religions

MDPI

Article

From India to China: Evolution of the Connotations of Extracanonical Buddhist Literature

Zhongyue Guan [1,*] and Siyao Wang [2]

[1] The History Department, College of Humanities, Hainan University, Haikou 570228, China
[2] The School of Humanities and Communication, Ningbo University, Ningbo 315211, China; guangxu1870zt814@126.com
* Correspondence: 996240@hainanu.edu.cn

Abstract: This paper introduces the concept of "Extracanonical Buddhist Literature" and explores its origins and development in the two major Buddhist cultural spheres of India and China. It investigates the roles such texts played in religious practice, doctrinal interpretation, and cross-cultural transmission. In India, extracanonical texts frequently remained outside the official canon due to factors such as sectarian divisions and geographic constraints, reflecting ongoing debates and dialogues with non-Buddhist thought. In China, the formation of these texts was influenced by indigenous cultural integration, political pressures, and translation practices, highlighting a distinct trajectory of Buddhist localization. By analyzing the complementary relationship between these extracanonical works and canonical scriptures, this study demonstrates that these texts not only supplement the canonical system but also offer critical insights into the diversity of Buddhist thought and cultural exchange. Ultimately, they hold significant academic and cultural value, shedding light on how Buddhist ideas were disseminated and adapted across diverse regional contexts.

Keywords: Indian Buddhism; Chinese Buddhist Canon; extracanonical Buddhist literature

check for updates

Academic Editors: Zhouyuan Li, Jiang Wu and Darui Long

Received: 6 March 2025
Revised: 11 April 2025
Accepted: 15 April 2025
Published: 29 April 2025

Citation: Guan, Zhongyue, and Siyao Wang. 2025. From India to China: Evolution of the Connotations of Extracanonical Buddhist Literature. *Religions* 16: 572. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16050572

Copyright: © 2025 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

1. Introduction

Extracanonical Buddhist Literature stands in contrast to the texts included in the Buddhist Canon and may be said to have arisen alongside the Canon's formation. To precisely delineate the scope and boundaries of Extracanonical Buddhist Literature, one must first trace the origins of the Buddhist Canon itself and examine the processes and internal logic underpinning its compilation. Far from being a static collection, the Buddhist Canon took shape over a long historical trajectory, undergoing continuous expansion and supplementation. Consequently, as Buddhist scriptures were gradually systematized, various texts —excluded for diverse reasons—remained outside the officially recognized corpus. These texts constitute what is now referred to as "Extracanonical Buddhist Literature".

These works of Extracanonical Buddhist Literature are not entirely separate from the Buddhist Canon; rather, to some extent, they complement it. Whether by extending the scope of Buddhist thought or by offering more detailed guidance on religious practice, they highlight the diversity and complexity of Buddhism's development. In fact, it is through investigating Extracanonical Buddhist Literature that we gain a more comprehensive understanding of how Buddhism evolved across different regions, sects, and historical contexts, as well as how it negotiated the balance between the orthodox and the non-orthodox.

Existing studies on "Extracanonical Buddhist Literature" are largely case-based or confined to a single region—either India or China—and rarely employ a trans-cultural,

trans-regional approach to systematically analyze the formation mechanisms and cultural interactions of such literature. Early Chinese research on Extracanonical Buddhist Literature can be traced back to the scriptural catalogs (经录) compiled by ancient monks, whose primary aim was to identify works considered "not spoken by the Buddha", without yet recognizing their distinct academic value. In 1995, Fang Guangchang 方廣錩 advocated for the study of "Extracanonical Buddhist Literature" and served as editor-in-chief of Zangwai Fojiao Wenxian 藏外佛教文獻, a journal that collected, compared, and examined a wide range of extracanonical materials (Fang 1998). Subsequently, Cao Ling 曹凌, in Zhongguo Fojiao Yiwei Jing Zonglu 中國佛教疑偽經綜錄 (L. Cao 2011), systematically organized the textual system and storage conditions of apocryphal sutras discovered in the Fangshan Stone Canon 房山石經. Entering the 21st century, research on extracanonical Buddhist literature has gradually become more systematic and detailed. Scholars focusing on dubious or apocryphal scriptures, such as Zhang Zong 張總 (2013), Zhang Xiaoyan 張小豔 (2019), and Zhang Miao 張淼 (2018), those centered on Dunhuang manuscripts, including Hao Chunwen 郝春文 (2001), Rong Xinjiang 榮新江 (2008), and Zhang Yongquan 張湧泉 (2011), as well as those specializing in Heishuicheng manuscripts 黑水城文獻, such as Shi Jinbo 史金波 (2006), Sun Jimin 孫繼民 (2012), and Cui Hongfen 崔紅芬 (2015), have not only performed text transcription, punctuating, and collation, but have also undertaken a series of historical examinations. Significant progress has thus been made in textual reconstruction, fragment combination, and investigations into the historical development of these works, as well as in methodological innovations, the utilization of new sources, and the editing of previously overlooked materials. Overseas research on Extracanonical Buddhist Literature began in the 1930s with pioneering efforts by Japanese scholars. Yabuki Keiki 矢吹慶輝 published Meisa yoin: Rare and unknown Chinese manuscript remains of Buddhist literature discovered in Tun-huang 鳴沙餘韻：敦煌出土未傳古逸佛典開寶, compiling nearly forty texts and providing detailed information on their extant status, references in historical scriptural catalogs, and manuscript transcriptions. In the 21st century, Western scholars such as Robert E. Buswell Jr. (Buswell 1990), Stephen F. Teiser, and Kuo Liying, as well as Japanese scholars including Ochiai Toshinori 落合俊典, Ibuki Atsushi 伊吹敦, Funayama Tetsu 船山徹, and Nishimoto Shōshin 西本照真, have begun to extensively utilize manuscript and woodblock materials from extracanonical Buddhist literature in their respective fields of study. In particular, these materials have been incorporated into research on the history of Buddhism, folk beliefs, and folk literature, thereby further expanding both the methodological approaches and the theoretical paradigms employed in the study of extracanonical Buddhist texts. Thanks to the endeavors of earlier and contemporary scholars, Extracanonical Buddhist Literature has gradually emerged from prolonged academic neglect into a notable research focus. A number of valuable materials in this category have been discovered and compiled, with some inscriptions and epigraphs undergoing systematic collation and annotation. At the disciplinary level, research on Extracanonical Buddhist Literature has evolved into an important branch of religious studies, offering significant support for understanding the diversity and complexity of the Buddhist textual corpus. Nevertheless, despite the existence of numerous specialized or case-based studies, there remains a lack of systematic, comprehensive analyses of the origins, forms, and cultural functions of these texts. Further deepening and expansion of research in this field is thus still required.

The achievements of earlier and contemporary scholars lie in the following: research on extracanonical Buddhist literature has evolved from marginal neglect to academic recognition; a body of extracanonical materials has been excavated and utilized; selected colophons and inscriptions have been systematically compiled; and, disciplinarily, Extra-

canonical Buddhist Literature has emerged as a significant branch of religious studies. Nevertheless, certain aspects of prior research remain open for refinement.

First, studies on Extracanonical Buddhist Literature within Chinese academia have predominantly focused on specialized domains such as Dunhuang manuscripts, Khara–Khoto documents, and Japanese ancient copied sutras, with a heavy emphasis on philological achievements. Research specifically addressing the origins, transmission, and evolution of extracanonical texts remains limited, and interdisciplinary explorations integrating historical, philological, and religious perspectives on these issues are still underdeveloped. Second, a longstanding disciplinary divide persists between studies of Indian Extracanonical Buddhist Literature and its Sinicized counterparts. Research on Chinese extracanonical texts often overlooks their Indian origins, while studies of Indian extracanonical literature frequently fail to adequately address the Sinicized transformations of these texts in China. This dual oversight has resulted in parallel yet disconnected scholarly trajectories that lack substantive cross-fertilization and dialogue. Notably absent are studies examining the Sinicization of Buddhism through the lens of extracanonical literature—a lacuna that provides ample space for this research to contribute.

In contrast, this research seeks to fill that gap by comprehensively examining the varied mechanisms of formation, modes of interaction, and dissemination characteristics of Extracanonical Buddhist Literature across both the Indian and Chinese cultural spheres. Special emphasis is placed on the complex interplay of these works with local thought and sociopolitical factors. Accordingly, by thoroughly surveying Extracanonical Buddhist Literature from India to China, this study not only broadens the scope of Buddhist canonical research but also highlights the complexities of Buddhist thought's pluralistic dissemination and cross-cultural exchange. Ultimately, it aims to shift the focus of Buddhist scholarship away from an exclusively canon-centered perspective toward a more holistic and pluralistic viewpoint.

2. The Original Connotations of "Extracanonical Buddhist Literature"

The formation of the Buddhist Canon is notably complex, a topic that has prompted extensive scholarly discussion.[1] Yet one broadly accepted view is that it originated as a comprehensive collection of Buddhist texts, gradually enriched and expanded upon on the basis of Buddhism's "Original Scriptures".[2] This process of "enrichment and expansion" is epitomized by the tradition of the Four Councils[3] in Buddhist history. Yet, in the early period, Buddhist scriptures exhibited a pluralistic character, and in a context where the concept of the "canon" was not yet fixed, "Extracanonical Buddhist Literature" simultaneously encompassed various types—such as miscellaneous collections 雜藏, non-Buddhist scriptures, and the extracanonical portions of the Pali texts—that together constituted the original connotations of "Extracanonical Buddhist Literature".

2.1. Buddhist Councils and Embryonic Forms of Extracanonical Buddhist Literature

Historical records universally confirm that the four large-scale Buddhist canonical assemblies spanned an enormous period—from the year of the Buddha's Parinirvana (486 B.C.) to approximately the first century CE. From the very beginning of the first Buddhist Council, there was an awareness of distinguishing texts as "extracanonical". The purpose of the 500 bhikṣus participating in the council was to collect and organize the Buddha's teachings (*Dharma*) and disciplinary rules (*Vinaya*). The Theravāda 上座部 conclusion upheld three important principles. First, no additional rules or teachings that the Buddha did not establish should be added; they maintained that nothing extra should be imposed in order to preserve the original essence. Second, the rules and teachings already established by the Buddha must not be altered or omitted; the original doctrines and regu-

lations must remain intact without arbitrary modification or abolition. Third, the Buddha's disciples should adhere strictly to his teachings; Theravāda monks believed that the Buddha's followers must faithfully observe the *Dharma* and *Vinaya* as taught by him, without deviation or innovation, in order to preserve the purity of Buddhism. These principles reflect the conservative stance of the Theravāda school in safeguarding and maintaining the Buddha's original teachings, and they also indirectly indicate that, even then, a certain number of Buddhist discourses that did not conform to these three principles were classified as "extracanonical".

During these councils, the Buddha's teachings were systematically compiled for the first time, laying the groundwork for what became known as the Tripiṭaka—the threefold corpus of sūtras, vinaya, and abhidharma. The Tripiṭaka, or "Three Baskets", comprises: (1) the Sūtra Piṭaka 修多羅 (meaning "basket of discourses"), which contains the doctrines taught by the Buddha; (2) the Vinaya Piṭaka 毗奈耶 (meaning "basket of discipline"), which consists of the behavioral codes established for the monastic community; and (3) the Abhidharma Piṭaka 阿毗曇 (meaning "basket of expositions"), including systematic analyses and interpretations of the Buddha's teachings by both the Buddha himself and his disciples. This Tripiṭaka was further divided into "nine divisions", reflecting content- and form-based classifications that underscore the diversity of textual styles in the early stages of Buddhist scripture formation.

It is worth noting that, during these three councils, the scope of the Buddhist canon was not fixed. Especially after the emergence of sectarian Buddhism, various schools—following extensive doctrinal disputes—undertook their own compilations of the Tripiṭaka to affirm their status within the monastic community and demonstrate their adherence to proper Dharma. The first to compile its own corpus was the Vātsīputrīya school 犢子部, producing a treatise on its central doctrines—that is, a form of the Abhidharma. The Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra 大智度論, roll 2, states:

> Some say that while the Buddha was still alive, Śāriputra understood the Buddha's words and thus composed the Abhidharma. Later, the Vātsīputrīya practitioners recited it down to the present day, calling it "Śāriputra's Abhidharma".[4]
>
> 有人言佛在時，舍利弗解佛語，故作阿毗曇，後犢子道人等讀誦乃至今名為舍利弗阿毗曇。

It appears that around two hundred years after the Buddha's parinirvāṇa, the Vātsīputrīya elders were the first to undertake a compilation of the "orthodox teaching". Because a large number of participants took part in this council, the Southern Buddhist tradition refers to it as the "Great Council". Influenced by this event, other schools followed the Vātsīputrīya example and compiled their own abhidharma collections. Ultimately, four major schools emerged: the Theravāda, the Sarvāstivāda 说一切有部, the Mahāsāṅghika 大眾部, and the Vātsīputrīya—the latter eventually evolving into the Saṃmatīya 正量部. Thus, during the era of oral transmission, the Tripiṭaka texts were continually proliferating. It was not until the 1st century B.C. that Elder Rakkhita Thera realized that the number of bhikkhus who had memorized the Tripiṭaka was gradually dwindling, thereby endangering preservation of the scriptures. In response, the Fourth Council was held at the Alu Vihāra in Sri Lanka.[5] In order to safeguard the integrity of Buddhist doctrine and prevent the loss of the Tripiṭaka, this council resolved to record the sūtras, vinaya, and abhidharma in written form on palm leaves. Following the council, these palm-leaf manuscripts were widely disseminated in Sri Lanka and later in regions adhering to Southern Buddhism, thereby laying the foundation for the preservation and transmission of Buddhist scriptures. [6]A large number of repetitive passages and expressions in the Tripiṭaka were intentionally designed to facilitate memorization through oral recitation. This transition to a written compilation not only preserved the content of the scriptures but also marked a

crucial shift from oral to written transmission of Buddhist literature, profoundly influencing broader dissemination of the Buddhist Canon throughout Asia. By the time Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664) set out on his journey to retrieve Buddhist scriptures, the number of texts he brought back to China had grown considerably, as recorded in the Great Tang Records on the Western Regions 大唐西域記.

The Mahāyāna scriptures consist of 224 collections, and the Mahāyāna treatises number 190 collections. In the Theravāda tradition, there are 14 collections of sūtras, vinaya, and abhidharma; in the Mahāsāṅghika tradition, 15 collections; in the Sāmmītiya tradition, 15 collections; in the Mīshāsāya tradition, 22 collections; in the Kāśyapīya tradition, 17 collections; in the Famibu 法密部 tradition, 42 collections; in the Sarvāstivāda tradition, 67 collections; the treatises on causation (Yinlun 因論) comprise 36 collections; and the treatises on sound (Shenglun 聲論) comprise 13 collections. In total, there are 520 volumes, amounting to 657 collections. [7]

> 大乘經二百二十四部，大乘論一百九十部。上座部經律論一十四部，大眾部經律論一十五部，三彌底部經律論一十五部，彌沙塞部經律論二十二部，迦葉臂耶部經律論一十七部，法密部經律論四十二部，說一切有部經律論六十七部，因論三十六部， 聲論一十三部，凡五百二十夾，總六百五十七部。

This indicates that the Tripiṭaka texts we have today are the outcome of a long historical process of gradual accumulation and fruition. In more iconoclastic terms, many of the Buddhist scriptures now in circulation have been, to a certain extent, intermingled with later adherents' interpretations, and thus diverge—more or less—from what the Buddha originally taught during his lifetime.

In addition to the Tripiṭaka, there is also the so-called "Miscellaneous Collection" (Khuddaka). Its earliest appearance can be traced back to the first Buddhist council held three months after Śākyamuni's parinirvāṇa. *Great Tang Records on the Western Regions* records this historical event:

> Ānanda, having verified the fruition of the teachings, proceeded westward for over twenty li until he reached Sudubha 窣堵波, a site established by King Wuyou 無憂王 and designated as the venue for the Mahāsāṅghika council. There, people from every walk of life—both the learned and the unlearned, numbering in the hundreds of thousands—congregated, far exceeding the numbers assembled at the Great Kāśyapa Council. They then remarked among themselves: "When Śākyamuni was alive, all followed one master's teaching; but after the Dharma King attained parinirvāṇa, our teachings became simplified. To repay the Buddha's grace, we must compile the Dharma treasury". Accordingly, both the sacred and the secular, along with all the sages and the wise, reconvened to compile five distinct collections: the Sūtra Collection 素纜藏, the Vinaya Collection 毗奈耶藏, the Abhidharma Collection 阿毗達磨藏, the Miscellaneous Collection 雜集藏, and the Incantation Collection 禁咒藏. Because this compilation was attended by both the sacred and the secular, it came to be known as the Mahāsāṅghika.[8]
>
> 阿難證果西行二十餘里，有窣堵波，無憂王之所建也，大眾部結集之處。諸學無學數百千人，不預大迦葉結集之眾而來至此。更相謂曰：如來在世，同一師學，法王寂滅，簡易我曹。欲報佛恩，當集法藏。於是凡聖咸會，賢智畢萃，復集素纜藏（經）、毗奈耶藏（律）、阿毗達磨藏（論）、雜集藏、禁咒藏，別為五藏。而此結集，凡 聖同會，因而謂之大眾部。

At this stage, a new category—the "Miscellaneous Collection"—emerged alongside the established classifications of sūtra, vinaya, and abhidharma. As for the specific scope of

texts encompassed by the "Miscellaneous Collection", the *Four-Part Vinaya* 四分律 provides a clear enumeration:

> Thus, the following texts were compiled as the Miscellaneous Collection: Sheng Jing (Jātaka), Ben Jing (Itivṛttaka), Shan Yinyuan Jing (Nidāna), Fangdeng Jing (Vaipulya), Weicengyou Jing (Adbhutadharma), Piyu Jing (Avadāna), Youpotishe Jing (Upadeśa), Juyi Jing (Arthapada), Faju Jing (Dharmapada), Boloyan Jing (Pārāyaṇa), Zanan Jing (Kathāvastu), and Shengjie Jing (Sthaviragāthā).
>
> 如是生經、本經、善因緣經、方等經、未曾有經、譬喻經、優婆提捨經、句義經、法句經、波羅延經、雜難經、聖偈經：如是集為雜藏。

The aforementioned scriptures are among the most familiar classics in Buddhist literature, with many serving as essential texts for beginners, as they preserve the accounts of past-life connections between Śākyamuni and his disciples. In various early Buddhist schools, these texts were extracted and classified into separate categories within their own systems. For instance, in addition to the Tripiṭaka (comprising the sūtra, vinaya, and abhidharma collections), the Mahāsāṅghika and other schools also established a Miscellaneous Collection (which includes texts on past lives and causal connections). Moreover, one branch of the Mahāsāṅghika further distinguished a Miscellaneous Collection and an Incantation Collection, while the Chengshi school 成實論 augmented its canon with a Miscellaneous Collection and a Bodhisattva Collection.[9]

The category of "Miscellaneous Collection" had already emerged as a key element in the classification of scriptures during the formative period of Buddhism. Moreover, Mahāyāna Buddhism also gave due attention to the categorization of "Miscellaneous Collection". For instance, the Mahāyāna text Zuanji Sanzang Ji Zazang Zhuan 撰集三藏及雜藏傳 states:

> How are the Four Collections? Ānanda, can you explain—for the sake of sentient beings?" Ānanda replied: "The accounts differ according to the various opinions of the masses; this is called the Miscellaneous Collection. The Buddha expounded on past-life karmic connections, the arhats likewise expounded, and even the teachings of the heavenly, Brahma, and heterodox traditions are thus designated. In addition, many gāthās and verses are included, and when one inquires about the Twelve Nidānas, each is inserted in a different manner—this, too, is called the Miscellaneous Collection.[10]
>
> 云何四藏，阿難可說，為眾生故。阿難答曰：此說各異，隨眾意行，是名雜藏。佛說宿緣，羅漢亦說，天梵外道，故名雜藏。中多偈頌，問十二緣，此各異入，是名雜藏。

The references in this document to "the Tripiṭaka and Miscellaneous Collection" and "How are the Four Collections?" unambiguously affirm that the "Miscellaneous Collection" is recognized as an independent category. Furthermore, the statement "Ānanda replied: 'The accounts differ according to the various opinions of the masses…'" clearly demonstrates the profound and expansive doctrinal significance of the Miscellaneous Collection, thereby providing believers with extensive doctrinal depth and intellectual space. This indicates that Mahāyāna Buddhism accepted the classification system of Buddhist scriptures established during the sectarian period. Consequently, the "Miscellaneous Collection" is universally recognized by both Mahāyāna and Theravāda traditions. Its content primarily records the inherent causes and conditions 本行因緣 related to the Buddha, arhats, and bodhisattvas, predominantly in the form of gāthās and verses. In contrast to the Āgamas, its content is broader than that of the Tripiṭaka's sūtra, vinaya, and abhidharma, making it an essential component of the classification system of early Indian Buddhist literature.

However, objectively speaking, we cannot simply designate the texts that have been intermingled with later adherents' interpretations as "Extracanonical Literature". On one hand, the "canonical" texts are those widely recognized by Buddhists as authoritative scriptures. Although these texts might not have been entirely articulated by Śākyamuni, they have been transmitted in an orderly fashion through oral recitation and are fundamentally centered on the Buddha's teachings; from their inception, they were imbued with a sacred character. Moreover, we cannot censure the inherent instability of texts, for the evolution of a text is an inevitable aspect of manuscript transmission—a phenomenon observed worldwide.[11] Moreover, the original Indian Buddhist scriptures—be they sūtras, vinaya, abhidharma, or miscellaneous texts—were all venerated by devotees as authoritative works. Therefore, it is inappropriate to label them as "extracanonical". On the other hand, although the Tripiṭaka existed during that period, there is no clear evidence to indicate that a systematic, closed Buddhist Canon had been established. Take the Abhidharma, for example: modern scholars generally agree that its formal formation was accomplished over an extended period following the First Council. As Buddhist doctrine evolved and diversified—with increasing doctrinal developments and schisms—the content of the Abhidharma grew and was eventually systematized in later councils. For instance, the seven Abhidharma treatises are considered to be part of the gradually formed Theravāda system, while Mahāyāna Buddhism, within its own sūtra and treatise frameworks, produced exegetical works on classics such as the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* 大智度論 and the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 中論. A systematic Buddhist Canon requires the establishment of a relatively stable and self-contained corpus of texts; if the scriptures remain in a state of constant addition, deletion, and modification, then the notion of a fixed "Canon" loses its meaning, and consequently, the term "extracanonical" would not be applicable.

2.2. The Expansion of Extracanonical Buddhist Literature by Non-Buddhist Literature

Since the 13th century AD, Buddhism had essentially become extinct on the Indian subcontinent,[12] and Buddhist scriptures gradually fell into oblivion. In India proper, no clear terminology or concept corresponding to "extracanonical" texts emerged. However, if one steps outside the narrow confines of Buddhist literature, the term "wàidào" 外道 mentioned in Buddhist theory might conceptually intersect with the notion of "extracanonical". The term "外道" is derived from the Sanskrit "tīrthaka" or "tīrthika" and the Pali "titthiya". It is transliterated in Chinese as "底體迦" and is also known as "外教", "外法", or "外學". It refers to all religions other than Buddhism. The Sanskrit word "tīrtha" means "ford" or "a path leading to liberation", so tīrthika originally designated those who pursued liberation or engaged in ascetic practices—such as ascetics and hermits—by various means. Prior to the rise of Buddhism, the Indian subcontinent already harbored many religious traditions aimed at attaining liberation, such as the Vedic tradition and various ascetic schools; these were collectively labeled as "wàidào".

Initially, the term "wàidào" was not pejorative but a neutral designation referring to religious systems and scriptures distinct from Buddhism. In contrast, Buddhism described itself as "nèidào", 內道 emphasizing that its practice involved an inward quest for liberation—focusing on inner cultivation and the development of wisdom—whereas "wàidào" favored external asceticism or other forms of practice. Consequently, Buddhist scriptures were termed "nèidi◎n"(内典 internal canon), while those of other religions were labeled "wàidi◎n"(外典 external canon). As Buddhist doctrine evolved—particularly amid debates and competition with other religious traditions—Buddhist monks and scholars began to imbue "wàidào" with notions of heterodoxy and error, equating it with "xiédào" 邪道 or "yìduān" 異端 (heretical or deviant teachings). This terminology was employed not merely to distinguish between different doctrines but to assert that sects failing to conform to Bud-

dhist orthodoxy were erroneous and invalid. In doing so, Buddhism established itself as the proper path to liberation, affirming that the Dharma represented the true means to attain freedom. Thus, as the "nèi"(internal) came to be equated with orthodoxy, "wàidào" gradually transformed from a neutral descriptive term into a pejorative one, used to designate religious systems that deviated from Buddhist teachings. In this manner, "wàidào" increasingly became a derogatory label, signifying those erroneous doctrines that lie outside the realm of truth.

Indian "external" schools are frequently mentioned in Buddhist literature. For instance, *Sanlun Xuanyi* 三論玄義 records: "The most subtle and profound is recognized as the Way; when the mind roams beyond the Way, it is called the external Way". 至妙虛通，目之為道。心游道外，故名外道 Buddhism collectively refers to them as "wàidào" (external doctrines).[13] The literature produced by these Indian external schools is extensive, with the core philosophical and religious views of each school often reflected in its major canonical texts.

The literature of Indian "wàidào" traditions often takes the form of philosophical debate. These texts not only engage in dialectical discussions of different philosophical viewpoints but also employ logical reasoning and dialectics to explore issues related to worldview, cosmology, ethics, and spiritual practice. Before the rise of Buddhism and throughout the period in which it coexisted with these traditions, various non-Buddhist schools engaged in intellectual exchanges and debates with Buddhist thought. For instance, the "Six Teachers"(ṣaḍvāda tīrthika 六師外道) frequently engaged in debates with the Buddha.[14] Such a debate-oriented style is deeply embedded in the Indian philosophical tradition. Schools such as the Vedānta, Sāṅkhya, and Cārvāka (Lokāyata) traditions frequently employed texts such as the *Upaniṣads*, Brahmanical scriptures, the *Vedas*, and philosophical dialogues. The body of literature from these traditions is vast; even within the "Six Orthodox Schools of Indian Philosophy"[15] alone, the philosophical texts can be categorized as follows:

Sāṅkhya School 數論派: The Sāṅkhya school is one of the earliest philosophical systems in India and advocates a dualistic worldview, dividing existence into Prakriti (the principle of matter 自性) and Purusha (the principle of consciousness 靈我). The foundational text of this school is the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* 數論經, written by Ishvarakrishna. This treatise systematically expounds the Sāṅkhya cosmology, asserting that liberation (*moksha*) is attained through the realization of the dual relationship between Prakriti and Purusha. As a significant part of Indian philosophy, Sāṅkhya thought has deeply influenced the Yoga school as well as other religious traditions in India.

Yoga School 瑜伽派: The Yoga school is closely connected to the Sāṅkhya school, as the two share a similar philosophical foundation. The core text of the Yoga school is the *Yoga Sūtra* 瑜伽經, composed by Patañjali. This classic systematically outlines the eightfold path of yoga practice, including posture (āsana), breath control (prāṇāyāma), and meditation (dhyāna). The Yoga school seeks to achieve mastery over the mind through disciplined practice, ultimately leading to the separation of Purusha (consciousness) from Prakriti (matter). By cultivating both body and mind, the Yoga school aims for individual liberation (*moksha*), a concept that has had a profound influence on Indian religion and culture.

Nyāya School 正理派: The Nyāya school, also known as the school of logic or Indian epistemology, emphasizes logical reasoning and the theory of knowledge. It is the philosophical system within Indian thought that developed a distinctive framework of logic. The core text of this school is the *Nyāya Sūtra* 正理經, composed by Akṣapāda Gautama. Nyāya philosophy explains four means of acquiring knowledge: perception (pratyakṣa), inference (anumāna), comparison (upamāna), and verbal testimony (śabda). The Nyāya

school asserts that only through rational reasoning and dialectical analysis can one attain true knowledge of reality, ultimately leading to liberation (moksha). Nyāya logic laid a crucial foundation for the development of Indian philosophy and was particularly influential in the later Buddhist system of hetuvidyā (Buddhist logic 因明學).

Vaiśeṣika School 勝論派: The core text of the Vaiśeṣika school is the *Vaiśeṣika Sūtra*胜论经, composed by Kaṇāda. The Vaiśeṣika school is based on atomism, asserting that the world is composed of paramāṇu (atoms), which are the fundamental and indivisible units of matter and are eternal and unchanging. Vaiśeṣika philosophy seeks to understand the nature of reality by analyzing the fundamental composition and classification of matter. This school focuses on six fundamental categories (padārtha): substance (dravya), quality (guṇa), motion (karman), universal (sāmānya), particularity (viśeṣa), and inherence (samavāya). Its ideas significantly influenced the ontological development of Indian philosophy.

Pūrva Mīmāṃsā School 彌曼差派: The primary text of the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā school is the *Mīmāṃsā Sūtra* 彌曼差經, composed by Jaimini[16]. Pūrva Mīmāṃsā focuses on the study of Vedic rituals and sacrificial practices, asserting that the correct performance of Vedic rituals leads to material prosperity (puṇya) and ensures cosmic and social harmony. This school emphasizes the efficacy of ritual actions (karma) over philosophical speculation in shaping reality. The religious perspective of Mīmāṃsā profoundly influenced ancient Indian religious ceremonies and social structures.

Vedānta School 吠檀多派: The Vedānta school is one of the most influential schools of Indian philosophy. Its foundational texts include the *Brahma Sūtra*[17] 梵經, the *Upaniṣads* 奧義書, and the *Bhagavad Gītā* 薄伽梵歌. Vedānta advocates a monistic (advaita) worldview, asserting that the entire universe and the individual soul are fundamentally one. All existence originates from Brahman, the ultimate reality, while the individual soul (Ātman) is an integral part of Brahman. By realizing the unity of the soul and the universe, one can transcend saṃsāra (the cycle of rebirth) and attain moksha (liberation). The Vedānta school laid the philosophical foundation for later Hindu thought and profoundly influenced Indian religious beliefs.

In addition, traditions such as Jainism, Cārvāka (Lokāyata 順世論), the Six Teachers, and Brahmanism produced classic texts that were closely related to Buddhism. The Six Teachers (ṣaḍvāda tīrthika) that coexisted with Buddhism during its early period, and Buddhist scriptures frequently record debates with these heterodox traditions. The major figures of the Six Teachers include Pūraṇa Kāśyapa 富蘭那迦葉, Maskārī Gośāliputra 末伽梨拘捨梨, Sañjaya Vairatīputra 刪闍耶毗羅胝子, Ajita Keśakambala 阿耆多翅捨欽婆羅, Kakuda Kātyāyana 迦羅鳩駄迦旃延, and Nirgrantha Jñātiputra 尼乾陀若提子. Each of these heterodox traditions had distinct philosophical views: Pūraṇa Kāśyapa advocated a doctrine of non-causality, denying karma and causation. Makkhali Gosāla promoted fatalism, asserting that all events are predetermined by fate. Ajita Keśakambala was a materialist, denying the existence of the soul and the afterlife. Niganṭha Nātaputta, the founder of Jainism, emphasized asceticism as the path to liberation. Although most of the original texts of the Six Heterodox Teachers have been lost, their philosophical ideas have been preserved through Buddhist scriptures, which document debates and critiques of their doctrines.

In these texts, dialogues, inquiries, and responses among various figures construct logical arguments, engaging with topics such as the nature of life, liberation, ontology, and epistemology. Although these "wàidào" traditions differ from Buddhism in theory, they also share many similarities.[18] First, Buddhism and non-Buddhist traditions mutually influenced each other in thought and practice. Early Buddhism borrowed certain meditative techniques from heterodox traditions. For instance, when the Buddha renounced the

world, he studied meditative practices from the Yoga school (*Yoga Sūtra*), and Buddhist meditation (*dhyāna*) has roots in Indian traditional yogic techniques. Additionally, Buddhism absorbed the Nyāya school's logical reasoning methods, which later contributed to the development of Buddhist logic (hetuvidyā). Second, some heterodox traditions are also believed to have been influenced by Buddhism. Classical Indian philosophers from Vedānta and Ācārya 阿闍黎 traditions adopted certain Buddhist concepts, such as an emphasis on saṃsāra reincarnation, liberation (moksha), and karma. Even Śaṅkara 商羯羅, though critical of certain Buddhist schools, incorporated elements of Mahāyāna Buddhism into his own system. In particular, his interpretations of Brahman (ultimate reality 梵) and illusion (māyā 幻) exhibit notable similarities with Nāgārjuna's 龍樹 concept of śūnyatā (emptiness 空). Śūnyatā is the foundational concept of Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka philosophy. According to Nāgārjuna, emptiness is not existence (sat) or non-existence (asat), or both—it is beyond all dualities, expressed as "neither being nor non-being, emptiness itself is also empty". 非有非無，空復亦空Śaṅkara viewed Brahman beyond subjective–objective distinctions, negating the diverse phenomena of the world. In this sense, Śaṅkara's Brahman can be seen as an adaptation of Nāgārjuna's śūnyatā. Because of such similarities, Śaṅkara was sometimes labeled by his contemporaries as a "crypto-Buddhist" (pracchanna bauddha)—a claim that is not entirely unfounded.[19] Furthermore, many heterodox doctrines and texts can also be found in Buddhist scriptures, Brahmanical texts, and later commentaries. For instance, Buddhist texts such as the *Dīrghāgama* 長阿含經 and *Madhyamāgama*中阿含經, along with their associated treatises, discuss heterodox views and doctrines, providing detailed critiques and analyses.[20] Heterodox traditions were also an integral part of early Indian philosophy, and as a result, they produced a vast corpus of scriptures. Buddhist scholars engaged in extensive critiques of these heterodox texts, focusing on their theoretical differences with Buddhist scriptures. In this regard, heterodox literature also exhibits characteristics similar to extracanonical Buddhist literature 藏外文獻.

Although heterodox texts are not part of the Buddhist canon, their intellectual exchanges and contrasts with Buddhist thought, as well as their significant role in the history of Indian philosophy and religion, make them valuable sources for studying the intellectual history of Buddhism and Indian religious culture. Since these texts do not belong to the Buddhist scriptural system, they can, to some extent, be considered part of extracanonical Buddhist literature, especially in the broader study of Buddhist–extracanonical interactions. It is also important to note that many heterodox texts, despite originating outside Indian Buddhism, were incorporated into the Buddhist canon after their transmission to China. For example, in the 6th century, the Indian monk Paramārtha 真諦(499–569) translated the Sāṅkhya text *Jñāna-saptati* (*Jin Qishi Lun* 金七十論) into Chinese. Similarly, in the 7th century, Xuanzang translated the Vaiśeṣika text *Praśastapāda Bhāsya* (*Shengzong Shijuyi Lun* 勝宗十句義論) at the Translation Institute of Hongfu Monastery 弘福寺. These two heterodox treatises were later incorporated into successive editions of the Chinese Buddhist Tripiṭaka, despite their non-Buddhist origins. Known for their philosophical complexity and abstruseness, they became essential reading for Buddhist scholars.

2.3. Extracanonical Buddhist Texts in the Pāli Tripiṭaka

The earliest explicit reference to the concept of "Extracanonical Buddhist Literature" appears in the Pāli Canon (Pāli Tipiṭaka). In the first half of the 5th century CE, Buddhaghosa 覺音, born in Kothiyangaya (Kuṭumbiya, India), traveled to Sri Lanka, where he was invited by the elders of the Mahāvihāra to oversee a major translation project. He organized a translation institute, where he translated the entire corpus of Theravāda Buddhist scriptures and their commentaries, which had been preserved in Sinhala (Sinhalese),

into Pāli, thus finalizing the Pāli Canon that has been transmitted to the present day. The Pāli Tipiṭaka is structured with the Vinaya Piṭaka (disciplinary code) placed first, followed by the Sutta Piṭaka (discourses) and the Abhidhamma Piṭaka (higher teachings). However, besides the Pāli Tipiṭaka, a large number of Buddhist texts were not included in the canon. These texts were referred to as extracanonical Buddhist scriptures. The three piṭakas of the Pāli Canon represent the content compiled during the four Buddhist councils in Indian history, which later came to be known as the "Hīnayāna (Theravāda) Tipiṭaka". In contrast, the "extracanonical portion" consists of various Pāli Buddhist texts compiled after the formation of the Pāli Tipiṭaka, including commentaries (aṭṭhakathā), historical chronicles, summaries, poetry, and other works.

Specifically, the extracanonical Buddhist texts in the Pāli Tipiṭaka mainly include the following categories of literature:

Pāli Commentaries and Sub-commentaries (Aṭṭhakathā and Ṭīkā): The commentaries (Aṭṭhakathā) are exegetical texts on the Pāli Tipiṭaka, forming one of the most significant categories of extracanonical Buddhist literature. In the Theravāda Buddhist tradition, commentarial texts play a crucial role in explaining and supplementing the content of the Tipiṭaka, particularly in areas such as meditative practice, doctrinal interpretation, and Vinaya application. These texts provide more detailed and practical explanations than the canonical scriptures. Among Pāli commentators, Buddhaghosa[21] is the most renowned. He translated Sinhalese Buddhist texts into Pāli and compiled extensive commentaries based on them. His works, along with those of later commentators, form the primary interpretative framework for Theravāda Buddhism. Although these texts are not included in the canonical Pāli Tipiṭaka, they are indispensable for understanding Buddhist scriptures.

Just as Pāli commentarial literature provides detailed explanations of the Pāli Tipiṭaka, it is traditionally believed that these commentaries were transmitted orally from teacher to disciple before being compiled into written form by eminent scholars, such as Buddhaghosa 佛護, around the 5th century CE. For instance, the *Visuddhimagga* (*Path of Purification* 清淨道論) is an influential exegetical treatise that provides a comprehensive explanation of the Buddhist path of practice. In addition to commentaries (Aṭṭhakathā), further explanatory texts known as sub-commentaries (Ṭīkā) were later composed. These sub-commentaries, though outside the Pāli Tipiṭaka, are essential for understanding canonical texts, as they offer more detailed explanations and clarifications of difficult points found in the primary commentaries.

Post-Canonical Pāli Buddhist Literature: After the compilation of the Pāli Tipiṭaka, the Theravāda Buddhist tradition continued to evolve, producing a vast body of post-canonical texts. Although these works are based on the doctrines of the Pāli Canon, they emerged in different historical contexts and were not incorporated into the official Buddhist canon. One example is Paritta literature[22], which consists primarily of protective and ritual texts used in Buddhist ceremonies and blessings. While many of these texts originate from the Sutta Piṭaka of the Pāli Tipiṭaka, they often exist as independent texts outside the canonical framework. Additionally, various treatises and exegeses were composed by Theravāda elders across different historical periods. Many eminent Theravāda monks authored extensive commentaries and doctrinal works, which, although based on the Pāli Tipiṭaka, were not included in the official canon. For instance, later commentators further developed interpretations of monastic discipline, building upon the Vinaya Piṭaka to refine the rules and ethical guidelines for the Saṅgha (monastic community).

Buddhist Historical and Biographical Literature: The extracanonical corpus also includes significant historical texts that document the spread, development, and significant events of Buddhism, particularly those closely related to Sri Lanka. These works are not merely religious chronicles but also serve as valuable sources for understanding the cul-

tural and social impact of the Theravāda Buddhist tradition. Certain biographical texts about the Buddha, saints, or major historical events were not incorporated into the "Pāli Tipiṭaka", yet they hold an important place in Buddhist belief and cultural heritage. For example, the *Dīpavaṃsa* (*Chronicle of the Island* 島史) and the *Mahāvaṃsa* (*Great Chronicle* 大史) are essential historical texts in Sri Lankan Theravāda Buddhism, recording the history of Buddhism's transmission to Sri Lanka, the formation of the monastic order, and the construction of major temples. Although these historical records are not part of the canonical scriptures, they are crucial for understanding the history and expansion of Buddhism.

Ritual Manuals and Practice Guides: Many manuals and guides related to Buddhist rituals and spiritual practice are also considered extracanonical Buddhist texts. These works serve as practical tools for monastic communities and lay Buddhists in their daily religious observances. For instance, texts on ordination and monastic precepts provide detailed ritual instructions, which, although partially addressed in the Vinaya Piṭaka of the *Pāli Tipiṭaka*, were further elaborated in later ritual manuals and practice guides. These texts outline specific procedures for ordination, meditation techniques, and monastic conduct, offering step-by-step guidance on how to undertake higher ordination (upasampadā), meditative absorption (jhāna), and other core Buddhist practices.

Although these texts are classified as Extracanonical Buddhist Literature in the *Pāli Tipiṭaka*, they have played a crucial role in the practice, historical transmission, and doctrinal development of the Theravāda Buddhist tradition. Extracanonical Buddhist texts not only aid in the interpretation and understanding of the Tipiṭaka—for instance, Pāli commentaries (*Aṭṭhakathā*) and sub-commentaries (*Ṭīkā*) are essential tools for studying the Pāli Canon—but they also broaden Buddhism's cultural and historical impact. Historical and biographical texts provide insights into the spread of Buddhism, the evolution of the monastic community, and Buddhism's influence on society. Moreover, extracanonical texts highlight the diversity and regional variations within Buddhist traditions, reflecting how Buddhist practices and beliefs adapted to different historical and cultural contexts.

At this point, when examining the origins of extracanonical Buddhist literature, its conceptual framework begins to take shape. It becomes evident that, in its early stages, the definition of extracanonical literature was not yet stable, encompassing a wide variety of texts. Although these texts were not officially incorporated into the Buddhist canon, they were closely related to Buddhist doctrines, thought, and history. More specifically, Extracanonical Buddhist Literature not only refers to texts outside the official Buddhist canon but also includes supplementary and extended literature that emerged during the formation and transmission of canonical texts. During this period, extracanonical literature can be categorized in several ways:

The Interaction Between Heterodox Texts and Buddhism: Non-Buddhist religious and philosophical texts engaged in extensive interaction with Buddhism. During the early formation of Buddhist doctrine, Buddhist scholars debated and critiqued heterodox ideas, gradually establishing their own doctrinal frameworks. As a result, heterodox texts serve as important references in the historical development of Buddhism.

"Miscellaneous Collection" (*Khuddaka*) and Derivative Texts of the Buddhist Canon: The so-called "Miscellaneous Collection" (*Khuddaka*) refers to supplementary texts derived from the Buddhist canon. Although these texts were not formally incorporated into the Tripiṭaka, they played a significant role in the interpretation of Buddhist thought, the performance of rituals, and the practice of lay and monastic communities. For example, commentarial literature (*Aṭṭhakathā*) and ritual manuals provide explanatory and supplementary insights to the canonical scriptures.

Regional Buddhist Texts: The spread of Buddhism beyond India led to the production of a vast body of Buddhist texts in different regions. For instance, Sri Lankan Buddhist

literature contains significant historical and cultural records of Buddhism. Although these texts were geographically distant from the Buddhist homeland in India, they were not merely products of Buddhist transmission, but also reflected how Buddhism adapted and evolved within different cultural contexts. Thus, Buddhist texts produced outside India—including those from Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia—can also be regarded as part of extracanonical Buddhist literature.

3. From Sanskrit to China: The Formation of Chinese "Extracanonical Buddhist Literature"

The previous section outlined the connotations of "Extracanonical Buddhist Literature" before Buddhism's transmission to China. However, during the transition from Sanskrit to Chinese, Buddhism underwent profound and fundamental changes.[23] Therefore, to explore the formation of Chinese "Extracanonical Buddhist Literature", it is essential to trace the establishment and development of the concept of the Buddhist Canon in China. This was a long and complex historical process, influenced not only by the transmission of Indian Buddhist scriptures but also by China's own cultural context and ideological systems and the deep influence of Buddhism's spread in China. Since Buddhism was introduced to China, the translation and compilation of scriptures through multiple dynasties gradually formed a more systematic corpus of Chinese Buddhist texts. However, during this process, many texts that were not incorporated into the official canon were transmitted in various forms, becoming part of the "Extracanonical Literature". These texts often reflect the integration of Buddhist thought with Confucian and Daoist ideologies during the Sinicization of Buddhism, as well as the unique developmental trajectories of Buddhism at different historical stages. They not only supplement the Canon but also serve as important witnesses to how Chinese Buddhism unfolded and adapted within its own cultural context.

3.1. Background of the Formation of Chinese Extracanonical Buddhist Literature

Buddhism was introduced to China during the late Western Han Dynasty via the Silk Road, initially relying on the transmission of Central Asian monks. At this stage, Buddhist teachings and scriptures were not yet systematized and were transmitted in a scattered form through oral recitation or sporadic translations. It was not until the late Eastern Han Dynasty that the concept of the "Tripiṭaka" gradually became known to Chinese monks and scholars, primarily through the translation efforts of Indian monks and the learning and dissemination by Chinese monks. Historical records state that, after Emperor Ming of the Han Dynasty 漢明帝 had a dream of a "golden figure", he sent emissaries to Central Asia to bring back Buddhist scriptures and images. Central Asian monks such as Śramaṇa Kāśyapa-Mātanga 攝摩騰 and Dharmarakṣa 竺法蘭 arrived in Luoyang 洛陽 and began translating Buddhist scriptures at the White Horse Temple 白馬寺. During this period, Buddhist scriptures began to be brought into China by monks from India and Central Asia, but there was no concept of systematic organization or classification of Buddhist texts at the time. The earliest translation work began in the tenth year of the Yongping era (67 CE) during the Eastern Han Dynasty, with eminent monks like Parthamasiris 安世高 and Lokaksema 支婁迦讖 translating numerous Buddhist scriptures.[24] Although translations during this period were fragmented, they began to cover parts of the Tripiṭaka. At this time, Buddhist texts mainly consisted of individual sutras, and their number was limited; the categorization and systematization of scriptures had not yet begun. The characteristic of this period was the scattered translation of Buddhist scriptures, without the formation of a systematic "canon" concept.

During the Northern and Southern Dynasties, the systematization and preliminary classification of Buddhist scriptures began. The earliest translations of Buddhist scriptures can be traced back to the late Eastern Han period. As Buddhism spread more extensively during the Northern and Southern Dynasties, the variety of Buddhist scriptures gradually increased, and the need for systematization and classification became more evident. During this period, with the spread and development of Buddhism in China, the translation of Buddhist scriptures expanded on a large scale, and both the number and variety of texts, increased rapidly. By this time, the concept of the Tripiṭaka had become more developed, especially through translation activities promoted by figures like Dao'an 道安, Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什, and Sengzhao 僧肇, with the classification system of the sutras 經, vinaya 律, and abhidharma 論 gradually becoming familiar to the Chinese Buddhist community. For example, Kumārajīva (344–413 CE), a prominent translator during the Sixteen Kingdoms period, played a significant role in promoting the systematization of Buddhist scriptures. Based in Chang'an (the capital of the Yaoqin Dynasty), Kumārajīva translated many important Buddhist scriptures, including the *Diamond Sutra* 金剛經, *Lotus Sutra* 妙法蓮華經, and *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 中論. His translations were not only stylistically beautiful but also relatively faithful to the originals, greatly promoting the spread and systematization of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Similarly, Dao'an (312–385 CE), who translated a large number of Buddhist texts, also advocated for the systematic classification of these texts. He was the first to explicitly raise the issue of systematizing Buddhist scriptures and established the "Five Losses of the Original, Three Non-Translatable" 五失本，三不易 theory, emphasizing that translations should not alter the original meaning of the scriptures.[25] He also compiled a systematic catalog of Buddhist scriptures—*Zongli Zhongjing Mulu* 綜理眾經目錄—which had a profound impact on the later classification of Buddhist scriptures.

During the Northern and Southern Dynasties, the systematization of Buddhist scriptures was not only reflected in the large-scale translation activities but also in the editing and compilation of Buddhist texts. Emperors from various dynasties organized multiple efforts to organize and verify the Buddhist scriptures, which promoted the systematization and classification of the texts. For example, during the reign of Emperor Xiaowen of the Northern Wei 北魏孝文帝, he appointed Li Kuo 李廓 to oversee compilation of the *Zhong Jing Mulu* 眾經目錄, a systematic catalog documenting Buddhist scriptures within the Northern Wei territory. The classification method used in this catalog had its own distinctive features.

> (The catalog system for Buddhist scriptures included ten distinct categories:) first, the Catalog of Mahāyāna Sutras; second, the Catalog of Mahāyāna Treatises; third, the Catalog of Mahāyāna Sutra Sub-commentaries; fourth, the Catalog of Untranslated Mahāyāna Sutras and Treatises; fifth, the Catalog of Theravāda Sutras and Vinaya; sixth, the Catalog of Theravāda Treatises; seventh, the Catalog of Sutras with Titles but Not Yet Acquired; eighth, the Catalog of Non-authentic Sutras; ninth, the Catalog of Non-authentic Treatises; and tenth, the Catalog of Entirely False Sutras and Treatises Claimed by Fools.[26]
>
> 一為《大乘經目錄》，二為《大乘論目錄》，三為《大乘經子注目錄》，四為《大乘未譯經論目錄》，五為《小乘經律目錄》，六為《小乘論目錄》,七為《有目未得經目錄》，八為《非真經目錄》，九為《非真論目錄》，十為《全非經愚人妄稱目錄》

This cataloging activity provided a standard for the organization and systematization of Buddhist scriptures, laying the foundation for classification and arrangement. Similarly, during the reign of Emperor Wu of the Southern Liang 南朝梁武帝, large-scale efforts were also made to verify and compile Buddhist scriptures. One of the most representative catalogues of this period is the Catalogue of Buddhist Scriptures from the *Chu Sanzang Ji Ji* [27]

出三藏記集, compiled by the monk Sengyou 僧祐 of the Southern Liang (445–518 CE). It was completed between the ninth and thirteenth years of the Tianjian era (510–514 CE) and later became known as the *Sengyou Lu* 僧祐錄, or simply the *You Lu* 祐錄. This is the oldest extant catalogue of the Tripiṭaka, translated scriptures, and biographies, and is considered highly reliable. It was compiled after the *Dao'an Lu* 道安錄 of the Eastern Jin dynasty and thus became the primary reference for later cataloguers. Therefore, all translations of scriptures related to the Later Han, Three Kingdoms, Western Jin, and Eastern Jin periods are primarily referred to in this catalogue.[28]

Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty, a devout Buddhist, actively promoted the organization and systematization of Buddhist scriptures. He ordered monks to revise the Buddhist scriptures and compile a more complete catalog of Buddhist texts. This effort not only further standardized the Buddhist scriptures, but also laid the foundation for future cataloging work. Based on this, in 515 CE, Emperor Wu ordered the compilation of the *Zhong Jing Mulu*, written by the monk Sengshao 僧紹 in four volumes, and in 518 CE, he ordered Baochang 寶唱 to revise the catalog, which included 1433 texts in 3741 volumes. This marked the first record of the Buddhist scriptures being collected into a Chinese Tripiṭaka, laying the groundwork for the later development of the Tripiṭaka. During this process, Chinese Buddhist scriptures gradually formed a classification framework centered on the "three baskets" (Tri-piṭaka) of sutras, vinaya, and abhidharma. As the number of scriptures increased, Buddhists gradually recognized the necessity of systematic organization and classification, leading to the emergence of initial classifications like Sūtra Basket (Sūtra Piṭaka 經藏), Vinaya Basket (Vinaya Piṭaka 律藏), and Abhidharma Basket (Abhidharma Piṭaka 論藏). This classification not only laid the foundation for the establishment of the concept of the Tripiṭaka, but also provided guidance for the compilation and transmission of scriptures in later generations.

During the Sui and Tang periods, the widespread dissemination of Buddhism in China led to a peak in the translation and organization of Buddhist scriptures. During the reign of Emperor Xuanzong in Tang Dynasty, the "Kaiyuan Three Great Tantric Masters"—Amoghavajra 不空, Śubhakara-simha 善無畏, and Vajrabodhi 金剛智—undertook a large-scale project to collate and organize Buddhist scriptures within China's Buddhist community. Based on the Tripiṭaka, they proofread and standardized earlier translations, thereby laying the foundation for the later development of the Chinese Buddhist Canon. Their efforts in textual verification and compilation further standardized the Tripiṭaka system. At this stage, the concept of the Tripiṭaka gradually took shape, and the systematization of Buddhist scriptures was largely completed, with the texts now exhibiting systematic characteristics and clearer classifications.

During the Sui and Tang periods, Buddhist cataloging in China experienced rapid development, giving rise to a specialized field of Buddhist scripture cataloging. In the Sui Dynasty, Fei Changfang's 費長房 *Lidai Sanbao Ji* 歷代三寶紀 introduced the "Entry to the Canon" 入藏錄. Moreover, a Tripiṭaka compiled at the Eastern Capital's Monastery by the monk Zhiguo 智果 and others in the Sui Dynasty had already divided the edited Tripiṭaka according to the "Sutra, Vinaya, and Abhidharma" model into eleven categories: Mahāyāna Sutras 大乘經, Theravāda Sutras 小乘經, Miscellaneous Sutras 雜經, Doubtful Sutras 疑經, Mahāyāna Vinaya 大乘律, Theravāda Vinaya 小乘律, Miscellaneous Vinaya 雜律, Mahāyāna Abhidharma 大乘論, Theravāda Abhidharma 小乘論, Miscellaneous Abhidharma 雜論, and Records 記. This system, roughly based on the Tripiṭaka classification, recorded nearly 2000 texts in over 6000 fascicles.[29] One of the most representative examples is the *Kaiyuan Shijiao Lu* 開元釋教錄 by Zhisheng 智昇 of the Tang Dynasty. Its compilation adhered to the Tripiṭaka classification system and further refined the categorization of Buddhist scriptures. First, the catalog was broadly divided into the Tripiṭaka—comprising the

sutras, vinaya, and abhidharma—and the collections compiled by sages outside of the Tripiṭaka. Within the Tripiṭaka, further distinctions were made between Mahāyāna and Theravāda texts, with the Mahāyāna sutras arranged in the following order: Prajñāpāramitā, Baoji 寶積, Daji 大集, Huayan 華嚴, Nirvana, and the Five Major Sections Beyond 五大部外; meanwhile, the collections by sages were divided into those from India, Central Asia and those from China. This systematic method of classification not only clearly differentiated the various types of Buddhist scriptures but also ensured the structural integrity of the subsequent Buddhist Canon compilations. As a systematic Buddhist catalog, the structure of the *Kaiyuan Shijiao Lu* had a profound influence on later efforts to compile the Chinese Buddhist Canon. Subsequently, many compilers of the Canon adopted its format, ensuring that the compilation followed a predetermined structure that guaranteed the completeness and systematic organization of the scriptures. Furthermore, Zhisheng employed a thousand-character numbering system to organize the "Entry to the Canon" section, thereby producing a four-volume work titled An Excerpt from the *Kaiyuan Shijiao Lu Luechu* 開元釋教錄略出. Later, Xuanyi 玄逸 provided an even more detailed listing of the subcategories within the "Entry to the Canon", compiling a thirty-volume edition also titled *Kaiyuan Shijiao Lu Luechu* 開元釋教錄略出.

In the process of the gradual introduction and translation of Buddhist scriptures, the structure of the Buddhist Canon was progressively perfected, and as a result, "Extracanonical Buddhist Literature" emerged. Following the compilation of *Kaiyuan Shijiao Lu* by Zhisheng during the Tang Dynasty, the system of the Chinese Buddhist Canon gradually matured, enabling the preservation of a vast number of Buddhist texts—sutras, vinaya, abhidharma treatises, and other related writings. Although successive editions of the Buddhist Canon continuously expanded the quantity and scope of the texts they included, numerous Buddhist works were not incorporated due to various constraints and influences. These texts, having circulated independently of the Canon, came to be known as "Extracanonical Buddhist Literature".

Extracanonical Buddhist Literature is quite prevalent, with its quantity even surpassing that of the texts included in the Buddhist Canon. For example, among the Dunhuang manuscripts, there are roughly over 36,000 extant documents, the vast majority of which are Buddhist texts; some of these are included in the "Entry to the Canon" section of the *Kaiyuan Shijiao Lu*. According to research by Fang Guangzhen 方廣錩, 391 types of texts are recorded in the "Entry to the Canon", accounting for 36.3% of the 1076 texts documented in that section.[30] Furthermore, all texts that were not incorporated into the Canon system can be regarded as extracanonical literature. The Extracanonical Buddhist Literature in the Dunhuang manuscripts represents only one segment of this broader extracanonical corpus, which also includes Buddhist texts from the Theravāda and Tibetan traditions; documents scattered across inscriptions, local gazetteers, and other specialized works; as well as numerous standalone self-authored treatises. Because these texts were not included in the Canon, they remain dispersed outside the formal system, forming a distinct corpus of literature.

3.2. Reasons for the Emergence of Chinese Extracanonical Buddhist Literature

The emergence of Extracanonical Buddhist Literature is multifaceted. Owing to its complementary relationship with the Buddhist Canon, an analysis from the Canon's perspective reveals several key factors.

First, there was incomplete inclusion due to the scattering and loss of texts. On one hand, some texts were not widely circulated and gradually fell into oblivion; on the other, the compilers of the Canon, with limited access or awareness, failed to discover many Buddhist works. Moreover, due to the varying levels of Buddhist development and shifting

theoretical emphases in different historical periods, some texts did not receive sufficient attention and were consequently excluded from the Canon. This exclusion affected not only certain translators and translated works that lacked wide influence and circulation but also the commentaries of prominent translators. For instance, the great Tang Dynasty translator Yijing's 義淨 commentaries encompass a total of 107 texts in 428 fascicles, yet the *Kaiyuan Dazangjing* 開元大藏經 included only 200 fascicles. Considering that Yijing passed away in 713 CE, and the compilation of the *Kaiyuan Dazangjing* took place merely 17 years later, it is evident that Yijing's commentaries could not be comprehensively collected within such a short span, demonstrating that gaps in Buddhist literature have become a relatively common phenomenon.

Faced with this situation, Zhisheng, while compiling the *Kaiyuan Dazangjing*, composed the *Kaiyuan Shijiao Lu*, which meticulously documented the Buddhist literature of the time—recording the titles of the scriptures, their number of fascicles, their state of preservation or loss—and even included brief biographical sketches of the principal translators to introduce their backgrounds in translation. Although the *Kaiyuan Shijiao Lu* was already an extraordinarily detailed effort to organize Buddhist texts at the time, a large number of Buddhist scriptures could not be comprehensively collected. Consequently, the latter part of the Kaiyuan Shijiao Lu was divided into several categories, including "Texts with Translation and Original" 有譯有本錄, "Texts with Translation but No Original" 有譯無本錄, "Branch-specific Practices" 支派別行錄, "Omissions and Heavy Redundancies" 刪落繁重錄, "Supplementary and Collected Omissions" 補闕拾遺錄, "Doubts Reexamined in Detail" 疑惑再詳錄, "False and Confused Authorship" 偽妄亂真錄, and "Entries into the Canon" 入藏錄. Notably, the "Texts with Translation but No Original" category records a vast number of lost texts—totaling 1148 works in 1980 fascicles—which inevitably includes many Buddhist scriptures that, while not completely lost, had not yet been discovered or incorporated. In contrast, the *Kaiyuan Dazangjing* contained a total of 1076 works in 5048 fascicles, meaning that the number of missing texts listed in the "Texts with Translation but No Original" category approaches nearly half of the volume of texts included in the *Kaiyuan Dazangjing*. This situation indicates that a significant number of Buddhist scriptures, long neglected and unknown in Chinese history, await discovery and organization, and that many texts which have either been lost or not included in the Canon still hold substantial academic and religious value.

Thus, the scattering and incomplete inclusion of texts arise not only from the limited range of transmission but also from the constraints of the compilers and the historical conditions of the time. This has rendered extracanonical literature an indispensable part of the Buddhist textual tradition, as it preserves the diverse array of forgotten thoughts and practices in Buddhist history.

Secondly, due to political reasons, many texts were subject to prohibition and even destruction. The religious policies and inclinations of successive dynasties varied, and the compilation of the Buddhist Canon was typically an official, state-organized undertaking. In particular, from the Tang Dynasty onward, whether a Buddhist text was included in the Canon required strict official "imperial edict" 奉敕 procedures—orders issued by the court to organize and review the texts. This regulation reflected the Tang regime's high regard for and intervention in Buddhist affairs, as it sought to regulate the compilation and dissemination of Buddhist scriptures in order to maintain social order and enforce national religious policies. Specifically, the review process for Buddhist texts to be incorporated into the Canon during the Tang period was often led by the central government, with a specialized committee composed of eminent monks and scholars tasked with examining the scriptures. This process involved not only verifying the authenticity of the texts but also assessing the orthodoxy of their doctrines and their compatibility with the state's

ideological framework. Moreover, the Tang edict-based policy for Canon inclusion also reflected the state's intention to control religious texts, thereby preventing the spread of heretical ideas and maintaining social stability. Consequently, during the Tang Dynasty not all Buddhist texts were admitted into the Canon; rather, inclusion was largely determined by political considerations and the need for authoritative endorsement.

For example, texts that failed to gain official recognition were often subject to strict prohibitions. Consider the Sanjie Jiao[31] 三階教 established by Xin Xing 信行 during the Sui Dynasty—one of China's early indigenous folk Buddhist sects—which took an innovative approach by dividing Buddhism into three stages according to time 時, place 處, and opportunity (or human factors 機/人) and emphasizing ascetic practices and almsgiving. However, this sect was banned in 600 CE under Emperor Gaozu of Sui and subsequently faced repeated crackdowns during the reigns of Empress Wu Zetian in 699 CE and Emperor Xuanzong in 725 CE. Although the Sanjie Jiao produced a large body of writings—amounting to as many as 35 works in 44 fascicles—its founder Xin Xing authored texts such as *Sanjie Fo Fa* 三階佛法 and *Dui Gen Qi Xing Za Lu* 對根起行雜錄, which circulated widely among the people. However, these texts were ultimately not incorporated into the Buddhist Canon and were repeatedly banned over several generations. Similar examples are not uncommon in Chinese history. For instance, the anti-Buddhist campaigns represented by the so-called "Three Wus and One Zong" 三武一宗 are particularly emblematic. These events not only led to the closure of numerous temples but also resulted in the burning of Buddha statues, scriptures, ritual objects, and more, causing the loss of a great deal of Buddhist literature. In addition, historical wars, social unrest, and other periods of turmoil—often described as "book disasters" 書厄—had extremely adverse effects on the preservation and transmission of Buddhist texts.[32] These political factors led to the exclusion of many works of both religious and scholarly value from the Buddhist Canon, thereby rendering them as extracanonical literature.

Thirdly, there was neglect and rejection stemming from religious attitudes. According to the *Kaiyuan Shijiao Lu*, the *Kaiyuan Dazangjing* excluded a large number of works authored by indigenous Chinese monks. This reflects the tendency among Buddhist practitioners, in order to maintain the purity of the religion, to deliberately leave out self-authored texts from China. Although this approach helped to avoid redundancy in the Buddhist scriptures to some extent, it also resulted in many valuable Buddhist writings not being incorporated into the Canon, leaving them scattered or isolated from the mainstream canonical system. Moreover, the monks responsible for compiling the Canon inevitably infused their own religious positions and interpretations of Buddhism into the process of organizing and selecting texts, which, to varying degrees, affected the revision of the Canon. For example, Dao Xuan 道宣 (Dao Xuan 道宣 2014), a master of Vinaya studies in the Tang Dynasty, composed *Ji Gujin Fodao Lunheng* 集古今佛道論衡—a treatise of a dialectical nature primarily aimed at defending the orthodox status of Buddhism by contrasting it with Taoism. In this work, Dao Xuan criticized Taoism and sought to demonstrate the superiority and orthodoxy of Buddhist teachings in China. However, the purpose of compiling the *Kaiyuan Dazangjing* was to include widely accepted Buddhist scriptures and treatises transmitted from India, not to emphasize external criticism or comparisons with other religions. The compilers were more inclined to select texts that provided systematic expositions of Buddhism's internal doctrines and cultivation methods, rather than debate-oriented works involving inter-religious disputes. Consequently, the polemical nature of *Ji Gujin Fodao Lunheng* likely led to its exclusion from the selection process. This difference in perspective resulted in its omission from certain Buddhist catalogs.[33] For example, the *Platform Sutra* 壇經 authored by Huineng 慧能, the Sixth Patriarch of Chan, held great significance within Chan Buddhism—so much so that successive Chan masters revered it

and elevated it to canonical status within their tradition. However, it remained outside the Buddhist Canon for a long time. In the Liao Dynasty, the compiler responsible for the Buddhist Canon, Quanxiao 詮曉, even regarded the *Platform Sutra* as spurious[34]—arguing that, although it claimed the status of a "sutra", it was spoken by neither the Buddha nor by any Bodhisattva. As a result, it was burned, and its circulation was prohibited, remaining outside the Canon until it was finally accepted during the Ming Dynasty. The harsh process that Huineng's *Platform Sutra* underwent in order to be included foreshadows the fate of many other Buddhist texts. This religious prejudice not only affected the inclusion of indigenous Chinese works, but also led to stratification within the Buddhist Canon. It was not until the Ming Dynasty, when Zhixu 智旭 compiled *Yuezang Zhijin* 閱藏知津, that a large number of indigenous Chinese works were finally incorporated into the Canon. The criteria for inclusion were elaborated in detail:

> Among texts composed in this land, only those by Zhaogong 肇公 and the two masters from Nanyue 南嶽 and Tiantai 天台—exemplary in their excellence and truly worthy of comparison with Aśvaghoṣa 馬鳴, Nāgārjuna 龍樹, Asaṅga 無著, and Vasubandhu 天親—are specially included in the Mahayana doctrinal treatises. The works of other masters, though largely excellent, possess minor shortcomings and may only be included in the miscellaneous collection. Texts composed in the Western lands, on the other hand, are included solely on the basis of their comprehensive doctrinal content, regardless of minor or major distinctions, or even if they consist of compiled excerpts; hence, they are classified as miscellaneous. Meanwhile, texts composed in this region, due to the varied styles and formats produced by different schools, are likewise designated as miscellaneous.[35]
>
> 此土述作，唯肇公及南岳天台二师，醇乎其醇，真不愧马鸣、龙树、无著、天亲， 故特收入大乘宗论。其余诸师，或未免大醇小疵，仅可入杂藏中。西土撰述，但以义兼大小，或复事涉抄撮，故名为杂。此方撰述，则以诸家不同，体式亦异，故名为杂。

He believed that only the works of Sengzhao 僧肇, Nanyue Huisi 南嶽慧思, and Tiantai Zhizhe 天台智者 were of sufficient caliber to rival the Buddhist scriptures of India, and therefore deliberately included them in the Mahāyāna doctrinal treatises. As for other works composed in China, Zhixu held that—even if they contained imperfections—they could be admitted only into the "Miscellaneous Collection"; similarly, works from India or Central Aisa were classified as miscellaneous, either because of the scope of their doctrinal content or due to their association with various doctrinal schools. This clearly demonstrates that indigenous Chinese compositions not only faced a different fate compared to Western Buddhist scriptures but also formed a distinct hierarchical tier within themselves.

Chinese Buddhist literature not only occupied a subordinate position compared to Western Buddhist scriptures, but even within indigenous works a hierarchical system emerged, with some writings being marginalized and excluded from the Buddhist Canon. This religious bias and stance not only limited the widespread dissemination of these texts, but also resulted in a large body of excellent Buddhist thought and scholarly achievements being overlooked, thereby becoming part of the extracanonical literature.

It is noteworthy that, since religious forces were able to exclude certain Buddhist texts, there were also deliberate efforts to promote the inclusion of specific scriptures in the Canon. For instance, the Song Dynasty was a crucial period for the development of Chinese Buddhist sects. In order to consolidate their doctrinal systems and social standing, various sects actively promoted the compilation and inclusion of their core scriptures into the Buddhist Canon. Take the Tiantai school as an example: its core scriptures, such as the *Lotus Sutra* and its commentaries, were admitted into the Song Buddhist Canon

largely thanks to the proactive advocacy of eminent Tiantai monks. These monk-scholars secured official support through memorials and by organizing compilation efforts, successfully ensuring that their sect's texts were included. This phenomenon reflects the competitive and cooperative dynamics within the Buddhist community during the Song Dynasty and indicates that the process of canonical inclusion became increasingly diversified, gradually forming a mechanism characterized by both bureaucratic review and autonomous religious initiative.

In addition, texts of dubious authenticity constitute an important source of extracanonical Buddhist literature.[36] With the development of Buddhism in China and its process of indigenization, some Chinese Buddhists composed scriptures that were not derived from India. Although such texts met the needs of local believers, from the perspective of orthodox Buddhist doctrine they were often regarded as inauthentic or spurious. The most direct distinction between these dubious texts and indigenous compositions is that the former were falsely attributed to Śākyamuni, whereas the latter explicitly bear the name of their author. Historical records show that the earliest examination of dubious texts was undertaken by the eminent monk Dao'an during the Eastern Jin period in his *Zongli Zhongjing Mulu*. Although this catalogue is now lost, its original content can be roughly reconstructed from the citations in Sengyou's *Chu Sanzang JiJi*. In that catalogue, Dao'an organized and classified the Buddhist scriptures transmitted to China, clearly indicating which texts he considered dubious or unreliable. This treatment of inauthentic texts provided valuable guidance for later scholars; indeed, the so-called "Yihuo Zaixiang Lu" (meaning "Record of Doubts Requiring Further Verification") and "Weiwang Luan Zhen Lu" (meaning "Record of Spurious Texts Masquerading as Genuine") in the *Kaiyuan Lu* reflect this approach. Most of these dubious texts enjoyed wide circulation and were not at risk of being lost. Their dissemination was either confined to particular sects or widespread among the general populace; however, within the framework of the orthodox Buddhist system, they were subjected to severe disdain and rejection. For example, regarding the *Gaowang Guanshiyin Jing* 高王觀世音經, the *Kaiyuan Shijiao Lu* states: "This is one of the old recordings of spurious and dubious texts. Although some compilations included it in the orthodox canon, both its language and content are manipulative. Therefore, this catalogue excludes it".[37] 是古舊錄中偽疑之經，周錄雖編入正，文理並涉人謀，故此錄除之不載 This clearly indicates that the emergence of extracanonical literature was primarily governed by the orthodox Buddhist establishment and official ideology. Consequently, even though Buddhist texts of dubious authenticity have been widely disseminated in society, they continue to be regarded as documents unworthy of formal inclusion, and the evaluative work undertaken by eminent monks over successive generations was aimed precisely at expunging such texts from the Canon to safeguard the purity of the Buddhist doctrinal system.

The existence of dubious scriptures reflects the complex situation that Buddhism faced during its process of indigenization in China. On one hand, these texts embody the unique interpretations and modes of acceptance of Buddhist doctrines found within Chinese popular belief; on the other, the orthodox Buddhist community has consistently maintained a vigilant stance in preserving the purity of its canonical system, striving to uphold the authority and orthodoxy of Buddhist scriptures. As a result, despite their widespread circulation among the people, these dubious texts have never been incorporated into the core of the Buddhist Canon, instead manifesting as "Extracanonical Buddhist Literature".

Of course, the emergence of Extracanonical Buddhist Literature is not limited to the aforementioned factors, and there is considerable overlap among them. For example, the exclusion of Sanjie Jiao texts from the Canon is partly due to the prohibitions they faced, while Sanjie Jiao monks, in addition to composing their own works, also fabricated a large

number of spurious scriptures. For instance, the *Shi Suo Fanzhe Yujia Fajing Jing* 示所犯者瑜伽法鏡經 composed by the Sanjie Jiao monk Shili 師利 is regarded as a spurious scripture; it states:

> This scripture is known, firstly, as the Imitative Dharma;
>
> secondly, as the Doubt-Resolving Dharma;
>
> thirdly, as the Dharma that Relieves and Sustains those bereft of kin or living in solitary circumstances;
>
> fourthly, as the Supreme Compassionate Method for the Lowest World;
>
> and fifthly, as the Yogācāra Dharma Mirror that Reveals Transgressions.[38]
>
> 此經一名像法，二名決疑，三名濟拔安養貧窮孤獨，四者最下世界悲田勝法，五者示所犯者瑜伽法鏡。

This scripture is, in fact, an expanded version of the *Xiangfa Jueyi Jing* 像法决疑经, which was already recognized as a common spurious scripture during the Northern Dynasties. This suggests that the *Shi Suo Fanzhe Yujia Fajing Jing* further developed upon an existing apocryphal text and was propagated under false attribution to the Buddha. This phenomenon demonstrates that the formation of extracanonical literature is not the result of a single factor, but rather the outcome of multiple intersecting influences, including prohibitions, religious bias, and the production of apocryphal scriptures. Consequently, Sanjie Jiao texts were restricted not only due to religious prejudice but also because they were associated with the creation of spurious scriptures, leading them to be classified as heretical and forming a distinct branch of extracanonical literature. These overlapping causes urge us to take a more comprehensive approach in understanding the complexity of Extracanonical Buddhist Literature within the broader Buddhist textual tradition, as well as the historical processes that led to its marginalization.

Overall, the evolution of Extracanonical Buddhist Literature from India to China not only reflects the mutual adaptation between culture and religion during the spread of Buddhism, but also embodies the diversity of Buddhist thought. In terms of differences, these are primarily evident in content and form. In India, Extracanonical Buddhist Literature was mostly recorded in Pali and Sanskrit, with its content covering early vinaya, doctrinal debates, and sectarian controversies. In contrast, Chinese extracanonical literature is predominantly written in Chinese and tends to emphasize practical aspects and meditative practices, reflecting Chinese Buddhism's closer alignment with Confucian ethical and moral values. Additionally, the religious contexts also differ. In India, the emergence of extracanonical literature was mainly due to sectarian divisions or geographical limitations, whereas in China, its formation is often linked to political oppression, selective translation practices, and the integration of indigenous religious and cultural traditions.

However, whether in India or China, Extracanonical Buddhist Literature shares a common ideological foundation. These texts all embody the essence of Buddhist doctrine—even though their forms of presentation and modes of interpretation differ according to diverse cultural and religious contexts. In the transmission and preservation of religious thought, these writings continue to uphold the core spirit of Buddhism, including fundamental teachings such as emptiness, pratītyasamutpāda (緣起), and the doctrine of no-self (anatman 無我). In addition, they share similar routes of dissemination. In both India and China, the transmission of extracanonical literature followed a comparable process—circulating through copies made by laypeople and through private instruction by monks—thereby ensuring that these texts continued to exist and evolve outside the mainstream religious canon.

4. Reflections on the Evolution of the Connotations of Extracanonical Buddhist Literature

In reviewing the historical evolution and connotations of extracanonical Buddhist literature from India to China, we gain insight into the complexity of the Buddhist canonical system and its changes and adaptations across different periods and regions. As a corpus that is intimately connected to, yet distinct from, the officially recognized Buddhist Canon, extracanonical literature is not merely a secondary body of texts excluded or overlooked during the development of the Canon. Rather, it serves as an important window into the diversity of Buddhist thought, religious transformation, and cultural exchange.

Firstly, at the level of scholarly value, extracanonical literature transcends the binary opposition between orthodox and heterodox. It offers us a unique perspective for reexamining the Buddhist canonical system. Traditional studies of religious scriptures often rely on the classification and systematization of orthodox texts—for example, the Tripiṭaka system (comprising the Sūtra Piṭaka, Vinaya Piṭaka, and Abhidharma Piṭaka) forms the core framework of Buddhist scriptures. However, the compilation and establishment of the orthodox Canon do not fully encompass or capture the entirety of Buddhist doctrine. The existence of extracanonical literature reminds us that Buddhist thought and practice extend beyond those texts formally incorporated into the Canon, revealing a richer array of manifestations within a broader cultural context.

Through a review of the history of extracanonical literature, we are prompted to transcend the dualistic framework of orthodox versus heterodox and rediscover ideas and practices that were neglected or marginalized during Buddhism's development. Particularly in the context of Chinese Buddhism, many indigenous sects and texts—having diverged from the Indian canonical system—failed to be incorporated into the Buddhist Canon. However, these works embody the unique developmental trajectories of Chinese Buddhism as it interacted with Confucian and Daoist cultures, thereby constituting vital resources for studying the indigenization and regionalization of Buddhism. For instance, although the Sanjie Jiao texts were officially banned, they reveal the richness and vitality of popular Buddhist practice. Additionally, the numerous Buddhist scriptures and ritual texts preserved in the Dunhuang manuscripts—which were not incorporated into the Canon—shed light on the spread and development of Buddhist doctrine in frontier regions, offering crucial clues as to how Buddhism adapted to varying social contexts and political environments. Thus, extracanonical literature is not merely a supplement to the orthodox Canon; it is a critical approach for uncovering the complexity of Buddhist thought. By delving into these texts, scholars can obtain a more comprehensive and multidimensional picture of the evolution of Buddhist religious thought—one that transcends a singular orthodox perspective and allows for a broader understanding of Buddhism's historical development.

Secondly, on a cultural level, extracanonical literature reveals the diversity of religious and cultural integration. It is a key resource for understanding how Buddhism adapted to various cultural contexts during its cross-cultural transmission. Since Buddhism was introduced from India to China, it underwent a prolonged process of indigenization. During this period, Buddhism profoundly interacted with and sometimes clashed against China's indigenous Confucian and Daoist thought. Extracanonical literature not only reflects this process of fusion but also documents how Buddhism transformed in response to Confucian ethics, Daoist philosophy, and traditional Chinese cultural values. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the history of Chinese Buddhism. Rather than simply replicating or accepting the ideological system of Indian Buddhism, Chinese Buddhism evolved into a distinct cultural form through continual absorption and transformation. The localized Buddhist practices, popular beliefs, and ritual systems preserved in extracanonical texts reveal the adaptability and flexibility of Buddhism under different cultural conditions. For

example, although the Platform Sutra has long been excluded from the orthodox Buddhist Canon, it encapsulates the core of Chan thought—emphasizing the nature of mind and sudden enlightenment—thereby reflecting the internal transformation and reformation of Chinese Buddhism in response to its own cultural milieu.

Furthermore, extracanonical literature also provides abundant material for understanding how Buddhism spread among various social strata. Many ritual texts, protective documents, and records of local Buddhist customs found within extracanonical works reveal the ways in which Buddhism merged with popular religious practices and customs. For instance, although the ritual texts in Pāli were not formally incorporated into the Canon, they played a significant role in everyday Buddhist life and ritual practice. Through these texts, researchers can gain a more detailed understanding of the functions of Buddhism within local communities, particularly regarding its role in popular belief.

Thus, extracanonical literature stands as a testament to the integration of Buddhism with local cultures. It not only reflects the diversity of Buddhist textual transmission but also provides crucial materials for understanding how Buddhism merged with local beliefs and social institutions during its cross-cultural spread. Through in-depth study of these texts, we can gain a more nuanced understanding of the multifaceted nature of Buddhist transmission and learn how it achieved balance and development across different historical periods and cultural contexts.

It should be noted that extracanonical literature also reflects religious diversity and interfaith dialogue from a global perspective. The study of extracanonical texts is not only historically significant, but also offers important insights for contemporary religious research. As globalization deepens, the exchange of religious and cultural ideas worldwide has become increasingly frequent and complex, ushering in an era of pluralistic dialogue in religious studies. In this context, the diversity and complexity embodied in extracanonical literature provide valuable lessons for understanding how religions adapt and evolve within cross-cultural settings.

On the one hand, extracanonical literature demonstrates the dynamic interplay between religious texts and faith practices. In the contemporary context of global religious dissemination, the dialogue and fusion between religious doctrines and local cultures remain critical topics. The study of extracanonical literature offers a perspective on how religious texts undergo a process of "recontextualization" within different cultural settings. In this process, these texts serve not only as carriers of doctrine but are also closely integrated with local beliefs and practices, thereby forming new religious cultural forms. Consequently, extracanonical literature reminds us that religious studies should not solely focus on the transmission and interpretation of orthodox scriptures; instead, greater attention should be given to the marginalized texts and practices that often best reflect the lived reality of religion within local societies.

On the other hand, the study of extracanonical literature also reminds us of how to engage in religious dialogue and coexistence in the face of religious diversity. Globalization has brought different religious traditions into contact and conflict, making the achievement of symbiosis and dialogue within a pluralistic religious landscape an important topic in contemporary religious studies. Many ideas and practices within extracanonical literature illustrate how Buddhism interacted with and borrowed from various religious cultures. In particular, when confronted with heterogeneous cultural influences, Buddhism did not adopt an entirely exclusionary stance; instead, it absorbed and transformed these elements to form its own unique doctrines and practices. This openness and inclusiveness offer valuable insights for contemporary interfaith dialogue.

Through the study of extracanonical literature, we can gain a clearer understanding that the transmission and evolution of religion is a dynamic process—not merely the dis-

semination of doctrines but also the mutual borrowing and integration of cultures. Therefore, extracanonical literature holds significant contemporary relevance in the context of globalization; it not only helps us comprehend the historical pathways of Buddhist propagation, but also offers valuable insights for contemplating cultural integration in modern religious dissemination.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, Z.G.; methodology, Z.G.; validation, Z.G. and S.W.; resources, Z.G.; writing—original draft preparation, Z.G.; writing—review and editing, S.W.; visualization, S.W.; supervision, Z.G.; project administration, Z.G.; funding acquisition, Z.G. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: National Social Science Fund Youth Project [隋唐至遼金時期房山石經"藏外文獻"整理與研究 (23CZJ005)]. Funder: National Social Science Fund Planning Office.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Notes

1 Previous scholarship on the formation of the Buddhist Canon is extensive. With regard to the Indian Canon, works by Japanese scholars provide systematic discussions, such as (Ono 1983; Mizuno 2018; Hirakawa 2018). In addition, Chinese scholars examine the formation and development of Indian Buddhist texts in depth, such as (Lü 2018; Yinshun 2011). Regarding the formation of the Chinese Buddhist Canon, see (Chikusa 2002; Fang 2006b; He and Li 2003; Li 2003; M. Zhang 1977), which includes seminal articles by Zhou Shujia 周叔迦, Ye Gongchuo 葉恭綽, and Jiang Weixin 蔣唯心. Through various methodologies and perspectives, these works reveal the complexity and far-reaching impact of the Canon's formation. They not only enrich Buddhist philology, textual criticism, and intellectual history, but also provide valuable sources and inspiration for further research. Nevertheless, comparative studies of the Indian and Chinese Canons remain relatively scarce, and truly comprehensive and systematic findings in this area are still lacking.

2 During his lifetime, Śākyamuni's Buddhist teachings were primarily disseminated orally. Given the inherent variability of oral transmission, in the three to four centuries following the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*, his disciples convened several communal recitations to unify the doctrines. Initially, the teachings were still preserved through collective oral agreement, but gradually they were committed to writing and assembled in a single compilation.

3 Historical records attest to four major councils. The First Council took place soon after the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* in Rājagṛha 王捨城, with an assembly of five hundred monks. Led by Mahākāśyapa, the monastic community aimed to preserve the Buddha's teachings. Together with other arhats, he organized a council to compile Śākyamuni's doctrines. During this gathering, Ānanda—renowned for his exceptional memory—recited the Buddha's discourses, while Upāli—recognized for his mastery of monastic discipline—recited the rules the Buddha had established for the community. Meanwhile, the assembled arhats examined both recitations for any errors. Consequently, the Buddha's teachings were compiled as the Sūtra Piṭaka, and the rules for the community as the Vinaya Piṭaka. The Second Council occurred roughly a century later, around the third century B.C., focusing again on the vinaya. It affirmed the so-called "ten unlawful practices" ("Dasa Vatthūni") and is therefore referred to as the Council of Vaiśālī, or the Council of Seven Hundred. Disputes during this council over the interpretation of the Buddha's teachings resulted in a fundamental schism that produced two major schools, which later branched into some twenty sects. The Third Council took place during the reign of King Aśoka, convened by a thousand monks under the leadership of Moggaliputtatissa in Pāṭaliputra 華氏城. The Fourth Council, according to the Northern Buddhist tradition, was held under the Kuṣāṇa ruler King Kaniṣka, whereas the Southern Buddhist tradition designates a gathering of five hundred monks in nineteenth-century Sri Lanka as the Fourth Council.

4 *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經, Vol.25, p. 70a (T1509), *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra*, Roll 2.

5 In fact, this was the second Buddhist Council held in Sri Lanka. (According to Sri Lankan historical records, the first council in Sri Lankan Buddhist history was led by Elder Mośhadha 摩哂陀長老, during which the teachings transmitted by the monks were consolidated into a relatively stable form.) However, due to its momentous significance and its faithful preservation of the early transmission of Buddhist scriptures, this council laid a solid foundation for Buddhism on a global scale. Moreover, it was

the large-scale council held after the "Third Council" of Emperor Ashoka's Mauryan period in India, and is therefore known as the "Fourth Council" in Buddhist history.

6 (Zheng 2015).

7 (Xuanzang 2015, p. 631).

8 (Xuanzang 2015, vol. 9, p. 448).

9 (Ci Yi 慈怡 1999).

10 *Taishō Tripiṭaka*, vol. 49, p. 3.

11 It is not appropriate to simply criticize these texts on the basis of textual instability. In the manuscript era, the copying and transmission of texts were inevitably influenced by different times, regions, and scribes, resulting in variations—a phenomenon that is universal. For example, until Liu Xiang 劉向 of the Western Han Dynasty compiled the canonical works and composed the *Bielu* 別錄, many texts from the pre-Qin period, having been repeatedly copied, had not yet reached a fixed form. Even modern archaeological discoveries reveal numerous discrepancies among texts. Yet, it was precisely through this process that many texts gradually became "canonical". Thus, early recognition of a classic was based more on the acceptance of a particular school or ideological system than on strict adherence to a fixed text. Although the contents of a classic may change during the transmission process, its core ideas and doctrinal spirit are maintained and widely accepted by both schools and devotees. This acceptance has endowed these texts with their legitimacy and authority. In this way, the flexibility of classic texts in their early stages did not hinder their "canonization", but rather reflected the vitality of the ideas and the diversity of their dissemination.

12 In the first half of the 7th century, Islam—originating in West Asia—began its eastward expansion. By the latter half of that century, several Islamic states that had been established in Iran, Central Asia, and Afghanistan, and India gradually came under the pressure of Islamic forces, which in turn dealt a severe blow to Buddhism. Regarding the timing of Buddhism's decline in India, a representative view is found in Akira Hirakawa's 平川彰 *A History of Indian Buddhism* 印度佛教史: "Major monastic institutions such as Nālandā, Chaoyan Temple 超岩寺, and Feixing Temple (also known as Oudan Dō Buli Temple, 歐丹多不梨寺) were successively destroyed, and the learned monks from these temples dispersed to regions including China, Tibet, Nepal, as well as South India, Java, and Burma. Eventually, even the remaining Buddhist community in Bengal disintegrated. In general, the destruction of Chaoyan Temple in 1203 AD is regarded as marking the demise of Buddhism in India". Various explanations have been offered for its decline. For instance, Sheng Yen's 聖嚴 *A History of Indian Buddhism* 印度佛教史 states: "Firstly, Buddhism, in its attempt to accommodate the heterodox in India, ended up merging with them, eventually becoming assimilated into Hinduism. Secondly, the repeated invasions and complete devastation by Muslim armies left Buddhism without any refuge". Lin Chengjie's 林承節 *History of India* 印度史 further explains: "I. The monasteries had become dominated by powerful feudal lords, and the monks grew corrupt and degenerate; II. Competition from Hinduism; III. Buddhism began to align itself more closely with Hinduism, thereby losing its distinctive character; IV. Buddhism lost its political support".

13 "The academic community generally classifies ancient and medieval Indian philosophical schools into orthodox and non-orthodox traditions. Orthodox philosophy represents the mainstream of Indian philosophy and adheres to the religious and philosophical tenets of Brahmanism. It primarily consists of six schools: the Vaiśeṣika school, the Sāṅkhya school, the Nyāya school, the Yoga school, the Mīmāṃsā school, and the Vedānta school." See (Cheng 2022).

14 The "Six Teachers" (*ṣaḍvāda tīrthika*) refer to six renowned heterodox scholars who lived during the time of the Buddha. They are: Pūraṇa Kāśyapa 普那迦迦葉, Maskārī Gośāliputra末伽梨拘捨梨, Ajita Keśakambala 阿耆多翅捨欽婆羅, Kakuda Kātyāyana 伽耶迦沙閣, Sañjaya Vairatīputra刪闍耶毗羅胝子, and Nigrantha Jñātiputra尼乾陀若提子. Each of them represented different religious and philosophical viewpoints, ranging from materialism, fatalism, and non-causality to skepticism and asceticism. These ideas exerted considerable influence on the philosophical and religious landscape of their time. However, through debates with these doctrines, the Buddha gradually established the core tenets of Buddhism. In particular, by critically engaging with these teachings, he emphasized the principles of karma and retribution, dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*), and the Middle Way (madhyamā-pratipad) as fundamental aspects of Buddhist practice. The presence of these non-Buddhist doctrines thus played a role in shaping and further refining Buddhist thought.

15 The "Six Orthodox Schools of Indian Philosophy", rooted in Brahmanism, are considered the philosophical foundation of later Hinduism. These schools not only acknowledge the authority of the *Vedas* but also seek to interpret their meaning through philosophical inquiry and debate. Their canonical texts cover areas such as metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and religious practice, making them the most representative body of literature among the non-Buddhist traditions of India.

16 Scholars speculate that Jaimini was likely a scholar of Vedic rituals or possibly the name of an ancient lineage rather than the direct author of the *Mīmāṃsā Sūtra*. This text gradually took shape over a long period, and Jaimini may have been one of its early compilers. The *Mīmāṃsā Sūtra* is believed to have been composed earlier than the *Vedānta Sūtra* 吠檀多經, also known as the *Brahma Sūtra*, approximately around 100 CE. This hypothesis suggests that the formation of ancient scriptures was rarely the work of a single author but rather the result of collective compilation and long-term accumulation by multiple scholars. This aligns with the traditional Indian practice of textual compilation, which emphasizes the transmission and development of **collective wisdom.** See (Chattopadhyaya 1980).

17 The exact date of the compilation of the *Brahma Sūtra* remains a subject of debate among scholars. Generally, it is inferred from its critiques of Mādhyamaka and Yogācāra Buddhism that it was composed sometime after Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu, approximately between 200 and 450 CE. However, some scholars suggest that, based on the textual style, the *Brahma Sūtra* might have been composed around the turn of the Common Era.

18 See (Yao 2011).

19 See (Huang 2014).

20 Buddhist scriptures frequently record dialogues in which the Buddha challenges the doctrines of heterodox traditions, thereby indirectly preserving their philosophical perspectives. For instance, in the *Śramanyaphala Sūtra* 沙門果經, the Buddha criticizes the ascetic practices of non-Buddhist traditions. Some of these heterodox schools advocated extreme austerities, believing that such practices could lead to liberation from the cycle of birth and death. In response, the Buddha discussed the ineffectiveness of this approach and introduced the concept of the Middle Way (madhyamā-pratipadā), which avoids both sensual indulgence and unnecessary self-mortification. This text also discusses the Six Teachers (ṣaḍvāda tīrthika), including Kakuda Kātyāyana and other well-known heterodox leaders, whose doctrines the Buddha critically examined through dialogue. Similarly, in the *Madhyamāgama*, the Buddha engages in a discussion with Śāriputra, analyzing two major philosophical errors held by non-Buddhist traditions: annihilationism (uccheda-dṛṣṭi 斷見)—the belief that nothing persists beyond death; and eternalism (śāśvata-dṛṣṭi 常見)—the view that an eternal, unchanging self exists. These scriptures have been preserved as part of the Buddhist canon and continue to be transmitted worldwide.

21 Buddhaghosa was born in Magadha (present-day Bihar, India) and is traditionally believed to have been born into a Brahmin family before ordaining as a Buddhist monk and studying the Dharma. He later traveled to Sri Lanka (Ceylon), where he studied and wrote Buddhist commentaries at Mahāvihāra in Anurādhapura. During his studies, Buddhaghosa immersed himself in Pāli scriptures and aspired to systematize the philosophical interpretation of the Pāli Tipiṭaka and its commentaries. His most renowned contribution was the composition of numerous commentarial texts and treatises, providing a comprehensive exegetical framework for the Vinaya Piṭaka (Disciplinary Code), Sutta Piṭaka (Discourses), and Abhidhamma Piṭaka (Higher Teachings) within the Pāli Canon. His works laid the foundation for the classical system of Pāli Buddhist exegesis.

22 The term "Paritta" in Pāli means protection or safeguard. Paritta literature originates from the Sutta Piṭaka of the *Pāli Tipiṭaka*, particularly from certain widely circulated Buddhist scriptures that are believed to possess special protective efficacy. Commonly recited Paritta texts include: *Mahāmaṅgala Sutta* (Discourse on Blessings 吉祥經), *Ratana Sutta* (Discourse on the Jewel Treasures 寶經), *Karaṇīya Mettā Sutta* (Discourse on Loving-Kindness 慈經), *Mettā Sutta* (Discourse on Benevolent Love 護愛經), *Khanda Sutta* (Discourse on the Snake 蛇經), and *Dhajagga Sutta* (Discourse on the Banner for Protection 防護經).

23 Dutch scholar Erik Zürcher has discussed how Buddhism, after its transmission from India to China, adapted and transformed continuously, eventually taking root in Chinese culture and becoming a part of the Chinese philosophical system. Rather than saying that Buddhism "conquered" China, it is more accurate to say that Buddhism, through its fusion and interaction with native Chinese culture, underwent its own process of "transformation" and "adaptation". In this process, Buddhism not only changed China's religion, philosophy, and socio-cultural aspects but also underwent significant transformations through its mutual influence with Chinese culture. For more details, see (Zürcher 2013).

24 See (Wang 1984).

25 *Taishō Tripiṭaka*, vol. 50, p. 2060.

26 (Yao 2014).

27 (Sengyou 1995).

28 (Ding 2015).

29 (Wei 1973).

30 (Fang 2006a).

31 Sanjie Jiao is a Buddhist sect founded by the Sui Dynasty monk Xin Xing (信行, 540–594), which emerged in the late 6th to early 7th century. Its core doctrine divided the propagation and practice of the Buddha's teachings into three periods—orthodox Dharma, imitative Dharma, and degenerate Dharma—asserting that the present era had already entered the period of degenerate Dharma, in which traditional methods of practice were no longer effective. Xin Xing advocated universal salvation, emphasized the equality between monastics and laypeople, and simplified cultivation methods by promoting accessible practices such as mantra recitation, almsgiving, and Buddha recitation to accumulate merit. Sanjie Jiao actively engaged in charitable and social relief activities, such as establishing free soup kitchens, engaging in widespread almsgiving, and promoting repentance ceremonies, thereby exerting a positive influence on society. However, its doctrines conflicted with traditional Buddhist Vinaya principles and were regarded as heterodox. Emperor Gaozu of Tang ordered the suppression of Sanjie Jiao in 626 CE, leading to the loss of most of its canonical texts. See (Z. Zhang 2013).

32 China has historically placed great emphasis on the preservation of its classical texts, yet large-scale incidents of textual destruction were inevitable. For example, in 583 CE, under Emperor Wen of Sui, Secretary Supervisor Niu Hong 牛弘 submitted a memorial that cited five major historical episodes of severe loss of texts: first, the book burning ordered by Emperpr Qin Shi

Huang; second, the incursion of the Red Eyebrows 赤眉軍 into the heartland of the Western Han; third, Dong Zhuo's 董卓 relocation of the capital; fourth, the disturbances caused by Liu Shi 劉石; and fifth, the invasion of Ying 郢 by Wei army during the late Liang period, during which Emperor Yuan of Liang ordered the burning of 140,000 fascicles. In the Ming Dynasty, Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 further proposed a continuation of the "Five Disasters": the chaos at the end of the Sui Dynasty, the An Shi Rebellion 安史之亂, Huang Chao's 黃巢 capture of Chang'an, the Jingkang 靖康 Incident, and the entry of the Boyan army 伯顏君 into Lin'an at the end of the Southern Song—collectively summarized as the "Ten Disasters". It can be said that, since the introduction of Buddhist scriptures, they too have repeatedly suffered from such "book disasters".

[33] Theravāda Buddhism maintains strict criteria for canonical inclusion, with its recognized scriptures primarily based on the Pāli Tripiṭaka system. The accepted texts are largely those reportedly spoken directly by the Buddha or compiled by the early monastic community. On this basis, canonical collections that emphasize emptiness—such as the Prajñāpāramitā texts exemplified by the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra* 大般若經—and those that stress the doctrine of Tathāgatagarbha—such as the *Lengyan Jing* 楞嚴經—are excluded from the Theravāda canon because they diverge from the original teachings and were compiled at a later date. Consequently, these texts are regarded as heterodox or as "later additions".

[34] Under Emperor Shengzong of Liao, in 1000 CE, Quanxiao was commissioned by imperial order to preside over and direct the printing of the Liao Canon and, at the emperor's command, to delete and burn Chan sutras and treatises—chiefly the *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* and the *Baolin Zhuan* 寶林傳. The Goryeo monk Yitian 義天, in his *Feishan Biezhuan Yiba* 飛山別傳議跋, also expressed his approval of this practice: "Alas! The ancient Chan and the contemporary Chan differ both in name and in substance. The ancient so-called Chan was practiced by those who cultivated Chan through the teachings; whereas the contemporary Chan of that era is propagated by those who merely expound on Chan apart from the teachings. Those who merely speak of Chan cling to its name while neglecting its essence, whereas those who practice Chan derive its meaning from proper interpretation. To remedy the prevailing trend of deceit and pretense and to restore the refined and genuine path of the ancient sages, Master Zhu's 珠公 discourse is of utmost significance. Recently, the Emperor of Liao has issued an edict to the relevant authorities, ordering the scholar monk Quanxiao to re-establish the Canon—so that the so-called *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* and *Baolin Zhuan* have all been burned, with their spurious portions removed. The regulations are detailed in the three volumes of the *Chongxiu Zhenyuan Xulu* 重修貞元續錄. This clearly demonstrates the Buddha's entrusted intention and the emperor's commitment to safeguarding his teachings. Yet the Chan doctrines currently practiced in China involve much heterodoxy. This is why the people of Haidong suspect that there is no one in Huaxia (China 華夏) capable of teaching Chan; however, upon hearing Feishan's distinguished discourse, they realized that a dharmapala indeed exists. " 甚矣!古禪之與今禪，名實相遼也。古之所謂禪者，藉教習禪者也；今之所謂禪者，離教說禪者也。說禪者執其名而遺其實，習禪者因其詮而得其旨。救今人矯詐之弊，復古聖精醇之道，珠公論辨斯其至焉。近者大遼皇帝詔有司，令義學沙門詮曉等再定《經錄》，世所謂《六祖壇經》《寶林傳》等皆被焚，除其偽妄。條例則《重修貞元續錄》三卷中載之詳矣。有以見我佛付囑之心，帝王弘護之志。而此世中國所行禪宗章句，多涉異端。此所以海東人師疑華夏無人，及見飛山高議，乃知有護法菩薩焉。

[35] (Zhixu 2015).

[36] (Guan and Huang 2017).

[37] (Zhisheng 2018).

[38] (Tang 2000).

References

Buswell, Robert Evan, ed. 1990. *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Cao, Ling 曹凌. 2011. *Zhongguo Fojiao Yiweijing Zonglu* 中國佛教疑偽經綜錄 *[Comprehensive Record of Apocryphal Chinese Buddhist Scriptures]*. Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House 上海古籍出版社.

Chattopadhyaya, Debiprasad. 1980. *Yindu Zhexue* 印度哲學 *[Indian Philosophy]*. Beijing: Commercial Press 商務印書館, p. 51.

Chikusa, Masayoshi 竺沙雅章. 2002. A History of the Chinese Buddhist Canon: With Special Reference to the Song-Yuan Editions 漢文大蔵経の歴史：特に宋元版大蔵経について. *Sidō Bunko Ronshū* 斯道文庫論集 37: 1–3.

Cheng, Jianhua 成建華. 2022. *Lun Yindu Chuantong Zhexue Duoyuan Siwei Moshi* 論印度傳統哲學多元思維模式 [*On the Pluralistic Thinking Model of Indian Traditional Philosophy*]. *Philosophical Research* 哲學研究 12: 116–22.

Ci Yi 慈怡. 1999. *Foguang Da Cidian* 佛光大詞典 *[The Fo Guang Encyclopedia of Buddhism]*. Taipei: Fo Guang Cultural Enterprise Co. 佛光文化事業有限公司.

Dao Xuan 道宣. 2014. *Xu Gao Seng Zhuan* 續高僧傳 *[Further Biographies of Eminent Monks]*. Edited by Shaolin Guo 郭紹林. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中華書局.

Ding, Fubao 丁福保. 2015. *Foxue Da Cidian* 佛學大詞典 *[The Great Dictionary of Buddhist Studies]*. Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House, p. 429.

Fang, Guangchang 方廣錩. 1998. *Zang Wai Fo Jiao Wen Xian* 藏外佛教文獻 *[Extracanonical Buddhist Literature]*. Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House 宗教文化出版社, vol. 6.

Fang, Guangzhen 方廣錩. 2006a. *Dunhuang Yiruzhang Fojiao Wenxian Jianmu* 敦煌已入藏佛教文獻簡目 [*A Brief Catalog of Buddhist Texts Already in the Canon at Dunhuang*]. *Dunhuang Research* 敦煌研究, 86–99.

Fang, Guangchang 方廣錩. 2006b. *Zhongguo Xieben Dazangjing Yanjiu* 中國寫本大藏經研究 *[Research on Chinese Manuscript Canons]*. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Press 上海古籍出版社, p. 208.

Guan, Zhongyue 管仲樂, and Yunhe Huang 黃雲鶴. 2017. *Fangshan Shijing Suocang Yiweijing Luelun* 房山石經所藏"疑偽經"略論 [*A Brief Discussion on the 'Dubious and Spurious Scriptures' Preserved in the Fangshan Stone Scriptures*]. *Journal of Research on Ancient Texts Organization and Studies* 古籍整理研究學刊 190: 97–101.

He, Mei 何梅, and Fuhua Li 李富華. 2003. *Hanwen Fojiao Dazangjing Yanjiu* 漢文佛教大藏經研究 *[Studies on the Chinese Buddhist Canon]*. Beijing: Religious Culture Press 宗教文化出版社.

Hirakawa, Akira 平川彰. 2018. *Yindu Fojiao Shi* 印度佛教史 *[A History of Indian Buddhism]*. Beijing: Beijing United Publishing Company 北京聯合出版公司.

Huang, Xinchuan 黃心川. 2014. *Yindu Zhexue Tongshi* 印度哲學通史 *[A Comprehensive History of Indian Philosophy]*. Zhengzhou: Elephant Press 大象出版社, p. 389.

Li, Jining 李際寧. 2003. *Fojiao Dazangjing Yanjiu Lungao* 佛教大藏經研究論稿 *[Collected Essays on the Chinese Buddhist Canon]*. Beijing: Religious Culture Press 宗教文化出版社.

Lü, Cheng 吕澂. 2018. *Yindu Foxue Yuanliu Luejiang* 印度佛學源流略講 *[A Brief Discussion of the Sources and Evolution of Indian Buddhism]*. Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Publishing House 上海人民出版社.

Mizuno, Kōgen 水野弘元. 2018. *Jingdian Chengli Shi* 经典成历史 *[The Formation History of the Scriptures]*. Shanghai: East China Normal University Press 華東師範大學出版社.

Ono, Genmyō 小野玄妙. 1983. *Fojiao Jingdian Zonglun* 佛教經典總論 *[A General Treatise on Buddhist Scriptures]*. Taipei: Xinwenfeng Publishing Company 新文豐出版公司.

Sengyou 僧佑. 1995. *Chu San Zang Ji Ji* 出三藏記集 *[A Collection of Records Concerning the Translation of the Tripitaka]*. Edited by Jinren Su 蘇晉仁 and Lianzi Xiao 蕭煉子. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.

Tang, Yongtong 湯用彤. 2000. *Tang Yongtong Quanji* 湯用彤全集 *[The Complete Works of Tang Yongtong]*. Shijiazhuang: Hebei Renmin Publishing House 河北人民出版社, vol. 1, p. 611.

Wang, Wenyan 王文顏. 1984. *Fodian Hanyi Zhi Yanjiu* 佛典漢譯之研究 *[A Study of the Chinese Translation of Buddhist Scriptures]*. Taipei: Tianhua Publishing House 天華出版社, pp. 58–64.

Wei, Zheng 魏徵. 1973. *Sui Shu: Jing Ji Zhi* 隋書·經籍志 *[Sui Shu: Records of Scriptures and Catalogues]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.

Xuanzang. 2015. *Datang Xiyu JI* 大唐西域記 *[Great Tang Records on the Western Regions]: Collated Edition*. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Press, p. 631.

Yao, Weiqun 姚衛群. 2011. *Fojiao Dui Waidao De Pipan Ji Yiyi* 佛教對"外道"的批判及其意義 [*Buddhism's Critique of 'Heterodox Doctrines' and Its Significance*]. *Religious Studies* 宗教研究, 113.

Yao, Mingda 姚名達. 2014. *Zhongguo Muluxue Shi* 中國目錄學史 *[A History of Chinese Cataloging Studies]*. Beijing: The Commercial Press, p. 226.

Yinshun 印順. 2011. *Yuanshi Fojiao Shengdian Zhi Jicheng* 原始佛教聖典之集成 *[The Compilation of Early Buddhist Canon]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中華書局.

Zhang, Mantao 張曼濤, ed. 1977. *Dazangjing Yanjiu Huibian* 大藏經研究匯編 *[Collected Essays on Buddhist Canon Studies]*. Taipei: Dacheng Cultural Press 台北大乘文化出版社.

Zhang, Zong 張總. 2013. *Zhongguo Sanjiejiao Shi* 中國三階教史 *[History of Chinese Sanjie Jiao]*. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press 中國社會科學出版社.

Zheng, Xiaojun 鄭筱筠. 2015. *Shijie Fojiao Tongshi——Sililanka He Dongnanya Fojiao* 世界佛教通史——斯里蘭卡和東南亞佛教 *[A Comprehensive History of World Buddhism—Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia]*. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press 中國社會科學出版社, vol. 12, pp. 15–16.

Zhisheng 智昇. 2018. *Kaiyuan Shijiao Lu* 開元釋教錄 *[The Kaiyuan Catalogue of Buddhist Scriptures]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, vol. 4, p. 1778.

Zhixu 智旭. 2015. *Yuezang Zhijin: Fanli* 閱藏知津·凡例 *[Guide to the Buddhist Canon: Prefatory Remarks]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company 中華書局, p. 5.

Zürcher, Erik. 2013. *Fojiao Zhengfu Zhongguo* 佛教征服中國 *[Buddhism Conquers China]*. Nanjing: Jiangsu Renmin Publishing House 江蘇人民出版社.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.