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**Selected Translations and Analysis of
'Further Biographies of Nuns'**

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Abbreviations

CEDBT	A Chinese- English Dictionary of Buddhist Terms
FGDCD	Foguang Da Cidian
HYDCD	Hanyu Da Cidian
NCED	New Age Chinese-English Dictionary
ODWR	The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions
PDCC	A Pronouncing Dictionary of Chinese Characters in Archaic and Ancient Chinese, Mandarin and Cantonese
T	Taishō
ZFRDC	Zhongguo Fojiao Renming Da Cidian
XZJ	Xu Zangjing/Zokuzōkyō

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1. Introduction

This thesis is a study of ‘Further Biographies of Nuns’ compiled by Master Zhenhua¹ in the 1940s. There exists only one more biography of Chinese Buddhist nuns in addition to ‘Further Biographies of Nuns,’ the ‘Biography of Buddhist Nuns’ compiled by Master Baochang,² making Zhenhua’s compilation all but unique. Furthermore, there has been very little research on this topic by scholars, both Chinese and Western. This work has never been translated into a Western language before, which make this a good opportunity to make a contribution.

Zhenhua’s compilation of ‘Further Biographies of Nuns’ presents two hundred Buddhist nuns from the Liang Dynasty to the Republic of China, covering a period of over a thousand years. The biographies I have translated are a sample of twelve biographies, initially chosen to represent different dynasties. Therefore, I have selected three biographies from the Tang Dynasty, two from the Song Dynasty, two from the Yuan Dynasty, one from the Ming Dynasty, and four from the Qing Dynasty. Secondly, the biographies chosen do not have many poetic verses, which would make the biographies more difficult to render in English. The biographies were also chosen to represent nuns from different Buddhist schools: the Pure Land, Chan and Huayan Schools.³ Finally, the texts were chosen as to be neither too long nor too short, giving a feel for the average length of a nun’s biography.

Translating the verses, which occur in some of the biographies, has been a particularly demanding task both because poetic phrases are difficult to render in English and because it is difficult to understand the meaning of the verses. Nonetheless, it has been an enjoyable task because the subject has been a great interest of mine for many years now, and being able to read the biographies in the original language has made it even more inspiring. In addition, the scarcity of literature on Buddhist nuns has been a motivating force.

In order to understand these biographies, it is important to have a grasp of the biographical tradition in Buddhism, both in Theravāda and Mahāyāna in general and of the development of biographical traditions in Chinese Buddhism in particular, a presentation of these traditions are provided in chapter two. As the majority of the nuns belonged to either

¹ *Xu Biquini Zhuan* 續比丘尼傳 ‘Further Biographies of Nuns’ compiled by Master Zhenhua 震華大師.

² *Biquini Zhuan* 比丘尼傳 ‘Biography of Buddhist Nuns’ T. 50, no. 2063, compiled by Master Baochang 寶唱大師.

³ Pure Land School *Jingtu zong* 淨土宗, Chan School *Chan zong* 禪宗, and Huayan School *Huayan zong* 華嚴宗.

the Pure Land or Chan schools, I have provided short introductions to these two traditions of Chinese Buddhism. Only one nun, Wuliang,⁴ belonged to another Buddhist school, the Huayan School. These short introductions and a presentation of Master Zhenhua, the compiler, will be found in chapter four and three respectively. The heart of this thesis is chapter five with the translations from ‘Further Biographies of Nuns,’ and in order to give the historical and cultural context for understanding the biographies, I have introduced the translations by giving information about the respective dynasty in which they lived. Subsequently, I have provided an analysis of the translated biographies.

1.1 Sacred Biography

This thesis is concerned with sacred—religious—biography.⁵ A sacred biography is an account, written or oral, of the lives of persons considered to be holy, and the most sacred teachings in the respective religion become manifest in the form of the subject of the sacred biography often highly mythologized. Sacred biographies are individual life stories which express the focal religious principles in the respective religion, and in this regard they mediate between the ideal and the real, the conceptual and the pragmatic. They are also “models for” religious practice in that they inspire others to imitate the idealized expressions of religiosity conveyed in the life of an exemplary religious practitioner.⁶ Therefore, sacred biographies also have a didactic purpose, i.e. teaching others how to lead exemplary religious lives. In addition to religious motivations for writing sacred biographies, there might also be mundane reasons, such as elevating a particular religious tradition in the competition for patronage and funding.

Several of the great religious traditions share the emphasis on sacred biography, including Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism. However, these traditions do not share the same degree of interpretive plasticity, shifting referents, and contexts that lend such

⁴ Wuliang 無量.

⁵ The term hagiography has a Christian connotation to it, and since this is a thesis on Buddhist biographies I will instead use the terms sacred or religious biographies.

⁶ Schober 1997: 2. Schober uses Clifford Geertz terms ‘models of’ and ‘models for’ in his article “Religion as a Cultural System” (in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books, 1973, p.93). Geertz writes: “Unlike...nonsymbolic information sources, which are only models *for*, not models *of*, culture patterns have an intrinsic double aspect: they give meaning, that is, objective conceptual form, to social and psychological reality both by shaping themselves to it and by shaping it to themselves.”

vitality to the Buddhist biographical tradition.⁷ The Buddhist biography is not merely a narrative matter, but includes painting, sculpture, ritual, and even architecture. In this thesis I will concern myself only with the written biographies of twelve Buddhist nuns, however.

1.2 Gender Roles in Premodern China

The gender roles in ancient Chinese society were influenced by the Confucian way of thinking, where men were supposed to be working and operating outside the household while women lived and worked within the household, taking care of children and the domestic economy. There is an expression in Chinese, *sancong*,⁸ which literally means ‘the three followings,’ e.g. women were to ‘follow’ men during three stages of their lives, something that definitely made women secondary to men. A woman was expected to be subservient to her father during her childhood, to her husband while a wife, and to her eldest son in old age. This implies that women are—and should be—different from men in status. Furthermore, their daily activities were confined to reproductive activities in the household, like childbearing and childrearing, as well as taking care of the needs of the general household.

In the fifth century, Sri Lankan nuns came to China by sea. They transmitted the full ordination lineage to Chinese nuns that, while it did not survive in the Theravāda tradition, has been preserved to this day in China and from there has also spread to Korea and Taiwan. As shown in the translations below, the Buddhist monastic rules, the Vinaya—particularly the eight *gurudharma*—definitely placed Buddhist nuns in a secondary position compared to monks. The monastic rules imply, for example, that a 100-year-old nun must pay respect to a novice boy. Even though some Mahāyāna scriptures like the ‘Diamond Sūtra’ and *Vimaladattāsūtra* (which became very popular in China) state that there is no difference between female and male as all phenomena are empty, the Vinaya rules, which need to be strictly obeyed, relegated nuns to a secondary position.

⁷ Schober 1997: 13.

⁸ *Sancong* 三從 literally ‘the three follows,’ or ‘three obediences.’

1.3 Research Questions

It is generally assumed that nuns in all Buddhist traditions have a lower position than monks. In the Theravāda tradition the lineage of nuns was broken by the thirteenth century and has never been fully restored, unlike the ordination lineage in the Mahāyāna tradition where it has been preserved since the first Chinese nuns were ordained in the fifth century. There are attempts at reviving the full ordination for women in Theravāda Buddhism, particularly in Sri Lanka,⁹ but there is still strong resistance in the monks' community against recognizing ordination taken from a Mahāyāna tradition. In Tibet, the full ordination lineage for women, if it ever existed, has also been broken. Up until the present, nuns in the Tibetan Buddhist traditions have had unequal opportunities as compared to monks when it comes to religious education and patronage.

In China, however, the full ordination lineage of Buddhist nuns has been preserved since it was transmitted in the fifth century by Sri Lankan nuns. Several scholars have suggested that nuns in China, particularly in South China, fared better than their Buddhist "sisters" in other countries.¹⁰ Based on the twelve translated biographies, this study attempts to examine the position of Buddhist nuns in premodern China and see if there are any indications that the nuns were influential and considered as great masters on the same level as the monks who mastered the *dharma* on a high level. In order to investigate the religious opportunities for Chinese nuns, I will therefore ask questions like: What were their motives for becoming nuns? What social background did they have? What was their religious practice? Did the nuns teach the *dharma*? If so, to whom? Did they only teach other nuns, and the laity, or did the nuns also teach monks despite that being forbidden by the monastic rules? I will look into these questions in the final part of the thesis.

1.4 Existing Studies

There are, in Western languages at least, relatively few studies of the biographies of Buddhist nuns in China. As far as I know, the only major work on this subject is Kathryn Ann (Cissell) Tsai's *Lives of the Nuns: Biographies of Chinese Buddhist Nuns from the*

⁹ The lineage of nuns was revived in Sri Lanka in 1998. <http://www.congress-on-buddhist-women.org/index.php?id=94&L=0> (Accessed 12 April 2008.)

¹⁰ See e.g. Paul (1979) and Barnes (1987).

Fourth to Sixth Centuries (1972), which is a translation of Baochang's *Biographies of Buddhist Nuns*. Li Jung-hsi (1981) translated the same text, but this translation is less well known than the one done by Tsai, which translated and analyzed the biographies presented by Baochang, whereas Li only gives a translation of Baochang's text. In the Chinese tradition there are some studies of the biographical tradition of Buddhist monks, e.g. John Kieschnick's *The Eminent Monk: Buddhist Ideals in Medieval Chinese Hagiography* (1997), which examines the biographies of Chinese Buddhist monks based on three collections of biographies of monks from the sixth to tenth centuries. Kieschnick's book does not say much about nuns, but was useful for me as comparative material.

In addition to the studies of sacred biographies of Buddhist nuns, some studies have been published on the general subject of "Chinese Buddhist nuns." Ding-hwa E. Hsieh (1999 and 2000) has written two insightful articles on women in Song Buddhism, and Miriam Levering (1982, 1992, and 1999) has written an article on the Song nun Miaodao, "Miao-tao and Her Teacher Ta-hui," whose biography I have translated in my thesis. Beata Grant has translated some poems of Chinese Buddhist nuns in *Daughters of Emptiness: Poems of Chinese Buddhist Nuns* (2003) and written some articles on Qing Dynasty nuns, e.g. "Female Holder of the Lineage: Linji Chan Master Zhiyuan Xinggang," where she also writes about Master Xinggang's dharma heir Chaochen, who I have also translated the biography of.

When it comes to biographies of women in China in general, Sherry J. Mou has written *Gentlemen's Prescriptions for Women's Lives: A Thousand Years of Biographies of Chinese Women* (2004), and Patricia Buckley Ebrey has—with her study on women in the Song Dynasty entitled *The Inner Quarters: Marriage and the Lives of Women in the Sung Period* (1993)—contributed to a greater understanding of womanhood, the status of women, and the challenges they faced in a Confucian society. Suzanne E. Cahill has translated and written about Daoist female figures in *Divine Traces of the Daoist Sisterhood: Records of the Assembled Transcendents of the Fortified Walled City* (2006). Cahill presents an insightful book on the religious quest of Daoist female figures in premodern China.

On Buddhist biography in Asia in general, there exist some collections of articles, including *Monks and Magicians: Religious Biographies in Asia* edited by Phylis Granhoff and Koichi Shinohara (1988) and *Sacred Biography in the Buddhist Tradition of South and Southeast Asia*, edited by Juliane Schober (1997). The former presents studies of Buddhist figures in India, Tibet and China, while the latter deals, as the title says, with nuns' biographies, mainly in the Theravāda tradition, but with the addition of one article about

Buddhist nuns in Nepal. In recent years a number of studies of nuns' biographies from the Tibetan cultural world have been carried out, including works by Hanna Havnevik (1999), Kurtis Schaeffer (2004), Sarah Jacoby (2007) and Hildegard Diemberger (2008).

Despite these contributions, however, one has to say that very little research has actually been done on the subject of Buddhist nuns. As shown above, Buddhist scholars and western scholarship in general have mainly focused on the life and achievements of Buddhist monks in their study of Buddhism and Buddhist clergy. As a consequence of this, the study of the Buddhist nuns and their accomplishment has been sorely neglected. Whether it is because the sources are scarce or the subject uninteresting for the scholar, I do not know. Nonetheless, being an area that needs to be further examined, this thesis will serve as a small, but nevertheless important, contribution. By translating and analyzing a few chosen biographies from 'Further Biographies of Nuns,' this thesis attempts to critically examine some general assumptions about Chinese Buddhist nuns in particular and about Buddhist nuns in general, as they have been portrayed in the Buddhist biographical tradition.

1.5 Transcription

The transcription system used for Chinese here is *pinyin*,¹¹ but without tone marks. I have used traditional characters throughout the thesis, in accordance with the original source.

For the Buddhist terms, in addition to giving the Chinese term, I have written the Sanskrit term where there exists an equivalent.

For the Buddhist scriptures, I have given the title in the body of the thesis, in the language best known in the West. Where the title is not well known here, I have used the translated Chinese title in the main text: e.g. the *Lotus sūtra* is written *Lotus sūtra* in the main text, while the Chinese and Sanskrit titles are given in the footnotes. *Avatamsakasūtra* is given in Sanskrit in the main text, as it is the title best known in the West.

¹¹ *Pinyin* 拼音.

2. The Genre of Biography

2.1 The Biographical Tradition in Early Theravāda Buddhism

To better understand the genre of religious biographies in China, some background information and scholarly views on the tradition of biography writing in early Theravāda Buddhism will be helpful.

Buddha Gautama's past lives are recounted in the *jātaka*, one of the twelve traditional genre divisions of Buddhist canon. Among the most influential developments in the biographical genre in Theravāda Buddhism is the fifth-century Pāli commentary *Jātakatthathā*, which recounts 547 of the Buddha's previous lives. *Jātakatthathā* illustrates exemplary modes of practising the path to attaining the ultimate goal of the Buddha (enlightenment), and to some extent chronicles the respective paths of his family and disciples. The *jātakas* do not appear to be arranged in any chronological order, but rather according to properties of the text, such as the length of the *jātakas*.¹²

According to Erich Frauwallner, a no longer extant biography of the Buddha was written approximately one hundred years after his death. Written as an introduction to the *Skandhaka*, this biography was a text of monastic discipline that was reportedly confirmed at the Second Buddhist Council held at Vaiśālī in 383 BC. Frauwallner argues that this text, which included an account of the Buddha's death and the first years of the fledgling monastic community, is the ur-text that all the subsequent Buddha biographies have derived from.¹³ Other scholars, such as Alfred Foucher, Étienne Lamotte and André Bareau, have argued that there was a gradual development of biographical cycles, that the first stages of the Buddha biography are fragments from the *sūtra* and *vinaya* texts, such as *jātaka*.¹⁴

The classical Pāli biographical stories follow a consistent format, as seen in the *jātaka*. First, they begin with a "story of the present" that provides the framework for the Buddha's recollection of one of his former lives, in this way "framing" the second part, "the story of the past." Finally, the rebirth identity of major characters concludes the *jātaka* by linking the narrative past and present. The narrative structure of birth stories in their classical Pāli versions is characterized by the shift in focus, intent and context.¹⁵

¹² Schober 1997: 3f.

¹³ Eliade 1993: 323.

¹⁴ Eliade 1993: 324.

¹⁵ Schober 1997: 4.

In addition to texts recounting the lives of the Buddha Gautama, the Therāvada tradition also has a rich collection of material including the stories of the previous Buddhas, (*Mahāpadānasūtra* and *Buddhavaṃsa*, for example) the Bodhisattva who will attain Buddhahood in the future, and the *arahats* in *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā* (the first biography of nuns).¹⁶ *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā* are collections of verses attributed to male and female *arahats* of the Buddha, although there is no evidence that these verses were in fact composed by the *therīs* to whom they are attributed.¹⁷

The biographical frames of the monks and nuns differ significantly. The nuns' biographies are all framed by accounts of birth and refer to acts of merit and devotion performed during the times of previous Buddhas. Most of the nuns reach the final stages of enlightenment by keeping high morals, and after an encounter with the Buddha or one of the great disciples, the nun obtains enlightenment through the insight gained from this encounter. The monks' verses are primarily concerned with the final path stages, and they are more likely to attain enlightenment through solitary forest meditation, the exercise of magical powers and the mastery of doctrine. More often than the nuns, the monks are portrayed as struggling against the world and their own passions. *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā* depict the monks' and nuns' progress toward enlightenment in significantly different ways. The monk's path is filled with elements found in the lives of the Buddha and is one of self-cultivation (though generally aided by the teaching of the Buddha), whereas the nun's path is one of lay piety and devotion leading to the sudden development of insight.¹⁸

The inhabitants of the heavens also have their own stories in *Vimanavatthu*, and even the hungry ghosts receive attention in *Petavatthu*. The *vinaya* and commentaries such as *Dhammapadattakatha* also include many sacred biographies. Taken together, the corpus of sacred biographies in Theravāda Buddhism is incredibly rich and diverse.¹⁹ The sacred biographies also play a part in even the most philosophical and abstract Theravāda scriptures, such as *Paṭisambhidāmagga* and *Visuddhimagga*, which assume that the reader is familiar with the biographical corpus. The *Visuddhimagga* even includes direct citations from the *jātaka* and the *Theragāthā*.²⁰ According to Mark R. Woodward, the doctrine and sacred biography of Theravāda Buddhism must be understood as interdependent components in a

¹⁶ Woodward 1997: 49.

¹⁷ Kloppenborg 1995: 153.

¹⁸ Woodward 1997: 56f.

¹⁹ Woodward 1997: 40.

²⁰ Woodward 1997: 46f.

larger religious system.²¹

Western Buddhist scholars have often viewed the Theravāda biographical corpus as tangentially related to the core doctrines of Buddhism, such as enlightenment and impermanence. T.W. Rhys Davids described the *jātaka* as “fairy tales, parables, fables, riddles and comic and moral stories.”²² According to Edward Conze, the Buddhist biographies have little to do with the fundamental teachings of Buddhism, instead intended as a gospel for the busy householder, and primarily concerned with the general moral virtues and the inexorable law of *karma*.²³

2.2 The Biographical Tradition in China

The Chinese historical writing tradition is overwhelming, as can be seen with the official standard history,²⁴ which deals with Chinese dynastic history up until 1644, and contains altogether twenty-five dynastic histories. The Standard History alone contains several thousand entries for biographies, including those of loyal officials, villainous officials, imperial concubines, writers, hermits, virtuous wives and filial sons. An example of the great number of biographies is the ‘History of the Ming Dynasty’ where 197 out of 332 chapters are biographies, which comprise about sixty percent of the whole work.²⁵ Whereas the focus in this thesis is on religious biographies in China with a special focus on biographies of Buddhist nuns and monks, an introduction to the genre of biography in China is a necessary background.

The biographies in the Standard History are found under the section *zhuan* or *liezhuan*,²⁶ as is also the case with other works modelled after the Standard History. The biographical writings began with Sima Qian’s ‘Historical Records.’²⁷ This work was begun by his father Sima Tan,²⁸ but when he passed away in 110 B.C., Sima Qian continued his work. The ‘Historical Record’ was written down in the time from 109 B.C. to 91 B.C. and contains 70 volumes of *liezhuan*. According to Denis C. Twitchett, it seems plausible to say

²¹ Woodward 1997: 49.

²² Woodward 1997: 41.

²³ Conze 1963: 87.

²⁴ *Zhengshi* 正史, Wilkinson 2000: 271.

²⁵ Nivison 1962: 457.

²⁶ *Zhuan* 傳 or *liezhuan* 列傳, both are translated as ‘biography’ or ‘tradition.’

²⁷ Sima Qian 司馬遷 (c. 163-85 B.C.) ‘Historical Records’ *Shiji* 史記.

²⁸ Sima Tan 司馬談 (? - died c. 110 B.C.).

that this genre did not originate in China with Sima Qian. The first independent biographical material still in existence are some surviving fragments of epitaphs inscribed on stone and *biezhuan*²⁹ from the first century A.D., and the writing form was by then already rigid and formalized. Due to the historical circumstances the source of the early epitaphs and the *biezhuan* cannot have been the ‘Historical Records,’ but must be found somewhere else. Possible sources include the writings connected with the clan cults, but since all of these writings have vanished and do not even appear in the bibliography of the ‘History of Former Han,’³⁰ one can not say for sure whether or not they are the source for the *liezhuan*. However, Twitchett considers it safe to say that some such form of biography must have been Sima Qian’s source for the *liezhuan* form and of the early epitaphs and separate biographies. Furthermore, he states that the name of this form—*zhuan*—may also come from the same source.³¹

Much of the confusion in attempting to define the term *zhuan* derives from the polysemy of the graph itself, as can be seen in the following passage from the *Shitong* by Liu Zhiji:³² “*Zhuan* is to transfer (*zhuan*),³³ to transfer the ideas of the classics one has received to posterity. Some say that *zhuan* means to perpetuate (*chuan*),³⁴ that which is perpetuated by being made known to future generations.”³⁵ According to historians living in the medieval ages, the word *zhuan* was linked to the usage in which it forms part of the names of the oldest commentaries on the ‘Spring and Autumn Annals.’³⁶ In this connection the term originally meant ‘something handed down,’ and thus ‘traditions.’ The use of this term on the commentaries for the ‘Spring and Autumn Annals’ may originate from the fact that these commentaries are in reality the ‘traditions’ attached to the canonical text of the various Confucian Schools. These commentaries were held to be much less reliable than the Classic, but they were placed higher than the apocryphal texts, and were acknowledged as a sort of secondary classic since they were attached to the canonical text itself.³⁷

Sima Qian’s use of the category *liezhuan* in ‘Historical Records’ was a shift from earlier history writings in China, and it was from then on the term *zhuan* was associated with

²⁹ *Biezhuan* 別傳 ‘supplementary biography.’

³⁰ ‘History of Former Han’ *Hanshu* 漢書, covering the period 206 B.C. - A.D. 25.

³¹ Twitchett 1961: 95f.

³² *Shitong* 史通, Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661-721).

³³ *Zhuan* 轉.

³⁴ *Chuan* 傳.

³⁵ Nienhauser, Jr. 1977: 444.

³⁶ ‘Spring and Autumn Annals’ *Chunqiu* 春秋.

³⁷ Twitchett 1961: 96.

biography.³⁸ The new category dealt with notable Chinese, as well as various foreign peoples; this is a traditional arrangement that persisted in Chinese official biographies until the current century. The connection between these apparently different types of material was that the entries were designed to develop and follow through a given topic from beginning to end, whether the subject was the career of an individual or the relationships of foreign people with the Chinese court.³⁹ The ‘Biographies of Exemplary Women,’⁴⁰ which is the earliest extant biographical work exclusively devoted to Chinese women, is also written in the *liezhuan* form. It was compiled at the end of the Former Han Dynasty by Liu Xiang,⁴¹ and was used as a textbook for educating women in Confucian morality.⁴² ‘Biographies of Exemplary Women’ will be further addressed in a later chapter.

Throughout history, the Chinese biographies have generally been quite short, with most of the biographies presented in the ‘History of the Ming Dynasty’ being about 800 to 1,000 characters in length. One of the longest is about 9,000 characters, and if translated into a western language would be the size of a small book. In comparison, many of the biographies from local histories and earlier dynastic histories are only one or two hundred characters in length.⁴³ In ‘Further Biographies of Nuns’ the average biographies are around 500 characters, with the shortest being about 100 characters and the longest about 1,500 characters.

As well as to being considered the beginning of the conventional form of dynastic history writing, many scholars see Sima Qian’s ‘Historical Records’ as the origin of fiction writing in China. It is not only the term *zhuan* and the forming of a topic free from the restrictions of a chronological framework that Sima Qian’s *liezhuan* had in common with the older ‘traditions’ and anecdotal histories. They were also more loosely organized, had a wider range of subject matter, had less emphasize on Court affairs, and had a ready acceptance of material whose strict history was doubtful. Hence, the ‘Historical Records’ was regarded as semi-fictional and had a folkloristic aspect, according to Twitchett.⁴⁴ From the Han Dynasty onwards the semi-fictional and folklore elements found no place in the official history, as writers had access to adequate documentary sources. As a result, this

³⁸ Nienhauser, Jr. 1977: 444.

³⁹ Twitchett 1961: 97.

⁴⁰ ‘Biographies of Exemplary Women’ *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳.

⁴¹ Former Han Dynasty *Hou Han* 後漢 (206 BC- AD 25), Liu Xiang 劉向 (77- 6 BC).

⁴² Kinney, Anne Behnke 1999, *Traditions of Exemplary Women (Lienü zhuan): An Introduction*, Chinese Text Initiative Home Page. <http://etext.virginia.edu/chinese/lienu/browse/LienüIntro.html> (Accessed 04.12.2007)

⁴³ Nivison 1962: 457.

⁴⁴ Twitchett 1961: 97.

forced the semi-fictional and folklore elements to lead a separate existence on the border between history and literature.⁴⁵

In addition to the biographies in the official Chinese history, there are innumerable collections of specialized biographies of various kinds and entries in local gazetteers in circulation. From the decay of the Han Dynasty and four centuries onwards to the reunification of the empire by the Sui, there was a great amount of non-official biographical writing going on. Among others, these works include the biographies of local worthies. A biography of this type is closer to the western biographies, as the details were more intimate than those in centrally compiled histories. Moreover, the aim of the biographer was often to portray the character of the individual rather than to shed light on an official's career.⁴⁶

In the Tang Dynasty there was an established system of historical compilation which (with some modifications) lasted to the end of the Qing Dynasty in 1911. When this official system was set up, the historians had access to sources to write the biographical entries that were equally voluminous and reliable as those which were used for the Annals.⁴⁷ In addition, the historians had the power of selecting who they thought was worthy of a biography. From the Tang Dynasty on, the dynastic history and thus the standard biographies were written by Confucian scholar-officials who were salaried employees of the imperial government.⁴⁸ During the Tang and Wudai, the historians, who belonged to the examination-bureaucrat class, omitted biographies of the rival groups of professional finance experts, such as the court euncus. As a result, to this day there is very little information known about them. To leave out a person's life was a simple and effective form of criticism, and a method widely used in the history of China. The aim for the official historian was to hand down a corpus of precedent for future generations of Confucian bureaucrats to follow; the aim was not to present a complete and objective picture of his age.⁴⁹ Those not regarded as models for the future generations, who had not performed a service of merit to the state or any action of virtue for the people, were not to be honoured with a biography. However, for the present-day reader many of the biographies seem to be merely basic accounts of commonplace officials careers. The cause of this is that it was hard for the historian to exclude a person who had recently held high office and whose relatives and supporters still might be in places of power. Consequently, high rank gave a person more than an even chance to be included in

⁴⁵ Twitchett 1961: 98.

⁴⁶ Twitchett 1961: 99.

⁴⁷ Twitchett 1961: 98.

⁴⁸ Boorman 1962: 453.

⁴⁹ Twitchett 1961: 101.

the official biographies.⁵⁰

The biographies presented in the earliest standard stories have a very dramatic flavour, and can be seen more as fiction than historical writings. The later historical biographies, however, give more crucial information about a man, presented in a very formal way. The basic structure of the official biographies is as follow: First it gives the family background of the subject being portrayed, and then his official career is outlined (assuming he had one). If he wrote anything, the biography will have some quotations before finally including some anecdotes intended to indicate his character, which are often stereotyped and quite false. According to David S. Nivison, this makes the character portrayed fall into a type, which do not exhibit a dynamic nor changing personality, and this makes it very difficult to form a picture of the man as an individual in the standard biographies, as is also the case with many of the non-official biographies.⁵¹ Twitchett points out that these defects in official Chinese biography, at least during the Tang Dynasty, were due largely to the official historian's dependence for his information on biographies privately written for funerals and family cults.⁵² There was also another type of material that was used to add body to the biography, the portrayal of the actions of the individual in his official capacity. This material was mostly unconventional and not to be found elsewhere, including incidents such as a minor policy put in place by a subject whilst a Magistrate of some unimportant County. This incident will be described at length, whereas his decisions as a high officer of state will be passed over in silence.⁵³ As the aim of the standard biographies was not to present portraits of mortal human beings, but rather to create a precedent for the Confucian official, the historians did not see the need to present the private personality of the subject of the biographies.

When it comes to the family chronicles and genealogies for the clan cult, the entries dedicated to the individual family members are very formalized. The type pattern consist of (a) Details of parentage, (b) Date of birth, (c) Details of entry into government service and official career where applicable, (d) Details of service in the administration of the family cult, (e) Notice of death, burial, posthumous honours bestowed by the court, and details of the appropriate rites to be celebrated in respect of him by the clan, (f) Details of marriages, and (g) Descendants. As with the official biographies, the material that does not correspond to the ideal of the scholar-bureaucrat is intentionally omitted, even if it would otherwise be of

⁵⁰ Twitchett 1961: 103.

⁵¹ Nivison 1962: 458.

⁵² Twitchett 1961: 107.

⁵³ Twitchett 1961: 109.

great interest to the reader. One example is that predominantly mercantile clans seldom mention trade in the entries regarding their members.⁵⁴ One man that went against this norm of writing biographies was Zhang Xuecheng.⁵⁵ Zhang was a writer of biographies during the Qing Dynasty and wrote an essay in 1796 titled ‘Ten Faults in Writing Classical Prose.’ In this essay he emphasized that a biography should be true to life, objecting sharply to the common practice of altering the account of a person to make it more laudatory or remarkable.⁵⁶ However, the weaknesses described above are not exhibited in all Chinese biographical writings, as seen in informal biographies where the writer knew his subject well.⁵⁷

One genre of biographical writings in China that lacks the shortcomings mentioned above is the *nianpu*.⁵⁸ The *nianpu* tried to put together the events in an individual’s life into a chronological order, following the example of the annalistic form. At its best, the *nianpu* provide the reader with such an abundance of material that it places its subject in his historical context similar to the western biographies. These writings are not so much a biography as a collection of notes to a biography, and the number of *nianpu* is relatively small compared to the immense mass of biographies that use the *liezhuan* form.⁵⁹

As shown above, both the official and family chronicles were not interested in the individual per se, but in his career as an official. This could also be said about the specialized biographies, which were compiled in great numbers during the later dynasties. One category of the specialized biography is the biographies of monks and nuns. As with the official biographies, these biographies seldom give any hint of the subject’s personality behind their professional function.

2.3 Biographies of Women in China

The main focus of this thesis is on the religious biographies, specifically on those of Buddhist nuns in China; however, in order to give a broader picture of women in the bibliographical tradition in China, this chapter will give a short introduction to biographies

⁵⁴ Twitchett 1961: 111f.

⁵⁵ Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠 (1738- 1801), ‘Ten Faults in Writing Classical Prose’ *Guwen shibi* 古文十弊.

⁵⁶ Nivison 1962: 461.

⁵⁷ Nivison 1962: 458.

⁵⁸ *Nianpu* 年譜 ‘chronological biography.’

⁵⁹ Twitchett 1961: 113.

of women in the Daoist and Confucian tradition in China.

As illustrated earlier, the biography has a central position in the Chinese literary tradition. However, when it comes to biographies concerning women, they are nearly nonexistent compared to the large corpus about men. One of the reasons for this might be that at that time China was a male-dominated society, where the Confucian tradition was strong. Confucianism emphasized the women's domestic roles and responsibilities, and did not acknowledge that women could hold positions of respect and influence. In addition to 'Biographies of Nuns' and 'Further Biographies of Nuns,' which both present Buddhist nuns, there also exist some biographies of Daoist nuns, e.g. 'Records of the Assembled Transcendent of the Fortified Walled City' compiled in 913 by Du Guangting.⁶⁰ According to Suzanne E. Cahill, 'Biographies of Nuns' was an important model for Du when he compiled the biographies of Daoist female figures.⁶¹ Du's work contained 109 separate accounts, but only seventy-nine of them are preserved today. The extant biographies are of varying lengths and present the various Daoist female figures in more or less chronological order, from the earliest times down to Du Guangting's own time.⁶² According to Cahill, the biographies of the female Daoist practitioners in Du's 'Record of the Assembled Transcendent of the Fortified Walled City' fit into what one "might call a 'quest narrative,' following a journey or path of life that includes obstacles, ordeals, and tests. The subject faces struggles, contests and challenges that lead her to discipline, transformation, and liberation."⁶³ This can also be said about the women presented in Baochang's 'Biographies of Nuns' and Zhenhua's 'Further Biographies of Nuns,' which will be examined later in this thesis.

As mentioned before, the earliest extant literary work devoted to the moral education of Chinese women is the Confucian text 'Biographies of Exemplary Women,' which was compiled by Liu Xiang in the Former Han Dynasty. Although this work includes primarily biographical accounts of women of high morals in early China, the final chapter is devoted to depraved women. The 120 biographical accounts presented in 'Biographies of Exemplary Women' are taken from the 'Spring and Autumn Annals,' 'Chronicle of Zuo'⁶⁴ and 'Historical Records.' 'Biographies of Exemplary Women' is organized into seven categories: (1) The exemplars of mothers, (2) The capable and intelligent, (3) The benevolent and wise,

⁶⁰ Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850-933) *Yongcheng jixiang lu* 壻城集仙錄.

⁶¹ Cahill 2006: 11.

⁶² Cahill 2006: 13-15.

⁶³ Cahill 2006: 17.

⁶⁴ *Zuo zhuan* 'Chronicle of Zuo' 左傳 (722-468 B.C.).

(4) The determined and obedient, (5) The principled and righteous, (6) Those able in reasoning and communication, (7) The pernicious and the deprived.⁶⁵ According to John Kieschnick, this way of dividing the biographies into categories (one way or another) has been the dominant way of organizing biographies of Buddhist monks.⁶⁶ An example of this is the ‘Biographies of Famous Monks,’⁶⁷ which organizes the biographies into eighteen categories according to the main activity of the monk, while the ‘Biographies of Nuns’ and ‘Further Biographies of Nuns’ are organized according to which dynasty the respective nun was active during. In the preface of the ‘Biographies of Nuns,’ examples are given of specific qualities or activities of certain nuns, which seems to divide the nuns into categories much as the ‘Biographies of Famous Monks’ did with the monks.⁶⁸ This, however, is not the case with ‘Further Biographies of Nuns,’ where the only criterion they are categorized under is which dynasty they lived during.

Thus, one can see that the organization of the biographies varied, and it seems that all the Buddhist monks’ biographies are organized according to different criteria than the biographies of Buddhist nuns and Daoist female figures. Another difference is that the biographies on men are far more numerous than those of women, whether of officials or monks possibly due to lack of interest in the lives of the nuns and women in general. Moreover, as shown above, the number of biographies of women in China is scarce, no matter how one counts, and the scholarly studies on this subject are even fewer. Aside from Suzanne E. Cahill’s study of Du Guangting’s compilation, Kathryn Tsai’s and Li Jung-his’s translation of ‘Biographies of Nuns,’ and the studies on ‘Biographies of Exemplary Women’ by Albert R. O’Hara, Sherry J. Mou, and Anne Behnke Kinney there are hardly any academic studies devoted to biographies of women in China in Western languages. One possible reason for this might be that the sources are scarce, and consequently researching into the lives of men is a much easier task since the available material is more numerous. Alternately, one must have an interest for the situation of women—whether they are nuns or otherwise—in China to make the effort looking into this subject and it could also be that the scholars simply do not have an interest in this subject.

⁶⁵ Sherry J. Mou 2004: 12.

⁶⁶ John Kieschnick 1997: 10.

⁶⁷ *Mingseng zhuan* 名僧傳.

⁶⁸ De Rauw 2005: 217.

3. Master Zhenhua, the Compiler

Master Zhenhua (1908- 1947) came from Xinghua, Jiangsu Province. His secular name was Tang Quanxin, and when he was ordained as a monk in 1929 and entered the Zhulin Temple in Zhenjiang he got the name Chengshi.⁶⁹ Later on he became the dean of the Zhulin Buddhist College, and in 1938 he got the position as the abbot of the temple. In 1942 Master Zhenhua was invited to the Jade Buddha Temple⁷⁰ in Shanghai, where he was appointed to serve both as the abbot of the temple and dean of the Shanghai Buddhist College. He set up a library there and started a monthly magazine called the *Miaofalun*.⁷¹ In the winter of 1945 Master Zhenhua resigned from the post as abbot of the Jade Buddha Temple to engage himself more deeply in Buddhist research. Master Zhenhua passed away in 1947, 39 years old.⁷²

During the time of the Republic of China, a Buddhist reform movement was developing, and the equality between men/monks and women/nuns came gradually into focus. Master Zhenhua maintained that the difference between men and women was simply a constructed idea, and that historically the achievements of monks and nuns were the same; they both were abbots/abbesses and received great respect. Due to his faith in the accomplishments of nuns, he thought the time had come to compile a sequel to 'Biographies of Nuns.'⁷³ During his compilation of the 'Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Buddhism,'⁷⁴ Master Zhenhua had also discovered information about eminent nuns. Master Zhenhua therefore started further collecting, ordering and editing biographies of nuns from the Liang Dynasty to the Republic of China (1912- 1949). Since the first volume of 'Biography of Nuns,' which was compiled by Master Baochang during the Liang Dynasty (502- 577), more than a thousand years had passed and no one had continued the work. The lack of interest in Chinese nuns' lives and their achievements stands in sharp contrast to the interest in the lives of monks who have been honoured with many biographical works, e.g. the Liang Dynasty's collection 'Biographies of Eminent Monks,' the Tang Dynasty's 'Further Biographies of Eminent Monks,' the Song Dynasty's 'Song Biographies of Eminent Monks,' the Ming Dynasty's 'Biographies of Eminent Monks in Great Ming' and the Republic of China's

⁶⁹ Tang Quanxin 唐全心, Chengshi 乘實.

⁷⁰ 'Jade Buddha Temple' Yufu si 玉佛寺.

⁷¹ *Miaofalun* 妙法輪, Skt. *Dharmacakra* 'The Wheel of the Law.'

⁷² The Jade Buddha Monastery, Abbot Zhenhua (1908-1947).

http://www.yufotemple.com/en_vision/history/abbots06.asp. (Accessed December 6, 2007).

⁷³ He 2001: 5.

⁷⁴ Zhongguo Fo jiao Renming Da Cidian 中國佛教人名大辭典.

‘Another Further Biographies of Eminent Monks.’⁷⁵

In the summer of 1937, after three years’ work, Master Zhenhua was about to finish the manuscript. After he had completed the text, he learnt that there was a collection about nuns from the Ming Dynasty in Beijing, and he prepared to travel to Beijing to borrow the collection. However, as this coincided with the Japanese invasion of China it prevented him from going to Beijing. As this was a time of unrest, his manuscript of ‘Further Biography of Nuns’ somehow got lost and the work had to be started all over again.⁷⁶ Master Zhenhua began to collect materials once again, now with the assistance of his disciple Chaochen.⁷⁷ Together they completed the manuscript in the spring of 1942, and the compilation consists of the biographies of two hundreds nuns from the Liang Dynasty to the Republic of China. The wooden boards, on which the text was carved, are kept at the Zhulin Temple in Zhenjiang.⁷⁸ Zhenhua does not identify his sources for ‘Further Biographies of Nuns,’ and like the compilers of ‘Biographies of Eminent Monks,’ ‘Song Biographies of Eminent Monks’ and ‘Further Biographies of Eminent Monks,’ Zhenhua has most likely copied (word-for-word, or with minor additions or deletions) from sources available to him, like *stūpa* inscriptions or writings of lay literati devoted to Buddhism. While it was usual to copy the text word-for-word without attributions both in regard to secular and Buddhist biographies, it is correspondingly difficult to find the original source of these biographies.⁷⁹ Where these sources have been found, they are noted in the footnote to the respective nun’s biography throughout this thesis.

In addition to ‘Further Biographies of Nuns,’ Master Zhenhua also wrote ‘Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Buddhism,’ ‘The History of Safeguarding the Homeland by the Saṃgha,’ ‘A History of Buddhism in Xinghua County’ and ‘A History of Buddhism in Tai County.’⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Gaoseng Zhuan 高僧傳, Xu Gaoseng Zhuan 續高僧傳, Song Gaoseng Zhuan 宋高僧傳, Da Ming Gaoseng Zhuan 大明高僧傳 and Xin Xu Gaoseng Zhuan 新續高僧傳. He 2001: 2.

⁷⁶ He 2001: 3.

⁷⁷ Chaochen 超塵.

⁷⁸ Zhulin Temple *Zhulin si* 竹林寺 in Zhenjiang 鎮江. *Biqiuni zhuan quanji* 1988: 151.

⁷⁹ Kieschnick 1997: 10.

⁸⁰ Zhongguo Fojiao Renming Da cidian 中国佛教人名大辞典, Sengjia Hu Guo Li 僧伽护国史, Xinghua Fojiao Tongzhi 兴化佛教通志 and Taixian Fojiao Tongzhi 泰县佛教通志. http://www.yufotemple.com/en_vison/history/abbots06.asp. (Accessed December 6, 2007).

4. The Pure Land and Chan Schools

The nuns presented in the biographies of ‘Further Biographies of Nuns,’ translated in this thesis, are from the Pure Land, Chan and Huayan Schools. The Pure Land School emphasizes salvation through faith and became the most popular form of Buddhism among the common people in China. Mahāyāna Buddhists believe that the western “Pure Land”⁸¹ is the sphere where Buddha Amitābha rules, and this paradise’s excellence and beauty are described in the most extravagant terms in several Mahāyāna scriptures. Amitābha’s Pure Land is considered free of the temptations and defilements that characterize the world of mortals.⁸² According to the *Sukhāvativyūha*,⁸³ one of the principal scriptures of the Pure Land tradition, Amitābha took forty-eight vows while he was still a Bodhisattva with the name Dharmākara. In the eighteenth vow, which later came to be considered the most important, Dharmākara promised that if he attained perfect enlightenment, he would help all beings in other worlds who called upon him to be reborn in his pure land. Since he became a Buddha, *nianfo*,⁸⁴ (invoking the name of Amitābha Buddha, audibly or inaudibly) became the most common religious practice in China.⁸⁵ Amitābha’s attendant Bodhisattva, Guanyin,⁸⁶ is also a highly popular figure in Chinese Buddhism. One favourite theme in religious painting and sculpture is Amitābha seated on a lotus throne in his Pure Land flanked by Guanyin.⁸⁷

Chan is an abbreviated transliteration from Sanskrit *dhyaṇa* and means ‘meditation.’ The Chan School emphasises the importance of direct transmission from a master (who himself

⁸¹ Jingtū 淨土 Skt. Sukhāvātī.

⁸² de Bary and Bloom 1999: 481f.

⁸³ *Wuliangshou jing* 無量壽經, Skt. *Sukhāvativyūha*, ‘Sūtra of the Buddha of Limitless Life.’ The other two main scriptures in this tradition are *Amituofo jing* 阿彌陀佛經 Skt. *Amitābhasūtra*, ‘the Amitābha Sūtra,’ also known as ‘the Shorter Sukhāvativyūhasūtra’ and *Guan Wuliangshou jing* 觀無量壽經, Skt. *Amitāyurdhyānasūtra*, ‘Sūtra of the Meditation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life.’ *FGDCD*: 5119.

⁸⁴ *Nianfo* 念佛 is the devotional practice where the devotee chant the name of Amitābha Buddha, *Namo amituofo* 南無阿彌陀佛 ‘Hail to the Buddha of Immeasurable Light and Eternal Life.’ This invocation is believed to assure the devotee rebirth in Amitābha’s Pure Land of the West. There are, however, sinners who will not be welcomed into the Pure Land, those who have committed the five violations, i.e. killing father or mother, those who have killed an *arhat*, those who have done harm to the body of the Buddha, those who have introduced disharmony in the *saṃgha*, and those who malign the *dharma*. *FGDCD*: 3208.

⁸⁵ deBary and Bloom 1999: 482.

⁸⁶ Guanyin 觀音 or Guanshiyin *pusa* 觀世音菩薩, Skt. Avalokiteśvara, one of the most worshipped and popular Bodhisattvas. She/he is the Bodhisattva of Mercy, and is able to transform herself/himself into the most suitable form to help people in all situations. *FGDCD*: 6954. From the 11th century onwards Guanyin began to be depicted as a female Bodhisattva in China. For more information on Guanyin’s transformation in Chinese Buddhism see Yu 2001, and for more general information see Paul 1979.

⁸⁷ de Bary and Bloom 1999: 483.

has experienced enlightenment himself) to his disciple, rather than on the disciple's mastery of the Buddhist scriptures and teachings. Chan traces its lineage back to Buddha Śākyamuni. According to Chan historiography it was Bodhidharma (c. 5th cent. AD) who established Chan in China, and accordingly he is recognized as the first Chinese patriarch, or the twenty-eighth patriarch if one includes the Indian patriarchs. According to "orthodox" Chan scriptures of the late Tang and early Song, a conflict developed about the legacy of the Sixth Patriarch, leading to the division into Southern and Northern Schools, with the Southern School supposedly emphasizing sudden awakening, and the Northern School stressing gradual awakening. The Northern School lost influence in the eighth century, whereas the Southern School continued its lineage and developed into many independent schools. The different schools of Chan were later transmitted to Korea and Japan, where they came to be known as Sōn and Zen respectively. There the schools continued to develop further and evolved distinctive characteristics.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Bowker 1997: 1006.

5. The Dynasties and Translated Biographies

5.1 The Tang Dynasty (618-907)

Buddhism prospered during the Tang Dynasty, as can be seen through the construction of the Longmen grottoes, the Leshan Buddha, the Mogao Caves near Dunhuang and the activity of eminent masters like Xuanzang and Xuanzhao during the dynasty.⁸⁹ The seventh to the tenth centuries are known for religious tolerance, and it was during the Tang Dynasty that Islam, Nestorian Christianity and Manichaeism were introduced to China. Buddhism already had a great number of followers, and due to friendly patronage of some of the Tang emperors, magnificent temples and monasteries were founded and Buddhist masters obtained influence at the imperial court as well as at regional aristocratic seats. At times the influence and power of Buddhism even outreached that of the Daoists, who had traditionally been favoured by the imperial clans. Moreover, it was first during the Tang Dynasty that Buddhism in China developed a specific Chinese character, with Buddhist schools like Chan, Pure Land and Tiantai. These schools soon gained followers from all layers of society.⁹⁰ At the same time Buddhism came more under the control of the State, civil officials generally supervised the *samgha*'s officials who were in charge of administrating the affairs of the monks, nuns and the monasteries.⁹¹

As in the dynasties before, Buddhism came under attack from Daoist and Confucian scholars.⁹² For example, in 621 a Daoist named Fu Yi⁹³ presented a memorial attacking Buddhism on intellectual and economic grounds.⁹⁴ Because a great part of the population was Buddhist, Emperor Gaozu⁹⁵ did his best to avoid any provocations, while at the same time saw the need to calm the Daoists and the Confucians. He sent out a decree saying that the monks and nuns who were diligent in observing the precepts should take up residence within the temples, where all their daily needs would be provided for by the government, while those who were lax in observing the monastic rules had to disrobe. This decree applied to Buddhist and Daoist alike. This imperial decree was not implemented, however, because

⁸⁹ Longmen grottoes 龍門石窟, Leshan Buddha 樂山大佛, Mogao caves 莫高窟, the monks Xuanzang 玄奘 and Xuanzhao 玄照.

⁹⁰ Ch'en 1964: 213.

⁹¹ Ch'en 1964: 214.

⁹² E.g. there were persecutions of Buddhism both in 446-452 and 574-579, with closing of monasteries and monks and nuns were forced back into lay life.

⁹³ Fu Yi 傅奕 554-639.

⁹⁴ Ch'en 1964: 215.

⁹⁵ Emperor Gaozu 高祖 (r. 618-626).

Emperor Gaozu was forced to abdicate by his son Taizong,⁹⁶ after Taizong had murdered the heir to the throne.⁹⁷

Emperor Taizong himself developed an interest in Buddhism in his later years when he had several conversations with the eminent monk Xuanzang about his journey to Central Asia and India. Emperor Taizong assured Xuanzang that he would do his utmost to promote Buddhism in China.⁹⁸ This was followed, according to the biography of the nun Wuliang, by Emperor Gaozong⁹⁹ issuing an imperial edict in 683 attempting to regulate the ordination of monks and nuns.

There were three ways to obtain ordination during the Tang Dynasty: through examination, through the favour of the emperor, or by purchase of the ordination certificate. Ordination based on an examination of the scriptures usually consisted of the recitation of a certain number of leaves from a *sūtra*—the ‘Lotus Sūtra,’ for example—or the reading and explanation of a text. For example, under the reign of Emperor Jingzong,¹⁰⁰ a male postulant had to recite 150 leaves and a female 100 leaves. If the postulant was successful, he received a certificate from the official in charge, and then he went to his master for tonsure and ordination. Certain fees were charged at the ordination ceremony, both for tonsure and for the cost of paper and ink for the printing of the certificate.¹⁰¹

Private ordination was the dominant practise during the first half of the Tang Dynasty. The private ordination was organized by the monasteries, and everyone who fulfilled the necessary requirements were ordained. The number of ordained monks and nuns was most likely high, since the officials complained that the income from the ordination ceremonies went into private pockets, and not public coffers as it ought to. The court made attempts to weed out undesirable elements from the *saṃgha* by forcing them to return to lay life. During the Kaiyuan¹⁰² era approximately 12,000 monastics were defrocked, and on another occasion 30,000 were laicized. These periodic attempts to weed out bad elements seem to have been insufficient, for in 747 the court decided on a system of official ordination sponsored by the government. Properly ordained monks received a certificate issued by the Bureau of National Sacrifice; the purpose here was to keep the number of ordinations low, and to ensure the quality of those ordained. This practice soon became unsuccessful. During the

⁹⁶ Emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 626- 649).

⁹⁷ Ch'en 1964: 216.

⁹⁸ Ch'en 1964: 219.

⁹⁹ Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 649- 683).

¹⁰⁰ Jingzong 敬宗 (r. 825-826).

¹⁰¹ Ch'en 1964: 246.

¹⁰² Kaiyuan 開元 713-741.

financial crisis that occurred as a result of the An Lushan¹⁰³ rebellion which lasted from 755 to 763, the government began to sell monk certificates to anyone who wished to become a cleric,¹⁰⁴ thus ensuring extra income to the State.

When Emperor Gaozong suffered from a stroke in 660, Empress Wu Zetian¹⁰⁵ became involved in administrative matters, ascending the throne as the only woman in the history of China who assumed the title of emperor. Empress Wu was introduced to Buddhism from her childhood, and under her rule Buddhism was elevated over the previously dominant Daoism. In 694, the empress transferred the supervision of Buddhism from the Court of State Ceremonial—whose function was to supervise foreign guests, audiences, good and evil omens, and sacrifices—to the Bureau of National Sacrifice, one of the organizations in the Ministry of Rites. With this shift, Empress Wu emphasized that she no longer considered Buddhism a foreign religion.¹⁰⁶ In addition, the empress used the Buddhist scripture *Dayun jing*¹⁰⁷ to justify that she—a woman—could rule the Chinese empire.¹⁰⁸

The Longmen Grottoes in Henan Province are examples of Empress Wu's support of Buddhism. She was instrumental in completing the carving of the great statue of Buddha Vairocana along with bodhisattvas and guardians of the world.¹⁰⁹ The statue of Buddha Vairocana is 17.14 meters tall, and it is said that the face was modelled after the empress herself.¹¹⁰ One of the inscriptions on the Fengxiansi¹¹¹ shrine states that the donation from Empress Wu came from her “rouge and powder money.”¹¹²

At the Wanfo Grotto,¹¹³ which is a part of the Longmen Grottoes, nuns contributed with one-fourth of the dedications, which is quite exceptional when compared to the other parts of the Longmen Grottoes where nuns only contributed with three to four percent of the donations.¹¹⁴ One of the most remarkable donations is the one from the Palace Chapel nun Zhiyun¹¹⁵ from Chang'an, who donated 15,000 Buddha figures to be carved on the side and

¹⁰³ An Lushan 安祿山.

¹⁰⁴ Ch'en 1964: 242f.

¹⁰⁵ Empress Wu Zetian 武則天 (624-705).

¹⁰⁶ Ch'en 1964: 255.

¹⁰⁷ *Dayun jing* 大雲經, Skt. *Mahāmegha sūtra*, 'The Great Cloud *Sūtra*' describes how Maitreya is reincarnated as a female deity who becomes the ruler of the whole world.

¹⁰⁸ Ch'en 1964: 221.

¹⁰⁹ Ch'en 1964: 220.

¹¹⁰ Xinhua News Agency June 16, 2004 *Longmen Grottoes: Buddhist Site for Only Empress* <http://www.china.org.cn/english/culture/98377.htm>. (Accessed December 6, 2007).

¹¹¹ Fengxiansi 奉先寺.

¹¹² McNair 2000: 168.

¹¹³ Wanfo Grotto, 萬佛洞, means literally 'Ten Thousand Buddha Cave,' i.e. "innumerable Buddhas."

¹¹⁴ MaNair 2000: 162.

¹¹⁵ Zhiyun 智運.

front interior walls of the Wanfo Grotto.¹¹⁶ According to Amy McNair, the reason for the large number of commissions by nuns at this shrine may have been caused by their wish to be associated with a large-scale commission made by a prominent metropolitan nun.¹¹⁷ There is a difference between the dedications made by nuns and the ones made by laymen; while nuns' dedications are offered in the context of Pure Land beliefs (a tradition wherein the worshippers do not dedicate their merit to anyone specific, but to all sentient beings), the laymen followed the Confucian tradition and dedicated the merit to their parents or siblings, playing the role of filial sons accordingly.¹¹⁸

According to McNair, the dedications made by nuns in the context of the Pure Land tradition may not have been dedications to all sentient beings in general, but more specifically to all women, or in some instances the women of the court. These women knew that Buddhism gave them freedom to learn and become educated, but at the same time they knew that being born as a woman was considered inferior to being born as a man, thus women were further away from salvation compared by their male counterparts.¹¹⁹

When Empress Wu was forced to abdicate in 705, there was a change in policy towards Buddhism, as monks and nuns were then prohibited from wandering about in the countryside to preach, and they were not allowed to sell Buddhist scriptures and images in public streets.

In 845, Emperor Wuzong¹²⁰ started a persecution of Buddhism, the most widespread persecution of Buddhism until then in Chinese history. More than 4,600 monasteries and 40,000 temples and shrines were destroyed and over 260,500 monks and nuns were forced to disrobe and subjected to double taxes. Several tens of million of *qing*¹²¹ of fertile land were confiscated, and 150,000 slaves were taken over by the State to become payers of double tax. Monks and nuns were now placed under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Guests in the Ministry of Rites, and not the Bureau of National Sacrifice. Again, this was done to emphasize that Buddhism was a foreign religion. This suppression lasted only a year, and when Emperor Wuzong died the persecution was called off by his successor Emperor Xuanzong.¹²²

¹¹⁶ McNair 2000: 166.

¹¹⁷ McNair 2000: 173.

¹¹⁸ McNair 2000: 185.

¹¹⁹ McNair 2000: 186.

¹²⁰ Emperor Wuzong 武宗 (r.840- 846).

¹²¹ *Qing* 頃 unit of area equal to 6.66 hectares or 16.47 acres. *NCED*: 1259.

¹²² Emperor Xuanzong 宣宗 (r. 846-859). Ch'en 1964: 232.

5.1.1

The introduction of the situation of Buddhism during the Tang Dynasty will now be followed by the translations of the biographies of the nuns Wuliang, Wujinzang and Shiji.

一四，唐長安道德寺尼無量傳

無量，長安閔氏女。年甫十八，能誦華嚴。永淳二年，有詔度僧，其家男女五人，俱以試經得度，無量配住道德寺。志節彌堅，每誦華嚴，三日一遍，以為恒課，六時禮懺，三業無替。每見諸貧病，莫不深思悲愍，資給湯藥，扶其困乏，時歎為女中丈夫。

Biography number 14

The Biography of the Tang Dynasty Nun Wuliang from Daode Temple in Chang'an.¹²³

Wuliang was the daughter of mister Min from Chang'an. When she was only 18 years old she was able to recite the *Avataṃsaka [sūtra]*.¹²⁴ In the second year of the Yongchun era,¹²⁵ the emperor issued an imperial edict about the regulation of monk and nun ordination. In her family there were five men and women who all managed to become monks and nuns through an examination of the *sūtras*. Wuliang was sent to reside at the Daode temple. Her determination and observance of the monastic rules became increasingly firm; she often recited the *Avataṃsaka [sūtra]*, completing the whole text every three days and regarded it as her permanent text of guidance.

¹²³ Tang Chang'an Daodesi Ni Wuliang Zhuan 唐長安道德寺尼無量傳. Her Buddhist name Wuliang means that space, time and quantity have no limit, and the name also refers to Buddha's immeasurable goodness. *FGDCD*: 5516.

ZFRDC gives a shorter version of the biography. According to *ZFRDC* Wuliang is also mentioned in *Huayan jing zhuanji* 華嚴經傳集. *ZFRDC*: 740. Her biography is also in T. 51, no. 2073: 167b.

¹²⁴ *Huayan jing* 華嚴經, Skt. *Avataṃsaka sūtra* 'Flower Ornament Scripture.' The full title in Chinese is *Dafangguangfo huayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經. It is one of the most influential *sūtras* in Chinese and East Asian Buddhism; it was translated three times into Chinese. *FGDCD*: 758.

¹²⁵ The text mentions the second year of the Yongchun 永淳 era, which is the name of the period from 682 -683; accordingly the year will be 683.

During the six periods of the day¹²⁶ she practiced repentance: the deeds of body, speech and mind,¹²⁷ [which] are endless.¹²⁸ Every time she saw someone who was poor or sick she felt deep compassion and grief. She gave medicine to the poor and relieved them of poverty. The people at that time praised her as a *zhangfu* among women.¹²⁹

5.1.2

二十一，唐韶州曹侯村尼無盡藏傳

無盡藏，韶州曹侯村人，儒士劉志略之姑。初，六祖自黃梅得法，回行抵村，人無知者。劉志略禮遇獨厚，無盡藏常誦大涅槃經，六祖暫聽，即知妙義，遂為解說。無盡藏乃執卷問字，六祖曰：“字即不識，義即請問。”無盡藏曰：“字尚不識，焉能會義？”六祖曰：“諸佛妙理，非關文字。”無盡藏驚異之，徧告里中耆德云：“此是有道之士，宜請供養。”有魏武侯玄孫曹叔良及居民，競來瞻禮。時寶林古寺，自隋末兵火已廢，遂於故基，重建梵宇。延六祖居之，俄成實坊。

Biography number 21

The Biography of the Tang Dynasty Nun Wujinzang from Caohou Village in Shaozhou.¹³⁰

Wujinzang was from Caohou village in Shaozhou. She was the aunt of the Confucian

¹²⁶ The six periods of a day include three during the day and three during the night, i.e. morning, noon, evening, night, midnight and dawn. *CEDBT*: 196.

¹²⁷ *Sanye* 三業 Skt. *Trīnikarmāṇi* ‘the action of speech, mind and body.’ *FGDCD*: 638.

¹²⁸ *Lichan* 禮懺 is a ritual where the practitioner shows respect to the Buddha or Bodhisattva and repents one’s misdeeds. Wuliang preformed this ritual because her actions as a human cannot be deleted or transformed. *FGDCD*: 6586.

¹²⁹ *Zhangfu* 丈夫 generally means ‘man,’ Skt. *puruṣa* has the meaning ‘brave, energetic disciple.’ It is remarkable that it is used here as a reference to a nun. *FGDCD*: 714. From the Southern Song onwards, it became more common to use *zhangfu* as praise for someone for his or her great courage and will in the religious quest. Hsieh 1999:161.

¹³⁰ Tang Shaozhou Caohoucun Ni Wujinzang 唐韶州曹后村尼無盡藏傳. Her Buddhist name Wujinzang means ‘Inexhaustible Storehouse of Goodness.’ *FGDCD*: 5134. ZFRDC gives a shorter version of the biography. According to ZFRDC Wujinzang is also mentioned in *Shishi Ji Gu Lüe*, part 36 釋氏稽古略三六, *Zhuan Fa Zhengzong Ji*, part six 傳法正宗記六, *Zengding Fozu daoying*, part four 增訂佛祖道影四. *ZFRDC*: 744.

scholar Liu Zhilüe.¹³¹

When the Sixth Patriarch¹³² had just received the *dharmā*¹³³ at Huangmei,¹³⁴ he arrived at a village where the people were ignorant [of the Buddhist teachings].

Liu Zhilüe received him in a courteous and warm way. Wujinzang often recited the *Mahāparinirvānasūtra*.¹³⁵ After the Sixth Patriarch had listened [to her recitation] for a moment he realized its subtle meaning, and consequently he explained [the text for her]. When Wujinzang held up the scroll and inquired about some of the Chinese characters in it, the Sixth Patriarch said: “I do not know the Chinese characters, but please ask me about the meaning.”¹³⁶ Wujinzang said: “Since you do not know the Chinese characters, how can you understand their meaning?” The Sixth Patriarch said: “The subtle truth of all the buddhas has no connection with written words.” Wujinzang was surprised at this, and told all the dignitaries in the village: “Since this is a man who is in possession of the Way,¹³⁷ it will be proper to offer him food and respect.”

There was a man by the name of Cao Shuliang, who was the great-great grandson of Wu Hou in Wei. Together with the other residents he competed to pay respect to the Sixth Patriarch. The former Baolin Temple,¹³⁸ which was already destroyed at the end of Sui,¹³⁹ was subsequently rebuilt as a new temple on its original foundation. Afterwards they invited the Sixth Patriarch to live there, and suddenly it turned into a famous temple.

5.1.3

二九，唐婺州金華山尼實際傳

實際，氏族不詳。通曉禪理，隨方化導，成就法事。婺州金華山俱胝和尚初住菴時，實際忽自遠方來，戴笠子，執錫繞俱胝三匝，曰：“道得即下笠子。”如是三問，俱

¹³¹ Liu Zhilüe 劉志略.

¹³² This refers to Huineng 慧能, the Sixth Patriarch of Chan 禪.

¹³³ *Fa* 法, Skt. *Dharma*, is the teaching of the Buddha. *CEDBT*: 90.

¹³⁴ Huangmei 黃梅 is the place where the Fifth Patriarch Hong Ren 弘忍 lived. It is situated in Qizhou Province 蕪州. *FGDCD*: 1920.

¹³⁵ *Da niepan jing* 大涅槃經, Skt. *Mahāparinirvānasūtra* ‘the Nirvana Sutra.’

¹³⁶ According to Chan legend the Sixth Patriarch was illiterate. Wm. de Bary and I. Bloom 1999: 498.

¹³⁷ *Dao* 道, Skt. *mārga* ‘road’—the path towards enlightenment. *FGDCD*: 5620.

¹³⁸ Baolin Temple 寶林寺.

¹³⁹ The Sui Dynasty 隋 was from 581- 681.

胝皆無對。乃曰：“日勢稍晚，何不且住？”實際曰：“道得即住。”俱胝又無對。實際去後，俱胝嘆曰：“我雖處丈夫形，而無丈夫氣，不如棄菴往諸方參尋善知識去。”其夜，山神告曰：“不須離此，將有肉身菩薩來為和尚說法。”逾旬，果天龍和尚到菴，俱胝即迎禮，具陳前事。龍豎一指示之，俱胝當下大悟。自此凡有學者參問，俱胝唯舉一指，無別提唱。

Biography number 29

The Biography of the Tang Dynasty Nun Shiji from Jinhua Mountain in Wuzhuo.¹⁴⁰

We do not know anything about her clan or family.

Shiji had a thorough understanding of the principles of Chan.¹⁴¹ She adapted to every place she came to teach and was accomplished in giving *dharma* talks and other things related to the *dharma*.¹⁴² In the beginning when Preceptor¹⁴³ Juzhi¹⁴⁴ resided in a hermitage¹⁴⁵ at Jinhua mountain in Wuzhuo, Shiji unexpectedly came from a far away place, wearing a hat made of bamboo splints and holding a nun's staff.¹⁴⁶ She circumbulated Juzhi three times and said: "If you can say one word [that shows your understanding of Chan], I will take off my hat." In this way Shiji asked him three times, but Juzhi could not answer the question. Then Juzhi said: "It is getting dark, why don't you stay here for the time being?" Shiji said: "If you can answer me, then I will stay here." Again Juzhi could not answer. After Shiji had left, Juzhi said with a sigh: "Even though I have the appearance of a man, I do not have the

¹⁴⁰ Tang Wuzhou Jinhushan Ni Shiji Zhuan 唐婺州金華山尼實際傳. Her Buddhist name, Shiji, Skt. Bhūtakoti, means 'Absolute Reality' or 'Absolute Truth.' *FGDCD*: 5791. She is also mentioned in T. 51, no. 288: b23, XZJ. 64, no. 148: 225b9 and XZJ. 87, no. 1614: 225b9. The XZJ mention Shiji in the biography of Master Tianlong.

¹⁴¹ Chan 禪 is an abbreviated transliteration from Sanskrit *dhyāna* 禪那 and means 'meditation.' For a more throughout explanation, see chapter 4.

¹⁴² *Fashi* 法事, Skt. *buddha-kārya* is to deliver the Buddha's teachings and transforming all sentient beings. It also includes prayers and worship. *FGDCD*: 2630.

¹⁴³ *Heshang* 和尚, Skt. *upādhyāya* refers to a monk of virtue, a teacher who imparts the precepts and intimately guides the student, later it was used more generally by disciples to respectfully address their masters. *FGDCD*: 3124.

¹⁴⁴ *Juzhi* 俱胝 suddenly attained realization after Tianlong held up one finger, later he stressed that if it had not been for Tianlong he would not have attained realization in this life. *ZFRDC*: 570.

¹⁴⁵ *An* 菴 was originally the name for the place where monks, nuns, and hermits lived; later it came to refer to a temple for nuns. *FGDCD*: 2419. I interpret it as have the meaning 'hermitage' in this context.

¹⁴⁶ *Xi* 錫 refers to a monk's staff, but I translate it here as a nun's staff. *FGDCD*: 6324.

spirit of a man, it is better to let go of the hermitage, and go somewhere else and seek a good and virtuous friend.’’¹⁴⁷ That night a mountain deity told him: “You must not leave this place, a Bodhisattva¹⁴⁸ in a bodily form will arrive and teach you the *dharma*!” After ten days Preceptor Tianlong¹⁴⁹ came as expected to the hermitage. Juzhi showed him respect and described in detail what had happened earlier. [Tian]Long held up one finger [and showed it to him], whereupon Juzhi immediately experienced great enlightenment.¹⁵⁰ Since then, each time a student came and asked about the Buddhist teaching, Juzhi would only raise one finger. Without any exception he only gave this instruction.¹⁵¹

5.2 The Song Dynasty (960-1279)

After the persecution in 845, Buddhism never fully recovered to its former status. Even though the *sangha* was more numerous and the economy more extensive than under the Tang Dynasty, no new schools of Buddhist thought developed, no important *sūtra* was translated and no eminent monks excelled as Xuanzang, Fazang and Zhiyi did.¹⁵²

One of the reasons for this decline was the government’s financial crisis, as one way to raise money was to sell monk certificates and the honorary title of *Master of the Purple Robe*. In 1067 the government adopted the sale of certificates as an official policy. During the first years, 3000-4000 certificates were sold annually, and the number rose to 120,000 between the years 1161-1170.¹⁵³ Since the certificate could be bought, knowledge of the scriptures was no longer necessary. Furthermore, it was no longer compulsory for the holder to shave his head and wear the monk’s robe, nor to stay at the monastery. Nonetheless, the candidate obtained the privileges of being a cleric, such as exemption from taxes and labour service.¹⁵⁴ Because of the newly emerging group of scholar-officials who gained government

¹⁴⁷ *Shanzhishi* 善知識, Skt. *kalyanamitra* refers to a person who is a good and virtuous friend or a teacher who leads one on the Buddhist path. *FGDCD*: 4884.

¹⁴⁸ *Roushen pusa* 肉身菩薩 is ‘one who will be a Bodhisattva in the physical body, in this present life.’ *CEDBT*: 256, *FGDCD*: 2511.

¹⁴⁹ Tianlong 天龍 lived at Tianlong Mountain in Hangzhou. When somebody asked him about the Buddha’s teaching, he used to raise one finger. *ZFRDC*: 62.

¹⁵⁰ *Dawu* 大悟 means ‘great enlightenment,’ when one has destroyed all duality-based illusions, and is synonymous with *dajue* 大覺 ‘great awakening,’ and *zhengjue* 正覺 ‘real awakening.’ *FGDCD*: 912.

¹⁵¹ *Tichang* 提唱 is a type of teaching delivered by Chan masters to their students. It is also called *tichang* 提倡, *tiyao* 提要 and *tigang* 提綱.

¹⁵² Ch’en 1964: 389.

¹⁵³ Ch’en 1964: 391.

¹⁵⁴ Ch’en 1964: 392.

positions through passing the civil service examinations during the Song Dynasty, there was a tendency towards giving generous dowries. Therefore, Ding-Hwa Hsieh suggests that buying an ordination certificate could sometimes be a solution to the problem of dowry escalation, to the families who had too many daughters. Some families may also have considered it cheaper to support their daughters' entry into the nunneries than to supply them with a sizeable dowry.¹⁵⁵

The second reason of the decline was the progress of Neo-Confucianism, which during the Song Dynasty developed into a movement that challenged the position of Buddhism. The Neo-Confucians attacked the Buddhist theory of *śūnyatā*, i.e. that all phenomena arise in dependence upon each other, and therefore no phenomenon has an independent or permanent existence.¹⁵⁶

One of the features of Song Buddhism was the blossoming of the Lotus or Pure Land Societies, some of which had several thousand members. Together with Pure Land, the Chan School was the only school that remained active after the persecution of 845, although it experienced a profound change during the Song Dynasty. Up until then, the scriptures and the written word were not considered important for the disciple in his/her search for Enlightenment, but the Chan masters began using recorded *gong'ans* as a subject of meditation for their disciples during the Song Dynasty. The Chan masters held that it was crucial for the disciples to investigate the meaning of the historical *gong'ans* in order to get a breakthrough. Thus, the study of the written *gong'ans* became an important part of the Chan practise. The Chan masters also began to study the scriptures of the Huayan and Tiantai Schools with their emphasis on philosophical issues.¹⁵⁷ One of the important figures in this syncretism was the Chan Master Yongming Yanshou,¹⁵⁸ who also became a master of the Pure Land School. Under the slogan "All *dharma*s are but manifestations of the mind," he made an effort to synthesise the teachings of the two schools.¹⁵⁹

Emperor Taizu¹⁶⁰ was one of the few emperors of China to take the layman's vows. His favourable treatment of Buddhism was continued by the succeeding Song emperors, and by 1221 there were 397,615 monks, 61,240 nuns, and 40,000 temples.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁵ Hsieh 2000: 75.

¹⁵⁶ Li 理. Ch'en 1964: 395f. For more on the Buddhist- Neo-Confucian debate, see Chang 1957 and Graham 1958.

¹⁵⁷ Ch'en 1964: 402f.

¹⁵⁸ Yongming Yanshou 永明延壽 (904-975).

¹⁵⁹ Ch'en 1964: 404.

¹⁶⁰ Taizu 太祖 (927-976).

¹⁶¹ Ch'en 1964: 400f.

The ordination of monks and nuns in the Song Dynasty was based on the examination from the Later Zhou era,¹⁶² where a male postulant had to recite 100 leaves and read 500 leaves, and a female had to recite 70 leaves and read 300 leaves.¹⁶³ In 1001 Emperor Zhenzong¹⁶⁴ issued an imperial decree saying that a woman had to be at least fifteen years old to become a novice nun, while men had to be at least eighteen. Furthermore, in order to be a postulant they had to be at least ten years old. Despite this, the minimum age for postulants—male or female—varied widely during the Song Dynasty.¹⁶⁵ According to the *vinaya*, the novices are divided into three categories according to age: (1) old enough to ‘drive away crows,’ which was from seven to thirteen, (2) ‘able to respond to or follow the doctrine,’ which was from fourteen to nineteen years old, (3) just *shami* or ‘novice,’ above the age of twenty, when the novice is old enough to receive full ordination.¹⁶⁶

The Song Emperor Taizu issued an imperial edict segregating Buddhist monks and nuns. Among other things, this also meant that monks were now prohibited from ordaining female disciples, and nuns were allowed to manage their monastic affairs without the supervision of monks. This segregation policy was based on Confucian moral teaching, but contradicted the Buddhist *vinaya* and the *gurudharma*.¹⁶⁷ According to the *gurudharma*, which Śākyamuni Buddha gave as a condition for allowing women enter the monastic order, a nun must respect all monks and be under their supervision and authority. Furthermore, their ordination is considered to be incomplete without the participation of both monks and nuns.¹⁶⁸ Even though this decree was incorporated into the Song legal code, it appears that it was not followed too strictly. One impact this decree had was that it allowed the nuns to acquire some control and authority in their own nunneries and establish their leadership in the Buddhist community.¹⁶⁹ Two of these nun leaders were Miaoshan and Daojian;¹⁷⁰ they both received the purple robe and honorary master titles from the emperor. They assumed full authority over the administration of their nunnery, ordained female disciples, performed monastic rituals and gave public sermons. Both Miaoshan and Daojian used their fame and

¹⁶² Later Zhou 後周 (907-960).

¹⁶³ Ch'en 1964: 246.

¹⁶⁴ Emperor Zhenzong 真宗 (r. 997- 1022).

¹⁶⁵ Hsieh 2000: 68f.

¹⁶⁶ *Quniao* 驅鳥 ‘drive away birds,’ *yingfa* 應法 ‘able to respond to or follow the doctrine,’ *shami* 沙彌 Skt. *śrāmanera*. FGDCD: 2976. See also 四分律序 T.22, no.1428.

¹⁶⁷ Hsieh 2000: 78.

¹⁶⁸ For more on the *gurudharma*, Ch. *ba jingfa* 八敬法, ‘Eight Chief Rules,’ see Horner 1930, for the ‘Eight Chief Rules,’ see T. 48, no. 2023 or T. 24, no. 1478: 946c23.

¹⁶⁹ Hsieh 2000: 80f.

¹⁷⁰ Miaoshan 妙善 and Daojian 道堅.

authority to raise funds for promoting Buddhist activities.¹⁷¹

According to Hsieh, the secular elite in the Song Dynasty had a positive impression of the Buddhist nuns, since the scholar-officials did not hesitate to include the daughters of officials who were nuns in their funerary eulogies for the deceased.¹⁷² Even women of the palace joined the monastic order, such as the Princess Binguo who became a nun in 982 and received the name Great Master Yuanming.¹⁷³ In 1009, the seventh daughter of Emperor Taizong, Princess Wuguo decided to renounce home and Emperor Zhenzong approved her request. She became a nun under the Buddhist name of Great Master Baoci Zhengfa at the Zisheng Cloister.¹⁷⁴ According to official records, the entrance of Princess Wuguo into the monastic order was considered a blissful event for the imperial family to celebrate. The princess was honoured with the purple robe and the master title *Qingyu*.¹⁷⁵

In the Southern Song period (1127–1279), there was a booming growth of Buddhist nunneries; the wealthy and prestigious families established many of these nunneries on their own estates. The public nunneries were also flourishing under the patronage of the imperial court. In some cases they served as secure havens for childless widows or daughters who did not want to marry from the upper layers of society.¹⁷⁶ Particularly during the Southern Song Dynasty, the nuns were highly esteemed and received generous support from their lay followers. Some of the nuns participated in the construction and restoration of their nunneries, and in this way they contributed to spreading Buddhist teachings among the lay population.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷¹ Hsieh 2000: 85.

¹⁷² Hsieh 2000: 77.

¹⁷³ Her full name was Binguo Great Senior Princess, Binguo dazhang gongzhu 邠國大長公主. Her name as a Buddhist nun was Yuanming Dashi 員明大師.

¹⁷⁴ Her full name was Wuguo Great Senior Princess, Wuguo dazhang gongzhu 吳國大長公主, her Buddhist name was Baoci Zhengfa Dashi 報慈正法大師, and she lived at Zisheng yuan 資聖院.

¹⁷⁵ *Qingyu* 清裕. Hsieh 2000: 82.

¹⁷⁶ Hsieh 2000: 90.

¹⁷⁷ Hsieh 2000: 95.

5.2.1

The introduction of the situation of Buddhism during the Song Dynasty will now be followed with the translations of the biographies of the nuns Miaodao and Huangxin.

四八，宋溫州淨居寺尼妙道傳

妙道，延平尚書黃公裳之女，參徑山大慧禪師得法，住溫州淨居寺。開堂日，乃曰：

“問話且止，直饒有傾湫之辯，倒獄之機，衲僧門下一點用不著。且佛未出世時，一事全無。我祖西來，使有許多建立，列刹相望，星分派別，以至今日，累及兒孫。遂使山僧於人天大眾前，無風起浪，向第二義門通箇消息。語默該不盡底，彌亘大方；言詮說不及處，徧周沙界。通身是眼，覷而當機；電卷星馳，如何湊泊？有時一喝，生殺全威；有時一喝，佛祖莫辨；有時一喝，八面受敵；有時一喝，自救不了。且道那一喝是生殺全威？那一喝是佛祖莫辨？那一喝是八面受敵？那一喝是自救不了？若向這裏薦得，堪報不報之恩；脫或未然，山僧無夢說夢去也。”拈起拂子曰：“還見麼？若見，被見刺所障。”擊禪牀曰：“還聞麼？若聞被聲塵所惑，直饒離見絕聞，正是二乘小果。跳出一步，蓋色騎聲，全放全收，主賓互換。所以道欲識佛性義，當觀時節因緣。敢問諸人，即今是甚麼時節？蕩蕩仁風扶聖化，熙熙和氣助昇平。”擲拂子，下座。尼問：“如何是佛？”道曰：“非佛。”曰：“如何是佛法大意？”道曰：“骨底骨董。”問：“言無展事，詔不投機時如何？”道曰：“未屙已前，墮坑落塹。”

Biography number 48

The Biography of the Song Dynasty Nun Miaodao from Jingju Temple in Wenzhou¹⁷⁸

Miaodao was the daughter of Minister¹⁷⁹ Huang Gongshang in Yanping. She joined Master Dahui¹⁸⁰ at Jingshan¹⁸¹ monastery and attained the *dharmā*. She resided [thereafter] at the Jingju Temple in Wenzhou.

On the occasion of the Kaitang ceremony,¹⁸² she said:

Stop these inquiries [into the scriptures], this is nothing but twisted and base argumentation and a device to turn the mountains upside down. You monks and nuns inside the temple should not use [this by any means]. Moreover, when the Buddha had not yet been born in this world, there was not a single problem. But when our Patriarch¹⁸³ came from the west, he caused many temples to be established, lined up so closely that they were within eyesight and the different schools became as numerous as the stars [in the sky]. Until today generations of disciples have succeeded [each other]. Accordingly it causes me¹⁸⁴ to stand in front of the assembly of men, heavenly beings and the *saṃgha*¹⁸⁵ and make waves when there is no wind, spreading information about the second level of truth.¹⁸⁶ Neither speaking nor silence is able to fathom [the Buddha's teaching], but they spread it in all directions. The doctrines formulated with words are inferior, but they already fill countless

¹⁷⁸ Song Wenzhou Jingjusi Ni Miaodao Zhuan 宋温州淨居寺尼妙道傳. Her Buddhist name means 'Supreme Way,' here referring to the Buddha's teaching. *FGDCD*: 2855. Miaodao is also mentioned in *ZFRDC*. It is said that she had a deep understanding of Chan. She is also mentioned in *Jiatai pudeng lu*, part eight 嘉泰普燈錄卷八. *ZFRDC*: 332. Miaodao's biography also appear in *Xu Chuandeng lu*, part 32 續傳燈錄卷第三十二目錄.

¹⁷⁹ *Shangshu* 尚書 is the title of the head of a top-level administrative agency in the central government's department of state affairs. The title was used in this way up till the Yuan Dynasty. Hucker 1985: 410.

¹⁸⁰ Dahui 大慧 (1089-1163) was the seventh successor of the Yangqi 楊岐 branch of the Linji School 臨濟宗 of Chan Buddhism. *FGDCD*: 881.

¹⁸¹ Jingshan 經山.

¹⁸² Kaitang 開堂 is the name of the ceremony of translating new scriptures on the occasion of the emperor's birthday, expressing a wish for the emperor's long life. *FGDCD*: 5309.

¹⁸³ This might refer to Bodhidharma, who according to Chan legend came from the west and was the first Chinese Chan patriarch.

¹⁸⁴ Miaodao uses the term *shanseng* 山僧, lit. 'mountain monk,' about herself.

¹⁸⁵ *Dazhong* 大眾, Skt. *mahāsaṃgha* means 'the community of monks and nuns.' *FGDCD*: 852.

¹⁸⁶ *Dieryimen* 第二義門 is the second level of the Bodhisattva path towards the attainment of the ultimate truth. *FGDCD*: 4761.

worlds.¹⁸⁷ With eyes all over the body one approaches a critical moment face to face with the teacher,¹⁸⁸ like lightning sweeping through the sky and dispersing all the stars, how can one gather and keep them together?

Sometimes one shout¹⁸⁹ and one has total power over life and death.

Sometimes one shout and the Buddhas and the Patriarchs are not distinguished?

Sometimes one shout and one is attacked by enemies from the eight different directions.

Sometimes one shout and one cannot even save oneself.¹⁹⁰

Can you answer me which shout has total power over life and death?

Which shout is the one where the Buddhas and the Patriarchs are not distinguished?

Which shout is the one where enemies from the eight different directions attack you?

Which shout is the one where one cannot save oneself?

If you are able to suggest [an answer to these questions], then you are able to repay the kindness that cannot be repaid. Suppose that before it happens, the mountain monks¹⁹¹ are explaining dreams without having dreamt them.

Miaodao lifted up the flywhisk¹⁹² and said: “[Did] you see this?¹⁹³ If you saw it, then you are obstructed by the thorn of sight.” She hit the meditation platform and said:

[Did] you hear this [sound hitting the platform]? If you heard it, you are confused by the impurity of sound. Although you separate yourselves from visual impressions and cut off acoustic impressions, it is nothing but the minor fruits of the *Two Vehicles*!¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁷ The meaning of *shajie* 沙界 is ‘measureless and countless number of Buddha worlds.’ *FGDCD*: 2974.

¹⁸⁸ *Dangji* 當機 probably refers to teaching situations which are critical in terms of whether one manages to attain Enlightenment or not. In this context, what she wants to express is that these critical moments are only approached with the eyes, which one uses for reading the scriptures, and not with one’s whole body.

¹⁸⁹ *He* 喝 is a sudden shout given during Chan dialogues between masters and disciples. It is used as an expression of a reality that goes beyond words, or it is used by a teacher to shock, awaken or scold the student. It is often used as a teaching method by the Linji School. *FGDCD*: 4909.

¹⁹⁰ It seems Miaodao was influenced by the teaching of Linji 臨濟. In *Linji lu* 臨濟錄, there is an incident with a clear parallel to these four shouts: “At times my shout is like the precious sword of the Diamond King. At times my shout is like a golden-hair lion crouching on the ground. At times my shout is like the search pole and the shadow grass. At times my shout doesn’t work like a shout at all. Do you understand?” Dainippon Zokuzōkyō 大日本續藏經, vol. 118, *Guzunsu yulu* 古尊宿語錄, 卷第四, p. 115a1-2 (tr. Watson 1993: 98).

¹⁹¹ Miaodao might be referring to herself here.

¹⁹² *Fuzi* 拂子, Skt. *vyajana* or *vālavayajana* is a flywhisk made out of hemp, silk or animal hair used by Buddhist monks and nuns to chase away flies and other insects without killing them. *FGDCD*: 4259.

¹⁹³ I.e. lifting up the flywhisk.

¹⁹⁴ This section occurs several times in the Buddhist scriptures, e.g. T51, no.2077: 692a. *Ercheng* 二乘 are the two vehicles of *shengwen* 聲聞, Skt. *śrāvaka* ‘listeners to Buddha’s teaching’ and *bizhifo* 辟支佛, Skt. *pratyekabuddha* ‘a lone Buddha.’ These two types of practitioners are regularly mentioned in Mahāyāna literature, usually with negative connotations as belonging to the ‘small vehicle,’ the Hīnayāna, and they are set up in sharp contrast to the Bodhisattva ideal. The *śrāvaka* was originally a disciple who heard the sermons of Buddha Śākyamuni. Later it got rather negative connotations in Mahāyāna scriptures. In these scriptures the

You [must] go one step beyond [this], transcend colours and sounds, let go of everything and gather everything together, the host and the guest are exchangeable.¹⁹⁵ Therefore if you say that you understand the meaning of the Buddha-nature, you must observe the occasion and conditions.¹⁹⁶ May I ask everyone, what occasion is it now? [This is the occasion:] the vast benevolence helps the transformation into a sage, the calm and gentle kindness aids the raise of peace.

[After she said this] she threw away the flywhisk and climbed down from the lecture seat.

[Once] a nun asked: “How is Buddha?” [Miao]Dao answered: “[There is] no Buddha.”

A nun asked: “What is then the great meaning of the Buddha-dharma?” [Miao]Dao said: “Skeleton of [old] bones.”

Someone asked: “What about when words do not refer to the matter and instructions do not correspond to the reality?” [Miao]Dao answered: “Already before you have urinated, you have fallen into the hole.”

5.2.2

五六，宋南昌妙住菴尼黃心傳

黃心，南昌馬氏女，乳名璫兒。卅歲從父問字，明敏絕倫，兼閒女紅。愛弄管絃，每潛鄰閩習之，畏家庭譴責也。年十三，慈父見背，依母鍼黹度日。尋嫁茶商季某為妻，季因事得罪，遂為南昌知府某所得。越一年，知府亦陷於法，心遂輾轉為妓。一日，有一老尼容止甚醜陋，故犯心輿，婢從訶之，不去，心遂舉帷審視，若故相識者。尼見心，驀然喝曰：“爾不憶如來座下失聲一笑時耶？”心聞言，頓悟前生，方欲酬答，尼已不見。心既歸，遂屏謝遊冶，即日覓得妙住菴，依師出家，蓋嘉定十二年四月八日也。時瓊瑄紫真人白玉蟾方訪道入浙，留滯南昌，聞知其事，大為歎美。贈以詩曰：“如今無用繡香囊，已入空王選佛場。生鐵脊梁三事衲，冷灰心緒一爐香。庭前竹長真如翠，檻外花開般若香。萬事到頭都是夢，天傾三峽洗高唐。”有又贈以詞曰：“荳蔻丁香，待則甚，如今休也。爭知道本來面目、風光洒洒底事？到

śrāvaka is seen as inferior to the bodhisattva, both in terms of insight and compassion, e.g. they did not recognise that all phenomena are without a permanent self. *FGDCD*: 6497, Williams 1989: 145f.

¹⁹⁵ ‘Host’ and ‘guest,’ or ‘subjective’ and ‘objective,’ are two concepts that are very important in the *Linji lu*.

¹⁹⁶ *Yinyuan* 因緣, Skt. *hetupratyana* are ‘primary conditions and secondary causes.’ *CEDBT*: 403.

頭驚鳳侶，不如禪脫鴛鴦社。好說與幾個正迷人，休嗟訝。紗窗外，梅花下，酒醒也，教人怕。把翠雲翦卻，緇衣披挂。柳色已參彌勒了，趙州要勘臺山話。想而今心似白芙蕖，無人畫。”其師爲一有道高尼，年已八十餘，度弟子十餘輩。嘗曰：“余最後弟子尚未來。”及心發道意，使者方至門，尼即遙呼曰：“汝之來意，我已預知。”令彼速來，使者驚駭返報，心乃剃度受戒。未久，其師付以衣鉢，溘然圓寂。心爲菴主之後，終日潛心修道，望者蔚著，四方叩法席者逾三百衆。齋寮靜室，鱗次櫛比，更興大願，鑄銅鐘一口，重四萬八千斤。因冶經八易，憤不成形，心自計願力不虔，乃有此失。遂於九次捨身入爐，鐘竟圓滿。

Biography number 56

The Biography of the Song Dynasty Nun Huangxin Who Came from Nanchang and Resided at Miaozhu nunnery.¹⁹⁷

Huangxin was the daughter of Mister Ma from Nanchang; her childhood name was Nao'er.¹⁹⁸ [When she was] a child she asked her father about the written characters, and her intelligence was without equal. In her leisure time Huangxin did needlework and loved to play wind and string instruments. She often practised secretly in the neighbour's private quarters, because she was afraid her family would criticize her. [When Huangxin was] thirteen years old, her beloved father passed away. [Now her family] depended on her mother's needlework to make a living. Soon she married a certain tea merchant Ji.¹⁹⁹

Because of an incident Ji was sentenced [to jail], and Huangxin then became the woman of a certain prefect²⁰⁰ in Nanchang. After one year, the prefect also got exposed to [punishment] by the law. [Huang]Xin was then forced [by circumstances] into becoming a prostitute. One day there was an old nun whose demeanour was extremely repulsive [who] intentionally damaged [Huang]Xin's cart. Huangxin's maidservants scolded the old nun, but she did not go away. [Huang]Xin then pulled up the curtain and took a closer look [at the

¹⁹⁷ Song Nanchang Miaozhu'an Ni Huangxin Zhuan 宋南昌妙住菴尼黃心傳.

¹⁹⁸ Nao'er 瑙兒 means something like 'precious child.'

¹⁹⁹ Ji 季.

²⁰⁰ Zhifu 知府 is the title of a prefect of a Superior Prefecture from Song through Yuan. Hucker 1985: 158.

nun, and saw that the she] resembled a previous acquaintance. The nun looked at [Huang]Xin and suddenly shouted:²⁰¹ “Do you not remember when you could not help but to laugh out once below the seat of the Tathāgta?”²⁰² [Huang]Xin heard these words, and she suddenly realized her previous life. [Just when she] wished to respond, the nun was already out of sight. [Huang]Xin then took refuge in the Buddha.²⁰³ Thereupon she abandoned [the life of] amusement, and the same day Huangxin found the Miao Zhu nunnery and renounced home²⁰⁴ under the guidance of a teacher. This was around the eighth day of the fourth month the twelfth year of the Jiading period.²⁰⁵ The Daoist Master Bai Yuchan²⁰⁶ visited Zhejiang²⁰⁷ on the way and stayed in Nanchang.²⁰⁸ When he got to know about this matter he was full of admiration for Huangxin. He presented her with a poem:

As for now there is no use of embroideries and sachets of perfume,
 You have already entered the Buddha’s²⁰⁹ place²¹⁰
 [Wearing a nun’s] robe²¹¹ with a backbone like iron,
 A mind like cold ashes and a furnace full of incense.
 The bamboo in front of the courtyard is growing the emerald green *thusness*,²¹²
 The flowers outside the fence unfold the fragrance of *wisdom*,²¹³
 The ten thousand things²¹⁴ are after all a dream,
 The heaven pour water [in order for] the Three Gorges²¹⁵ to wash Gaotang.²¹⁶

²⁰¹ He 喝 see explanation above.

²⁰² Rulai 如來, Skt. Tathāgta the ‘thus gone one’ is another name for the Buddha.

²⁰³ The meaning of *gui* 歸, Skt. *śaraṇa* is to ‘take refuge in the Buddha.’ *FGDCD*: 6570.

²⁰⁴ *Chujia* 出家, Skt. *pravajyā*, literally means ‘to leave home,’ but has the implicit meaning of becoming a novice, and later a nun or monk. *FGDCD*: 1558.

²⁰⁵ The text says it is in the twelfth year in the Jiading 嘉定 period (1208 -1224), so this will be in 1220.

²⁰⁶ The full name of Bai Yuchan here is Qiongguan Ziqing Zhenren Bai Yuchan 瓊瑯紫清真人白玉蟾. He was a Daoist who lived during the Southern Song Dynasty.

²⁰⁷ Zhe 浙 refers to Zhejiang Province 浙江.

²⁰⁸ Nanchang 南昌 is in Jiangxi Province 江西.

²⁰⁹ *Kongwang* 空王, literally ‘King of Emptiness,’ is another term for the Buddha. *FGDCD*: 3471.

²¹⁰ *Xuanfochang* 選佛場 means ‘meditation room.’ *FGDCD*: 2769. It could also mean the place where one gets ordained as a monk or nun, literary ‘choosing Buddha place.’

²¹¹ *Sanshina* 三事衲 is a term for a monk’s or nun’s robe of five, seven, or nine patches. Ding 1984: 155. The *Song Bai Zhenren Yuchan Quanji* 宋白真人玉蟾全集 gives an alternative reading of this sentence, instead of *sanshina* 三事衲, it gives *sanshina* 三世衲. *Sanshi* 三世 refers to the three periods of time; past, present and future. *Song Bai Zhenren Yuchan Quanji* 宋白真人玉蟾全集 1976: 220. I am not sure which of the two readings is the correct one.

²¹² *Zhenru* 真如, Skt. *bhūtatathatā* or *tathatā* often translated as ‘thusness’ or ‘suchness,’ meaning ‘things as they are’ or ‘the real nature of things.’ *FGDCD*: 4197.

²¹³ *Bore* 般若, Skt. *prajñā* means ‘wisdom’; in Buddhism it is the perfect wisdom that is based on a realization of dependent origination, no-self, emptiness, etc. It is the wisdom that is able to extinguish afflictions and bring about enlightenment. *FGDCD*: 4301.

²¹⁴ I.e. everything, the whole world.

Bai Yuchan also presented her with another poem:²¹⁷

Young beautiful girl,²¹⁸

What are you waiting for?

Now [that your beauty has] passed [away]

Don't you know your original appearance?

Or the matters of great importance?

The startled sweethearts everywhere,

Are not equal to hide from the affectionate couple,

Better tell the many truly deluded people

Put a stop to it!

Outside the screen window under the plum flowers,

When one awakes from drunken sleep it causes people to be afraid.

Having cut off the hair²¹⁹

The black clothes [of a nun] are put on as armour

The willows' colour already belongs to Maitreya.²²⁰

Zhaozhou wished to see through the speech of Mt. Tai,²²¹

His mind and heart [are as pure] as a white lotus nobody is able to paint.

Her master was an eighty-year-old plus nun of high morals, and [who had] saved more than ten disciples. The old nun used to say: "My very last student has not come yet." At the time when [Huang]Xin had directed her will to [the attainment of] enlightenment, a messenger

²¹⁵ San Xia 三峽 is the same as the Three Gorges of the Yangtze River. *HYDCD*: 94.

²¹⁶ I think Gaotang 高唐 is the name of a place.

²¹⁷ *Ci* 詞 is a form of poetry originating in the Tang Dynasty and flourishing during the Song Dynasty. *HYDCD*: 6556.

²¹⁸ *Doukoudingxiang* 豆蔻丁香; *doukou* literally means 'round cardamom,' and is often used in poems as a metaphor for a young girl. *Dingxiang* literally means 'lilac,' but I think it here is a metaphor for 'beautiful.'

²¹⁹ *Cuiyun* 翠雲 is a metaphor for a woman's long, black and thick hair. *HYDCD*: 5582.

²²⁰ Mile 彌勒, Skt. Maitreya is the Buddha of the Future. *FGDCD*: 2704.

²²¹ This is a part of a *gong'an*, the whole *gong'an* is: Zhaozhou had a disciple who met an old woman and asked her, "How do I get to Mt. Tai?" She said, "Just keep going!" As the monk started off, he heard the old woman remark, "He really went!" Afterwards, the disciple mentioned this to Zhaozhou, who said, "I think I will go over there and see for myself." When he met the old woman, Zhaozhou asked the same question and she gave the same response: "Just keep going!" As Zhaozhou started off, he heard the old lady said as she had last time, "He really went!" When Zhaozhou returned, he said to the assembly, "I have seen through the old lady of Mt. Tai!" T.48, no.2005: 297a.

Zhaozhou Congshen 趙州從諗 (778-897), was one of the most renowned Chinese Chan masters of the Tang Dynasty. His teachings are frequently cited in the *gong'an* 公案 collections, e.g. the *gong'an* of the dog and the Buddha-nature 狗子佛性. *FGDCD*: 5934.

arrived to the door and the nun then called out from a distance: “Your intention of coming was something I knew of beforehand.” She instructed him to come quickly and the messenger became terrified, returned and reported the matter. Thereupon [Huang]Xin shaved her hair and received the precepts.²²² Not long [after] her master [had] handed her the robes and begging bowl,²²³ Huangxin suddenly [attained] perfect enlightenment.²²⁴ After [this Huang]Xin acted as the abbess [of the nunnery]. All day long she was absorbed in the study [of Buddha’s teachings]. Her good reputation was growing, [and those people from] all directions that venerated her under the *dharma* seat exceeded the number of 300. Study rooms, dormitories and meditation halls were [standing] row after row. [In order to make] the Bodhisattva vow²²⁵ flourish even more, she cast a bronze bell, and its weight was 48,000 *jin*.²²⁶ Eight times [the bell was] cast and went through transformations, but it broke and was impossible to form. [Huang]Xin herself reckoned that the vow²²⁷ was not sincere [enough], and therefore this failure [had occurred]. Consequently she threw her body into the fireplace the ninth time, and the bell was [finally] completed.

5.3 The Yuan Dynasty (1206/1279-1368)

The Yuan Dynasty was a part of the Mongolian Empire and, as in the case of the Liao Dynasty (which was ruled by the Khitans) and the Jin Dynasty (which was ruled by the Jurchens), Buddhism was the most acceptable religion for the rulers. In contrast to Confucianism and Daoism, Buddhism was not an indigenous Chinese religion and did not make any distinction between people. Confucianism and Daoism, however, considered the Chinese people superior to others. As a result, the Liao, Jin and Yuan Dynasties all supported Buddhism.²²⁸

²²² *Tidu* 剃度, Skt. *muṇḍanā* means ‘to shave the hair to become a monk or a nun.’ *FGDCDS*: 3727. *Shoujie* 受戒 means ‘to receive the rules,’ it is a special ceremony where the disciple receives the rules. Different sets of rules apply to the various schools of Buddhism. *FGDCD*: 3101.

²²³ *Yibo* 衣鉢, it is also written *yibo* 衣鉢, Skt. *pātracīvara* and means ‘three robes and a bowl’; these are the primary possessions of a nun or a monk, that they must carry when they are being ordained.

²²⁴ *Yuanji* 圓寂, Skt. *parinirvāna* refers to the perfection of all virtue and the elimination of all evil, transcendence of the miseries of transmigration and entrance into the fullest bliss. *FGDCD*: 5405.

²²⁵ *Dayuan* 大願, Skt. *mahāpraṇidhāna* is the great vow of a Buddha or a Bodhisattva made to bring all sentient beings to Buddhahood. *FGDCD*: 904.

²²⁶ One *jin* 斤 is half a kilogram. *New Age Chinese-English Dictionary*: 798.

²²⁷ *Yuanli* 願力 means ‘the power of one’s vow,’ i.e. the power of the Bodhisattva’s vow to save all sentient beings. *FGDCD*: 6727.

²²⁸ Ch’en 1964: 425. The Liao Dynasty 遼 (907-1125) ruled by the Khitans 契丹, and the Jin Dynasty 金

One of the reasons the Mongols were attracted to Tibetan Buddhism (or Lamaism) was its use of magic. In 1260 they made it into their national religion and made 'Phags-pa (1235-1280), a Tibetan lama belonging to the Sakya (Sa skya) tradition, the imperial preceptor. In 1264 'Phags-pa became the chief of the highest office in the central government controlling all affairs concerning Buddhism, Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism.²²⁹ The lamas enjoyed great benefits after Tibetan Buddhism became the state religion of the Yuan Empire. In 1309 an edict was issued stating that anyone striking a lama would get his hands cut off, and anyone insulting a lama would get his tongue ripped out. As a result, some lamas became arrogant, haughty and unreligious. Some of the lamas took advantage of the situation and indulged in crimes like stealing land from the people and carrying away their daughters.²³⁰ In 1276 a new decree was issued, stating that the lamas who had families were to be taxed the same as laymen, but this was difficult to enforce, since the government bureau that controlled Buddhism was opposed to the decree.²³¹ The frequent arrogance of Tibetan lamas and the expenses of Buddhist rituals at court caused deep but muted discontent among Chinese Confucian scholars.²³²

During the reign of Emperor Wuzong,²³³ the Tibetan Tripiṭaka was translated into Mongolian and the government also sponsored three editions of the Chinese Tripiṭaka and one edition in the Tangut script for distribution to the monasteries situated in Xixia.²³⁴ In the fourteenth century, Uighur and Mongolian translators translated many Tibetan Buddhist works into Mongolian (e.g. *sūtras*, devotional works, the biography of the Buddha, and guides to lay Buddhist life). The only Chinese *sūtra* translated into Mongolian was the 'Sūtra of the Big Dipper' in 1328 by Alintemür.²³⁵

In 1230, the Daoists began to decorate the walls of Daoist temples with paintings representing Laozi in eighty-one different incarnations, one of the incarnations being the Buddha. In addition, a text explaining the eighty-one incarnations was published. This, together with the circulation of the notorious text *Huahu jing*²³⁶ from the Sui Dynasty claiming that Laozi went to India and taught simple doctrines under the name of Buddha,

(1115-1234) ruled by the Jurchen 女真.

²²⁹ Ch'en 1964: 419.

²³⁰ Ch'en 1964: 420.

²³¹ Ch'en 1964: 421.

²³² Atwood 2004: 50.

²³³ Emperor Wuzong 武宗 (r. 1308-1311).

²³⁴ Ch'en 1964: 420. Xixia 西夏.

²³⁵ Atwood 2004: 50.

²³⁶ *Huahu jing* 化胡經 'Scripture of Conversion of Barbarians.'

made the Buddhists furious. Buddhists brought this issue up with Mangu Khan²³⁷ in 1255, and in the debate that followed, the authenticity of these two texts were discussed. The Daoists failed to answer the questions from the Khan and the Buddhists, and therefore lost the debate. The Khan issued a decree stating that the texts were to be collected and turned over to the Buddhists. However, the Daoists refused to hand the scriptures over and the controversy continued. It was not until 1281 that the controversy was put to an end when Kublai Khan issued an edict stipulating that all Daoist texts, except *Daode jing*,²³⁸ were false and must be destroyed by fire, together with their respective printing blocks.²³⁹

There is little—or no information—about nuns in the Yuan Dynasty, at least I did not find any during my research for this thesis.

5.3.1

This short introduction of the situation of Buddhism during the Yuan Dynasty will now be followed by the translations of the biographies of the nuns Shelanlan and Xingyue.

六六，元京師妙善寺尼舍藍藍傳

舍藍藍，高昌人，其地隸北庭，風尚好佛，故為苾芻者多。太祖皇帝龍飛漠北，其王率所部以從，帝嘉其義，處之諸國君長之上，待以子壻之禮。海都之叛，國人南徙，師始八歲，從其親至京師，入侍中宮。真懿順聖皇后愛其明敏，恩顧尤厚。成宗之世，事皇太后於西宮。以侍從之久，勤勞之多，詔禮帝師迦羅斯巴幹即兒為師，薙染為尼。服用之物，皆取給於宮。又抵宮官例，繼以既廩。武宗繼統，仁宗以太弟監國，師朝夕於太后之側，入而侍，出而從，所言必聽，所諫必從，睽寵之隆，猶子姪焉。內而妃主，外而王公，皆敬以師禮，稱曰八哈石。北人之稱八哈石，猶漢人之稱師也。仁宗之世，師以桑榆晚景，自謂出入供掖數十餘年，凡歷四朝事三后，寵榮兼至，志願足矣。數請靜退，居於宮外，求至道以酬罔極。太后弗聽，力辭弗已，詔居妙善寺，以時入見。賜予之物，不可勝紀。師以其物，剏寺於京師曰妙善，又建寺於臺山曰普明，各置佛經一藏，恆業有差。又以黃金繕寫番字藏經般若八千頌，五護陀羅尼十餘部，及漢字華嚴、楞嚴，畏元字法華、金光明等經二部。又於西山重建龍泉

²³⁷ Mangu Khan was the fourth Great Khan of the Mongol Empire (c. 1208-1259).

²³⁸ *Daode jing* 道德經 was, according to legend, the only text written by Laozi.

²³⁹ Ch'en 1964: 422ff.

寺，建層閣於蓮池，於吐蕃五大寺，高昌國栴檀佛寺，京師萬安寺等，皆貯鈔幣以給然燈續明之費。又製僧伽黎衣數百，施番、漢諸國之僧，其書寫佛經，凡用金數萬兩，剏寺施捨所用幣以萬計。其積而能散，施予不吝，期積福於來生，必至於地者，皆人所不能也。英宗之明，以其有靜退之高，眷遇尤至，每稱之賢，以為知幾。文宗即位，皇太后居中宮，以皇妣眷屬太長公愛重於師，有兄弟之義，尤加敬焉。至順三年二月廿一日歿，年六十四，葬南城之陽，賜號真淨大師。

Biography number 66

The Biography of the Yuan Dynasty Nun Shelanlan from Miaoshan Temple in the Capital.²⁴⁰

Shelanlan was from Gaochang, her birthplace was Libeiting.²⁴¹ By custom they practiced Buddhism, and therefore many of them became monks and nuns.²⁴²

The first emperor [of the Yuan Dynasty]²⁴³ ascended the throne north of the Gobi desert.²⁴⁴ The king [there] commanded all his troops to follow him. The emperor appreciated the king's integrity and installed him as the foremost among dignities of all the kingdoms. The emperor treated him with the respect proper for a son-in-law. [When] Haidu²⁴⁵ rebelled, the inhabitants migrated to the south. The Master²⁴⁶ was then eight years old, and she followed her parents to the capital.²⁴⁷ Where she entered [the palace] and served the empress. The empress²⁴⁸ liked her bright and quick-witted personality, and with kindness she cared for

²⁴⁰ Yuan Jingshi Miaoshansi Ni Shelanlan Zhuan 元京師妙善寺尼舍藍藍傳. This biography is the same as in *Taishō Tripikāta* T.49, no2036: 734c 佛祖歷代通載. Shelanlan is also mentioned in *ZFRDC*, where it is stated that she lived from 1269 to 1332. She was born in Gaochang 高昌, which today is in the eastern part of the Tulufan district in Xinjiang Province. *ZFRDC* gives a brief summary of her biography presented here. *ZFRDC*: 388.

²⁴¹ Libeiting 隸北庭 is in present-day Xinjiang Province.

²⁴² *Bichu* 苾芻 is another transliteration of the Sanskrit word *bhikṣu*, which means 'monk.' *FGDCD*: 1735.

²⁴³ Kublai Khan was the first emperor of the Yuan Dynasty.

²⁴⁴ Mobei 漠北 is the land north of the Gobi desert, it is now known as Mongolia.

²⁴⁵ Haidu 海都 (1235-1301) was the grandson of Ögedei Khan, i.e. posthumously the Mongol Emperor Taizong. He controlled the eastern part of Turkestan, present-day Xinjiang Province, and much of Mongolia proper. He opposed the rule of his cousin Kublai Khan. *Cihai*: 2514.

²⁴⁶ I.e. Shelanlan.

²⁴⁷ The text refers to the first capital in the Yuan Dynasty, which was then known as Khanbalik or Dabu 大都. It was situated where the present-day Beijing is located. Fairbank and Goldman 2001: 121.

²⁴⁸ Her full posthumous title is Zhenyishunsheng zhaotianruiwenguanying Huangshou 貞懿順聖昭天睿文光應

Shelanlan very generously.

In the era of Emperor Chengzong,²⁴⁹ Shelanlan served Empress Dowager in the western part of the palace.²⁵⁰ Because Shelanlan served her for a long period and performed her duties diligently, Empress Dowager ordered the emperor's teacher Jialuosiba²⁵¹ to be Shelanlan's teacher. Shelanlan shaved [her hair off] and dyed [her clothes] to become a nun. Clothes and all the things she needed for daily use were supplied by the palace. The custom of the palace eunuchs to administer Shelanlan's grant continued.

[After Emperor Chengzong's reign,] Wuzong²⁵² succeeded the throne. Because Renzong²⁵³ was the younger brother of the emperor, he was in charge of State affairs. From morning to night the Master stayed at Empress Dowager's side. [When they were] inside, she waited on Empress Dowager; when they went outside, she followed Empress Dowager. [When] the Master spoke, Empress Dowager would certainly listen, and the Empress would certainly follow her advice. Empress Dowager cared so much for Shelanlan, [that she would treat her in the same way as her] niece! Both the second wife and empress inside the palace, and the kings and dukes outside the palace, all respected her as Master and called her *bahashi*.²⁵⁴ [What] the northerners call *bahashi*, is the same as [what] the Han people call *shi*.²⁵⁵

During Emperor Renzong's reign, the Master was getting old.²⁵⁶ She herself considered that she went in and out of the palace for several decades, all together experiencing the reign of four emperors and serving three empresses, being highly loved and honoured, and that her wishes were fulfilled! She [therefore] asked several times for permission to quietly retire and reside outside the palace [in order] to seek ultimate Enlightenment,²⁵⁷ in order to understand the infinite. But Empress Dowager would not allow it! But Shelanlan tried her best to withdraw and would not give up [her wish]. [In the end] Empress Dowager ordered Shelanlan to reside in the Miaoshan Temple and from time to

皇后, here abbreviated to Zhenyishunsheng Huanghou 真懿順聖皇后, she was the wife to Kublai Khan.

²⁴⁹ Emperor Chengzong 成宗 ruled China between 1295 and 1307.

²⁵⁰ The western part of the palace, *xigong* 西宮, is where the concubines usually resided.

²⁵¹ Jialuosiba 迦羅斯巴 was Emperor Chengzong's teacher.

²⁵² Emperor Wuzong 武宗 (r. 1308-1311).

²⁵³ Emperor Renzong 仁宗 (r. 1311-1320).

²⁵⁴ *Bahashi* 八哈石.

²⁵⁵ *Shi* 師 mean 'master.'

²⁵⁶ *Sangyuwanjing* 桑榆晚景 is an idiom meaning 'one has come to the evening of one's life' or 'closing years of one's life,' i.e. one is getting old.

²⁵⁷ *Dao* 道 can mean both 'road,' Skt. *mārga*, and 'enlightenment' Skt. *bodhi*. In this context I think 'enlightenment' is the right translation. *FGDCD*: 5198, 5620.

time enter the palace to visit her. [All] the things that were bestowed on her cannot be fully recorded here. With these gifts the Master established a temple called Miaoshan in the capital. Furthermore, Shelanlan established a temple called Puming at Mt.Tai,²⁵⁸ and each temple stored one set of the Buddhist canon. Shelanlan's deeds were out of the ordinary. Moreover she used golden [ink] to meticulously copy the *Prajñāpāramitā*²⁵⁹ in eight thousand verses in a foreign language,²⁶⁰ and more than ten sections of the *Wuhutuoluoni*,²⁶¹ as well as the *Avatamsakasūtra*²⁶² and the *Lengyan jing*²⁶³ in Chinese characters, and the *Lotus Sūtra*²⁶⁴ and the *Jin guangming jing*²⁶⁵ in the Uighur [language]. Shelanlan also rebuilt the Longquan Temple at Xishan,²⁶⁶ and constructed a multi-story tower at Lianchi,²⁶⁷ five great temples in Tibet,²⁶⁸ the Guozhantanfo Temple²⁶⁹ in Gaochang, the Wan'an Temple²⁷⁰ in the capital and so on. Shelanlan kept money in all [the temples] to cover the expenses to light the lamps and [let them] continue to burn. She made hundreds of black robes to the *saṃgha*,²⁷¹ and gave alms to foreign as well as Chinese monks and nuns. She copied Buddhist *sūtras*. In all she used tens of thousands *liang*²⁷² of gold. She used tens of thousands of coins to establish temples and for alms. The wealth increased and Shelanlan [was] able to distribute it, and she gave alms generously. Shelanlan's accumulated good fortune will be transferred to her future rebirth and certainly she will arrive at a place nobody

²⁵⁸ Puming 普明 at Taishan 'Mt.Tai' 臺山. Mt.Tai may refer to Mt.Wutai 五臺山, which is one of the four sacred mountains in Chinese Buddhism. In *ZFRDC* it says that she established a temple at Mt.Wutai. *ZFRDC*: 388.

²⁵⁹ Borebaqiansong 般若八千頌, Skt. *Aṣṭāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*.

²⁶⁰ It could be referring to Mongolian, using the Uighur alphabet writing from the top down.

²⁶¹ *Wuhutuoluoni* 五護陀羅尼, 'Fivefold Protection dhāraṇī,' a *dhāraṇī* is considered to hold magic power. I am not sure which text this is referring to.

²⁶² *Huayan* 華嚴 refers to *Huayanjing* 華嚴經, Skt. *Avatamsakasūtra* 'Flower Ornament Scripture.' See footnote 124.

²⁶³ *Lengyan jing* 楞嚴經 means the same as *Shou lengyan jing* 首楞嚴經, Skt. *Śūraṃgamasūtra*. *FGDCD*: 4004.

²⁶⁴ *Fahua jing* 法華經, Skt. *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* the 'Lotus Sutra.' There are two versions of the *Fahuajing*: *Zheng fahua jing* 正法華經 which was translated by Dharmarakṣaborn (around 230) and was the first translation. The second and most popular translation was called *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經 and was translated by Kumārajīva (344- 413). *FGDCD*: 2847.

²⁶⁵ *Jinguangming jing* 金光明經, Skt. *Suvarṇaprabhāsa(uttam)sūtra*.

²⁶⁶ Longquansi 龍泉寺 at Xishan 西山, I think it might be in Beijing.

²⁶⁷ Lianchi 蓮池.

²⁶⁸ Tuba 吐蕃 is an ancient name for Tibet.

²⁶⁹ Guozhantanfosi 國梅檀佛寺.

²⁷⁰ Wan'ansi 萬安寺.

²⁷¹ *Sēngjiā* 僧伽, Skt. *saṃgha* is another term for 'the community of Buddhist practitioners.' *FGDCD*: 5718.

²⁷² *Liang* 兩 is a unit of weight for silver or gold, about 31 grams. *New Age Chinese-English Dictionary*: 973.

else will be able to match up to.²⁷³

The enlightened rule of Emperor Yingzong,²⁷⁴ is the lofty period of her quiet retirement from public life. The imperial family has treated her kindly and generously; everybody praised her worthiness, and thought she was very wise.

When Wenzong²⁷⁵ was enthroned Empress Dowager resided at the women's palace.²⁷⁶ Because of a distant relative—the princess of the eldest son in the Lu-state²⁷⁷—loved and respected the Master, and since they²⁷⁸ were related by marriage, Shelanlan was respected even more!

The Master died on the twenty-first day of the second month of the third year in the Zhishun²⁷⁹ era, 64 years old. Shelanlan was buried south of Nancheng²⁸⁰ and was given the [posthumous] title Great Master Zhenjing.²⁸¹

5.3.2

七〇，元燕京藥師菴尼性悅傳

性悅，蒙古人，姓高麗氏，為中書平章濶濁歹之側室，有賢行。平章死，誓不貳適，正室子拜馬朶兒赤說其色，欲妻之而不可得，乃以其父所有大答納環子，獻於太師伯顏，特為奏聞。奉旨命拜馬朶兒赤，收繼小母高麗氏。高麗氏夜與親母踰垣而出，投藥師菴削髮為尼。伯顏怒，以為故違聖旨。拜奏命省臺，泊侍正府官鞫問，諸官奉命惟謹，鍛鍊備極慘酷。性悅無他言，惟持觀音聖號不絕口，速求其死。時國公濶里吉思於鞫問官中獨秉權力，侍正府都事帖木兒不花數致語曰：“誰無妻子？安能相守至死！得有如此守節者，莫大之幸。而反坐以罪，恐非我治朝之盛典也。”國公悟，為言於伯顏之前，宛曲解釋，其事遂已。性悅自慶更生，堅發道意，奉大士尤虔。凡蔬

²⁷³ This might refer to that she will be reborn in Amitābha's Pure Land or as a man in her next life.

²⁷⁴ Emperor Yingzong 英宗 ruled from 1321 -1324.

²⁷⁵ Emperor Wenzong 文宗 was enthroned in 1328 and ruled until 1329 when he abdicated. He was reinstated in 1329 and ruled until his death in 1332.

²⁷⁶ *Zhonggong* 中宮 is where the concubines resided.

²⁷⁷ Luguo 魯國.

²⁷⁸ I.e. the Empress Dowager and the princess.

²⁷⁹ Zhishun 至順 is the name of the era Emperor Wenzong ruled the second time, i.e. 1330-1333.

²⁸⁰ Nancheng 南城.

²⁸¹ Zhenjing Dashi 真淨大師.

果糖餞，必先至誠獻供，而後始食。年垂七十，入寂。

Biography number 70

The Biography of the Yuan Dynasty Nun Xingyue from Yaoshi Nunnery in Beijing.²⁸²

Xingyue²⁸³ was Mongolian, and her family name was Gao Li.²⁸⁴ She was the concubine of Kuokuodai,²⁸⁵ who was an Administrator²⁸⁶ to the emperor. Gao Li was a woman of virtuous conduct. When the Grand Councillor died, she swore not to marry again. The son of Kuokuodai's legal wife Baima Duoerchi²⁸⁷ liked her beauty, and wished to marry her, but he could not [get her to marry him]. Thereupon Gao Li took all her father's jewellery,²⁸⁸ and donated them to Grand Preceptor²⁸⁹ Bo Yan.²⁹⁰ This gift was [just what] Bo Yan wanted. Delighted Bo Yan asked what her wish was. She answered by telling what had happened earlier. Bo Yan specially reported this story to the emperor; [but he then] received a decree from the emperor commanding Baima Duoerchi to take his stepmother Gao Li [as his wife].

[During the] night Gao Li and her mother climbed over the wall and ran away. Gao Li went to Yaoshi nunnery, shaved her head²⁹¹ and became a nun. Bo Yan was angered, and regarded this as an act of intentionally disobeying an imperial edict. Both the Governor and the Palace Domestic Service²⁹² made a judicial investigation. All the officials obeyed their orders scrupulously, and exercised extreme cruelty [when they interrogated her]. But

²⁸² *Yuan Yanjing Yaoshian Ni Xing Yue Zhuang* 元燕京藥師菴尼性悅傳. Yanjing is the name of present-day Beijing. The name of the nunnery, Yaoshi, might be a reference to the Bodhisattva of Medicine, Bhaiṣajyarāja.

²⁸³ Xingyue is her name after ordination, Gao Li is the lay name; as in the original Chinese text I use Gao Li until she is ordained as a nun and Xingyue after her ordination.

²⁸⁴ Gao Li 高麗.

²⁸⁵ Kuokuodai 濶濶歹.

²⁸⁶ *Zhongshupingzheng* 中書平章: During the Yuan and Ming Dynasties *pingzhang* referred to a mid-level executive of the Secretariat, *zhongshu*. Hucker 1985: 385.

²⁸⁷ Bai Maduoerchi 拜馬朶兒赤.

²⁸⁸ *Dadanahuanzi* 大答納環子 are a kind of earrings or jewellery used by Mongolian men.

²⁸⁹ *Taishi* 太師 is the title of the Grand Preceptor. Hucker 1985: 481. Here it is not a religious title.

²⁹⁰ Bo Yan 伯顏 (?- 1340). *Zhongguolidai Renming Dacidian*: 1098.

²⁹¹ *Xuefa* 削髮, Skt. *muṇanā* means to shave off one's hair and beard, in the case of men, and become a monk or nun. *FGDCD*: 3727.

²⁹² *Shengtai* 省臺 probably means a 'governor.' *Shizhengfu* 侍正府 is a title used only during the Yuan Dynasty to refer to the Palace Domestic Service which was headed by 14 attendants-in-chief, *shizheng* 侍正. Their status and function are not clear, but they were probably not eunuchs. Hucker 1985: 422.

Xingyue did not utter a single word except that she kept on reciting the holy name of Guanyin,²⁹³ wishing for a quick death.

At that time the Duke of State²⁹⁴ Kuoli Jisi²⁹⁵ was the one among the officials who was in charge of interrogating her. The Palace Domestic Service Office Manager²⁹⁶ Tiemuer Buhua²⁹⁷ repeatedly told [him the following]: “The ones who have no wife, how can they stay together until death [separates them]? To be able to attain a woman who holds on to her chastity after her husband’s death, is not it the uttermost fortune! But on the contrary, this is punished as a crime [here], I am afraid [that this is] not a grand standard for governing our dynasty.” The Duke of State realized [this], and said [these words] in front of Bo Yan, explaining the complicated matter; consequently, this incident came to an end! Xingyue celebrated this as being born again. She firmly resolved her mind for the Way,²⁹⁸ and in worshipping Guanyin²⁹⁹ she became extraordinary pious. As for vegetables, fruits, sweets, and preserved fruits, without exception she would offer them sincerely to Guanyin first and only afterwards she would start to eating [it herself].

Xingyue [was] nearly 70 years old [when] she passed away.

5.4 Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)

In 1368, Zhu Yuanzhang³⁰⁰ overthrew the Mongol rule in China and founded a new dynasty, which he called Ming; ‘the Enlightened Dynasty.’ According to a Maitreya legend, an enlightened ruler will arise in the world when the future Buddha descends to earth from the Tuṣita Heaven. Since Zhu was a member of a rebellious group that fought under the slogan saying an enlightened ruler would appear in this world, he chose to call the new dynasty

²⁹³ Guanyin 觀音 or Guanshiyin *pusa* 觀世音菩薩, Skt. Avalokiteśvara, one of the most worshipped and popular Bodhisattvas. She/he is the Bodhisattva of Mercy, and is able to transform herself/himself into the most suitable form to help people in all situations. *FGDCD*: 6954. For more information on Guanyin see Paul 1979 and Yu 2001.

²⁹⁴ *Guogong* 國公 was from the Sui Dynasty to the Yuan Dynasty a title for the Duke of State. Hucker 1985: 298.

²⁹⁵ Kuoli Jisi 濶里吉思.

²⁹⁶ *Dushi* 都事 was from the Sui Dynasty until the Qing Dynasty the title of an Office Manager; he worked as an supervisor of an agency’s internal clerical work. Hucker 1985: 541. For an explanation of *Shizhengfu*, see footnote 292.

²⁹⁷ Tiemuer Buhua 帖木兒不花.

²⁹⁸ I.e. she vowed to follow the way of Buddhism.

²⁹⁹ *Dashi* 大士 means a ‘Bodhisattva,’ in this context I think it might refer to the Bodhisattva Guanyin. *HYDCD*: 1299.

³⁰⁰ Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (r. 1368-1398).

Ming. By doing so, Zhu received extensive support among common people, who had been looking forward to the coming of the future Buddha. This may be seen as an indication that he regarded himself as the authentic enlightened ruler, a Cakravartin, connected with the coming of Maitreya.³⁰¹

As Zhu had previously been a monk, he therefore had a favourable attitude towards Buddhism, and the ordaining of monks and nuns was encouraged during his reign. There were 57,200 ordinations of Buddhist and Daoist monks and nuns in 1372, and the number increased to 96,328 in 1373. The number increased so rapidly that the government had to find a way to limit it. In 1387, ordination for those under the age of twenty was forbidden, and examinations were introduced to test their knowledge of the scriptures. In 1394, monks who were married were assembled in the capital in order to examine their understanding of the scriptures, and all those who failed were laicised. This was followed by a decree in 1418 stating that in each department no more than forty monks were to be ordained annually, while each prefecture and district were limited to thirty monks and twenty monks, respectively. However, these measures did not help to limit the number of ordinations, and there were 200,000 ordinations in 1486. One of the reasons the measures did not help was that the government continued the practice of selling ordination certificates. For example in 1414, they sold 10,000.³⁰²

During the Ming Dynasty, temples were divided into three categories: *chan* which were devoted to meditation; *jiang* which were concerned with the instructions in the *sūtras*; and *jiao*,³⁰³ in which monastic rules were taught, replacing the *Vinaya* temples from previous dynasties. The *jiao* temples also included those where yoga was practiced, Tantric ceremonies, rituals for the happiness and welfare of the common people, and ceremonies for the deceased were held.³⁰⁴

Another characteristic of Ming Buddhism was the circulation of a registry of monks and nuns to all the temples and monasteries in the empire. When a travelling monk or nun stopped at a temple, his/her name would be checked against the registry. If a name was not on the list, he or she would be considered a fake and handed over to the authorities.³⁰⁵

A schedule of merit and demerit was also introduced in Buddhism during the Ming Dynasty. The accumulation of merit had earlier played a focal role in Daoism, but now this

³⁰¹ Ch'en 1964: 434f.

³⁰² Ch'en 1964: 435.

³⁰³ Chan 禪, jiang 講 and jiao 教.

³⁰⁴ Ch'en 1964: 436.

³⁰⁵ Ch'en 1964: 436.

also came to play a part in Buddhism. According to this schedule, the fate of each individual was determined by the balance between merit and demerit earned during one's lifetime. With his book *Yinzhi lu*, Yuan Liaofan³⁰⁶ made this system popular among the populace.³⁰⁷ The idea of future retribution of one's actions (*karman*) was developed further by the monk Zhuhong who, in the book *Zizhi lu*,³⁰⁸ formulated the ideology's practical applications. He divided all deeds into two categories, meritorious and non-meritorious. Each deed was assigned with a positive or negative number, e.g. helping a person recover from a serious illness was credited with ten merits points, whereas if one did not help a sick person, one was given two points of demerit. This system contradicted an essential Mahāyāna doctrine, saying that an individual should perform a meritorious deed for the sake of the deed itself and not for any reward. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, compassion was seen as the only necessary motivating factor.³⁰⁹

Zhuhong also played a leading role in the harmonizing of the different schools, since he was well versed in the *Vinaya*, as well as the Huayan, Chan and Pure Land teachings. Zhuhong emulated the example of masters like Yongming Yanzhou of the Song Dynasty in the effort of harmonizing the different Buddhist schools.³¹⁰ Zibo Zhenke, Hanshan Deqing, Ouyi Zhixu³¹¹ and Zhuhong all agreed that although Chan and Pure Land were different in some aspects, their psychological approach were the same. When a Pure Land disciple sat down and practised *nianfo*, his mind was concentrated entirely on that one phrase excluding all other thoughts. This resembled the practise of the Chan disciple and his use of the *gong'an*. When the Chan Master Hanshan Deqing copied the *sūtras*, it is said that he uttered the name of Amitāba for every stroke he made, and in old age he recited the *Amitābasūtra* every morning and recited the name of Amitāba several thousand times each day. That pronouncing the names of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas was a part of a great Chan master's everyday practise illustrated the similarities of the religious practices of the Pure Land and Chan Schools in this period.³¹²

In the late Ming Dynasty and early Qing Dynasty, the Chan lineage Linji³¹³ went through a brief but vital revival. This revival occurred despite the fact that none of the four

³⁰⁶ Yuan Liaofan 袁了凡 (1533-1606), *Yinzhi lu* 陰鷲錄 'Record of Silent Recompense.'

³⁰⁷ Ch'en 1964: 436.

³⁰⁸ Zhuhong 株宏 (1535-1615), *Zizhi lu* 自知錄 'Record of Self-knowledge.'

³⁰⁹ Ch'en 1964: 437f.

³¹⁰ Ch'en 1964: 445.

³¹¹ Zibo Zhenke 紫柏真可 (1543-1603), Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清 (1546-1623) and Ouyi Zhixu 藕益智旭 (1599-1655).

³¹² Ch'en 1964: 446f.

³¹³ Linji 臨濟.

Buddhist masters mentioned above associated themselves with a formal Chan lineage and were listed in the “lineage unknown” section of the official biographies of Chan monks. One of the few Buddhist masters who were interested in restoring the Linji lineage was Miyun Yuanwu.³¹⁴ Master Yuanwu had a great number of female disciples who studied with and received *dhārma* transmission from him and his disciples. Such transmissions were given in accordance with the tradition of the great Linji masters of the Tang and Song Dynasties.³¹⁵

The Ming Dynasty also continued to patronize Tibetan Buddhism, as the Mongol Yuan Dynasty had done earlier.³¹⁶ Unlike the Mongols, who let one tradition—the Sakya—have supremacy over the others, the Ming rulers spread their favours to many different monasteries and schools. Consequently, they prevented any one school from becoming too dominant. The Ming rulers’ motives for patronizing several traditions were based on strategic and political considerations: by supporting high lamas,³¹⁷ they hoped to maintain control over the Tibetans and Mongols, who respected and followed their religious leaders. By such peaceful means, the Ming emperors hoped to keep control over the border regions, and to avoid sending any costly military forces or build-up of civil administration in marginal areas.³¹⁸

As the *samgha* declined during the Ming Dynasty, a lay Buddhist movement arose during the latter part of the Ming Dynasty and continued to grow through the next dynasty, the Qing.³¹⁹

5.4.1

The introduction of the situation for Buddhism during the Ming Dynasty will now be followed by the translation of the biography of the nun Dumu Jingang.

八三，明歸德水晶菴尼獨目金剛傳

獨目金剛，萬曆間人，住歸德府城外之水晶菴。因嘗以金剛為業，失一目，故以名此。天性淡薄，自糲食粗衣外，人有所遺，盡分贍僧尼之不給者。每開期會講，善信

³¹⁴ Grant 1996: 51. Miyun Yuanwu 密雲圓悟 (1565-1641).

³¹⁵ Grant 1996: 52f.

³¹⁶ Atwood 2004: 49.

³¹⁷ Tib. Hutukthus.

³¹⁸ Ch'en 1964: 443.

³¹⁹ Ch'en 1964: 447.

環集。一士子問曰：“金剛經何以有三十二分？”答曰：“一以貫之，儒佛皆然。何得許多段落？”說偈曰：“佛說金剛妙出羣，一言了悟絕聲聞。有人解得金剛旨，四八何須逐段分。”一僧問曰：“何以謂之金剛？”答曰：“金剛人皆有的，何須恁般問？金剛果信是金剛，百鍊千槌永不撓。粉碎虛空些子走，祇近惟見佛毫光。”又有人曰：“師通曉佛義，何以不現男身？”答曰：“形有男女，性無彼此，莫作差等觀。”說偈曰：“男女何須辨假真，觀音出現果何人。皮囊脫盡揮無用，試問男身是女身。”隨問隨應，靈敏異常，遠近皈依者無算。年踰七十，預示化期，鼻端有火，危坐瞑然而逝。示一偈云：“茶毘一去永歸空，著處尋常便不空。我去我來仍是我，電光泡影一般同。”

Biography number 83

The Biography of the Ming Dynasty Nun Dumu Jingang from the Shuijing Nunnery in Guide.³²⁰

Dumu Jingang [lived during] the Wanli period.³²¹ She resided in the Shuijing³²² nunnery outside the prefectural city Guide.³²³ Because her previous work [was to sell] diamonds, and she [had] lost one eye, she therefore got the name Dumu Jingang.³²⁴

By nature she [was] indifferent [to both fame and fortune].³²⁵ In addition she [only ate] unrefined rice and wore shabby and coarse clothes. [The things other] people left behind, Dumu Jingang [did] her utmost to distribute [to all the] monks and nuns who did not have sufficient [food and clothing]. She spoke at every meeting, and the pious believers assembled around her.

An Examination Candidate³²⁶ asked: “Why does the *Diamond Sūtra*³²⁷ have thirty-two

³²⁰ Ming Guide Shuijingan Ni Dumu Jingang Zhuan 明歸德水晶菴尼獨目金剛傳.

³²¹ Wanli 萬曆 is the name of the period from 1573-1620.

³²² *Shuijing* 水晶 means ‘crystal.’

³²³ Present day Shangqiu 商丘 in Henan Province.

³²⁴ *Du* 獨 means ‘single’ and *mu* 目 means ‘eye,’ and *jingang* 金剛 means ‘diamond.’ It could also be an indirect reference to the Diamond Sūtra, which is often abbreviated to the *Jingang jing* 金剛經. The full title is *Jingangbanruoboluomi jing* 金剛般若波羅蜜經 Skt. *Vajraccedikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*. FGDCD: 3553.

³²⁵ *Danbo* 淡薄 is an expression meaning ‘thin,’ ‘weak’ or ‘cool’ among others, but in this context it has a positive meaning; she was indifferent to the worldly affairs, such as fame and fortune.

³²⁶ *Shizi* 士子 is a general reference to candidates at the Provincial Examinations in Imperial China. Hucker 1985: 430.

sections?” Dumu Jingang replied: “One thought runs through all texts, Confucianism and Buddhism are both like this, how can [it then] have so many paragraphs?” [Further] Dumu Jingang expounded a *gāthā*.³²⁸

The *Diamond Sūtra* expounded by the Buddha is outstanding and goes beyond the mass [of other scriptures].³²⁹

[With] one sentence your understanding will go beyond the voice-hearers’;³³⁰

[For] anyone who obtains an understanding of the *Diamond [Sūtra]’s* meaning,

[It is] unnecessary to divide it into thirty-two sections.³³¹

A monk asked: “Why is it called ‘Diamond’?” Dumu Jingang replied: “Everyone has his own diamond, [is it] necessary to ask like that?” And she expounded a *gāthā*:

The diamond is really a diamond,

[Even if] melted a hundred times and beat a thousand times [just as if you are making a sword, it] will never break,

[When] you crush emptiness,³³² the particles disappears,

Only now you [can] see the Buddha’s long rays of light.

Again someone asked: “Since you, Master,³³³ thoroughly understand the Buddha’s true teaching, why [are] you not manifested in the form of man?” Dumu Jingang replied: “There are [physical] forms of man and woman, but their nature is not different,³³⁴ and does not produce the view which make categories [of things].” Dumu Jingang expounded in a *gāthā*.³³⁵

[When it comes to] man and woman it is unnecessary to distinguish [between] false and true,

[After all] as what kind of person did Guanyin appear as?³³⁶

³²⁷ The essence of *Jingang jing* 金剛經 Skt. *Vajraccedikāprajñāparmitasūtra* is that all phenomena are without a permanent self. *FGDCD*: 3553.

³²⁸ *Jie* 偈, also written *qietuo* 伽陀, *jietuo* 偈佗, *jiesong* 偈頌 and *qieta* 伽他, Skt. *gāthā* and refers to the poetic verses of the scriptures, as opposed to the prose. *FGDCD*: 4383.

³²⁹ This is a verse.

³³⁰ *Shengwen* 聲聞, Skt. *śrāvaka* see footnote 194.

³³¹ It literally says ‘four eight,’ which is thirty-two if you multiply them.

³³² *Xukong* 虛空, Skt. *ākāśa* refers to the concept of ‘emptiness’ or the illusoriness and unreality of all phenomena, a central concept in Mahayānā Buddhism. *FGDCD*: 5262.

³³³ I.e. Dumu Jingang.

³³⁴ It literally says ‘does not have this and that.’

³³⁵ According to *Guangyun* the last character in the first, second and fourth line in this *gāthā* rhymes. *PDCC*: 218, 9, and 345.

³³⁶ From the 11th century onwards Guanyin began to be depicted as a female Bodhisattva in China. For more information on Guanyin’s transformation in Chinese Buddhism see Yu 2001, and for more general information see Paul 1979, *sūtras* on sexual transformation, e.g. the *Lotus Sūtra*, *The Sūtra of the Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Verses*, *The Sūtra of the Dialog of the Girl Candrottarā*, and *The Collection of Jewels*.

[When one has] broken free from the human body³³⁷ it is completely useless,

May I ask you [is] the male body the same as the female body?

As soon as someone asked Dumu Jingang answered, and she [was] unusually bright. Those from far and near who were converted to Buddhism³³⁸ by her were countless. [When Dumu Jingang was] over 70 years old, she indicated that she was about to die, at the tip of her nose there was a [spark of] fire. Dumu Jingang sat upright [in meditation posture with] eyes closed and passed away.

She proclaimed a *gāthā*:³³⁹

[After] the cremation of my body³⁴⁰ I will for all eternity return to emptiness,

It is usually difficult [to recognise] emptiness everywhere.

I die, I am born still it is me,

In a flash of lightning everything³⁴¹ is the same.

5.5 The Qing Dynasty (1644-1911)

Like the Mongols, the Manchu Qing Dynasty favoured Tibetan Buddhism, which they considered to be closer to their own indigenous religion than other forms of Buddhism. In order to establish Manchu control over Tibet and Mongolia, the Qing emperor invited the fifth Dalai Lama to Beijing in 1652. To show their support of Tibetan Buddhism, the early Manchu emperors, especially Kangxi,³⁴² made numerous visits to Wutaishan³⁴³ to pay their respect to Mañjuśrī and the temples dedicated to him. Several Tibetan temples were also constructed, and the finest and largest were found in Fengtian,³⁴⁴ Beijing and Mt. Wutai.³⁴⁵

Besides Tibetan Buddhism, the early Manchu emperors Shunzhi and Yongzheng³⁴⁶ were

³³⁷ *Pinang* 皮囊 literally means ‘leather bag,’ but here it is a Buddhist term for ‘human body.’

³³⁸ *Guiyi* 皈依 also written *guiyi* 歸依, Skt. *śaraṇa* which means to rely on and trust the Buddha’s teaching and to take refuge in the Three Jewels of Buddhism, e.g. the Buddha, the Dharma and the *Samgha*. *FGDCD*: 6570.

³³⁹ According to *Guangyun* the last character in the first, second and fourth line in this *gāthā* rhymes. *PDCC*: 233, 233, and 218.

³⁴⁰ *Chapi* 茶毘, Skt. *jhāpita* refers to the cremation of a Buddhist monk’s or nun’s corpse. *FGDCD*: 4782.

³⁴¹ *Dianguang* 電光 is here a metaphor for ‘the impermanent and transient,’ and *paoying* 泡影 literally means ‘bubble and shadow,’ but used here a metaphor for ‘everything.’ *FGDCD*: 3449.

³⁴² Kangxi 康熙 (r.1661- 1722).

³⁴³ Mt. Wutai Wutaitshan 五臺山 is said to be the home of Mañjuśrī, and is one of the four holy mountains in Chinese Buddhism. The others being: Mt. Emei 峨眉山, Mt. Jiuhua 九華山, and Mt. Putuo 普陀山.

³⁴⁴ Fengtian 奉天.

³⁴⁵ Ch’en 1964: 450.

³⁴⁶ Shunzhi 順治 (r. 1644-1661), Yongzheng 雍正 (r. 1722-1735).

also favourably inclined towards the Chan School, represented by the Linji branch. Emperor Shunzhi often invited Chan monks to the palace for discussions on the Chan doctrines and practices. But the one most dedicated to Chan practice was Emperor Yongzheng, who called himself a ‘Perfectly Enlightened Layman.’ In his collected writings there is a selection of biographies and collected sayings of famous monks (mostly Chan), as well as a biography of one Daoist and one of a layman (himself).³⁴⁷

In 1724, the Beijing edition of the Tibetan canon was completed with the printing of the *Tanjur*, as the *Kanjur*³⁴⁸ had already been printed in 1700. Under imperial auspices, work was started on the printing of the Chinese Buddhist canon in 1735. This edition was called the Dragon Edition of the Chinese Tripiṭaka³⁴⁹ and was completed in 1738. The tremendous project of translating the whole Buddhist canon into Manchu was initiated under Emperor Qianlong³⁵⁰ and finally completed in 1790.³⁵¹

The lay movement continued its growth during the Qing Dynasty as the people embraced Buddhist principles and practices in their daily lives, and participating actively in the spreading of the *dhārma* through their writings.³⁵² During the first half of the Qing Dynasty, Peng Shaosheng³⁵³ was one of the driving forces in the lay movement. In his youth he had specialized in the writings of the Song Neo-Confucians, but after reading the works of Zhuhong and Zibo Zhenke, Peng converted to Buddhism. It was through Zhuhong and Zhenke’s writings that he became interested in the doctrines of the Pure Land School and its practice of *nianfo*. Even though Peng was a Pure Land follower, he supported the harmonization of all the different schools of Buddhism, as well as Confucianism and Daoism.³⁵⁴

The turn to lay Buddhism reached its peak at the end of the Qing Dynasty, and one of the main figures in this movement was Yang Renshan.³⁵⁵ During the Taiping rebellion,³⁵⁶ Buddhism

³⁴⁷ Ch’en 1964: 451.

³⁴⁸ The Tibetans divide their canon into two parts: *Kanjur* ‘translated word (of the Buddha)’ is the primary part of the Tibetan authoritative scriptures which include all the *sūtras* and *tantras* attributed to the historical Buddha, to his revelation, or to another transcendent Buddha. The second part is called *Tanjur* ‘translated doctrine’ and complements the *Kanjur* with treatises and commentaries on Buddhist doctrine. Bowker 1997: 532, 948.

³⁴⁹ *Longzang* 龍藏 Dragon Edition of the Chinese Tripiṭaka.

³⁵⁰ Qianlong 乾隆 (r.1735-1796).

³⁵¹ Ch’en 1964: 451.

³⁵² Ch’en 1964: 447.

³⁵³ Peng Shaosheng 彭紹升 (1740-1796).

³⁵⁴ Ch’en 1964: 448.

³⁵⁵ Yang Renshan 陽仁山 (1837-1911), he was also known as Yang Wenhui 楊文會.

³⁵⁶ The Taiping rebellion 太平 (1851-1865), the leader of the rebellion, Hong Xiuquan 洪秀全, replaced Confucianism, Buddhism and Chinese folk religion by a peculiar form Christianity, holding that he was the younger brother of Jesus Christ.

suffered greatly as the Taiping leaders destroyed all Buddhist images, libraries and temples in the areas they occupied in their crusade against all idolatrous worship. As it was difficult to obtain Buddhist reading materials after the destruction of the Buddhist libraries, Yang Renshan established the ‘Jinling Sūtra Publishing House’³⁵⁷ in Nanjing, where a Japanese Buddhist scholar named Nanjō Bunyu³⁵⁸ helped him import *sūtras* for printing. It is estimated that Yang distributed over a million Buddhist *sūtras* during his lifetime, including both Mahāyāna and Theravāda texts.³⁵⁹

According to Kenneth Ch’en, the shift of leadership from the clergy to laymen was the culmination of the transformation from Theravāda to Mahāyāna, accelerated by the deterioration and consequential weakness of the *saṃgha* in China. The lay movement played a far more crucial role than the clergy in Chinese Buddhism during the last phase of the Ming Dynasty and throughout the Qing Dynasty (labelled as the modern period). They contributed to the publications and distribution of Buddhist text, stimulated a revival of Buddhist thought, and engaged in the philanthropic and social activities of the Buddhist *saṃgha*. In addition, the laymen relieved the leadership during the modern period of stress. In some cases they even took over some of the duties of the monks by officiating during religious services. This turn towards lay leadership was one of the most important changes within Buddhism during the Ming and Qing Dynasties.³⁶⁰

In 1815, the Manchus became aware of a new rebellion developing in Hebei, led by a Wang family in Luanzhou.³⁶¹ The Wang family distributed a tract saying that Maitreya soon would be born into their family. They held meetings in the surrounding regions asking people to make contributions to prepare for the coming of the future Buddha, and promised that these gifts would be amply rewarded when Maitreya descended on earth. The uprising was not able to gain momentum because of the discovery of the tract by the Manchus. Millenarianism was also used by the White Lotus Society in their many uprisings against Manchu rule.³⁶²

During the reign of Kangxi there were 79,622 Buddhist temples, 110,202 monks, and 8,615 nuns in China. This was the highest number of temples in Chinese history, but the actual size of the monastic community was actually quite small, and it is suspected that the figures are

³⁵⁷ Jinling Sūtra Publishing House, Jinling kejing chu 金陵刻經處.

³⁵⁸ Nanjō Bunyu 南条文雄.

³⁵⁹ Ch’en 1964: 448f.

³⁶⁰ Ch’en 1964: 449.

³⁶¹ Wang 王, Luanzhou 灤州.

³⁶² Ch’en 1964: 452.

not accurate. In comparison, during the early years of the Republic,³⁶³ it is estimated that there were 740,000 monks and nuns. According to Ch'en, too many of the clerics entered the Order not for religious reasons, but mainly to gain a livelihood. Often they were those who failed to succeed in society or who wanted to escape from society because of some crime committed. Consequently, the Qing emperors issued a number of restrictions and measures against the Order, including one that called for punishing a monk who married with eighty blows from a bamboo stick.³⁶⁴

5.5.1

The introduction of the situation of Buddhism during the Qing Dynasty will now be followed by the translations of the biographies of the nuns Chaoyin, Xinwen, Chuanhui and Chaochen.

九二，清常熟大河靜室尼潮音傳

潮音，姓金氏，常熟大河人。歸里中龔某，孀居自誓，儀法井井。長子既娶，辭親出家，字曰定暉。暉歿，母謂次子端吾曰：“汝兄往矣，吾母子何苦微塵人世？”端吾曰：“諾。”遂棄妻落髮，奉母入郡，禮尼真如為師。既而還里，儼居焚修，晝夜六時，佛聲浩浩。順治乙未正月，示微疾。二月初六，沐浴披衣，堅坐中堂。日晡時，計曰：“人定亥時去矣。”斂手入神，端然而化，緇白男女聚觀禮拜，填咽者數日。建塔吳山之玄墓，世壽七十三，夏十五，大宗伯錢牧齋為撰塔銘。有曰：“子觀近日宗門，女戒鋒起，闍黎上座林立。鏡奩語錄，伽陀交加，丹粉咸有尊宿印證。支派流傳，可羞可愍，莫斯為甚。是比丘尼卻避市塵，遠離俗姓，不唱參方之緣，不挂大僧之籍。一聲佛號，十念往生，旌表末法，甚難希有。斯則墨穴之電光，狂水之聖藥也。善乎！徐波居士推言之曰：世尊說法，四眾同集。法華會上，比丘尼與諸大弟子等記作佛。奄及末世，以逮今時，出頭露面，幾成戲具。盲參瞎仰，斷送佛法。又曰：潮音師坐脫立亡，臨終灑灑，生前不炫弄、不誕謾，死時用得著也。於乎！敘潮音之事，可使發心者勘錄居士之言，可使識法者懼。居士作頌四章，以告誡女人出家者，余又何以加諸？謹重宣此偈，以代餘銘，俾端吾刻之塔上。偈一曰：紛紛恒化是

³⁶³ Republic of China Zhonghua Minguo 中華民國 (1912-1949).

³⁶⁴ Ch'en 1964: 452f.

何情，習慣遷流每著驚。若使生人真畏四，須知死者復愁生。偈二曰：平生行履歷堪思，捧盃披緇不弄奇。畢竟臨岐談笑去，是渠應得更何疑。偈三曰：去須明白莫悤悤，仰視春星亥未終。法法本來無動想，頗於人定露機鋒。偈四曰：數珠百八舊前程，士女相逢掉臂行。卻是遺骸能說法，朝來奔赴動山城。”

Biography number 92

The Biography of the Qing Dynasty Nun Chaoyin from Jingshi in Changshu Dahe.³⁶⁵

The family name of Chaoyin was Jin,³⁶⁶ and she came from Dahe in Changshu. Chaoyin was married to a certain Gong³⁶⁷ from the same village. [When she became] a widow she swore to live by her own, and her moral standards were spotless.

Her eldest son had already taken a wife, but he bid farewell to his relatives and renounced home. His Buddhist name was Dinghui.³⁶⁸ [When Ding]Hui died, the mother said to her second son Duanwu: “Your elder brother has passed away! Why do we bother staying in this human world of dust?”³⁶⁹ Duanwu answered: “I agree.” Then he left his wife and cut his hair off.³⁷⁰ Duanwu helped his mother to enter the prefecture and she venerated the nun Zhenru as her master. Afterwards she returned to the village, [where] she rented a house where they burned incense and practised Buddhism; during the six periods of day and night the sound of the Buddha [‘s name] resounded continuously.³⁷¹ In the first month of the year

³⁶⁵ Qing Changshu Dahe Jingshi Ni Chaoyin Zhuan 清常熟大河靜室尼潮音傳. Her Buddhist name, Chaoyin, means ‘the sound of monks reciting the scriptures.’ Chaoyin is also mentioned in ZFRDC, where it is stated that Zhenru 真如 was her teacher and that she renounced home together with her son, Duanwu 端吾. It also states that Chaoyin is mentioned in the *Muzhai Quanji* 牧齋全集 and the *Jingtu sheng xian lu* 淨土聖賢錄 ‘Record of Sages and Worthies of the Pure Land,’ in addition to the *Xu Biqiuni Zhuan*. ZFRDC: 1022. Dahe is a small place west of the city Changshu in Jiangsu Province.

³⁶⁶ Jin 金.

³⁶⁷ Gong 龔.

³⁶⁸ Dinghui 定暉.

³⁶⁹ *Weichen* 微塵, Skt. *aṇuraja* or *aṇurajas* is the smallest unity in the universe; it is too small to be seen with the naked eye. FGDCD: 5445.

³⁷⁰ *Luofa* 落髮 literally ‘to cut one’s hair,’ but is used as a metaphor for renouncing home and becoming a monk or nun. FGDCD: 3727.

³⁷¹ I.e. she practiced *nianfo* all the time, which is one of the most widely spread practises of the Pure Land School, which entails the verbal chanting of the name of Amitābha Buddha for the purpose of obtaining rebirth in the Pure Land. FGDCD: 3208.

yiwei in the Shunzhi³⁷² period, Chaoyin showed some signs of illness. On the sixth day of the second month in the lunar year, Chaoyin took a bath and put on her clothes, and firmly seated herself in the meditation hall. At the time of dusk Chaoyin said: “I will pass away between 9-11[tonight]!” Chaoyin put her hands together, entered deep meditation, and sitting with her back straight in meditation [posture] she passed away. For several days monks, nuns and laymen³⁷³ crowded together to see and venerate her remains. They erected a *stūpa*³⁷⁴ at Xuanmu in Wushan.³⁷⁵ Chaoyin lived in the mundane world for 73 years, and she had been a nun for fifteen years. The Minister of Rites³⁷⁶ Qian Muzhai³⁷⁷ wrote an inscription on the *stūpa*, which said:

I observed the Buddhist schools³⁷⁸ of our days and [saw that the a number of] female preceptors³⁷⁹ rose drastically, and there are a great number [of] eminent [female] masters.³⁸⁰ ‘Recorded Sayings’ of these women’s dressing cases, and ‘*gāthās*’³⁸¹ occurred along with it, and their rouge is all over confirmed through the masters’ stamp. The traditions³⁸² spread, causing one to feel ashamed or worried, nothing is more serious than this!

This nun, however, avoided the city’s dust, and left the secular world³⁸³ far behind: she was not showing off the temples she had visited and did not register [her name in the] great monks’ list. [One could only hear] the resonant sound of the Buddha’s

³⁷² The *Shunzhi* 順治 period lasted from 1644-1662. According to the text she fell ill in the first month of the lunar year the *yiwei* 乙未 year, i.e. the 32nd year of the Sexagenary Cycle, which corresponds to sometime between 6 February and 7 March in 1655.

³⁷³ *Zibai* 緇白 refers to Buddhist monks, nuns and laymen, also to with the terms *sengsu* 僧俗 and *zisu* 緇素. *FGDCD*: 5636.

³⁷⁴ *Ta* 塔, Skt. *stūpa* referred originally to a mound where the relics of the Buddha were buried, but later also came to contain the remains of eminent teachers and masters. When Buddhism spread to East Asia this architectural structure came to be known as a ‘pagoda.’ It is also known as *fotu* 佛圖, *futu* 浮屠, and *sudubo* 窣堵波 in Chinese. *FGDCD*: 5421.

³⁷⁵ Xuanmu 玄墓 is a place in Wushan 吳山. *XZJ* 57, no. 975: 9874.

³⁷⁶ *Da zongbo* 大宗伯 lit. ‘Grand clansman,’ but in the Qing Dynasty it was an unofficial reference to the Minister of Rites. Hucker: 473.

³⁷⁷ Qian Muzhai 錢牧齋.

³⁷⁸ *Zongmen* 宗門 was originally a reference to sects in general, but from the Song Dynasty on it was used by the Chan sect to refer to themselves, and they called the other schools *jiaomen* 教門 literary ‘teaching sects,’ i.e. sects based on scriptural teaching. *FGDCD*: 3150.

³⁷⁹ *Jie* 戒, Skt. *śīla* refers to monastic discipline, which is different when it comes to monks, nuns, novices and laymen, and the different school also have different sets of rules, but the basics are the same. *FGDCD*: 2896.

³⁸⁰ *Sheli* 闍黎 is often written as *asheli* 阿闍黎, Skt. *ācārya* which refers to a teacher, master, or preceptor, and is a teacher who guides the students. *FGDCD*: 3688. Shangzuo 上座 is an honorific title applied to one’s master in Chan. *FGDCD*: 719.

³⁸¹ *Qietuo* 伽陀, Skt. *gāthā*, see footnote 328.

³⁸² I.e. the Chan School got divided into different sub sects.

³⁸³ *Suxing* 俗姓 is the secular name for a Buddhist monk or nun.

name and the ten invocations of Amitābha Buddha.³⁸⁴ Showing honour to the *dharma* in its final stage,³⁸⁵ truly unique [she was just like] a flash of lightning in a dark cave, and an efficacious medicine against the great flood.

Good indeed she was!

The layman Xu Bo³⁸⁶ said [some] pertinent words:

The teaching³⁸⁷ of the World Honoured One³⁸⁸ gathered together the four categories of Buddhist devotees.³⁸⁹ At the Fahua meeting³⁹⁰ nuns and other great disciples were predicted to become Buddhas.³⁹¹ But now when the end of the world suddenly is reached, the nuns are appearing in the open; many of them become pawns in the game and blindly they visit masters and pointlessly venerate them, destroying the Buddha *dharma*.

He furthermore said:

Master Chaoyin died while sitting in meditation. At the end of her life she was free from anxieties and vexation, during her lifetime she did not brag nor deceive anyone, when she died this was of great help [for her]. Ah! When recounting Chaoyin's matters, it may encourage those who have an earnest intention in attaining enlightenment,³⁹² to explore and record this layman's words; and it may make the people who [think] they know the *dharma* intimidated. The layman wrote a *gāthā*³⁹³ in four verses, so as to admonish

³⁸⁴ *Shinian wangsheng* 十念往生: In Pure Land Buddhism it is believed that a dying man with evil *karma* will be reborn in the Pure Land of Amitābha Buddha 阿彌陀佛 if he recites the Buddha's name at the time of his death. *FGDCD*: 446.

³⁸⁵ *Mofa* 末法, Skt. *saddharmvipralopa* refers to the latter *dharma*; according to Buddhism the *dharma* passes three periods after the passing away of Buddha Śākyamuni; the *zhengfa* 正法 period, the 'correct *dharma*' which was the period right after Buddha Śākyamuni passed away (usually 500 years), the *xiangfa* 像法 period 'the semblance *dharma*' (this period is often assumed to last 1000 years), and the *mofa* 末法 period 'the degenerated *dharma*' which is the last period (usually assumed to last 2000 years), and this is the period we live in now. After the *mofa* period the future Buddha Maitreya is expected to be born on earth. This theory has had a very strong influence on the Pure Land School in China. *FGDCD*: 1942.

³⁸⁶ Xu Bo *jushi* 徐波居士.

³⁸⁷ *Shuofa* 說法, Skt. *dharmadeśanā* refers to the expounding of the Buddhist teachings. *FGDCD*: 5922.

³⁸⁸ *Shizun* 世尊, Skt. *lokanātha*, one of the ten epithets of the Buddha. *FGDCD*: 1522.

³⁸⁹ *Sizhong* 四眾, Skt. *catasraḥ parśadaḥ* refers to the four categories of Buddhist devotees, which are monks, nuns, male and female laity. *FGDCD*: 1763.

³⁹⁰ *Fahuahui* 法華會 is probably referring to an event in the *Fahuajing* Skt. *Saddharmapundrīkasūtra*, where the Buddha proclaims that all sentient beings can become Buddhas.

³⁹¹ *Zufo* 作佛 means 'to become a Buddha' i.e. to achieve enlightenment. It is also written *chengfo* 成佛. *FGDCD*: 2777.

³⁹² *Faxin* 發心 refers to a Bodhisattva's 'arousal of the thought,' or 'sincere and earnest intention to attain enlightenment,' especially for the sake of saving other sentient beings. *Faxin* is an abbreviation of *faputixin* 發菩提心. *FGDCD*: 5162.

³⁹³ See footnote 329 for explanation of *jie* 偈.

women who are going to become nuns. What more can I add to this? Sincerely I repeat these [four] *gāthās*, so they can represent my inscriptions [on her tomb], and should be the essential part of my carvings on the *stūpa*.

The first verse of the *gāthā*³⁹⁴ says:

What really is this constant change [of life and death]?
When the costumes change [one will in] each and every [case meet] fear;
If this cause the living to be really afraid of death,
One should know that the dead are afraid of life.

The second verse of the *gāthā* says:

[When we look back on her] life one may contemplate her actions.
She carried [her begging] bowl and wore black [nuns' clothes] and did not act strange;
When she approached death she talked and laughed,
There is no doubt that her merits were immense.”

The third verse of the *gāthā* says;

[When you] pass away you must be clear and not in a hurry,
Looking up at the spring stars, she [was now] seventy-three years [old and it had] not yet come to an end.
All *dharmas*³⁹⁵ fundamentally did not set thoughts in motion.
In order to expose this to the people she exposed the [technique] of sharp points.³⁹⁶

The fourth verse of the *gāthā* says;

Her life was [to count] the 108 beads on her prayer beads,
Young men and women met her on the way, but they walked and refused to notice her;
In fact her remains are able to expound the *dharmā*,
In the morning many hurried to [to pay their respect to Chaoyin],
setting the mountain city in motion.

³⁹⁴ These *gāthās* are all in the modern style quatrains, i.e. *qiyanjueju* 七言絕句.

³⁹⁵ Dharma is here referring to ‘phenomenon,’ not the teaching of the Buddha.

³⁹⁶ *Jifeng* 機鋒 literally ‘sharp or shocking points,’ is a term used in Chan Buddhism, it is also known as *chanji* 禪機, and refers to the dialogs between master and student and the riddles used to enlighten the student. *FGDCD*: 6252.

5.5.2

九七，清漢陽某菴尼心聞傳

心聞，住漢陽某菴，年五旬，志在持戒。於順治十年二月中，同徒等九人，一帆不憚險，遠投金陵寶華山見月律師座下，乞求三月安居，供米六十石、銀二十兩。見公觀其意誠切，遂憐愍許之。於設齋日，不肯入堂禮佛，齋畢，見公集衆，呼聞至前語云：“汝發心遠來學戒，爲何不進齋堂禮僧？律制：比丘尼縱年百歲，當禮初夏比丘。今自太慢僧，非學戒者。”聞云：“某在楚中，若有善知識處，俱往設供。方丈皆以客禮相欸，並不禮拜。”見公云：“彼貪圖利養，敗壞法門。凡見有因緣尼，敬如生母，以望更得厚供，是獅子蟲，非真善知識也。吾華山今雖淡薄，寧絕糧斷食，必不敢違制邀利。今日所設之齋，作常住自用，其銀還汝。米在下院，可將別去。”聞作無明會，接銀領徒，即下後山，歇出水洞靜室。有弟子古潭，入室白云：“彼尼遠來，常住空虛，和尚且方便攝受。一則不退彼心，次則大眾有半月之供。”見公正色云：“但肯真實修行，大眾自不懸鉢。樹立法門，正在淡薄時操履。律師行律，豈見利而違聖制耶？”古潭愧顏，作禮而退。至三日後，聞復領徒上山，齊跪方丈門外，涕泣。謂在楚朦朧如此，實非自大慢僧，懇和尚慈悲容懺悔。所有言教，盡行遵依。諸首領爲其拜求，由是令在鹿山莊結界安居，遣闍黎等半月往彼教誡，爲講本部毘尼。見公因撰教誡比丘尼正範一卷。

Biography number 97

The Biography of the Qing Dynasty Nun Xinwen From a Certain Nunnery in Hanyang.³⁹⁷

Xinwen lived in a certain nunnery in Hanyang; at the age of fifteen she was determined to observe the precepts.³⁹⁸ In the middle of the second month of the tenth year in the Shunzhi

³⁹⁷ Qing Hanyang mou an Ni Xinwen Zhuan 清漢陽某菴尼心聞傳. Xinwen is also mentioned in *ZFRDC*, where a short summary of the biography presented here is given. *ZFRDC*: 117.

³⁹⁸ *Chijie* 持戒, Skt. *śīla* refers to the observance of the precepts or moral guidelines of Buddhism, and constitute one of the six perfections. It can also be written *jie* 戒. *FGDCD*: 3816.

period,³⁹⁹ Xinwen [travelled] together with nine other believers. They [got on] a sailing boat and did not fear the danger of this long journey. They travelled far to Mt. Baohua in Jinling⁴⁰⁰ where they met Preceptor Jianyue⁴⁰¹ and requested [permission to enter] the three months retreat,⁴⁰² and offered sixty *dan*⁴⁰³ of rice and twenty *liang*⁴⁰⁴ of silver. The Honourable Jian[Yue]⁴⁰⁵ saw that her intention was sincere, and therefore, out of compassion, allowed her [to stay]. At the day of the fast,⁴⁰⁶ Xinwen was not willing to enter the hall to venerate the Buddha [and the monks]. When the fast was over, the Honourable Jian[Yue] gathered the *samgha*, called Xin[Wen] up in front [of the assembly] and spoke to her:

With a resolute mind you came from far away to study the precepts.⁴⁰⁷ Why [did] you not enter the temple hall to venerate the monks? The rules [say that] even a 100-year-old nun must bow to a monk [who is in his] first year [of monkhood]. Today you [were] very arrogant towards the monks, [this is] not [appropriate for] one who wants to study the precepts.

Xin[Wen] said: “When someone⁴⁰⁸ was in Chu,⁴⁰⁹ and had a good teacher,⁴¹⁰ they went together to prepare the offerings. The abbot⁴¹¹ treated everyone with respect and as equals and did not at all [expect them to] show reverence to the monks.” The Honourable Jian[Yue] said:

³⁹⁹ The *shunzhi* 順治 period lasted from 1644-1662, so this will be in 1653.

⁴⁰⁰ ‘Mt. Baohua’ Baohuashan 寶華山 in Jinling 金陵, which is the present-day Nanjing. The Longchang Temple 隆昌寺 at Mt. Baohua is the temple that has initiated the most monks and nuns in China, and it was the centre of the Vinaya School. *FGDCD*: 6755.

⁴⁰¹ Jianyue *lüshi* 見月律師 (1601-1679) also known as Duti 讀體, before he became a Buddhist monk he was a Daoist priest. *ZFRDC*: 1145. *Lüshi*, Skt. *vinayadhara* refers to a monk who is well versed in the precepts. *FGDCD*: 3800. Later in this text he is referred to as Jian Gong, i.e. Honourable Jian.

⁴⁰² *Anju* 安居, Skt. *vārṣika* or *varṣa* refers to the three month long retreat for monks and nuns. One retreat is during the rainy season in summer, and is called *xiazuo* 夏坐, while the other is at the end of the year, and is called *zuola* 坐臘. *FGDCD*: 2398.

⁴⁰³ *Dan* 石 is a unit of dry measure of grain, one *dan* is one hectolitre. *NCED*: 300.

⁴⁰⁴ *Liang* 兩 is a unit of weight for gold or silver; one *liang* is about 31 grams. *NCED*: 973.

⁴⁰⁵ I.e. the Preceptor.

⁴⁰⁶ *Zhairi* 齋日 refers to days when the laity lives according to the eight rules: not to kill; not to take things which are not given; no ignoble conduct; not to speak falsely; not to drink alcohol; not indulge in cosmetics, personal adornments; not engage in dancing or music; not to sleep on fine beds; and not to eat besides regular hours (i.e. after noon) in order to purify themselves. These lay vows are also referred to as *liuzhairi* 六齋日, lit. ‘six days of fasting,’ because each month has six of this kind of days. *FGDCD*: 6545.

⁴⁰⁷ For an explanation for *jie* 戒, see footnote 329.

⁴⁰⁸ Xinwen is here referring to herself.

⁴⁰⁹ Chu 楚 is situated in the present-day Hubei Province 湖北.

⁴¹⁰ *Shanzhishi* 善知識, see footnote 147 for an explanation.

⁴¹¹ *Fangzhang* 方丈 originally referred to the front room in a monastery or the room of the abbot, later it turned into a respectful term used to address an abbot or a master. *FGDCD*: 1432.

Other monks' desire for food and drink will ruin the Buddha's teaching,⁴¹² every time they meet a nun with good 'karma,'⁴¹³ they respect her as their own mother, because they hope to obtain even more generous offerings. They are the worms of the lion⁴¹⁴ and are not true teachers. Although we now have few resources at Mt. Baohua,⁴¹⁵ I [would] rather cut off the food rations and refuse to eat. I [would] certainly not dare to violate the regulations and seek benefits [for the monastery]. The fast that was prepared today, the one who is *changzhu*⁴¹⁶ will manage [with what we have], and we [will] return this silver to you. The rice is in the subsidiary monastery, you can now [pack your bags] and leave.

[Xin]Wen did not understand [why she was asked to leave], and received the silver and lead the followers down the back way of the mountain. They rested at a hermitage where the water poured out from a cave.

There was a disciple named Gutan⁴¹⁷ who entered Honourable Jianyue's room and plainly said: "That nun⁴¹⁸ came from faraway, and the temple is completely empty [of food and drink]. The Master⁴¹⁹ received [her offerings] firstly because he would not reject her good heart, and secondly [it will give] the *samgha* supplies for half a month." The Honourable Jian[Yue] said with a stern countenance:

Only [as long as you are] willing to practice truly, the *samgha* will naturally not worry about the begging bowl.⁴²⁰ When one establishes the true teaching,⁴²¹ it is exactly in bad times [one must uphold] the daily practice. When the Vinaya master practices the monastic rules, how then can one see profit and go against the holy regulation.

Gutan got an ashamed [look on his] face, made the appropriate rituals and withdrew.

After three days, [Xin]Wen led the followers up the mountain again. Respectfully, they knelt outside the door of the abbot's room and wept. They explained [that when they where]

⁴¹² *Famen* 法門, Skt. *dharmaparyāya* refers to the Buddha's teaching. *FGDCD*: 3363.

⁴¹³ The word used in the Chinese text is *yinyuan* 因緣, which is a Buddhist term meaning 'primary and secondary causes,' in this context I think the meaning is not directly referring to this, but more that they seek or gain benefits from being in the vicinity of this type of nun.

⁴¹⁴ *Shizi* 獅子, Skt. *simha* means 'lion' and is a metaphor for the Buddha, just as the Buddha is the greatest among human beings, the lion is the greatest among animals. *FGDCD*: 4090.

⁴¹⁵ The word used in the text is *danbo* 淡薄, which literally means 'weak,' 'faint' or 'indifferent,' but in this context I think it means that they have few guest and are poor.

⁴¹⁶ *Changzhu* 常住 refers to the monk who is in charge of the fast. *FGDCD*: 4525

⁴¹⁷ Gutan 古潭.

⁴¹⁸ I.e. Xinwen.

⁴¹⁹ I.e. Preceptor Jianyue.

⁴²⁰ I.e. food and clothes.

⁴²¹ *Famen* 法門 literally means 'dharma-gate,' and means the 'true teaching' of the Buddha. *FGDCD*: 3363.

in Chu, it was not clear that it was like this,⁴²² but in reality they [were] not arrogant and rude towards the monks. They pleaded for the Master's compassion⁴²³ to accept their repentance. [They promised that they would] always act in accordance with all the teaching. All leaders [in the temple] prayed for them, and therefore the leaders let Xinwen and the rest of the group [stay at] Lushanzhuang⁴²⁴ as a defined area for retreat.⁴²⁵ [Every] half month Preceptor Jianyue sent a master⁴²⁶ to go there to give instructions and explain the proper *vinaya*.⁴²⁷ Because of this [incident], The Honourable Jian[Yue] wrote one volume of *Jiaojie Biqiuni Zhengfan*.⁴²⁸

5.5.3

一〇五，清淮安拈花社尼傳慧傳

傳慧，字如如，甘泉人。童穉精敏，擅柳絮才，行楷清潤韶秀，父母極愛之。標梅期近，將為擇配，慧跂呈所志曰：“塵寰擾攘，欺詐相尚，人我是非，無有了期。富貴利達，原是過眼煙雲。而舉世營營奔走，迄無寧日，在至人觀之，殊不值一顧。兒性非傲僻，實以嘗聞鄰媪學道之說，析理談玄，發人深省。吾將披如來法衣，從諸高德之後，誓期悟徹上乘，用報罔極之恩。二老若能垂聽，銘感永弗諼矣。”父母聆其言，不敢固強，從之。遂依師出家，參方學道。至淮安湖心，叩南菴老人。老人示以話頭，慧默自逼拶，以悟為則。久之，心地豁通，機辯縱橫，老參宿衲，皆不能挫其鋒。相傳嘗挂大僧之籍，寄禿京口金山，隱跡大徹堂，司至維那，人無有知者。一日，有貴官登山，見素壁聯語，佇視良久，問知客僧曰：“此為何人所書？”僧曰：“本山職事維那筆也。”官大訝曰：“字體頗類閨秀，其人何在？能否請來一晤？”僧力辯其非，直往禪堂覓慧。慧得信，知不能隱，即讒其辭曰：“寧有是哉？汝可先去，吾頃刻即來。”乃頂笠下山，渡江而北，一時，山中傳為佳話。後於淮安開拈花社，規模一如叢林。其上堂法語，一導禪師採入廩山正燈錄，茲不備載。

⁴²² I.e. that the nuns should respect the monks.

⁴²³ *Cibei* 慈悲, Skt. *karuna*, the selfless compassion of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

⁴²⁴ Lushanzhuang 鹿山莊.

⁴²⁵ For an explanation of *anju* 安居, see footnote 403.

⁴²⁶ For an explanation of *sheli* 闍黎, see footnote 381.

⁴²⁷ *Pini* 毘尼 is another term for *Vinaya*. *FGDCD*: 3789.

⁴²⁸ *Jiaojie Biqiuni Zhengfan* 教誡比丘尼正範 'Instructions to nuns through the use of examples.' This is my translation.

Biography number 105

The Biography of the Qing Dynasty Nun Chuanhui from Nianhua Society in Huai'an.⁴²⁹

Chuanhui styled herself Ruru,⁴³⁰ and [came from] Ganquan.⁴³¹ As a child, Chuanhui [was] smart and bright, and good at writing poetry. Her calligraphy⁴³² was clear and beautiful. Chuanhui's father and mother cherished her very much. The time for her to marry was drawing near, and her father and mother would choose a husband for her. [Chuan]Hui went forward and presented her will, saying:

The defiled world⁴³³ is in chaos. Cheating and deceiving is treasured. [There is an emphasise on] the self⁴³⁴ and right or wrong, [that is something that] will never come to an end. Wealth and fame pass fundamentally as quickly as mist and clouds. Furthermore, throughout the world one [is] running hither and thither, and all along one [does] not [find] a peaceful day. In the eyes of the perfect man,⁴³⁵ it is really not worth any attention. Of nature I am not arrogant or prejudiced; in fact I [have] often heard explanations about the study of the Way⁴³⁶ from the old neighbour woman. Analyzing the principles and discussing the profound and mysterious truth made me think deeply, I will wear the Buddha's robe.⁴³⁷ I [will] follow the great virtuous masters, and vow to comprehend the Great Vehicle⁴³⁸ completely. I [will] use it to repay the kindness of my parents. If my parents are able to listen attentively, I [will] be deeply grateful and will never forget it!

Chuanhui's father and mother listened to her words and did not dare to insist [on her getting married, so] they approved. Thereupon she renounced home under the guidance of a master

⁴²⁹ Qing Huai'an Nianhuashe Ni Chuanhui zhuan 清淮安拈花社尼傳慧傳. The *ZFRDC* gives a brief summary of the biography presented here. *ZFRDC*: 881.

⁴³⁰ Ruru 如如, which means 'Suchness.'

⁴³¹ Ganquan 甘泉, which is situated in present-day Shanxi Province 陝西.

⁴³² *Xingkai* 行楷 is one form of Chinese calligraphy, where the style of handwriting is somewhere between the cursive style and the "standard" script. *NCED*: 1733.

⁴³³ I.e. the secular, materialistic world.

⁴³⁴ *Renwo* 人我 refers to the mistaken conception of a self, i.e. that one sees one's self as an individual and permanent self. *HYDCD*: 441.

⁴³⁵ *Zhiren* 至人 refers to the perfect man i.e. the Buddha.

⁴³⁶ In this context 'the Way' refers to the Buddhist path.

⁴³⁷ *Fayi* 法衣 is the monastic robe worn by monks and nuns. It is also written *fafu* 法服, *sengfu* 僧服, and *sengyi* 僧衣. *FGDCD*: 3346.

⁴³⁸ *Shangsheng* 上乘, 'the Supreme Vehicle' is an alternative name for Sanskrit Mahāyāna; it is more commonly known as *dasheng* 大乘 in Chinese, literally 'the Great Vehicle.' *FGDCD*: 807.

and started to study the principles of Buddhism, Chuanhui arrived at Huxin⁴³⁹ in Huai'an, and kowtowed in front of an elder at Nan'an.⁴⁴⁰ The elder instructed her with the help of a *huatou*,⁴⁴¹ [Chuan]Hui silently forced herself [in her practice] and took enlightenment as her ultimate goal. After a while her mind widened up, and she [became] eloquent in all situations and good at debating. None of the resident old masters could defeat her sharpness [of mind]. In the tradition Chuanhui put her name in the great masters' list and resided temporarily at the Jinshan [Temple] in Jingkou.⁴⁴² Chuanhui concealed her identity at the Dache hall⁴⁴³ and became the deacon⁴⁴⁴ [there]; no one knew it was her.

One day when a noble official⁴⁴⁵ ascended the mountain, he saw two verses of poetry on the plain walls, and stood for a long time looking [at it]. [Finally the official] asked the guest master:⁴⁴⁶ "Who wrote this?" The monk said: "[The one who has] the position as deacon at this mountain has written it." The official said in surprise: "The characters rather resemble a woman[']s handwriting], where is this person? Is it possible to ask for a meeting?" The monk argued strongly that it was not [a woman's handwriting] and went straight to the meditation hall to look for [Chuan]Hui. [Chuan]Hui got the message and knew [that she was] not able to hide [any longer], so she told him a lie: "How can this be [possible]! You can go first, I will come instantly." Thereupon Chuanhui put on her bamboo hat⁴⁴⁷ and descended the mountain, crossed the river and [went] north. Within a short time the story became popular in the mountains.

Later Chuanhui opened the Nianhua society in Huai'an, modelled after a monastery.⁴⁴⁸ Chuanhui ascended the hall and gave lectures on the *dharma*. Master Yidao⁴⁴⁹ collected the *Linshan zheng denglu*.⁴⁵⁰ We [will] not write about this here.

⁴³⁹ Huxin 湖心.

⁴⁴⁰ Nan'an 南庵.

⁴⁴¹ *Huatou* 話頭, sometimes translated as 'essential phrase,' is the main topic of a *gong'an* in Chan Buddhism. E.g. in the *gong'an* "Does a dog have Buddha nature or not?" "Not!", the *huatou* here is "Not." *FGDCD*: 1315.

⁴⁴² The Jinshan Temple 金山 in Jingkou 京口 is a famous Buddhist temple in China, situated in present-day Zhenjiang 鎮江, Jiangsu Province 江蘇.

⁴⁴³ *Dachetang* 大徹堂 is one of the halls in a Buddhist temple.

⁴⁴⁴ *Weina* 維那, Skt. *karmadāna* refers to a deacon, the second most senior member of a monastery. *FGDCD*: 5890.

⁴⁴⁵ *Guan* 官 is the most common term for official, whether civil, *wenguan* 文官, or military, *wuguan* 武官. Hucker: 283.

⁴⁴⁶ *Zhike* 知客 refers to a monk who is responsible of receiving the guests in the monastery. He is on the fourth level of the six supervisory positions. It is also written *dianke* 典客 and *dianbin* 典賓. *FGDCD*: 3461.

⁴⁴⁷ *Li* 笠 is a large bamboo or straw hat with a conical crown and a broad brim. *NCED*: 958.

⁴⁴⁸ *Conglin* 叢林 refers to a monastery. *FGDCD*: 6552.

⁴⁴⁹ Yidao Chanshi 一導禪師.

⁴⁵⁰ *Linshan zheng denglu* 廬山正燈錄 'The true record of the lamp of Mt. Lin.'

5.5.4

一一八，清嘉興參同菴尼超琛傳

超琛，字一揆，嘉興大司寇孫簡肅公之曾孫女。仲兄子麟，少年得道，登三教壇。琛幼聰敏，不由師傅，而通書義，兼善繪墨。及笄，適盛，盛邁疾不起，思爲出世計。自後毀容變服，茹素焚修，立志堅貞。其兄子麟，見琛心切，語之曰：“待吾拼卻性命，倘有所悟，汝不難出世也。”奮身打七，大事得明，即告琛曰：“汝急做工夫，絕後再甦，欺君不得。”琛晝夜參究，話頭難破，如吞鐵丸，愈疑愈問。一日，同母夫人參謁伏獅剛，一見，稱爲法器。是冬結制，坐至二七，忽爾定去，香盡四炷，瞬息而過，大地平沉，洞徹本來面目。其兄聞之，笑曰：“這不啣嚙漢，遲至今朝，方摸著鼻孔，何鈍如之？”剛卽爲披剃印可，出住參同，繼住伏獅。康熙己未春，抱微恙，至六月，絕粒飲水，至示期七月初三立秋永別。初三黎明，先期報鐘，琛曰：“又擔閣我一日。”初四日辰時，沐浴更衣，說偈曰：“這漢一生骨硬如釘，一處轉腳，最難移根。二十四上，知有此事，十年克苦忘形。四十九上，惘絕娑婆世界，覩得世態如冰。實求早離如願，業緣又使七春。目今葉落知秋，正是歸根時節。呵呵呵！逍遙惟我。”端坐而逝，世壽五十五，僧臘三十一。

Biography number 118

The Biography of the Qing Dynasty Nun Chaochen from Cantong Nunnery in Jiaxing.⁴⁵¹

Chaochen styled herself Yikui,⁴⁵² [and was] the great-granddaughter of the highly respected Minister of Justice⁴⁵³ Sun Jiansu⁴⁵⁴ from Cantong. Her second-eldest brother Zilin⁴⁵⁵ attained

⁴⁵¹ Qing Jiaxing Cantongan Ni Chaochen Zhuan 清嘉興參同菴尼超琛傳. The *ZFRDC* gives a brief summary of the biography presented here, and it states that Chaochen is also mentioned in *Wu deng quanshu* 五燈全書. *ZFRDC*: 701. See also Beata Grant 1996.

⁴⁵² Yikui 一揆.

⁴⁵³ *Dasikou* 大司寇 literally means ‘great manager of criminals’ i.e. Minister of Justice. Hucker: 470.

⁴⁵⁴ Sun Jiansu 孫簡肅.

⁴⁵⁵ Zilin 子麟.

enlightenment⁴⁵⁶ when he was young, and began to study the three teachings.⁴⁵⁷

As a child [Chao]Chen was [very] bright. Without depending on the transmission of a teacher she thoroughly understood the meaning of the books, in addition she [was] skilled in both painting and calligraphy. [When] she reached the age of fifteen, she married Cheng.⁴⁵⁸ Cheng became very ill and died. Chaochen thought about renouncing the world, she disfigured her face and changed into mourning dress. She [also] became a vegetarian, burned incense and practiced Buddhism,⁴⁵⁹ and had a solid aspiration and a firm [determination]. Her brother Zilin saw [Chao]Chen's eagerness, and said to her: "Based on my efforts of renouncing life, I have reached some extent of understanding. It would not be difficult for you to renounce the world!" He exerted himself for seven days⁴⁶⁰ and reached an understanding of the great matter, and immediately he told [Chao]Chen: "Hurry up and make great efforts, [until you] die and then [become] reborn [again], you cannot fool me."⁴⁶¹ [Chao]Chen reflected [on the puzzle] night and day, [but she found it] difficult to solve the head phrase,⁴⁶² [it was just] like swallowing an iron ball, and the more she doubted⁴⁶³ the more depressed she became. One day she accompanied her mother to pay respect to Fushi Gang,⁴⁶⁴ [who] saw at once [that she was] able to understand the Buddhist teaching.⁴⁶⁵ That winter she [entered a] meditation retreat.⁴⁶⁶ Chaochen meditated for fourteen days, and suddenly, [when she was in] meditation, four incenses burned out in an instant. The whole

⁴⁵⁶ *Dedao* 得道 literally means 'attain the Way,' but in Buddhism it means to attaining enlightenment. It is also written *dedu* 得度. *FGDCD*: 4555.

⁴⁵⁷ I.e. Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism.

⁴⁵⁸ Cheng 盛.

⁴⁵⁹ *Fenxiu* 焚修 means to 'burn incense and practice Buddhism.' *HYDCD*: 4105.

⁴⁶⁰ *Qiri* 七日 is a method of practice used especially in the Chan and the Pure Land school where the monks engaged in intensive meditation, and often also *gong'an* practice for a period of seven days. It is also written *jieqi* 結七. *FGDCD*: 1931.

⁴⁶¹ This *gong'an* occurs several times in the Taishō and Zokuzōkyō, e.g. in T.51 no.2076: 362a.

⁴⁶² On *huatou* 話頭, see footnote 441.

⁴⁶³ *Yi* 疑, Skt. *vicikitsā* means 'doubt' or 'suspicion.' The Pure Land school states that the antonym to 'doubt' is to 'believe,' and asserts that once doubt is gone it will give rise to belief. In the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* it is listed as one of the indeterminate elements, while in the doctrine of the Yogācāra School it is counted as one of the six primary defilement *liufannaο* 六煩惱 and one of the ten 'secondary dullnesses.' However in the Chan School 'doubt' can also sometimes have positive connotations as precondition for attaining enlightenment. *FGDCD*: 5841.

⁴⁶⁴ Fushi Gang 伏獅剛 is referring to Zhiyuan Xinggang 祇園行剛 (1597-1654), who was the abbess at Fushi Chan Yuan 伏獅禪院. Master Xinggang was pronounced dharma heir by Master Tongsheng in 1638. *ZFRDC*: 228. Master Chaochen was pronounced dharma heir by Master Xinggang.

⁴⁶⁵ *Faqi* 法器 literally means 'dharma vessel,' and refers to one who is receptive to the study of Buddhism. *FGDCD*: 3424.

⁴⁶⁶ On *Jiezhi* 結制, see footnote 402, *anju* 安居, for explanation.

earth sank, and she saw clearly her own true nature.⁴⁶⁷ Her brother heard of this and said with a laugh: “This person is not gaga, it was not until this morning she [used the] method of touching the nose, why be so slow!” [Fushi]Gang immediately shaved her head⁴⁶⁸ and approved her enlightenment.⁴⁶⁹ Chaochen resided at the Cantong [Nunnery] and succeed Fushi Gang [as the master of the temple.]

In the spring of the *jiwei*⁴⁷⁰ year in the Kangxi period⁴⁷¹ Chaochen became ill. In the sixth month [of that year] she stopped eating food and drinking water. She was going to depart [from this world] forever on the third day of the seventh month on the *liqiu*-day.⁴⁷² At dawn on the third day of the lunar month the bell struck. [Chao]Chen said: “Delay me one more day.” On the fourth day between seven and nine, she took a bath and put on clean clothes, and said a *gāthā*:

All her life this person,
Her skeleton was as hard as a nail,
She turned her foot at the same place.⁴⁷³
And it was most difficult to move the root.⁴⁷⁴

At [the age of] twenty-four Chaochen had an understanding of this matter,⁴⁷⁵ in ten years [after she was twenty- four], she repressed herself to the extent that she forgot [about her own] form. At [the age of] forty- nine she [out of] sorrow [wished to] cut off [the bonds to] the secular world,⁴⁷⁶ and looked at the world [just like it was made out of] ice, and actually wished that she could leave it early. But her karmic conditions⁴⁷⁷ caused Chaochen [to live for] seven more springs. These days the leaves fall and the fall will soon come, and now it is time to return to the roots. He! He! He!

Chaochen was free and unfettered as herself and sat straight [in mediation] and passed

⁴⁶⁷ *Benlaimianmu* 本來面目 means literally ‘original face,’ and refers to the true or original nature of the mind. It is a Chan expression. *FGDCD*: 1960.

⁴⁶⁸ *Piti* 披剃 refers to the first shaving of the head and donning the robes by a novice. *FGDCD*: 3263.

⁴⁶⁹ *Yinke* 印可 refers to the master’s approval of enlightenment attained by a disciple. In the Chan School this meant that the teacher acknowledged the disciple’s ability to be a teacher in her/his own right. *FGDCD*: 2204.

⁴⁷⁰ Transferred into Western dating it would be the year 1679, or more precisely sometime between 11 Feb. 1679 to 30 Jan. 1680.

⁴⁷¹ The Kangxi 康熙 period was from 1662- 1723, and *yiwei* is the 56th year of the Sexagenary Cycle.

⁴⁷² *Liqiu* 立秋 is the beginning of the autumn.

⁴⁷³ I.e. she did not travel.

⁴⁷⁴ I.e. she was very strong-minded.

⁴⁷⁵ I.e. the theory of Buddhism.

⁴⁷⁶ *Suoposhijie* 娑婆世界, Skt. *sahālokadhātu* refers to the secular or corrupted world we live in, the world where all are subject to transmigration and where the Buddha taught his path to enlightenment. *FGDCD*: 4077.

⁴⁷⁷ *Yeyuan* 業緣, Skt. *karmapratyaya* ‘Karma-cause’ or ‘condition resulting from karma’, one of twenty-four causes. *FGDCD*: 5503.

away. Her age was fifty- five, and in thirty- one [of them she had been] a nun.

6. An Analysis of ‘Further Biographies of Nuns’

Based on the twelve translated biographies from Zhenhua’s ‘Further Biographies of Nuns’ dating from the Tang to Qing, I will now examine the content of these translations and see if there are any indications that the nuns were influential and considered as great masters on the same level as the monks who mastered the *dharma* on a high level. The conclusions in this thesis will be based on twelve biographies; consequently they might not be representative of how the nuns were perceived and does not necessarily give a precise picture of the religious practice of the Chinese nuns in the period covered here. The analysis will further ask questions like: what social background did they have? What were their motives for becoming nuns? What was their religious practice? Did any of the nuns become highly respected nuns? Did these nuns teach the *Dharma*? If so, to whom? Did they only teach other nuns, and the laity, or did the nuns also teach monks? For example, in the Chan genealogical history of enlightened masters *Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp*,⁴⁷⁸ which was compiled in 1004, one finds only one woman, Moshan Liaoran,⁴⁷⁹ among the 950 Chan masters represented in the work.⁴⁸⁰ However, before looking into these questions, I will cast light on the major topics in the translated biographies and see what their characteristics are.

6.1 Place of Birth and Surname

As stated before in this thesis, the style and structure of the Buddhist biographies are in the tradition of the secular biography in China, and owes relatively little to Indian forms of religious biography. A representative biography begins with stating the monk or nun’s secular surname and place of origin. The biography may continue with giving information on the monk or nun’s father or other ancestors if they were prominent. It then goes on to recount the first master of the biographee, when and where she or he received full ordination and what scriptures she or he read. The biography usually ends with the precise date and circumstances of the biographee’s death, followed by the names of the disciples.⁴⁸¹ This last factor is not found in the biographies I have translated, but this does not necessarily means

⁴⁷⁸ *Jingde chuandeng lu* ‘Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp’ 景德傳燈錄.

⁴⁷⁹ Moshan Liaoran 末山了然 (d. 895).

⁴⁸⁰ Levering 1999: 188.

⁴⁸¹ Kieschnick 1997: 4f.

that all nuns' biographies fail to list the nuns' disciples. In other parts, the pattern is the same for the nuns. Of course not all the biographies follow this pattern meticulously, but they all have it as a foundation.

When it comes to the place of origin and surname of the nuns presented in this thesis, both the surname and place of birth of five of the nuns are known,⁴⁸² though three of the biographies indicate the nun's surname by giving the surname of her father; "daughter of mister [...]." Five of the biographies give us just their place of birth⁴⁸³ and the remaining two gives us neither information of their place of birth nor surname.⁴⁸⁴ Of more than 80% of the monks presented in the 'Biographies of Eminent Monks,'⁴⁸⁵ the original surname, as well as their place of birth, are unknown.⁴⁸⁶ When it comes to 'Biographies of Nuns,' the place of birth of 59 of the 65 nuns are presented.⁴⁸⁷ Thus, together with the scant material from the twelve translations presented here from 'Further Biographies of Nuns,' which gives either place of birth or surname, or both, in ten out of the twelve biographies, the biographies give us more information about the nuns' background (i.e. their place of birth and surname) than the 'Biographies of Eminent Monks.'

Of the twelve biographies translated from 'Further Biographies of Nuns,' the age at death is recorded in five of them;⁴⁸⁸ the youngest was Chaochen who was 55 years old when she passed away, and the oldest was Chaoyin who was 73.

There were three nuns who foresaw their own death: Dumu Jingang, Chaoyin and Chaochen. The biography of Dumu Jingang also says that when she was "over 70 years old, she indicated that she was about to die, at the tip of her nose there was a [spark of] fire." I do not know how to interpret that there was a spark of fire at the tip of her nose, but it could be read as an auspicious sign.

In 'Biography of Nuns,' 37 out of 65 nuns had their age at the time of death recorded. Nine of the nuns had foreknowledge of their deaths, and they were all auspicious.⁴⁸⁹ I will now turn to why these women choose to become nuns.

⁴⁸² Biographies nr. 14, 48, 56, 70, and 92. The three are 14, 48, and 56.

⁴⁸³ Biographies nr. 21, 66, 105, and 118. Biography nr. 21 state 'Wujinzang [...] was the aunt of the Confucian scholar Liu Zhilüe,' from this one cannot presume that her surname was Liu.

⁴⁸⁴ Biographies nr. 29, 83, and 97.

⁴⁸⁵ 'Biographies of Eminent Monks' *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 compiled by the monk Huijiao 慧皎 (497-544) around 530.

⁴⁸⁶ Zürcher 1959: 7.

⁴⁸⁷ Cissell 1972: 287. Cissell do not mention anything about the nuns' surname.

⁴⁸⁸ Biographies nr. 66, 70, 83, 92, and 118.

⁴⁸⁹ Cissell 1972: 121.

6.2 Social and Economic Background

Many of the biographies included in the ‘Biographies of Eminent Monks,’ are of monks who are said to have lived in poor and difficult circumstances before entering the monastic order. According to Erik Zürcher, poverty is one of the virtues of a Buddhist monk or nun, in fact the monk calls himself ‘poor monk.’⁴⁹⁰ The Buddhist biographical collections, including ‘Further Biographies of Nuns,’ have a tendency to standardize the lives of their heroes according to a set of fixed pattern, referred to as *topoi*. Some of the monks said to have come from poor families in ‘Biographies of Eminent Monks,’ actually came from modest or relatively poor gentry families.⁴⁹¹ However, the majority of illustrious monks presented in this work were of rather lowly origin, and it was fairly uncommon that the monks were of gentry origin. The cultured clergy in China differed from the rest of the Chinese intelligentsia in that it was relatively free from discrimination based on social background. In this, the Chinese *sangha* was in line with its Indian counterpart.⁴⁹² Among the nuns in the ‘Biographies of Nuns’ about whom we have information of their background, they seem to have their origin in upper layers of society; some are daughters of high officials and some are members of the urban aristocracy.⁴⁹³ Of the twelve biographies of nuns I have translated from ‘Further Biographies of Nuns,’ six of the nuns came from gentry families,⁴⁹⁴ and of the remaining six nuns there is no information that reveals their background. It is therefore difficult to compare the social and economic background of the nuns and the monks based on this scant material.

6.3 Their Motives for Becoming Nuns

There are many different reasons why these women became nuns, and sometimes the biographies do not tell us why they chose this way of life.

Of the twelve biographies in ‘Further Biographies of Nuns’ I have translated, six do say the reason why the women chose to become nuns. Their motives for choosing this path of life varied greatly, however. Both the biographies of the nun Chaochen and the

⁴⁹⁰ *Pindao* 貧道.

⁴⁹¹ Zürcher 1959: 7.

⁴⁹² Zürcher 1959: 9.

⁴⁹³ Chikusa: 11.

⁴⁹⁴ Biographies nr. 14, 21, 48, 56, 105, and 118.

Mongolian nun Xingyue⁴⁹⁵ state that they became nuns in order to remain faithful to their late husbands. The nun Chaoyin, biography number 92, became a nun after her eldest son (who was a monk) passed away; losing a child made her life meaningless and she wanted to become a nun. Chaoyin was a widow who had sworn not to remarry. Biography number 56 of Huangxin tells us that after running into different kinds of problems, she became a prostitute. One day Huangxin was approached by an old nun who made her realize that she had been a nun in her previous life; this made her “abandon the life of amusement” and renounce home. The ability to see the previous life of others or obtain knowledge of one’s previous existence is two of the most common expositions of supernatural powers in Buddhism.⁴⁹⁶

The only biography that states directly that she decided to enter the Order after listening to explanations of the Buddha’s teaching is that of Chuanhui, which is number 105. She made up her mind to become a nun after listening to an old neighbour woman’s explanations of the principles of Buddhism. Chuanhui then made a vow to comprehend the Great Vehicle completely. The Yuan nun Shelanlan served Empress Dowager at the palace in such a diligent way that the empress ordered the emperor’s master to teach Shelanlan. Subsequently, she shaved her head and renounced home. Possibly, the biography of Shelanlan could be added to the category “after listening to the Buddha’s teaching.” Even though none of the other biographies tell us directly that the women decided to become nuns after listening to the Buddha’s teaching, we cannot exclude that some of them also had this reason for their decision, e.g. the nuns Wuliang and Miaodao.

The six remaining biographies do not say why the women chose to become nuns.⁴⁹⁷ However, some of the biographies give us an indication why the woman in question decided to live her life as a nun. The biography number 97 of the nun Xinwen does not state the reason for her becoming a nun, it only says: “[...] lived at a certain nunnery in Hanyang and by the age of fifteen determined to observe the precepts.” The text does not say why Xinwen made this decision, but perhaps indicates that she was brought to the nunnery as an orphan, or in order to avoid getting married. Becoming a nun was the only way a woman could remain respectable outside the family setting. In the category of “unknown causes for becoming a nun,” we also have the biography of the nun Wujinzang, which does not reveal anything about why or when she became a nun. This biography is mainly about when the

⁴⁹⁵ Biographies 70 and 105 respectively.

⁴⁹⁶ Kieschnick 1997: 70.

⁴⁹⁷ The six are biographies are as follow: 14, 21, 29, 48, 83, and 97.

Sixth Patriarch came to her village and taught her the meaning of the *Mahāparinirvānasūtra*. The whole village came to show the Sixth Patriarch respect and rebuilt the Baolin Temple for him. Thus, Wujinzang plays a supporting role in her own biography. As shown, the six biographies in this category vary greatly in how they present the respective nun, and in most cases it is difficult to get information from the texts why they entered the Order.

Accordingly, of the twelve biographies presented in this thesis, six do not reveal the women's motivation, while the remaining women all had different reasons: two remained faithful to their deceased husbands, one nun's life became meaningless after the death of her son, one obtained the knowledge that she had been a nun in her previous life, and two became nuns after listening to the Buddha's teaching.

6.4 Highly Respected Nuns

In the introduction to the 'Biographies of Nuns,' Baochang divides the nuns into four categories: the ascetic, the contemplative, the faithful and steadfast, and the teacher of great influence.⁴⁹⁸ According to this categorization there were nuns who were considered teachers of great influence, and thus respected in China before the Liang Dynasty. In this section I will examine if nuns were also respected in the succeeding dynasties, and if so what kind of influence did they have, whether they taught monks and laity in addition to nuns. I will also examine how the nuns were addressed, as this is also a way to determine whether they were respected. First, I will examine how many of the nuns received respect as great teachers.

Seven nuns are described as giving sermons or other forms of teachings in the translated biographies.⁴⁹⁹ The topic of equality between the genders regarding the attainment of Buddhahood is discussed in many of the biographies.⁵⁰⁰ In the biography of the Ming Dynasty nun Dumu Jingang, she is asked why she has manifested as a woman, and not as a man, when her understanding of the Buddha's true teaching is thorough.

Dumu Jingang replied: "There are [physical] forms of man and woman, but their nature is not different, and does not produce the

⁴⁹⁸ The ascetic *kuxing zhi jie* 苦行之節, the contemplative *changuan zhi miao* 禪觀之妙, the faithful and steadfast *lizhizheng* 立志貞固, and the teacher of great influence *hongzhen kuangyuan* 弘震曠遠. Cissell 1972: 48.

⁴⁹⁹ Biographies number 29, 48, 56, 66, 83, 105, and 118.

⁵⁰⁰ See Paul 1979, for more information on gender transformation.

view which make categories [of things].” Dumu Jingang expounded in a *gāthā*:

[When it comes to] man and woman it is unnecessary to distinguish

[between] false and true,

[After all] what kind of person did Guanyin appear as?

[When one has] broken free from the human body it is completely useless,

May I ask you [is] the male body the same as the female body?⁵⁰¹

Dumu Jingang here points out one of the essences of Mahāyāna philosophy, the theory that everything is emptiness, and the difference between the genders is only in the mind of the unenlightened. In one of her speeches Dumu Jingang refers to the ‘Diamond Sūtra,’ where one of the main messages can be said to be that all phenomena are illusory. Dumu Jingang was an eloquent speaker and spoke at every meeting. When she was challenged, she replied immediately. The biography says that her followers were many, and people who were “converted to Buddhism by her were countless.” This was not only caused by her intelligence, but also by her pious nature: “she only ate unrefined rice and wore shabby and coarse clothes. [The things other] people left behind, Dumu Jingang did her utmost to distribute [to all the] monks and nuns who did not have sufficient [food and clothing].” Accordingly, Dumu Jingang was a nun who was not only pious, but also had a thorough understanding of the Buddha’s teaching and taught nuns, monks, and laity and was thereby highly respected.

There is also an example of a nun who challenged a less realized monk, the Tang nun Shiji. Her biography states: “She circumambulated Juzhi three times and said: “If you can say one word [that shows your understanding of Chan], I will take my hat off.”” The monk Juzhi could not answer Shiji, who subsequently left. After this encounter with Shiji, the monk Juzhi decided to undergo further Chan training, and under the guidance of Preceptor Tianlong, he experiences the great enlightenment. But it is his encounter with Shiji that made him realize his shortcomings in his understanding of the Buddha’s teaching.

The nun Miaodao was one of the most notable Chan women during the Song Dynasty; she was not only the first dharma heir of the most renowned Linji master of the Song Dynasty, Master Dahui, but she was also the first of his disciples to attain enlightenment.⁵⁰² Miaodao is one of sixteen women who have an entry in the Chan genealogical history ‘Jiandai

⁵⁰¹ For the whole biography of Dumu Jingang with footnotes see chapter 5.4.1.

⁵⁰² Hsieh 1999: 158.

Universal Record of the Lamp,⁵⁰³ —compiled in 1204. The preface states that the compiler wished to broaden the accounts of the lineage to also include women and lay people whom previous compilations had excluded.⁵⁰⁴ According to her biography presented in ‘Further Biographies of Nuns,’ Miaodao attacked the monks and nuns for their blind inquiries into the scriptures. Miaodao followed the teaching method used by the Linji School in the Chan tradition when she taught, e.g.:

[Once] a nun asked: “How is Buddha?”

[Miao]Dao answered: “[There is] no Buddha.”

The nun asked: “What is then the great meaning of the Buddha-dharma?”

[Miao]Dao said: “Skeleton of [old] bones.”

Someone asked: “What about when words do not refer to the matter and instructions do not correspond to the reality?”

[Miao]Dao answered: “Already before you have urinated, you have fallen into the hole.”

As shown in the dialogues above, Miaodao was engaged in eloquent, clever, and witty dialogues with Chan students. Her sermons are also reported to have been eloquent and sophisticated. According to the *vinaya*, a nun could receive *dharma* instructions from a monk, but nuns were not permitted to teach monks.⁵⁰⁵ Despite this, Miaodao taught the laity, nuns, and monks.

The Qing nun Chuanhui first heard an explanation of the Buddha’s teaching from an old neighbour woman, the text does not say if this old woman was a nun or laywoman. Chuanhui later renounced home, and the biography says that she practiced her *huatou* diligently and became “eloquent in all situations and good at debating.” Later Chuanhui became the deacon at Dache Hall; she now concealed her identity as a woman, pretending to be a man.⁵⁰⁶ The reason for this is not clear, but it might have to do with the gender roles in

⁵⁰³ ‘Jiandai Universal Record of the Lamp,’ Ch. *Jiandai pudeng lu* 嘉泰普燈錄.

⁵⁰⁴ Levering 1999: 189.

⁵⁰⁵ Barnes 1987: 108.

⁵⁰⁶ In all the five great religions women have been subordinated to men. According to the Buddhist Vinaya, a nun was not permitted to teach monks, and some Mahāyāna scriptures (e.g. the ‘Lotus Sūtra’) states that a woman has to change her gender before she can attain enlightenment. However, the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* says that it is not necessary for females to change their gender in order to attain enlightenment. For more on this see Paul 1979 and Havnevik 1989. In my translations there are examples of nuns instructing monks in the *dharma* and some are also said to have attained enlightenment; accordingly it is difficult to say whether or not

Chinese society at that time. This, however, is only an assumption, since the traditional Confucian gender roles had almost ceased in certain cases in regards of Buddhism. As shown above, some of the accomplished women of Buddhism were not considered inferior to men, but were respected as great masters. However, when it became clear that concealment of her gender was to be revealed, Chuanhui escaped into the mountains, where her story soon became well known. Chuanhui later opened the Nianhua society in Huai'an, where she lectured on the *dharma*. Consequently, it was not necessary for her to pretend to be a man in order to lecture.

The four examples above show that some of the nuns were very eloquent, giving sermons, Chan dialogues, and answering questions from the assembly. The nuns were respected and honoured for this, possibly in the same way as the monks were. These examples are taken from the Tang, Song, Ming, and Qing Dynasties, and indicate that the nun masters were respected throughout the different dynasties. According to Nancy Schuster Barnes, some nuns publicly debated famous monks and defeated them, but there is no evidence that individual nuns or nuns' communities made any noteworthy contributions to the development of the Chinese Buddhist schools which emerged in the sixth century C.E., or that the nuns participated in the discussions on the doctrines and the institution of new practises from which the Chinese schools emerged. Even though some nuns wrote commentaries and treaties on the doctrines, most of these works are now lost.⁵⁰⁷ In my material, there is no information about any nuns being a part of the development of the different Buddhist schools.

6.5 *Zhangfu* and other titles

In the translated biographies there are three nuns who are given the title *shi* 'master': Shelanlan, Dumu Jingang, and Chaoyin; the nun Wuliang is called a *zhangfu*, a term I will explain later in the chapter. The Yuan Dynasty nun Shelanlan reached a high position as a teacher for Empress Dowager. Shelanlan became a nun after the Empress Dowager ordered Emperor Chengzong's teacher Jialuosiba to teach Shelanlan, who subsequently shaved her head. In her biography it says:

misogyny was the reason for Chuanhui to conceal her gender.
⁵⁰⁷ Barnes 1987: 124.

From morning to night the Master stayed at Empress Dowager's side. [...] When the Master spoke, Empress Dowager would certainly listen, and the empress would certainly follow her advice. [...] Both the second wife and empress inside the palace, and the kings and dukes outside the palace, all respected her as Master and called her *bahashi*. [What] the northerners call *bahashi*, is the same as [what] the Han people call *shi*.⁵⁰⁸

The biography continues, saying that Shelanlan wished to withdraw from the palace and seek Enlightenment, but the Empress Dowager would not allow this. Finally, however, the empress gave Shelanlan permission to live at Miaoshan Temple on the condition that she visited the Empress Dowager at the palace regularly. From this we can conclude that Shelanlan was highly respected by the Empress Dowager. In addition to establishing two temples which both kept a copy of the Buddhist canon, Shelanlan also copied several *sūtras* in Chinese, Uighur, and Mongolian, gave alms generously, rebuilt one temple, and built many more. Due to her good deeds and the respect she received at the palace, Shelanlan was honoured with the posthumous title Great Master Zhenjing. Both Emperor Yingzong and Emperor Wenzong treated her with the utmost courtesy. Her biography states that Shelanlan outlived four emperors and served altogether three empresses. That a nun had great influence at the court was not something new, as in the Eastern Jin Dynasty several nuns had strong influence on the court, and this is reflected in the numerous complaints about the close relationship between Buddhism and the state.⁵⁰⁹

The other nuns who were called 'Master' are Dumu Jingang, who I presented earlier in this chapter, and Chaoyin. She was respected and venerated for her pious and humble ways, and I will return to Chaoyin's biography later in this chapter.

In the biography of the Tang Dynasty nun Wuliang, the term *zhangfu* is used to describe her, it says: 'the people at that time praised her as a *zhangfu* among women.' In classical Chinese the term *zhangfu* has the meaning 'brave man,' but in regard to the Buddhist meaning of it is used to mean 'zealous disciple' or 'energetic disciple.' According to Beata Grant, the use of the title *zhangfu* was ubiquitous in Ming-Qing literati writing to describe an extraordinary woman, when her virtues were not considered to be traditionally

⁵⁰⁸ *Shi* 師 mean 'master.'

⁵⁰⁹ Chikusa: 8.

feminine.⁵¹⁰ This being a biography from the Tang Dynasty, it must have been in use as a term to describe exceptional women already then. Other terms describing nuns in a rather masculine way appear also in some biographies of women not translated in this thesis. For instance, in the Qing nun Chaochen's⁵¹¹ biography of her female teacher Master Xinggang, she uses the adjective *kuiyan*,⁵¹² which can be translated as 'imposing' and 'stalwart,' to describe Master Xinggang's appearance. Furthermore, Chaochen characterize Master Xinggang's attitude and behaviour as that of a *zhangfu*.⁵¹³ Other nuns, especially female Chan practitioners, tended to ignore the gender implications of the term *zhangfu*, taking it purely as high praise for anyone—male or female—who had extraordinary courage and zealotness in their religious quest.⁵¹⁴ Thus, Wuliang must have practised with great energy and resolution, since she was praised as a *zhangfu*. According to Bernard Faure, the use of the term *zhangfu* in Chan texts is an example of the school's rhetoric of equality.⁵¹⁵ Chan texts acknowledge that male and female have the same opportunity to achieve Buddhahood, but by using the term *zhangfu* to describe a diligent disciple suggest that the qualities needed for reaching enlightenment are masculine and only a small number of remarkable women have the qualities needed to achieve this aim.

6.6 Their Religious Practice

The Chan and Pure Land Schools were the most popular and widespread schools of Buddhism in the period covered here, i.e. from the Tang to Qing Dynasties. This is also reflected in the biographies presented in this thesis. Seven of the nuns belonged to the Chan School⁵¹⁶ and one of them (Chaoyin) practiced a synthesis of Pure Land and Chan, which was not unusual after Master Yongming Yanshou syncretized the two schools during the Song Dynasty. Shelanlan copied scriptures from both the Chan and Pure Land traditions, and there is also a reference to Guanyin in the biography of the Chan nun Dumu Jingang.

The Bodhisattva Guanyin is mentioned in two other biographies as well. From the Yuan nun Xingyue's biography it seems that her main religious practise was to worship

⁵¹⁰ Grant 1996: 72.

⁵¹¹ I have translated Chaochen's biography in this thesis, but not that of her master, Xinggang.

⁵¹² *Kuiyan* 魁硯.

⁵¹³ Grant 1996: 73.

⁵¹⁴ Hsieh 1999: 162.

⁵¹⁵ Faure 2003: 129.

⁵¹⁶ Biographies nr. 29, 48, 56, 83, 92, 105, and 118.

Guanyin.

The religious practice of the nun Xinwen is somewhat unclear, her biography does not mention any scripture or religious practice; the focus in the text seems to be that a nun should respect monks and follow the *vinaya*.

The only nun that belonged to the Huayan School⁵¹⁷ was Wuliang who lived during the Tang Dynasty. She often recited the *Avataṃskasūtra*, and the text says that Wuliang “completed the whole text every three days, and regarded it as her permanent text of guidance.” Other texts that are mentioned in the nuns’ biographies are the *Mahāparinirvānasūtra* and the ‘Diamond Sūtra.’

According to Tsai, the principal texts studied and mastered by the nuns presented in Baochang’s ‘Biographies of Nuns,’ were the ‘Lotus Sūtra,’ *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra*, *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, *Srimālādevī* and *the Mahāparinivanasūtra*.⁵¹⁸ These scriptures are much the same as I found in my material. The central theme of all these texts is that women are able to attain enlightenment, e.g. *Srimālādevī* introduces women as great teachers of the bodhisattva path or as imminent Buddhas,⁵¹⁹ and in the ‘Lotus Sūtra’ there is the story of the Dragon Princess who attained Buddhahood after changing her gender, while in commentaries besides the Tiantai School states that it is not necessary for a woman to change her sex as long as she has realized that all phenomenon are empty.⁵²⁰ That the nuns studied and mastered these scriptures is not only because they were women, but also because these works are among the most fundamental and influential texts of Mahāyāna Buddhism, and the different Buddhist schools the nuns belonged to, and consequently were a natural part of their religious practise.

6.7 Self-immolation

Of the biographies in ‘Further Biographies of Nuns’ I have translated, the only nun who carried out self-immolation was the Song nun Huangxin. She did not become a nun until late in her life, and attained perfect enlightenment. Huangxin became the abbess of Miaozhu

⁵¹⁷ The Huayan School 華嚴, which took its name from the Chinese translation of the *Avataṃskasūtra*, Ch. *Huayan jing*, ‘Flower Garland Sūtra.’ The Huayan School was founded by Dushun 杜順 (557-640), and reached its prime during the Tang Dynasty under its third patriarch Fazang 法藏 (643-712). deBary 1999: 471.

⁵¹⁸ Tsai 1982: 12.

⁵¹⁹ Barnes 1987: 121.

⁵²⁰ Barnes 1987: 125.

nunnery and her biography describes how her reputation grew and that her following soon exceeded 300 people. The reason for Huangxin to sacrifice herself was that on one occasion of making the Bodhisattva vow, she “cast a bell to make the vow flourish even more,” but the bell was impossible to form. After trying to cast it eight times, the ninth time Huangxin threw her body into the fire as an offering and the bell was eventually completed. The religious practice of self-immolation most likely found inspiration in the ‘Medicine King’ chapter of the ‘Lotus Sūtra,’ which was the most influential book in all of premodern East Asia. The ‘Lotus Sūtra’ describes self-immolation as the highest and most honoured offering possible to give. In Baochang’s ‘Biographies of Nuns’ there are six examples of self-immolation.⁵²¹ In ‘Biographies of Monks,’ ‘Further Biographies of Eminent Monks’ and ‘Song Collection of Eminent Monks,’⁵²² more than fifty monks attempted or committed self-immolation.⁵²³ The motives for the nuns and monks immolating themselves were not only inspired by the ‘Lotus Sūtra,’ as some of them were motivated by a dislike for their bodies and worldly life and others did so in an imitation of the Bodhisattvas, for fulfilment of a promise, or as a protest against religious persecution.⁵²⁴ Even though we find examples of self-immolation in the *jātaka* tales, the Theravāda tradition stresses the religious practice of a middle road.

6.8 Faithful nuns

There are several examples of women who became nuns after their spouses passed away in ‘Further Biographies of Nuns,’ and in ‘Biographies of Nuns.’ According to Chikusa Masaaki, it was not unusual for widows to enter the Order.⁵²⁵ One woman who turned to Buddhism and became a nun after she became a widow is the Yuan nun Xingyue who after refusing to marry her former stepson Baima Duoerchi, went to Yaoshi nunnery where ‘she shaved her head.’ Since Xingyue had violated the emperor’s command when she refused to marry Baima Duoerchi, she was sent to jail and brutally interrogated. Xingyue had faith in Bodhisattva Guanyin, and kept reciting her name through the whole interrogation until one

⁵²¹ Chikusa: 18.

⁵²² ‘Further Biographies of Eminent Monks’ *Xu Gaoseng Zhuan* 續高僧傳, ‘Song Collection of Eminent Monks’ *Song Gaoseng Zhuan* 宋高僧傳.

⁵²³ Jan 1965: 244.

⁵²⁴ Jan 1965: 246.

⁵²⁵ Chikusa ?:12.

of the officials praised Xingyue for her faithfulness to her late husband and criticized the officials for punishing Xingyue for this. In Confucianism, faithfulness to one's husband after he has passed away is considered a great virtue. Consequently, Xingyue was released and she was determined to follow the way of Buddhism and became exceptionally pious in her worship of Guanyin. It does not say in the biography that it was her faith in Guanyin that saved her, but it is believed that when one is in danger and calls upon Guanyin that she will come to your rescue, often in disguise.

The biography of the Qing nun Chaochen tells us that she “disfigured her face and changed into mourning dress” when her husband passed away. She thought about renouncing the world, but had to go through the traditional Confucian mourning period before she was allowed to enter the *samgha*. The reason why Chaochen disfigured her face could be that since she now wanted to devote her life to Buddhism her beauty would only be a distraction. Finally, after practicing Buddhism at home for some time, Chaochen entered a meditation retreat and after sitting in meditation for fourteen days she reached enlightenment. Master Xinggang, the abbess of Fushi Gang, approved the enlightenment.

Another nun who was faithful to her late husband is the Qing nun Chaoyin, but it was not until her eldest son passed away that she renounced the world together with her other son. From her biography it seems like her main practise was that of *nianfo*⁵²⁶ (a Pure Land practice), but she also practised the ‘technique of sharp points’ (a practise used by the Chan School). It was not unusual to syncretize these two schools of Buddhism after Master Yongming Yanshou synthesised the teachings of the two schools in the Song Dynasty.

After Chaoyin passed away, monks, nuns, and lay people assembled to see and venerate her relics. The Minister of Rites, Qian Muzhai, wrote an inscription on the *stūpa* erected for her, praising her righteous and pious ways. At the same time he criticized other nuns for causing Buddhism to degenerate. The layman Xu Bo also expressed his respect for Chaoyin praising her sincere devotion and humble ways. Like Qian Muzhai, Xu also criticized other nuns for destroying the Buddha *dharma*:

[...] nuns and other great disciples were predicted to become Buddhas.

But now when the end of the world suddenly is reached, the nuns are appearing in the open; many of them become pawns in the game and

⁵²⁶ *Nianfo* 念佛 is the devotional practice where the devotee chant the name of Amitābha Buddha, *Namo amituo fo* 南無阿彌陀佛 ‘Hail to the Buddha of Immeasurable Light and Eternal Life.’ This invocation is believed to assure the devotee rebirth in Amitābha’s Pure Land of the West. *FGDCD*: 3208.

blindly they visit masters and pointlessly venerate them, destroying the Buddha *dharma*.

But this was not the case with Chaoyin, she did not even write her name in the great masters' list.

One of the nuns this criticism was indirectly pointed against was Xinwen, who on the fasting day during the three month retreat, was not willing to enter the hall to venerate the Buddha and monks assembled there. This was a violation of the precepts, which says that even a 100-year-old nun must venerate the youngest male novice. Xinwen said that she had not learnt this of her former teacher, who treated everyone as equals and did not expect the nuns to show reverence to the monks. Preceptor Jianyue characterized Xinwen's former teacher as only being interested in donations, subsequently threw Xinwen and her donations out of the temple. When she later returned to the temple to repent, Preceptor Jianyue let her stay and wrote a guide for nuns regarding the precepts. Accordingly, there are both examples of nuns who were great teachers or pious, as well as nuns who failed to follow the precepts as this last example shows; not all the biographies presented in 'Further Biographies of Nuns' were of exemplary nuns.

In this chapter I have analyzed the biographies presented in this thesis, based on the scant information of Buddhist nuns from the Tang to Qing Dynasties. We find examples of nuns who studied, taught, debated and were respected as teachers. There are also examples of nuns who were admired for their virtue, piousness and dedication to Buddhism, and who compassionately helped those in need. Many of these nuns were models for other women to emulate.

7. Conclusion

In this final chapter, I will summarise the results presented in this thesis, which is based on a sample of twelve biographies chosen in turn from the compiler Zhenhua's selection of 200 biographies of Buddhist nuns from the period of the Liang Dynasty to Republic of China. Master Zhenhua's reasons for selecting these specific 200 biographies is not stated in the edition of 'Further Biographies of Nuns' I have based my translations on. As far as I can see, the only aspect the translated biographies have in common is that they portray nuns who in different ways are role models to be emulated; they were intelligent, eloquent, pious and faithful. Or, like the biography of the nun Xinwen, an example of how nuns should not behave towards monks. As the compilers of 'Biographies of Eminent Monks,' 'Song Biographies of Eminent Monks,' 'Further Biographies of Eminent Monks' and 'Biographies of Nuns,' Zhenhua most likely copied the text word-for-word from sources available for him, which likely included *stūpa* inscriptions, writings of lay literati devoted to Buddhism and other sources. This practice was not only used in Buddhist biographies, but was also widely used in compilations of secular biographies too. From the twelve translated biographies of 'Further Biographies of Nuns'—originating from the Tang to Qing Dynasties—there is not enough material to draw reliable conclusions of how Buddhist nuns were perceived and what their religious practices were as a whole, but we can form an idea of the position of nuns in premodern China.

In the translated biographies there are examples of nuns who taught the *dharma* to nuns, the laity and monks. Despite the fact that the *vinaya* states that nuns were not permitted to teach monks but only receive *dharma* instructions from a monk, several of the nuns presented in 'Further Biographies of Nuns' were eminent teachers who also taught monks, like Dumu Jingang and Miaodao. These nuns were highly respected and considered as great masters not only by nuns and the laity, but also by monks. The scriptures the nuns studied and mastered were the principal texts in Chinese Buddhism and many of them are on the subjects of emptiness or on the possibility of women to attain Buddhahood, such as the 'Lotus Sūtra' and *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra*. As shown above, some of the nuns indeed became great teachers who lectured to other nuns, large congregations of lay people, and even to monks on the *sūtras*. In this way they became highly respected and influential. There is also an example of a nun, Shelanlan, who had a great influence on Empress Dowager in the Yuan Dynasty. This was, however, not unusual, as there are many examples of nuns and monks who had friends at the court and who lectured and acted as the teachers of emperors,

empresses and other members of the imperial family throughout Chinese history. The nuns presented here did not only receive respect because they were considered great teachers, but also because they were thought to be extraordinarily pious in their religious practise, like the nuns Chaochen and Chaoyin. It appears that the accounts of the lives of monks are surrounded with more supernatural elements than those of the nuns, who are portrayed more as models for other women to emulate. In the material I have translated, there are no examples of nuns living for hundreds of years, nor defeating monsters with esoteric spells or fly through the air, all of which appear in the biographies of monks.⁵²⁷

Becoming a nun was the only way women could maintain respectability outside the family setting in premodern China. Most of the biographies presented here does not reveal the women's motivation for becoming a nun. However, in the biographies where the reason is stated we see that their motives varied enormously, from a sincere wish to comprehend the Buddha's teaching thoroughly to staying faithful to their late husbands. Most of the nuns presented in this thesis had their background from the upper layer of society. This is in accordance with Baochang's 'Biographies of Nuns,' where the nuns we have information about are associated with the urban aristocracy.

Accordingly, several of the nuns presented in this thesis were highly respected masters who taught the *dharma* to the laity, nuns and monks, and some became respected because of their piousness in their religious practice. At the same time, there are no examples of individual nuns or nuns' community who made any significant contributions to the development of the Chinese Buddhist schools, nor contributed in the discussion on the doctrines and the institution of new practices from which the Chinese schools emerged.

⁵²⁷ Kieschnick 1997: 1.

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94. Bhiksuni Jingzhu of Hui-cheng
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98. Bhiksuni Deri of Qinglian Temple, Qinzhou (including the biography of Bhiksuni Deyue)
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104. Bhiksuni Xinghao of Shanhu Temple, Danghu
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Abstract

‘Further Biographies of Nuns’ was compiled by Master Zhenhua (1908 -1947) in the 1940s and presents the biographies of 200 Buddhist nuns from the Liang Dynasty (502-557) to the Republic of China (1912-1949). This thesis presents the translation of twelve biographies from ‘Further Biographies of Nuns.’

Though the Buddhist monks of China have been a source for many biographies and studies by both Asian and Western scholars throughout history, Chinese Buddhist nuns have received little attention. Zhenhua’s compilation is the sequel of ‘Biographies of Nuns’ by Master Baochang (ca. 466-?), collected nearly 1500 years before. It is not known why it took so long for a sequel on the lives of nuns to be written, especially considering how the lives of monks were elaborated in several compilations throughout Chinese history. However, it might be because the lives of nuns were considered less interesting and noteworthy than those of monks. This thesis shows that many nuns were of comparable importance and influence as the great monks, as in the translated biographies presented here there are examples of nuns who became greatly respected and influential teachers, lecturing other nuns, large congregations of lay people, and monks on the sūtras. Many of the nuns presented here were considered very eloquent and witty, and there is even an example of a nun—one of many—who held great influence over an Empress Dowager in the Yuan Dynasty.