

Article

Zhiyan's 智儼 Theory of Suchness (Ch. *Zhenru* 真如) and the Dependent Arising of the One Vehicle of the Distinct Teaching: With a Focus on the Influence of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (Ch. *Jiujing Yisheng Baoxing Lun* 究竟一乘寶性論)

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Abstract: Zhiyan 智儼 (602–668) is considered the second patriarch of the Chinese Huayan 華嚴 (Jp. *Kegon*) school. Zhiyan gave his scholarly attention to the Dilun School 地論宗 and Shelun School 攝論宗. By his period, the reunification of the North and South had permitted the Dilun and Shelun lineages to begin to merge, and the texts on which they were based had a common origin in the Indian Yogācāra and Tathāgatagarbha. In this article, I focus on Zhiyan's conceptual innovations and their background. My chief concerns are twofold: the first is to review several terms and teachings as representative examples of the creative practice of Zhiyan and the second is to identify his roots in the earlier traditions of Indian and Chinese Buddhism. I focus on the translation and understanding of the term *zhenru* 真如 (Skt. *tathatā*; suchness/thusness), which is a crucial expression used in descriptions of ultimate truth in Buddhism. By investigating the terms through the lens of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (=RGV), I consider what *tathatā*, *dhātu* and *gotra* signified in their Indian usage and how these meanings evolved in the process of the appropriation of these concepts in China, especially in Zhiyan's writings. Furthermore, through this analysis, I aim to explore Zhiyan's attitude towards the *Jiujing yisheng baoxing lun* 究竟一乘寶性論 (=BXL), the Chinese translation of the RGV, and examine how he absorbed and utilized this significant treatise, which was compiled in India and translated in Northern China. We cannot find even one clear interpretation defining suchness as unconditioned dharma in the *Dasheng qixin lun* 大乘起信論 (=AF; Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith). In the AF, it is stated that suchness is initially pure. However, due to the fumigation of ignorance, the marks and features of defilement will appear on pure suchness. Suchness, being connected with foundation consciousness, has been regarded as the foundation or origin of conditioned arising in the *She dasheng lun chao* 攝大乘論抄 (T2806), a significant commentary on the *She dasheng lun* 攝大乘論 translated by Paramārtha 真諦 (499–569), who has been associated with the AF. Building on this trend in the interpretation of suchness, Zhiyan employs both the AF and the BXL to expound his theory of suchness. He initially utilizes the theory of suchness from the AF and the BXL to argue that all phenomena, including delusion, could arise from suchness. Zhiyan asserts the fumigation/perfume of suchness. The background of Zhiyan's theory of suchness is based on the AF. However, while the AF only mentions the fumigation/perfume of suchness, Zhiyan adds that suchness does not inherently maintain its self-nature but arises conditionally. This marks a significant difference, or development, between the theory of suchness in the AF and that in Zhiyan's Huayan doctrinal system. In my view, the answer lies in the BXL, which Zhiyan himself regards as a key text alongside the AF as the basis for his theory of suchness. Zhiyan finds an intimation of the precious truth in the commentaries of Huiguang 慧光, who was a disciple of Ratnamati, the translator of the BXL, and the founder of the southern branch of the Dilun School. Zhiyan finds the doctrine of infinite dependent arising according to the one vehicle of the distinct teaching (Ch. *biejiao yisheng* 別教一乘) in Huiguang's commentaries. It indicates that the renderings and interpretations of Ratnamati and Huiguang seem to have deeply influenced Zhiyan. For a long time, many scholars have believed that the RGV had only a minimal impact on East Asian Buddhism, and few have pointed out its influence on Zhiyan. However, through the analysis in this article, I find that Zhiyan places significant importance on the RGV and its Chinese translation BXL.



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Keywords: Zhiyan 智儼; the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (Ch. *Jiujing yisheng baoxing lun*); the *Dasheng qixin lun*; Zhenru 真如 (Skt. *tathatā*; suchness/thusness); the one vehicle of the distinct teaching

1. Introduction

How and to what extent did the fundamental religious concepts and principles that had governed pre-Sui 隋 Buddhism give way to the new set of concepts and principles that constitute early Huayan 華嚴 (Jp. Kegon)?¹ This question can be answered by focusing on the crucial role played in the process of transformation by a Buddhist thinker, the monk Zhiyan 智儼 (602–668). In this article, my chief concerns are twofold: the first is to review several terms and teachings as representative examples of the creative use to which Zhiyan put this heritage and the second is to identify his roots in the earlier traditions of Indian and Chinese Buddhism. In other words, to what extent were Zhiyan’s conceptual innovations the response of a Chinese mind to an Indian tradition?

Zhiyan is considered the second patriarch of the Chinese Huayan school. His first and perhaps most influential teacher was Dushun 杜順 (557–640). In 1933, Tokiwa Daijō 常盤大定 asserted Dushun’s claim to the founding status of the Chinese Huayan tradition. (Tokiwa 1933, pp. 1–96) In 1934, however, Suzuki Munetada 鈴木宗忠 maintained that it was actually Zhiyan himself who was the first patriarch of the Chinese Huayan tradition and that Dushun had little to do with Huayan Buddhism and was only Zhiyan’s tonsure master. (Suzuki 1934, pp. 1–128) After this, some scholars still accepted Dushun as the first Chinese Huayan patriarch, albeit slightly more cautiously. For this reason, in this article, I focus on Zhiyan’s conceptual innovations and their background in order to explore some innovations and characteristics of early Huayan tradition. This is also important because the innovations that were to constitute the subsequent new Buddhism of the Sui Dynasty were the creations of those critical Buddhist reformers. Undoubtedly, Zhiyan is one of the most representative figures among these reformers, and his actual influence surpassed that of his teacher, Dushun. Additionally, Zhiyan was the actual founder of early Huayan doctrine in China.

As Chinese Buddhists advanced in their studies, they increasingly encountered troubling barriers with greater regularity. By Zhiyan’s period, there were thus many to whom the world of Buddhist learning seemed not an ordered cosmos but a vast welter. There was too much to be learned, and more was finding its way to China every year. Furthermore, an increasing focus on the pre-digested doctrines of the *śāstras*, as opposed to the *sūtras*, literature tended to force Chinese minds to adopt Indian thoughts. Among these *śāstras*, we find the *Jiujing yisheng baoxing lun* 究竟一乘寶性論 (=BXL), which was translated from Sanskrit into Chinese before Zhiyan’s birth.

The *Ratnagotravibhāga* (=RGV; Ch. *Jiujing yisheng baoxing lun* 究竟一乘寶性論; Treatise on the Jewel Nature of the Ultimate Single Vehicle) is a representative Indian Buddhist scripture on Tathāgatagarbha (Ch. *Rulaizang* 如來藏; womb/embryo for the buddhahood) thought. The RGV, whose full formal title is *Ratnagotravibhāga Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra*, is esteemed in both India and Tibet,² with a number of commentaries on the text existing in Tibetan Buddhism.³ Comparatively few commentaries, however, have been undertaken in East Asia. For a long time, there has been a stereotypical view in academia that the RGV did not have much influence on East Asian Buddhism due to the lack of Chinese commentaries on this text. However, in this article, I will re-examine the profound influence of the RGV on Zhiyan, which is its primary purpose. In other words, previous studies have not directly indicated Zhiyan’s regards for the RGV or its influence on his Huayan thought system. Therefore, this article will re-examine the close relationship between the RGV and Zhiyan.

As a specific approach, I will focus on the translation and understanding of the term *zhenru* 真如 (Skt. *tathatā*; Jp. *shinnyo*; Suchness/thusness), which is a crucial expression used in descriptions of ultimate truth in Buddhism, found in the BXL, the Chinese translation of the RGV, and Zhiyan’s writings. By investigating the term through the lens of the

RGV and other Sanskrit texts translated into Chinese,⁴ I consider what *tathatā*, *dhātu*, and *gotra* signified in their Indian usage and how these meanings evolved in the process of the appropriation of these concepts in China, especially in Zhiyan's writings. Furthermore, through this analysis, I aim to explore Zhiyan's attitude towards the BXL and examine how he absorbed and utilized this significant treatise, which was compiled in India and translated in Northern China.

2. Suchness (Ch. *zhenru* 真如) in the *Dasheng Qixin Lun* 大乘起信論 and the Shelun School 攝論宗

Generally speaking, according to the traditional understanding of the history of Chinese Buddhist thought in academia, the *Dasheng qixin lun* 大乘起信論 (=AF; Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith) had a significant influence on the Dilun School 地論宗,⁵ the Shelun School 攝論宗,⁶ and early Huayan tradition. Among these, Zhiyan was also deeply influenced by the ideas in the AF, which consequently began to exert a continuous impact on the history of Huayan thought in China, starting with Zhiyan. Moreover, while academia has long believed that the RGV had little influence on East Asian Buddhism, the AF is considered one of the most influential texts for East Asian Buddhism. Given this profound impact, when examining Zhiyan's interpretation of suchness, we must first consider the relevant interpretations within the AF.

The AF, an indigenous Chinese composition that purports to be an Indian Buddhist composition, is one of the most influential texts in the history of East Asian Buddhism. Even if the specific circumstances of its creation are still unclear, the view that this treatise is an original Chinese composition is now prevalent among scholars. Meanwhile, for more than one hundred years, the text served as a source of knowledge of Buddhism in the West thanks to a number of English translations.⁷

As is widely known, Suzuki Daisetsu 鈴木大拙 concludes that the key concern of the AF is the discussion of ultimate reality, referred to as suchness, which is closely related to Tathāgatagarbha in this text. In East Asian Buddhism, both suchness and Tathāgatagarbha are always regarded as synonyms of buddha nature (Ch. *foxing* 佛性) (Suzuki 1900, p. 43).

It appears that the concept of suchness in the AF is associated with delusion and affliction. In this regard, consider the following excerpt from the AF:

Someone heard that it is explained in the sutra that all types of phenomena (dharma; defiled states) related to birth and death in this world are based on (on the ground of) Tathāgatagarbha, and that all types of phenomena (defiled states) are therefore not independent of suchness. However, lacking understanding of the true meaning of these statements, they mistakenly believe that Tathāgatagarbha literally contains all types of defiled states related to birth and death. How should we correct this? There are as many merits, virtues and pure excellent qualities as there are grains of sand [in the Ganges River] in Tathāgatagarbha from the very beginning. They are not independent from, severed from, or different from suchness. It cannot be separated from suchness.

一切世間生死染法皆依如來藏而有，一切諸法不離真如。以不解故，謂如來藏自體具有一切世間生死等法。云何對治？以如來藏從本已來唯有過恒沙等諸淨功德，不離不斷不異真如義故。⁸

According to this passage, the theory of Tathāgatagarbha is akin to that of suchness. It is also noteworthy that while suchness itself denotes pure existence, defiled phenomena are not separated from it. In other words, all types of phenomena, including defiled states, are not independent of or different from suchness.

In addition to the association between suchness and delusion/affliction, in the AF, the concept of the fumigation/perfume of suchness (Ch. *zhenru xunxi* 真如熏習) also stands out as a distinctive feature of the text.

The pure [state of] suchness certainly has no defilement. However, if this pure suchness is permeated by ignorance, then the marks/features of defilement ap-

pear on suchness. If the defiled ignorance, lacking any purifying form itself, is permeated by suchness, it will come to have a purifying influence.

真如淨法實無於染，但以無明而熏習故，則有染相。無明染法實無淨業，但以真如而熏習故，則有淨用。⁹

In the above passage from the AF, it is stated that suchness is initially pure. However, due to the fumigation of ignorance, the marks and features of defilement will appear on pure suchness. All types of phenomena, including defiled states, are not independent of or different from suchness. According to Takasaki Jikidō 高崎直道, *tathatā* was typically regarded as unconditioned dharma in Indian Abhidharma Buddhism. However, we cannot find even one clear interpretation defining *zhenru* as unconditioned dharma in the AF.¹⁰ In this text, which appeared later than the translation of the RGV into Chinese, suchness is categorized into emptiness (*kong* 空) and non-emptiness (*bukong* 不空).¹¹ This represents a significant turning point in the interpretation of suchness in East Asian Buddhism.

The interpretation of *zhenru* in the AF differs somewhat from the concept of *tathatā* in Indian Buddhism. This raises a question: can we find any background or basis for the AF's interpretation of suchness within the history of Chinese Buddhist thought? In my view, the answer lies in the RGV. This will be discussed in depth in the next section of this article.

It should be added here that there is an undeniable connection between the AF and the Dilun School. However, the AF itself was likely not influenced by the Dilun School, whereas the Dilun School was significantly influenced by the AF. According to Ōtake, the AF does not show any influence of the thoughts of the Dilun School. (Ōtake 2017, p. 482) On the other hand, the terms in the AF closely resemble those used by Bodhiruci 菩提流支 (sixth century CE), one of the founders of the Dilun School. (Takemura (1985); Ishii (2003, 2004)) Therefore, we can see that the Dilun School, the Shelun School, and Zhiyan all placed great importance on the AF. However, the AF itself was likely not influenced by the Dilun School or the Shelun School.

As is widely known, Paramārtha 真諦 (499–569) is traditionally regarded as a key figure of the Shelun School due to its teachings, which synthesize Yogācāra (Ch. Weishi 唯識; Consciousness Only) thought with buddha nature ideas.¹² Paramārtha has been associated with the AF, although some recent research has cast doubt on the possibility of a direct connection between them. (Ōtake 2017, pp. 482–83) A significant commentary on the *She dasheng lun* 攝大乘論 (The Summary of the Great Vehicle), a prominent Chinese translation by Paramārtha, exists in Dunhuang manuscripts. The *She dasheng lun chao* 攝大乘論抄 (T2806; Excerpt of The Summary of the Great Vehicle), believed to have been compiled in the sixth century, is this commentary. In this treatise, the anonymous author interprets suchness as follows:

If we consider the function of the mind, it is the cause of the truth. When discussing the truth itself, it refers to the suchness of mind (Ch. *xin zhenru*). Therefore, the subsequent explanation posits that the realm of Store Consciousness (Ch. *aliye shi*) regards gnosis (Ch. *jie*) as its nature. This realm encompasses five meanings and is also referred to as the non-empty womb for the buddha-hood (Ch. *bu kong rulai zang*). The *Bhūmika Sūtra* (Ch. *Di jing*) also reveals that observing the ultimate truth through the foundation consciousness (or store consciousness) represents [the function of] suchness of mind.

若論心功能，即是如實因緣。若據實，是心真如。故下釋云，此即此阿黎耶識界以解為性。此界有五義等也，亦名不空如來藏。《地經》亦明緣阿黎耶識作第一義諦觀，即心真如也。¹³

This passage asserts that the truth refers to the suchness of mind (Ch. *xin zhenru* 心真如). Furthermore, observing the ultimate truth through the Store Consciousness represents the function of suchness. It is well known that foundation consciousness (Ch. *aliye shi* 阿黎耶識) can be considered a type of conditioned dharma, given its close relationship with movement, arising, and function. Evidently, suchness, being connected with founda-

tion consciousness, is regarded as the foundation or origin of conditioned arising in the *She dasheng lun chao* (T2806).

3. Zhiyan's 智儼 Theory of Suchness and the *Jiujing Yisheng Baoxing Lun* 究竟一乘寶性論

Building on the foundation laid in the previous section, this section will address the core issue of this article: Zhiyan's theory of suchness and its connection to the RGV.

The resources on Zhiyan's life are few and frustratingly presented. There are only two primary biographical sources on Zhiyan. The earliest one, written while Zhiyan was still alive, was by his contemporary Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667) in the *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳 (Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks).¹⁴ The second was compiled by Zhiyan's disciple Fazang 法藏 (643–712) and is included in the *Huayan jing zhuanji* 華嚴經傳記 (= *Zhuanji*; Records of the Transmission of the *Avatamsakasūtra*).¹⁵ According to Robert M. Gimello, there is no surviving or recorded epigraphy about Zhiyan. These few sources contain very little anecdotal material and no personal correspondence. We are not told whether Zhiyan was at all involved in any of the major events of the secular China of his day. (Gimello 1976, pp. 49–50) Thus, since most of Zhiyan's innovative accomplishments were the products of the various traditions in which he studied, we have only to compare what he studied with what he later wrote in order to determine what influenced him.

In Zhiyan's education, a long period was devoted to the extensive study of certain forms of Buddhist thought that were more Indian than Chinese. The most notable among these were the two traditions of the Yogācāra system, which had been of considerable interest to many Chinese Buddhists of the late sixth century. Zhiyan gave his scholarly attention to the Dilun School and Shelun School. Since, by Zhiyan's period, the reunification of the North and South had permitted the Dilun and Shelun lineages to begin to merge, and since the texts on which they were based had a common origin in the Indian Yogācāra and Tathāgatagarbha thought, it is not surprising that Zhiyan chose to deal with these traditions in his writings.¹⁶

It is significant also that the Nirvāṇa Sutra (Ch. *Niepan jing* 涅槃經) and buddha nature thought had their strongest nexus with one particular tradition that was to be especially influential upon Zhiyan. In East Asia, it is certainly not the case that Tathāgatagarbha and Yogācāra Buddhism are of a single piece, but, in certain cases, the line between these two is only indistinctly drawn. This is especially true of many of the texts translated by Paramārtha and of the Shelun School writings. It was from Paramārtha's translations and from the Shelun School that Zhiyan learnt much of his Yogācāra knowledge. It appears that the specific strength of Zhiyan's Chang'an 長安 curriculum was Yogācāra thought, with ancillary investigations of Abhidharma and Tathāgatagarbha. The BXL and the concept of suchness belong to the specific issues that span both the Yogācāra and Tathāgatagarbha thought systems. These concepts also hold significant positions within Zhiyan's thought system.

It is certain that Zhiyan recognized the value of Xuanzang's 玄奘 (602–664) contributions, the significance of the texts themselves, and the competence with which they were translated. However, Zhiyan judged this Indian school of Buddhism that Xuanzang had introduced to be inferior to what he had studied earlier, including both the earlier transmissions of Yogācāra and Tathāgatagarbha thought, such as the Dilun and Shelun lineages. Gimello asserts that this judgement seems to have prompted Zhiyan to amplify his early Huayan system. The earlier phases of Zhiyan's education had prepared him well for this critical task. (Gimello 1976, p. 55)

Building on the trend mentioned in the last section in the interpretation of suchness, Zhiyan employs both the AF and the BXL to expound his theory of suchness.

What is ignorance (the darkness of mind)? This refers to suchness (Ch. *zhenru*) because suchness could establish ignorance (darkness of mind). There would be no ignorance (the darkness of mind) if there were no suchness. Thus, the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* (Ch. *Dasheng qixin lun*) states that all kinds of phenomena

(dharma), including ignorance (darkness of mind), are inherent to the essence of beings and the characteristic of the cycle of birth and death within suchness. If one accepts this meaning, one will be able to enter the gate of suchness in accordance with it. The object of one vehicle also enters one vehicle. Regarding the previous correct observation, in order to clarify its correctness, the similarity should be mentioned. According to the *Treatise of the Jewel-Nature of Ultimate Single Vehicle* (Ch. *Jiujing yisheng baoxing lun*), the bodhisattva who has just started her/his practice will experience empty and confused minds, which can be categorized into three types of emptiness of mind. The first type is to eliminate the empty womb for the buddhahood (Ch. *kong rulai zang* 空如來藏) and practice by recognizing the falseness of things. It is also referred to as the gate of empty liberation (Ch. *kong jietuo men* 空解脫門). After experiencing this kind of mental state, phenomena will cease, and one could enter into *nirvāṇa*. This constitutes the first type of confused mind. The second type involves contemplating empty existence. Some individuals may perceive emptiness as synonymous with existence. This constitutes the second type of confused mind. The third type involves generating the notion that there exists another form of emptiness separate from all other types of phenomena. Furthermore, this form of emptiness can be achieved through practice as the aim of one's spiritual endeavor.

無明是何義？是真如義。何以故？真如成無明故。若無真如，即無無明。故《起信論》從無明等一切諸法，皆是摩訶衍眾生之心，真如體中生滅相用也。若可此義，即得隨順入真如門。一乘所目，亦入一乘。對前正觀，舉其相似，以明其正。依《寶性論》，新發意菩薩修行心中遂成空亂意，略有三種。一離空如來藏，以失變壞物修行，名為空解脫門。起如是心，實有物斷滅，後得涅槃。是第一亂意。二者，又復有人以空為有，物義應得空。是第二亂意。三者，又生是心，離色等法別更有空，我修行為得彼空。¹⁷

It is worth noting that Zhiyan employed both the AF and the BXL in his analysis. He initially utilized the theory of suchness from the AF to argue that delusion could arise from suchness. This may represent an extension of the concept of empty and non-empty suchness found in the AF. Additionally, Zhiyan highlighted the BXL, the Chinese translation of the RGV, as supporting evidence for this theory of suchness.

In this passage, based on the AF, Zhiyan points out that suchness establishes ignorance (the darkness of mind), and all kinds of phenomena, including ignorance, are inherent to the essence of beings and the characteristics of the cycle of birth and death within suchness. Evidently, the AF causes Zhiyan to combine suchness, phenomena, and ignorance. To demonstrate this point, Zhiyan utilizes not merely the AF but also the BXL. Based upon the BXL, Zhiyan criticizes the three types of false views of emptiness. The third one is that there exists another form of emptiness separate from all other types of phenomena. That is to say, both emptiness and ignorance refer to suchness, since suchness establishes ignorance. There is neither ignorance nor emptiness beyond suchness. All of them are inherent within suchness. Through this interpretation, Zhiyan clarifies the direct connection between phenomena, including ignorance, and suchness. As discussed in the second section, this trend is implied in the AF and the *She dasheng lun chao* (T2806). However, in the *Huayan jing neizhangmen deng za kongmu* 華嚴經內章門等雜孔目 (=Kongmu zhang; Huayan Miscellany), Zhiyan draws support from the BXL to explain suchness.¹⁸

According to Ui Hakuju 宇井伯寿, the Indian monk Ratnamati 勒那摩提 (sixth century CE; ?–508–512–?) translated the RGV into Chinese in Luoyang 洛陽 between 511 and 515; Ratnamati and Bodhiruci brought various texts to China, translating them with the assistance of Senglang 僧朗 (n.d.) and Jueyi 覺意 (n.d.). (Ui 1959, pp. 4–5) Consequently, it is possible to trace certain terms and passages across the multiple texts translated by these two monks. The earliest treatise mentioning the existence of this translation is the *Baochang lu* 寶唱錄 (Baochang's Catalogue), which is quoted in the *Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶記 (Record of the Three Jewels throughout Successive Dynasties). In other words, the *Lidai sanbao ji* is the earliest work making reference to this version of the RGV.¹⁹ Ui has pointed out that

the Chinese scribes assisting with the translation were Senglang and Jueyi. On the other hand, the translation itself was solely carried out by Ratnamati, although Senglang and Jueyi both participated in the actual translation of other texts under the supervision of Bodhiruci (Ui 1959, pp. 5–16).

As a primary biographical source on Zhiyan, the *Zhuanji* was compiled by Zhiyan's disciple, Fazang. We can best see Zhiyan's studies by resuming his biography from Fazang's *Zhuanji* as the following:

Zhiyan took so many teachings to be a profuse desert and the sea of wisdom a vacant depth in which he knew not yet what to employ as a compass. At this moment, Zhiyan went before the collection of scriptures, venerated them, and made himself a vow to randomly select a text from them [with the hand of faith]. What he got was the first roll of the *Avatamsaka Sutra* (Ch. *Huayan jing* 華嚴經). Thereafter Zhiyan took instruction in this scripture in this temple, under Master Zhizheng 智正. Although Zhiyan examined carefully the older learning [on this sutra], he continually longed for new interpretations. Frequently he vacillated between enthusiasm and indifference and he had yet to remove his doubts. Accordingly, Zhiyan scanned the canons, seeking out all the explanations. Only in the commentaries of Precept Master Guangtong 光統律師 (=Huiguang 慧光) did he find an intimation of the precious truth, the doctrine of infinite dependent arising according to the one vehicle of the distinct teaching (Ch. *biejiao yisheng* 別教一乘).

儼以法門繁曠，智海沖深。方駕司南，未知何曆。乃至於經藏前，禮而自立誓，信手取之，得《華嚴》第一。即於當寺智正法師下，聽受此經。雖閱舊聞，常懷新政。炎涼亟改，未革所疑。遂遍覽藏經，討尋眾釋。傳光統律師文疏，稍開殊軫，謂別教一乘無盡緣起。²⁰

In this passage, it is worth noticing that, after taking instruction in the *Huayan jing* 華嚴經 (Skt. *Avatamsaka Sutra*; Flower Garland Scripture) and examining the older learning, Zhiyan found an intimation of the precious truth in the commentaries of Precept Master Guangtong 光統律師, namely Huiguang 慧光 (468–537). Huiguang was a disciple of Ratnamati, the translator of the RGV, and the founder of the southern branch of the Dilun School.²¹ Huiguang's commentary on the *Huayan jing* is not extant but for a brief fragment discovered in Dunhuang 敦煌. According to Fazang, Huiguang's commentary was presented in four fascicles. Zhiyan took Huiguang's commentaries seriously and found an intimation of the precious truth—the doctrine of infinite dependent arising according to the one vehicle of the distinct teaching (Ch. *biejiao yisheng* 別教一乘)—in Huiguang's commentaries. This suggests that Ratnamati's renderings and interpretations may have influenced Zhiyan.

According to Fazang's *Zhuanji*, an important figure is mentioned in the form of Zhiyan's examiner, introduced only as "Dharma Master Bian 辨法師". There are two Dharma Master Bians, both roughly contemporary and both resident in Chang'an, to whom Fazang might be referring. One is Lingbian 靈辨 (586–663) of the Da Ci-en Temple 大慈恩寺. The other is Sengbian 僧辨 (568–642) of the Hongfu Temple 弘福寺. However, several considerations suggest that Lingbian is actually not the Dharma Master Bian mentioned in Zhiyan's biography. Lingbian was only sixteen years older than Zhiyan. Sengbian was thirty-five years older than Zhiyan. Furthermore, as a Shelun specialist, Sengbian's interests corresponded rather more closely to Zhiyan's doctrinal background.²² According to the *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, Sengbian's first teacher was a monk named Zhining 智凝 (d. 605–616 at the age of 47), who was also a scholar of the Shelun School.²³ Zhining studied in his youth under the monk Jingsong 靖嵩 (537–614),²⁴ who was originally of the Southern Dilun School lineage, which had begun with Ratnamati, the translator of the BXL, and had descended to him through Huiguang and Fashang 法上 (495–580).²⁵ From the aforementioned network of relationships, we can further observe the strong connection between Zhiyan and the BXL.

Zhiyan had at his disposal only the *Huayan jing* itself, one or two of the very few Chinese commentaries that had by then been written. His preliminary studies of the *Huayan jing* took him back to the Zhixiang Temple (Ch. *Zhixiang si* 至相寺). There, Zhiyan surveyed what Fazang calls the “older *Avatamsaka* (Huayan) learning”. According to Gimello, Zhiyan still had doubts and still felt the need for new approaches, and only in Huiguang’s commentaries did he find a linking of truly useful guidance. Huiguang, as Ratnamati’s main disciple, played a notable role in the history of the Chinese Huayan tradition. Although we cannot say exactly how Huiguang defined these categories with certainty, since his own explanations are not extant, to him, it was also a “complete (Ch. *yuan* 圓)” and “distinct (Ch. *bie* 別)” rendition of the “one vehicle (Ch. *yisheng* 一乘)”, whose fundamental principle was that of the “infinite interdependence (Ch. *wujin yuanqi* 無盡緣起)” of all things (Gimello 1976, pp. 163–64).

Fleshing out the outline in the *Zhuanji*, we find Zhiyan in late adolescence leaving the Zhixiang Temple, where he had already demonstrated considerable academic talent. From there, equipped with some knowledge of the Sanskrit language, Zhiyan traveled north to Chang’an, the capital of the newly founded Tang 唐 Dynasty.²⁶ At several monasteries there, Zhiyan spent the next several years studying a variety of lengthy and difficult Buddhist texts. Thus, it is not surprising that Zhiyan may have known and read the Sanskrit text of the RGV, which was translated by Huiguang’s teacher, Ratnamati. Certainly, it is also possible that Zhiyan had never read the Sanskrit text of the RGV, as we currently lack clear records or evidence. However, even if Zhiyan himself had not read the Sanskrit version, he should have been aware that the RGV was translated from Sanskrit into Chinese by Huiguang’s teacher, Ratnamati. We can also deduce one of the reasons that Zhiyan valued the BXL from his knowledge of Sanskrit.

Since Zhiyan establishes the doctrine of infinite dependent arising according to the one vehicle of the distinct teaching based on Huiguang’s commentaries, we need to consider how he explained this theory. In the *Kongmu zhang*, Zhiyan concludes the following:

Furthermore, since the Hīnayāna Buddhism does not exhaust the path of discussion, there are disputatious treatises. Since the three vehicles and common teachings exhaust the path of discussion, there are definitive treatises. Since the one vehicle of the distinct teaching has no path of discussion, there are no treatises on the meaning of the treatises. Since the Dharma-gateway is complete and cannot be explained by means of an example, there are no parables. Since the Dharma-gateway is complete and cannot be explained by means of a reason, there are no causal treatises.

又小乘未窮論道，故有諍論。三乘及同教窮其論道，故有定論。別教一乘絕其論道，故無論義經。法門具滿，無喻可說故，無譬喻經。法門圓備，不可由致而說故，無因緣經。²⁷

That is to say, since the one vehicle of the distinct teaching has no path of discussion, the Dharma-gateway is complete at this stage. In other words, the one vehicle of the distinct teaching is much more profound than other Buddhist traditions, such as Hīnayāna Buddhism and the three vehicles. As mentioned earlier, according to Fazang’s *Zhuanji*, based on the commentaries of Huiguang, Zhiyan found some sources and inspiration for his doctrine of infinite dependent arising according to the one vehicle of the distinct teaching. It is evident that Zhiyan’s theory of the one vehicle of the distinct teaching is related to dependent arising.²⁸ For this reason, it is necessary to further analyze the relationship between the one vehicle of the distinct teaching and the dependent arising within Zhiyan’s Huayan doctrinal system.

As mentioned earlier, in the AF, the concept of the fumigation/perfume of suchness also stands out as a distinctive feature. In the *Kongmu zhang*, Zhiyan describes suchness as the following:

Learning, contemplation and practice (hearing, thinking and cultivating) develop gradually from subtle beginnings to substantial realization, all rooted in the orig-

inal consciousness, the Tathāgatagarbha (womb/embryo for the buddhahood). Therefore, it is known that “the cultivation of hearing flows from suchness,” and one should understand that suchness is the foundation of the three wisdoms (hearing, thinking and cultivating). Through fumigation/perfume, seeds are formed, which subsequently transform and gain superiority. Other dharmas do not achieve this. [Someone] asks: “If this is the case, and suchness inherently possesses virtues that naturally flow out, why is further fumigation/perfume necessary?” [I] answer: “Suchness does not inherently maintain its self-nature but arises conditionally. Thus, fumigation/perfume is necessary.”

聞思修法從微至著並由本識如來藏成，所以知之故“聞熏習從真如流”，當知真如是三慧本，受熏成種，轉得增上。餘法則無。問，若爾，真如具德但自流出，何假更熏？答，真如實不守自性，待緣方起，故說熏也。²⁹

In the above passage, Zhiyan asserts the fumigation/perfume of suchness. Evidently, the background of Zhiyan’s theory of suchness is based on the AF. However, the AF only mentions the fumigation/perfume of suchness, while Zhiyan adds that suchness does not inherently maintain its self-nature but arises conditionally (Ch. *zhenru shi bu shou zixing, dai yuan fang qi* 真如實不守自性，待緣方起). In other words, according to Zhiyan, suchness is not motionless. Suchness can act and arise conditionally, implying the dependent arising of suchness. This marks a significant difference, or development, between the theory of suchness in the AF and that in Zhiyan’s Huayan doctrinal system.³⁰

This brings us to a crucial question: what exactly is the origin or background of Zhiyan’s theory of suchness, which extends beyond the scope of the AF? In my view, the answer lies in the previously mentioned RGV (Ch. BXL), which Zhiyan himself regards as a key text alongside the AF as the basis for his theory of suchness.³¹

From my perspective, in the history of Chinese Buddhism, we can trace the origin of the theory of the conditioned arising of suchness back even earlier than the AF, reaching as far as the Chinese translation of the RGV, where we encounter the term *zhenru foxing* 真如佛性 (buddha nature as suchness). This does not mean that, in India, the RGV does not understand *tathatā* to be related to the conditioned dharmas at all. The fact is that, in the Northern and Southern dynasties, most Chinese people read only the Chinese translation of the RGV, instead of its Sanskrit text. Furthermore, according to Ōtake, it is evident that the AF was compiled in China. (Ōtake 2017) In addition, the theory of the conditioned arising of suchness was created and well known in China and other East Asian countries. For these reasons, taking a historical approach, I emphasize the importance of the BXL, the Chinese translation of the RGV. Meanwhile, *gotra* (Ch. *zhongxing* 種姓; lineage/potential; a destiny, almost in the sense of a spiritual disposition, which prompts one to follow a particular path to enlightenment)³² was not only translated as *zhenru foxing* but also, in some instances, as simply *foxing* (the potential for all sentient beings to become a Buddha or the fact that all beings already have a buddha essence within) (Wayman and Wayman 1990, p. 45; Brunnholz 2014, p. 3) in the BXL.³³

The translations from Sanskrit into Chinese by Ratnamati, on one hand, and Bodhiruci, on the other, exhibit both similarities and differences. In Ratnamati’s translation of the RGV, we can find extensive passages that are textually identical to those in the Chinese *Buzeng bujian jing* 不增不減經 (T668, Skt. *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśaparivarta*; The Sutra of Non-Increase and Non-Decrease), which was translated by Bodhiruci.³⁴ This suggests that there are numerous points of similarity between the two translations.

Bodhiruci was from Northern India, a region that, in the late fifth and early sixth centuries, witnessed the development of Yogācāra lineages derived from Vasubandhu. As the translator of the BXL, Ratnamati, on the other hand, was from a more southern region of India in which the Tathāgatagarbha tradition was born and flourished.³⁵ With regard to the term *tathatā*, on the other hand, we observe some clear differences. In some of his Chinese translations, Bodhiruci rendered *tathatā* as *zhenru*.³⁶ Meanwhile, as mentioned earlier, Ratnamati also employed the term *zhenru*,³⁷ but he did so in a different sense, particularly as part of his rendering of *gotra*. The differences between Bodhiruci and Ratnamati’s ap-

parent doctrinal preferences, for Yogācāra and Tathāgatagarbha, respectively, affected the course of Chinese speculation about these significant terms and ideas.

As is well known, the Dilun School is said to have been divided into two factions. One, labeled the northern branch after its monastic location north of the Lo river in Luoyang 洛陽, was established by Daochong 道寵, a student of Bodhiruci. The other, labeled the southern branch as its center was south of the Lo river, was founded by Huiguang, Ratnamati's disciple.³⁸ According to Zhanran 湛然 (711–782), the southern branch held that the support of all phenomena is suchness and that its nature generates all dharmas. The northern branch assigns the *ālaya* (storehouse of consciousness) to this supportive role.³⁹ Thus, it is evident that the southern branch of the Dilun School, originating with Ratnamati and Huiguang, emphasized the connection between suchness and the arising of all phenomena in the world. This is likely the background for the later theory of the conditioned arising of suchness. Zhiyan, to some extent, inherited Huiguang's teachings, especially regarding the conditioned/dependent arising according to the one vehicle of the distinct teaching. Therefore, the influence of Ratnamati's translation of the RGV and the arguments of the southern branch of the Dilun School on Zhiyan is not difficult to imagine.

Let us first examine the following example of *foxing* alone as a rendering of *gotra* in the RGV:

Gotra (lineage/potential [for buddhahood]) is known to be twofold: like a treasure, and like a tree from a seed. [Namely,] the innate lineage/potential without beginning and that which has acquired the highest process of development. It is considered that three kinds of buddha-body can be obtained from this twofold lineage/potential (*gotra*).⁴⁰

*gotram tad dvividham jñeyam nidhānaphalavrksavat/anādīprakṛtistham ca samudānītam uttaram/buddhakāyatrāyāvāptir asmād gotradvayān matā*⁴¹

There are two kinds of buddha-nature (*foxing*). One is like a treasure, and the other one is akin to a tree from a seed. [They are respectively] the pure mind of self-nature since beginningless time and the cultivation of the unsurpassed path. From these two kinds of buddha-nature (*foxing*), three types of buddha-body can be obtained.

佛性有二種，一者如地藏，二者如樹果。無始世界來，自性清淨心，修行無上道。依二種佛性，得出三種身。⁴²

Here, it is evident that *gotra* is used in the Sanskrit text of the RGV, and it is probable that it is what is rendered as *foxing* in the Chinese translation. Correspondingly, the two specified types of lineage/potential, *anādīprakṛtistham* and *samudānītam uttaram*, appear in the Chinese text as two types of buddha nature.

One of my colleagues points out that since Ratnamati translated *ratnagotra* in the title of the RGV as *baoxing* 寶性, it is clear that *xing* is a rendering of *gotra*. Thus, *zhongxing* 種性 (*gotra*) = *zhongxing* 種性 = *foxing* 佛性 = *xing* 性, and there is no difference between the Sanskrit texts of the RGV and its Chinese translation. In response to this argument, I must add a very important fact here. As is widely known, in Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism, particularly within the framework of the Yogācāra system, there are several different types of lineage/potential, including *icchantikas* (Ch. *yichanti*), who belong to the lineage that will not achieve buddhahood and final nirvāna. Moreover, *icchantikas* are also mentioned in the RGV. Thus, we can conclude that the lineage/potential for awakening is equivalent to the nature (Skt. *dhātu*; Ch. *xing/foxing*) of a buddha, and both are synonymous with suchness. However, we cannot easily claim that, in Indian Buddhism, all types of lineages are totally equivalent to the nature of a buddha and suchness.⁴³ It is needless to say that it is almost obvious that the author(s) of the RGV knew the Mādhyamika system and the Yogācāra system.

As mentioned earlier, in my view, we can trace the origin of the theory of the conditioned arising of suchness as far back as the RGV and its Chinese translation, where the term *zhenru foxing* is found:

The view that in transmigration, there is pain and suffering, and that in *nirvāṇa*, there is satisfaction and comfort, belongs to those people who are virtuous and exists only in case the lineage/potential (*gotra*) [for awakening] exists. Hence, this view does not take place without causes or conditions. If it were to occur without that lineage/potential, it would be without cause and without condition, and then it would occur/exist even in the case of *icchantikas*, who belong to the lineage/potential that will not know final *nirvāṇa*.

*yad api tat saṃsāre ca duḥkhaḍoṣadarśanam bhavati nirvāṇe ca sukhānuśaṃsadarśanam etad api śūklāṃśasya pudgalasya gotre sati bhavati nāhetukam nāpratyaḥyam iti/yadi hi tadgotram antareṇa syād ahetukam apratyayam pāpasamucchedayogena tad icchantikānām apy aparinirvāṇa gotrānām syāt*⁴⁴

[This passage suggests that] any seeing of suffering result of this current world and any seeing of pleasant result of *nirvāṇa*, these two types of dharmas [only belong to] those beings with great roots possessing buddha nature as suchness (Ch. *zhenru foxing*) [as a foundation]. The implication is that this kind of mind does not arise independently of buddha-nature, without cause and conditions. It is because the verse mentioned above states that “seeing of suffering result and pleasant result this exists on the basis of [one’s] nature.” If this mind can exist without causes, even beings without the nature of *nirvāṇa*, for instance, *icchantika*, could generate the awakening mind, because the above verse asserts that “if there is no buddha-nature (Ch. *foxing*), this mind will not arise.”

凡所有見世間苦果者，凡所有見涅槃樂果者，此二種法，善根眾生，有一切依因真如佛性，非離佛性無因緣故起如是心。偈言見苦果樂果，此依性而有故。若無因緣生如是心者，一闡提等無涅槃性，應發菩提心。偈言若無佛性者，不起如是心故。⁴⁵

Evidently, it is by virtue of the existence of the specific lineage/potential associated with becoming a buddha that beings avoid suffering and pursue merits. Ratnamati probably translated *gotra* as *zhenru foxing* or *foxing*. According to the Sanskrit text, the correct view about what transmigration (*saṃsāra*) and *nirvāṇa* truly are is a property of those who have the buddha lineage/potential (*gotra*); if this was not the case, then the *icchantika* would know the truth about *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. However, obviously, they do not.⁴⁶ According to the Chinese translation, the view that, in transmigration, there is misery and suffering, and, in *nirvāṇa*, there is satisfaction and merit, exists when there is *zhenru foxing* (buddha nature as suchness). This *zhenru foxing* exists in beings with great roots. In other words, the Sanskrit RGV states that the above happens because of lineage (*gotra*); the Chinese translation states that this happens because of *zhenru foxing*. That is to say, *zhenru* in the RGV’s Chinese translation is combined with *foxing*, and the compound *zhenru foxing*, instead of *gotra*, sees *saṃsāra* as suffering and *nirvāṇa* as pleasure. In Indian Buddhism, *nirvāṇa* is considered unconditioned dharma, (Jones 2005, p. 6628) while transmigration is seen as conditioned dharma.⁴⁷

The Chinese term *zhenru foxing*, as far as I know, first appeared in Ratnamati’s rendering of the RGV and in two other Chinese translations by Bodhiruci: the *Jingangxian lun* 金剛仙論 (T1512; Treatise of Jingang Xian) and the *Miaofa lianhua jing lun youbotishe* 妙法蓮華經論優波提舍 (T1520; Commentary on the Lotus Sutra). This term, at least in my view, has altered the meaning of *tathatā* in relation to *gotra*.

One of my colleagues points out that it is likely that the word *gotra* is rightly translated as *foxing* and *zhenru* is simply added. Furthermore, Ratnamati’s point lies in *gotra* = *foxing* = *xing* and not in *zhenru*. In response to this interesting and lighthearted suggestion, although I am not able to agree with it immediately, I do not entirely deny its possibility at this stage. However, what I want to express is a historical fact in the development of Chinese and East Asian Buddhism. That is, in pre-modern China, most Chinese people read only the Chinese translation of the RGV and not the Sanskrit text. They had no knowledge of Sanskrit. When Ratnamati translated a term as *zhenru foxing* or *zhenru xing*, most Chi-

nese people, especially the authors of the AF and its commentaries, could not ignore the term *zhenru* here. This held true regardless of Ratnamati's specific intentions in his era.

According to Takasaki, in Indian Buddhism, the concepts *pratītya-samutpāda* (conditioned arising; Ch. *suiyuan* 隨緣) and *vāsanā* (fumigation/perfume/habit; Ch. *xunxi* 熏習) are not related to *tathatā*. (Takasaki 1990, pp. 21–22) Meanwhile, Takasaki also notes that, in India, although no Buddhist texts explicitly teach conditioned arising under the name of *tathatā*, the treatment is delicate when it comes to the dharma-body and Tathāgatagarbha. The significance of these two lies in their function in wisdom. The AF made use of this concept under the name *zhenru*. (Takasaki 1990, pp. 21–22) As we have seen, in his translation of the RGV, Ratnamati sometimes chose to translate what was likely *buddha-gotra* as *zhenru foxing*. He also appears to use *zhenru foxing* to render *tathāgatagarbha* at least once. I believe that in the history of Chinese Buddhism, *tathatā* found in the RGV's Sanskrit text and *zhenru foxing* found in the Chinese rendering form part of the background to the theory of the conditioned arising of suchness and can be considered part of the origin of this theory.

To delve deeper into the meaning of the term *zhenru foxing*, let us examine the following passage from the RGV:

Here, stained suchness (*samālā tathatā*) refers to the nature (*dhātu*) [of a buddha] which, unreleased from a sheath of afflictions, is called Tathāgatagarbha. Stainless suchness (*nirmalā tathatā*) is also this [*dhātu*], [but] characterized by the fundamental transformation of the basis at the stage of awakening, is referred to as the dharma-body of the suchness. [...] Here, stained suchness is said to be both pure and afflicted at the same time.

*tatra samālā tathatā yo dhātur avinirmukta-kleśa-kośas tathāgata-garbha ity ucyate/nirmalā tathatā sa eva buddhabhūmav āśrayaparivṛttilakṣaṇo yas tathatādharmakāya ity ucyate.tatra samālā tathatā yugapad ekakālam viśuddhā ca samkṣiptā cety.*⁴⁸

What does this verse mean? [This verse suggests that] defiled suchness represents a stage in which buddha nature as suchness (Ch. *zhenru foxing*) is still intertwined with affliction, leading to its designation as Tathāgatagarbha. The process of overcoming various defilements means that one can progress to the stage of the buddhahood and obtain the dharma-body through fundamental transformation (Ch. *zhuanshen*; Skt. *parivṛtti*) of Tathāgatagarbha. For this reason, it is also referred to as dharma-body of the Buddha (Ch. *rulajfa shen*).Defiled suchness is characterized by being both pure and also defiled simultaneously.

此偈明何義？真如有雜垢者，謂真如佛性未離諸煩惱所纏，如來藏故。及遠離諸垢者，即彼如來藏轉身到佛地得證法身，名如來法身故。.....真如有雜垢者，同一時中有淨有染。⁴⁹

Evidently, although *nirmalā tathatā* (stainless suchness) is inherently pure, it remains *samālā tathatā* (stained suchness) when affected by defilement and afflictions. At this stage, *dhātu* implies the presence of delusion, and, in this context, the term can be considered synonymous with Tathāgatagarbha. In contrast, the Chinese translation rendered *dhātu* as *zhenru foxing*, indicating that stained suchness exists with defilement and afflictions and functions as conditioned dharma despite its inherent purity.⁵⁰ At the very least, we cannot deny that *dhātu* and *samālā tathatā* in the RGV are closely linked to afflictions (*kleśa*), which are conditioned phenomena (dharma). In the case of the Chinese translation of the BXL, *zhenru foxing* is described to be linked to afflictions.

As analyzed in the second section, according to the AF, while suchness itself denotes pure existence, defiled phenomena are not separated from it. All types of phenomena, including defiled states, are not independent of suchness. If we carefully examine the descriptions of *nirmalā tathatā* and *samālā tathatā* in the RGV mentioned above, we will find that they are remarkably similar to the theory of suchness in the AF. This demonstrates the close connection between the theories of suchness in these two treatises.

Next, let us investigate whether *samālā tathatā* (stained suchness), which is associated with conditioned dharma, can indeed move and function as conditioned dharma. Consider the following passage in the RGV:

The dharma-body of the Buddha is to be understood in two types. [The first one is] perfectly pure dharma-realm itself, which is the acting sphere of the wisdom without division and is to be known in relation to the true dharma personally realized by the Tathāgata through introspection. [The second is] the natural out-flow of the perfectly pure dharma-realm as the cause for its attainment. It forms the communication among other living beings according to their abilities in discipline. It should be known in relation to the dharma of teaching.

*dvividho buddhānām dharmakāyo 'nugantavyah/suviśuddhaś ca dharmadhātor avikalpa-jñānagocaraviśayah/sa ca tathāgatānām pratyātmam adhigamadharmam adhikṛtya veditavyah/tat prāptihetuś ca suviśuddhadharmadhātunisyaṇdo yathā vāinayikaparasattveṣu vijñaptiprabhavaḥ/sa ca deśanādharmam adhikṛtya veditavyah*⁵¹

What does this verse mean? [It implies that] all buddhas and *tathāgatas* possess two types of dharma-body. What are these two? The first one is the quiescent body of the dharma-realm, [which is so characterized] because it belongs to the realm of undifferentiated wisdom and is to be known in relation to the dharma-body of buddhas and *tathāgatas*, realized by the dharma-realm through introspection. Hence, the verse mentions “*qingjing zhen fajie* 清淨真法界 (the perfectly pure dharma-realm).” The second one is the cause leading to the attainment of the perfectly pure dharma-realm. This aspect involves the way that the quiescent dharma-realm imparts various kinds of dharma. It teaches individuals respectively according to living beings’ [roots and abilities]. It should be recognized that these teachings are grounded in *zhenru fashen* (dharma-body as thusness), and hence, it is also referred to as habit/perfume. This is highlighted in the verse with the phrase “*ji yi bi xiqi* 及依彼習氣 (and relying on its habit/perfume).”

此偈明何義？諸佛如來有二種法身。何等為二？一者寂靜法界身，以無分別智境界故，如是諸佛如來法身唯自內身法界能證應知，偈言清淨真法界故。二者為得彼因，謂彼寂靜法界說法，依可化眾生說，彼說法應知，以依真如法身有彼說法，名為習氣，偈言及依彼習氣故。⁵²

There are two kinds of dharma-bodies. The first kind is the pure dharma-realm and belongs to wisdom without division. There is no clear difference between the Sanskrit text and the Chinese translation on this point. In contrast, there is an obvious disparity between the two versions concerning the second kind of dharma-body: the Sanskrit text states that the second kind is the reason for and origin of the achievement of the pure dharma-realm. It is identical to the pure dharma-realm and can inform beings through various convenient methods. However, the Chinese translation states that the second kind of dharma-body teaches individuals respectively according to their roots. The teaching is based on the dharma-body as suchness (Ch. *zhenru fashen*). The Sanskrit text indicates that teaching occurs from the pure dharma-realm, while the Chinese translation suggests that the dharma-body as suchness can teach.⁵³ In other words, in the BXL, suchness can function and teach individually about dharma as the dharma-body. This process is referred to as practice and habit/perfume. The teaching and movement of the dharma-body as suchness in the Chinese translation replace the two types of dharma-bodies in the Sanskrit text. I believe that this reflects a shift in the Chinese understanding of suchness towards one that conceptually incorporates conditioned dharma.

As mentioned earlier, the AF only mentions the fumigation/perfume of suchness, but Zhiyan adds that suchness arises conditionally. Zhiyan’s interpretation of suchness is not entirely identical to that in the AF. Instead, the explanations found in the aforementioned BXL are likely the theoretical materials that influenced Zhiyan’s interpretations.

We can observe that there seems to be a certain connection between the aforementioned statements in the BXL and Zhiyan’s interpretation of the buddha-bodies. In the

Huayan wushi yao wenda 華嚴五十要問答 (Fifty Questions and Answers from the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*), Zhiyan interprets the buddha-bodies as the following:

The buddhas of the three vehicles are threefold: the dharma-body buddha, the retribution-body buddha, and the transformation-body buddha. The buddhas of Hīnayāna are twofold: the born-body buddha and the transformation-body buddha. The dharma-body buddha is also called self-nature body, which is the inherent suchness (Ch. *zhenru*). The retribution-body buddha is also called the appearance-body, and the transformation-body buddha is also called the appearance-body, both of which result from [the dharma-body through] cultivation of virtues and practices.

三乘佛有三，一法身佛，二報身佛，三化身佛。小乘佛有二，一生身佛，二化身佛。法身佛亦名自性身，即本有真如也。二報身佛亦名應身，三化身佛亦名應身，則修生行德成也。⁵⁴

In this passage, Zhiyan asserts that the dharma-body is also called inherent suchness. Meanwhile, both the retribution-body and the transformation-body result from the dharma-body through the cultivation of virtues and practices. In other words, according to Zhiyan, both the retribution-body and the transformation-body can be generated from suchness. In my view, this is an example of the conditioned/dependent arising of suchness. The BXL plays an important role.

To explore the interplay of unconditioned and conditioned dharma in the RGV, let us examine a passage where the Chinese translation renders *parivṛtti* as *zhuan* 轉 (fundamental transformation for enlightenment) and, in a second instance, as *zhenru*. This serves as evidence of the role played by suchness in bridging the gap between unconditioned and conditioned dharma:

Now, what is this stainless suchness (Skt. *nirmalā tathatā*)? It is that which is called the perfect manifestation of the basis. Since [this suchness] is freed from all kinds of delusions in the immaculate realm of the Buddhas, [so *āśraya-parivṛtti* (transformation; fundamental transformation for enlightenment) can be confirmed and finished.] This stainless suchness is to be known in brief in relation to the eight categories.

*tatra katamā nirmalā tathatā yāsau buddhānām bhagavatām anāsravadhātau sarvākāramalaviṣamāḍ āśrayaparivṛttir vyavasthāpyate/sā punar aṣṭau padārthān adhikṛtya samāsato veditavyā*⁵⁵

Stainless suchness (Ch. *wugou ru*) signifies that within the uncontaminated/stainless dharma-realm, all buddhas and tathāgatas transcend various forms of defilement/delusion, transforming the defiled body and obtaining pure and subtle body. We should note that, within the context of the eight categories, [it is possible] to provide a brief explanation of the nature of suchness (Ch. *zhenru xing*) and dharma-body without outflows (Ch. *wulou fashen*).

無垢如者，謂諸佛如來於無漏法界中遠離一切種種諸垢，轉雜穢身得淨妙身，依八句義略差別說彼真如性無漏法身應知。⁵⁶

The theory of *parivṛtti* is one the most crucial concepts within Consciousness-Only thought. According to the *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra* (Treatise on the Foundation for Yoga Practitioners), *parivṛtti* involves transforming *kleśa* (Ch. *fannao*; mental states that cloud the mind and manifest in unwholesome actions) and attaining wisdom. Additionally, the *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha* (T1592/1593; Ch. *She dasheng lun* 攝大乘論; The Summary of the Great Vehicle) and the *Chengweishi lun* 成唯識論 (T1585; The Treatise on the Demonstration of Consciousness-Only) describe *parivṛtti* as the transformation of seeds and *ālayavijñāna* (foundation consciousness). In other words, the inevitable engagement with conditioned dharma during the process of *parivṛtti* is emphasized. The BXL employs terms such as stained suchness (Skt. *samālā tathatā*) and the nature of suchness (Ch. *zhenru*

xing) to elucidate *tathatā*, thereby reinforcing the connection between suchness and conditioned dharma.⁵⁷

This statements in the BXL clearly influenced Zhiyan's understanding of suchness. In the *Kongmu zhang*, Zhiyan provides the following explanation of suchness:

According to the treatises, the six unconditioned dharmas are expanded into eight unconditioned dharmas. The three types of suchness fall under the category of unconditioned, thus it is understood that suchness is classified as unconditioned. This statement merely belongs to the initial teaching. This understanding encompasses both the differentiated and non-differentiated teachings. The meaning of non-differentiation refers to the realization of suchness. The non-differentiated teaching refers to the contemplation through wisdom, where the mind does not distinguish objects, thus comprehending the teachings of the Mahāyāna Buddhism. The differentiated teaching means that the teachings themselves are empty. In the context of the initial teaching, the aforementioned suchness merely presents the concept of emptiness, which differs from the final teaching.

又依對法論，開六無為成八無為。三種真如，即屬無為攝，得知真如成無為。上此初教始終，並通分別無分別教義。無分別義者，謂證真如。無分別教者，謂比觀意言無分別境，悟大乘言教故。分別教義者，謂教義即空故。今初教門中真如，但是空義，不同終教。⁵⁸

In this passage, Zhiyan asserts that the statement that suchness is classified as unconditioned dharma merely belongs to the initial teaching. Furthermore, in the context of the initial teaching, the aforementioned suchness merely presents the concept of emptiness, which differs from the final teaching. That is to say, according to Zhiyan, the statement that suchness is unconditioned dharma is not the ultimate teaching. Evidently, we can observe an undeniable connection between Zhiyan's interpretation and the BXL.

In short, the idea of the conditioned arising of suchness is implied in the AF, and it was developed into a theory through some later Chinese commentaries. This idea dates back to the Chinese translation of the RGV in the history of Chinese Buddhism and even the Sanskrit text of this treatise itself if we pursue the Indian origin of this idea. Against this background, Zhiyan's Huayan thought system, particularly his interpretation of suchness, was greatly influenced by the AF. Additionally, the BXL also occupies a significant position in Zhiyan's theoretical framework. The RGV, especially its Chinese translation, the BXL, along with the AF, provided important theoretical materials for Zhiyan's explanation of suchness.

Although it is not Zhiyan's own discourse, I wish to add a final note in this section about the view of one of Zhiyan's disciples on his theory of suchness and the BXL. As a representative of Zhiyan's disciples, Fazang developed his theory of doctrinal classification in his treatise, the *Huayan wujiao zhang* 華嚴五教章 (Essay on the Five Teachings of the Huayan). In another of Fazang's treatises, the *Huayan jing tanxuan ji* 華嚴經探玄記 (Record of Investigating the Mystery of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*), he asserts that suchness could function as conditioned dharma.

[Someone answers that] one reason is that within the womb for the buddhahood (Skt. *tathāgatagarbha*; Ch. *rulai zang*), there are as many merits, virtues, and pure excellent qualities as there are grains of sand [in the Ganges River]. The *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* asserts that non-empty suchness (Ch. *bukong zhenru*) embodies the essence of great intellect/wisdom's light and the quality of pervading the entire world (Ch. *bianzhao fajie*). The *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* (Ch. *Da baniepan jing*) asserts that buddha-nature represents the highest form of emptiness, often referred to as intellect or wisdom. That implies that conditioned merits and benefits exist within unconditioned nature. This aligns with the concept of *mozhong xiang* (the feature reflected in a model) as described in the *Rulaizang jing* (Skt. *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra*; *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*), and the notion of *zhenru wei*

zhongxing (suchness being lineage/potential) as found in the *Treatise of the Jewel-Nature of Ultimate Single Vehicle* (Ch. *Jiujing yisheng baoxing lun*).

答，以如來藏中具足恒沙性功德故。《起信論》中，不空真如有大智慧光明義、遍照法界義等。《涅槃》云，佛性者，名第一義空。第一義空名為智慧。解云，此即無為性中具有有為功德法故。《如來藏經》模中像等及《寶性論》真如為種性等，皆是此義。⁵⁹

According to Fazang, the womb for buddhahood exhibits activity in nature because, as one type of unconditioned dharma, it inherently encompasses an active nature. This active nature, being conditioned, implies that both the womb for buddhahood and active nature function in ways that are similar to conditioned dharma. To illustrate this theory, Fazang draws upon not only the AF but also the BXL. Furthermore, it is essential to note Fazang's assertion: "There are conditioned merits and benefits in unconditioned nature. This is the same as the meaning of suchness being lineage/potential in the BXL". This statement underscores the significance of the passage in the BXL in comprehending Fazang's interpretation, which regards the noumenal principle as functioning and behaving like a conditioned dharma. This shows that Zhiyan's emphasis on the BXL in his interpretation of suchness was inherited by his esteemed disciple, Fazang. Fazang's attitude and explanations indirectly confirm the validity of the core argument of this article.

4. Concluding Remarks

The conventional view of the early history of the Huayan tradition in East Asia presents Huayan as a sectarian successor to two of the dominant schools of sixth-century Chinese Buddhism—the Dilun School and the Shelun School. These two schools were absorbed by the Huayan tradition. Their history is part of Huayan's prehistory. The teachers of the first Huayan thinkers were the intellectual descendants of the men who had introduced the Dilun and Shelun texts and doctrine to the Chinese. By the third or fourth generation of Dilun School descent and the second generation of the Shelun School, the two schools had merged, based on their common Yogācāra origins. Tathāgatagarbha thought was an component of sixth and early seventh century Chinese Buddhist learning that was almost as important as Yogācāra. Thus, as major elements in a sort of Yogācāra-Tathāgatagarbha hybrid, the AF and the BXL deeply influenced the early Chinese Huayan tradition, especially Zhiyan's doctrinal thought.

In India, although no Buddhist texts teach conditioned arising under the name of *tathatā*, the significance of the dharma-body and Tathāgatagarbha lies in their function of wisdom. The AF made use of this concept under the name *zhenru*. The idea of the conditioned arising of suchness is implied in the AF and was developed into a theory through some later Chinese commentaries. This idea dates back to the Chinese translation of the RGV in the history of Chinese Buddhism and even the Sanskrit text of this treatise itself in the context of Indian Buddhist thought.⁶⁰ In the BXL, the Chinese translation of the RGV, *zhenru* is combined with *foxing* to form *zhenru foxing*, becoming a foundation or reason for the world. In this way, suchness, originally an unconditioned dharma, exhibits actions and movements akin to those of conditioned dharma.

Zhiyan was heir to a doctrinal amalgam composed of nearly equal and largely inter-related parts of Yogācāra and Tathāgatagarbha thought, combined in turn with Dushun's critique. Zhiyan's later works, like the *Kongmu zhang*, would give full definition, detail, and amplitude to his Huayan doctrine. In these texts, Zhiyan utilized the theory of suchness from the AF and the BXL to argue that all phenomena, including delusion, could arise from suchness. The doctrine of dependent origination, which was the source of the doctrine of nature origination, preoccupied Zhiyan throughout his career. Zhiyan proclaims that the doctrine of dependent origination of the one vehicle has significance. One of the supports of dependent origination is suchness, as well as the dharma-realm. Furthermore, Zhiyan found the doctrine of infinite dependent arising according to the one vehicle of the distinct teaching in Huiguang's commentaries. As Huiguang' teacher, Ratnamati was the

translator of the BXL. This suggests that the renderings and interpretations of Ratnamati and Huiguang may have deeply influenced Zhiyan.

The aim of this article was not to be exhaustive or comprehensive but to provide some additional reflections on the relationship between Zhiyan and the RGV, suggesting possible further research. For a long time, many scholars have believed that the RGV had only a minimal impact on East Asian Buddhism, and few have pointed out its influence on Zhiyan. However, through the analysis in this article, I have found that Zhiyan placed significant importance on the RGV. It is hoped that this study will make a small contribution to the reconsideration of the influence of the RGV within the historical context of Chinese Buddhist thought.

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Notes

- ¹ The Huayan tradition is a Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition that developed in China. This tradition considers the *Flower Garland Sutra* (Ch. *Huayan jing*) to be the ultimate teaching of the Buddha, as well as the works of Huayan patriarchs, like Zhiyan 智儼, Fazang 法藏, Chengguan 澄觀 and Zongmi 宗密. See (Yü 2020, p. 160).
- ² Eugene Obermiller was the first to provide an English rendering from the Tibetan translation of the RGV. See (Obermiller 1931).
- ³ On these commentaries, see (Kano 2016, pp. 405–14).
- ⁴ Nakamura Zuiryū 中村瑞隆 was the first to provide a comprehensive comparison between the Sanskrit text of the RGV and the Chinese translation of this treatise by Ratnamati. See (Nakamura 1961).
- ⁵ The Dilun School is a tradition that was derived from the translators Bodhiruci 菩提流支 and Ratnamati 勒那摩提. Both of them worked on Vasubandhu's *Shidi jing lun* 十地經論 (Commentary on the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*), producing some translations during the Northern Wei 北魏.
- ⁶ The Shelun School is a tradition that was derived from Paramārtha 真諦 and his translations. He taught widely on the principles of Consciousness Only and developed a large following in China. Many followers heard Paramārtha's teachings, especially those on *Mahāyānasamgraha*. This tradition was known as the Shelun School.
- ⁷ On the spread of the AF and its modern readings, see (Tarocco 2008).
- ⁸ *Dasheng qixin lun*, T1666, 32.580a18–a22.
- ⁹ *Dasheng qixin lun*, T1666, 32.578a19–a21.
- ¹⁰ See (Takasaki 1990, pp. 13, 22). Recent scholarship indicates that the terms in the AF closely resemble those used by Bodhiruci rather than another Indian monk, Paramārtha 真諦 (499–569), who also translated texts into Chinese. Regarding the terms found in the AF, see Takemura (1985); Ishii (2003, 2004); Ōtake (2004a) (Yuishikisetsu); Ōtake (2004b) (Inyōbunken).
- ¹¹ See (Takasaki 1990, p. 14). In my view, this development evolved into the theory of the conditioned arising of suchness (Ch. *zhenru suiyuan* 真如隨緣/*zhenru yuanyi* 真如緣起) and had become prevalent by the sixth century.
- ¹² See the biographies of Paramārtha and his disciple Fatai 法泰 (?-?) in (Hsiang-lin Lo 1954, pp. 313–26).
- ¹³ *She dasheng lun chao*, T2806: 85.1000b18–b22.
- ¹⁴ *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, T2060:50.654a10–13.
- ¹⁵ *Huayan jing zhuanji*, T2073:51.163b18–164a6.
- ¹⁶ About the close relationship between Zhiyan and the Shelun School, see Ōtake (2000).
- ¹⁷ *Huayan jing neizhangmen deng za kongmu*, T1870: 45.550b9–550b20.
- ¹⁸ To date, there has been very little research on the *Kongmu zhang*. As a notable example, Takamine Ryōshū 高峯了州 has conducted some preliminary studies on this topic. See Takamine (1964).
- ¹⁹ While some scholars question the reliability of the *Lidai sanbao ji*, there is currently no other literature mentioning the translation of the RGV.
- ²⁰ *Huayan jing zhuanji*, T2073: 51.163c7–c13.

Huiguang's most important biographies are in the *Xu gaoseng zhuan* (T2060, 607c18–608a29) and the *Huayan jing zhuanji* (T2073, 159a10–b15). He was the main disciple of Ratnamati.

Also see (Gimello 1976, p. 179).

Xu gaoseng zhuan, T2060:50.504c26–505a29.

Xu gaoseng zhuan, T2060:50.501b6–502a25.

Xu gaoseng zhuan, T2060:50.485a1–486a6.

At the end of Zhiyan's *Kongmu zhang* (T1870, 588a–589b), he provides some of the contents of a Sanskrit text of the *Avatamsaka Sutra* (Ch. *Huayan jing*), which he had seen in Chang'an and which seemed to differ from the 60-fascicle Chinese version of this scripture. This indicates that Zhiyan had some knowledge of Sanskrit. See (Hino 1955, pp. 254–61).

Huayan jing neizhangmen deng za kongmu, T1870: 45.586b9–b13.

Concerning the one vehicle of the distinct teaching in Zhiyan's doctrinal system, see (Ishii 1996, pp. 80–139).

Huayan jing neizhangmen deng za kongmu, T1870: 45.545a21–a26.

Concerning Zhiyan's theory of *zhenru*, see (Ōtake 2007, pp. 333–45).

Huayan jing neizhangmen deng za kongmu, T1870: 45.550b9–550b20.

Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism (Buswell and Lopez 2013, p. 325).

Also see (Ogawa 1990, pp. 225–58).

While translating the *Buzeng bujian jing*, Bodhiruci employed the Chinese term *zhenru*, a choice not referenced by Ratnamati in his translation of the BXL, despite the thematic overlap between these two texts. Regarding the term *zhenru* in the *Buzeng bujian jing*, see (Silk 2015, pp. 116–19, 176).

For a biography of Bodhiruci, which includes a reference to Ratnamati, see *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, T2060:50.428a22–429c4.

Regarding this point, see (Ōtake 2017, pp. 88, 98–99, 105). Furthermore, concerning the characteristics of Bodhiruci's renderings, see the first chapter of Ōtake (2013).

On the history of suchness in Chinese Buddhism, see Kaginushi (1968); Ishii (1997).

Concerning the origin and development of the Dilun School, see Satomichi (1973).

T1729:34.285a4–7 and T1717:33.942c17–24.

Refer to Takasaki (1966) for the English translation of the Sanskrit text of the RGV. However, in this article, I rely on my translation of the Sanskrit text of the RGV.

Ratnagotravibhāga: 71.18–72.1.

Jiujing yisheng baoxing lun, T1611:31.839a1–4.

Prof. Matsumoto Shirō criticized Takasaki's statement mentioned here. See the whole analysis in the fourth chapter of Matsumoto (2013).

Ratnagotravibhāga: 36.10–13.

Jiujing yisheng baoxing lun, T1611:31.831a23–28.

For further insights into the concept of *gotra* in context, consult (Ruegg 1976, pp. 341–63).

In contrast to Sarvāstivāda, Yogācāravāda (Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda) clearly considers *tathatā* unconditioned dharma. I thank Saitō Akira 齋藤明 for instructing me on this point. Concerning this point and *tathāgatagarbha* in the RGV, see Saitō (2019).

Ratnagotravibhāga: 21.8–17.

Jiujing yisheng baoxing lun, T1611:31.827a1–14.

Samalā tathatā and *zhenru foxing* may be connected to the theory of *Tathāgatagarbha* in the *Śrīmālādevī-sūtra* (Ch. *Shengman jing* 勝鬘經). See (Paul 1979, p. 197).

Ratnagotravibhāga: 70.5–8.

Jiujing yisheng baoxing lun, T1611:31.838b15–21.

For insights into the theory of *dharmakāya*'s teaching in Indian Buddhism, refer to Ochi (1985); Namai (2002). Additionally, Ōkubo (2004) explores this theory of *dharmakāya*'s teaching in East Asian Buddhism, noting its connection to *hōbutsu seppō* 法佛說法 in the *Ru lengqie jing* 楞伽經 within Japanese Buddhism. In my view, the roots of the theory of *dharmakāya*'s teaching extend not only from this text but also from the Chinese translation of the RGV. Fujii (2004) has made a similar argument.

Huayan wushi yao wenda, T1869: 45.519b18–b22.

Ratnagotravibhāga: 79.1–3.

Jiujing yisheng baoxing lun, T1611:31.841a2–4.

To the best of my knowledge, one of the earliest Chinese Buddhist manuscripts translating *pariṣṭi* as *zhuan* 轉 is found in the translation of the RGV. Subsequently, this Chinese term was adopted by Paramārtha and his disciples, featuring in translations such as the *Shedasheng lun shi* 攝大乘論釋 (T1595, 132a), the *Zhuanshi lun* 轉識論 (T1587, 63c), and the *Foxing lun* 佛性論 (T1610). An intriguing observation is that neither the *Lengqie abaduoluobao jing* 楞伽阿跋多羅寶經 (T670) nor the *Ru lengqie jing* 楞伽經

(T671) utilized the term *zhuanyi*, despite the presence of *parivṛtti* in the Sanskrit text of the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*. Given this, a reassessment of the positions and affiliations of Paramārtha's disciples becomes necessary.

58 *Huayan jing neizhangmen deng za kongmu*, T1870: 45.559a8–a14.

59 *Huayan jing tanxuan ji*, T1733: 16.405b7–405b18.

60 Concerning some connections between the RGV and the *Dasheng qixin lun*, also see Zimmermann (forthcoming).

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