Imperial Patronage and Scriptural Authority: Sui Buddhist Cataloguers and Their Perspectives on Emperor-Saṅgha Relations

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Abstract: This article analyses three Sui dynasty Buddhist catalogues by Fajing, Fei Changfang, and Yancong, focusing on how they balanced imperial patronage with scholarly independence. Fajing's catalogue praises Emperor Wen but excludes imperially sponsored texts. Fei Changfang, a former monk turned lay scholar, emphasizes imperial support for Buddhism throughout his work, includes more texts as canonical and gives special attention to those significant to Emperor Wen. However, he still determines scriptural authenticity himself and leverages the emperor's power to bolster his own scriptural authority. Yancong's catalogue shows the most autonomy, canonizing predominantly foreign-sourced texts and excluding Chinese-authored works, regardless of the latter's imperial support. These differences reflect each compiler's status and relationship with the court. This article aims to show how Sui Buddhist cataloguers asserted their scriptural authority in catalogue formation while working under imperial patronage and illuminate the complex interplay between Buddhist scholarship and political power in the Sui dynasty.

Keywords: Buddhist catalogues, Sui dynasty, Imperial Patronage, Scriptural Authority, Fajing, Fei Changfang, Yancong

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1. Introduction

The Chinese Buddhist Canon, formally known as the 'Great Storage of Scriptures' (*Da zangjing* 大藏經), is a vast collection of Buddhist texts translated into or written in Chinese, reflecting diverse traditions and doctrinal orientations.[1] Cataloguing played a crucial role in shaping this canon, serving to classify, authenticate, and manage the growing body of texts.[2] For the saṅgha, catalogues provided a framework for establishing textual authority, and supporting the study and preservation of Buddhist teachings.[3] The scriptural authority of Buddhist cataloguers played a pivotal role in shaping the Chinese Buddhist textual tradition. As Kyoko Tokuno aptly states, 'A cataloguer held the key to a scripture's destiny in the Chinese Buddhist textual tradition, regardless of what that text's actual provenance may have been.'[4] Tanya Storch notes that from the late third century through the Northern Song (960–1127), nearly a hundred handwritten Buddhist catalogues were produced, with each cataloguer exercising this scriptural authority to shape the canon's form and meaning.[5] Tokuno further demonstrates the impact of this authority, observing that with the advent of printing, texts classified as suspicious and spurious in pre-Song manuscript catalogues fell out of circulation, while those granted canonical status persisted into later periods.[6] For cataloguers, in turn, this scriptural authority was

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[1] In his study of the early Chinese Buddhist canon, Stefano Zacchetti discusses the inclusive and conservative nature of the canon, see Zacchetti, 'Notions and Visions of the Canon', 81–83. The Chinese Buddhist canon is alternatively referred to as the 'Internal Classics' 內典, 'Myriad of Scriptures' 眾經, and 'All the Scriptures' 一切經, see Wu, 'The Chinese Buddhist Canon', 18–19.

[2] Tokuno, 'The Evaluation of Indigenous Scriptures', 31–33; Zacchetti, 'Notions and Visions of the Canon', 84.

[3] Wu, 'The Chinese Buddhist Canon', 17–18; Lancaster, 'The Movement of Buddhist Texts', 231–32.

[4] Tokuno, 'The Evaluation of Indigenous Scriptures', 33.

[5] Storch, 'Fei Changfang's Records', 109–10.

[6] Tokuno, 'The Evaluation of Indigenous Scriptures', 32–33, 62–63, note 8.

instrumental in establishing their identity as guardians of orthodox dharma, enhancing their influence in Buddhist circles, and securing elite and imperial patronage.

In the pre-Sui period, cataloguing was primarily driven by individual monks and lay Buddhist scholars. Daoan 道安 (312–385) introduced the term 'Tipiṭaka' (*sanzang* 三藏) into the Chinese cataloguing system for classifying and discussing Buddhist texts[7] and created a catalogue titled the *Zongli zhongjing mulu* 綜理眾經目錄 [Comprehensive Catalogue of Myriad Scriptures]. This catalogue, the first to mention the production of native Chinese Buddhist texts, had not survived its entirety.[8] However, Sengyou's 僧祐 (445–518) later catalogue, the *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集 [Collected Records on the Production of the *Tipiṭaka*][9] preserves most of its contents.[10] Sengyou's catalogue became a crucial source for later Chinese Buddhist cataloguers.[11] These early catalogues reflected the cataloguers'

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[7] Zacchetti, 'Notions and Visions of the Canon', 92–93.

[8] In Tokuno's words, Daoan's catalogue was probably 'an attempt to make a comprehensive record of translations made during the nearly two-hundred-year period from the beginning of translation activities in China up to the time of its compilation', see Tokuno, 'The Evaluation of Indigenous Scriptures', 33. Zacchetti argues that Daoan used certain Indian traditional categories to create what was essentially a highly inventive and distinctly Chinese conception of the canon, see Zacchetti, 'Notions and Visions of the Canon', 92–96.

[9] According to Naitō Ryūo 内藤龍雄, Sengyou continuously revised his works with the catalogue completed in 504 and last updated around 515, see Naitō, 'Sōyū no chosaku'.

[10] *Chu sanzangji ji*, *T* no. 2145, 55: 1.1a29–b8. For instance, Daoan's compilation of anonymous translations is found in ibid., 3.16c7–18c2. This collection contains 142 entries, with Sengyou adding eleven titles as a supplement, see Palumbo, *An Early Chinese Commentary*, 164, note 3. Naitō, however, argues that Daoan's original catalogue was likely organized by individual titles with annotations, following Han bibliographic precedent, rather than the more complex structure seen in Sengyou's work, see Naitō, 'Dō'an roku'. For the structure of Sengyou's catalogue, see Rao, 'Lun Sengyou', 409–11.

[11] Tokuno, 'The Evaluation of Indigenous Scriptures', 33–36; Zacchetti,

own scriptural choices and authority, with limited imperial influence.[12] However, they also faced challenges in balancing scholarly pursuit with imperial preferences. For instance, Sengyou's catalogue did not give prominence to dhāraṇī literature and spoke critically of abridged scripture redactions (*chaojing* 抄經), both of which were favoured by Emperor Wu 武 (r. 502–549) of Liang (502–557).[13] Sengyou also categorized the recitations by nun Sengfa 僧法 (491–505) as spurious, despite Emperor Wu summoning her to the court in 505.[14] Consequently, shortly after the completion of Sengyou's

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'Nations and Visions of the Canon', 93–96.

[12] For a summary of the pre-Sui catalogues, see Storch 'Fei Changfang's Records', 111–18. While Sengyou likely had significant autonomy in compiling his catalogue, Palumbo suggests Sengyou used Liang imperial library resources for anonymous texts, indicating some indirect imperial influence, Palumbo, *An Early Chinese Commentary*, 164–68. Zacchetti's note on the missing palace edition of Sengyou's work warns against assuming we fully understand Sengyou's original catalogue or its relationship to imperial sources, see Zacchetti, *In Praise of the Light*, 76, note 10.

[13] Storch, 'Fei Changfang's Records', 116–17. Abridged scripture redactions were of academic interest in Sengyou's contemporary Buddhist circles and common practice among Qi-Liang royalty, see Tokuno, 'The Evaluation of Indigenous Scriptures', 40; Palumbo, *An Early Chinese Commentary*, 166. Sengyou, however, maintained a critical attitude toward these redactions, see ibid., 166–67; Rao, 'Lun Sengyou', 410. However, Tokuno pointed out that Sengyou's treatment of abridged scripture redactions was more lenient than later cataloguers, despite his apparent criticism, see Tokuno, 'The Evaluation of Indigenous Scriptures', 39–40. He classified only six as spurious, compared to forty-six in the main section of abridged scripture redactions and over 450 among anonymous translations. This indicated that Sengyou generally distinguished abridged scripture redactions from spurious texts.

[14] Fei Changfang records that nun Sengfa, a daughter of an imperial scholar, recited twenty-first sūtras totaling thirty-five fascicles. At the age of eight or nine, she would sit quietly with closed eyes and recite these sūtras, which many considered divinely inspired, see *Lidai sanbao ji*, *T* no. 2034, 49: 11.97a17–b27. Sengyou includes Sengfa's recitals in his 'Yi lu' 疑錄 [Category of Dubious Texts]

catalogue, Emperor Wu ordered new catalogues to be compiled, resulting in Baochang's 寶唱 (fl. 505–519) *Liangshi zhongjing mulu* 梁世眾經目錄 [Liang Era Catalogue of Myriad Scriptures] becoming the official catalogue around 519.[15] This situation illustrates the growing influence of the emperor and imperial patronage on catalogue formation and canon development.

While catalogues served critical functions for the saṅgha, over time they also became objects of increasing imperial interest and involvement. From the mid second to late fourth centuries, rulers' patronage was not yet significant in developing the Chinese Buddhist canon and its cataloguing. Substantial imperial involvement emerged later, particularly from the Sui onward. By commissioning comprehensive catalogues, rulers could demonstrate their patronage for Buddhism, present themselves as protectors of the Buddhist dharma, and exert some control over Buddhist texts. During the Tang dynasty, despite less consistent imperial support for Buddhism compared to the Sui,[16] several rulers actively engaged in catalogue formation to assert their authority. For instance, Empress Wu 武皇后 (r. 690–705) ordered the composition of the *Da Zhou kanding zhongjing mulu* 大周刊定眾經目錄 [Corrected and Authorized Catalogue of Scriptures of the Great Zhou] in 695, decreeing it to be the largest and the most correct catalogue ever.[17] Emperor Dezong of Tang 唐德宗 (r. 779–805)

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because, according to Sengyou, despite their remarkable origin, they lack the authority of being directly from the Buddha's mouth and were not translated by a recognized master, see *Chu sangzangji ji*, *T* no. 2145, 55: 5.40a9–b23. For more about Sengfa, see Tokuno, 'The Evaluation of Indigenous Scriptures', 37–38; Fang, 'Guanyu Jiang Mi nüzi Sengfa songchu jing', 2–5; Chen, 'Buddhist Establishments Within Liang Wudi's Imperial Park', 21.

[15] *Lidai sanbao ji*, *T* no. 2034, 49: 11.94b17–20; *Sui shu* 35.1089; *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, *T* no. 2060, 50: 1.426c21–24.

[16] Weinstein, 'Imperial Patronage', 1624; Yūki, 'Shotō bukkyō', 18–19.

[17] The cataloguer monk Mingquan's 明佺 (d. after 712) preface to the *Da Zhou kanding zhongjing mulu* lavishly praises Empress Wu, exalting her as the 'Jinlun sheng huangdi bixia' 金輪聖皇帝陛下 [Golden Wheel Sacred Divine Emperor] among other accolades, see *Da Zhou kanding zhongjing mulu*, *T* no.

commissioned the *Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu* 貞元新定釋教目錄 [Zhenyuan Era Newly Authorized Catalogue of Śākyamuni's Teachings] in 794, aiming to improve upon earlier catalogues and prove that during his reign, the Buddhist canon had reached the apex in terms of organizational clarity and doctrinal accuracy.[18] These actions demonstrate the Tang rulers' more active and assertive role in catalogue formation compared to the Sui period.

During the Sui period, three official catalogues were commissioned: two by Emperor Wen 隋文帝 (r. 581–604) and one by Emperor Yang 隋煬帝 (r. 605–618). The two extant catalogues commissioned by Emperor Wen are the *Da Sui zhongjing mulu* 大隋眾經目錄 [Catalogue of Myriad Scriptures of the Great Sui], compiled by Fajing 法經 (fl. late sixth c.) and his colleagues in 594, and the *Sui Renshounian neidian lu* 隋仁壽年內典錄 [Catalogue of the Inner Canon of the Sui Renshou Era], compiled by Yancong 彥琮 (557–610) in 602.[19] The catalogue commissioned by Emperor

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2163, 55: 1.372c17–373a12. For Empress Wu and her political use of Buddhism, see Forte, *Political Propaganda*, 153–68; Chen '*Śarīra* and Scepter', 123–25.

[18] Emperor Dezong's influence is strongly felt in Yuanzhao's 圓照 (fl. 794) *Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu*, most notably through the inclusion of a new category 'Techeng enzhi lu' 特承恩旨錄 [Texts Specially Authorized by Imperial Grace], see *Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu*, *T* no. 2157, 55: 1.771a5–23; 771c8; cf. Storch, 'Fei Changfang's Records', 129.

[19] The title of *T* no. 2147 in the Taishō edition is simply the *Zhongjing mulu* 眾經目錄, the same title as *T* no. 2146. Contrary to Storch's claim that it is titled *Yancong zhongjing mulu*, *T* no. 2147 does not mention Yancong, see Storch, 'Fei Changfang's Records', 109, note 21. Instead, it states it 'was compiled by Sui translation monks and scholars' (隋翻經沙門及學士等撰). The earliest mention of this catalogue being attributed to Yancong as the main responsible person is in the 'Yancong zhuan' 彥琮傳 [Biography of Yancong] in Daoxuan's *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳 [Further Biographies of Eminent Monks], see *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, *T* no. 2060, 50: 2.437b29–c3. Subsequently, the *Da Tang dongjing Dajing'ai si Yiqiejinglun mu* 大唐東京大敬愛寺一切經論目 [Catalogue of All Scriptures and Treatises at the Great Jing'ai Monastery in the Eastern Capital of Great Tang, *T* no. 2148] written by Jingtai 靜泰 (fl. mid to late seventh c.) is

Yang, composed by Zhiguo 智果 (fl. late sixth c. to early seventh c.) in 617, is now lost.[20] Additionally, there was one privately initiated catalogue, the *Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶記 [Records of Three Treasures Throughout Successive Dynasties] by Fei Changfang 費長房 (fl. late sixth c.), which was submitted to Emperor Wen in 597 and subsequently approved for distribution.

This article examines two extant official Sui catalogues and Fei Changfang's privately initiated catalogue, focusing on these Buddhist cataloguers' perspectives on the emperor-saṅgha relationship. I mainly analyse the address to Emperor Wen in Fajing's catalogue, the memorial and preface in Fei Changfang's catalogue, and the preface to Yancong's catalogue. Fajing's catalogue, lacking both preface and titled memorial, includes a formal address to the emperor before the general index of scriptures in its final fascicle: 'Daxingshan Monastery Scripture-Translation Śramaṇa Fajing and others respectfully address the Emperor, the Great Patron' (大興善寺善寺翻經眾沙門法經等敬白皇帝大檀越).[21] Fei Changfang's memorial is titled 'Shang

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closely based on *T* no. 2147, see Hayashiya, 'Zui dai kyōroku', 303–14. Due to the Taishō edition reducing the titles of both *T* no. 2146 and *T* no. 2147 to the *Zhongjing mulu*, I adopt their names as mentioned in the *Lidai sanbao ji* and the *Da Tang neidian lu* 大唐內典錄 [Great Tang Record of the Inner Canon] to differentiate them for this discussion. That is, *T* no. 2146 is referred to as the *Da Sui zhongjing mulu* and *T* no. 2147 as the *Sui Renshounian neidian lu*, see *Lidai sanbao ji*, *T* no. 2034, 49: 15.126c11–12; *Da Tang neidian lu*, *T* no. 2149, 55: 10.337b24; 337c7–8.

[20] 'During the Daye era, the monk Zhiguo was ordered to compile a catalogue of various scriptures at the Inner Place of the Way in the Eastern Capital, categorizing and organizing them. The sūtras spoken by the Buddha were divided into three parts: first called Mahāyāna, second called Hīnayāna, and third called miscellaneous scriptures. The rest, which seemed to be falsely attributed to later people, were separately categorized into one part, called the doubtful scriptures' (大業時, 又令沙門智果, 於東都內道場撰諸經目, 分別條貫, 以佛所說經為三部: 一曰大乘, 二曰小乘, 三曰雜經. 其餘似後人假託為之者, 別為一部, 謂之疑經), see, *Sui shu* 35.1099; Wang, 'Sui Jinwang Yang Guang "Baotai jingzang" jianzhi shulun', 4–5.

[21] *Da Sui zhongjing mulu*, *T* no. 2146, 55: 7.148c7–8.

Kaihuang sanbao lu biao' 上開皇三寶錄表 [Memorial Presenting the Kaihuang Three Treasures Catalogue], which currently precedes the 'Kaihuang sanbao lu zongmu xu' 開皇三寶錄總目序 [Preface to the Kaihuang Three Treasures General Catalogue]. Notably, memorials to the emperor are absent from both pre-Sui and Tang catalogues. In function and content, Fajing's address, and Fei's memorial resemble the prefaces common in other catalogues, which typically review previous catalogues, justify the need for the current catalogue, and outline its structure and size. Both Fajing's choice to use an address to the emperor instead of a preface, and Fei Changfang's decision to include his memorial right before the preface, reflect their intention to closely associate their catalogues with imperial power. Yancong's catalogue has a preface only, like other catalogues in the pre-Sui and Tang periods, but his preface clearly speaks to the emperor as part of the audience.

The main finding is that despite the emperor's commissions, Fajing's and Yancong's evaluation of canonical Buddhist texts primarily relied on their personal judgments. Fajing notably excluded most early Sui translations sponsored by Emperor Wen. Yancong excluded both original compositions and translation works by Chinese Buddhists, even those produced by contemporary Sui Chinese Buddhists with imperial patronage. Their consideration for the emperor and imperial patronage was reflected in their praise for Emperor Wen's support of Buddhism, as expressed in their memorial and preface.

Fei Changfang's catalogue, while a personal effort, adopted a Chinese dynastic chronology approach as its primary organizing principle. Storch suggests that his approach aimed to buttress the imperial authority in determining the canonical status.[22] In my opinion, as I shall demonstrate below, Fei Changfang's main objective was to emphasize the importance of imperial support for Buddhism and then to capitalize on the emperor's power to bolster his own scriptural authority. Despite the emphasis on the imperial patronage, it was still Fei Changfang himself who determined which scriptures to include in his catalogue and their canonical status. He included more texts

[22] Storch, 'Fei Changfang's Records', 121–23.

than two other Sui catalogues and treated many texts as canonical that Fajing had labelled as dubious or fake.

In what follows, I shall explore the cataloguers' backgrounds, cataloguing methods, and relationships with imperial power. This comparison reveals how differently Sui Buddhist intellectuals balanced imperial patronage with scholarly pursuits. Although all three cataloguers praised Emperor Wen and the Sui unification, they maintained significant independence in their cataloguing decisions.

2. The Address to the Emperor of Fajing's Catalogue

2.1. Context and Impetus for the First Sui Official Catalogue

The *Da Sui zhongjing mulu* is a seven-*juan* Buddhist scripture catalogue compiled in 594. It was commissioned by Emperor Wen and completed by monk Fajing and his team from the Daxingshan Monastery 大興善寺. The catalogue was finished in just two months, likely due to the involvement of up to twenty collaborators. Naitō suggested that this rapid compilation might indicate urgent circumstances.[23] In 593, the *Zhan cha jing* 占察經 [Scripture on Divination and Observation] caused problems in Guangzhou and Qingzhou. In Guangzhou, a monk used this text to practice a 'pagoda repentance method' (塔懺法), which involved throwing tokens marked good and evil for divination. He also conducted a 'self-beating method' (自撲法) for eliminating sins, where men and women participated together inappropriately.[24] A layman in Qingzhou practiced similar rituals. These activities were reported to Guangzhou authorities as potentially heretical. When questioned, practitioners claimed the 'pagoda repentance method' was based on the *Zhan cha jing*. The 'self-beating method' was based on scriptures describing prostrating oneself

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[23] Naitō, 'Hōkyō roku', 235–36.

[24] For a detailed discussion of the contents of the *Zhan cha jing*, see Lai 'The Chan-ch'a ching', 178–93; Kashiwagi, *Daijō kishinron*, 383–405.

as if a great mountain were collapsing. Guangzhou officials reported this incident to the capital. The emperor ordered an investigation, consulting eminent monks including Fajing. These monks found that the *Zhan cha jing* was not listed in any previous catalogues and its practices differed from established Buddhist teachings.[25] The emperor subsequently prohibited the scripture's circulation and related practices.[26] Naitō suggests this incident indicated an urgent need for authoritative judgment on Buddhist scriptural authenticity.

I think that although such incidents might have been a background factor in creating an official scripture catalogue, they may not have been the primary impetus, given the relatively minor status of the locations and participants involved, especially among the elite Buddhist circles. Furthermore, Fajing's catalogue includes a relatively conservative evaluation of the *Zhan cha jing*. It was classified along with twenty other scriptures in the category of 'Zhongjing yihuo' 眾經疑惑 (Dubious Scriptures) rather than being labelled as 'Zhongjing weiwang' 眾經偽妄 (Fake Scriptures). Had the catalogue been created due to urgent circumstances caused by this scripture, the comment would likely have been more severe.[27] The main context for the first Sui scripture catalogue should be considered in light of Buddhist policies and royal engagement in scripture copying from the beginning of Kaihuang era (581–600), which significantly increased the

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[25] Lai suggests that the *Zhan cha jing* remained in circulation even after the Sui cataloguers declared it spurious, see Lai, 'The Chan-ch'a ching', 196–97. Zhisheng's 智昇 (fl. early eighth c.) catalogue compiled in 730 recognized it as authentic, see *Kaiyuan Shijiao lu*, *T* no. 2154, 55: 7.551a2–23.

[26] The incidents related to the *Zhan cha jing* are not recorded in Fajing's catalogue but in Fei's catalogue, see *Lidai sanbao ji*, *T* no. 2034, 49: 12.106c8–22; cf. *Kaiyuan Shijiao lu*, *T* no. 2154, 55: 7.551a2–23.

[27] The evaluation reads: 'the previous twenty-one scriptures, mostly due to discrepancies in titles and annotations among various catalogues, and their textual content being mixed, have not yet been distinguished as genuine or false. The matter requires further examination, so for now they are appended to the catalogue of dubious [scriptures]' (前二十一經, 多以題注參差眾錄, 理復雜, 真偽未分, 事須更詳, 且附疑錄), see, *Da Sui zhongjing mulu*, *T* no. 2146, 55: 2.126c1–2.

number of Buddhist texts.[28] Furthermore, the conquest of Chen in 589 increased the collection of many scriptures from the south.[29] These factors collectively necessitated the creation of a Sui official scripture catalogue.

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[28] At the beginning of Kaihuang era, Emperor Wen ordered that 'in the capital and other major urban areas such as Bingzhou, Xiangzhou, Luozhou, and others, they should officially copy all the scriptures and place them in monasteries; and then copy them again and store them in secret pavilions. The people All-under-Heaven followed this wind, competing with each other in respect and admiration, and Buddhist scriptures spread among the people became numerous tens or hundreds of times more than the Six Classics' (京師及并州, 相州, 洛州等諸大都邑之處, 並官寫一切經, 置于寺內. 而又別寫, 藏于祕閣. 天下之人, 從風而靡, 競相景慕, 民間佛經, 多於六經數十百倍). See *Sui shu* 35.1099. In 589, Empress Dugu 獨孤皇后 (544–602) ordered all Buddhist scriptures be copied. These copies were based on the official Buddhist texts previously commissioned by Emperor Wen in 581. Six Dunhuang manuscripts have been discovered with the following inscription at the end of each scroll: 'On the eighth day of the fourth month in the ninth year of Kaihuang of Sui (589), the empress respectfully produced all scriptures for the sake of all the sentient beings in the dharma realm, to circulate and make offerings' (隋開皇九年四月八日皇后為法界眾生敬造一切經, 流通供養). For detailed analysis of these manuscripts, see Fang, 'Dunhuang yishu', 139–45; Du and Wu, 'Dunhuang yishu zhong Dugu huanghou shizao "yiqie jing" ji youguan wenti', 9–12.

[29] 'After pacifying Chen 陳 (557–589), [Yang Guang] at Yangzhou repaired the old scriptures and also inscribed new copies. In total, there were 612 collections, 29,173 divisions, and 903,580 fascicles' (平陳之後, 於揚州莊補故經, 并寫新本, 合六百一十二藏, 二萬九千一百七十三部, 九十萬三千五百八十卷), see *Bianzheng lun*, *T* no. 2110, 52: 3.509c8–11. Yang Guang established the Precious Platform Scripture Repositories 寶臺經藏 in Yangzhou from 590 to 595. According to 'Baotaijingzang yuanwen' 寶臺經藏願文 [The Vow Text of Precious Platform Scripture Repositories] authored by Yang Guang himself, 'the Precious Platform's four repositories comprised nearly a hundred thousand scrolls' (寶台四藏將十萬軸), see *Guang hongming ji*, *T* no. 2103, 52: 22.257b27–28.

2.2. Fajing's Address to Emperor Wen

Fajing's address to the emperor starts with the following statement:

> The Daxingshan Monastery's scripture translation assembly of monks, including Fajing and others, respectfully present to the emperor, the great patron. On the tenth day of the fifth month [in 594], the Minister of the Imperial Sacrifices, Niu Hong 牛弘 (545–610), received the imperial order to compile the catalogue of myriad scriptures. [Fa]jing and others carefully and immediately compiled [the catalogue], which totals 2,257 divisions in 5,310 *juan*, summarized in seven *juan*. The separate catalogue has six *juan*, and the general catalogue has one *juan*. The transcription is now complete and respectfully submitted. 大興善寺翻經眾沙門法經等敬白皇帝大檀越：去五月十日，太常卿牛弘奉勅，須撰眾經目錄．經等謹即修撰．總計眾經，合有二千二百五十七部，五千三百一十卷．凡為七卷，別錄六卷，總錄一卷，繕寫始竟，謹用進呈.[30]

The above paragraph is a formal submission or memorial to Emperor Wen from Fajing, a court monk in charge of scripture-translation at the Daxingshan Monastery, and his colleagues. It follows the traditional format used in the official communications to the emperor, especially for reporting on tasks ordered by the emperor himself. It specifies the date when Niu Hong, the Minister of the Imperial Sacrifices, received orders, demonstrating the emperor's authority to commission the catalogue. This underscores the catalogue's official standing, being an endeavour backed by imperial patronage.

> [I], [Fa]jing, and others again respectfully state: [we] look up and ponder the supreme dharma treasure, the Way of which permeates the boundless. In the middle of the Age of Semblance Dharma, [dharma] had already reached this land. Before when [Dong]fang Shuo 東方朔 (154–93 BCE) saw ashes beneath the Kunming Lake, [he] suggested querying in the Western Regions

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[30] *Da Sui zhongjing mulu*, *T* no. 2146, 55: 7.148c7–11.

for clarification.[31] When Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE) collated books and catalogued [them] in the records of the Heaven Blessings Pavilion 天祿閣, the Buddhist scriptures were already seen there. From this we know that by the Former Han (206 BCE–9 CE) era, the true dharma had already arrived for a long time. It was not that it first spread to this land only in the Later Han (25–220).

However, since the Way was pale, the passion ostentatious, the distinction between truth and falsehood opaque, few people held genuine reverence and although it existed, it seemed as if it were absent. This led Emperor Ming of Han 漢明帝 (r. 57–75) to dream of a golden figure, signifying the sacred Way relying on the imperial throne.[32] [This] greatly initiated the beginning of the promotion and reverence of [Buddhism]. Thus, envoys were sent to the Western Regions specifically to seek Buddhist scriptures, leading to the creation of the *Sishierzhang jing* 四十二章經 [Forty-Two Chapters Sūtra] by Kāśyapa Mātaṅga (Shemoteng 攝摩騰) and Dharmarakṣa (Zhufala 竺法蘭),[33] and Parthamasiris ([An] Shigao 安世高, d. 168) and Lokakṣema (Zhiqian 支謙, b. 147) broadly translated other scripture divisions. After that, scholars fathoming the Way sought

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[31] He, *Sanfu huangtu*, 257. Kunming Lake was built by Emperor Wu of Han 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE) near Chang'an, see *Han shu* 24.1165.

[32] The beginning of the *Sishierzhang jing* writes 'Formerly, Emperor Xiaoming of Han (r. 57–75) dreamt at night of a divine being, whose body was golden, and neck radiated sunlight, flying in front of the palace. He felt joyous and greatly pleased in his heart. The next day, he asked his ministers, "What deity is this?" A knowledgeable person, Fu Yi (d. 90), said, "Your servant has heard that in India, there is one who has attained the Way, called Buddha, who can levitate and fly; perhaps it was his spirit"' (昔漢孝明皇帝夜夢見神人, 身體有金色, 項有日光, 飛在殿前, 意中欣然, 甚悅之. 明日問群臣: '此為何神也?' 有通人傅毅曰: '臣聞天竺有得道者, 號曰佛, 輕舉能飛, 殆將其神也'). See *Sishierzhang jing*, *T* no. 784, 17: 17.722a14–18.

[33] It was not until the fifth century that Buddhist texts began to specifically name Kāśyapa Mātaṅga and Dharmarakṣa as the two missionaries who travelled with delegations to the Western Regions to collect Buddhist scriptures. For details, see Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, 22.

> each other and arrived. 經等又敬白：仰惟無上法寶，道洽無窮. 像運中途，預被茲土. 昔方朔覩昆明下灰，令問西域取決. 劉向校書，天閣錄載，已見佛經，方知前漢之世，正法久至；非為後漢，始流此地矣. 但自道淡情華，真偽玄隔，人尠宗敬，雖有若亡. 又致明帝夢感金容現者，當是聖道憑籍皇王，大啟弘奉之端耳. 於是發使西域，專求佛經. 緣此，摩騰、法蘭創出《四十二章》；世高、支讖，廣譯諸餘經部. 是後，通道之士，相尋而至.[34]

This paragraph opens with the assertion that Buddhism reached China before the start of the Former Han dynasty. To support this claim, Fajing refers to two renowned scholars from that era: Dongfang Shuo, who suggested to query in the Western Regions (normally referring to today's Xinjiang region but may include also Central Asia and even India) to solve the mystery of ashes beneath Kunming Lake; and the librarian Liu Xiang, whose annotated catalogue of the Former Han imperial library allegedly contained references to Buddhist scriptures.[35] Fajing's narrative, though historically dubious,[36] aims at advancing the timeline of Buddhism's arrival into China into the Former Han dynasty. This is one of the earliest known attempts to create a full chronological scheme of Chinese Buddhist history.

Fajing then identifies a subsequent phase in Buddhism's penetration to China with a widely circulated tale about Emperor Ming of

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[34] *Da Sui zhongjing mulu T* no. 2146, 55: 7.148c11–20.

[35] Although Liu Xiang's bibliography almost certainly did not contain Buddhist references, Fajing, like previous Buddhist cataloguers, was clearly aware of and to some extent modelled his work on Liu Xiang's bibliographic methodology. For how Confucian bibliographical tradition influenced the formation of Chinese Buddhist bibliography, see Storch, *Chinese Buddhist Bibliography*, 10; Drège, *Les bibliothèques en Chine*, 177.

[36] According to Tang Yongtong 湯用彤, the earliest non-Buddhist bibliography that includes Buddhist texts is the *Zhongjing bu* 中經簿 [Central Classics Register]. This catalogue was compiled by Zheng Mo 鄭默 (213–280), who served as the Supervisor of the Imperial Library during the reign of Emperor Ming of Wei 魏明帝 (r. 226–239). This bibliography has been lost, see Tang, *Han Wei Liangjin Nanbeichao Fojiao shi*, 424–25.

Han. According to this account, detailed in the *Sishierzhang jing*, the emperor dreamed of a golden deity unequivocally identified as the Buddha. *The Sishierzhang jing*, which gained immense popularity among Buddhist clergy in China from the third century onward, underwent several revisions before reaching its final form by the late fifth century.[37] A crucial aspect of this narrative, particularly pertinent to our discussion, is the early association (by the third century at the latest) that Buddhist clergy drew between Buddhism's growth in China and the imperial authority. Although this connection, as depicted in Emperor Ming's dream, was open to various interpretations, Fajing, in his capacity as a Sui court monk, unambiguously construes it as evidence that 'the sacred Way relies on the imperial throne'. This interpretation provides a clear window into the attitudes of Sui court monks regarding the emperor and imperial patronage.

> Up to the days of Wei and Jin (220–316), when the capital was in Luoyang, although Zhiqian and Kang Senghui (d. 280) preached in Jinling (Nanjing), whereas Zhu [Fa]hu (233–310) and [Zhu Shu]lan 竺叔蘭 (fl. early fourth c.) rapidly translated [the scriptures] in Yong[zhou] and Luo (i.e., Chang'an and Luoyang), the faith and reverence remained simple, and the practice was indeed minimal. By the time of Eastern Jin (318–420) and the two Qins (i.e., Former Qin 前秦, 350–394 and Later Qin 後秦, 384–417), the sūtras and vinayas were roughly sufficiently [translated]. But the dharma relies on humans to be magnified,[38] and the wise and the enlightened

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[37] According to Robert Sharf, scholars debate the legend's date, but agree that Buddhism entered China before Emperor Ming's dream and that the scripture in the *Sishier zhang jing* existed in some form during the Later Han. The legend was expanded over time, with varying dates and destinations for the envoys. Later versions mention two Indian monks, Kāśyapa Mātaṅga and Dharmaratna, as co-translators and mentions the construction of the Baima Monastery 白馬寺 in Luoyang, see Sharf, 'The Scripture in Forty-two Sections', 418–19; cf. Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, 22–23.

[38] An allusion to the *Analects*: 'Humans can magnify the Way, it is not the Way that magnifies the humans' (人能弘道, 非道弘人), see *Lunyu* 15.29.

> increased daily. Thus, Daoan, the dharma master, created a catalogue of various scriptures. [He] examined and evaluated the translation materials, clarifying the time and dynasties [of their composition]. [He] sought the missing and filled the gaps to complete the substance of the catalogue. From then to now, for over two hundred years, over a dozen scripture catalogues were made. Some arranged [the catalogue] by numbers, others by [the sūtra's] name; some based [the divisions] on the time [of translation], others on the translators' [names]. Each recorded one corner and strived to preserve what he had seen. Only the catalogue by the vinaya master Sengyou of Yangzhou is considered close to comprehensiveness, yet it still makes the major and the minor [i.e., Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna] identical and the *Tipiṭaka* mixed. What have been copied and compiled [by indigenous individuals] mix with the authentic, and biographies are confused with scriptures. When we examine them from the beginning to the end, none are comprehensive. As for other various catalogues, how can [they] be said to be more superior [to the current one]? 爰暨魏晉京洛之日, 雖有支謙、康會, 驟宣於金陵, 竺護、蘭炬, 飛譯於雍洛, 然而信敬尚簡, 奉行固微. 比逮東晉二秦之時, 經律粗備. 但法假人弘, 賢明日廣.於是道安法師創條諸經目錄, 銓品譯材, 的明時代, 求遺索缺, 備成錄體. 自爾達今, 二百年間, 製經錄者十有數家, 或以數求, 或用名取, 或憑時代, 或寄譯人. 各紀一隅, 務存所見. 獨有楊州律師僧祐, 撰《三藏記錄》, 頗近可觀. 然猶小大雷同, 三藏雜糅; 抄集參正, 傳記亂經; 考始括終, 莫能該備. 自外諸錄, 胡可勝言?[39]

Fajing's account progresses from discussing the early history of Buddhism in China to examining the evolution of Buddhist scriptural catalogues. He acknowledges early translators' efforts but diminishes the simplicity of Buddhist practice back then. Over the next two centuries, numerous catalogues emerged with varying organizational approaches. Fajing criticizes most as limited in scope, reserving cautious praise for Sengyou's work.[40] However, he immediately points

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[39] *Da Sui zhongjing mulu*, *T* no. 2146, 55: 7.148c20–149a2.

[40] For a comprehensive discussion of Buddhist catalogues written from the

out Sengyou's shortcomings, such as inadequate distinction between the Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna teachings, confusion in the *Tipiṭaka* organization, and mixing of indigenous compositions with authentic translations. Fajing concludes that no existing catalogue achieves true comprehensiveness, subtly setting the stage for the glorification of his own cataloguing project. Fajing continues:

> Since we the monks did not get to see all the scriptures from the Three Kingdoms (220–280) to verify similarities and differences, now, we can rely only on the catalogues from various scholars to delete or simplify, to approve or disapprove and to overall grasp the essentials. [We] positioned them as nine catalogues, distinguishing the categories into forty-two sections. The first six of the nine catalogues comprise thirty-six sections, briefly demonstrating the differences in the *Tipiṭaka* of sūtra, vinaya and *abhidharma* and roughly revealing the differences between authentic and fake translations. The latter three catalogues collect biographies, records, and commentaries [written by the western and native Buddhists], with the first three sections being composed by the sages and the worthies from the Western Regions. Since these are not considered the *Tipiṭaka* orthodox scriptures, they were put into a separate catalogue. The latter three sections are compiled by the virtuous from this place [China]. Although they are not of the same category as products of the Western Regions, each can support the orthodox scriptures, elucidate the essence of the teaching, illuminate the precedents, and enlighten and advance the later students; hence, all these were also included. Besides, [I], Fajing, and others again deeply contemplated. Various catalogues of scriptures are mostly compilations by the worthy and knowledgeable persons of previous generations. When we respectfully measure the former worthies, each of them can be called the one who penetrated the past in his generations, but their compilations are not thoroughly scrutinizing. It is not because these worthies lacked talent or their learning was incomplete. It was directly due

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fourth century to the time of Sengyou, see Tang, *Han Wei Liangjin Nanbeichao Fojiao shi*, 422–24; Storch, *The History of Chinese Buddhist Bibliography*, 24–75.

> to the times they encountered. All-under-Heaven was divided; the nine shepherds were without a master;[41] famous provinces and large commanderies each declared themselves as imperial capitals, and battlefields and difficult passes created [anew] the Warring States. [The previous catalogue compilers] could not know the origins and locations of the scriptures; scholars relied on hearsay but could not observe the scriptures throughout their lifetime. Therefore, although those previous wise men had the talent and capability, having not encounter the right time, they had no opportunity to extend and narrate [what they learned]. 僧眾既未獲盡見三國經本, 校驗異同, 今唯且據諸家目錄, 刪簡可否, 總摽綱紀. 位為九錄, 區別品類, 有四十二分. 九初六錄, 三十六分, 略示經律三藏, 大小之殊. 粗顯傳譯是非, 真偽之別. 後之三錄, 集傳記注. 前三分者, 並是西域聖賢所撰, 以非三藏正經, 故為別錄. 後之三分, 並是此方名德所修, 雖不類西域所製, 莫非毘贊正經, 發明宗教, 光輝前緒, 開進後學, 故兼載焉. 又法經等更復竊思, 諸家經錄, 多是前代賢哲修撰, 敬度前賢, 靡不皆號一時稽古. 而所修撰不至詳審者, 非彼諸賢才不足而學不周, 直是所遇之日, 天下分崩, 九牧無主; 名州大郡, 各號帝畿; 疆場艱關, 並為戰國; 經出所在, 悉不相知; 學者遙聞, 終身莫覩. 故彼前哲, 雖有材能, 若不逢時, 亦無所申述也.[42]

Fajing first explains the structure of his catalogue, which is presented as a comprehensive and well-organized catalogue that surpasses previous efforts. Crucially, Fajing's evaluation of earlier catalogues is both respectful and critical. He acknowledges the competence of previous compilers but attributes their works' limitations to the political fragmentation of their times. By emphasizing the impact of political division, regional conflicts, and restricted access to texts, Fajing implicitly contrasts these conditions with the unity achieved under the Sui. This framing serves a dual purpose: it praises the Sui reunification and Emperor Wen's Buddhist revival while justifying the need for a new, more comprehensive catalogue. Fajing thus positions his work

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[41] Referring to the leaders of the symbolic 'nine provinces' 九州 into which the Chinese world was divided in preimperial era.

[42] *Da Sui zhongjing mulu*, *T* no. 2146, 55: 7.149a2–17.

as both a scholarly achievement and a product of favourable political circumstances. He continues:

> Now, [I], Jing, and others, acknowledge that our learning truly falls behind that of the ancients. However, due to fortunate predestined relationships, our time is a blessed era of having the Four Seas as one home, and peace prevailing among the six directions. Exotic lands and diverse customs are as if before our eyes. Once the first month of the first year [of Sui] was promulgated, nothing remained external [to the realm of unified] writing and gauges [of vehicles].[43] Furthermore, the emperor, a great benefactor, although personally overseeing the myriad affairs, is devoted to the Way throughout the whole day. He revived the Three Jewels, became the cakravartin, forever sealed the gates to the four saṃsāra realms and grandly opened the path between Heaven and humans. In our domain, all beings are blessed, let alone [myself], [Fa]jing and the rest of us. Why then [do I] speak of regrets? My knowledge and wisdom are limited; I have merely encountered this auspicious time. I am unable to fully obtain the scriptures from the Three Kingdoms, the lost texts, and leftover teachings. [My] compilations are hastily made, with much that is confusing. Advance in thought, retreat in reflection, my shame and regret are profound. [This is] respectfully written on the fourteenth day of the seventh month of the fourteenth year of the Kaihuang (594) at the Daxingshan Monastery by the scripture translation monk Fajing and others. 當今經等識學, 誠不及古, 而宿緣多幸, 運屬休辰. 四海為家, 六合清泰. 殊方異俗, 宛若目前. 正朔所班, 書軌無外. 又皇帝大檀越, 雖復親綜萬機, 而耽道終日; 興復三寶, 為法輪王. 永關四趣之門, 大啟天人之路. 在域群生, 莫不蒙賴, 而況經等? 夫何復論所恨, 識慧無長, 猥參嘉運, 不能盡獲三國經本及遺文逸法, 造次修撰, 多有罔昧. 進思退省, 慚慨良深. 敬白. 開皇十四年七月十四日, 大興善寺翻經眾沙門法經等.[44]

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[43] Referring to the canonical achievement of the First Emperor of Qin 秦始皇 (r. 247 BCE–221 BCE) 'vehicles had a uniform gage, writing was in uniform characters' (車同軌, 書同文字), see *Shiji* 6.308.

[44] *Da Sui zhongjing mulu*, *T* no. 2146, 55: 7.149a17–27.

Fajing and his colleagues humbly acknowledge their scholarly limitations in comparison to previous Buddhist scholars. This is not just a display of humbleness. Japanese scholars have conducted substantial research on Fajing's cataloguing methods. Hayashiya Tomojirō 林屋友次郎 suggested that Fajing compiled the catalogue hastily as an armchair exercise. He argued that Fajing synthesized information from old catalogues without directly examining the texts themselves.[45] Sakaino Kōyō 境野黄洋 emphasized the confusion in Fajing's catalogue between the translators Bodhiruci 菩提流支, Prajñāruci 般若流支, and Dharmaruci 曇摩流支 due to the shared '-ruci' element in their names.[46] Tokiwa Daijō 常盤大定 averred that Fajing's contemporaries and subsequent scholars did not highly value his catalogue, based on the limited number of citations it received in later works. He pointed out two main problems with Fajing's approach: the lack of direct examination of texts and failure to record the sources he used. However, Tokiwa acknowledged the catalogue's significance in recording previously unknown scriptures and adding new information.[47]

While the cataloguing techniques, sources, and limitations of Fajing's work, as noted by Japanese scholars, are not the main focus here, it is clear that Fajing's humble self-assessment, stating that their 'learning truly falls behind that of the ancients', is not merely a polite expression of modesty. Fajing was likely aware of the catalogue's shortcomings, regardless of the reasons behind them. However, his catalogue was still a timely and significant work compared to earlier ones. As the person in charge of the first official Sui catalogue, Fajing likely had better access to scriptural sources that were unavailable to previous cataloguers, and he was assisted by more than twenty colleagues. This position allowed him to highlight the benefits of living in the peaceful era under Emperor Wen's reign. By portraying Emperor Wen as a cakravartin, an ideal Buddhist ruler, Fajing's work enhanced the emperor's legitimacy among the Buddhists and the public while aligning him with Buddhist ideals. This portrayal was

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[45] Hayashiya, 'Zui dai kyōroku', 250–74.

[46] Sakaino, *Shina Bukkyō seishi*, 663–64.

[47] Tokiwa, *Gokan yori Sō Sei ni itaru yakukyō sōroku*, 47–49.

aimed at securing continued support and favourable policies for the Buddhist community.

Despite this praise of the emperor, Fajing's catalogue shows no signs of direct imperial involvement. Unlike Fei Changfang, who sought Emperor Wen's approval for his privately composed catalogue (see section 3), Fajing's catalogue appears to have been circulated immediately upon completion and submission, without additional approval. This pattern is also evident in the second Sui official catalogue compiled by Yancong. It is likely that Emperor Wen only reviewed its memorial or preface, and even this review was probably more ceremonial than a rigorous examination. The fact that Fajing's selection and assessment of scriptures appear uninfluenced by imperial preferences suggests that the emperor did not scrutinize the specific contents of the catalogue.

The content of the catalogue shows that it was not directly aligned to the emperor's preferences. For instance, Fajing categorized the *Renwang bore jing* 仁王般若經 [Transcendent Wisdom for Humane King Sūtra], which states that the Buddha entrusted the *prajñāpāramitā* (Ch. bore boluomiduo 般若波羅密多 (transcendental wisdom) to the king rather than to the saṅgha,[48] as dubious, even though this sūtra was endorsed by Emperor Wen. Furthermore, Fajing's catalogue conspicuously omits several sūtras translated at Daxingshan Monastery under Emperor Wen's patronage. These include, for instance, the *Dafangdeng rizang jing* 大方等日藏經 [Great Square and Vast Sun Treasury Sūtra], the *Da Sui yebao chabie jing* 大隋業報差別經 [Great Sui Karmic Retribution Distinction Sūtra], and the *Dacheng fangguang zongchi jing* 大乘方廣總持經 [Mahāyāna

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[48] *Renwang bore boluomi jing*, *T* no. 246, 8: 2.832b20–25. Ōno Hōdō 大野法道 argues that the sūtra, often linked to Kumārajīva, was created in China between 426 and 512, incorporating ideas and addressing historical events not found in Indian texts, see Ōno, *Daijō kai kyō*, 87–92. Tajima Tokune 田島徳音 observes that the sūtra connects Buddhist teachings with China's political challenges, highlighting Buddhism's importance for the state stability, especially relevant during the Northern Zhou's persecution of Buddhism. Tajima, 'Tajima Tokune', 397–98.

Square and Vast Dhāraṇī Sūtra]. Particularly noteworthy is the absence of the *Dehu zhangzhe jing* 德護長者經 (Skt. *Śrīgupta sūtra*) and the *Lianhuamian jing* 蓮花面經 [Lotus Face Sūtra] which were instrumental in constructing Emperor Wen's image as the Moonlight Child 月光童子.[49] Naitō argues that Fajing largely incorporated the catalogue compiled by Fashang 法上 (495–580), the most distinguished monk in the former Northern Qi, between 570 and 576. This explains why Fajing's catalogue does not include translations made after 570. Naitō's analysis is plausible and reveals additional potential sources for Fajing's work.[50] However, as an official translation monk at Daxingshan Monastery, Fajing was undoubtedly aware of the early Sui texts mentioned above and their politico-religious significance. Therefore, while his address to the emperor emphasizes imperial support for Buddhism and praises Emperor Wen, the catalogue's content appears uninfluenced by the emperor's preferences. This discrepancy suggests that Sui court monks maintained considerable autonomy under imperial patronage, feeling secure enough to make independent judgments about the canonical status of scriptures.

3. The Memorial of Fei Changfang's *Lidai sanbao ji*

3.1. Content and Controversies

Fei Changfang completed his catalogue in 597, three years after Fajing's. Fei's own summary provides a concise overview. The fifteen *juan* comprise:

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[49] From 557–584, Indian monk Narendrayaśas (Ch. Naliantiliyeshe 那連提黎耶舍, 490–589) translated Buddhist texts for Chinese emperors. He altered and expanded these texts, introducing the concept of the 'Moonlight Child' and connecting it to ruling emperors. This work began under Emperor Wenxuan of Northern Qi and continued under Emperor Wen of Sui. His translations linked the Buddha, his relics, Maitreya, the Moonlight Child, and rulers.

[50] For the previous catalogues that Fajing might have used, see Naitō, 'Hōkyō roku', 236–38.

> One *juan* of 'Zong mu' [General Index], two *juan* of 'Ruzang mu' [Entering the Canon], three *juan* of 'Di nian' [Emperor's Years], nine of 'Dai lu' [Dynastic Catalogues]. 'Dai lu' compiles varying amounts of scriptural translations. 'Di nian' expands the knowledge about Buddha's presence in the world. 'Ruzang mu' differentiates the shallow and the deep among minor and major teachings. 一卷總目, 兩卷入藏, 三卷帝年, 九卷代錄, 代錄編鑒經翻譯之少多, 帝年張知佛在世之遐邇, 入藏別識教小大之淺深.[51]

Fei's catalogue has been the subject of in-depth analyses by scholars such as Huang Biji 黃碧姬 and Tanya Storch.[52] These studies reveal several distinctive features that set Fei's catalogue apart from other Sui and post-Sui catalogues. First, it uses dynastic chronology as a framework to record Buddhist texts from the Later Han to the Sui period in the nine-*juan* 'Dai lu'. Additionally, it elevates the status of native Buddhist texts by listing them alongside translated texts in the dynastic catalogues. The catalogue also establishes two fascicles of 'Ruzang mu'. Huang Biji suggests that Fei Changfang's 'Ruzang mu' is largely based on Fajing's catalogue with some additions and deletions, aimed at determining which texts Fei Changfang considered canonical.[53] Storch argues that in his 'Ruzang mu' Fei separated the practical canon from materials about its compilation.[54] This claim lacks evidence and departs from Fei Changfang's stated intention of differentiating the teaching's depths and eliminating false texts. Furthermore, Fei Changfang's catalogue softens the judgment of dubious and fake texts by granting canonical status to nearly sixty texts considered dubious or fake by Fajing in its 'Ruzang mu'. It also eliminates a separate category for dubious and fake texts, unlike other catalogues.

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[51] *Lidai sanbao ji*, *T* no. 2034, 49: 15.120c28–29.

[52] Storch, 'Fei Changfang's Records', 109–42; Huang, *Fei Changfang*, 69–100. For a comprehensive survey of the compilation, structure, and later influence of Fei's catalogue, see also Ōuchi, *Nanbokuchō Zui-Tō ki bukkyōshi kenkyū*, 71–194; Chen, *Zhongguo Fojiao shiji*, 4–10.

[53] Huang, *Fei Changfang*, 99–100.

[54] Storch, 'Fei Changfang's Records', 123.

Tanya Storch argues that Fei Changfang's 'dynastic-periodical' approach to text classification and evaluation indicates that in Fei Changfang's eyes, Buddhist texts' canonical status should be determined by the rulers rather than the saṅgha.[55] However, this interpretation has several problems. First, the catalogue does not establish a direct connection between the ruler's sponsorship and the text's production, especially for the periods before the Sui. Fei Changfang's 'Dai lu' largely incorporated pre-Sui catalogues,[56] which were composed by monks without imperial commission. Second, Fei Changfang's method of justifying the text's canonical status was its inclusion in the 'Ruzang mu', rather than placement in 'Dai lu' (notably, many texts in the latter are excluded from the former). Third, Fei Changfang himself explains that the 'Dai lu' was designed primarily to show 'the varying amount of scriptural translations' across dynasties, illustrating Buddhism's continuous development in Chinese history. To wit, the dynastic framework is used as a backdrop for highlighting the increase in Buddhist textual production, rather than a factor behind determining the text's authenticity. Besides, Storch's assertion that Fei Changfang prioritized dates of imperial authorization over translation dates lacks clear evidence.[57] Hence, Storch's argument that Fei Changfang viewed the rulers as the primary determinants of textual legitimacy appears to me too far-fetched. This being said, Fei Changfang indeed stands out among the

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[55] Storch, 'Fei Changfang's Records', 126–31.

[56] Huang, *Fei Changfang*, 98–99.

[57] Fei Changfang largely retained Sengyou's dating system in his 'Dai lu'. Storch cites Chen Jinhua 陳金華 to support her assertion, see Storch, 'Fei Changfang's Records', 126, note 66. However, Chen's observation pertains to later catalogue compilers who faced increased government interference. Chen notes that in these later catalogues, some translation dates reflect official imperial announcements rather than actual start or end of the translation, see Chen, 'Some Aspects of the Buddhist Translation Procedure', 647–48. Although Chen does not specify the exact period for these later catalogues, his reference to Forte's research suggests that he is referring to the post-mid-Tang era, see Forte, *A Jewel in Indra's Net*, 57–58.

Sui Buddhist cataloguers for his emphasis on the imperial power as a means to bolster his own scriptural authority. To explore this point further, I shall first examine Fei's life and career and then turn to his memorial to Emperor Wen.

3.2. Fei Changfang's Lay Status: Context and Implications in Sui Monastic Communities

Fei Changfang, originally a monk from Chengdu, lost his clerical status during the Northern Zhou's persecution of Buddhism. Interestingly, he remained a layman even after Emperor Wen implemented pro-Buddhist policies.[58] The reasons for this choice are not documented, but it is worth exploring possible explanations. Under Emperor Wen's rule, it would have been straightforward for Fei to reclaim his monastic status. Many prominent monks who had been forced to defrock during the Northern Zhou persecution resumed their clerical roles at the start of the Sui dynasty. The *Sui shu* records that in 581, immediately after ascending the throne, Emperor Wen issued an edict 'allowing [anyone] in All-under-Heaven to leave the household [and become a Buddhist cleric]' (普詔天下, 任聽出家).[59] Fei Changfang's works demonstrate his deep Buddhist devotion and his desire to spread the Buddhist dharma. His decision to remain a lay Buddhist scholar rather than returning to monkhood could be attributed to several factors. His Chengdu background might have made it difficult to integrate into the northern clergy community. He may have seen a more promising career path as a lay scripture translation scholar. Alternatively, he might have simply preferred life as a layperson.

While we lack direct evidence for some of these possibilities, there is support for the idea that Fei Changfang's Chengdu background may have posed challenges. Emperor Wen consistently favoured

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[58] 'Fang originally left his household to be a monk but the [Northern] Zhou abolished monks and nuns. When the Sui dynasty restored [Buddhism], he continued to practice in lay clothing' (房本出家, 周廢僧侶, 及隋興復, 仍習白衣), see *Da Tang neidian lu*, *T* no. 2149, 55: 5.279c9–17.

[59] *Sui shu* 35.1099.

northern monks for leadership roles in the saṅgha and scripture translation projects. At the beginning of his reign, he appointed Guanzhong monks like Tanyan 曇延 (516–588) and Tanchong 曇崇 (515–594) to lead the saṅgha and manage scripture translation.[60] In 587, he summoned six Monks of Great Virtue 大德 from former Northern Qi territories to the capital. Later, in 592, he established a translation office staffed by ten northern monks.[61] These north-

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[60] Upon moving into Daxing City 大興城, Emperor Wen assigned lands in prestigious Guang'en Ward 廣恩坊 to Tanyan and his disciples to build up their monastery. In 584, Emperor Wen named this monastery Yanxing 延興 [Prospered by Yan]. Moreover, in honour of Tanyan, Emperor Wen named the east and west gate of the Imperial City 皇城 respectively as Yanxing and Yanping 延平 [Pacified by Yan]. As one of the most eminent monks in the former Northern Zhou, Tanyan attracted followers from the four quarters, see *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, *T* no. 2060, 50: 8.488c25–489a11. Tanchong enjoyed exceptional prestige under Emperor Wen, as evidenced by his selection among one hundred and twenty elite monks to reside at Daxingshan Monastery and the lavish gifts he received from the emperor, including vast quantities of silk, cloth, cotton, rice, and money. His status was further underscored by the intimate terms used by the imperial family, with Emperor Wen referring to himself as 'master's son' 師兒 and the Empress as 'master's daughter' 師女, as well as his unrestricted access to the imperial palace. The extent of imperial favour was ultimately demonstrated upon Tanchong's death, when Emperor Wen issued an edict for his burial, covering all funeral expenses, and over 5,000 disciples accompanied his body to the burial site where a white stūpa was erected in his honour. See *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, *T* no. 2060, 50: 17.568b8–c19; Tsukamoto, 'Zui no Kōnan seifuku to Bukkyō', 10.

[61] Emperor Wen 'further established Ten Monks of Great Virtue: Śramaṇa Sengxiu, Facan, Fajing, Huizang, Hongzun, Huiyuan, Fazuan, Senghui, Mingmu, Tanqian, and so forth. [They] supervised and managed the translation affairs, determining the essence [of the scriptures]. Śramaṇa Mingmu and Yancong re-examined the Sanskrit originals, reviewed and verified [them] and organized the textual meaning' (又置十大德沙門僧休, 法粲, 法經, 慧藏, 洪遵, 慧遠, 法纂, 僧暉, 明穆, 曇遷等, 監掌翻事銓定宗旨, 沙門明穆, 彥琮, 重對梵本, 再審覆勘, 整理文義), see *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, *T* no. 2060, 50: 2.434a29–b3. These monks predominantly came from northern regions. For instance, Fazuan was from Chang'an,

ern monks enjoyed higher status and more prestigious conditions under Emperor Wen. Many had large disciple communities, and the emperor often assigned specific monasteries in the capital for these monastic groups. Examples include Tanyan's Yanxing Monastery 延興寺, Tanchong's Qingchan Monastery 清禪寺, Huiyuan's 慧遠 Jingying Monastery 淨影寺, Huizang's 慧藏 Jiangzang Monastery 經藏寺, Tanqian's 曇遷 Shengguang Monastery 勝光寺 and Hongzun's 洪遵 Chongjing Monastery 崇敬寺.[62]

By contrast, we have little information about the development of the Chengdu monastic community in the Sui capital. Only a few individuals from Chengdu, including Fei Changfang, Sengkun 僧琨 (fl. late sixth c.), and Zhixuan 智鉉 (fl. late sixth c.) are mentioned as being in charge of scripture translation at Daxingshan Monastery.[63] Given this context, Fei Changfang, as a former monk from Chengdu, likely would have found it challenging or disadvantageous to interact or compete with the northern monks. This may explain his decision

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Huiyuan from Luoyang, Huizang from Weijun (modern Handan, Hebei), Sengxiu from Qinghe (modern Xingtai, Hebei), and Hongzun from Jijun (modern Weihui, Henan). See, *Xu gaoseng zhuan T* no. 2060, 50: 18.572c14–17. Tanqian, though associated with Xuzhou (modern Jiangsu), originally came from Raoyang of Boling (modern Anping, Hebei), for Tanqian, see, Chen, '*Śarīra* and Scepter', 12–16. While the birthplaces of Fajing, Mingmu, Facan, and Senghui are unknown, their associations with northern monasteries or inclusion among predominantly northern monks suggest they too likely originated from the north, see *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, *T* no. 2060, 50: 26.667b15; *Lidai sanbao ji*, *T* no. 2034, 49: 12.106c8–23.

[62] For a detailed examination of how specific monastic communities transitioned from their initial placement at Daxingshan Monastery to eventually occupying dedicated monasteries centred around prominent monks and their disciples, see Sun, 'Cong "zhong" dao "si"', 9–32.

[63] In the 550s, the Western Wei/Northern Zhou conquest of Ba and Shu led to the forced relocation of many prominent monks from these regions to Guangzhong, see Tang, *Han Wei Liangjin Nanbeichao Fojiao shi*, 382–83. However, records of these displaced Ba and Shu monks' activities and contributions during the Sui dynasty are scarce.

to remain a lay Buddhist scholar, focusing on scripture translation and catalogue composition rather than attempting to reintegrate into the monastic community dominated by northern clergy.

3.3. Fei Changfang's Memorial to Emperor Wen

In what follows, I break down Fei Changfang's memorial into two parts and examine each one separately. The first part reads:

> Your subject [Fei Chang]fang speaks. I have heard that those who contribute to the state have their merits recorded in history. Those who implement [good] governance among the people have their virtues transmitted through stele inscriptions. How much more so for the tathāgata, the great sage, whose transformations are endless, but who did not seek lasting glory. The fragrance of a hundred kings lasts for a thousand years. I dared to encroachingly investigate and examine that since the Han and Wei dynasties, there have been translations generation after generation. Yet the catalogues have been scattered, and many scriptures have lost their origins. Seldom has there been compilation and repair, thus leading to periodic discontinuities. For this reason, Buddha entrusted the orthodox dharma to the kings. It is known that the flourishing of the teaching depends on the emperors. I humbly believe that Your Majesty, in accordance with the times, holds the mandate. You have received the prediction of the tathāgata, succeeding the enterprise of the cakravartin, ruling over Jambudvīpa. You pity the world's darkness and open the sun of wisdom to shine. You widely compile sūtras and images, and greatly establish monasteries. You expound the gate of liberation and guide the path of devas and humans. You build the good boat and ferry to save all living beings. This is truly the most flourishing era in ancient times. 臣房言：臣聞：有功於國，史錄其勳；有政於民，碑傳其德．況如來大聖，化洽無窮而不垂美；百王流芳，千載者也．臣竊尋覽，自漢魏已來，代有翻譯，而錄目星散，經多失源．世罕綴修，時致間絕．緣此佛以正法付囑國王，是知教興，寄在帝主．　伏惟陛下：應運秉圖，受如來記、紹輪王業、統閻浮提．愍世間昏，開慧日照．廣緝經像，大啟伽藍．闡解脫之門，導天人之路．建善舟檝，濟拔蒼生．斯實曠古，一代盛歟![64]

Fei Changfang depicts Emperor Wen as an ideal Buddhist monarch whose influence shapes Buddhism's trajectory in China. He urges the emperor to embrace his predestined role, foretold by the tathāgata, to advance the mission of a cakravartin and govern Jambudvīpa. Fei Changfang positions Emperor Wen as the chosen recipient of Buddha's orthodox dharma, aligning with the emperor's self-presentation as Buddha's deputy in his 585 edict (see below). This lavish praise is also evident in Fei Changfang's catalogue's preface[65] and in his 'Dai lu'.[66]

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[64] *Lidai sanbao ji*, *T* no. 2034, 49: 15.120a20–29.

[65] In his 'Kaihuang sanbao lu zongmu xu', Fei Changfang writes, 'during Qi, Zhou, and Chen, translations were made, but no catalogues were compiled, leaving nothing to follow. Moreover, due to destruction and burning, there was absolutely no basis to rely on. Fortunately, our Emperor upholds Earth and supports Heaven. He purifies the two principles and clears the six directions. The court causes ten thousand countries to come [under submission] and transforms and governs the nine provinces. Various lost texts have all been gathered without exception' (齊周陳並皆翻譯, 弗刊錄目, 靡所遵承. 兼值毀焚, 絕無依據. 賴我皇帝維地柱天, 澄靜二儀, 廓清六合. 庭來萬國, 化攝九州. 異出遺文, 莫不皆萃), see *Lidai sanbao ji*, *T* no. 2034, 49: 15.120c8–11.

[66] For instance, Fei Changfang writes that 'Our Emperor received the mandate from the Four Heavens to protect the Three Treasures. Accepting the signs of the Five Cycles, he settled in these Nine Provinces. Therefore, at the beginning of his birth, divine light illuminated the room. After he ascended to the throne, spiritual responses came in abundance. Thus, heavenly omens appeared in turtle patterns, and water floated with five colours. The earth opened with sweet springs, and mountains echoed with ten thousand years. Clouds brought blessings and dew turned sweet, pearls shone brightly, and stones transformed. The deaf could hear, the blind could see, the mute could speak, and the lame could walk. Birds and beasts showed extraordinary omens, while grass and trees presented countless auspicious signs. How could the Seven Treasures alone manifest the golden wheel? How could the Four Seasons merely harmonize with the jade candle?' (我皇帝受命四天, 護持三寶, 承符五運, 宅此九州. 故誕育之初, 神光耀室. 君臨已後, 靈應競臻. 所以天兆龜文, 水浮五色, 地開泉醴, 山響萬年. 雲慶露甘, 珠明石變, 聾聞瞽視, 瘖語躄行, 禽獸見非常之祥, 草木呈難紀之瑞. 豈

Fei's praise of Emperor Wen is perhaps most notable in his treatment of the *Dehu zhangzhe jing*, which marks a significant departure from his contemporaries. Unlike Fajing, who omitted the text, and Yancong, who merely listed it (see section 4), Fei Changfang included the *Dehu zhangzhe jing* in his 'Ruzang mu' and provided a concise biographical account of its translator, Narendrayaśas.[67] Notably, Fei Changfang cited the sūtra's prediction of Emperor Wen as the Moonlight Child's reincarnation.[68] This citation, however, presented a potential problem: the prediction's reference to *mofa* 末法 (final dharma) could threaten the Sui dynasty's legitimacy, identifying their era as *mofa*. To avoid the trap, Fei argued against a strict chronological interpretation of *mofa*. He demonstrated the flexibility of Buddhist historical periods by presenting varying calculations for the 'orthodox dharma' (*zhengfa* 正法) and the 'semblance dharma' (*xiangfa* 像法) eras.[69] Furthermore, he associated *mofa* with periods

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唯七寶, 獨顯金輪, 寧止四時, 偏和玉燭?). See *Lidai sanbao ji*, *T* no. 2034, 49: 12.101c19–25.

[67] In Northern Qi, Narendrayaśa was appointed to the most prestigious position of Clarification of Buddhist Profundities Controller 昭玄統 in the Buddhist official system. During the Sui, he resided in Daxingshan Monastery, overseeing state-sponsored translations under Emperor Wen of Sui. For details, see Sato, 'Narendayasha to mappō shisō', 129–45; Fujiyoshi, 'Mappōka toshite no Narendayasha', 29–56.

[68] *Lidai sanbao ji*, *T* no. 2034, 49: 12.102c20–103a8; *Dehu zhangzhe jing*, *T* no. 545, 14: 2.849b15–24.

[69] According to Liu Yi 劉屹, the concept of *mofa* 末法 was used quite flexibly among Chinese Buddhists from the late Southern and Northern Dynasties to the Sui-Tang period, see Liu, 'Fo mie zhi hou', 494–97. Liu Yi compared the views of Jan Nattier and Étienne Lamotte on possible Sanskrit equivalents for *mofa* and found no matching term in known Sanskrit Buddhist texts, see Nattier, *Once Upon a Future Time*, 90–94; Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism*, 191–92. This suggests that either we have not yet discovered the relevant Sanskrit sources, or the concept simply did not exist in Indian Buddhist texts, see Liu, 'Fo mie zhi hou', 499–503. Liu Yi also argues that Chinese Buddhist texts probably borrowed the terms *mofa* and *moshi* 末世 from classical Chinese literature, where

of severe Buddhist persecution, such as under Emperor Taiwu of Northern Wei 北魏太武帝 (r. 423–452) and Emperor Wu of Northern Zhou 北周武帝 (r. 560–578).[70] This nuanced approach allowed Fei Changfang to maintain the sūtra's predictive validity while upholding Sui legitimacy as a force for Buddhist revival. The second part of his memorial reads:

> How could I, a humble and insignificant subject, dare to recklessly narrate? But in the past, when [the dharma] was destroyed, I was among those in dyed robes (i.e., Buddhist clergy). Today, as [the dharma] flourishes, I return to join the dharma companions. What I encountered those times of [persecution], I could foresee. Due to the overarching principle through the ages, the Buddha's dharma rose from causation. It started with the birth of the Buddha in the western regions during the reign of King Zhuang of the Ji clan Zhou, in the *jiawu* year (687 BCE).[71] Then, during the Eastern Han, under the Yongping era of Emperor Ming (see section 2), in the *dingmao* year (67 CE), the sūtras were brought to the East. Up to the present, the year of Jupiter positioned in *dingsi*, Kaihuang era (596), 1274 years passed. During this period, numinous [signs] and auspicious [omens], emperors and eminent monks, distinguished themselves

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they carried meanings of decline and disorder, see ibid., 504–06. The unclear timing of the *mofa* period and its negative political associations likely motivated Fei Changfang to attempt separating the Sui dynasty from the concept of *mofa*.

[70] *Lidai sanbao ji*, *T* no. 2034, 49: 12.107a19–b24.

[71] In his 'Di nian', Fei Changfang associated the Buddha's birth with the tenth year of King Zhuang of Zhou (687 BCE). He interpreted a star shower recorded in the *Chunqiu* 春秋 [Spring and Autumn] annals (Zhuang 7.2) as referring to the same celestial phenomenon that marked the Buddha's birth, as described in fourth–fifth century Buddhist texts, such as the *Puyao jing* 普曜經 [Universal Illumination Sūtra] and the *Fo benxing jing* 佛本行經 [Buddha's Original Acts Sūtra]. This interpretation allowed Fei to establish a synchronicity between Chinese historical records and Buddhist narratives, thereby anchoring Buddha's birth within the Chinese chronological framework, see *Lidai sanbao ji*, *T* no. 2034, 49: 1.23a26–b18.

> in different generations. [I] named the catalogue as the *Kaihuang sanbao lu* [Kaihuang Catalogue of the Three Jewels]. [The catalogue] comprises fifteen fascicles. Its methods [of cataloguing] are not concealed, wishing for the scriptures to be widely propagated. Unable to restrain my emotions, in fear and trembling [I] boldly present this chart and submit the catalogue for review, praying for the heavenly kindness to bestow its divinity, to condescend and inspect these cautious words. 豈臣庸微, 輕敢妄述? 但昔毀廢, 臣在染衣. 今日興隆, 還參法侶. 時事所接, 頗預見聞. 因綱歷世, 佛法緣起, 始自姬周莊王甲午, 佛誕西域, 後漢明皇永平丁卯, 經度東歲, 迄今開皇太歲丁巳, 歷一千二百七十四載. 其間靈瑞, 帝主名僧, 代別顯彰, 名《開皇三寶錄》,凡十五卷. 庶法無隱, 冀經有弘. 不任下情, 惶悚戰懼, 輕冒奉表, 上錄以聞. 伏願天慈, 垂神降省. 謹言.[72]

Fei Changfang reviews the history of Buddhism in China from the Buddha's birth up to the current Kaihuang era, a chronology he details in his three fascicles of 'Di nian'. Throughout this time, each dynasty has seen its own notable emperors and distinguished clergy. To highlight his own work's significance, he names it the *Kaihuang sanbao lu*,[73] as if intending it as an homage to Emperor Wen and the commencement of his reigning era. Fei Changfang ends by humbly acknowledging his role. Overcome with emotion and a mix of fear, uncertainty, and courage, he presents his catalogue to the emperor, seeking approval in a manner not seen in the submissions of the other two official cataloguers.

The emperor's approval was crucial for Fei Changfang because his catalogue differed from the Sui official catalogue (Fajing's) and other influential catalogues like Sengyou's. Fei Changfang's Chengdu background disadvantaged him in comparison to northern monks in gaining imperial favour and influence in the Sui capital. Thus, he

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[72] *Lidai sanbao ji*, *T* no. 2034, 15.120a29–b8.

[73] Chen Yuan 陳垣 examines how Buddhist and non-Buddhist bibliographical works record the title of Fei Changfang's catalogue. He also analyses whether these works categorize Fei's catalogue as bibliographical or biographical literature, see Chen, *Zhongguo Fojiao shiji*, 4–5.

particularly needed imperial approval for his privately initiated catalogue, perhaps to establish his reputation among eminent Buddhists. Fei Changfang asserted his interpretative authority through his catalogue, differentiating himself from predecessors. His dynasty-based approach made Buddhist historical development more accessible to wider Sui and post-Sui Chinese intellectuals than the *Tipiṭaka*-based approach.[74] His bold canonization of many previously dubious texts risked criticism but potentially attracted a broader audience.[75] Storch and Huang Biji argue that despite criticism,[76] Fei Changfang's catalogue significantly influenced later works by Daoxuan and Zhisheng, the two most important Buddhist cataloguers in the Tang. The sustained scholarly engagement with Fei Changfang's work, even

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[74] Storch, 'Fei Changfang's Records', 122.

[75] Notably in his two-fascicle 'Ruzang mu', he regranted canonical status to numerous scriptures. These include influential texts among the sixth-century Buddhists such as the *Foshuo renwang bore boluomi jing*, the *Fanwang jing* 梵網經 [Brahma's Net Sūtra], the *Dacheng qixin lun* 大乘起信論 [Mahāyāna Awakening of Faith Śāstra], and the *Xiangfa jueyi jing* 像法決疑經 [Resolving Doubts During the Age of the Semblance Dharma Sūtra].

[76] Storch, 'Fei Changfang's Records', 131–44; Huang, *Fei Changfang*, 121–23. Michael Radich presents a compelling argument that Fei Changfang was a deliberate forger, see Radich, 'Fei Changfang's Treatment of Sengyou's Anonymous Texts', 247–75. For a summary of the criticism on Fei Changfang's work, see Huang, *Fei Changfang*, 105–11. Eric Greene compares translator attributions across three catalogues: Fei Changfang's, Sengyou's, and the *Zhongjing bielu* 眾經別錄 [Separate Catalogue for Myriad Scriptures], preserved only in Dunhuang fragments. Examining ninety texts, Greene finds Fei Changfang's attributions largely align with Sengyou's, challenging the prevalent scholarly view that Fei arbitrarily assigned translators to Sengyou's anonymous texts. Greene argues that Fei likely used the *Zhongjing bielu* as a supplementary source. For example, Fei probably attributed texts 16, 17, and 18 (anonymous in Sengyou's catalogue) to Zhiqian based on Zhiqian's association with text 19 in the *Zhongjing bielu* manuscript. For details, see Greene, 'Chinese Buddhist Literary Historical Consciousness', 129–33; Okabe, 'Shakkyō to shakyō', 16–17; Naitō, 'Shukyō betsuroku', 269.

amid criticism, elevated him from a relatively minor figure to one of the most renowned sixth-century Buddhist authors. Fei Changfang's praise for Emperor Wen, whether sincere or strategic, likely played a crucial role in gaining imperial favour and protection against potential critics.

4. The Preface to Yancong's Catalogue

4.1. General Analysis

The *Sui Renshounian neidian lu*, commissioned by Emperor Wen in 602, was the second official Sui Buddhist catalogue. Monk Yancong led its compilation, supported by scripture-translation monks and lay scholars. It is the most concise of the three extant Sui catalogues, comprising five *juan*, compared to Fajing's seven and Fei Changfang's fifteen.

Hayashiya argued that Yancong's catalogue updated Fajing's work, incorporating new texts from across the Sui empire, including early Sui texts omitted by Fajing.[77] Storch, conversely, contends that Yancong's catalogue primarily responded to Fei Changfang's 597 catalogue. Fei Changfang's granting of canonical status to scriptures previously considered dubious or fake by cataloguers like Fajing unsettled Sui's court monks. Moreover, Fei Changfang's organization of translated and locally composed texts by dynastic periods risked conflating these distinct categories, prompting Yancong and his colleagues to revise this classification system.[78]

I think Yancong's catalogue does not appear to be a direct response to either Fajing's or Fei Changfang's work. While Yancong did modify some classifications from his predecessors, this does not seem to have been his primary focus. His catalogue introduced a distinct classification method and excluded certain Chinese-authored texts that Fajing had included (see more below). Notably, of the texts

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[77] Hayashiya, 'Zui dai kyōroku', 303–14.

[78] Storch, *The History of Chinese Buddhist Bibliography*, 99–100.

Fei Changfang deemed canonical but Fajing had not questioned, Yancong categorized only six as dubious or fake. This minimal divergence suggests that Yancong probably was not primarily concerned with addressing issues of textual authenticity raised in Fei Changfang's catalogue, especially considering that Fajing's catalogue remained in circulation.[79]

Yancong's cataloguing approach diverges significantly from both of his predecessors. He categorizes canonical scriptures based on their translation status, specifically: a single translation, retranslation, or translations from separate parts of the scriptures. This approach differs from Fajing's *Tipiṭaka*-based system and Fei Changfang's dynasty-based chronological approach. Yancong's method can be characterized as a translation-status-based approach. Notably, he prioritized texts translated by foreign monks from original Indian sources, a focus not seen in the work of his predecessors. This preference is also evident in his fascicle 'Xiansheng ji zhuan' 賢聖集傳 [Compilations and Biographies of the Worthies and Sages] which exclusively features texts 'compiled by the worthies and sages [and] translated with original [Indic] texts' (賢聖集撰, 翻譯有原).[80] Notably, not only were all the worthies and sages included in this fascicle foreign monks, but the translators were also predominantly non-Chinese, with only two individuals whose ethnicity was unknown.[81]

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[79] Yancong's catalogue added approximately nineteen entries to the list of suspicious and spurious texts previously identified by Fajing, out of a total of 209 texts. A comparative analysis reveals that Fajing's list of dubious and fake texts (A) included about 54 texts from Fei's list of canonical texts (B). Yancong's list of dubious and fake texts (C) only added 6 more texts to this overlap between A and B. A distinction between Yancong's and Fajing's records is that Fajing's catalogue distributed dubious and fake texts across six chapters using a *Tipiṭaka*-based taxonomic organization, whereas Yancong consolidated these texts into a single, unclassified fascicle.

[80] *Sui Renshounian neidian lu*, *T* no. 2147, 55: 2.161b3.

[81] Yancong's catalogue includes the translators Faju 法炬 and Fali 法立 from the reign of Jin Huidi 晉惠帝 (r. 290–307), whose ethnicities remain unclear. These translators are also mentioned in Sengyou's and Fei Changfang's cata-

I shall in what follows explore how Yancong, in his preface to the catalogue, discusses Emperor Wen's role in commissioning the catalogue and how Yancong's treatment of the scriptures reflected his perception of the imperial patronage behind his cataloguing pursuit.

4.2. Yancong's Preface

> Buddhist dharma has spread eastward long ago. The arrival of Sanskrit scriptures from the West [to China] gradually increased. Ancient canonical texts were all translated. Recently afflicted by the age of turmoil, the origins of many [texts] have been lost. Written first and translated later, [the texts] differ in both the essence and literary refinement. A single scripture exists in several versions, with varying additions and deletions. This even allows ordinary people to fabricate texts. Some privately select important matters and establish different names [for the sūtras]. Others repeatedly concoct additional words yet still claim the true title. Some treat *abhidharma* as sūtra, commentaries as *abhidharma*. Major and minor [teachings] are intermixed, right and wrong are confused together; [the forged sūtras] overflow without returning [to the true base], they continue to circulate without [their authenticity] being fixed. We fear that the sages' sayings will decline, and faithful hearts will be unsettled. The meaning in what is inherited and promoted is deficient, the principles in entrusted admonitions are contradictory. The emperor, deeply revering the Three Jewels and clearly understanding the Five Vehicles, has decreed the relevant officials to request the [monks of] Great Virtue from the Daxingshan Monastery, together with the scripture translation monks and scholars, to thoroughly examine the dharma canon and carefully define the scripture catalogue. 佛法東行, 年代已遠. 梵經西至, 流布漸多. 舊來正典, 並由翻出. 近遭亂世, 頗失原起. 前寫後譯, 質文不同. 一經數本, 增減亦異. 致使凡人得容妄造, 或私採要事, 更立別名; 或輒搆餘辭, 仍取真號; 或論作經稱, 疏為論目. 大小交雜, 是非共混; 流濫不歸, 因循未定. 將恐陵遲

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logues, but neither source provides any personal information about them (*Sui Renshounian neidian lu*, *T* no. 2147, 55: 1.117c15–16).

> 聖說, 動壞信心. 義闕紹隆, 理乖付囑. 皇帝深崇三寶, 洞明五乘. 降勅所司, 請興善寺大德與翻經沙門及學士等, 披檢法藏, 詳定經錄.[82]

Yancong's preface outlines the challenges in transmitting the Buddhist dharma to China, describing how political turmoil led to translation inaccuracies and scriptural forgeries. This prompted the emperor to order a revision of the Buddhist catalogue. Of course, this revision likely served the Buddhist clergy's needs and interests more than the emperor's, but Yancong frames it as an imperial initiative likely to garner the emperor's support and resources for the project. Yancong portrays the emperor as an enabler rather than the central figure in this canonical reorganization. He acknowledges the emperor's reverence for the Three Jewels and understanding of the Five Vehicles but uses this praise primarily to emphasize the delegation of the task to Buddhist experts. By mentioning that eminent monks and scholars will carry out the examination and selection of authentic scriptures, Yancong effectively places the authority for determining scriptural authenticity in the hands of the saṅgha. This presentation subtly diminishes the emperor's role, casting him as the project's initiator rather than its supervisor. The preface continues:

> Classified according to categories, in total [the catalogue] is divided into five parts. First is [translations] with a single version. Second is the re-translated [texts]. Third is [texts] originating from separate parts of [the original texts]. Fourth is the compilations and biographies of the worthies and sages. Fifth is the dubious and fake [texts]. Those that originate from separate parts of [the original texts] and the dubious and fake [texts] need not be copied. The other three are to be included in the canon and seen in the catalogue. As for the texts like the *Fabao ji* 法寶集 [Collection of Dharma Jewels][83] and

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[82] *Sui Renshounian neidian lu*, *T* no. 2147, 55: 1.150a21–b1.

[83] According to Fei, the *Fabao ji* has 'two hundred fascicles. During his days as the crown prince, Emperor Jianwen Xiao Gang [of Liang] (r. 549–551) personally reviewed the Inner Classics, pointed out the scope of topics, and ordered the scholars to compile and link, completing this text's fascicles. Grouped by cate-

> the works of the same category as the *Jingzhu zi* 淨住子 [Methods of Pure Practices of the Pure Abider],[84] these are to be copied and categorized as [texts] originating from the separate parts of [the original texts]. [As for] the rest, such as the eminent monks' biographies, [their] words mix literature and history, their form is not pure and correct. Even if their events are traceable, their significance is insufficient to be included in the catalogue. Furthermore, upon reviewing ancient catalogues, we still discovered missing texts. In the past, when the land within the Four Seas was not yet pacified, many places suffered losses. Now that All-under-Heaven has been unified, we request that all be sought out. It is hoped that the Benevolent Longevity [era] will be extensively prolonged. The dharma door will be fully provided. All beings will be fortunate. The benefits will be boundless. [The catalogue] is compiled into five fascicles, to be prominently displayed on the left. 隨類區辯, 總為五分: '單本' 第一、'重翻' 第二、'別生' 第三、'賢聖集傳' 第四、'疑偽' 第五. 別生疑偽, 不須抄寫. 已外三分入藏見錄. 至如《法寶集》之流,《淨住子》之類, 還同略抄, 例入別生. 自餘《高僧傳》等, 詞參文史, 體非淳正; 事雖可尋, 義無在錄. 又勘古目, 猶有闕本. 昔海內未平, 諸處遺落. 今天下既壹, 請皆訪取. 所願仁壽長延, 法門具足, 群生有幸, 方益無窮. 合成五卷, 顯之於左. [85]

Yancong's catalogue excludes the 'Cifang zhude zhuanji' 此方諸德傳記 [Biographies and Compilations of the Virtuous from Our Place

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gories for coherence, it is similar to the *Hualin bianlüe* [Comprehensive Digest of the Institute of the Flowery Grove]. Examinations by great scholars account for more than half of its achievement' (右一部二百卷. 簡文帝蕭綱在儲宮日, 躬覽內經, 指撝科域, 令諸學士編寫結連, 成此部卷. 以類相從, 有同華林遍略, 大學者省, 有過半之功), see *Lidai sanbao ji*, *T* no. 2034, 49: 11.100a10–13. Compared to Fei Changfang, Yancong evidently downgraded the status of this text.

[84] The *Jingzhu zi* was written by Prince Wenxuan 文宣王 (Xiao Ziliang 蕭子良, 460–494) of Southern Qi. According to Cao, 'Jingzhu zi', 51–52, it focuses on confession rituals through five confessions. It reformulates these rituals to better teach the importance of performing good deeds.

[85] *Sui Renshounian neidian lu*, *T* no. 2147, 55: 1.150b1–9.

(China)] present in Fajing's catalogue (see section 2), critiquing their blend of literary and historical elements as impure.[86] However, in his 'Xiansheng ji zhuan', Yancong included eleven out of thirteen texts of Fajing's list in Fajing's 'Xiyu shengxian zhuanji' 西域聖賢傳記 [Biographies and Compilations of the Sages and Worthies from the Western Regions]. This disparity provides compelling evidence of Yancong's intention to canonize primarily foreign-sourced texts.

Yancong's catalogue incorporates early Sui translations by foreign monks like Narendrayaśas, Jñānagupta (Ch. Shenajueduo 闍那崛多, b. 523), Vinītaruci (Piniduoliuzhi 毘尼多流支, d. 594), Dharmaprajñā (Damobore 達摩般若, in the Sui known as Fazhi 法智, fl. ca. 550–582). Thus, it includes Narendrayaśas's *Dehu zhangzhe jing* and the *Lianhuamian jing*,[87] which are crucial to Emperor Wen's Moonlight Child image. However, Yancong incorporates these texts as part of a broader inclusion of recent Sui-era translations by the foreign monks. He does not give these politically significant scriptures special attention. Unlike Fei Changfang, who cites the *Dehu zhangzhe jing* to glorify Emperor Wen, Yancong includes in the canon the new Sui translations while maintaining a scholarly distance from their political implications. By treating these texts as part of a larger corpus of foreign translations, Yancong appeared to balance his scriptural evaluation and political sensitivities.

Conversely, Yancong's catalogue omits all newly translated texts by Chinese monks and lay Buddhist scholars under the Sui, regardless of their high status or reputation.[88] This exclusion extends to

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[86] Yancong included only two of the fifty-five texts from Fajing's 'Cifang zhude zhuanji' in his catalogue: the single-fascicle *Fo benji* 佛本記 [Record of the Buddha's Origin] and the four-fascicle *Shijia pu* 釋迦譜 [Genealogy of Śākyamuni]. Yancong classified both as 'Bie sheng' 別生 (texts originating from separate parts of [the original texts]). Yancong deemed this category, along with dubious and fake texts, unworthy of copying into the canon.

[87] For a detailed discussion of the Buddha's bowl in the *Lianhuamian jing*, see Shinohara, 'The Story of the Buddha's Begging Bowl', 68–107.

[88] These Chinese figures and their translations are, however, recorded in Fei's catalogue. According to Fei, these figures include prominent monks such as Fashang

his own works. Such a pattern suggests that Yancong prioritized non-Chinese authorship as a key criterion for scriptural canonization. A significant omission is Baogui's 寶貴 (fl. the late sixth c.) 597 translation of the *Hebu Jinguangming jing* 合部金光明經 [Combined Chapters of Golden Light Sūtra], despite its imperial patronage and role in Emperor Wen's self-promotion as the Buddha's deputy.[89] Interestingly, Yancong himself had participated in revising this text, yet still excluded it from the catalogue.[90] This consistent exclusion of Chinese-authored works, even those written under imperial patronage underscores two points: Yancong's apparent preference for the foreign-sourced Buddhist texts as worthy of canonization, and his scholarly independence in carrying out the emperor-assigned and sponsored project.

In this context, it is worth citing Tokuno's finding on the Chinese cataloguers' evaluation of native Buddhist texts from approximately

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法上, Lingyu 靈裕, Xingxing 信行, Fajing 法經, Sengjiu 僧就, Baogui 寶貴, Sengcan 僧粲, Sengkun 僧琨, Huiying 慧影, and Yancong himself. The lay Buddhist scholars excluded are Guo Yi 郭誼, the Regional Inspector of Guangzhou 廣州司馬, Hou Junsu 侯君素, the Gentleman of the College of Scholars 儒林郎, Xu Tongqing 徐同卿, the Libationer of the Jin Prince's Mansion 晉王府祭酒, and Liu Feng 劉馮, the scripture-translation scholar 翻經學士. See *Lidai sanbao ji*, *T* no. 2034, 49: 12.102b3–15.

[89] The *Jin guangming jing* 金光明經 [Golden Light Sūtra], initially translated during the Northern Liang 北涼 (398–439), retranslated in the Southern Chen period, and finally compiled as *Hebu Jinguangming jing* by the Sui monk Baogui at the Daxingshan Monastery in 597. The concept of the orthodox dharma is central to this sūtra's discussions of ideal kingship. The sūtra emphasizes the importance of rulers governing according to the orthodox dharma, promoting good laws, encouraging virtuous behaviour, and punishing wrongdoing. A king who upholds the orthodox dharma is portrayed as gaining divine support, ensuring the realm's prosperity and stability. Conversely, neglecting the orthodox dharma risks abandonment by divine protectors and subsequent calamities. In 585, Emperor Wen issued an edict proclaiming that he was selected by the Buddha to protect the orthodox dharma, see *Bianzheng lun*, *T* no. 2110, 52: 3.509a16–20.

[90] *Hebu Jinguangming jing*, *T* no. 0664, 16: 1.359c8–9.

the fourth to eighth centuries. Tokuno argues that most Chinese cataloguers viewed native Buddhist texts as a threat to Buddhism's textual tradition. They believed this tradition had been flawlessly transmitted from India and Central Asia. Many cataloguers interpreted the creation of native Chinese Buddhist texts, which they termed 'scriptural forgery', as a sign of the dharma decline. They felt obligated to counter this perceived threat.[91] Tokuno's perspective helps explain Yancong's consistent exclusion of Chinese-authored texts from his catalogue. However, it is crucial to note that cataloguers like Yancong were not opposed to the production of native Chinese Buddhist texts. In fact, Yancong and other cataloguers who critiqued native texts in their catalogues often authored numerous Buddhist texts themselves.[92] Yancong's differential treatment of foreign-sourced and Chinese-authored texts in his catalogue, presenting the former as worthy of canonization, likely served multiple purposes: first, to demonstrate his ability to distinguish between these two types of texts; second, to show his skills in textual taxonomic organization; third, to position himself as a guardian of dharmic purity.

To conclude his preface, Yancong, like Fajing and Fei Changfang, recognizes the past difficulties in preserving Buddhist texts during periods of political instability. He contrasts this with the current unified Sui dynasty, which he sees as conducive to recovering lost scriptures. Yancong's address to Emperor Wen is notably restrained in comparison to his predecessors. While he briefly expresses hope for the emperor's continued prosperity during the Benevolent Lon-

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[91] Tokuno, 'The Evaluation of Indigenous Scriptures', 58–59.

[92] For instance, according to Fei Changfang, Yancong authored the following texts: the *Damojiduo zhuan* 達摩笈多傳 [Dharmagupta's Biography] (four *juan*); the *Tongji lun* 通極論 [Treatise on Penetrating the Ultimate] (one *juan*), the *Bianjiao lun* 辯教論 [Treatise on Elucidating the Teachings] (one *juan*); the *Tongxue lun* 通學論 [Treatise on Penetrating the Learnings] (one *juan*); the *Shanchaitongzi zhu zhishi lu* 善財童子諸知識錄 [Record of Various Good Friends of Sudhana] (one *juan*); the *Xinyi jingxun he* 新譯經序合 [Newly Translated Sūtra Prefaces Combined] (one *juan*). See *Lidai sanbao ji*, *T* no. 2034, 49: 12.106b12–16.

gevity era, Yancong's text lacks both the effusive praise characteristic of Fajing's catalogue and the even more elaborate praise found in Fei Changfang's work. Instead, he emphasizes the present as an opportune time for gathering previously lost Buddhist texts, focusing on the scholarly task at hand rather than imperial glorification.

4.3. Yancong's Biography

Yancong appears to be more self-confident than Fajing and Fei Changfang when it comes to deciding which scriptures should be considered canonical. He did not belittle his abilities as Fajing did, nor did he seek approval from the emperor like Fei Fangfang had. His catalogue, according to Daoxuan, was 'flourishing in the emperor's era' (帝世盛行).[93] Among the three cataloguers under discussion, Yancong merited the most comprehensive and well-preserved biography, thanks to the works of his contemporaries Fei Changfang and Daoxuan, with records in Daoxuan's *Xu gaoseng zhuan* being particularly detailed. These biographies suggest that Yancong's confidence may have stemmed from his distinguished family background. We read that 'Shi Yancong, in his lay life came from the Li lineage, was a man of Boren County of Zhao Commandery (today's Longyao County 隆堯縣, Xingtai, Hebei). Known throughout generations for scholarly and noble status, his is recognized as a primary [noble] lineage' (釋彥琮, 俗緣李氏. 趙郡栢人人也, 世號衣冠, 門稱甲族).[94]

Additionally, Yancong's assurance was reinforced by lifelong connections with influential elite members and officials. Under the Northern Qi, he developed a close relationship with Wang Shao 王邵 (fl. 570–604), the chief governor of Zhao Commandery, who later became a trusted advisor to Emperor Wen of Sui. Moreover, '[his] way spread throughout the Fen [River] and Shuo (i.e., throughout Shanxi) and [his] name was well-known among the erudite scholars. The State Affair Minister Jing Changyu 敬長瑜 (fl. mid to late sixth

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[93] *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, *T* no. 2060, 50: 2.437b29–c3.

[94] Ibid., 2.436b15–16.

c.), along with court luminaries Lu Sidao 盧思道 (531–582), Yuan Xinggong 元行恭 (fl. mid to late sixth c.), Xing Shu 邢恕 (fl. mid to late sixth c.), and others, were all men of high prominence and renown in Qi. They deeply respected [Yancong' s] teaching style and moral conduct' (道張汾朔, 名布通儒. 尚書敬長瑜, 及朝秀盧思道, 元行恭, 邢恕等, 並高齊榮望, 欽揖風猷).[95]

Into the Sui period, Yancong continued to closely interact with elite scholars. When Emperor Yang of Sui was still the Prince of Jin 晉王, '[he] instructed [Yancong] to reside in the Daxingguo Monastery. Thereafter, for the prince's newly composed poems and previous narratives, [Yancong] was always ordered to harmonize them. Moreover, [the Prince of Jin] dispatched Xiao Yi (d. ca. 614), Zhuge Ying (fl. late sixth c. to early seventh c.), and other worthy individuals to repeatedly visit and consult [Yancong]' (又教住大興國寺, 爾後王之新詠舊敘, 恒令和之. 又遣簫懿, 諸葛潁等群賢, 迭往參問).[96] Later when the Prince of Jin invited Yancong to permanently reside in the

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[95] *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, *T* no. 2060, 50: 2.436b24–28. When Emperor Wu of Northern Zhou pacified Qi, Yancong was soon invited to enter the court. 'He shared a bond like that of zither and lute with court officials Wang Shao, Xin Deyuan (d. 601), Lu Kaiming (fl. 577), Tang Yi (fl. 577), and others. [They] were called friends beyond the realm of literature, companions in the mysterious' (與朝士王邵, 辛德源,陸開明, 唐怡等, 情同琴瑟, 號為文外玄友), see ibid., 2.436c18–19. '[He] also collaborated with Lu Yanshi (fl. 559–581), Xue Daoheng (540–609), Liu Shanjing (fl. 605), Sun Wanshou (fl. 570–604), and others, who were literary masters of their generation, to compile a collection of texts of inner canon' (又與陸彥師, 薛道衡, 劉善經, 孫萬壽等一代文宗, 著內典文會集), see ibid., 2.436c25–26. Notably, the scholars Yancong formed close bonds with were all ex-officials of Northern Qi who maintained their positions under Northern Zhou following Zhou's conquest of Qi. Yancong's interactions with scholars from the Northern Zhou were relatively limited. So far, there is only one recorded instance, which says 'along with Yuwen Kai (555–612) and other worthy men of the Zhou dynasty, [Yancong] accompanied and served [Emperor Wu of Northern Zhou] and lectured on the *Book of Changes* and Laozi-Zhuangzi [philosophy]' (與宇文愷等周代朝賢, 以大易老莊陪侍講論), see *Xu gaoseng zhuan* ibid., 2.436c12–13.

[96] Ibid., 2.437a12–13.

Riyan Monastery 日嚴寺 in the capital, 'visits from the noble, the distinguished and the wise greatly increased' (朝貴明哲數增臨謁).[97]

Finally, the respect and patronage that Yancong received from the rulers of Northern Qi, Northern Zhou, and Sui further cemented his confidence. We read that:

> Later, when the Empress of [Northern Qi] went west to Jinyang, [Yancong] was invited into the Xuande Hall 宣德殿 to lecture on the *Renwang jing*. The Controller of the Saṅgha and the Monk Deacons were employed to receive instructions and orders from him, with an audience of two hundred disciples, all distinguished and talented. Emperor Houzhu of Northern Qi 北齊後主 (r. 565–577) personally attended the banquet, with both civil and military officials in attendance. The Empress Dowager [Hu] 胡太后 (d. after 581) and the six palaces (i.e., empress and imperial concubines) ascended to the dharma assembly together [...]. When Emperor Wu of [Northern Zhou] pacified Qi, [Yancong] was soon invited to enter [the court]. In their discussions on the profound, he deeply resonated with the emperor's heart. By the imperial decree, he was made a scholar of the Penetrating the Dao Institution at the age of twenty-one [...]. Emperor Wu personally compiled the book of the Way named the *Wushang miyao* 無上秘要 [Supreme Secret Essentials]. At that time, [Yancong] was pre-emptively attached to the emperor's fine-spun words, and [his words] were specially collected into [the emperor's book] [...]. When Emperor Xuan [of Northern Zhou] (r. 578–579) took the throne, each Daoist ritual would last for days. Throughout these nights of discussion, Yancong would enrich them with the correct dharma. 及齊后西幸晉陽, 延入宣德殿, 講《仁王經》. 國統僧都, 用為承奉. 聽徒二百, 並是英髦. 帝親臨御筵, 文武咸侍. 皇太后及以六宮, 同昇法會 [⋯] 及周武平齊, 尋蒙延入, 共談玄藉, 深會帝心. 勅預通道觀學士, 時年二十有一 [⋯]. 武帝自纘道書, 號《無上祕要》.于時預霑綸綜, 特蒙收採 [⋯]. 宣帝在位, 每醮必累日通宵, 談論之際, 因潤以正法.[98]

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[97] *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, *T* no. 2060, 50: 2.437a26–27.

[98] Ibid., 2. 436b29–c16.

When Emperor Wen of Sui ascended to the throne in 581, we read that:

> [Yancong] immediately took his place among the teaching seats [of Buddhist teachers] in all four seasons. Both the religious and lay communities in Chang'an worshipped his trace. Because he fathomed Buddhist principles, both the heretical and the orthodox received the grace and enlightenment of the teachings. Tens of thousands embraced the Way [...]. By the twelfth year (592), [Yancong] was summoned to the capital by the imperial order, again to take charge of translations, residing at the Daxingshan [Monastery]. Generous provisions were frequently made. At that time, Emperor Wen was ruling and greatly promoting the Three Jewels. Whenever [the emperor] held a grand fasting ceremony, confession and repentance would be presented. The emperor personally held the incense burner, with Yancong leading the exposition [...]. In the early years of the Benevolent Longevity era (601), an imperial decree ordered [Yancong] to transport relics to Jingzhou. In the early years of the Benevolent Longevity era (601), an imperial decree ordered [Yancong] to transport relics to Jingzhou (in today's Xiantao, Hubei). In the final year of the Renshou era (604), [Yancong] was again ordered by imperial decree to transport relics to Fuzhou's (in today's Hubei) Fangle Monastery. 即位講筵, 四時相續. 長安道俗, 咸拜其塵. 因即通會佛理, 邪正沾濡, 沐道者萬計 […]. 至十二年, 勅召入京. 復掌翻譯, 住大興善, 厚供頻仍. 時文帝御寓, 盛弘三寶, 每設大齋, 皆陳懺悔. 帝親執香鑪, 琮為宣導 […]. 仁壽初年, 勅令送舍利于荊州 […]. 仁壽末歲, 又勅送舍利于復州方樂寺.[99]

In essence, Yancong's approach to compiling the official Buddhist catalogue demonstrates a notable degree of independence, which likely stems from several factors: his elite family background, strong connections with prominent elites, and consistent support from rulers and imperial families across the Northern Qi, Northern Zhou, and Sui dynasties. His ability to gain respect and patronage, even

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[99] Ibid., 2. 436c23–437b8.

from Buddhist persecutors like Emperor Wu of Northern Zhou, probably enhanced his confidence in interactions with the emperors. This background allowed Yancong to express his views on scriptural canonization with relative freedom from political constraints or peer influence.

5. Concluding Remarks

The memorials of Fajing and Fei Changfang to Emperor Wen, alongside Yancong's preface, illuminate how Buddhist scholars balanced imperial patronage with scriptural authority in Sui Buddhist catalogue formation. Their different approaches demonstrate the diversity of Buddhist attitudes towards the emperor and their distinct cataloguing methods.

The first Sui official catalogue, likely necessitated by an increase in Buddhist texts from early Sui to 594, was compiled by Fajing and his colleagues at Daxingshan Monastery. Although little personal information about Fajing survives, his work bears a distinctly official character. He received the cataloguing task from the Minister of the Imperial Sacrifices and accompanied the work's submission with a formal address to the emperor rather than a preface. In this address, Fajing praised Emperor Wen as a cakravartin and emphasized 'the sacred Way relying on the imperial throne.' Despite such praise, Fajing excluded most early Sui translations completed under imperial sponsorship at Daxingshan Monastery, including those politically significant to Emperor Wen. Fajing also deemed the Renwang bore boluomi jing, which asserts that the Buddha entrusted the dharma of transcendental wisdom to the king rather than the saṅgha, as spurious. This judgment contradicts Emperor Wen's self-portrayal as the Buddha's primary deputy. These contrasting aspects suggest that Fajing and his colleagues viewed the emperor primarily as a patron of Buddhism rather than an arbiter of scriptural status. Their approach toward emperor-saṅgha relations emphasized gratitude for imperial support while maintaining independence in determining the Buddhist canon's content.

Fei Changfang's privately-initiated catalogue employed a markedly

different strategy. As a lay Buddhist scholar from Chengdu, with less influence in the capital compared to northern monks, Fei deliberately pursued imperial recognition. He emphasized imperial support for Buddhism throughout his work, highlighted Buddhism's development across successive dynasties, and elevated the status of native Buddhist texts. Fei accorded canonical status to numerous texts and included all early Sui translations and compilations, mostly completed at Daxingshan Monastery under imperial patronage, giving special attention to texts politically important to Emperor Wen. His distinct bibliographical approach and textual reassessment shaped his intellectual identity and scriptural authority, demonstrating an attempt to leverage imperial power to bolster his scholarly standing.

Yancong's catalogue, the second official Sui catalogue, presents yet another perspective on the emperor-saṅgha relationship. Despite being commissioned by the emperor, the catalogue lacks a memorial and contains only restrained praise for Emperor Wen in its preface. Yancong's catalogue recognizes only foreign-sourced translations and compilations as canonical, and omits works by esteemed contemporary Chinese Buddhists, even those that gained imperial support. This approach suggests that eminent monks like Yancong, from influential families with close ties to the court, felt confident in determining canonical status based on their own criteria, with minimal consideration for imperial favor. His catalogue portrays the emperor's role primarily as a facilitator of Buddhist textual transmission while departing from the effusive praise characteristic of his predecessors' works.

The three catalogues demonstrate the diverse ways in which Buddhist scholars asserted their scriptural authority under imperial patronage. Each cataloguer leveraged imperial power to different degrees, with significant variations in how they allowed the emperor's role to be visible in their work. The diverse cataloguing approaches in Sui-era Buddhism reveal a process of canon formation that encompassed both textual scholarship and political negotiation. These methods illustrate how Buddhist catalogue compilation became a means of negotiating the boundaries between religious authority and imperial power, establishing patterns that would continue to influence state-Buddhism relations during subsequent Chinese dynasties.

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Abbreviations

T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*. See Secondary Source, Takakusu and Watanabe, eds.

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