

## What is Behind Yinshun's Re-statement of the Nature of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*? Debates on the Creation of a New Mahāyāna in Twentieth-century China

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### ABSTRACT

*Yinshun (1906–2005) is regarded as one of the most eminent monks in twentieth-century Chinese Buddhism. Previous research has argued that Yinshun especially undertook the mission of writing new commentaries on Madhyamaka texts. His efforts provoked a revival of interest towards the Madhyamaka school among contemporary Chinese Buddhists, and a re-assessment of the position of the writings of Nāgārjuna within the history of Chinese Buddhism. This article focuses on Yinshun's restatement of the nature of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, a text that has always been regarded as fundamental in the Madhyamaka/San-lun tradition in China. The first part analyzes Yinshun's textual study of the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, examining his approach to the text, and how he came to terms with previous Chinese traditional textual scholarship and canonical scriptures. The second part discusses Yinshun's interpretation of the text by moving away from the micro-context of Chinese San-lun scholarship, and addressing the macro-context of the modern Chinese understanding of the Mahāyāna.*

### Keywords

*Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, Nāgārjuna, Yinshun, Jizang, Buddhism in modern China and Taiwan*

After Fafang 法舫 and I had returned to the Donglian Jueyuan 東蓮覺苑 in the evening, I heard that Yinshun had given lectures on the *kārikās* of the *Zhong lun* 中論. Yinshun is the expert on Chinese San-lun, he especially adopts original

Buddhism for explaining Mahāyāna treatises, and is able to unveil syncretism and encompassing argumentation, grasp the theoretical principles, explain the profound in simple language, in a clear and well-articulated way. He can really be considered a *śāstra*-teacher [*lunshi* 論師]. (Dao'an 1981, 251)<sup>1</sup>

Yinshun 印順 (1906–2005)<sup>2</sup> is regarded as one of the most eminent monks in twentieth-century Chinese Buddhism. He became well known as the theorizer of the so-called 'Buddhism for the Human Realm' (*renjian fojiao* 人間佛教), for preserving the legacy of the reformist monk Taixu 太虛 (1890–1947), for the link to the Taiwanese nun Zhengyan 證嚴 (b. 1937), founder of the Tzu Chi Foundation, and for his large corpus of writings and scholarly achievements.

Yinshun especially embarked on the mission of re-commenting on and re-promoting the study of early Madhyamaka texts, which he read in Chinese translation.<sup>3</sup> His efforts provoked a revival of interest in the Madhyamaka school among contemporary Chinese Buddhists and a re-assessment of the position of the writings of Nāgārjuna within the history of Chinese Buddhism.<sup>4</sup>

My previous research argued that the Madhyamaka dimension of Yinshun should be interpreted within the context of the religious, intellectual, and national restoration that twentieth-century China was undertaking. At that time Chinese Buddhists worked to create a new theoretical framework as basis for a new Buddhism, and adopted the latter as symbol of a new Chinese identity. Yinshun articulated his own plan of renewal for Chinese Buddhism, beginning with the establishment of new standards of authority and a new orientation towards tradition. In this context, he theorized a 'negotiation strategy' that combined the figure and teachings of Nāgārjuna (as representative of early Indian Mahāyāna) with the mainstream Chinese San-lun doctrine.

Yinshun divided Nāgārjuna's treatises into those of 'deep investigation' (*shen guan* 深觀) and those of 'extensive practice' (*guang xing* 廣行).<sup>5</sup> The combina-

1. Note written on 27 October, 1949.

2. Yinshun was born in 1906 at Haining 海寧, Zhejiang province. His birth name was Zhang Luqin 張麴芹. Yinshun received the tonsure in 1930 under the Chan monk Qingnian 清念 at Fuquan monastery (*fuquan an* 福泉庵), and was fully ordained in 1931 at Tiantong monastery (*tiantong si* 天童寺), Ningbo 寧波. After studying at the Buddhist institutes founded by the reformist monk Taixu, Yinshun moved from Mainland China through Hong Kong (1949) to Taiwan (1952), where he finally settled. Yinshun died on the 4th of June 2005 at Hualian, in the Tzu Chi Hospital established by the nun Zhengyan, his disciple.

3. The early Madhyamaka texts that Yinshun focussed on are the Chinese translations and commentaries on the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, and the *Da zhidu lun*, which is the supposed Chinese translation of *Mahāprajñāpāramitā śāstra* (authorship and translations of the *Da zhidu lun* have been the subject of still unsolved debates). Yinshun used the term *Zhong lun* to refer both to the translation of the *kārikās* only and to the text including Piṅgala's commentary too (*Zhong lun* T1564). To avoid misunderstandings, this article adopts the Sanskrit title *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* for the former, and *Zhong lun* for the latter. This article uses the term 'Madhyamaka' with respect to core doctrine of the school, and the expression 'Madhyamaka/San-lun' for the subject of the Chinese reception and cultural interpretation of the school of Nāgārjuna.

4. For comprehensive research on Yinshun's interpretation of the Madhyamaka, and the overall state of Madhyamaka scholarship in twentieth-century China, see Travagnin 2009.

5. This distinction was also present in the thought of Lama Tsongkhapa. A second distinction that Yinshun made was between 'commentaries on the explanation of *sūtras*' (*shi jing lun* 釋經論) and 'commentaries on the root teachings of *sūtras*' (*zong jing lun* 宗經論). The latter was not an invention of Yinshun, but a repetition of the system of classification of texts that Taixu

tion of 'investigation' with 'practice' as essential for the correct understanding of early Madhyamaka is one of the firm points in Yinshun's agenda. Specifically, Yinshun indicated the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (which he generally identified with the translation and commentary *Zhong lun* 中論 T1564) as the text of 'deep investigation', and the *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論 (T1509) as the text of 'extensive practice' (Yinshun 1993, 107–108). Yinshun's argument that 'The *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* is the thorough argumentation (*tonglun* 通論) of the *Āgamas*' became the icon of Yinshun's overall view of Buddhist doctrine. It summarized Yinshun's intervention on the *kārikās*, was the main reason for the attacks he received from contemporary Chinese Buddhists, and constituted the core of his project for the restoration of Chinese Buddhism in mid-twentieth century China.

Since a comprehensive discussion on Yinshun's Madhyamaka thought would go beyond the length-limits of an article, I will here focus specifically on Yinshun's restatement of the nature of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, a text that has always been regarded as the core treatise of the Madhyamaka/San-lun tradition in China.<sup>6</sup>

The article is divided into two parts. The first analyzes Yinshun's textual study of the *kārikās*, examining the modalities of his approach to the text and how he dealt with previous Chinese traditional textual scholarship and canonical treatises. The result of this was a lively and long-term debate within the contemporary Chinese Buddhist world, that the second part of this article explores in order to address also the modern discourse on this specific text as part of the more complicated Chinese discourse on modern Mahāyāna.

Yinshun's study of this text can also be regarded as a twentieth-century attempt to reshape the Chinese tradition of Buddhism, and to provoke new directions for interpreting 'tradition' in the context of the tension between 'conservatism' and 'modernity'. The shift from seeing the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* as rooted directly in the *Prajñāpāramitā* to seeing it as derived directly from the *Āgamas*, and Yinshun's adoption of the term 'encompassing teaching' (*tongjiao* 通教) as his definition of the doctrine of Nāgārjuna, came to question the mainstream Chinese reception and practice of the Mahāyāna.

## I

### RETHINKING THE MŪLAMADHYAMAKAKĀRIKĀ

In any hermeneutical process, a text is not a static reality, but its historical significance develops in and through the process of interpretation. With the premise that 'the hermeneutical experience understands what is said in the light of the

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proposed in 1936 (Taixu 1936, 2654–2655). A third system of classification divided Nāgārjuna's works historically, into early and late works. See Yinshun 1942, 99–103; Yinshun 1950, 13–17; Yinshun 1952, 1–3; Yinshun 1985, 201–206; Yinshun 1988, 122–125; Yinshun 1993, 106–112.

6. The earliest Chinese domestication of Madhyamaka is identified as the San-lun School (*sanlun zong* 三論宗) and is based on the study of three treatises: *Zhong lun* ('The Middle Treatise,' T1564), *Shi'er men lun* ('Treatise of the Twelve Gates,' T1568: *Dvādaśa-mukha-sāstra*), which are Chinese (commentated) translations of works by Nāgārjuna, and the *Bai lun* ('Treatise of Hundred Verses', T1569: *Sata-sāstra*), which is the Chinese translation of a work attributed to Āryadeva, a disciple of Nāgārjuna. The San-lun School reached its peak with the commentaries written by Jizang 吉藏 (549–623) and declined thereafter, with its doctrine being absorbed by the local Chan and Tiantai Schools. See Robinson 1967, Liu 1994.

present’, and that ‘the task of interpretation, then, is that of bridging historical distance’ (Palmer 1969, 242–253), I argue that Yinshun’s interpretation of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* should be seen as a dialectical encounter with the text, the tradition that the text represented and embodied, and its adaptation to circumstantial factors in early twentieth-century Chinese Buddhism and Buddhist China.

### Yinshun’s study of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*

The core teaching of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* is: temporary arising is the sole existence. (Yinshun 1952, 52)

Yinshun’s autobiographies say that Piṅgala’s *Zhong lun* (T1564) was among the first Buddhist books that Yinshun bought in the 1920s,<sup>7</sup> and another early commentary on the treatise that he read was the *Zhongguan lun shu* 中觀論疏 (T1824), by Jizang 吉藏 (549–623), of the San-lun School (Yinshun 1974, 4). The numerous citations from the *kārikās* that we find in Yinshun’s works reveal that he made a considerable and consistent study of the treatise throughout his career. Finally, in the *Fofa gailun* 佛法概論 (1949), Yinshun for the first time mentioned the *Āgama*’s legacy in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* as a basis for a new understanding for the entire Mahāyāna rather than a mere doctrinal statement limited to the re-interpretation of the Madhyamaka alone – a thesis that in a few years became central in Yinshun’s Buddhology (Yinshun 1949, i).<sup>8</sup>

Yinshun’s study of the treatise reveals elements of interest at the level of research methodology, textual analysis, and doctrinal interpretation. The historical and doctrinal identity of the treatise was among Yinshun’s main concerns. The Introduction of Yinshun’s *Zhongguan lun song jiangji* 中觀論頌講記 (1952) includes Yinshun’s notes on authorship of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, and of the Chinese translation of and commentaries on it. Yinshun emphasized the *Āgama* more than the *Prajñāpāramitā* roots of the Madhyamaka doctrine expounded in the text (Yinshun 1952, 1–41). His historical analysis argued that a shift in doctrinal interpretation had resulted from the transmission of the text from India to China. Therefore Yinshun considered Jizang’s *Zhongguan lun shu* as a perfect case of sinification of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, and presented the Chinese San-lun understanding of the treatise as a misunderstanding of Nāgārjuna’s teachings: an instance of the Chinese tendency to syncretism (*ronghui* 融會) and thus corruption of the original teachings of the text.

During his entire career Yinshun was a Chinese Buddhist who criticized Chinese commentaries in the name of their ‘pure’ Indian counterparts. In line with this double-perspective, Yinshun both critiqued and drew from Jizang’s works. In Yinshun’s view, Jizang, who was a key master of the Chinese San-lun, represented and developed the ‘impure’ Chinese reception of the teachings expressed in the

7. Piṅgala lived in the late third or early fourth century.

8. Quoting Yinshun:

Regarding Buddhadharma, I obtained a deep and correct understanding of the religion from reading Nāgārjuna’s *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* [*Zhong lun*]: the true mark, the dichotomy in great and lesser, and the distinction between Mahāyāna and Hinayāna in Buddhadharma can be recognised only on the level of practice. Dependent arising and the middle way are the only absolute correct views in Buddhadharma, therefore the *Āgamas* are the canon that the three vehicles all rely on.

Mūlamadhyamakakārikā and Nāgārjuna's doctrine in general. Following Yinshun's argument, one might then think that he considered Jizang's *Zhongguan lun shu* to be misleading (Yinshun 1952, 39). Nevertheless my study found quite a few similarities between Yinshun's and Jizang's commentaries. I argue that Yinshun made a doctrinal critique of Jizang's work while following its textual structure, since, as I will explain below, his analyses of some chapters of the treatise are structured in a similar way, and include the same metaphors and examples that are found in Jizang's work. Yinshun seemed to rely on Jizang's quotations from other texts rather than quoting directly from these, and this might be a further index of Jizang's legacy in Yinshun's writing. The fact that Jizang's commentary was one of the first books that Yinshun bought in 1925 facilitated an implicit inheritance from the San-lun master.

In his work Yinshun engaged with several previous commentaries on the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, and thus Yinshun's *Zhongguan lunsong jiangji* is not only another explanation of Nāgārjuna's teachings, but also a sort of 'Mūlamadhyamakakārikā encyclopedia' with the addition of excerpts and cross-references from the main previous commentaries that were available in China and canonized through their inclusion in the Taishō *Tripitaka*. The commentaries that Yinshun examined were Piṅgala's *Zhong lun* (T1564); Bhāvaviveka's *Banruo deng lun shi* 般若燈論釋 (T1566), Asaṅga's *Shun zhong lun* 順中論 (T1565), Sthiramati's *Dacheng zhongguan shi lun* 大乘中觀釋論 (T1567),<sup>9</sup> and Jizang's *Zhongguan lun shu*. Yinshun also referred constantly to the *Akutobhaya* (Ch: *Wuwei shu* 無畏疏) in the commentary on almost every chapter.<sup>10</sup> A final observation concerns what I call Yinshun's historical consciousness: even if he has been internationally recognized as a historian, his limits in this respect become evident particularly in his study of the *kārikās*, as he referred to the different commentaries without consideration of the date of their compilation but with concern only for their doctrinal contents. Therefore it is the doctrinal contents here which become instrumental for and supportive of Yinshun's arguments.

Besides quotations from the commentaries listed above, Yinshun related the treatise to the other San-lun texts (*Dvādaśa-mukha-śāstra*, Ch: *Shi'er men lun* 十二門論 T1568; and *Śata-śāstra*, Ch: *Bai lun* 百論 T1569), the *Āgamas* and the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature. In this way Yinshun showed his intention to contextualize the Madhyamaka/San-lun school within the wider context of the Chinese tradition of Buddhism. As for the passages from the Chinese Buddhist Canons that Yinshun quoted in his works, most of them are Yinshun's paraphrases, some of them do not find any correspondence in the Taishō or in the Longzang Canons, and others — as previously noted — are taken from Jizang's work. Furthermore, Yinshun's preference to agree with the theories proposed in the texts attributed to Nāgārjuna more than with those presented in commentaries authored by post-Nāgārjuna Buddhists can be read as a confirmation of his tendency to trust the

9. According to Yinshun, the Chinese translation was authored by Dānapala (Shihu 施護, Song dynasty), while it is usually attributed to the joint effort of Dharmapāla (Fahu 法護) and Weijing 惟淨 (Yinshun 1952, 4; Lan 1993, 210).

10. Yinshun referred to it as *Wuwei lun* 無畏論. The *Akutobhaya* is preserved in Tibetan, and has been translated into Japanese only at the beginning of the twentieth century. Huimin listed two Japanese translations of the text: one by Ikeda (1932) and one by Teramoto Enga (1937) (Huimin 1986, 14–15). Yinshun relied on the latter.

original texts, even if this original is read in its Chinese translation and thus not in the original version (Yinshun 1952, 72).

Yinshun's classification of the chapters of the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* is also unique in the history of interpretation of this text. Unlike the previous commentaries available in Chinese, all of which made a distinction between chapters 1–25 (considered as concerning the Mahāyāna) and chapters 26–27 (regarded as related to the Hīnayāna),<sup>11</sup> Yinshun grouped all 27 chapters under the headings of the Four Noble Truths.<sup>12</sup> This, I assert, reflects Yinshun's emphasis on early Buddhism. Yinshun's articulation opposed the mainstream Chinese firm distinction between Mahāyāna and Pre-Mahāyāna (mostly defined with the term 'Hīnayāna'), and proposed a doctrinal pattern in line with the principle of the 'Dharma common to the Three Vehicles' (*sansheng gongfa* 三乘共法). Quoting Yinshun:

This present classification of the contents of the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* does not make a distinction of Mahāyāna from Pre-Mahāyāna (Hīnayāna) in terms of mutual exclusiveness, but assesses the principle of emptiness as common to the Three Vehicles. (Yinshun 1952, 43)<sup>13</sup>

Should we, therefore, consider Yinshun's Chinese study of the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* as a new milestone in the history of the scholarship of

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11. According to Jizang and the Tiantai tradition, Chapters 1 to 25 are about the Bodhisattva doctrine, Chapter 26 concerns the *Pratyekabuddha* doctrine, and Chapter 27 the *Śrāvaka* doctrine. Twentieth-century monks like Taixu followed this scheme (Taixu 1942, 808–825).
  12. Yinshun made the following division: (a) Chapters 1–2, general view; (b) Chapters 3–5, 1st Noble Truth — Suffering; (c) Chapters 6–17, 2nd Noble Truth — Accumulation of Suffering; (d) Chapters 18–25, 3rd Noble Truth — Extinction of Suffering; (e) Chapters 26–27, 4th Noble Truth — Noble Path to the extinction of suffering. See the table in appendix for further details.
  13. In the *Kong zhi tanjiu* Yinshun re-elaborated his thought as follows:  
The *Zhong lun* is divided into 27 chapters. According to Piṅgala's commentary and the *Akuto bhaya*, the *Zhong lun* is divided into two parts: chapters 1–25, and chapters 26–27. I cannot agree with this distinction. The *Zhong lun* does not adopt any terminology specific to the Mahāyāna, like *Bodhi-mind* (*putixin* 菩提心), *Six Pāramitās* (*liu poluomi* 六波羅蜜), *Ten Bhūmis* (*shi di* 十地), *Solemn Buddha Land* (*zhuangyan fotu* 莊嚴佛土), but uses the language of the *Āgamas* and *Abhidharma*. The *Zhong lun* is structured according to the order of the Four Noble Truths, uncovers the deep doctrine of the *Āgamas* but goes through the investigation of the Mahāyāna practice, and because of this it is also in agreement with the deep doctrine of the Mahāyāna (Yinshun 1984, 212–213).  
Yinshun went into details in a previous work, the *Zhongguan jin lun*. Regarding the *Āgama* and *Abhidharma* framework: (1) Ch.1–2 deal with the eight negation; (2) Ch.3–27 deal with the Four Noble Truths (Ch.3–5: Suffering; Ch.6–17: Accumulation; Ch.18–25: Extinction; Ch.26–27: Noble Path). More specifically: the doctrinal arrangement of Ch.3–5 (from the six faculties to the five *skandhas* and finally the six elements) find correspondence with the structure of *Middle Āgama*, fascicle 34; Ch.6–7: the location of these chapters after what has been expounded in Ch.3–5 resembles the structure of the *Abhidharmas*; Ch.8–10: the contents of these chapters find correspondence in the doctrine taught in the *Āgama*; Ch.11–12: the *saṃsāra* theory expounded here is based on the *Samyuktāgama*, *sūtra* 302; Ch. 13–17: here are important teachings from the *Āgamas*; Ch.18: the understanding of 'non-self' (*anātman*) is a fundamental concept of the *Āgamas*; Ch.19–21: these are the subject of deep investigation by the scholars at the time of the compilation of the *Zhong lun*; Ch.22: the description of the *Tathāgata* finds correspondence in the 'Fourteen Inexpressibles' (*shisi bukeji* 十四不可記) of the *Āgamas*; Ch.23–25: clear reference to the *Āgamas*, especially Ch.25 repeats the contents of the *Samyuktāgama*, *sūtra* 293; Ch.26–27: the first of these is entirely based on the *Āgamas* (Yinshun 1950, 19–20).



this text? Yinshun was indeed the first Chinese monk since the Tang dynasty to write a complete commentary on the *kārikās*. Furthermore, the fact that the Taiwanese Buddhistologist Lan Jifu 藍吉富 listed Yinshun's *Zhongguan lun song jiangji* as one of the most important Chinese commentaries on the *kārikās* – besides being the only modern and non-canonical text of those listed – testifies to the general recognition that Chinese Buddhist scholarship paid to Yinshun's work (Lan 1993, 205–216).<sup>14</sup> The statement 'On the level of doctrinal interpretation, Yinshun can be defined as the most outstanding [Chinese] scholar of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* after Jizang' (Lan 1993, 215) cannot but confirm the role that Yinshun played – or at least that most of the Taiwanese scholarship wanted him to play – in the renaissance of Madhyamaka study in China. Earlier, in 1956, the monk Dao'an 道安 (1907–1977) wrote that he had to mention Yinshun and the *Zhongguan lun song jiangji* in his essay on the modern state of San-lun scholarship in China, because Yinshun had been enshrined as the modern authority for the study of this text and as such should have been acknowledged (Dao'an 1981, 1512–1513).<sup>15</sup> Another Taiwanese Buddhistologist, Wan Jinchuan 萬金川, included Yinshun's *Zhongguan lun song jiangji* within the modern international scholarship on the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. As Wan Jinchuan argued, whereas going beyond Piṅgala's commentary and conducting a comparative analysis of a number of canonical commentaries on the treatise constitutes an unprecedented achievement within Chinese monastic scholarship, nevertheless Yinshun's reference to Candrakīrti and his thought-provoking thesis of a doctrinal inconsistency between Candrakīrti and Nāgārjuna was not supported by enough evidence (Wan 1998, 256–257).<sup>16</sup> Lan Jifu provided a critical review of Yinshun's work as well, and underlined the latter's adoption of modern colloquial Chinese and Western philosophical terms as cause of his semantic misunderstanding and doctrinal confusion (Lan 1993, 214–216). At any rate, such attention to Yinshun's work surely

14. Lan Jifu listed the following works: Piṅgala's commentary (included in the Taishō, T1564); Asaṅga's *Shun zhonglun* (T1565); Bhāvaviveka's *Banruo deng lun shi* (T1566); Sthiramati's *Dacheng zhongguan shi lun* (T1567); Jizang's *Zhongguan lun shu* (T1824); and finally Yinshun's *Zhongguan lun song jiang ji*, which is not a canonical text. As Lan Jifu reasons: 'After the Tang dynasty, there was not so much Chinese Buddhist scholarship on the *Zhong lun*. Recently, Taixu's book *Faxing konghui gailun* included an explanation of the *Zhong lun*. This is now included in volume 13 of the collection *Taixu dashi quanshu*. We need to wait until the contemporary Yinshun for a new significant interpretation of the teachings of the *Zhong lun*' (214). Lan Jifu also listed Yinshun's *Zhongguan jinlun* as valid scholarship of the field, and concluded: 'This book [*Zhongguan jinlun*] and *Zhongguan lun song jiangji* are perfectly complementary, and form the structure of Yinshun's Madhyamaka system' (222).

15. Note written on 17 April, 1956. Dao'an listed the *Xingkong xue tanyuan* and *Zhongguan jin lun* as Yinshun's works on San-lun, a fact that proves the popularity of the volumes, and also mentioned Shanyin 善因 and Taixu as other eminent scholar-monks of the field. In addition, Dao'an listed the *Zhongguan jin lun*, *Zhongguan lun song jiangji*, *Xingkong xue tanyuan*, and *Yindu zhi fojiao* among the reference material for researching San-lun (1460–1461; note written on 7 February, 1956).

16. Wan Jinchuan also proposed an association between Yinshun's *Zhongguan lun song jiangji* and Ng Yu-kwan's *Longshu zhonglun de zhaxue jiedu* 龍樹中論的哲學解讀 (1997), and defined these works as a new beginning for the *Zhonglun* scholarship in China, as well as drawing a comparison between Yinshun's work and Ng Yu-kwan's, Kalupahana's *Nāgārjuna, The Philosophy of the Middle Way* (1986), Pandeya's *Nāgārjuna's Philosophy of No-Identity* (1991), and Garfield's *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way* (1995), with the conclusion that Yinshun's work is the most comprehensive of all (256–263).

facilitated his enthronement as *the* authority in modern Chinese Madhyamaka/San-lun scholarship.

### Jizang's legacy in Yinshun

Yinshun's critique of Jizang is in line with his argument that the 'pure' Dharma can be found only in the earliest doctrine of Indian Buddhism. The first accusation against Jizang of corrupting the core of Nāgārjuna's teachings dates back to the late 1930s, which is after the monk Fazun 法尊 (1902–1980) had taught Yinshun the Indian and Tibetan traditions of the Madhyamaka. Previous to this, Jizang had appeared in Yinshun's early works on San-lun as a San-lun master without any negative appellation.<sup>17</sup> This fact demonstrates that Yinshun's interpretation of Jizang changed along with his study of the Madhyamaka/San-lun school. Nevertheless, in the early 1940s, the date of Yinshun's first lectures on the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, Yinshun's Buddhology still maintained a strong inheritance from Jizang. As the second part of this article will show, the silent acceptance of Jizang can be interpreted as Yinshun's strategic expedient to make his theory better accepted by the Chinese Buddhist tradition, and thus in line with Yinshun's strategy of negotiation and his final domesticated resolution.

My study reveals Jizang's legacy in Yinshun under four main headings. First of all, the arrangement of the verses of each chapter that Yinshun theorized finds a close similarity with the way Jizang himself had classified them.<sup>18</sup> Yinshun probably bought the *Zhongguan lun shu* published by the Jinling Scriptural Press (*jinling kejing chu* 金陵刻經處).<sup>19</sup> This edition, which today is reprinted by the

17. Yinshun's early works on Madhyamaka include three articles written in 1934: 'Sanlun zong zhuancheng kao' 三論宗傳承考, 'Zhonglun shi zhi yanjiu' 中論史之研究, 'Qingbian yu hufa' 清辯與護法; and two articles written in 1937: 'Sanlun zong shi lue' 三論宗史略; 'Sanlun zong feng jian shuo' 三論宗風簡說. Today 'Zhonglun shi zhi yanjiu' remains missing, while the other four pieces are still available.

18. Similarities are present especially for Ch.1; Ch.2 (the division into 'three gates' [*sanmen* 三門] is common to Piṅgala, Jizang and Yinshun); Ch.3: Yinshun and Jizang adopted the same system of classification for the Six Faculties (*liu qing* 六情), with Yinshun's scheme being only slightly more detailed; Chapters 5, 8, 10, 13, 16, and 25: Yinshun's scheme reposed Jizang's classification of contents. Ch.9: Yinshun reported Jizang, however the reference does not find any correspondence in the text but seems to summarize Jizang's scheme of the chapter in his comment on vv.3–4 (190). Ch.14: Yinshun's commentary on this chapter (242–249) should be read in parallel to Jizang's own commentary on the same (T1824 108c22–111b19); there are numerous similarities in contents, terminology, structure and order of quotations.

19. Yinshun's emphasis on Jizang reflects indeed the state of the available Buddhist scholarship and the publication market in the first half of the twentieth-century China. Yang Wenhui 楊文會 (1837–1910) had brought Jizang's works back to China from Japan, and his Jinling Scriptural Press made them available to the Chinese readership. In the years 1878–1886 Yang Wenhui travelled to England, where he had the opportunity to see old Chinese texts, learn some 'new' Western methods of textual analysis and meet the Japanese Nanjo Bunyo. It was thanks to Nanjo Bunyo that Yang Wenhui could return to China important texts dating from the Sui and Tang dynasties – a total of about 280 works, more than 1000 fascicles. Among the texts that returned from Japan and were reprinted in China there are Jizang's commentaries on the San-lun texts: the *Zhongguan lun shu* (T1824), *Bai lun shu* 百論疏 (T1827) and *Shi'er men lun shu* 十二門論疏 (T1825). These are only three out of the 64 works requested by Yang Wenhui from Nanjo Bunyo in September 1891. Jizang's works had not been included in the previous editions of the Chinese Buddhist Canon, and Yang Wenhui made them available to the Chinese readership already at the end of the nineteenth century, well before the canonization of these texts in the Japanese Taishō. Yinshun, in fact, was able to get a copy of Jizang's



Xinwenfeng Press in Taipei, includes charts, compiled in 1914, on the contents of each chapter. In the same years, Taixu and Fazun used similar methods and terminology for cataloguing the contents of Buddhist texts. Therefore, rather than just following Jizang's system, Yinshun was also conforming to a new standard in the local Buddhist scholarship.

Piṅgala and Bhāvaviveka, the latter more than the former, commented on the doctrine of the *kārikās* within a wider context including other Buddhist and non-Buddhist schools. However, the quality and the quantity of cross-references, as well as the confrontation between Mahāyāna, Pre-Mahāyāna and non-Buddhist schools that Yinshun listed, find a stronger similarity to Jizang's work. In some chapters Yinshun made exactly the same parallels, in the same order and with the same quotations that Jizang had done in his work.<sup>20</sup>

The quotations from canonical texts constitute a third element of similarity between Yinshun's and Jizang's commentaries. As I mentioned above, many quotations in Yinshun do not find correspondence in the relevant texts. Most of these inaccurate quotations are actually taken from Jizang's works – especially, but not only, the *Zhongguan lun shu*.<sup>21</sup>

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*Zhongguan lun shu* in the early 1920s, while the first copies of the Taishō *Tripitaka* reached China only in the early 1930s.

20. Ch.3: in his comment on vv.2–4 Yinshun made a reference to the Vātsīputriya (105), just as Jizang did (T1824 62c9–10). Ch.7: Yinshun referred to the Vātsīputriya, Sarvāstivāda and Mahāśāṅghika in commenting on v.4 (149–151), and among the previous commentators on the *Zhong lun* only Jizang referred to the Vātsīputriya in this context (T1824 74a22–23); Ch.9: Yinshun made reference to the Vātsīputriya and Sautrāntika in his general survey of the contents of the chapter (186–187), as Bhāvaviveka and Jizang (T1824 92a4–10), but not Piṅgala, had done in their own commentaries, while references to the Sāṃkhya school, which Yinshun made in his comment on vv.8–10 (194–195), are present only in Jizang (T1824 92a–94a), who made frequent references to the Sāṃkhya school; Ch.10: Yinshun's reference to the Vātsīputriya as promoters of the metaphor of fire and fuel (196–197) had been mentioned only in Jizang's work (T1824 94b24–28); Ch.15: Yinshun criticised the Sarvāstivāda doctrinal position in his comment on v.3 (254), and the same argumentation is present in Jizang's work, even if at the end of the comment on the chapter (T1824 113a27).
21. Ch.1: in his comment on vv.7–9 Yinshun made a reference to the *Shi'er men lun* (p.72), as only Jizang among the other commentaries did (T1824 40b28–29); in commenting on v.11 Yinshun quoted a sentence from Nāgārjuna's *Da zhidu lun* on the Middle Way (p. 75) which does not occur in any of the texts by Nāgārjuna, but is mentioned in the same terms – and also as a quotation from the *Da zhidu lun* – in Jizang's *Zhongguan lun shu* (T1824 50c19–20); Ch.3: the quotation on the equivalence between Emptiness and Non-Origination (p. 103) is a quotation from Jizang's text (T1824 205c14); Ch.8: Yinshun (176) referred to the *Weimojing shao* (T2773 424c), and the same quotation is present and with the same function in Jizang's *Zhongguan lun shu* (T1824 91a22), but does not appear in any other commentaries on the *Zhong lun*; Ch.12: in the general introduction to the chapter Yinshun referred to the *Da zhidu lun* (pp. 220–221), however the sentence finds no correspondence in the *Da zhidu lun*, but is present in Jizang's *Zhongguan lun shu* (T1824 102c24–25), where Jizang reported the passage as a quotation from the *Da zhidu lun*. Other passages that Yinshun reported as from the *Da zhidu lun* are actually paraphrases of passages from the *Lotus Sūtra*, and again Jizang himself reported the same passages and claimed them to be direct quotations from the *Da zhidu lun* (T1824 442c19); in sum Yinshun made wrong references by following Jizang's mistakes. Yinshun even reported the passages in the same sequence used by Jizang, a fact that shows Yinshun's reliance on Jizang's text. In the comment on v.1 (222) Yinshun quoted from the *Jingming jing* 淨名經 (T2777 461b7), and only Jizang's work, among the various commentaries on the *Zhonglun*, mentioned the same passage (T1824 102b19); Ch.15: in his comment on vv.8–9 (259–260) Yinshun quoted from *Prajñāpāramitā* scriptures (but the quotations do not find exact correspondences in the

Yinshun associated the contents of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* with Buddhist teachings that are not explicitly mentioned in the treatise. This is not unique in the history of Buddhist interpretation, but it is probably not a coincidence that Yinshun on quite a few occasions selected the same teachings that Jizang also reported and in the same sequence as he reported them.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, quite a few of the parables and stories that Yinshun included in his commentary are present in Jizang's works but not in the other canonical commentaries.<sup>23</sup>

That Jizang's *Zhongguan lun shu* was one of the very few Buddhist books that Yinshun found purchasable at the beginning of his learning could confirm the diffusion of the text in China during the first decades of the twentieth century. Another among the first Buddhist books bought by Yinshun, Eun Maeda's 前田慧云 *Sanronshū kōyō* 三論宗綱要, underlined the role that Jizang's scholarship came to play after the reprinting of his works in the early twentieth century. In fact, Eun Maeda himself analyzed San-lun treatises, and classified their contents in accordance with Jizang's commentaries. Jiang Weiqiao 蔣維喬, who had translated Maeda's book into Chinese in 1923, affirmed that in recent years Jizang's works, once reprinted and made newly available in China, had stimulated and facilitated research on San-lun (Maeda, Jiang tr. 1923, i). This is another sign of a general reevaluation of Jizang at that time.

## II

### RETHINKING CHINESE MAHĀYĀNA

Both the criticism and appreciation that Yinshun's *Zhongguan lun song jiangji* received have to be read beyond the mere level of textual exegesis, and as part of the overall contemporary debate on the reinvention of tradition. And tradition, in

*Prajñāpāramitā* corpus), and this is what Jizang also did (T1824 107a06-07); Ch.16: Yinshun quoted from the *Prajñāpāramitā* (271) and *Avatamsaka Sūtra* (276), as Jizang had done in the same parts (respectively, T1824 114a3-6, and T1824 114c5-6), while these references are missing in the other commentaries on the *Zhong lun*; Ch.17: in his comment on v.19 (299) Yinshun quoted from the *Mingliao lun* 明了論 (T1461), though the quotation does not occur in the original text, but Yinshun was probably referring to a passage in Jizang's *Zhongguan lun shu* (T1824 119a10-11); Ch.24: Yinshun reported a quotation from the *Da zhidu lun* (probably the rephrasing of T1609 703b24-27) in a comment on v.7 (452-453) and in regards to the Twofold Truth (*erdi* 二諦): the same passage was quoted by Jizang several times in his *Zhongguan lun shu* (T1824 28b15, 108c07, 149b29), *Buke erdi zhangxu* 補刻二諦章敘 (T1854 82c2-8), and *Fahua xuan lun* 法華玄論 (T1720 396b12-14).

22. Ch.4: Yinshun referred to the *Bai lun* in order to explain vv.1-3 (115-116), and similar references had been used by Jizang (T1824 67c5), but are not present either in Piṅgala's or in Bhāvaviveka's commentaries; Ch.7: Yinshun referred to the *Bai lun* and the metaphor of the lamp in his comment on v.9 (153), as Jizang had done (T1824 81c9-15); Ch.10: Yinshun's explanation of the title of the chapter, the metaphor of the fire, and the parallel between the fire/fuel relationship and self/five *skandhas* relationship (pp. 197-198) finds correspondence only in Jizang's commentary (T1824 94b20-94c23); Ch.10: Yinshun's argumentation (203-205) on Interdependence (*xiangdai* 相待) and *Lakṣaṇa-hetu* (*xiangyin* 相因) occurs only in Jizang's work (T1824 93b5-95a1); Ch.19: in a comment on the general meaning of the chapter, Yinshun referred to the *Da piposha lun* 大毗婆沙論 (350-351), as did Jizang (T1824 130c8); Ch.23: Yinshun's argumentation on the Four Errors (*sidao* 四倒) and Eight Errors (*badao* 八倒) resembles a previous argument by Jizang (T1824 144c4).
23. E.g. Ch.19: the parable of bottle and mud (368) also recurs in Jizang (T1824 134b17-20).

this case, is identified with the Chinese quality of the Buddhism that was present in China. In other words, Yinshun's adoption and sinification of Pre-Mahāyāna Buddhism, the negotiation between traditions, and the final resolution took on a historical, and not merely a doctrinal, significance.

The second part of this article analyzes Yinshun's interpretation of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* by moving away from the micro-context of the Chinese Madhyamaka/San-lun scholarship and addressing the macro-context of the modern Chinese understanding of the Mahāyāna.

### Tonglun 通論 and Tongjiao 通教: Bridging *Āgama* and *Prajñāpāramitā*

My personal understanding of the middle way as proposed in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* [*Zhong lun*] is that it represents the core essence of the *Āgamas* as it has been unveiled by Nāgārjuna, who then found the right view of the empty nature and dependent origination in the profound and extensive system of Mahāyāna. In other words, while the doctrine of dependent origination, emptiness and the middle way is propagated by the Mahāyānists, this is not a doctrine apart from that of the *Āgamas*, but it has not been understood by the Hīnayānists who clung to the phenomenal aspects of reality. (Yinshun 1950, 18)

The argument 'The *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* is the thorough argumentation (*tonglun*) of the *Āgamas*' is one of the main points of Yinshun's agenda, and also one of the most challenging. Yinshun was the first person in the history of Chinese Buddhism to propose such a thesis, which then provoked a serious debate within Chinese (and later also Taiwanese) Buddhism.

Yinshun's thesis remained unchanged from the first formulation in *Zhongguan jin lun* (1950, 17–24) to the re-affirmation in *Kong zhi tanjiu* (1984, 209–216). The criticism aimed at Yinshun's argument was not so much concerned with the presence of Pre-Mahāyāna Buddhism in a Mahāyāna text, an element that Chinese Buddhists had not denied, as with the nature of the link between the *Āgamas* and the *kārikās*. The Chinese (Mahāyāna) common view was that the *kārikās* were directly linked to the *Prajñāpāramitā* scriptures and only through the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature, therefore indirectly, linked to the *Āgamas*. As Lan Jifu stated, the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* is the '*tonglun*' of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, and the *Prajñāpāramitā* is then connected to the *Āgamas* (Lan 1993, 224–225).<sup>24</sup>

Among non-Chinese scholars there has been a general tendency to contextualize the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* in the *Prajñāpāramitā* domain rather than stressing the *Āgama* legacy in the text. Nevertheless, contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism has attempted to show similarities between Yinshun's theory and the thesis advanced by some Western and Japanese scholars. For instance, Wan Jinchuan related the thesis of a mostly Pre-Mahāyāna and less Mahāyāna legacy in Nāgārjuna that Kalupahana and Warder had proposed to Yinshun's statement on the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (Wan 1998, 56–59).<sup>25</sup> Another Taiwanese scholar, Qiu Minjie 邱敏捷, also underlined a similarity between Japanese scholarship and Yinshun, and made explicit

24. See also Chen 1999, 78–84; Chen 2000; Rushi 2001, 99–184; Ruyong 2002, 57–85; Huang 2002.

25. Other Western scholars such as Richard Robinson and Christian Lindtner emphasised the Mahāyāna dimension of the *Zhong lun*, with the former linking the treatise to the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature and the latter underlining the influence of the *Lañkāvatāra Sūtra* on the *Zhong lun*.

reference to Yuichi Kajiyama and his theory of a strong presence of the *Āgamas* in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, which however did not include what Qiu defined as the ‘extremist’ conclusion proposed by Yinshun (Qiu 2000, 190–204).

A different position has been taken by the nun Ruyong 如永, who underlined the legacy of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* in the Mahāyāna literature and hence defined the text as neither a restatement of the *Āgamas* nor a restatement of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, but gave the text a unique position in the development of Buddhism, between the *Āgamas* and the *Prajñāpāramitā* (Ruyong 2002, 13–14).

Lan Jifu did agree that the teachings presented in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* were rooted into the *Āgamas*, but he disagreed with Yinshun who, according to Lan Jifu, made its teachings as the reaffirmation of the doctrines of Dependent Arising (*yuanqi* 緣起) and the Middle Way (*zhongdao* 中道) of the *Āgamas*. Lan Jifu argued that the direct influence of the *Prajñāpāramitā* on the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* was much deeper than any inheritance from the *Āgamas*. Lan Jifu concluded by proposing this other statement as more correct: ‘The *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* is the thorough argumentation of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, and the *Prajñāpāramitā* doctrine is linked directly to the *Āgamas* teachings’ (Lan 1993, 224–225). According to Lan Jifu, Yinshun’s emphasis could bring the readers to neglect the direct relations between *Prajñāpāramitā* and *Āgamas*, and wrongly to consider that the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* surpassed the *Prajñāpāramitā* and inherited directly from the *Āgamas* (p. 226). Lan Jifu also adduced historical factors to confute Yinshun’s doctrinal argument. First of all, in terms of contents, the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* and *Prajñāpāramitā* both centred on the teaching of emptiness (*kong* 空), whereas the *Āgamas* did not adopt *kong* as a key concept. Secondly, in terms of terminology, the *Āgamas* centred on the impermanence of the five aggregates (*wu yin wuchang* 五陰無常), but rarely mentioned *kong*. In terms of Nāgārjuna’s scholarship, the *Da zhidu lun* is the evidence that Nāgārjuna was doing the ‘encompassing argumentation’ (*tonglun*) of the *Prajñāpāramitā*; from the contents of the *Da zhidu lun* and the emphasis on the term ‘Perfection of Wisdom’ (*zhidu* 智度), we should also deduce Nāgārjuna’s emphasis on, and close connection with, the *Prajñāpāramitā* doctrine. Then again, in terms of doctrinal history, the Mahāyāna quality of the *kārikās* does not find correspondence in the *Āgamas*, but is a direct derivation from the *Prajñāpāramitā*, that had developed in a later period, as the commentaries of Piṅgala, Bhāvaviveka and Asaṅga had evidenced. Finally, in terms of quotations, Nāgārjuna probably cited from the *Āgamas* and not from the *Prajñāpāramitā* to confute the wrong views of *Abhidharma* only for convenience, since at that time the *Prajñāpāramitā* tradition was not yet well consolidated and Buddhists were more familiar with the *Āgamas* (226–227).

Another Taiwanese scholar, Chen Xueren 陳學仁, listed a few elements that could confute Yinshun’s thesis. Chen expressed a historical concern. According to Nāgārjuna’s biography, Nāgārjuna read the Mahāyāna scriptures and therefore centred his career on the *Prajñāpāramitā*. At the time of Nāgārjuna, non-Buddhist sects and the ‘Hīnayāna’ were predominant, hence Nāgārjuna compiled the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* to spread the Mahāyāna teaching of emptiness with the purpose of correcting wrong views and making the *Prajñāpāramitā* prevail. Also, looking at the literature, Chen argued that Yinshun’s thesis was disputable in relation to his own conception of the corpus of the *Āgama*. We have a Northern tradition and a Southern tradition of the *Āgamas*, and the former is the only one translated

into Chinese. According to Chen, Yinshun read only the Northern tradition but took it as the corpus of the whole so-called early Buddhism. Therefore, according to Chen, we should question if the Northern tradition is exhaustive of the doctrine of the entire early Buddhism, and only afterwards discuss the link between the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* and *Āgamas* (Chen 1999, 78–84; see also Chen 2000).

Yu Heng 毓恆 raised another objection to Yinshun: the monk's emphasis on the *Madhyamaka* and on the legacy of the *Āgamas* in the *kārikās* is read as an attempt to devalue Chinese traditional Buddhism by attributing value mainly to early Indian Buddhism, which, Yu Heng argued, Yinshun identified with the *Āgamas* (Yu 2005, 33–40).

Besides the literary and historical arguments that have been used to confute Yinshun's effort to bridge the teachings of the *kārikās* and the *Āgamas* directly, some scholars contested only Yinshun's adoption of the term *tonglun*. In this respect, Chen Xueren suggested that the *Zhong lun* could be considered as a *shenlun* 申論 ('extended argumentation') more than *tonglun* (Chen 2000, 14).<sup>26</sup> Elsewhere, Huang Ruikai 黃瑞凱 proposed *zongjinglun* 宗經論 ('commentaries on the root teachings of *sūtras*') as a better alternative to what Yinshun described as *tonglun* (Huang 2002, 18).<sup>27</sup>

I argue that Yinshun's thesis, as well as his adoption of the terms *tonglun* and *tongjiao*, aimed to go beyond the micro-context of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* alone, indeed it declared the *Āgamas* as doctrinal basis of the entire corpus of Nāgārjuna's literature, and, consequently, as the core foundation of the entire early Mahāyāna. In this way, the mission to return to early Indian Buddhism is accomplished and at the same time well integrated within the Mahāyāna that constitutes the basis of Chinese Buddhism. Yinshun summarizes his project as follows:

In sum, based on the *Āgamas*, the role of the *Zhong lun* is to confute the different teachings, and to reveal the true teachings of the Buddha. Of course, this does not mean that the *Zhong lun* is not related to the Mahāyāna at all, but it means that the doctrine of emptiness of all the *dharma*s expounded in the *Zhong lun* is the true teaching of all the Buddhadharma doctrines and so [the *Zhong lun*] bridges the two vehicles; in the study of the Mahāyāna, one should focus on the true teaching of the Mahāyāna, and then reveal the features of the Mahāyāna practice on this basis. Therefore Nāgārjuna, in conformity with the deep view of the Mahāyāna, chose the teachings of the *Āgamas* (and *Abhidharma*), and thus demonstrated a thorough knowledge [*quantong* 貫通] of the *Āgamas* and of Mahāyāna scriptures like the *Prajñāpāramitā*. As there is thorough teaching [*tongjiao* 通教] in the Buddhadharma, then the *Zhong lun* can be considered as the model of a thorough treatise [*tonglun* 通論] of the Buddhadharma! (Yinshun 1984, 214)

26. According to Chen, the *Zhong lun* debates the concept of emptiness that is a Mahāyāna doctrine that *Prajñāpāramitā* scriptures explain. However, links to the doctrine included in the *Āgamas* are also evident. Chen concluded that the *Zhong lun* could not be defined as an 'encompassing' treatise of the *Āgamas* but as an 'extended argumentation' of the meaning of *kong*. 'Extended argumentation' is an argumentation that is based on the text but goes beyond that (in this case through the addition of Mahāyāna doctrine), while 'encompassing' argumentation is an argumentation that thoroughly states (or, in this case, states again) the meaning of a text. The character *tong* has been used by Tiantai in their system of classification of teachings – *panjiao* – and it has been usually translated as 'encompassing' or 'thorough'

27. Huang recalled the distinction between 'treatises explanatory of *sūtras*' (*shijing lun*) and 'treatises on the deep teachings of *sūtras*' (*zongjing lun*), which Taixu, and then Yinshun, had adopted.



The attack on Yinshun's position is not a mere debate on the interpretation of a canonical text, but a reaction to Yinshun's overall understanding of Nāgārjuna, who had been generally enthroned as the 'Patriarch of the Eight Schools' and the founder of the Mahāyāna by East Asian Buddhists. Yinshun attempted a new definition of the Mahāyāna through his use of the term *tonglun*, and this 'innovation' was neither shared nor easily accepted by contemporary mainstream Chinese Buddhism.

I will give here a few clarifications of the state of Buddhism in twentieth-century China for a better understanding of the historical and intellectual background of the debate under review.<sup>28</sup> I would divide the twentieth-century into two main phases. In the first half of the century China saw a re-assessment of the Mahāyāna, especially through the intervention of Taixu and the movement of humanization and social engagement in Buddhism, which aimed to unify and strengthen Chinese Buddhism as a whole. The rest of the century witnessed the reinforcement of a Mahāyāna ideology in Taiwan. It is in the final decades of the twentieth-century that Buddhism in Taiwan created its own identity, produced a 'Taiwanese' Buddhism, and defined itself in terms of its relation to not only Japanese Buddhism but also, and especially, Mainland (Chinese) Buddhism.<sup>29</sup>

The mid-twentieth century is a key period for understanding the shift from one historical pattern to the other. In the late 1940s, with the coming to power of the Communist Party in China, Buddhist monks moved from China to Hong Kong, and eventually most of them fled to Taiwan. That period was marked by a new schism between conservatives and reformers, a schism that was dictated by a different understanding and practice of the conceptualization and identification of authority. The monk who is generally seen as the key figure in the reforming and modernization of Chinese Buddhism is Taixu. Taixu called for reforms of the teachings and the renewal of monastic education, and identified all these initiatives as part of the process of modernization of Chinese Buddhism. On the other hand, Taixu was also the monk who defended the Chineseness of Buddhism as the foundation of a new Buddhist China. Taixu promoted the study of Indian Buddhism, but never neglected the emphasis that was traditionally Chinese on the *Tathāgatagarbha* doctrine, Tiantai, Chan and Pure Land. According to Pittman, Taixu sought the 'creative recovery of the tradition' (Pittman 2001, 196–254).

Most of the monks who moved to Hong Kong and then to Taiwan were affiliated to Taixu, and they all aimed to refer to mainstream Chinese Buddhism as the 'authority' and to legitimate a new Buddhist China on that basis. The diary of the monk Dao'an shows plenty of correspondence between Buddhists who had been able to move to Taiwan and those who remained in Mainland China or Hong Kong, and contains evidences of the project common to all of them: 'the renaissance of Buddhism must start from the free China' (Dao'an 1981, 1023).<sup>30</sup> And the

28. Besides the well-known works of Welch, Dongchu, Jones and Pittman, see also Fafang 1937, 13–23; Changxing 1937, 5–9; Taixu 1937, 10–12.

29. This construction of a Buddhist identity and the reinforcement of the religious sphere in Taiwan in the late twentieth-century was not merely an effect of the end of martial law (1987), but also a consequence of the general change of policy of the political leadership on the island who gradually pushed for independence from, rather than the reconquest of, Mainland China. Among the others, see Madsen 2007, 9–15 and 152–156; Jones 1999.

30. Note written by Dao'an on 17 January, 1953: *Fojiao fuxing yao cong ziyou zhongguo zuoqi* 佛教復興要從自由中國作起.



'free China' (*ziyou Zhongguo* 自由中國) was Taiwan. The crucial role that Taiwan was playing at that time can explain the tension that arose within the Buddhist community on the island around issues such as the selection of a leader within the group, and questions around maintaining or manufacturing a tradition. At that time we also begin reading terms such as 'Taiwanese Buddhism' (*Taiwan fojiao* 台灣佛教), 'Mainland Buddhism' (*Dalu fojiao* 大陸佛教), and 'Chinese Buddhism' (*Zhongguo fojiao* 中國佛教) as labels for distinct realities (2556).<sup>31</sup>

The death of Taixu in 1947 signalled the time for the election of a new leader, and Yinshun was regarded by many as Taixu's natural successor. Dao'an himself reported that in 1951 Buddhists had hoped to have Yinshun involved in the mission of systematizing Chinese Buddhism in Taiwan (635)<sup>32</sup> and later on, in 1957, that Yinshun came to hold the top position among the monks who fled to Taiwan from Mainland China (1833).<sup>33</sup>

Yinshun's way to deal with the 'authority of the past', however, differed from Taixu's. Yinshun's revaluation of Indian Buddhism, his emphasis on early Buddhism, the identification of the superiority of the Mahāyāna in embodying the core doctrine of early Buddhism: none of these elements finds correspondence in Taixu's ideas. It was especially the emphasis on the *Āgamas* that brought Yinshun the accusation of undermining the Mahāyāna. The document *Jiaru mei you dacheng* 假如沒有大乘 ('If there were not Mahāyāna'), that the senior monk Cihang 慈航 (1893–1954) wrote in 1953 to criticize Yinshun, well reflects the common Chinese traditional atmosphere of that time.<sup>34</sup> According to Cihang, some Chinese Buddhists had become experts in defaming the Mahāyāna. Quoting Cihang:

'Is it because once the Mahāyāna has been destroyed, Chinese Buddhism may arise again?' ... 'If there were not Mahāyāna, there would not be the need to separate the Two Vehicles from the Bodhisattva [Vehicle] any more. ... If there were not Mahāyāna, Taixu would not be like you any more. If there were not Mahāyāna, you should not continue editing the complete collection of Taixu. ... If there were not Mahāyāna, the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* [*Zhong lun*] that you highly esteem would become Hīnayāna. ... If there were not Mahāyāna, then Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva, Asaṅga, Maitreya are all false.' (Dao'an 1981, 1280–1284)<sup>35</sup>

Like Taixu, Yinshun had to face opposition and critique, and that critique came mostly from the conservative group. Like Taixu, Yinshun attempted to establish a new framework for the renaissance of Buddhism, but, unlike Taixu, Yinshun did not make a firm distinction between Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna, indeed he proposed the integration of those traditions as the core of a new resolution (1833).<sup>36</sup>

31. Note written by Dao'an on 14 November, 1964.

32. Note written by Dao'an on 27 June, 1951.

33. Note written by Dao'an on 25 February, 1957.

34. It is said that Cihang wrote this essay to start a written debate with Yinshun. Yanpei, a peer of Yinshun, persuaded Cihang to abandon his plan, took Cihang's essay with him and showed it to Yinshun. As result, Cihang's *Jiaru mei you dacheng* was never published. However Dao'an wrote up the Cihang-Yanpei episode in his diary, with the addition that Yanpei showed the essay to Dao'an before leaving the Maitreya Inner Hall and returning to Yinshun in Xinzhu. Dao'an read the work and summarised its conclusion in his diary. So far, this is the only existent publication of Cihang's essay.

35. Note written by Dao'an on 24 December, 1953.

36. Note written by Dao'an on 27 February, 1957.

Was Yinshun's construction of a new Mahāyāna also a sort of 'creative recovery of the tradition'? This depends on what 'tradition' and 'authority of the past' were for Yinshun. Yinshun emphasized early Buddhism, but he also relied on Jizang's works for structuring and compiling his commentary on the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. In other words, Yinshun proposed a revised Jizang as the textual basis of his attempt to promote a renaissance of the Mahāyāna. Jizang's legacy in Yinshun is another negotiation that Yinshun made in order to keep his ideology in line with both the 'pure' (Indian) Dharma and the sinification of Buddhism. Taixu had called for a reform of teachings, a program that Yinshun said he disagreed with (Yinshun 1974, 7–8). However, Yinshun's way to re-define the Mahāyāna sounds like a reform on the doctrinal level.

Cihang's *Jiaru mei you dacheng*, the attack on Yinshun for the formulation of the 'Mahāyāna threefold system' (see p. 268), the devaluation of the Yogācāra and *Tathāgatagarbha* doctrines, and the presumed plan to become 'the new master' (*xin dashi* 新大師) after the death of Taixu (Dao'an 1981, 1283):<sup>37</sup> this all takes on a historical meaning.

Questioning and revising the figure of Nāgārjuna, defying the Chineseness of Buddhism and undermining the core of the Mahāyāna were all felt to be dangerous in the process of restructuring Chinese Buddhism. As a result, Yinshun was also defined as belonging to the 'sect of mistaken view' (*duanjian pai* 斷見派), 'sect of opportunism and speculation' (*touji pai* 投機派), and the 'fence-sitter sect' (*qiqiang pai* 騎牆派) (1284).<sup>38</sup> Because of Yinshun and his supporters there was the fear that 'the Buddhists who had come from Mainland China could leave a bad impression in Taiwan' (1281).<sup>39</sup>

The critique of Yinshun's conceptualization of the Mahāyāna and his stress on early Buddhism has remained unchanged in the course of time, but the accusers became different. From the end of the 1980s a number of lay and monastic Buddhists could not accept Yinshun's position because it was seen as sabotaging the Chineseness of Chinese Buddhism.

The Taiwanese scholar Song Zelai 宋澤萊 understood Yinshun's argument as a modern misunderstanding of the core of Buddhism and especially as a betrayal of the spirit of Chinese Buddhism. In his article 'Yinshun foxue sixiang de weixianxing' 印順佛學思想的危險性 ('The dangerous nature of Yinshun's thought'), written in 1989, Song accused Yinshun of misunderstanding the teachings of the *Āgamas*, the Madhyamaka doctrine, and overall of having devalued the role of Nāgārjuna in the development of the Mahāyāna. Again, the direct link from the *Āgamas* to the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* is seen as in opposition to the Chinese reception (and also transformation) of the Mahāyāna. As Song asserts, 'the *Āgamas* and the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* [Zhong lun] are totally in opposition' (Song 2001, 163). And:

Nāgārjuna was the only one called 'patriarch common to the eight schools', and is not related to Hīnayāna at all. The *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* [Zhong lun] has to be considered only as the dialectical argumentation of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, and does not have any relation with the *Āgamas*. Nāgārjuna himself did not think to make a thorough study of Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna scriptures. Therefore, the Nāgārjuna

37. Note written by Dao'an on 24 December, 1953.

38. Note written by Dao'an on 24 December, 1953.

39. Note written by Dao'an on 24 December, 1953.

and the Madhyamaka that are in Yinshun's mind are certainly not common [to the eight schools]. (145)

In the same year Song stated that Taiwanese Buddhism had to be reformed and obtain a new identity, and remarked on the importance of the Mahāyāna as the doctrinal core of Taiwanese Buddhism. Yinshun's viewpoint was thus regarded as mistaken, a stage that should have been surpassed as soon as possible to enable the development of Taiwanese Buddhism (Song 2000, 66). As Song argued:

After his arrival in Taiwan he [Yinshun] was able to offend 'all the Buddhist colleagues who had moved to Taiwan', but actually he had already caused 'offence' before his arrival in Taiwan (59).

The critique posed by the Modern Chan Society at the end of the 1980s should also be read in these terms. According to Wen Jinke 溫金柯, Yinshun was the Chinese Buddhist who most emphasized early Indian Buddhism. That Yinshun defined the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* as the 'encompassing argumentation' of the *Āgamas* was a clear indication of the attention he devoted to early Buddhism, and of his devaluation of the Chinese Chan and Pure Land.<sup>40</sup> For Wen, such an emphasis was one of the factors that provoked the rise of the new generation of Taiwanese scholarship that valued the *Āgamas* (Wen 2001, 349–354).

There are, then, similarities between what happened in the 1950s and the attacks from the late twentieth-century. The only difference is that the concern for the reestablishment of Mahāyāna Buddhism in Mainland China in the 1950s was replaced with a program to invent a Taiwanese Mahāyāna Buddhism.

*Tonglun* 通論 and *tongjiao* 通教: Doctrinal classification in Yinshun's *panjiao*

The meaning of the term *tonglun*, especially of the first character *tong*, is crucial for understanding Yinshun's theory, and the consequent debate that arose within the Buddhist community. Like Huang Ruikan, I see the term *tonglun* as closely related to the term *tongjiao* ('encompassing teaching') coined by the Tiantai school. Unlike Huang Ruikan, I argue that the way Yinshun adopted the concept of 'encompassing argumentation' (*tonglun*) recalled the definition that he gave to the 'encompassing teaching' (*tongjiao*) in his *panjiao*. Moreover, the distance that Yinshun moved from Huayan and Tiantai in his *panjiao* provides an explanation of what innovation and tradition were in Yinshun's thought, and of the discursive representations of those elements within his teachings.

Yinshun expressed high appreciation for the term *tongjiao* coined by Zhiyi in 'Qili qiji zhi renjian fojiao' 契理契機之人間佛教 (1989). With *tong* meaning 'comprehensive of the teachings of the previous (three) baskets, and of the following distinct and perfect teaching', the term *tongjiao* means the teaching 'common' to the Three Vehicles if taken as *gongtong* 共通, while it implies the transition from Pre-Mahāyāna to the late and Esoteric Mahāyāna (identified with the *Tathāgatagarbha* doctrine) if intended as *tongru* 通入 (Yinshun 1989, 12).<sup>41</sup>

40. 'The MCS's viewpoints that are different from those of Master Yinshun can be summarized in 4 points: 1. Mādhyamika is not the only way of conceptual explanation for the ultimate truth; 2. To comment favorably on Chan, Vajrayana and Pure Land; 3. To affirm the spirit of practising urgently for enlightenment; 4. The practice of Bodhisattva with pure Dharma-Eye is the true meaning of the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva Way'. Available from [www.whpq.org](http://www.whpq.org).

41. Ch: *tong qian zangjiao, tong hou bieyuan* 通前藏教, 通後別圓.

Unlike the previous *panjiao* of the Tiantai and Huayan Schools,<sup>42</sup> Yinshun proposed a cyclic view of the development of Indian Buddhism, so as to make a parallel with the three-phase cycle of the decline of the Dharma. The idea of a gradual corruption occurring throughout the history of transmission of Buddhism is illustrated through the metaphor of the dilution of milk:

Buddhadharma [fofa 佛法] can be compared to milk. [Buddhadharma] cannot but attempt to be suitable and propose ‘expedients’ [fangbian 方便] in order to benefit living beings. This is like adding water to the milk ... In the end, the true taste of the Buddhadharma has become weak, and the Buddhism that there had been in India disappeared! (Yinshun 1971b, 879)

Yinshun also used the metaphor of a human life to describe the evolution of the teachings, which he saw as passing from the initial immature period (i.e., childhood) to maturity (i.e., youth) and finally decline (i.e., old age). In other words, in Yinshun’s thought, neither the very early Buddhism nor the late Esoteric traditions embody the ideal practice.

Yinshun’s *panjiao* mapped the history of Indian Buddhism in four interrelated systems: (1) The division into ‘three periods’ (*san qi* 三期) lists the development from ‘Buddhadharma’ (*Fofa* 佛法) through Mahāyāna Buddhadharma (*Dasheng fofa* 大乘佛法) to Esoteric Mahāyāna Buddhadharma (*Mimi dasheng fofa* 秘密大乘佛法). (2) The classification in ‘four periods’ (*si qi* 四期) divides Mahāyāna Buddhadharma into Early Mahāyāna Buddhadharma (*Chuqi dasheng fofa* 初期大乘佛法) and Late Mahāyāna Buddhadharma (*Houqi dasheng fofa* 後期大乘佛法). (3) With the ‘three systems’ (*san xi* 三系) Yinshun associated Madhyamaka with Early Mahāyāna Buddhadharma, and Yogacāra and *Tathāgātagarba* doctrines with Late Mahāyāna Buddhadharma. (4) It is in the classification in ‘five periods’ (*wu qi* 五期) that Yinshun elaborated his view in detail. The Buddhadharma (Early Buddhism) is linked to the figure and practice of the *Śrāvakas*, the Early Mahāyāna Buddhadharma is associated with the domain of the Bodhisattva, and the Esoteric Mahāyāna Buddhadharma is linked to the deification of the *Tathāgāta*. The second and fourth periods represent transitional stages between Early Buddhadharma and Early Mahāyāna (second period), and between Late Mahāyāna and Esoteric tradition (fourth period). Yinshun also drew a parallel between his system of classification of teachings and the *panjiao* proposed by the Tiantai and Huayan Schools. Yinshun’s *panjiao* deserves a longer discussion that would go beyond the scope of this article.<sup>43</sup> What is essential to highlight here is what Yinshun meant by ‘correct’ Buddhism and *tongjiao*, and the dynamic encounter between these. Yinshun’s *tongjiao* referred to Early Mahāyāna, which for Yinshun corresponds to the Mahāyāna system of emptiness, and it bridges and embodies the various stages of development of the Bodhisattva vehicle, passing from the Pre-Mahāyāna to the Mahāyāna tradition.

Yinshun’s emphasis on *tongjiao* is then perfectly in line with his overall agenda. His emphasis on the importance of the *Āgama* teachings, his quest for a return to the original ‘pure’ Buddhism and, at the same time, his appeal to follow the Bodhisattva path: all of these apparent oppositions found reconciliation through

42. For *panjiao* in the Tiantai and Huayan schools see Gregory 1991; Petzold 1982.

43. For further details, see Travagnin 2001.

the adoption of the concept *tongjiao*. Put differently, *tongjiao* is the medium that allowed Yinshun to negotiate harmoniously between the double polarity of his system of thought. Consequently, the definition of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, which is the most important text of the Chinese (San-lun) Madhyamaka, as the restatement of the *Āgama* teachings is the perfect realization of a *tongjiao* system.

However, Yinshun's negotiation and his use of an expedient like *tongjiao* received negative reactions from mainstream Chinese Buddhists in Taiwan, as did his adoption of the term *tonglun*. The classical Chinese view seeks the 'superiority' of the Mahāyāna based on its distance from the Pre-Mahāyāna (Hīnayāna), while Yinshun, through his use of the two terms *tonglun* and *tongjiao*, based the superiority of Mahāyāna on its roots in the Pre-Mahāyāna (Hīnayāna) and the embodiment of the doctrine of the latter. Yinshun's position thus created a tension within twentieth-century Chinese Buddhism.

### CONCLUSION

Yinshun intervened in the Buddhist intellectual debate of his time with a new theory on the links between the Mahāyāna and Pre-Mahāyāna that had the effect of destabilizing the local Chinese Buddhist community.

Yinshun's study of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* — with textual adoption but doctrinal rejection of Jizang's previous work — surely contributed to developing and renewing of Madhyamaka scholarship in twentieth-century Taiwan. Since the 1980s this new page in the history of Chinese Madhyamaka also involved the translation of Western scholarship in the field. This facilitated the creation of a wider and challenging intellectual context for Chinese Buddhist scholars to review and develop their doctrinal theories.

Most importantly, the new role and meaning that Yinshun gave to the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* — and Madhyamaka in general — challenged the foundations of traditional Chinese Buddhism. Behind Yinshun's interpretation of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* there is an attempt to revise the macro-context and the identity of Chinese Mahāyāna in a time characterized by competing voices and debates on the creation of a *new* Buddhist China first, and of Taiwan later. The study of the *Āgamas* that Yinshun carried out in Taiwan started where Lü Cheng's 呂澂 (1896–1989) work in Mainland China had terminated. As a result, Yinshun's scholarship provoked a rise of *Āgama* studies in Taiwan and thus a new evaluation of Early Buddhist texts and practice. Yinshun's contribution to the field can then demonstrate continuity with the Buddhism that we find in the first half of twentieth-century Mainland China, as Taiwanese *renjian fojiao* ('Buddhism for this world') complied with Taixu's *rensheng fojiao* 人生佛教 ('Buddhism for Human Life'). Post-colonial Taiwanese Buddhism has been building its identity on the roots of Mainland Chinese traditions, implementing the debate that animated the Buddhist arena in the first half of twentieth-century China, leading it to new resolutions and starting further and new contentions.

## APPENDIX

Yinshun's analysis of the chapters of the *Zhong lun* in accordance with the Four Noble Truths.<sup>a</sup>

Thesis and homage	[ the first two verses ]					
Doctrinal explanation	<b>General View<sup>b</sup></b>	Accumulation and Non-origination		Cause and Conditions (01)		
		Annihilation and Non-going (into <i>Nirvāna</i> )		Going and Coming (02)		
	<b>Distinct View<sup>c</sup></b>	Samsāra - Suffering {1 <sup>st</sup> Noble Truth}	The Six Faculties		(03)	
			The Five <i>Skandhas</i>		(04)	
			The Six Elements		(05)	
			Effects of illusion and action	Illusion and thus origination	Passion and the Impassioned One	(06)
					The Three Marks	(07)
		Samsāra - Accumulation {2 <sup>nd</sup> Noble Truth}	Doing and thus receiving	Deed and Doer	(08)	
				A Substrate	(09)	
			Fire and Fuel	(10)		
		Samsāra	Without the three limits	Original Limits	(11)	
			Without the four creating	Suffering	(12)	
		Void nature of the impermanent activities	All the predispositions		Predispositions (13)	
			Contact and combination		Combination (14)	
			Existence and non-existence		Existence and Non-existence (15)	
			Bondage and Liberation		Bondage and Liberation (16)	
			The (various) karmas		Karma (17)	
		Samsāra - Extinction {3 <sup>rd</sup> Noble Truth}	View of the phenomenal appearances		Dharmas (18)	
			Towards the Attainment of Awakening		Time (19)	
					Cause and effect (20)	
	Becoming and Dissolution		(21)			
	Elimination of Afflictions and Awakening		Pudgala	<i>Tathāgata</i>	(22)	
				Perverved views	(23)	
			Dharma	The Four Noble Truths	(24)	
	<i>Nirvāna</i>	(25)				
	Samsāra - (Noble) Path to the Extinction {4 <sup>th</sup> Noble Truth}	Correct view of Dependent Arising		The Twelve Causes and Condition (26)		
		Distance from the Wrong View		Wrong views (27)		
Conclusion and homage	[ the last verse ]					

a. Yinshun 1952, 45–46.

b. Of the dependent arising of the eightfold negation.

c. Of the dependent arising of the eightfold negation, and according to the four Noble Truths.

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 T1565 *Shun zhong lun* 順中論  
 T1566 *Banruo deng lun shi* 般若燈論釋  
 T1567 *Dacheng zhongguan shi lun* 大乘中觀釋論  
 T1568 *Shi'er men lun* 十二門論  
 T1569 *Bai lun* 百論  
 T1824 *Zhongguan lun shu* 中觀論疏



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