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RESEARCH ARTICLE

What is Other than "Us": Non-Buddhist Sources in the Buddhist Commentary *Zhiguan Fuxing Chuanhong Jue*

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This study delves into Zhanran's *Zhiguan fuxing chuanhong jue* (hereafter *ZFCJ*), a commentary on the *Mohe zhiguan*. It focuses on this Buddhist commentary's incorporation of non-Buddhist sources and highlights two primary approaches. First, the commentary employs a strategy of "philological exposition" to blend Zhanran's knowledge with the object of the commentary, Zhiyi's *Mohe zhiguan*. Second, instead of simply contradicting non-Buddhist teachings, it exemplifies an approach of "interpretational integration" to affirm the superiority of Buddhism by juxtaposing non-Buddhist and Buddhist content. This paper argues that non-Buddhist sources significantly enrich the text of the *ZFCJ*, showcasing Zhanran's extensive interdisciplinary knowledge and highlighting the interplay between, and synthesis of, Buddhism and traditional Chinese culture. By providing a comprehensive case study, this research aims to contribute to a broader understanding of literary practices within Chinese Buddhist traditions.

湛然的《止觀輔行傳弘決》是對智顗《摩訶止觀》的註釋。本文探討湛然在註釋中運用非佛教典籍的兩種方式：文本詳釋與整合詮釋。前者指湛然將個人的知識充分融入對《摩訶止觀》的解說；後者則是指湛然通過將非佛教內容與佛教內容進行對比，進而確認佛教的優越性，而非簡單地反駁異說。非佛教典籍豐富了《輔行》的內容，展現湛然的廣博知識，並揭示了佛教與中國傳統文化之間的互動與融合。此研究有助於理解中國佛教典籍在文本外延方面的特徵。

Keywords: commentary, intertextuality, *Zhiguan fuxing chuanhong jue,* Zhanran, Tiantai Buddhism, thought

關鍵詞： 註釋，互文性，止觀輔行傳弘決，湛然，天台佛教，子

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Introduction[1]

This study demonstrates that references to external texts in a commentary not only fulfil an explanatory function but can also be strategically utilised to reinforce the author's own position. For premodern Buddhist commentary-writers, this engagement with external sources served as a way to connect with other intellectual traditions and interact with the broader intellectual community.

As illustrated by the use of character *su* 俗 in terms such as *sudian* 俗典 (non-Buddhist classics) and *sushu* 俗書 (non-Buddhist books), Chinese Buddhist writings actively differentiate non-Buddhist sources from Buddhist sources.[2] Yet although they are specified to be something other than Buddhist, that does not mean non-Buddhist sources are excluded from Chinese Buddhist writings. Examples of the various ways in which non-Buddhist texts were used by a Tang Buddhist scholar can be seen in the *Zhiguan fuxing chuanhong jue* 止觀輔行傳弘決 (A Determination on the *Mohe zhiguan* to Support Practice and for Propagation; collected in *Taishō* [hereafter *T*] 46, no. 1912).[3] It was composed by Zhanran 湛然 (711–782),[4] a prominent advocate of the Tiantai tradition 天台宗. In the *Zhiguan fuxing chuanhong jue* (hereafter *ZFCJ*), non-Buddhist sources are not only used as an aid to understanding the *Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀 (The Great Cessation and Contemplation; *T*46, no. 1911),[5] but also to support Zhanran's assertion of the superiority of the Tiantai school. The *Mohe zhiguan* is a

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[2] For the usage and connotations of these terms, see the below section "Demarcation of 'Buddhist' and 'Non-Buddhist' Texts".

[3] The numbering following "*T*" or "*X*" indicates the volume number of the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大蔵経 (Taishō Revised Tripiṭaka; Takakusu 1924–1932) and *Manji shinsan Dainihon zokuzōkyō* 卍新纂大日本續藏經 (Manji Supplementary Buddhist Canon; Kawamura 1975–1989), respectively. Following that is the scripture number, the page number, the column (a, b, or c), and the column number.

[4] We can reconstruct Zhanran's life experiences from the autobiographical details in his own writings and from other people's accounts. These are to be found in: (1) Zhanran's own works, such as the prefaces to his works; (2) Zhanran's words as recorded in others' works, such as his letters recorded in the *Tiantai jiuzu zhuan* 天台九祖傳 (Biographies of the Nine Tiantai Patriarchs); (3) records on his life by others, including Buddhist biographies such as the *Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳 (The Song Dynasty Biographies of Eminent Monks), Buddhist chronicles such as the *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀 (Complete Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs), and local gazetteers such as the *Jiading Chicheng zhi* 嘉定赤城志 (The Jiading Gazetteer of Chicheng). For more detailed information, see Chi Limei's monograph (2008, 7–57), which outlines the records of Zhanran's life in detail. Penkower's PhD thesis (1993, 10–112) also examines Zhanran's biography and is furnished with a detailed introduction to the relevant sources.

In terms of Zhanran's works, Hibi (1966, 82–130) and Chi (2008, 85–87) disagree on the total extant number. Here I adopt Chi's view that out of a total of thirty-two works that Zhanran is believed to have written, twenty are extant and twelve of them are based on works by Zhiyi. Chi (2008, 85–94) offers a brief introduction to these works. For a detailed examination of each work, see Hibi (1966).

[5] The *Mohe zhiguan* explores a Buddhist meditative practice combining *zhi* 止 (cessation, Skt. *śamatha*) with *guan* 觀 (contemplation, Skt. *vipaśyanā*). It is a record of Zhiyi's lectures but was compiled by his disciple Guanding 灌頂 (561–632). The extent to which Guanding's record accurately reflects Zhiyi's original ideas is a long-standing topic of scholarly debate. Although Zhanran also distinguishes between Guanding's and Zhiyi's contributions within the text, he generally treats the *Mohe zhiguan* as an authoritative text within the Tiantai tradition.

constituent of the "Three Major Works of Tiantai Buddhism" (*Tiantai san da bu* 天台三大部)[6] that laid the foundations of the Tiantai tradition, all three works being composed by its founder, Zhiyi 智顗 (538–597).[7] The title of the *ZFCJ*, which I render *A Determination on the "Mohe zhiguan" to Support Practice and for Propagation*, clearly articulates the aim of providing the correct interpretation in order to assist readers' understanding and practice of Tiantai Buddhism, thereby preserving and disseminating the Tiantai tradition.

The *ZFCJ* is a text with a strong sectarian orientation which contains extensive discussions of doctrine; non-Buddhist sources could be said to have little to offer in contribution to either of these facets. Indeed, within the tradition itself, there is evidence of concern about Zhanran's use of non-Buddhist sources. For example, in the preface of the *Guketsu geten shō* 弘決外典鈔 (On the Extrinsic Sources in *A Determination on the "Mohe zhiguan" to Support Practice and for Propagation*),[8] a 10th-century Japanese text that catalogues and comments on all the *waidian* 外典 (extrinsic sources) that are mentioned in the *ZFCJ*, records a complaint—attributed to a Tendai monk—that Zhanran quoted extensively from *waidian*, resulting in a commentary that was "crowded with redundancies" 太為繁粹 (Tomohira Shinnō, *Guketsu geten shō*, 1).[9] We do not know the precise grounds for this claim and this article has no intention of evaluating its validity, but it raises the question of whether and how this inclusive approach could be understood to reflect Zhanran's thoughts on how to interpret the *Mohe zhiguan* effectively. It is clear that the non-Buddhist quotations, paraphrased excerpts and other references in the *ZFCJ* are not heaped together aimlessly. To the contrary, this article will argue that they were chosen carefully to serve two purposes of "philological exposition" and "interpretational integration".

"Philological exposition" occurs in instances which do not engage in doctrinal discussion and serves to incorporate Zhanran's knowledge into his commentary on the *Mohe zhiguan*, almost as if showcasing his vast compendium of generalist knowledge. In doctrinal discussions, there are instances of other intellectual traditions being presented as being in direct opposition with Tiantai doctrine.

There are also cases where, instead of outright rejection, non-Buddhist and Buddhist content is juxtaposed to affirm the superiority of Buddhism, a method I refer to as "interpretational integration". Using this method, the *ZFCJ* demonstrates how non-Buddhist texts offer inferior understandings of the same issue compared to Buddhist interpretations. This presents the reader with a more nuanced

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[6] The other two commentaries are the *Fahua xuanyi* 法華玄義 (The Profound Meaning of the *Lotus Sūtra*) and the *Fahua wenju* 法華文句 (Words and Phrases in the *Lotus Sūtra*).

[7] There are several versions of the Tiantai tradition's lineage. It can be regarded as extending as far back as Nagarjuna or even to the Buddha, but Zhiyi is considered the school's founder since its doctrines are based on his teachings. When discussing the Tiantai lineage, we need to be aware that the lineage had not yet formed during Zhiyi's or Zhanran's time; it was established later during the Song dynasty. Zhanran is also recognised as a patriarch within its lineage. Penkower (1993, 360–556) conducts a detailed study of the lineage construction process.

[8] "Guketsu" is a Japanese abbreviation of the title *ZFCJ*.

[9] The Tiantai doctrines were later exported to Japan, where they are known as "Tendai". The school takes its name from Mt. Tiantai 天台山 (in present-day Zhejiang province), where its headquarters were located. Possibly, the mentioned Tendai monk was a fictional character, serving as a narrative device to enable the prince to underscore the importance of compiling the *Guketsu geten shō* while avoiding criticising the *ZFCJ* himself.

relationship that recognises a level of validity in the non-Buddhist content, yet ultimately incorporates it within the Buddhist framework. Compared to "philological exposition", this approach demanded a more careful and deliberate use of the materials at hand on the part of the commentator.

To investigate the differing treatment of Buddhist and non-Buddhist sources in the *ZFCJ*, we will start by exploring how the text employs the terms *sudian* and *sushu*, and then consider what this permits us to infer about Zhanran's understanding of what those terms meant and how they differed from other categories of literature. Next, I will illustrate the two approaches through which such sources are quoted, cited and otherwise paraphrased in the *ZFCJ*: the aforementioned "philological exposition" and "interpretational integration", and explore the complexities involved, which include Zhanran's aims to promote the Tiantai tradition, his concerns about his readership, and the influence of traditional Chinese exegesis practices and pre-existing Tiantai hermeneutics.

Demarcation of "Buddhist" and "Non-Buddhist" Texts

The *ZFCJ* contains a large number of quotations, paraphrased excerpts, and other kinds of reference. The sources are deployed in various forms: they are either quoted almost verbatim,[10] paraphrased, summarised, or referenced indirectly through their titles. Their sources are generally attributed to specific texts or authors, but we occasionally see broader, less precise categories such as *sudian*, *zishu* 字書 (dictionaries), or phrases like *shiren yun* 世人云 ("as said by people in society"), all of which obscure the origin of the source.

The *ZFCJ* contains about 1,800 textual references drawn from a wide range of sources, which I categorise as:

(1) Doctrinal Buddhist literature: Indian Buddhist canons (known as *tripiṭaka*, the "three baskets") and Chinese-language Buddhist exegetical works;[11]

(2) Non-doctrinal Buddhist literature, such as Chinese-language Buddhist biographies and historical records;

(3) Premodern Chinese texts, including dictionaries, historical records, gazetteers, and the representative classics of various indigenous intellectual traditions.

[10] The quotations in the *ZFCJ* often exhibit minor differences from the quoted texts. These differences could be unintentional, or they might be deliberate alterations by Zhanran. Another possibility is that the version of the *ZFCJ* or the referenced texts at the time of writing differed from the transmitted versions available today.

[11] Chinese Buddhist exegesis underwent a complex developmental process that combined Indian Buddhist and indigenous Chinese exegetical traditions, in various stylistic forms; see Li Silong (2021).

The first two, namely Buddhist doctrinal texts and non-doctrinal texts produced by the Buddhist community, can be referred to as "Buddhist sources".[12] The third category corresponds to what Zhanran called *sudian* or *sushu*. The character *su* 俗 is furnished with a range of connotations, but in the Buddhist context, it can be understood as "lay", as opposed to *seng* 僧, a translation of the Sanskrit word *saṅgha* meaning the community of Buddhist monks and nuns in general, or an individual monk or nun. In the *ZFCJ*, *su* is used primarily to denote that something is "non-Buddhist" in nature.[13] The use of these terms to differentiate between "Buddhist" and "non-Buddhist" is also commonly encountered in other Chinese Buddhist texts.[14] Besides *sudian* and *sushu*, the *ZFCJ* uses the character *su* in other combinations, such as *sujiao* 俗教 (non-Buddhist teachings), which is used to indicate indigenous intellectual traditions.

The term *sushu* appears only once in the *ZFCJ*, where Zhanran summarises Zhiyi's approach to integrating non-Buddhist sources (*T*46, no.1912, 302b20–21). This passage comes immediately after Zhanran's interpretation of why the story of the "Fight between a Snipe and a Clam" (*yu bang xiang zheng* 鷸蚌相爭) appears in the *Mohe zhiguan* (*T*46, no. 1912, 302b12–19). Zhanran notes that the source of this story is Kong Yan's 孔衍 (268–320) *Chunqiu houyu* 春秋後語 (Post-Spring and Autumn Discourses), a non-Buddhist Chinese text.[15]

The term *sudian* occurs ten times in the *ZFCJ*,[16] and twice in the *Zhiguan fuxing souyao ji* 止觀輔行搜要記 (Record Collecting the Essentials of *The "Zhiguan" to Support Practice*), which is an abridged version of the *ZFCJ*.[17] In some of these instances the context sheds light on how Zhanran himself understood the term. These include references to:

(1) Single-character dictionaries such as the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (Explaining Depictions of Reality and Analysing Graphs of Words) and *Erya* 爾雅 (Progress towards Correctness);

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[12] While the former category is treated in the *ZFCJ* as proof texts, the credibility of the latter category, containing opinions expressed by other Buddhists, is not always acknowledged and could be subject to criticism. Such criticism is evident in the paradigm of "Mahayana/Hinayana" or "Tiantai/non-Tiantai", a different manifestation of the distinction between "us" and "others".

[13] In this sense, *su* contrasts with *shi* 釋, which signifies "Buddhist" and is adopted as a surname by members of some monastic orders of East Asian Buddhism.

[14] For example, see Daoxuan's 道宣 (596–667) *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳 (The Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks; *T*50, no. 2060), 636b27.

[15] The story of "The Fight between a Snipe and a Clam" is more commonly associated with the *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 (Strategies of the Warring States) in contemporary sources, while Zhanran explicitly attributes it to the *Chunqiu houyu*. Although the *Chunqiu houyu* has mostly been lost, with only fragments surviving, we can find the story in the sections that have been preserved in the Wang Mo (recomp.), *Han-Wei yishu chao* 漢魏遺書鈔 (Excerpts from Lost Books of the Han and Wei) (Chongqing: Xi'nan shifan daxue chubanshe, 2011), 6:496–508. The version in the *Chunqiu houyu* is remarkably similar in structure and content to that in the *ZFCJ*, see ibid., 507.

[16] *T*46, no. 1912, 143c12, 153b7, 189c29–190a1, 190c22, 222a5, 238b6, 304a26, 304b29, 325b27, 374c14.

[17] *X*55, no. 919, 743a22, 746c16.

(2) Confucian and Daoist classics such as the *Lunyu* 論語 (Analects), the *Laozi* 老子, and the *Zhouyi zhu* 周易註 (Commentary on the *Book of Changes*) by Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249) and Han Kangbo 韓康伯 (n.d.);

(3) Texts like the *Guanzi* 管子 and *Bowu zhi* 博物誌 (Records of Diverse Matters), which do not fit neatly into a distinct philosophical tradition.

Thus, it can be seen that the terms *sudian* and *sushu* are used in the *ZFCJ* to describe both non-doctrinal and doctrinal non-Buddhist sources. *Sudian* is further categorised as Chinese non-Buddhist sources (*cifang sudian* 此方俗典) (*T*46, no. 1912, 238b6) and Indian non-Buddhist sources (*xifang sudian* 西方俗典) (Ibid, 222a5), although Indian non-Buddhist content is not actually utilised in the *ZFCJ*.[18]

A wide range of Chinese non-Buddhist sources (*sudian* and *sushu*) are used in the *ZFCJ*. They include dictionaries, historical records, gazetteers, compendia, and classics. In total, there are 397 borrowings from eighty non-Buddhist sources. However, the *ZFCJ* is a voluminous work of approximately 500,000 characters in ten fascicles; it invokes Buddhist sources 1391 times, making the non-Buddhist content a relatively small proportion of about 20%. However, its use of non-Buddhist sources was commented on unfavourably within the tradition. In the *Guketsu geten shō*, Prince Tomohira 具平親王 (964–1009) reports a conversation that he claimed was one of his reasons for composing the text.

> Last year, a monk said to me, "The Dharma literature of our [Tendai] school cites extensively from extrinsic sources. Among them, the commentary *Hongjue fuxing* [i.e., *ZFCJ*] is crowded with redundancies. Learners of latter generations need not include [this material] in their studies."
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> 去年有一僧相語曰："我宗法文多引外典，就中弘決輔行記太為繁粹。後來末學不必兼習。"
>
> (Tomohira Shinnō, *Guketsu geten shō*, 1)

As the passage shows, the commentary is perceived by this Japanese Tendai monk as an example of excessive use of *waidian*.[19] How should we interpret this claim? As non-Buddhist content only constitutes a relatively small proportion of the *ZFCJ*, the claim that the *ZFCJ*'s use of non-Buddhist material

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[18] It is also noteworthy that the term *waidian* is used in the *ZFCJ* to differentiate the "Buddhist" from the others. Although the term appears only once in the *ZFCJ* (*T*46, no. 1912, 339b12), without a clear connotation, its usage in Zhanran's other writings suggests that it refers to Indian non-Buddhist sources. The term *waidian* (Jpn. *geten*) has a different connotation in the *Guketsu geten shō*. The *Guketsu geten shō* refers to Chinese non-Buddhist sources, as well as non-canonical Chinese Buddhist sources, as *geten*. A catalogue of these texts is provided at the beginning of the *Guketsu geten shō*. Feng (2022, 137–142) summaries the texts quoted or otherwise borrowed from and their frequency of use. The diverse interpretations of the term *waidian* highlight its ambiguous nature and calls for further research into its implications in different textual contexts.

[19] As mentioned above, the term *waidian* only refers to Indian non-Buddhist sources in Zhanran's writings, but in the *Guketsu geten shō* the term refers to Chinese non-Buddhist classics as well as non-canonical Chinese Buddhist classics. It therefore seems reasonable to assume

is "crowded with redundancies" seems to be more a matter of quality than of quantity. Readers across different regional contexts and time periods would have had various needs and reading habits, making whether the information provided was strictly "necessary" a subjective matter. However, the monk's claim naturally raises the question of the manners in which Zhanran integrates non-Buddhist sources, which will be discussed in the following sections.

Philological Exposition: Quoting for General Explanation

Zhanran summarises the principle of how non-Buddhist sources are used in the *Mohe zhiguan*.

> Whenever [the *Mohe zhiguan*] uses non-Buddhist books, their meaning is always taken partially, rather than in their entirety.
>
> 凡用俗書皆取少分，非全其意。
>
> (*T*46, no.1912, 302b20–21).

This indicates that the *Mohe zhiguan* uses content from *sushu* with reservations, adopting their ideas in small measures rather than in their entirety, with this partialness conceptual, not physical. Thus, a complex methodology underlies the selection of concepts, and the distinction made between Buddhist and non-Buddhist materials.

Unlike Buddhist doctrinal texts, non-Buddhist sources are seldom employed as "proof texts", that is, scriptural excerpts utilised to substantiate doctrinal arguments. As we shall see in the next section, when it comes to doctrinal discussions, Zhanran takes a cautious and critical view of the use of non-Buddhist sources. Nevertheless, far from being excluded wholesale, non-Buddhist sources are sometimes used in a neutral way or accepted with conditions. In certain cases, they are even used uncritically and without reservation, that is, taken "in their entirety" rather than just "partially".

The *ZFCJ* often cites non-Buddhist sources as a means to provide general explanations of non-doctrinal points, for example to elucidate non-Buddhist elements, or supplement information on terminology, historical figures and events, or classical allusions. When engaged in this "philological exposition" of non-doctrinal points, Zhanran exhibits a tendency to provide summaries of his knowledge on the subject at hand, invoking all kinds of sources. This makes the *ZFCJ* a varied compendium of knowledge, reflecting Zhanran's extensive scholarly interests.

Several factors may have contributed to this tendency towards "philological exposition". Given that the *Mohe zhiguan* is embedded in its author Zhiyi's cultural context, and thus infused with indigenous cultural elements, the *ZFCJ* employs Chinese non-Buddhist sources for required explanations and

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that the Japanese monk was referring to the non-Buddhist sources used in the *ZFCJ*.

contextual clarifications. The non-Buddhist sources employed for general explanations come from various genres. Traditional Chinese dictionaries, for example, offer explanations for glosses in the *Mohe zhiguan*, following an approach of traditional Chinese exegesis, known as *xunggu* 訓詁.[20] Li Si-long (2013, 155–159) suggests that traditional Chinese exegetical methods might have been an important influence on Zhiyi's hermeneutical approach to Buddhist scriptures. However, it is unlikely that Zhanran's abundant use of character dictionaries for literal explanations was inherited from Zhiyi, as the *Mohe zhiguan* does not use dictionaries to define terms in as much detail or as frequently as the *ZFCJ*. This tendency seems more attributable to Zhanran's previous training as a Confucian scholar, which would have familiarised him with such methods as standard exegetical approaches.[21]

The *Mohe zhiguan* incorporates many allusions and terms without the elucidation needed by those less well versed in the subject. It quotes or paraphrases some non-Buddhist as well as Buddhist sources "silently" without explicit identification or attribution. As Swanson (1997, 7) points out in his study of Zhiyi's use of quotations, the result of this is that the *Mohe zhiguan* is "often abbreviated and cryptic", giving rise to the need for a commentary like the *ZFCJ* to provide explanations for non-Buddhist Chinese terms and allusions in the text. For example, when Zhiyi was discussing Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures, Zhanran's use of Chinese non-Buddhist sources often served as a way to resolve issues of untranslatability in cases where Chinese lacked an equivalent for a term in the source language. In his gloss on *gui* 鬼 (ghost) and its equivalent *preta* in Sanskrit (hungry ghost), Zhanran adds the explanation from *Erya* for clarification (*T*46, no.1912, 195c13–14). Similarly, the *ZFCJ* cites many Chinese historical or geographical records and compendia when it delves into the cultural-historical context of words and passages. For instance, it quotes the *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (Records of the Three Kingdoms) to illustrate the life of Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220) (*T*46, no. 1912, 294b2). It cites the *Shanhai jing* 山海經 (Classic of Mountains and Seas) to shed light on the question of the timing of the invention of the plough (172c1), and it cites the *Picang* 埤蒼 (Increased Cangjie), a traditional Chinese dictionary, to introduce the idea that the pincers of a crab could be described as "holding fire", which, though intriguing, is a deviation from the sense as used by the *Mohe zhiguan* (389c1). It even includes dietary advice from the *Bowu zhi* (274c2).

While non-Buddhist sources in the *ZFCJ* provide information necessary for supporting readers' understanding of the *Mohe zhiguan*, the above examples also tend to include any pertinent knowledge Zhanran happened to possess, making the commentary in certain respects a compendium of his personal knowledge. His rich employment of literature demonstrates great attention to textual sources. While Zhanran's manifold quotes and citations reflect the importance of books within Chinese Buddhism, the *ZFCJ* is not the exclusive product of textual scholarship. Traces of "oral instruction" are discernible in the process by which the *Mohe zhiguan* and the *ZFCJ* were formalised in writing. The *Mohe zhiguan* originated from lectures given by Zhiyi, which were compiled and edited into their

[20] As pointed out by Matsumori (2006, 179), a traditional style of exegesis is also found in Zhanran's other commentary, the *Fahua xuanyi shiqian* 法華玄義釋籤 (Explanation of the 'Profound Meaning of the *Lotus Sūtra*'; *T*33, no. 1717).

[21] The *Song gaoseng zhuan* (T50, no. 2061) records that he was born into a Confucian family (T50, no. 2061, 739b17) and maintained the identity of a Confucian scholar until he was formally ordained in his thirties (739b25–26).

current form by Guanding. The influence of orality on the *ZFCJ* can be gleaned from Zhanran's own accounts and biographies. Creating the *ZFCJ* was a lengthy process; Zhanran mentions in the *Zhiguan fuxing souyao ji* that the *ZFCJ* was based on the lecture notes he had been taking since he began studying Buddhism at an early age (*X*55, no. 919, 742a7–11). His experiences of giving lectures may also have affected his commentarial style. According to the *Song gaoseng zhuan* Zhanran used to lecture on the *Mohe zhiguan* at the Kaiyuan Monastery 開元寺 in today's Suzhou 蘇州 (*T*50, no. 2061, 739b27). In comparison to texts to be read, oral lectures may require more techniques in order to engage listeners. It is not inconceivable that while giving his lectures, Zhanran found it useful to hook his audience's attention by adding certain indigenous cultural references that would resonate with them. His intention to meet the needs of different readers is suggested by his creation of multiple commentaries on *Mohe zhiguan*, including the *Souyao ji,* an abridged version of the *ZFCJ*, the *Zhiguan dayi* 止觀大意 (General Meanings of the *Zhiguan*) which was written for the official Li Hua 李華, and the *Zhiguan yili* 止觀義例 (Interpretations and Precedents of the *Zhiguan*) which systematises Zhiyi's ideas in the *Mohe zhiguan*.

Who were the target audiences for the *ZFCJ*? Zhanran lists ten reasons for its composition. Of these, the third, fourth, and fifth are suggestive of its intended readership.

> ..... Third, this is written for transmission to future generations to prevent the rise of misinterpretations and the loss of the original teachings. Fourth, this is written for those who believe in this lineage and are eager to learn it but cannot find a teacher elsewhere, so they have a reference to rely on. Fifth, this is written for those who cultivate both doctrines and meditative practice and wish to rely on the Tiantai teachings, so they have an apparatus for their practice and comprehension.
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> 三為後代展轉隨生異解失本依故。四為信宗好習餘方無師可承稟故。五為義觀俱習好憑教者行解備故。
>
> (*T*46, no. 1912, 141b22–24)

The third reason reflects concern that the Tiantai doctrine might be lost and stresses the importance of preserving and transmitting it to future generations. The fourth and fifth reasons indicate that the commentary is for those who aspire to study the Tiantai teachings. The "doctrine and meditative practice" mentioned here reflect the mutual importance of teachings and meditation, a fundamental concept in the Tiantai tradition. Zhanran's intended readers and listeners here are students of Tiantai and belong not only to the present generation but also to future generations. One of the reasons he strove to incorporate various sources was likely in order to preserve as much detail as possible, ensuring these elements would support and enhance learners' understanding.

However, whether the information he chose to provide was strictly "necessary" remained a subjective matter, so it is understandable that Zhanran's "philological exposition" elicited diverse feedback. For readers seeking to absorb a wide array of knowledge from the *ZFCJ*, the detailed inclusion of various non-Buddhist elements is likely to have been appealing. On the other hand, readers already equipped

with a fundamental understanding of traditional Chinese philology and culture who hoped the *ZFCJ* would grant them deeper insights into the Buddhist concepts discussed in the *Mohe zhiguan* might well have found such detail superfluous, as illustrated above by the *Guketsu geten shō*.

The relationship between orality and text creation may be relevant to the debate surrounding the "Dark Age" of the Tiantai tradition. This term, coined by Shimaji Daito, is based on Liang Su's 梁肅 (ca. 751–793) claim that Zhanran's great contribution was to revitalise Tiantai following Zhiyi's death. Shimaji's (1929, 270) view was that whereas other Buddhist traditions like Huayan 華嚴 and Chan 禪 flourished, Tiantai languished until it was rejuvenated by Zhanran's rigorous treatment of Zhiyi's doctrines and critique of other schools. This view has been challenged by Yu (2006) and Chi (2008). Yu suggests that this argument exaggerates Zhanran's role in elevating Tiantai by overlooking the contributions of other Tiantai scholars. For example, Xuanlang, Zhanran's teacher, compiled and commented on Tiantai doctrine. Most of his works were either never completed or have not survived, but his ideas and writings may have been subsumed into Zhanran's writings (Yu 2006, 36–38). Yu's study (2006, 30–46) suggests that the potential contributions of the Tiantai scholars active in between the lifetimes of Zhiyi and Zhanran have been overlooked because their teachings were transmitted orally and hence did not leave textual records. However, this is not to say that their oral teaching left no traces whatsoever; these may in fact be preserved within the *ZFCJ.* The *ZFCJ*'s possible nature as a product of both oral and textual transmission should be reconsidered and may indeed offer further clues on Zhanran's extensive use of references.

Quoting to Compare, or to Adopt?

Besides being used to explain non-doctrinal points, in the *ZFCJ* non-Buddhist sources are also invoked in order to draw comparisons with Buddhist thought on doctrinal issues. These comparisons reflect the tension between Buddhism, an imported intellectual tradition, and indigenous traditions, especially Daoism and Confucianism.

Buddhism took a long time to establish itself in China. That process involved competing with, and negotiating with, these pre-existing traditions. The conflict played out physically, such as in the debate over whether monks should kneel before figures of political authority, and is also reflected in texts such as the *Laozi huahu jing* 老子化胡經 (Sutra on Laozi's Conversion of the Barbarians; *T*54, no. 2139),[22] which claims that Laozi had been the Buddha's teacher, thus asserting the superiority of Daoism over Buddhism. Given the conflict between Buddhism and indigenous traditions, the extent to which non-Buddhist texts are utilised in the *ZFCJ* could be cause for surprise. Moreover, since the

[22] The term *hu* was used in premodern China to collectively refer to foreigners but has also acted as a reference to various specific groups throughout history. Sometimes derogatory in connotation, it is often translated as "barbarians".

eponymous aim of the *ZFCJ* is to preserve and disseminate the Tiantai teachings, its integration of external sources is even more noteworthy.

The *ZFCJ* generally takes a critical perspective when using non-Buddhist sources in doctrinal discussions. At certain points the *ZFCJ* is openly critical of non-Buddhist traditions. One comment, for instance, says that reading the *Chunqiu* 春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals), one of the "Five Classics" (*wujing* 五經) of Confucianism, and its commentary, the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (The Commentary of Zuo) could only result in "a heart wandering through the battle array and lips enacting deceitful stratagems" 心遊戰陣、口演詐謀 (*T*46, no. 1912, 341b7–8).

More in-depth criticism can be found in the theoretical discussions. For example, the *ZFCJ* refers to the idea of the *wufu* 五福 (five blessings)[23] as a "mundane Confucian" 俗儒 perspective that recognises the different types of blessing yet does not identify their origins, or suggest the need for restrictions or discipline (as Buddhism does with its idea of *vinaya*) for those who enjoy these blessings and will otherwise accumulate bad karma as a result. "For the reason that their felicities are numerous, the sins they beckon are also numerous" 以福多故，招罪亦多 (*T*46, no.1912, 300a26–30). Here it is Zhanran who introduces the reference to Confucianism. The part of the *Mohe zhiguan* upon which he comments does not refer to Confucianism specifically, nor does it imply that the kind of person who is inclined towards goodness but ends up sinful is an adherent of Confucianist ideas. Instead, the *Mohe zhiguan* merely stresses the need to become *wulou* 無漏 (uncontaminated, Skt. *anāsrava*), because those who adhere to the *wujie* 五戒 (five moral precepts) and practise the *shishan* 十善 (ten good deeds) due to an intention to evade misfortunes in their next life are cultivating the blessings with a superficial heart and will consequently incur bad karma (*T*46, no. 1911, 56a1–3). It was Zhanran who chooses to deploy non-Buddhist content in such a detailed way to elaborate on the idea of the blessings.

Although the examples above demonstrate that Zhanran could be critical of Confucianism, overall, his critiques of Confucianist ideas are relatively infrequent, and most of these references actually serve to explain the anecdotes used by Zhiyi. Much like Zhiyi, on the other hand, Zhanran is more openly critical of Daoism. According to Ikeda's (1990) summary, Zhiyi finds fault with three aspects of Laozi's and Zhuangzi's thought. First, Laozi and Zhuangzi fail to grasp the truth of *yinguo* 因果 (cause and effect). Zhiyi criticises Zhuangzi's concept of *ziran* 自然 (spontaneity), which he regards as failing to effectively explain the cause and effect of things, unlike the Buddhist idea of dependent arising. Second, he notes that Laozi and Zhuangzi blindly venerate the concept of *jueyan* 絕言 (the ineffable), unlike Buddhism, which seeks to ground its ethics in rationality.[24] Third, whereas Buddhism seeks to benefit others, Laozi and Zhuangzi lack such wholesome aspirations (Ikeda 1990, 73).

Similarly, Zhanran criticises these three aspects of Laozi's and Zhuangzi's thought. He belittles Zhuangzi's understanding of *ziran* for the same reason that it "does not comprehend the Dharma of

[23] Namely, the five blessings are longevity, prosperity, health and tranquillity, the practice of virtuous deeds, and a peaceful death at a venerable age. The *ZFCJ* attributes the idea to Du Yanye, and the *Guketsu geten shō* elaborates that it is from Du's *Jin chunqiu* 晉春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals of the Jin Dynasty). Lost during the Song dynasty, the relevant content is absent from surviving fragments.

[24] For a detailed discussion on Tiantai's criticism on the Daoist interpretation of the ineffable, see Kantor (2024).

dependent arising" 不達緣起之法 (*T*46, no. 1912, 238b9–15). He criticises Zhuangzi and Laozi for recognising that the five sensory organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body) cause harm, yet failing to grasp the root of their emergence (270c8–13). He also criticises Laozi for enticing his disciple Yin Xi 尹喜 (n.d.) to harm his parents,[25] which, as he points out, is behaviour that would even be unacceptable to Confucians, who advocate filial piety (325b24–28). In contrast, Zhanran writes, Buddhism takes great compassion as the principle, and thus "it is impossible that Buddhism originated from Daoism" (325b28–29). Thus, Zhanran not only aligns himself with Zhiyi's perspective but also criticises Daoist views in a similar manner from the three perspectives of the conceptual, polemical, and ethical.

These examples show how Zhanran uses various approaches to criticise Confucianism and Daoism. While there are clearly marks of the influence of Zhiyi's criticism, not all the content that is criticised in the *ZFCJ* is mentioned by the original *Mohe zhiguan*; these are sometimes additions made by Zhanran. In this way, the commentary broadens the discussion in the *Mohe zhiguan*, while remaining tethered to it.

However, while the above examples show instances of criticism being levelled at non-Buddhist sources in the *ZFCJ*, that is not the only kind of treatment they receive. Non-Buddhist ideas are sometimes accepted, even without criticism, but given lower status in a hierarchy. By demonstrating that non-Buddhist texts' understanding of the same issue is inferior to Buddhist interpretations, the *ZFCJ* constructs a complex relationship that acknowledges the validity of the opposing viewpoint, but ultimately incorporates it within a Buddhist framework. Non-Buddhist ideas are partially included on the Buddhist side to show the comprehensiveness of its wisdom. This approach of juxtaposition is illustrated in the following two examples:

> As for [passages] such as "[One] should not cheat the Buddha", deceiving someone means to insult them. If the *Lunyu* states, "A man of noble character should not be hoodwinked", then what more so for the Buddha?
>
> "不欺佛" 等者，欺物曰陵。論語曰: "君子不可罔也。" 況復佛耶？
>
> (*T*46, no. 1912, 182c10–11).

> The *Li* states, "Alcohol is used for offering sacrifices". It does not call it a regular drink. If drinking when one is not offering sacrifices even violates mundane propriety, then what more so for the Buddhist regulations?
>
> 禮云："酒者，因祭祀而用之。" 非謂常飲。非祭而飲，尚違世禮。況佛制耶？
>
> (*T*46, no. 1912, 342a17–19).

[25] The source of this record is said to be the *Laozi huahu jing* but the content mentioned is not present in the extant text. Rather, it can be found in Zhen Luan's 甄鸞 (535–566?) *Xiaodao lun* 笑道論 (Laughing at the Dao), which is now included in Daoxuan's *Guang hongming ji* 廣弘明集 (Further Collection for Propagation and Clarification; *T*52, no. 2103, 149c27–150a13).

The first example cites the *Analects* to show that deceit is not proper Confucianist behaviour, while the second example compares the restrictions of alcohol in Buddhism to those in the *Book of Rites*. The two examples end with similar rhetorical remarks, "then what more so for the Buddha/Buddhist regulations?" That these remarks can be made without any further elucidation reflects that the good sense of these Buddhist ideas is self-evident, implying by extension that the teachings of Buddhism are always comprehensive and universal. Hence, when other intellectual traditions happen to have understand something correctly, that understanding is already naturally subsumed within Buddhism.

Occasionally, non-Buddhist content is even almost granted equal treatment to Buddhist content. For example, the *Mohe zhiguan* likens the practice of *lishi guan* 歷事觀 (phenomenal contemplation) [26] to the six tusks of the white elephant symbolising the "Bodhisattva's undefiled six supranormal powers" (trans. Swanson 2018, 315–316). When explaining this, the *ZFCJ* indicates that a similar approach of seeing the truth through analogies with physical processes can be found in non-Buddhist works, such as the statement by Zihua 子華 (n.d.) that just as farmers cultivate their crops, a nobleman cultivates himself by maintaining a righteous character and righting wrongs (*T*46, no. 1912, 190c22–25).[27] Citing this example, Zhanran comments on this common approach:

> How could this be the preserve of Buddhism; the non-Buddhist classics also regard it to be so... This just means that the great teachers inwardly concur, and that's all.
>
> 何但釋教，俗典亦然.....但謂大師內合而已。
>
> (*T*46, no. 1912, 190c22; 26–27).

However, we would be naïve to understand this as a promotion of non-Buddhist sources. Rather, Zhanran's point is that even non-Buddhists can comprehend such rudimentary principles. Therefore, although it is possible to draw parallels with Buddhist teachings, non-Buddhist teachings barely make the grade to be admitted to the hierarchy. For example:

> Even the non-Buddhist teachings say that "Loftiness takes lowliness as the foundation; nobility takes humility as the base".
>
> 俗教尚云: "高以下為基，貴以賤為本。"
>
> (*T*46, no. 1912, 162a17).[28]

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[26] *Lishi guan* (also *tuoshi guan* 托事觀) is one of the *sanzhong guanfa* 三種觀法 (three kinds of contemplation). The three kinds of contemplation, although they appear in the *Mohe zhiguan*, were classified and formalised by Zhanran, particularly in the *Zhiguan yili* (*T*46, no. 1913, 458a10–15). Tam translates *Lishi guan* as "phenomenal contemplation", meaning "contemplation of mind that resorts to phenomenal (ritual and cultic) distinctions" (1996, 74). In the example we cite here, *lishi guan* means "contemplation of bringing oneself into the verses of Buddhist scriptures" (Sakamoto 1984, 953).

[27] This content seems to have a close connection the *Li zhongjie chao* 勵忠節鈔 (Excerpts Encouraging Loyalty and Integrity, *Pelliot chinois* 2711, col. 16–17).

[28] This passage is found in the *Laozi* (*Laozi daode jing zhu* 老子道德經註 [Commentary on Laozi's *Daode jing*], 39.109).

In this example, there is an acknowledgment of the viewpoints of non-Buddhist teachings. However, the concessive expression "even" (*shang* 尚) reflects a subtle reconciliation of Buddhist and non-Buddhist teachings: the correct viewpoint that even non-Buddhist teachings were able to notice is naturally included in Buddhist teachings. This implicitly affirms Buddhist superiority: Buddhism not only encompasses but also transcends other intellectual traditions, rendering the Buddhist perspective not only correct but also the more profound and comprehensive.

Both this intrinsic alignment and the hierarchy allow us to observe the influence of *panjiao* 判教 (doctrinal classification) in Chinese Buddhist hermeneutics. Rhodes (2016, 140) indicates that the Chinese Buddhist hermeneutics developed in response to the ongoing importation of the numerous and frequently conflicting sutras from India, each asserting their authenticity as records of the Buddha's teachings, and that this stimulated Zhiyi's aspiration to formulate his comprehensive guidelines for organising the Buddha's words. The doctrinal classification scheme in Tiantai is known as the *wushi bajiao* 五時八教 (Five Periods and Eight Teachings). It classifies the sutras by the time periods in which the Buddha preached them, as well as by their content and the approach used to expound them. Rhodes (2016, 140) comments on the motivation behind Chinese Buddhist hermeneutics appears also to be applicable in both Zhiyi's and Zhanran's case:

> Buddhists were not motivated to develop hermeneutic strategies solely to assert the dominance of their own vision of Buddhism over that of others. Their overriding concern was to discover the contents of the Buddha's enlightenment by discerning the true meaning of the Buddha's words.

In other words, the approach taken by Buddhist scholars, including Zhiyi and Zhanran, to resolve contradictions was not to eliminate opponents or to ignore them, but to manage to uncover an overarching "truth" within them that was equally shared by "us" and "them", thereby harmonising these contradictions within a cohesive framework.

In the context of this paper, "we" stands for the Buddhist tradition, while "they" refers to "non-Buddhists". When the Tiantai were trying to resolve contradictions within the Buddhist community, an internal distinction is further drawn between "Tiantai" and "other Buddhist schools". Although quotations, paraphrased excerpts and other uses of Buddhist and non-Buddhist material differed in nature, with one set of sources being intrinsic and the other extrinsic, it is apparent that a similar logic underlies the Tiantai tradition's approaches to both kinds of source. The distinction lies in the fact that while we do see Buddhist doctrines being arranged into hierarchies, they are not criticised outright, whereas Confucianist and Daoist doctrines are not only relegated the lowest tier of the doctrinal hierarchy but must also face direct criticism.

Conclusion

Focusing on Zhanran's commentary and its nuanced engagement with non-Buddhist texts, this study has revealed his sophisticated commentarial approaches of philological exposition and interpretational integration. Zhanran's use of non-Buddhist texts serves as a strategic tool not only for elucidating the obscure or undeveloped aspects of the *Mohe zhiguan* but also for addressing contradictions between Buddhist and non-Buddhist theory. This underscores the role of commentaries not just as interpretive guides but also as platforms for broader intellectual discourse.

Furthermore, Zhanran's support for Buddhism is not solely executed by opposing non-Buddhist theories but also by assimilating them through skilful exegesis. By incorporating non-Buddhist texts, Zhanran not only broadens the scope of his commentary but also demonstrates the potential of intellectual inclusivity and adaptability of Tiantai hermeneutics. His methodology of interpretation, which partly arises out of incongruity between the Buddhist tradition and the non-Buddhist traditions, in turn, reinforces the superiority of Buddhism, which further solidifies the opposition or distinction between Buddhism and other indigenous traditions.

Non-Buddhist quotations, paraphrased excerpts, and other references are a significant component of the *ZFCJ*. They enrich the text and demonstrate Zhanran's extensive and broad-ranging knowledge. His use of non-Buddhist texts also demonstrates the interaction and synthesis between Buddhism and premodern Chinese culture. There are many possibilities for further exploration into Zhanran's use of sources. Future research could delve deeper into Buddhist references in the *ZFCJ*, compare the *ZFCJ* with Zhanran's other commentaries on the *Mohe zhiguan* to identify similarities and differences in how they approach sources, or secure insight into Zhanran's intended audience by investigating the Buddhist pedagogical practices of his time.

Abbreviations

ZFCJ: Zhiguan fuxing chuanhong jue 止觀輔行傳弘決.

T: Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡辺海旭, eds., 1924–1932. Taishō shinshū daizōkyō 大正新脩大蔵経 (Taishō Revised Tripiṭaka). Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai 大正一切経刊行會.

X: Kawamura Kōshō 河村孝照, ed., 1975–1989. Manji shinsan Dainihon zokuzōkyō 卍新纂大日本続蔵経 (Manji Supplementary Buddhist Canon), Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai 國書刊行會.

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Zhiguan fuxing souyao ji 止觀輔行搜要記 (Record Collecting the Essentials of *The "Zhiguan" to Support Practice*). ca. 765–770. Zhanran 湛然. *X*55, no. 919.

Zhiguan yili 止觀義例 (Interpretations and Precedents of *Zhiguan*). 758. Zhanran 湛然. *T*46, no. 1913.

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