha’s disciples. Moreover, Master Yinshun made a distinction between three, nine and twelve *aṅgas*, and placed more emphasis on the nine collections (*jiu bu jing* 九部經); the final three collections, namely *vyākaraṇa*, *udāna*, *vaipulya*, are seen as a later addition.

The three stages of formation of the *sūtras* (*xiuduoluo* 修多羅), according to Master Yinshun, are the following:

1. The division of the Buddha's teachings into nine forms of exposition and groups of teachings; the first three (*sūtra*, i.e., teachings expressed in prose; *geya*, i.e., teachings expressed as a combination of prose and verses; *gāthā*, i.e., teachings expressed in verses) predated those that followed (Yinshun 1985: 72–75).

2. The formation of the four *Āgamas* on the basis of the exposition of the first nine divisions (which he defined as both *jiu bujing* 九部經 and *jiu fenjiao* 九分教), with a close association between *sūtra*, *geya*, *gāthā* and the *Samyukta-āgama* being also sometimes argued (Yinshun 1985: 75–77).

3. The nine divisions of teachings became the four *Āgamas*, and so the emergence of the four *Āgamas* implied the loss of the old forms of the nine textual divisions; the formation of the *Kṣudraka-piṭaka* (*Zazang* 雜藏) happened later, and was based on the four *Āgamas* (Yinshun 1985: 77–79).⁵¹

The *Yuanshi fojiao shengdian zhi jicheng* marked a turning point in Master Yinshun's understanding of 'original Buddhism'; this is a book he felt the need to write, as a better knowledge of early Indian Buddhism, he argued, would help correct popular misunderstandings of Mahāyāna too. Yet, he relied only on Chinese sources and secondary literature coming from Japanese Buddhologists for his writing.⁵² Furthermore, he insisted that an investigation based only on Pali texts might have neglected important elements of the *Āgama* tradition (Yinshun 1971: 475–482). This is probably why he spent quite a few pages on the Chinese translations (and translators) of the four *Āgamas* (see especially Yinshun 1971: 90–100).

⁵¹ More on the *Kṣudraka-piṭaka* is found in Yinshun 1971: 793–866.

⁵² Besides Maeda Egaku 前田 惠學 1964, he also lists Ui Hakuju 宇井 伯壽. 1925 and Tetsuro Watsuji 和辻 哲郎 1927.

In the *Yuanshi fojiao shengdian zhi jicheng*, Master Yinshun referred to nine and twelve groups of teachings (*jiu fen jiao* 九分教; *shi'er fen jiao* 十二分教), and not to textual collections. In line with other Chinese and Japanese scholars, he also discussed the timeline of teaching and textual formations extensively, questioning whether the four *Āgamas* were formed before or after the systematisation of the nine (or twelve) divisions of the teachings (Yinshun 1971: 2, 475–492). The extension of the discussion on the *Āgamas* in relation to the divisions of the *anigas*, and the new arguments expressed about the latter constitute a major difference between this book and *Yindu zhi fojiao*.

Certainly at the time of the Buddha, Master Yinshun (1971: 2) argued, the *Āgamas* had not yet been collected. He claimed that there had been a shift in the understanding of the division of teachings and the formation of Buddhist texts (including the four *Āgamas*) within Chinese and Japanese scholarship. The traditional Chinese and Japanese position – which argued the idea that the twelve divisions of teachings represented the old form of teachings, while the four *Āgamas* were the first collection of them – was replaced by a new viewpoint, based on a fresh study of the Pali scriptures, according to which the nine divisions were not only an ancient development but also predated the formation of the *Āgamas* (Yinshun 1971: 6).

In other words, the ‘old’ pattern in the scholarship argued that first there was Upāli’s recitation of the *Vinaya*, followed by Ānanda’s recitation of all the discourses (*fa* 法), and it was the latter’s recitation which became the four *Āgamas*. This scholarship did not perceive the four *Āgamas* as having been formed on the basis of (or after the formation of) the nine or twelve divisions of the teachings. The ‘later’ scholarship, however, came to argue that the four *Āgamas* had been formed on the basis of the nine divisions of teachings (Yinshun 1971:

476–478).⁵³ Nonetheless, Master Yinshun reasoned, asserting that the four *Āgamas* were constituted on the basis of the nine divisions of the teachings, and that then, chronologically, the four *Āgamas* followed the appearance of the nine divisions was still questionable as this is not stated in any ancient text.

So, how did Master Yinshun position himself in this debate? He concluded that the nine groups of teachings (*jiu fenjiao*) and the four *Āgamas* developed simultaneously. That is to say the four *Āgamas* were already present in the early stage of the formation of those nine teachings, even though they had not yet been assembled and collected into collections, and were not known as ‘the four *Āgamas*’ at that time.⁵⁴ The four *Āgamas* were constituted in various stages, and did not form before the nine-fold division of the teachings. If a chronology has to be given, Master Yinshun argued, it can be said that the nine divisions of teachings found their completion before the four *Āgamas* had been finalised (Yinshun 1971: 481).

Master Yinshun discussed the categories of divisions of teachings (*fenjiao* 分教), genres of textual collections (*bujing* 部經), and *Buddhavaṇa* (*foshuo* 佛說). Firstly, the nine-fold or twelve-fold divisions encompassed not only the teachings in the discourses – in short, the Dharma (*fa* 法) – but also the *Vinaya* (*lü* 律) (Yinshun 1971: 479). Secondly, he argued, it is difficult to draw parallels and correspondences between the nine or twelve divisions of teachings and the *Āgamas*, as the former, at least according to a more traditional view,

⁵³ Here he uses both the term ‘four *Āgamas*’ (*si ahan* 四阿含) and ‘*Āgama* section’ (*ahan bu* 阿含部), that is, a section of the Buddhist canonical scriptures.

⁵⁴ On the construct of the four *Āgamas* in the Chinese Buddhist canon see also Zacchetti 2016.

includes only the *Buddhavacana* (*foshuo* 佛說), whereas the *Āgamas* incorporate more than just the *Buddhavacana* (Yinshun 1971: 480).

The list of nine textual collections (*jiu bujing*) in *Yindu zhi fojiao* and the list of the nine divisions of teachings (*jiu fenjiao*) in *Yuanshi fojiao shengdian zhi jicheng* are quite different. In the *Yindu zhi fojiao*, Master Yinshun did not develop a lengthy explanation of the *aṅgas*; he just explained that the first nine textual collections were divided into two groups, with the *Buddhavacana* manifesting in the first three collections, which he listed here as *sūtra*, *geya* and *gāthā*. The final three, hence the extension from nine to twelve *aṅgas*, are a later addition. In the *Yuanshi fojiao shengdian zhi jicheng*, Master Yinshun developed a more in-depth narrative about a possible chronology and typology of the *aṅgas*, which made him also change the order of the *aṅgas* (see Table 1 below). This new narrative, he acknowledged, partly mirrored conclusions made previously by Maeda (1964).

According to Maeda, Master Yinshun reported, the twelve *aṅgas* developed in four stages. First, the classification into twelve *aṅgas* is a later development and followed the classification into nine *aṅgas*, and in fact the twelve-fold division even included Mahāyāna teachings. For the nine *aṅgas*, the first five (*sutra*, *geya*, *vyākaraṇa*, *gāthā*, *udāna*) preceded the following four (*ityuktaka*, *jātaka*, *vaipulya*, *adbhuta-dharma*). Within the first group, the first two *aṅgas* (namely *sūtra* and *geya*) were formed earlier than the other three (namely *vyākaraṇa*, *gāthā* and *udāna*).

Moreover, the meaning and ordering of these *aṅgas* changed as they were going from one phase to the next, and the interconnections that then emerged among them also changed. This is why there is not one ‘*aṅga* narrative’, but streams of collective narratives that developed before the twelve *aṅgas* reached their final completion. And this is why schools in early Buddhism gave different interpretations and defin-

itions to the meaning, order and interrelations of the twelve *āṅgas* (see especially Yinshun 1971: 621–627).

Table 1. Master Yinshun's Listing of the *Āṅgas* in the *Yindu zhi fojiao* (1985 [1943]) and the *Yuanshi fojiao shengdian zhi jicheng* (1971)

<i>Yindu zhi fojiao</i> 印度之佛教	<i>Yuanshi fojiao shengdian zhi jicheng</i> 原始佛教聖典之集成
1. <i>sūtra</i> (修多羅)	1. <i>sūtra</i> (修多羅) ⁵⁵
2. <i>geya</i> (祇夜)	2. <i>geya</i> (祇夜)
3. <i>gāthā</i> (伽陀)	3. <i>vyākaraṇa</i> (記說)
4. <i>nidāna</i> (因緣)	4. <i>gāthā</i> (伽陀)
5. <i>avadāna</i> (譬喻)	5. <i>udāna</i> (優陀那)
6. <i>jātaka</i> (本生)	6. <i>ityuktaka</i> (本事)
7. <i>ityuktaka</i> (本事)	7. <i>jātaka</i> (本生)
8. <i>adbhutadharmā</i> (未會有)	8. <i>vaipulya</i> (方廣)
9. <i>upadeśa</i> (優波提舍)	9. <i>adbhutadharmā</i> (未會有法)
10. <i>vyākaraṇa</i> (記別)	10. <i>nidāna</i> (因緣)
11. <i>udāna</i> (陀南)	11. <i>avadāna</i> (譬喻)
12. <i>vaipulya</i> (方廣經)	12. <i>upadeśa</i> (論議)

Another difference between the two volumes by Master Yinshun is the large space that he dedicated to the analysis of the *Kṣudraka-piṭaka* (*Zazang* 雜藏) in the *Yuanshi fojiao shengdian zhi jicheng*. Also defined as ‘Minor Collection’ (*xiaobu* 小部), and ‘Fifth Collection’ (*wubu* 五部), this group of discourses were formed after the four *Āgamas* (as Master Yinshun argued in the *Yindu zhi fojiao*), and has been preserved only in the Tāmraśāṭīya tradition. He also related the formation of this collection to the nine *āṅgas* (Yinshun 1971: 793–866).

⁵⁵ It is worth noting that here *sūtra* (*xiuduoluo* 修多羅) is sometimes used to indicate texts (*jing* 經) and at other times just teachings (*fa* 法).

III.4 Master Yinshun's 印順 Classification Systems: *Āngas* and *Siddhāntas*

Very often, Master Yinshun adopted Buddhist doctrinal tenets to classify the historical development of Buddhism or the structure of texts. For instance, he divided the chapters of the *Mūlamadhyamakā-kārikā* into four groups according to the four noble truths (Travagnin 2012: 270), showing an approach quite different from other previous Chinese monks, such as Taixu, who had grouped those chapters in terms of their supposed pre-Mahāyāna and Mahāyāna tendencies (Travagnin 2012).

The *siddhāntas*, as described by Nāgārjuna in the *Mahāprajñā-pāramitopadeśa* (*Da zhi du lun* 大智度論, T1509) seem to be extremely important in Master Yinshun's thought, as he referred back to them repeatedly and in different contexts, including in his *panjiao* and in his categorisation of the four *Āgamas*. He related these four *siddhāntas* to the four *Āgamas* from the time of his very first lectures on these textual corpora in 1944.

In what follows, I explain how he correlated and merged the four *siddhāntas* with the system of the *āngas* in his systematisation of the four *Āgamas*, with special attention to the *Samyukta-āgama*. I thus aim to provide some additional perspective on Master Yinshun's view of the *āngas* and his own study of the *Samyukta-āgama*. I rely mostly on his final article (Yinshun 1993 [1989]), which represents the fourth and conclusive phase of his study of the *Āgamas*, and where he also offers his conclusions on the history of Indian and Chinese Buddhism. Furthermore, the article in question not only reports and explains further arguments that he had already presented in previous works (1944–1945 and 1971), but also brings new elements into the conversation, such as Buddhaghosa's commentaries on the four *Nikāyas*.

Table 2 below illustrates how Master Yinshun related the four *siddhāntas* (as per the *Da zhidu lun*; cf. note 1 above) to his four-fold division of the history of Indian Buddhism, and the four *Āgamas*. While considering how he linked the first three *āṅgas* to the *Āgamas* (also with consideration of Buddhaghosa's commentaries on the four *Nikāyas*), it also shows the connections that he wanted to draw between the *siddhāntas* and the *āṅgas*.

As Table 2 shows, Master Yinshun argued that the Buddhadharma corresponded to the first *siddhānta*, and in doing so he gave the highest value to the Buddhadharma rather than only to the Mahāyāna.

This was in line with his overall arguments on Indian Buddhism, and one of the main reasons he was criticised by mainstream Chinese Buddhists. However, for him, this Buddhadharma encompasses, diachronically, 'root Buddhism' (*genben fojiao* 根本佛教), 'original (pre-sectarian) Buddhism' (*yuanshi fojiao* 原始佛教), and 'sectarian Buddhism' (*bupai fojiao* 部派佛教), and it is to the first two that he gave more value. Master Yinshun attempted to correct the misleading understanding of 'Buddhadharma' as 'Hīnayāna' (*xiaocheng* 小乘), a misconception that had spread into Chinese Buddhism. This is why he insisted on highlighting the first phase of Buddhadharma and identifying the phase when early Mahāyāna emerged from the Buddhadharma as the 'correct Dharma'. It is for this reason that he claimed that crucial schools in Mahāyāna, such as Mādhyamika and Yogācāra, were not just rooted in, but continued to embody those pre-Mahāyāna tenets. As explained in the previous part of the chapter, Lü Cheng himself did not adopt the term Hīnayāna for the pre-Mahāyāna Buddhism, but he was moved by different motivations that made him use this term anyway in reference to another stage of the history of Indian Buddhism.

Table 2. Master Yinshun's View on the Scriptural History of Indian Buddhism

<i>Siddhāntas</i>	History of Indian Buddhism	<i>Āgamas</i>	Commentaries on the Four <i>Nikāyas</i>	<i>Āngas</i>
第一義悉檀 [<i>Siddhānta</i> of Supreme Meaning]	佛法 [Buddha-dharma]	雜阿含 [<i>Saṃyukta-āgama</i>]	<i>Sāraṭhappakāsinī</i> (<i>Saṃyutta-nikāya</i> Comm.): 顯揚真義 [‘Proclamation of the Supreme Truth’]	<i>sutta/sūtra</i>
對治悉檀 [Corrective <i>Siddhānta</i>]	初期大乘 [Early Mahāyāna]	中阿含 [<i>Madhyama-āgama</i>]	<i>Papañcasūdanī</i> (<i>Majjhima-nikāya</i> Comm.): 破斥猶豫 [‘Elimination of Doubts’]	<i>veyyakāraṇa/vyākaraṇa</i> (by the Buddha’s disciples)
各各為人悉檀 [Individualised <i>Siddhānta</i>]	後期大乘 [Late Mahāyāna]	增一阿含 [<i>Ekottarika-āgama</i>]	<i>Manorathapūraṇī</i> (<i>Aṅguttara-nikāya</i> Comm.): 滿足希求 [‘Satisfaction of Wishes’]	<i>veyyakāraṇa/vyākaraṇa</i> (by the Buddha)
世界悉檀 [Worldly <i>Siddhānta</i>]	秘密大乘 [Esoteric Mahāyāna]	長阿含 [<i>Dīrgha-āgama</i>]	<i>Sumaṅgalavilasīnī</i> (<i>Dīrgha-nikāya</i> Comm.): 吉祥悅意 [‘Optimism and Delight’]	<i>geyya geya</i>

When it comes to the *Āgamas*, Master Yinshun agreed with other scholars in considering the *Samyukta-āgama* as the earliest of the four collections to find completion. As mentioned above, he argued that there was a parallel development of the *aṅgas* and the *Āgamas*, but also underlined how the *Āgamas* were collected in their final form after the *aṅgas* had been fully developed. At the same time, he saw that the *Samyukta-āgama* started taking shape when the three *aṅgas* of *sūtra*, *geya* and *vyākaraṇa* had already taken form. In fact, Master Yinshun argued that the *Samyukta-āgama* includes all these three *aṅgas*, with *aṅgas* taken in their sense of literary genres. The same scheme also suggests correspondences between *geya*, *vyākaraṇa* and the other three *Āgamas*.

Master Yinshun wanted to demonstrate that the *Samyukta-āgama* represents the highest teachings, hence it corresponds to the first *siddhānta*. Nonetheless, through this cross-reference, he also argued that the Buddhadharmā encompasses all the subsequent trajectories of Buddhism and all the *siddhāntas*, and that the four *siddhāntas* were all present already in the *Samyukta-āgama* and in the *sūtra aṅga*. This marks the *Samyukta-āgama* as the highest early body of teachings.

III.5 Closing Reflections on Modern Chinese *Āgama* Scholarship

The brief overview in the first part of the chapter reveals the complexity of the *Āgama* studies in the Republican period. There were various factors involved in the renaissance of *Āgama* scholarship in modern China: the debate around 'original Buddhism', the reevaluation of early Indian tradition as instrumental for a redefinition and new analysis of Mahāyāna itself, and for providing more scriptural and doctrinal authority and legitimacy to the new *renjian fojiao*, and the circulation of ideas within Asia and beyond.

Yet, none of the works before Master Yinshun explored above discussed the formation of the *Samyukta-āgama* through the notion of selected *āngas*. Not even Lü Cheng or Tang Yongtong, scholars who could read Pali and Sanskrit, did that. Lü Cheng mentioned the *āngas* but in a discussion on whether the *Āgamas* or the *āngas* (here intended as literary forms, topics and also textual collections) were the first textual collections in the history of Buddhism. Lü Cheng made some propositions, however he did not offer any certain conclusion on the issue. The book where he argued about the *āngas* was written before the publication of Maeda's work, but it was revised more than ten years after the Japanese scholar had expressed his views. The Cultural Revolution, and the isolation in which Lü Cheng worked after the 1960s could explain this omission.

It is with Master Yinshun that the topic of the *āngas* is articulated extensively, in relation also to the formation of each of the four *Āgamas* and the *Kṣudraka-piṭaka*, the context of 'original Buddhism' and the notion of *Buddhavacana*. Nonetheless, Master Yinshun's view on the *āngas* is not consistent throughout his writings. In fact, he drew up different lists of the *āngas* and looked at them from multiple angles and for multiple objectives. Moreover, he clearly presented the '*āṅga* question' as something still under debate, a debate among different scholarly positions that he summarised in several sections of the *Yuanshi fojiao shengdian zhi jicheng*, and a debate with still many open questions. Another matter raised by Master Yinshun concerns methodology and approach. He acknowledged the contribution that studies of the Pali canon had to offer toward a better understanding of early Buddhism and the original formation of the texts, but at the same time questioned some side-effects that such an extreme weight given to the Pali tradition could cause (see for instance Yinshun 1971: 476). Finally, his adoption of the four *siddhāntas*, based on the definition found in the *Da zhidu lun*, as analytical tools to

classify and understand the history of Indian Buddhism and the four *Āgamas* shows that Master Yinshun's reevaluation of 'original Buddhism', which aimed at a better understanding and repositioning of the Mahāyāna, was still framed within Mahāyāna (a repositioned Mahāyāna, yet Mahāyāna) concepts.

In line with what Master Yinshun argued, it may be concluded that the reason why the '*aṅga* question' is still debated may be found in the various approaches, in terms of language and texts and research questions, that created different streams of scholarship.

The foregoing two parts of this chapter have given an overview of many arguments on 'original Buddhism' and the *Āgamas* that eminent Buddhist voices in modern and contemporary China have raised and discussed, looking at their research methods, sources, evidence and objectives. What follows places one of those arguments, the '*aṅga* question', in the light of a text-historical comparative approach to early Buddhist texts, hence arriving at conclusions that differ from those of the traditional East-Asian scholarship surveyed above, as well as from those of recent academically trained Asian scholars following in Master Yinshun's footsteps (Choong 2020 in this volume).

IV. Problems with the Three-*aṅga* Theory

Based on the pioneering research and reflections advanced by Master Yinshun that have been surveyed above, there has been a tendency in subsequent academic *Āgama* scholarship to posit the three *aṅgas* as an early ordering principle of the Buddhist scriptures. An example is the presentation by Choong Mun-keat 鍾秉潔 [Wei-keat 煒傑] (2020). In what follows, the proposed interpretation of these

three *āngas* is examined from the viewpoint of current academic knowledge and relevant textual comparison. This will hopefully serve as a reply to the concerns voiced by Choong Mun-keat (2020: 903) that Master Yinshun's proposal

has attracted so little attention among Western researchers into early Buddhism.

Contrary to the impression articulated by Choong Mun-keat (2020: 911), this is not so much a case of

a widespread failure, among Western scholars of early Buddhism, to take due account of the very substantial research findings of Master Yinshun.

Instead, it is rather because for several reasons this particular proposal is text-historically unconvincing.

The hypothesis that at an early stage in the transmission of the early Buddhist discourses the three *āngas* of *sūtra* (Pali *sutta*), *geya* (Pali *geyya*), and *vyākaraṇa* (Pali *veyyākaraṇa*) fulfilled a role of textual collections, similar to that of the *Āgamas* and *Nikāyas*, rests on the following five premises:

1. The assumption that the *āngas*, usually known in listings of nine or twelve, functioned as textual collections.

2. The proposition that *sūtra/sutta* stands for simple prose expositions of doctrinal topics (such as on the five aggregates, the six sense-spheres, conditionality, and the path), *geya/geyya* for verse mixed with prose, and *vyākaraṇa/veyyākaraṇa* for expositions (of the type found in the 弟子所說誦 and 如來所說誦 sections of the *Saṃyukta-āgama*).

3. The hypothesis that the structures of the *Saṃyukta-āgama* and

the *Samyutta-nikāya* in particular reflect the employment of these three *aṅgas* as a basic ordering principle.

4. The notion that at an earlier stage only three *aṅgas* were in use, which formed a precedent to the listings of nine or twelve.

5. The identification of the three *aṅgas* with a three-partite analysis of the *Samyukta-āgama* in the *Vastusaṃgrahaṇī*.

In what follows, each of these five points are examined in turn.

IV.1 The Function of the *Aṅgas*

The actual function of the *aṅgas* is up to now not well understood, in spite of considerable scholarship on this topic both in the East and in the West. A detailed survey of references to listings of nine or twelve *aṅgas* in the early discourses makes it appear rather improbable that the *aṅgas* ever functioned as an organisational principle for allocating discourses into textual collections (Anālayo 2016).

In reply to a proposal by Oskar von Hinüber (1994) that a shorter listing of four *aṅgas* reflects an early attempt at organizing the texts, Konrad Klaus (2010: 518) points out that such hypotheses are not supported by the discourses, which do not present the *aṅgas* as an attempt at ordering the texts. Lance Cousins (2013: 105–106) comments that:

short versions are sometimes interpreted as earlier lists of ‘*Aṅgas*’, but that seems quite anachronistic to me ... there is no indication anywhere that any of this has anything to do with an arrangement of the canonical literature in some kind of earlier recension.

Peter Skilling (2017: 293 note 55) concludes that:

the *Aṅgas* are not actual collections of texts.

It is thus not possible to take for granted that the *aṅgas*, be it the full set or a shortened listing, ever served as textual collections. Instead, it needs to be acknowledged that, at the present state of academic knowledge, this is a debated issue.

IV.2 The Significance of the Three *Aṅgas*

An understanding of the significance of the three *aṅgas*, found at the outset of the standard listings of nine or twelve, can be approached by examining occurrences of the respective terms in the early discourses apart from such bare listings. This enables ascertaining the type of meaning the relevant term would have carried at an early stage, before any possible change in meaning during the period of its employment as an *aṅga*.

In the case of the first of the three *aṅgas*, the term *sūtra/sutta* (leaving aside *suttanta*), is of course regularly found in the titles of discourses. The main occurrence of relevance apart from discourse titles can be found in the context of the four great standards (*mahā-padesa/mahāpradeśa*). These describe procedures for verification to determine if certain teachings should be accepted as reliable testimonies of what the Buddha had taught. For this purpose, the particular teaching under scrutiny should be examined to see if it fits among the *sūtras/suttas* and is in line with the *Vinaya*.⁵⁶ The Pali commentaries on the respective passage offer several interpretations of these two referents. The most straightforward interpretation understands

⁵⁶ DN 16 at DN II 124,15 and AN 4.180 at AN II 168,21: *sutte c'eva otaranti vinaye ca sandissanti*; with parallels in Sanskrit fragments, Waldschmidt 1951: 246,7: *sūtre 'vataranti vinaye samdrśyante*, in DĀ 2 at T I 17c10: 其所言依經, 依律, 依法者, T 6 at T I 183a1: 入經承律, T 7 at T I 195c9: 若修多羅及以毘尼法相之中有此法者, and EĀ 28.5 at T II 652b24: 彼布現, 所謂與契經相應, 律, 法相應者.

sutta here to stand for the whole collection of discourses.⁵⁷ This would be in line with the use of the term in discourse titles. As a result, all discourses, without exception, would fall under this *āṅga*.

The term *geya/geyya* appears to occur in the early discourses principally in listings of the *āṅgas*, leaving little to be said about its import.

The term *vyākaraṇa/veyyākaraṇa* occurs quite often in the early discourses and can carry a range of meanings.⁵⁸ Of particular interest are several Pali discourses that identify themselves (or at least the main 'explanation' given in the body of the discourse) as *veyyākaraṇa*:

- the *Brahmajāla-sutta* (DN 1)⁵⁹
- the *Sakkapañha-sutta* (DN 21)⁶⁰
- the *Sampasādanīya-sutta* (DN 28)⁶¹
- the *Brahmanimantanika-sutta* (MN 49)⁶²
- the *Mahāpuṇṇama-sutta* (MN 109)⁶³

⁵⁷ Sv I 565,37 or Mp III 159,3: *sutta(ṅga)-piṭakam suttam, vinaya-piṭakam vinayo ti*. Bodhi 2012: 1712 note 893 comments that “this instruction presupposes that there already existed a body of discourses and a systematic Vinaya that could be used to evaluate other texts proposed for inclusion as authentic utterances of the Buddha.”

⁵⁸ For a survey of *veyyākaraṇa* in Pali discourses see Anālayo 2009b.

⁵⁹ DN I 46,28; parallel to 說此法時 in DĀ 21 at T I 94a9, 說是經時 in T 21 at T I 270c14, and *chos kyi rnam grangs 'di bshad pa na* in a Tibetan parallel, Weller 1934: 64,23.

⁶⁰ DN II 288,20 and 289,3; parallel to *(a)smiṃ khalu dharmapary(ā)ye bhāṣyamāṇe* in a Sanskrit fragment parallel, Waldschmidt 1932: 111,6, to 說此法時 in DĀ 14 at T I 66a1 and MĀ 134 at T I 638a26, and to 說正法時 in T 15 at T I 250b20.

⁶¹ DN III 116,9; parallel to *asmiṃ khalu dharmaparyāye bhāṣyamāṇe* in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Dīrgha-āgama* Sanskrit manuscript, 299r8, DiSimone 2016: 121 and 389.

⁶² MN I 331,32; parallel to 此經 in MĀ 78 at T I 549a29.

⁶³ MN III 20,22; parallel to 說此經時 in SĀ 58 at T II 15a28 and to *chos*

- the *Cūlarāhulovāda-sutta* (MN 147 = SN 35.121)⁶⁴
- the *Chachakka-sutta* (MN 148)⁶⁵
- the *Timsamattā-sutta* (SN 15.13)⁶⁶
- the *Anattalakkhaṇa-sutta* (SN 22.59)⁶⁷
- the *Khemaka-sutta* (SN 22.89)⁶⁸
- the *Āditta-sutta* (SN 35.28)⁶⁹
- the *Gilāna-suttas* (SN 35.74 and SN 35.75)⁷⁰
- the *Dhammacakkapavattana-sutta* (SN 56.11)⁷¹
- the *Gotamakacetiya-sutta* (AN 3.123)⁷²
- the *Aggikkhandhopama-sutta* (AN 7.68)⁷³
- the *Dvayatānupassanā-sutta* (Sn 765)⁷⁴

kyi rnam grangs 'di bshad pa na in Up 7006 at D 4094, *mngon pa, nyu* 57a2 or P 5595, *mngon pa 'i bstan bcos, thu* 98b8.

⁶⁴ MN III 280,7 and SN IV 107,28; parallel to 說此經已 in SĀ 200 at T II 51c10.

⁶⁵ MN III 287,5; parallel to 說此經已 in SĀ 304 at T II 87a25.

⁶⁶ SN II 189,1; parallel to 說是法時 in SĀ 937 at T II 240c22, SĀ² 330 at T II 486a16, and EĀ 51.2 at T II 814b19.

⁶⁷ SN III 68,28; parallel to *imaspi ca va araṇo bhaṣiamaṇ(*o)* in the Gandhari fragment parallel in Allon 2020: 223, *asmin khalu dharmaparyāye bhāṣyamāṇe* in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, Gnoli 1977: I 139,14, 說此經已 in SĀ 34 at T II 8a2, and 說此法時 in T 102 at T II 499c26.

⁶⁸ SN III 132,10; parallel to 說此法時 in SĀ 103 at T II 30c4.

⁶⁹ SN IV 20,26; parallel to 說此經已 in SĀ 197 at T II 50c5.

⁷⁰ SN IV 47,27 and SN IV 48,12; parallel to 授第一記 (adopting a variant reading) followed by the standard 說此經已 in SĀ 1025 at T II 268a18.

⁷¹ SN V 423,14; parallel to 說是法時 in SĀ 379 at T II 104a8, T 110 at T II 504b7, and EĀ 24.5 at T II 619b6 (for a survey of parallels found apart from *Āgama* texts see Anālayo 2015: 348–350).

⁷² AN I 276,24; no parallel appears to be known to this discourse.

⁷³ AN IV 135,4; parallel to 說此法時 in MĀ 5 at T I 427a3 and EĀ 33.10 at T II 689c1.

⁷⁴ Sn 149,16; no parallel to this discourse appears to be known.

The parallels to these Pali discourses differ, however, often speaking instead of a *dharmaparyāya* or a *sūtra*.⁷⁵ It seems that these three terms were perceived as conveying similar meanings. Such usage does not give the impression that from an early stage the terms *vyākaraṇa* and *sūtra* carried sufficiently different meanings for the reciters such that they could have been employed as headers to create different collections of the orally transmitted texts.

Regarding the possible implications of *geya/geyya*, it is noteworthy that the *Brahmanimantaṇika-sutta* combines prose with verse, even though the Pali version refers to it as a *veyyākaraṇa* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel as a *sūtra* (經). This usage would conflict with the assumption that all texts with verse were assigned to the category of *geya/geyya*.

IV.3 The First Part of the *Samyukta-āgama* and its Parallel in the *Samyutta-nikāya*

A similar impression emerges when consulting the first part of the *Samyukta-āgama*, which begins with the *Skandha-samyukta*, in comparison with its Pali counterpart. Two discourses found in both the *Skandha-samyukta* (with their parallels in the *Abhidharmakośo-pāyikā-ṭīkā*) and the Pali *Khandha-samyutta* have verses;⁷⁶ another discourse shared by the two collections has an inspired utterance (*udāna*).⁷⁷

⁷⁵ See above notes 59 to 73, and on the significance of *dharmaparyāya* the entry in Edgerton 1953: 279–280, *s.v.*

⁷⁶ SĀ 73 at T II 19a26, Up 9023 at D 4094, *mngon pa, nyu* 86a3 and P 5595, *mngon pa'i bstan bcos, thu* 132b6, and SN 22.22 at SN III 26,10; SĀ 265 at T II 69a18, Up 4084 at D 4094, *mngon pa, ju* 240b2 and P 5595, *mngon pa'i bstan bcos, tu* 274b6, and SN 22.95 at SN III 142,29.

⁷⁷ SĀ 64 at T II 16c8 and its parallel SN 22.55 at SN III 55,29.

One of the discourses with verse is the famous ‘Discourse on the Burden’ (*Bhāra-sutta*). The other has the perhaps even more famous set of similes that compare the body to a lump of foam, feeling to bubbles, perception to a mirage, formations to a plantain tree, and consciousness to a magical illusion. This can safely be regarded as one of the most important teachings on the five aggregates. It is hard to imagine that the reciters would have collected texts on the topic of the five aggregates without from the outset including these two discourses, even though they have verses.

Following the *Skandha-saṃyukta* and the *Khandha-saṃyutta* are the collected sayings spoken to Rādhā.⁷⁸ Similar to the preceding discourses in the *Skandha-saṃyukta* and *Khandha-saṃyutta*, the discourses in this collection also cover the topic of the aggregates. According to Choong Mun-keat (2000: 243 and 249), the discourses found in the *Skandha-saṃyukta/Khandha-saṃyutta* should be considered as *sūtra/sutta*, but those found in the *Rādha-saṃyukta/Rādha-saṃyutta* should instead be regarded as *vyākaraṇa/veyyākaraṇa*. Yet, the only real difference between them is that in the latter case the recipient of the teachings is explicitly named as Rādhā. It is not easy to understand how this changes the nature of the respective discourse from a *sūtra/sutta* to a *vyākaraṇa/veyyākaraṇa*.

To solve this conundrum, one might imagine that the *Rādha-saṃyukta/Rādha-saṃyutta* originated from what initially was merely a sub-chapter within the *Skandha-saṃyukta/Khandha-saṃyutta*. This is certainly possible, but it is equally possible that several discourses addressed to Rādhā were collected under his name from the outset. In fact the list of foremost disciples in the *Anguttara-nikāya* includes Rādhā among outstanding male monastics.⁷⁹ Once he is already

⁷⁸ SĀ 111 to SĀ 129 at T II 37c6–41b6 and SN 23.1 to SN 23.71 at SN III 188–201.

⁷⁹ AN 1.4.4 at AN I 25,15.

known in the discourses themselves as an exceptional disciple, sufficient to find a place in this listing, it would not be surprising if the reciters should have chosen his name as a reference point for collecting discourses, similar to *saṃyuktas/saṃyuttas* collected under the name of other eminent disciples. Due to the fact that the discourses addressed to him happened to be on the topic of the five aggregates, it would then have been natural to place this collection on Rādha close to the collection on the aggregates, as the similarity in content facilitates ease of memorisation and hence their oral transmission. Although this is of course just a hypothesis, it is in principle just as possible as the assumption that the collection on Rādha originated from a sub-section within the collection on the aggregates.

The *Rādha-saṃyukta* and the *Rādha-saṃyutta* share a pattern of beginning with several discourses, found similarly in both versions, that have quite unique and individual presentations. These are then followed by a proliferation of discourses that appear to have been generated somewhat automatically by way of repetition, similar to what has been described by Rupert Gethin (2020) for another part of the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*. These proliferations or discourse permutations differ between the *Rādha-saṃyukta* and the *Rādha-saṃyutta*. Such differences imply that the grouping of discourses around the name Rādha must have been in existence early enough to allow for the arising of different additional discourse permutations in the two reciter traditions.

Of further interest regarding the distinction applied by Choong Mun-keat not only to the *Saṃyukta-āgama*, but also to the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, is that the *Khandha-saṃyutta* actually contains a discourse on the five aggregates that is explicitly addressed to Rādha.⁸⁰ In other words, the reciters of the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* apparently did not

⁸⁰ SN 22.71 at SN III 79,33; no parallel to this discourse appears to be known.

consider it an issue of major importance whether a teaching on the aggregates addressed to Rādha is placed in the *Khandha-saṃyutta* or in the *Rādha-saṃyutta*. As a result, one such discourse is now found in the *Khandha-saṃyutta* and a number of others in the *Rādha-saṃyutta*. The discourse on the aggregates addressed to Rādha and found in the *Khandha-saṃyutta* leaves no room at all for considering other discourses on the aggregates addressed to Rādha, now found in the *Rādha-saṃyutta*, as representing a substantially different type of exposition, *veyyākaraṇa* as opposed to *sutta*.

This case exemplifies a problem that also holds for the *Saṃyukta-āgama*, in that it is difficult to discern what would make the discourses in the *Skandha-saṃyukta* sufficiently different from those in the *Rādha-saṃyukta* to be reckoned as pertaining to the category of *sūtra* instead of *vyākaraṇa*.

The situation that emerges in this way concords with the overall impression conveyed by references to the three *aṅgas* in early Buddhist discourse, in that it is doubtful that they served as an ordering principle for creating discourse collections. This is as doubtful as the assumption that the *aṅgas* in general ever had such a role.

At the same time, it needs to be admitted that the three points surveyed so far are not yet decisive. It is still possible to assume that the *aṅgas* did have such a role originally, that the uncertainty in defining the three *aṅgas*, as currently reflected in early discourse literature, is due to a loss of understanding of their earlier function, and that the present distribution of discourses in the first part of the *Saṃyukta-āgama* and its counterpart in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* is similarly due to a loss of understanding of their original structure, which has been obscured by later developments. Although the points mentioned so far make the three-*aṅga* theory doubtful, they do not suffice to disprove it.

IV.4 The Count of Three *Āngas*

The next premise to be examined is the assumption that at an early stage in the development of Buddhist textual collections, only three *āngas* were in existence. Here the count of three *āngas* derives from a passage in the *Mahāsuññata-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel;⁸¹ a Tibetan parallel has instead the full set of twelve *āngas*.⁸² The context of this reference in all three versions is an admonition addressed by the Buddha to his attendant Ānanda. According to this admonition, a disciple should not follow the teacher (the Buddha) for the sake of these *āngas*, but instead follow him for the sake of teachings on morality, concentration, wisdom, liberation, and knowledge-and-vision-of-liberation.⁸³

If the reference to three *āngas* (or twelve *āngas* in the Tibetan version) is taken to indicate some system of textual division that collects the different discourses spoken by the Buddha and his disciples,

⁸¹ MN 122 at MN III 115,18: *suttaṃ geyyaṃ veyyākaraṇassa hetu* (Burmese and Ceylonese edition: *sutta-geyya-veyyākaraṇaṃ tassa hetu*, Siamese edition: *sutta-geyya-veyyākaraṇassa sotuṃ*) and MĀ 191 at T I 739c4: 正經, 歌詠, 記說.

⁸² Skilling 1994: 242,13: *mdo'i sde dang, dbyangs kyis bsnyad pa'i sde dang, lung bstan pa'i sde dang, tshigs su bcad pa'i sde dang, ched du brjod pa'i sde dang, gleng gzhi'i sde dang, rtogs pa brjod pa'i sde dang, de lta bu byung ba'i sde dang, skyes pa rabs kyi sde dang, shin tu rgyas pa'i sde dang, rmad du byung ba'i chos kyi sde dang, gtan la bab par bstan pa'i sde'i chos de dag dang.*

⁸³ MN 122 at MN III 115,25: *sīlakathā, samādhikathā, paññākathā, vimuttikathā, vimuttiñāṇadassanakathā*, MĀ 191 at T I 739c8: 戒論, 定論, 慧論, 解脫論, 解脫知見論, and the Tibetan version in Skilling 1994: 244,13: *tshul khrims kyi gtam dang, ting nge 'dzin gyi gtam dang, shes rab kyi gtam dang, rnam par grol ba'i gtam dang, rnam par grol ba'i ye shes mithong ba'i gtam dang.*

there would be no place left for the teachings on morality, concentration, wisdom, liberation, and knowledge-and-vision-of-liberation for whose sake a disciple should follow the Buddha. The context makes it clear that something more specific than the whole corpus of early Buddhist canonical texts must have been intended, independent of whether this corpus be presented as three-fold, nine-fold, or twelve-fold.

Judging from the context, the passage under examination might originally have been an injunction not to follow the teacher for the sake of getting ever more ‘explanations’ (*vyākaraṇa/veyyākaraṇa*), in contrast to following him for the type of teachings that are directly related to the practice and the goal. Such an admonition would suit the case of Ānanda quite well, who features in the discourses as foremost among monastic disciples in being learned but at the same time as one who has not yet reached full awakening. In fact, the *Mahā-suññata-sutta* and its parallels begin with the Buddha admonishing Ānanda and a group of monastics by contrasting excessive socializing with the secluded lifestyle necessary to gain both temporary and final liberation of the mind.

In this way, the context makes it quite possible that the reference to three (or twelve) *aṅgas* results from an expansion of what originally could have been just a reference to explanations. During oral transmission the occurrence of *vyākaraṇa/veyyākaraṇa* would have prompted the addition of *sūtra/sutta* and *geya/geyya*. In line with the same tendency, subsequently the other terms mentioned in the standard list of the *aṅgas* were added, as now seen in the Tibetan version.

Be that as it may, however, the context makes it certain that the textual passage employed to establish the notion of three *aṅgas* as an early stage in the evolution of textual division is unable to fulfil that purpose. On this interpretation, the relevant discourse passage

no longer makes sense, as it posits a contrast between the whole of the teachings (in terms of three *āṅgas*) and what indeed is about the whole of the teachings, namely teachings on morality, concentration, wisdom, liberation, and knowledge-and-vision-of-liberation. Whereas the previous three points are only doubtful, the present one is decisive. It definitely undermines the three-*āṅga* theory, leaving it bereft of any grounds for the assumption that at some early stage in the history of Buddhism only three *āṅgas* were known.

IV.5 The *Vastusaṃgrahaṇī*

In a discussion of the divisions of the *Samyukta-āgama*, the *Vastusaṃgrahaṇī* division of the *Yogācārabhūmi* offers a three-fold typology as a principle underlying all of them:⁸⁴

- speaker
- topic
- audience

In other words, the *saṃyuktas* of the *Samyukta-āgama* are based on one of these three perspectives, in that they concern either the one who spoke a particular discourse, the topic taken up in it, or those to whom the teaching was given. This presentation has no explicit reference whatsoever to the three *āṅgas*.

Each of these three labels can be applied to any discourse, since they invariably involve a speaker, are on some topic, and the very fact that they have been transmitted shows that they had an audience. In other words, these three categories are not mutually exclusive.

⁸⁴ T 1579 at T XXX 772c17: 一是能說, 二是所說, 三是所為說 and D 4039, *sems tsam*, zi 128a1 or P 5540, *sems tsam*, 'i 143b6: *su ston pa dang*, *ci ston pa dang*, *gang la ston pa dang*. On the content of the *Vastusaṃgrahaṇī* supplying a 'mātrikā' to the *Samyukta-āgama* see Huimin 2020 in this volume.

They are complementary perspectives that can be applied to each and every discourse.

Whereas any single discourse can fit each of the three categories mentioned in the *Vastusamgrahaṇī*, for the three *āngas* to have functioned as textual divisions, they need to be at least somewhat exclusive to each other. If each and every discourse could at the same time be a *sūtra/sutta*, a *geya/geyya*, and a *vyākaraṇa/veyyākaraṇa*, these three terms would no longer be able to function as ordering principles for a textual collection since they would not yield any concrete evaluative principle to determine to which of these three a particular discourse should be allocated.

Such evaluative principles can be seen to underlie the division into *Āgamas* or *Nikāyas*, which is based on distinguishing between long, medium-length, and short discourses (the last are then further distinguished into those collected by topic and those collected numerically). Now these distinctions are not absolutely water-tight compartments. The length of a discourse is open to some degree of subjectivity. At the same time, it is clearly not the case that each and every text can at the same time be considered long and medium-length and short.

Material common to the collections of long discourses consists indeed of long discourses and a particularly short discourse in the *Dīrgha-āgama* can be identified as the result of a later development that occurred within the already-formed collection (Anālayo 2014b: 32–35). A comparable case is an extremely long discourse (if its abbreviated parts were to be filled out) now found in the *Madhyama-āgama* collection (Anālayo 2014a: 44–47). Again, an unusually long discourse in the *Majjhima-nikāya* can be shown to have grown in size from what originally would have been just a medium-length discourse (Anālayo 2009a).

In sum, the basic distinction of discourses into long, medium-length, and short, despite some overlap and fuzziness of boundaries, does yield categories that enable allocating discourses differently. The same does not hold for the distinction into speaker, topic, and audience.

Take the example of the earlier mentioned discourses spoken by the Buddha to Rādhā on the topic of the five aggregates. Such discourses could be fitted under each of these three categories. They could in principle be allocated to a collection of texts 'spoken by the Buddha', a collection of texts 'on the five aggregates', and a collection of texts 'spoken to Rādhā'. In contrast, they could not equally well be allocated to a collection of texts that are 'long', that are 'medium-length', and that are 'short'.

From this it follows that the tripartite analysis in the *Vastusamgrahaṇī* cannot be equated with the three *aṅgas*, as this results in equating a listing of three complementary categories with a listing of three categories that, in spite of occasional overlap, need to be exclusive of each other. Already the previous point, regarding the count of three *aṅgas*, deprives the three-*aṅga* theory of an indispensable premise. The present point has the same effect by showing that the presentation in the *Vastusamgrahaṇī* could not have intended the positing of the three *aṅgas* as the basic formative principle behind the order of discourses in the *Samyukta-āgama*.

Abbreviations

AN	<i>Āṅguttara-nikāya</i>
CBETA	Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association 中華電子佛典協會
DĀ	<i>Dīrgha-āgama</i> (T 1)
D	Derge edition
DN	<i>Dīgha-nikāya</i>
EĀ	<i>Ekottarika-āgama</i> (T 125)
MĀ	<i>Madhyama-āgama</i> (T 26)
MN	<i>Majjhima-nikāya</i>
Mp	<i>Manorathapūraṇī</i>
P	Peking edition
SĀ	<i>Saṃyukta-āgama</i> (T 99)
SĀ ²	<i>Saṃyukta-āgama</i> (T 100)
SN	<i>Saṃyutta-nikāya</i>
Sn	<i>Sutta-nipāta</i>
Sv	<i>Sumaṅgalavilāsinī</i>
T	Taishō 大正 edition (CBETA)
Up	<i>Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā</i>

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