

Wutai Shan During the Ming Dynasty

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Abstract

Historians of Ming period Chinese Buddhism have tended in the past to concentrate on the monastic Buddhism of the economically dominant Lower Yangzi, or on the Buddhism of the capital, Beijing. By contrast this thesis investigates the management of monastic establishments on Wutai Shan during the Ming dynasty. A review of Wutai Shan Buddhist history and the general characteristics of Ming Buddhism is provided as essential background for understanding the conclusions of the research. By the 15th-16th centuries Indian Buddhist influence on Wutai Shan had a long established history. There is little awareness, however, that Wutai Shan was still attracting Indian Buddhist visitors as late as this period. This thesis focuses on the activities of two great Indian Buddhist masters who came to Wutai Shan. Their visits reveal that although it had weakened as a result of the decline of Buddhism in India, the bond between Indian Buddhism and Wutai Shan continued to exist during this period. Following these two great masters other South Asian Buddhists came to this holy mountain throughout the Ming period. In contrast to these visitors from “the west”, in this period we hardly see any Japanese and Korean Buddhist pilgrims on Wutai Shan.

Many Wutai Shan monk officials are mentioned in inscriptions in regard to various events. Through a careful study of the monk official system on Wutai Shan we conclude that the power of Ming Wutai Shan monk officials was very limited. This was due to the unique character of Wutai Shan, where many celebrated monks were given honorific titles which co-existed with the Buddhist offices. This created overlaps in jurisdiction which frequently resulted in no one having the authority to take charge. Elsewhere, however, the Ming monk official system was not merely honorific. In most areas the system still functioned, and we use the Nanjing monk official system as example to prove this.

Many Buddhologists believe that four eminent monks in late Ming China played important roles in revitalising Chinese Buddhism. Among these, three had been to Wutai Shan. In this research we compare the monastic reforms led by two of these monks with those on Wutai Shan in the late Ming.

As one of the most important sacred Buddhist sites, Wutai Shan gained considerable support from the Ming imperial family. Some members had political motives but most acted out of genuine concern for the flourishing of Buddhism. As compared with both previous dynasties and with the later Qing dynasty, relatively more Ming imperial support came from the members of imperial family's personal purse than from state funds, reflecting the weakened condition of imperial power under the Ming. In contrast to the well-documented imperial patrons there are hardly any records relating to lay patrons of Wutai Shan, and we analyse reasons behind this.

All these aspects of Wutai Shan Buddhism reveal a Ming Buddhist culture significantly different from that which has occupied scholarly attention so far.

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Abbreviations

T	Taisho Canon 大正藏
卅 XZ	卅 Xu Zang Jing 卅 续藏经
DZZBB	Da Zheng Zang Bu Bian 大正藏补编
QLSZJY	Qingliang Shan Zhi Ji Yao 清凉山志辑要

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Introduction

Despite its standing in all Buddhist countries as an exceptionally important Buddhist pilgrimage site, Wutai Shan has received the attention of few scholars. But it deserves more attention than other Buddhist mountains in China for its contribution to Chinese Buddhism. The studies of Wutai Shan that do exist have mostly focused on developments during the Tang (618-907) and Song (960-1279) periods.

Among western scholars, Étienne Lamotte was one of the first to write about Wutai Shan. In his essay on Mañjuśrī, published in *T'oung Pao* in 1960, he provided a thorough study of this Bodhisattva, who is believed to have dwelt “in a mountain with five peaks”. Lamotte’s research examined Mañjuśrī’s association with Wutai Shan and how the mountain was known by the Tibetans and Nepalese. Although his main task was to explore how the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī gained popularity in Buddhist countries, he also shed light on the history of this important Buddhist pilgrimage site.

Another scholar, Tansen Sen, in his book *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade*, briefly addressed the issue of the origin of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. He also discussed the proposal that the Mañjuśrī cult in China had become widely known to the Buddhist community in South Asia and was not merely fabrication of the Chinese clergy. The evidence shows that the reports of Indian pilgrims at Wutai Shan can be found in other traditions, specifically in Nepali manuscripts and Sanskrit-Khotanese bilingual manuals. Prof. Sen demonstrated that the acceptance of Wutai Shan as a sacred pilgrimage site by the Indian Buddhist community advanced communication between India and China during the 6th –10th century.

Robert M. Gimello has published a number of studies on Wutai Shan in the Song dynasty. In his monograph *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China* edited by Susan Naquin and Yü Chün-fang, Gimello included the essay “Chang Shang-ying on Wu-T’ai Shan”. Chang Shang-ying (张商英 1043-1121) was a major personage in the religious, cultural, and political history of the Northern Song, and both the secular and the Buddhist historiographical traditions preserve ample information about both his private life and his official career. Chang Shang-ying’s contribution to the popularity of Wutai Shan derives from his record of his nine days’ journey there, *Xu Qingliang Zhuan* (a further record of Qingliang Shan). In his essay Gimello took Chang Shang-ying as an example to help answer the question of “how and why religion flourished in the ‘China moulded by Confucius,’ the China that a Voltaire could admire for the presumed rationalism and irreligion of its mandarin--philosophies”.¹ In support of his view, Gimello translated *Xu Qingliang Zhuan* at the end of his essay. The translations of Buddhist terminology he made in his essay are very useful for all scholars researching Wutai Shan.

Regarding studies of Wutai Shan in late imperial China, *Qingliang Shanzhi* is essential. This was written by a Ming Buddhist monk called Zhencheng (镇澄 1547-1617). Like his predecessors, Zhencheng’s intention in producing this monograph was to praise the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī’s virtue and the reverberations of this great being’s presence on the mountain. There are eight chapters in this book. From the natural environment to the history of major monasteries, from imperial patronage to eminent monks, from legends of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī to the records of monks’ interaction with elites and so forth, it gives an overall picture of Buddhism on Wutai Shan during the Ming and early Qing dynasties.

¹ Robert, Gimello, “Chang Shang-ying on Wu-t’ai Shan.” In Susan Naquin and Chün-fang Yü, eds., *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*, Berkeley: University of California Press. 1992, p.91.

However, Ming monk officials on this mountain are not mentioned in this book at all, despite the fact that this is an important aspect of the development of Buddhism during the Ming dynasty. The author is also misleading about the historical establishment of Buddhism on this mountain, which had been investigated by his predecessor Huixiang (慧祥, lived in the seventh century) in *Guang Qingliang Zhuan*. In this work I shall compare and contrast Buddhist developments on Wutai Shan with other regions during the Ming dynasty, and reveal certain features, which have not been covered or are misleading in *Qingliang Shanzhi*.

More recently, Cui Zhengceng has written a book: *Wutai Shan Fojiao Shi* (Buddhist History of Wutai Shan). A comprehensive history of Wutai Shan is most welcome and this work is helpful in bringing together material from various sources. However, as a whole it settles upon narration rather than analysis. The discussions are also rather superficial and lack originality.

Regarding Buddhism during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 CE) in general, Yü Chün-fang's essay "Ming Buddhism" in the *Cambridge History of China* is a pioneering work. In this essay Yü gives an overall view of Ming Buddhism and divides the development of Buddhism in the Ming dynasty into three periods. However, she has not been given enough space to properly set out her theory. In this thesis we shall take Wutai Shan as a case study to test her propositions with regard to Buddhism during the Ming dynasty. She says: "For about 150 years, from the end of the reign of the Yung-lo emperor until the beginning of the reign of the Wan-li emperor, Buddhism was in a state of serious decline. This did not mean that Buddhism disappeared. On the contrary, imperial patronage reached new heights with the construction of even more lavish monasteries and the large-scale sale of official titles and ordination certificates. The decline was spiritual rather than material." In addition to that, this research will reveal some new information. For instance, in the Jiajing era, Buddhism was persecuted,

which led to a sharp drop in the number of monasteries, particularly Tibetan monasteries. Monks were forced to give up their monkhood. More significantly, the number of Buddhist establishments on Wutai Shan was contrary to the trend in the Jiajing's regime: dozens of new monasteries were set up on this famous pilgrimage site. I shall use this case to add to our knowledge of Buddhism in the Middle Ming dynasty.

Apart from Yü's work, there has been some research on Buddhism in southern China. For instance Ming Buddhism in the southern capital and surrounding area² and Buddhist monasteries in Hangzhou in the Ming and early Qing³. However, little attention has been paid to Ming Buddhism in northern China. Susan Naquin's *Peking Temples and City Life 1400-1900* has covered certain elements of Ming Buddhism in the northern capital but Buddhism is not her main concern, and not all of the temples she describes are Buddhist.

There is an abundance of research on the Ming emperors, and a few distinct works are very important to this current research of Wutai Shan Buddhism as several Ming emperors' policies and their support to this religious centre had influenced its development strongly. For instance, Tsai, Shih-shan Henry's *Perpetual Happiness: the Ming Emperor Yongle*; Schneewind Sarah's *A Tale of Two Melons: emperor and Subject in Ming China*; Heer Ph. De's *The Care-taker Emperor* and so on. Another Schneewind's editorial book named *Long Live The Emperor* is particularly worthy of mentioning here. In its third chapter, Dr. Gerritsen did an excellent research on the first Ming emperor's monastic policies. As Schneewind wrote at the beginning of this book "Chinese dynastic founders are often credited with definitively

²He Xiaorong, *Mingdai Nanjing Siyuan Yanjiu*. Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Yuan Chubanshe, 2000.

³Susanna, Thornton, "Buddhist Monasteries in Hangzhou in the Ming and Early Qing", D.Phil of Wolfson College, Oxford, 1996.

shaping the governments and societies of their eras. Each founder was a man of action, who had won the approval of Heaven, so his heirs naturally felt-or could be told to feel-some filial obligation to continue the new systems he had set up.” Indeed most of the religious policies of the Ming dynasty were created during the first Ming emperor’s reign, but how effective those religious policies in practice is debatable. Dr. Gerritsen’s paper has been very enlightening to our current research of Wutai Shan Buddhism, specially in the second and third chapter of this thesis we shared many of her insights on Ming monastic policies.

The above studies represent two different approaches, one focusing on Buddhist history on Wutai Shan, the other on Buddhism during the Ming dynasty. However, there is little specific information about Wutai Shan Buddhism during the Ming dynasty, which is the intersection of these two fields of study. Thus this research topic is designed to address this lacuna.

The main focus of this thesis is not about Wutai Shan Buddhist monks’ religious practice, it is about the monastic management. Wutai Shan has been recognized as a transcultural pilgrimage centre among Buddhists many centuries before the Ming dynasty; how Wutai Shan defined its reputation when Buddhism had almost disappeared in its motherland, and when Chinese Buddhism’s glorious golden period had long gone and been suffering continuous decline? Monastic management does not only involves its internal affairs, but it has also to deal with the relationship between monastic institutions and the state, and the relationship between monastic institutions and society. To manage its economic resources is equally important. Through the study on its management we can see how Wutai Shan maintained its religious position throughout the nearly three centuries’ Ming governance.

Before discussing the above issues, first this thesis will provide us a brief introduction about Buddhist history on Wutai Shan and the characteristic of Ming Buddhism. With this background knowledge we are hoping the following discussions will make more sense to the

readers. Wutai Shan is renowned as one of the most well visited sites in China by all Buddhists. Its fame has spread beyond the Chinese community. Records about many transcultural pilgrims's activities on Wutai Shan made it more divine. The second chapter of this thesis will investigate if there was any pilgrim from outside China paid visits here during the Ming dynasty, what was their motivation, and how did the transcultural pilgrim fit in the Wutai Shan Buddhist community? What is the significance of the transcultural pilgrim's visit to Wutai Shan Buddhism? Religious institutions have to deal with the changes of the state and the changes of its religious policy. The Ming State sometimes imposed constraints on the Buddhist organizations or religious activities, for different political needs, however, sometimes these constraints had been lifted. In between the monastic community and the state, monk officials were the intermediate. The third chapter will reconstruct the monk official system on Wutai Shan. This chapter will investigate to what extent this monk official system influenced the Buddhist development on Wutai Shan. We will also compare how this system worked on Wutai Shan with the monk official system in Nanjing. Apart from the Ming state's religious policies, the monastic internal management also determined the Buddhist development on Wutai Shan. In the fourth chapter, monasticism on Wutai Shan will be studied. Particularly we will direct our attention towards the late Ming monastic reform on Wutai Shan, with the comparison of similar reforms in South China. The comparison study on monastic reforms is aiming to attest Yü Jün-fang's suggestion that the type of Buddhist practice created in the late Ming period remodeled and reshaped the future Chinese Buddhism. Through our research on this subject it will reveal what are the most fundamental values in Buddhist establishments. The last two chapters are about the management of economic resources on Wutai Shan. Imperial support for Wutai Shan was substantial during the Ming. The fifth chapter will discuss what caused the imperial family and their relatives

patronising Wutai Shan Buddhism; what did their support mean to Wutai Shan Buddhism. The last chapter will analyse why there is a lack of lay patronage evidence to Wutai Shan Buddhism. In theory merchants was the lowest in the imperial social structure of China, though in the Ming society the reality might not be the case. Particularly the new movement of Neo-Confucianism in the late Ming gained merchants a higher status in the more commercialised Jiangnan society. Through careful study we will see the northern Chinese society in the Ming was still conservative, and less commercialised and poorer northern society did not allow northern Chinese merchants to share their southern counterparts' status in their local arenas.

Looking at both Eastern and Western scholarship on Ming studies, it is apparent that that the study of northern Chinese Buddhism has been relatively neglected. I begin here to address this by opening up a fresh approach, specifically by investigating the development of Buddhism on Wutai Shan, with the aim of shedding light on certain aspects of northern Chinese Buddhism during the Ming dynasty.

Chapter one: The Pre-Ming Buddhist history of Wutai Shan

&

Ming Buddhism

This thesis is about the Buddhist development on Wutai Shan during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). In order to give readers a fuller picture of my study this first chapter is dedicated to giving the reader some background on what happened on Wutai Shan pre-Ming dynasty and what was happening elsewhere during the Ming dynasty.

Wutai Shan is one of the most famous centres for Buddhism; not only within China, but also in other Mahayana Buddhist countries. This mountain is located in north-east of Shanxi province. The concept of mountain in Chinese can mean a single peak, a cluster of hills, or a whole mountain range; sometimes it can mean an island or caverns. Wutai Shan is a whole mountain range. Its outer circle is about 300 kilometres long, and it rises to about 3000 meters above sea level. Such a high place in north China has been viewed as a point of access to heaven or a place where deities dwelled. Wutai Shan became not only the centre for spiritual studies and practices, but it is the site to which intrepid practitioners from different countries would journey in quest of visions.

How Buddhism came to Wutai Shan

Of the records about Wutai Mountain, four monographs have been considered most important: 1, *The Ancient Records of Mount Cool and Clear* (古清凉传), which was written by Huixiang in 680, and based on Huize (会贇)'s *the Brief Records of Mount of Cool and*

Clear (清凉山略传), which was written in 662. 2, *the Extended Records of Mount Cool and Clear* (广清凉传), written by Yanyi in 1060. 3, *Further Records of Mount Cool and Clear* (续清凉传), written by a Song Prime Minister Zhang Shangying. 4, *Gazetteer of Mount of Cool and Clear* (清凉山志)⁴, written by Zhencheng in 1569.

According to Huixiang (lived in the seventh century CE), there are some legends that Buddhism was introduced to Wutai Shan as early as the Western Zhou dynasty (1100-771 BCE) or the Later Han dynasty (25-220 CE), but the earliest traceable Buddhist activity on Wutai Shan is in the Northern Wei (386-534 CE) period, when the emperor Xiaowen (491-499) paid a visit to the mountain and build the Da Futu Monastery (大孚图寺). By the Northern Qi dynasty (550-577), there were more than two hundred Buddhist temples on the mountain, and the imperial Gao family granted the tax of eight prefectures to the monks who were living on the Cool and Clear Mount.⁵

However, Daoxuan (596-667), a more celebrated contemporary of Huixiang, in his *Ji Shenzhou Sanbao Gantong Lu* (written earlier than Huixiang's *the Ancient Records of Mount Cool and Clear*) says that according to ancient records, the Da Fu Lingjiu Monastery (大孚灵鹫寺) was built by the Han emperor Mingdi (58-75).⁶ In a later work *the Extended Records of Mount Cool and Clear* says that Buddhism had flourished on the mountain during the reign of King Mu of the western Zhou period(1100-771BCE). This work also claims that during the Later Han dynasty, Kāśyapa Mātāṅga (the first Indian monk who translated Buddhist sutras

⁴ “Mount of Cool and Clear” in Chinese Qingliang Shan is another name for Wutai Shan.

⁵ T.51, “爰及北齐高氏, 深弘像教, 宇内塔寺, 将四十千, 此中伽蓝, 数过二百. 又割八州之税, 以供山众衣药之资焉.”, p.1094.

⁶ T.52, 岱州五台山太孚圣寺 “中台东南下三十里有大孚灵鹫寺, 古传汉明所造.”, p.425.

into Chinese) used his divine intuition to see that there was a pagoda on Wutai Shan and persuaded the emperor to build a monastery there naming it Dafu Lingjiu (大孚灵鹫).⁷

It seems to us that Huixiang's version on how Buddhism came to Wutai Shan is more reliable. Firstly, as a nomadic tribe in North-west China, the Northern Wei must have had contact with other central Asian tribes, who had been converted to Buddhism earlier than the Chinese. When this tribe became dominant in North-west China, it was quite natural for them to promote Buddhism in their region. Their Buddhist faith is clear from the Yungang Grotto. Moreover, the capital of the Northern Wei, Pingcheng (modern Datong) was less than 100 miles from Wutai Shan. Therefore, it is convincing that as a Buddhist the emperor Wendi would pay a visit to Wutai Shan and build the first temple there. Secondly, although Daoxuan has a high reputation, he did not cite his source.

Yanyi's Song dynasty version agrees in part with Daoxuan's, but the origins of Buddhism on Wutai Shan are exaggerated. The Buddha was born in the six century BCE. How could Chinese have known Buddhism in the Western Zhou period (1100-771BCE)?

The recognition of Wutai Shan as Mañjuśrī's Residence

The establishment of a link between Mañjuśrī and Wutai Shan is largely due to the work of translating the *Avatamsaka sutra* (*Flower Garland sutra*) into Chinese. This translation

⁷ T.51, “昔周穆王时。已有佛法。此山灵异。文殊所居。汉明之初。摩腾天眼。亦见有塔。劝常造寺。名大孚灵鹫。言孚者信也。帝信佛理。立寺劝人。名大孚也。又此山形。与其天竺灵鹫山相似。因以为名焉”。p.1103.

灵鹫山 in Sanskrit is “Gṛdhrakūṭa-parvata”. This is the place where the Buddha lived a very long period, after the Buddha passed away, his disciples gathered together here and had the first Buddhist council.

apparently began in the second century, and continued for almost a thousand years. During this time more than thirty translations and retranslations of various volumes and selections from the sutra were produced. The finalisation of the translation of this sutra was made in the early fifth and late seventh centuries.⁸

The first comprehensive translation of the *Avatamsaka sutra* was done under the direction of an Indian monk named Buddhābhaddra (359-429) during Eastern Jin (0317-420) period; the second, under the direction of a Khotanese monk named Sikshānanda (652-710) during the Tang dynasty. The latter version, which is the longer version, was based on a more complete text imported from Khotan at the request of the empress Wu, and this version has been translated into English by Thomas Cleary.⁹

Tracing back the translation process of this sutra, we can see how the mountain was recognised as the dwelling place of Mañjuśrī. In a work entitled the *Mañjuśrī-parinirvāṇa sutra* (佛说文殊师利般涅槃经), it says:

It is like this, O great one. Long dwelling in the meditative trance of heroic valor (śūramgama-samādhi), four hundred and fifty years after my final passing, (Mañjuśrī) will go to a snowy mountain and for five hundred transcendent he will extensively proclaim the teachings of twelve divisions of the (Mahayana) scriptures.¹⁰

⁸ See Raoul Birnbaum, “The manifestation of a monastery: Shen-ying’s experiences on Mount Wu-t’ai in T’ang context” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 106.1 (Jan-Mar 1986), pp.123-4.

⁹ Thomas Cleary, *The Flower Ornament Scripture*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1984.

¹⁰ T.14, No.463, 佛说文殊师利般涅槃经: “佛涅槃后四百五十岁, 当至雪山, 为五百仙人, 宣畅敷演十二部”. p.480.

This sutra is said to have been translated by the layman Nie Daozhen in the late third century though the authorship is dubious¹¹. The term “snow mountain”, in texts translated from Indic languages, usually refers to the Himalayas, rather than *the Cool and Clear Mountain*. However, when Buddhabhadra translated the *Flower Garland Sutra*, the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī’s dwelling place changed to Cool and Clear.¹² Finally in 710 CE an Indian monk called Bodhiruci, who translated *Scripture Spoken by the Buddha on the Dhāraṇī of Mañjuśrī’s Precious Treasury of the Dharma* into Chinese. In this sutra Mañjuśrī’s dwelling place is precisely located at Wutai Shan of China. The translation is as follows:

Then the Buddha told the bodhisattva Lord of the Vajra’s Secret Traces: “After my final passing, in this Rose Apple Continent in the northeast sector, there is a country named Maha Cina. In its centre there is a mountain named Five Peaks.

¹¹ According to Raoul Birnbaum, it is difficult to accept Nie Daozhen as the translator of this sutra. Because the sutra is not listed in early scripture catalogs. It first appears in Tang catalogs (such as 大唐内典录, T2149:55, 26c). The first time the sutra associated with Nie Daozhen is in the eighth century work *Kaiyuan Shijiao Lu* (开元释教录)--Raoul Birnbaum, “the Manifestation of a Monastery: Shen-Ying’s Experiences on Mount Wu T’ai in T’ang Context” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106.I (1986), pp.119-137.

¹² T.09, No. 278, in the 29th chapter “Dwelling Places of the Bodhisattvas” of the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, it says: There is a place in the Northeast named Mount Cool and Clear. From ancient times till the present, bodhisattva assemblies have dwelt there. At present, there is a bodhisattva named Mañjuśrī who, together with his retinue and assembly of bodhisattvas numbering ten thousand persons, is always in its center, extensively preaching the Dharma. p. 0590a.

The youth Mañjuśrī shall roam about and dwell there, preaching the Dharma in its center for the sake of all sentient beings.¹³

Before the above sutra was translated, Wutai Shan had already been known as Five Peaks Mountain. For instance, in a well-known geographical work “the Commentary on the Book of Waterways” (*Shui Jing Zhu*), which was written in the Northern Wei period by Li Daoyuan (?-527), it says: “The mountain has five summits, which rise far above the lesser summits. Thus it is called Five Peaks.”¹⁴

Thus Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī came to be linked with Wutai Shan of China. Thereafter, Wutai Shan became the most popular pilgrim centre for Buddhists in China. As Raoul Birnbaum says: “For Buddhists in Tang China, no natural site was more sacred than the numinous precincts of Mount Wu-t'ai, the earthly home of Mañjuśrī bodhisattva.”¹⁵ The following discussion of popularity of Wutai Shan will give us reason to believe Birnbaum's above comment.

¹³ T.20, No. 1185A, 唐 菩提流志译《佛说文殊师利法宝藏陀罗尼经》“尔时世尊复告金刚密迹主菩萨言,我灭度后于此瞻部洲东北方,有国名大振那.其国中有山号曰五顶,文殊师利童子游行居住,为诸众生于中说法.” p.791.

¹⁴ Li Daoyuan (酈道元), *Shui Jing Zhu* (王先谦ed.,1892) Vol 23: “其山,五峦巍然,迥出群山之上,故谓五峰.”

¹⁵ Raoul Birnbaum, “The Manifestation of a Monastery: Shen-Ying's Experiences on Mount Wu-t'ai in T'ang Context,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, (Jan. - Mar., 1986), p. 119.

The popularity of Wutai Shan

Although there is a saying that in the Northern Qi (550-577) period, there were already two hundred temples on Wutai Shan,¹⁶ the mountain was not well known nationally until the Tang dynasty. This was partly because the country had been reunited. It was safer for people to travel and it was easier for information to be spread. Moreover it was because many temples on this mount got patrons from the imperial family. Furthermore eminent monks like Kuiji (窥基 632–682) of the Yogācāra school, Daoxuan of the Vinaya School, Amoghavajra (705-774) of Tantric school, Chengguan (澄观 737-838) of the Huayan school, Fazhao (法照 747-821) of the Pure Land school, Zhiyuan (志远)¹⁷ of the Tiantai school, Shenying (神英)¹⁸ of the Chan school either visited or lived on this mountain. Most of them are recognised as patriarchs in their schools. Hence Wutai Shan became a key centre of many Buddhist schools. This kind of establishment made the mountain more popular.

As mentioned above, there are many monographs about this mountain. As Gimello says: “They are miscellaneous collections of lore about the five sacred peaks, part genuine history and meticulous description, part recollected legend and secondhand retelling of myth.”¹⁹ The meticulous description about the manifestation of the Great being Mañjuśrī on Wutai Shan encouraged many pietistic Buddhists to come here and witness the great being. Hence, a Mañjuśrī cult permeated through all strata, and Wutai Shan became a pilgrim site. The

¹⁶ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p.126.

¹⁷ T.51, *Guang Qingliang Zhuan* (广清凉传), Vol.3, p.1119.

¹⁸ T.51, *Guang Qingliang Zhuan* (广清凉传), Vol.2, pp.1112-3.

¹⁹ Robert, Gimello, “Chang Shang-ying on Wu-T’ai Shan”, *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*. Edited by Naquin Susan and Yü Chün-fang, California: University of California Press, 1992, p.101.

mountain was visited in vast numbers, not only from China, but also from South and Central Asia as well as from Korea and Japan. The most well known pilgrimage to this mountain was made by a Japanese traveler Ennin, who wrote a detailed description about this mountain in his travel book *Ennin's Diary: The Record of a pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law*.²⁰ According to eighth century work *Zhenyuan Shijiao Lu* (贞元释教录), the famous Indian tantric monk Amoghavajra advised the Tang emperor to enshrine and worship bodhisattva Mañjuśrī throughout the country, in order to secure the power of the imperial family. The Emperor Daizong (762-779) accepted his suggestion and ordered all Buddhist temples to

²⁰ Translated by Reischauer, Edwin O., New York: Ronald Press, 1955.

build a Mañjuśrī Hall and enshrine this bodhisattva's statue inside.²¹ The worship of bodhisattva Mañjuśrī became a popular practice throughout the whole country.

When the Tang Dynasty declined in the late 9th century, China fell into chaos. Although Wutai Shan as the northern frontier of the empire made it sensitive to warfare, it did not decline appreciably after the Tang. It continued to flourish through the Five Dynasties, Song, and Jin periods. 大历七年十月二十七日特进试鸿胪卿大兴善寺三藏沙门大广智不空表进 their respects to the mountain. They continuously patronized this holy place by building, rebuilding temples on it, or by bestowing the printed *Tripitaka* on this mountain.

²¹ See *Zhenyuan Shijiao Lu* (贞元释教录) Vo.16. Also in T.52, No.2120, p.841-2: 《代宗朝赠司空大辨正广智三藏和上表制集. 敕置天下文殊师利菩萨院制一首》: 沙门不空言。伏见今月十六日特敕。京城及天下僧尼寺内各简一胜处。置大圣文殊师利菩萨院。并素文殊像装饰彩画者。不空闻。惟圣作法。甚德动天。泽润生灵。悬之日月。不空诚欢诚荷。欣载跃。伏惟陛下开法王之玄造。辟非常之福田。建文殊真容。使普天瞻仰。在于缙侣光幸尤深。且文殊圣者即诸佛祖师。大悲弘愿不取正觉。大乘引导利乐无期。昔释迦如来先有悬记。一乘典语兴在中华。当有至圣帝王必以大乘理国。八百余载。历伏帝王圣贤多矣。实未有如陛下者也。不空何幸生遇圣朝介修大乘。奉事文殊师利。常以此圣真言奉为国家特诵。每蒙护念。恩德逾深。日夜思之无阶上报。不谓忽然天慈普洽。垂泪宿诚。废寝忘食无任悲喜。不胜戴荷之至。谨附中使扬贵珍奉表陈贺以闻。沙门不空诚欢诚悦谨言

大历七年十月二十七日特进试鸿胪卿大兴善寺三藏沙门大广智不空表进

宝应元圣文武皇帝批

大圣文殊久登正觉。拯生人于三界。镇毒龙于五峰。慈悲道深。弘济功远。故令释众同此归依。三藏梵域宗师。当深慰惬也。所贺知。

The Song Prime Minister Zhang Shangying's *Further Records of Mount Cool and Clear* made Wutai Shan even more popular. In his book he narrated his nine days' visit on Wutai Shan. This monograph is different from the previous two. "It is the continuous narrative of a single man's visit to the Wutai Mountains, a veritable eyewitness report of single sequence of events recounted more or less from a single authorial perspective. It is a record of personal experiences of witnessing remarkable phenomena, which are understood as the manifestations of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī."²²

The introduction of Tibetan Buddhism to Wutai Shan

When the Mongols took control of China in the early thirteenth century, Wutai Shan established a new political significance. A new development, namely Tibetan Buddhism, was promoted on this mountain by the Mongol rulers. How was it that Wutai Shan gained favour with these non-Chinese? This was because bodhisattva Mañjuśrī was a very important figure in Tantric Buddhism; the bodhisattva is considered as the progenitor of Tantric Buddhism. In Tibetan Buddhism there are many sutras and mantras related to Mañjuśrī. Moreover, the Tang dynasty Tantric master Amoghavajra had contributed a lot to the popularity of Mañjuśrī belief in China. Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhism are popularly called Lamaism, which belongs to the Tantric tradition. Therefore, to elevate the position of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī's residence (Wutai Shan) was very natural for Mongol rulers.

In 824, Tibetans sent delegations to the Tang emperor to request a map of Wutai Shan.²³ During the Five Dynasties period, Khotanese monks carved Mañjuśrī's statue in the 61st

²² Robert M., Gimello, "Chang Shang-ying on Wu T'ai Shan" p.101.

²³ 《册府元龟》吐蕃史料校正“穆宗长庆四年九月甲子，灵武节度使李进诚奏，吐蕃遣使求五台山图，山在代州，多浮屠之迹，西戎尚此教，故来求之。”p.18.

《唐会要·吐蕃》卷九十七：（长庆）四年，吐蕃遣使来求五台山图。

grotto of Dunhuang and painted a map of Wutai Shan on its wall.²⁴ This also shows that Wutai Shan had been known by Tibetans long before the thirteenth century.

As early as the Yuanyou era (1082-1097) of the Northern Song dynasty, the founder of the Tibetan Zhi-bytd sect Dam-pa sangs rgyas (?-1117) made a pilgrimage to Wutai Shan.²⁵ After the Mongols ruled China, the fourth patriarch Sa-pan of the Sa-skya sect also came to Wutai Shan to worship Mañjuśrī.²⁶

However, it is the visit of Bāspa, which marks the official introduction of Tibetan Buddhism to Wutai Shan. As the Imperial Preceptor of the Mongol empire, his visit had a major influence on introducing Tibetan Buddhism to Wutai Shan. In the 36th chapter of the *Entire History of Qing Dynasty*, it says that: “In the year 1257 the great master Bāspa²⁷ made a pilgrimage to Wutai Shan. He used thousands of taels of gold to cast a Buddha statue, and

²⁴ See Sun Guoqing, “Dunhuang Bihuan Wutai Shan Tu de Chubu Yanjiu”(敦煌壁画五台山图的初步研究) in *Wutai Shan Yanjiu*, 1989.3, pp.21-25.

²⁵ See Wang Lu. “Wu Tai Shan Yu Xi Zang Fo Jiao”(五台山与西藏佛教) in *Wutai Shan Yanjiu*, 1995.4, p.22-23.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ He is also called Chos-rgyal-hags-pa in Tibetan. He is the fifth patriarch of Sa-skya-pa sect. When he was fifteen the first Mongol emperor got ordained as a lay Buddhist under him. Hence he became the emperor’s master. He was given the title “the master of the emperor” (帝师) and empowered as the highest leader of Buddhism under the whole Mongol empire, include Tibet. This is the beginning of the unity of religion and politics (政教合一) in Tibet. He was also bestowed another title “the great treasure dharma raja” (大宝法王).

enshrined it on Wutai Shan.”²⁸ He spent nearly a year there and wrote some poems and gāthās to praise Mañjuśrī’s virtues. The Pu’en Temple (or Xitian Si), where Bāspa stayed, was considered as the first Tibetan temple on Wutai shan. Following Bāspa, his disciple Tanba was appointed by the Mongol emperor to stay at Wutai shan, and he made Tibetan Buddhism even more popular on this mountain. “(He) started to build temples on Wutai Shan, popularize Tantric mantras, and performed all kinds of Buddhist services, also held sacrificial rites to the great Bodhistva Mañjuśrī.”²⁹ Thus Tibetan Buddhism was established on Wutai Shan.

When the Míng dynasty took over power from the Mongol rulers, the new successor continuously supported Tibetan Buddhism on Wutai Shan for political reasons. “(Taizu) thought to take advantage of Tibetan custom, using Tibetan monks to influence the ignorant masses, and to suppress troubles in the frontiers, thereby making the country at peace. He designated missions to send his message to Tibet, and welcome Tibetan monks to China, to bestow titles and valuable gifts on them.”³⁰ As Yü Chün-fang mentions, the connection between Míng Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism is an area that scholars have barely begun to study.³¹ So I would like to devote my attention to this subject in my following chapters.

²⁸ Dan Tao Trans., *Qingchao Quanshi* (清朝全史) (written by Inaba Iwakichi, 1876—

1940), Vol.36. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju 1915. Also see, Chen Qingying, *Dishi Basiba Zhuan* (帝师八思巴传), Beijing: Zhongguo Zangxue Chubanshe, 2002, pp.65-71.

²⁹ Nianchang (念常 1282-1341), *Fozu Lidai Tongzai* (佛祖历代通载) Vol.22 in T.49, p.726.

³⁰ Zhang Tingyu, “Western Region Three” in *Ming History* (明史, 西域传) Vol.331, (reprint) Taipei: Guofang Yanjiuyuan, 1962. p.232.

³¹ Yü Chün-fang, “Ming Buddhism” in *Cambridge History of China, Vol.8, The Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644*, p.952.

Buddhism during the Ming Dynasty

In the previous section we have discussed a diachronic review of the pre-Ming history of Wutai Shan. During the Ming dynasty Buddhism continued to develop on Wutai Shan. As a popular pilgrim centre Wutai Shan no doubt had a strong connection with Buddhism in the rest of the country.

Ming legislation on Buddhism

The Ming regulations on Buddhism were mostly enacted in its early period. As soon as Zhu Yuanzhang succeeded to the Mongol empire, he followed the Yuan model and created the Commission for the Buddhist Patriarchs (Shanshi Yuan) in 1368, and pointed Huitan as the leader (统领) of it, he also gave Huitan a civil service rank of 2b and the title “Great master who expounds Buddhism, improves the world, benefits the country and promotes education”. Thus Huitan had authority over the entire *sangha*.³² However, this institution did not last for long. Another institution-the Central Buddhist Registry (僧录司), modelled on the Buddhist institutions of the Tang and Song dynasties, was set up in 1383 to replace the earlier one. The structure and the function of this institution have been fully explained in Yü Chün-fang’s “Ming Buddhism”³³, I shall not repeat it here.

³² *Ming Veritable Record of the Hongwu Period* 《明太祖实录》 Vol.29, Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo. 1962, p.500.

³³ Yü Chün-fang, “Ming Buddhism”, p.905.

Having a special affection for Buddhism³⁴, the first Ming emperor Zhu Yuanzhang encouraged the ordination of the clergy in his early years, and abolished the traditional tax on religions, called corvée labor exemption money. However, this created a big problem-the number of the clergy became huge. The emperor had to prescribe quotas and age limits for persons seeking ordination. Similar regulations were emphasised over and again throughout the whole dynasty, but their effectiveness is highly questionable. The large number of *sangha* also created a huge problem for monks and nuns themselves. I shall discuss it below under the decline of Ming Buddhism.

In the thirteenth year of the Hongwu era, Taizu's Prime Minister Hu Weiyong conspired against the throne. This event embroiled lot of people, including sixty-four Buddhist monks. The following year, Taizu, Zhu Yuanzhang reformed the government administration. Fully aware how the Yuan dynasty had collapsed, Zhu Yuanzhang also started to exert strict administrative control over every aspect of the *sangha* by setting up the Buddhist and Daoist registry system. He divided Buddhist monks into three categories: meditation, exposition, and yoga. The functions of each were defined in a 1382 regulation issued by the Ministry of Rites: "Meditating monks do not establish words but aim at seeing their own nature. The expositing monks concentrate on understanding scripture. The teaching (*yoga*) monks teach the people of the world by performing Buddhist rituals that benefit and save all, destroy all kinds of present

³⁴ As an orphan, he was brought up in a Buddhist temple as a monk in his early age, see Edward, Farmer, *Zhu Yuanzhang and Early Ming Legislation*. Leiden & New York: E.J. Brill, 1995, pp.18-20.

karma created by deeds and thought, and cleanse away the evil influences accumulated by the past karma of the dead.”³⁵

A more detailed and rigid regulation for Buddhist clergy called “the Placard to Elucidate Buddhism” (申明佛教榜册) was issued in 1391. In this regulation, a clear definition of punishments was given; the fees and procedures for ritual ceremonies were clearly regulated. Three years later, some additional articles to this regulation were added. In this addition it stated that monks were not allowed to collect money from markets and households; it stipulated that each big temple should have a lay manager, and that all affairs relating to government and officials should not be handled by monks but by the manager, and that the clergy should not have contact with officials (in order to avoid monks interfering in politics); monks were to be exempted from labor and military services; married clergy should be reprimanded. This regulation and its addition were very important and reaffirmed by many other Ming emperors.³⁶ Some minor regulations for Buddhism were made by later Ming emperors, the keystone of Ming law for Buddhism was, however, founded by Taizu Zhu Yuanzhang in the early Ming dynasty. Although the monastic policies was put into law, whether or not they were enforced throughout the Ming empire has yet to be investigated. Surveying the monastic policies of the first Ming emperor introduced throughout his reign

³⁵ Ge Yinliang, *Jingling Fancha Zhi* (金陵梵刹志), 1607, rpt. Taipei: Zongqing tushu chuban gongsi, 1994, pp.51-52.

³⁶ See He Xiaorong, *Mingdai Nanjing Siyuan Yanjiu*, P.7.

reveals a continual failure to successfully implement them.³⁷ Sarah Schneewind's article on the first Ming emperor also gives us reason to believe that against Zhu Yuanzhang's wish Hongwu's Buddhist policies were not carried out throughout his empire.³⁸

Ming Buddhism: its decline and revival

During the Ming dynasty despite the wide-scale lavishing of patronage on Buddhism by the imperial family and local gentry, the quality of the *sangha* declined by lack of monastic discipline. The administration of Buddhist clergy had been corrupted. People with all kinds of purpose joined the *sangha*.³⁹ Buddhist clergy often appeared with negative images in popular literature. They were depicted as greedy and licentious, and some criminals escaped to monasteries and donned monastic robes to falsify their identities. Yu Jideng, in his *Huang Ming Diangu Jiwen*, gave a vivid description of the corrupt situation at the end of the Xuande reign (1426-1435): "In recent years farming and military households have wanted to escape from taxation and labour service. They pretended to be monks and priests by the tens of thousands. They do not weave or farm, yet they enjoy food and shelter. Some of them even

³⁷ Anne Gerritsen, "The Hongwu Legacy: Fifteenth-Century Views on Zhu Yuanzhang's Monastic Policies" in Sarah Schneewind, *Long Live the Emperor! Uses of the Ming Founder across Six Centuries of East Asian History* (Minneapolis: Society for Ming Studies, 2008), pp. 55-72.

³⁸ Sarah Schneewind, "Visions and Revisions: Village Policies of the Ming Founder in Seven Phases", *T'ong Pao* 87 (2001), pp.317-59.

³⁹ See Yuancheng (1561-1626), *Kaigu Lu*, "或为打劫事露而为僧者。或牢狱脱逃而为僧者。或妻子斗气而为僧者。或负债无还而为僧者。或夫为僧而妻戴发者，谓之双修。或夫妻皆削发，而共住庵庙，称为住持者。或男女路遇而同住者。以至奸盗诈伪，技艺百工，皆有僧在焉", http://www.cbeta.org/result/normal/X65/1285_001.htm, 20/07/2010.

keep wives and concubines in their monastic cells and bring up sons and grandsons in Taoist shrines. There is nothing worse than this kind of moral degeneration.”⁴⁰

Accusations of corruption in monastic orders continued. In 1479, an investigating censor wrote: “Unless we take timely measures, in the worst situations they might gather together in the mountains and forests to plan criminal acts; and in less serious situations, they might manufacture rumours to disturb people’s minds. In any event, the harm they do is never small. Nowadays, among the robbers caught in Suzhou and elsewhere, many are monks.”⁴¹

In the Jiajing era (1522-1567), Ming Buddhism reached its bottom low. Under this emperor’s reign, Buddhism was persecuted. There are two main reasons for this persecution: 1, temples owned a great amount of land, which had the privilege of free tax, therefore economically they were the rivals of the government. In the *Ming Shizong Shilu* (明世宗实录) many detailed confiscations of monastic properties were recorded. 2, the Jiajing emperor was famous in Chinese history as a Daoist follower. Throughout Chinese history, one religion has often been promoted by suppressing another. The persecution under Jiajing started from inside the imperial palace. In the first year of the Jiajing era, the emperor ordered to scrape the gold from Buddhist statutes, and burn the Buddha relics, also destroy temples within the palace compound. Later on, he gave orders to destroy all unauthorised temples. In the capital alone, six hundred Buddhist temples were either sold or destroyed. Monks and nuns were

⁴⁰ Yu, Jideng (余继登 1544-1600), *Huang Ming diangu Jiwen* (皇明典故纪文), ch.10, quoted in Noguchi Tesurō, “Mindai Chūki no Bukkyōkai,” *Tōyōshi gakuron*, 7 (1963), pp.192-93.

⁴¹ *Ming Xiaozong Shi Lu* (明孝宗实录), pp.342-343.

forced to disrobe. During his forty-five years' reign, Buddhism reached its lowest ebb in the Ming dynasty.⁴²

One can see several reasons for the decline of Buddhism in the Ming dynasty. First, the Hongwu emperor's policy on encouraging the ordination of the clergy and abolishing the tax on monks contributed to the increasing number of clergy, and ultimately caused the decline of monastic discipline. The regulation on the three divisions among Buddhist monks caused the separation of Buddhist teaching from practice. As a religion, only when its teaching and practice combine together would it have a future and make progress. Second, the loss of control over the ordination certificate in the mid-Ming led to a further decline in the monastic orders. In order to gain free tax status, many people wanted to enter into the monastic order, and this caused an increasing prevalence of private ordination. The sale of ordination certificates by the Ming government definitely accelerated the decline. The tradition of married clergy was another reason aggravating the decline of Buddhism. According to Yü Chün-fang, complaints about married clergy began to appear only in the Yuan period, when Tibetan Buddhism was introduced into China. She says: "the rise of married clergy during the Yuan dynasty might be connected with the coming of Tibetan Buddhism to China, but this cannot, at present, be proven in any concrete way."⁴³ However, the tradition of married clergy

⁴² Sussan, Naquin, *Peking: Temples and City Lives, 1400-1900*, Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2000.

⁴³ Yü Chün-fang, "Ming Buddhism", *Cambridge History of China, Vol. 8, The Ming History, 1368-1644*, p.911.

started at least as early as the Song dynasty.⁴⁴ Moreover, the imperial patronage in the Ming dynasty also produced negative and debilitating effects on the *Sangha*. Finally the Jiajing persecution was a direct cause of the revival of Buddhism.

The revival of Buddhism in the late Ming

First of all, when the grandson of the Jiajing emperor ascended the throne, he immediately stopped the persecution of Buddhism. He and his mother supported Buddhism by giving lavish patronage to the *sangha*. Secondly, the long period of decline, especially the Jiajing persecution of Buddhism, alarmed the *sangha*, and made them realise that they should reform the corrupted monastic discipline. In later chapters I shall give an example from Wutai Shan to discuss this in detail. Thirdly, the revival was also marked by the rise of the “four eminent monks”, who created a new form of practice. The new practice influenced the later generations considerably. Scholarship on Ming Buddhism has concentrated on these monks, and monographic

⁴⁴ Zhuang Jiyou (庄季裕), *Jilei bian* (鸡肋编) “广南风俗，市井坐估，多僧人为之，率皆致富。又例有家室，故其妇多嫁于僧”。This is quoted by You Biao in *Songdai Siyuan Jingji Shigao* (宋代寺院经济史稿), Hebei: Hebei University Publishing House, 2003, p.27.

study has been produced for each of them.⁴⁵

The Characteristics of Ming Buddhism

The Sui (581-618) and Tang (618-907) dynasties were a golden age for Chinese Buddhism, when many sutras were translated into Chinese. We can see how readily they were assimilated from the proliferation of commentaries, and they were digested very quickly by the writing of their treatises. In the Song dynasty, along with the rise of Neo-Confucianism, which had a very anti-Buddhist attitude, Buddhism was downgraded. However, “The compilation of recorded saying (*Yülu*), lamp records (*denglu*), and monastic codes (*jielü*) made the Sung period the golden age of Ch’an Buddhism.”⁴⁶ Buddhism in the Yuan dynasty was characterised by the introduction of Tibetan Buddhism to China. Although Tibetan Buddhism was not as popular with the majority of Chinese as it was among the Mongol ruling class, it did manage to be partially absorbed by Chinese Buddhism. One characteristic of Ming Buddhism is that the boundaries between Buddhist schools were fluid and shifting, and different Buddhist schools started to absorb each other’s thoughts. The most distinguished example is the syncretism of the Chan and Pure Land School. The syncretism happened not

⁴⁵ Fan Jialing, *Zibo Dashi Shengping Jiqi Sixiang Yanjiu* (紫柏大师生平及其思想研究), Taipei: Fagu Wenhua, 2001; Hsu, Sung-peng, *A Buddhist Leader in Ming China: The Life and Thought of Han-shan Te-ch’ing*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979; Hurvitz, Leon, “Chu-hung’s One Mind of Pure Land and Ch’an Buddhism” in *Self and Society in Ming Thought*, by Wm. Theodore de Bary and the conference on Ming Thought, New York: Columbia University Press, 1970; Shengyan (关世谦译), *Mingmo Zhongguo Fojiao Zhi Yanjiu* (明末中国佛教之研究), Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju, 1988; Yü Chün-fang, *The Renewal of Buddhism in China*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1981.

⁴⁶ Yü Chün-fang, “Ming Buddhism”, pp.946-947.

only within Buddhism, but also between different religions, namely Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism. This was affected by a movement among a few nonconformist thinkers to break away from the mold of orthodox Neo-Confucianism.⁴⁷ These nonconformists' activities aroused monks' interests to think how to bring Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism into a single harmony by treating all three as varying manifestations of the same ultimate reality. Apparently this was approved and promoted by the first Ming emperor.⁴⁸

In the Tang Dynasty, the Chan Master Guifeng Zongmi (圭峰宗密 784 – 841), brought up the idea of “*Chan jiao Yi Zhi*” (禅教一致 the unity of Chan and *Jiao*). During the Five dynasties (907-960), the Chan master Yongming Yanshou (永明延寿 904 – 975) said “*Chan Jing He Liu*” (禅净合流 the collaboration of Chan and Pure Land School). However, the practice had not been fully popularised until the Ming dynasty, when most of the eminent monks endorsed this kind of dual practice of Chan and Pure Land, and the synthesising of the three religions.

Another characteristic of Ming Buddhism is, unlike Song Buddhism which emphasised the transmission of the dharma lineage, it was a relatively free from strict lineage affiliations. In the early period of the Chan School, it emphasised meditative practice and supervision from experienced masters, and discouraged book learning. But this had changed by the Ming dynasty. In the late Ming some books dealing with Chan teaching methods appeared. Although Chan practitioners could not rely solely on book learning, they did pay more attention to scriptural studies. Some Chan practitioners were recognised as great Chan masters without transmission from the dharma lineage in the Ming dynasty.

⁴⁷ Timothy Brook, *Praying for Power*, pp.54-83.

⁴⁸ Zhu Yuanzhang, *Ming Taizu Yuzhi Wenji* (明太祖御制文集) Vol.11, Anhui: Huangshan Shushe, 1995, pp.79-82.

To sum up this section I would like to cite Yü Chün-fang “The styles and forms of Buddhist practice which emerged in the Ming continued through the Qing dynasty and to the present day. Thus, while looking back to the past for inspiration, Ming Buddhism created new models of religious practice for later generations.”⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Yü Chün-fang, “Ming Buddhism”, p.894.

Chapter Two: Trans-cultural pilgrims to Wutai Shan

Wutai Shan had long been a renowned Buddhist pilgrimage site for Chinese and foreigners alike pre-Ming dynasty. Pilgrims to Wutai Shan covered almost all Mahayana Buddhist countries both of the East and the West.⁵⁰ Many of these pilgrims wrote down their experiences on Wutai Shan. Their magnificent stories of seeing the great bodhisattva Mañjuśrī's manifestation inspired many others to make pilgrimage to Wutai Shan in China. These trans-cultural pilgrims' activities in China had a political significance to Chinese emperors, particularly to those who came into power disputably. Using these pilgrims' influence among vast Chinese Buddhist communities Chinese emperors had strengthened their power and legitimated their status. Chinese emperors' patronage to trans-cultural pilgrims to Wutai Shan gave this sacred mountain site a state-protecting function.

Through studying two Ming international pilgrims on Wutai Shan, this chapter tries to investigate what inspired these pilgrims come to China, and to what extent their pilgrimages to Wutai Shan influenced religious practice there. Comparing Ming trans-cultural pilgrims on Wutai Shan with other pilgrims who went there previously, an interesting phenomena is unveiled. Despite Wutai Shan's popularity among Chinese, internationally the prestige had weakened. The reasons are various from the East and the West.

Since 12th century Muslim invasion in India, Buddhism was severely weakened. However, the communication between Indian and Chinese Buddhists did not stop as a result

⁵⁰ Here the West is different from the modern sense of the West, which refers to Europe and the US alike developed countries. In the past all South Asian Buddhists who came China were considered as "Westerners" because most of them came to China via Central Asia, where was considered as the West.

of this interruption. Indian monks continuously paid their visit to Wutai Shan during the Ming dynasty. However, the volume had reduced drastically. Due to the anti-Buddhist environment in India, these Indian monks lived in China for the rest of their lives. Through reading various Chinese sources this chapter will reconstruct these two famous Indian pilgrims' life in China, and try analyse the role they played in Chinese Buddhism.

Contrary to the continuation of western pilgrims to Wutai Shan, we hardly see any Korean and Japanese Buddhists' activities on Wutai Shan during the Ming period. During the Tang and Song period both eastern and western Buddhists frequently appeared on Wutai Shan. In the famous Japanese monk Ennin's diary *Journey to China*, there is a detailed depiction of Wutai Shan. Ennin was followed by many other Japanese Buddhists who travelled to Wutai Shan. So did Koreans. Buddhism had gained solid foundations in Japan and Korea through Chinese influence. Unlike India, Buddhism was still blossoming between the 14th and the 17th centuries in East Asian countries. What made East Asian Buddhists cease their pilgrimage to Wutai Shan in China? This chapter will analyse reasons for that. First let us have a look two famous Indian pilgrims on Wutai Shan.

Sahajaśrī (?-1381)

In his article, "*Paṇḍita Sahajaśrī: a forgotten torch bearer of Indian culture*", Jan Yun-hüa remarks that Sahajaśrī came to China as a pilgrim to Wutai Shan. However, this thesis will give a different opinion as to what caused Sahajaśrī to come to China. First let us read the description about Sahajaśrī's early life in his epitaph:

The master was named Sahajaśrī, who also was addressed as *paṇḍita*. He was born in the same country as Gautama Buddha, and belongs to the *kṣatriya* caste. At first, his parents thought they could not have any child, so they prayed sincerely in the temple, which was dedicated to Mahamāyā [so that they might have a child]. In

their declining years, their wish grew stronger. One night, the wife had a dream, she saw the Buddha's mother come in front of her, holding the hand of a boy, telling her: "I give this boy to you to fulfil your wish. You should take care of him, in the future he will save beings of the *catur-yoni*.⁵¹ His achievement will be beyond *arahantship*, become Mañjuśrī." Immediately after that, the mother woke up. She memorised Māyā's words in her dream, and decided that if her wish were fulfilled, her child should be named Sahajaśrī. When the gestation period was over, a boy was born. After seven days, the mother passed away, and the father also died. Sahajaśrī's wet nurse brought him up. Later he followed *śramaṇas* to Kashmir and became a monk in the Su-luo-sa (Śūrasena?) monastery, among different traditions he joined the *sthaviravāda* order, and under Ven. Su-za-na-shi-li (Sujanāsri?), he got ordained, and had a thorough study of *pañcavidyā* and the *Tripitaka*. His knowledge of Buddhism endowed him with a great ability to discern what authentic Buddhism is and what is heretical. Even the most experienced veteran of Buddhism in the country could not challenge him. However, he did not believe that literacy and debating skills could make him realise the ultimate truth. He then started to concentrate on meditation practices. He dwelled in the snow-capped mountains for more than ten years, during which time he did not come down even once. At the time there was a great *śramaṇa abhidharma* master, Jia-ma-luo-shi li (Kamarasri?), who was highly respected by the people of the whole country. Sahajaśrī went to visit him, and Jia-ma-luo-shi-li approved Sahajaśrī's

⁵¹ *catur-yoni* means the four forms of birth: viviparous, such as mammals; oviparous, such as birds; moisture or water-born, such as worms and fish; chrysalis, such as *devas*, or in the hells, or the first beings in a newly evolved world.

achievement. The neighbouring countries were trying to invite Sahajaśrī to their countries, but he refused. He had heard that in the East there is a country called China, and that in that country there is Wutai Shan [five peaks mountain], where the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī manifests. He therefore set off for China to visit Wutai Shan. From the Hindu River to Turkestan, he travelled through Kucha, Qoco and many other countries. In these countries he was welcomed by all the kings and ministers, and they beseeched Sahajaśrī to give them ordination. It took him four years to reach Gansu (a large province in west China at that time).⁵²

The above account shows that Sahajaśrī came to China because he wanted to make a pilgrimage to Wutai Shan and to pay respect to the *Bodhisattva* Mañjuśrī. Even in his mother's dream Māyā prophesied that the unborn child would become Mañjuśrī. Mañjuśrī is one of the most popular *bodhisattvas* in Mahayana Buddhist countries. This *bodhisattva* was very famous in the Northwest Indian region where Nepal and Kashmir are situated. Many sutras related to Mañjuśrī were translated into Chinese from that region. Even a legend about the origin of Nepal was related to Mañjuśrī.⁵³ Decades before Sahajaśrī came to China, the famous Mongol emperor, Khubilai Khan (1215-1294), persuaded the Tibetan monk, Phags-pa

⁵² The original text is in Chinese, the translation of this text has not been published. This epitaph was written by Laifu. After Sahajaśrī's death, a new Buddhist institution was set up to replace the one which was led by Sahajaśrī. Laifu was one of the eight highest monk officials, who were appointed by the Ming emperor. Laifu's rank was called Enlightener (觉义), the discipline overseer. This text is included in Wang, Zhichao. *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*. Taiyuan: Beiyue Wenyi Chubanshe, 1995. pp.185-8.

⁵³ John, Brough, "Legends of Khotan and Nepal" *Bulletin of the School of African and Oriental Studies*, vol.12, 1948, pp.333-9.

(12391280),⁵⁴ to invite a delegation of a hundred Nepalese artists to the Yuan capital, Dadu (Beijing). Among these hundred Nepalese the most distinguished artist was Arniko,⁵⁵ whose designs can be seen on Wutai Shan. In his book *Nepal*, Landon says that ‘At Wutai Shan there is still a structure remotely resembling the shrines of Bodhanatha and Svayambhunatha and it does not appear that any other similar shrine is to be found in China proper.’⁵⁶ This suggests that Nepalese Buddhist monks had influenced the life and manner of monks at Wutai Shan before Sahajaśrī arrived in China. All these factors must have inspired Sahajaśrī to visit China.

However, that may not be the only reason for him to visit and eventually live in China. According to Buddhist custom, monks will abandon their lay names when they join the Buddhist order. It is for the disciple’s master to give the new monk a name. Therefore, the name Sahajaśrī could not have been given by his mother, and the prophecy of his becoming Mañjuśrī must have been an invention. If visiting Wutai Shan was the real reason for him to visit China, why did he linger in the kingdoms in the western regions (China Turkestan) for four years?⁵⁷ Why did he not visit Wutai Mountain first rather than go to the Yuan capital? Looking at the map of the Yuan dynasty, one sees that Wutai Shan is in between Gansu and

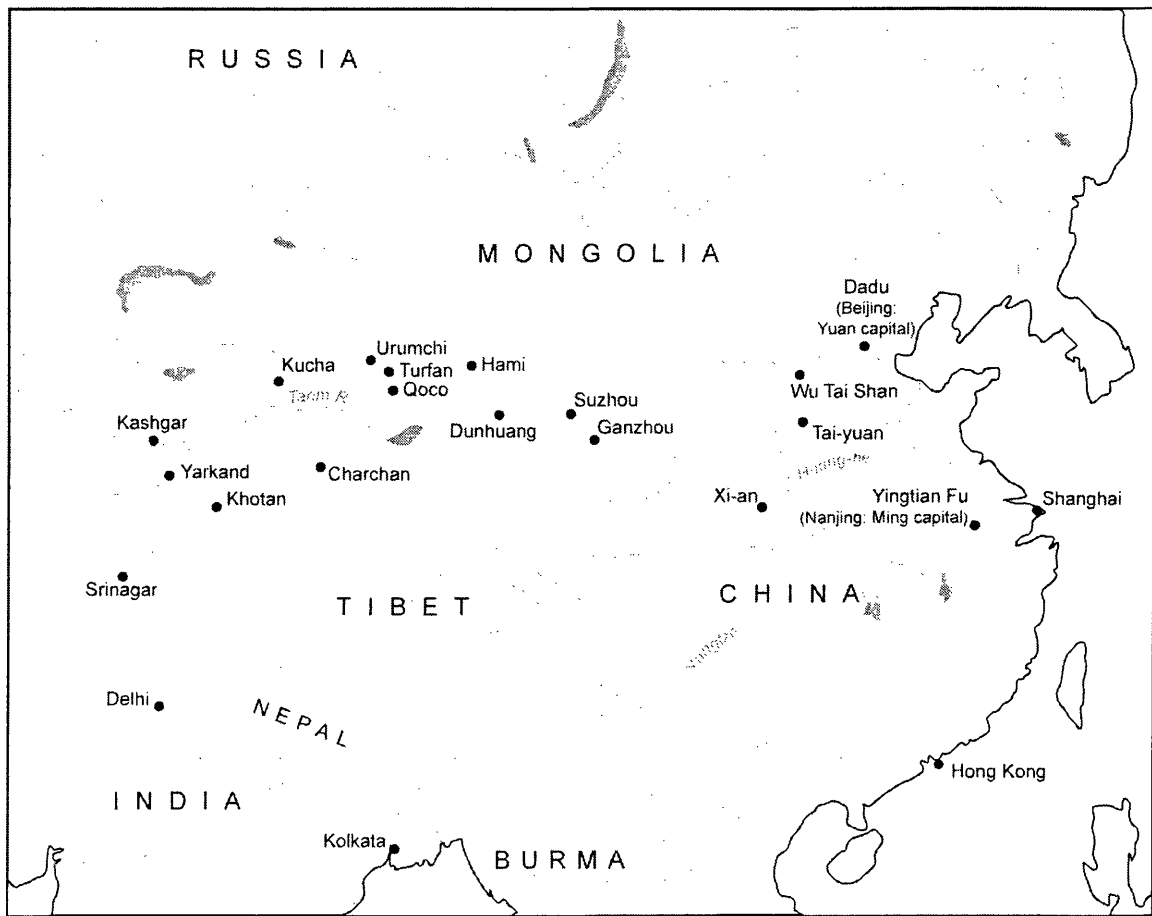
⁵⁴ Elsewhere I addressed him as Bāspa.

⁵⁵ Min Bahadur, Shakya, “Nepalese Buddhist Artist Arniko and His Contribution to Buddhist Heritage of China”, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/25702931>, 02/08/2010.

⁵⁶ Perceva, Landon, *Nepal*, London : Constable, 1928. Vol.2, p.223.

⁵⁷ Decades ago, Marco Polo traveled through a very similar route from Kashmir to China, and he only spent 128 days along the journey. See Thomas, Wright (1810-1877) ed., *The travels of Marco Polo, the Venetian: the translation of Marsden revised: with a selection of his notes*, 1901, pp.88-115.

the Yuan capital. If his original intention of coming to China was to go on pilgrimage to the *bodhisattva* Mañjuśrī, why did Sahajaśrī miss this chance?



Possible reasons for Sahajaśrī leaving Kashmir:

When we trace back Buddhist history in Kashmir to the time when Sahajaśrī lived, it is hard to find anything directly from Buddhist records. This is because in the fourteenth century Buddhism was not the dominant religion in Kashmir anymore. In fact, many historians and Buddhologists believe Buddhism vanished in that region at that time. For instance, in *Seiki no bukkyō* (*Buddhism in the Western Region*), Hatani Ryōtai writes ‘Since 1339CE Shāh Mir’s ascendance to the throne, marks the beginning of Muslim rule in Kashmir; after 1500

years of prosperity, Buddhism eventually came to an end in this land.’⁵⁸ In books of Kashmiri history we notice that this is the period when Islam was battling with Shaivism, and we find hardly any records relating to Buddhism. From archaeological evidence and records in other regions, also from Sahajaśrī’s epitaph and biography, we can prove that Buddhism had not yet vanished in fourteenth century Kashmir. However, Kashmiri Buddhists definitely were having a very hard time, and losing ground.

Before Islam took over Kashmir, Kashmiri Hindu kings tolerated Buddhism and patronised both Shaivite and Buddhist temples. This is because the rise of Mahayana and the growth of Tantrism had brought Buddhism very near to Shaivism. The Buddha himself had been accepted into the Hindu pantheon as an incarnation of Vishnu. Buddhism, for its part, had developed a sacred pantheon full of gods and goddesses analogous to those of the Shaivas and other Hindu sects. With the resurgence of Shaivism in Kashmir from the eighth century onwards, there was not much perceptible difference between the followers of the two faiths. Among the laity the same household would often contain followers of the two faiths. Inside monasteries and temples both Hindu *sadhus* and Buddhist *śramaṇas* were living side by side. This is why during that time kings, queens and nobles erected a large number of *mathas* without assigning them exclusively for members of any one faith only. The syncretism of Buddhism towards Hinduism indicates that Buddhism was losing its own identity. Sahajaśrī must have been very concerned with the state of Buddhism in this period. The deterioration of Buddhism could be one of the reasons which made him choose to leave Kashmir.

Decades after Sahajaśrī’s death, his disciple, Zhiguang (智光 1348-1436) was sent by the Ming emperor to search for Buddhist dharma in the western region. Interestingly Zhiguang

⁵⁸ Hatani, Ryōtai, *Seiki no Bukkyō*, 1914, p.32.

went to countries such as Tibet and Nepal;⁵⁹ but he did not go to Kashmir, where his master Sahajaśrī grew up as a great Buddhist leader. This shows that there was no ground for Buddhism to hold in Kashmir in the early fifteenth century. This may also indicate the real reason for Sahajaśrī's leaving Kashmir.

The change in the Kashmiri political environment could be another reason for Sahajaśrī's leaving. Before Sahajaśrī left Kashmir, it was the Muslim King, Shihab-ud-Din (1354-73), who was ruling the country. During his reign, Kashmir was very dominant in that region. This king conquered several territories lying to the north, north-west and south of Kashmir. Before he started his conquests, he first directed his attention to the consolidation of his position at home. Many of the feudal chiefs had become independent and refractory during the troubled times preceding the establishment of the Sultanate. He therefore subdued all the feudal chiefs within Kashmir. He was so ambitious that the famous Kashmiri historian, Jonaraja, captured Shihab-ud-din's attitude perfectly when he said 'marching with his army was as dear to him as a young wife is to another man.'⁶⁰ In the year 1360, when Sahajaśrī left Kashmir, the country was hit by a devastating flood. These manmade wars and natural disasters could have been further reasons which impelled Sahajaśrī to leave.

How did he decide to come to China? In Sahajaśrī's epitaph it mentions he lingered in the kingdoms of the western region for four years. Before he left Kashmir he refused the invitations of neighbouring countries. As discussed above, the Muslim King was very ambitious in wanting to conquer his neighbouring countries. If Sahajaśrī wanted to get away

⁵⁹ See Yang Rong (杨荣), "Xitian Fozi Da Guoshi Zhi Lue(西天佛子大国师志略)" in Ge Yinliang, *Jinling Fancha Zhi*, 1987(reprint.), p.290.

⁶⁰ Jogesh Chunder, Dutt trans., *Kings of Kashmira: Being a Translation of the Sanskrit Work Rajatarangini of Kahlana Pandita*, 1935, pp.37-38.

from the dominance of the Muslim King, he had to travel much further away. During the four years of his stay in the Western Region (modern central Asia), he might not have made the decision to move to China. That was the period of waiting and seeing whether Shihab-ud-din's reign was going to last long. Eventually, he lost hope of returning to Kashmir, because the Muslim king was getting on very well with his subjects. The kingdoms of the Western Region where he stayed were under the influence of the Yuan dynasty of China, which was a very strong Buddhist empire. When Sahajaśrī could not see the possibility of going back, he saw a chance of gaining support from the Buddhist Mongolian emperor. Therefore, he came to China and went to the capital to meet the emperor straight away without wasting time visiting Wutai Shan.

Sahajaśrī's connection with the Yuan court

In the biography of Sahajaśrī, which was written by his famous disciple Zhiguang⁶¹, it says that he came to China in the twenty-fourth year of the Zhizheng era of the Yuan dynasty (1364). On hearing of Sahajaśrī the Mongol emperor immediately invited him to the capital and treated him with great honour. A similar story was narrated in Sahajaśrī's epitaph. Both of these were written in the early Ming period. However, in a later work 'the Biography of

⁶¹Zhiguang was given a title "the Buddha's Son of the western world" by a Ming emperor to praise him as a religious and political missionary to the Ming western neighbouring countries. The honour Zhiguang enjoyed in the Ming was even grander than his master. See Yang Rong, "Yuanrong Miaohui Jingjue Hongji Fuguo Guangfan Yanjiao Guanding Guangshan Xitian Fozhi Da Guoshi Taming (圆融妙慧净觉弘济辅国光范衍教灌顶广善西天佛子大国师塔铭)", in *Beijing Tushuguan Cang Zhongguo Lidai Shike Tuoben Huibian* (北京图书馆藏中国历代石刻拓本汇编) Vol.51, pp.76-8; also see Deng Ruiling, "Ming Xitian Fozhi Da Guoshi Zhiguang Shiji Kao (明西天佛子大国师智光事迹考) in *China Tibetology*, 1994.3.

Zhiguang',⁶² it says that when Zhiguang was fifteen, he left home and joined the Buddhist order under the State Preceptor, *Pandita Sahajaśrī*, who was from Kashmir in India.

According to existing sources, there is no information that Sahajaśrī was endowed with the title of State Preceptor, either by the Yuan or by the Ming emperors. Therefore, one may doubt whether this record is an accurate and true account. Through careful investigation one has reasons to believe he was granted such a title by the last Yuan emperor.

In Sahajaśrī's epitaph, it says that the last Yuan emperor made a platform in the palace garden in order to receive the *abhisecani* ordination from Sahajaśrī. After the ordination ceremony, Sahajaśrī was presented a robe and also was given a *dana* as a sign of honour. However, it does not mention what kind of honour he received. But at least this shows that Sahajaśrī was the last Yuan emperor's ordination master. In the Yuan dynasty, according to Mongolian law, all the imperial family members had to be ordained as Buddhists by the Imperial Preceptor. What is more, before the new emperor's coronation, he had to be initiated as a Buddhist by the imperial preceptor first (because Mongolians are followers of Tibetan Buddhism, all Imperial Preceptors in the Yuan dynasty were Tibetan monks). The Imperial Preceptor⁶³ in Chinese means the emperor's spiritual master. Even though he was the last Yuan emperor's ordination master, Sahajaśrī could not be the Imperial Preceptor at that time; because there was an Imperial Preceptor before Sahajaśrī arrived in the palace, and the Imperial Preceptor was not only the emperor's spiritual mentor but was also an important

⁶² Minghe (Ming), *Buxu Gaoseng Zhuan*, in 卅 XZ. Vol.77, p.1524

⁶³ *Dishi* (帝师) in Chinese. Sahajaśrī was given the title State Preceptor, *guoshi* (国师) in Chinese. See Chen Qingying, "Lun Ming Chao dui Xizang Fojiao de Guanli(论明朝对西藏佛教的关系)" *China Tibetology*, 2000.3, pp.57-73.

government post in the Yuan official system.⁶⁴ There could not have been more than one Imperial Preceptor at the same time.

As discussed above, the Yuan emperors thought highly of their Buddhist ordination masters. As Sahajaśrī was one of the last Yuan emperor's ordination masters, and was treated with great honour, it is reasonable to believe he was given a State Preceptor title. That was not the first time an Indian monk was granted such a title.⁶⁵ The meaning of state preceptor and imperial preceptor sounds similar, though in practice, the imperial preceptor had practical power. The State Preceptor was only an honorary position. For what Sahajaśrī had done for the last Yuan emperor, it is no surprise that he was given the title of state preceptor.

If he was a high ranking monk of the Yuan dynasty, why is this fact not mentioned in his biography and in his epitaph? Sahajaśrī came to China during the period of the Yuan Ming transition. Even though there is not much information about his connection with the last Yuan emperor, the above accounts are good enough to indicate how close he was with the Yuan emperor. Presumably the first Ming emperor had already heard of Sahajaśrī's ties to the last Yuan emperor. When they met in person, the new emperor attested to Sahajaśrī's merit and acknowledged that he deserved the honour he enjoyed previously. Therefore the emperor

⁶⁴ In the Yuan dynasty, the Imperial Preceptor was the head of *Xuanzheng Yuan*, which had two functions: a. it was the ministry in charge of Buddhist affairs; b. it was the administration of Tibetan affairs. *Xuan Zheng yuan* was one of the four most important administrations in the Yuan dynasty. See Deng Ruiling, *Yuan Ming Liang Dai Zhongyang Yu Xizang Difang de Guanxi* (元明两代中央对西藏地方的关系). Beijing: Zhongguo Zangxue Chubanshe, 1989.

⁶⁵ In the early Yuan dynasty, a Kashmiri monk, Namo (那摩), had the title of State Preceptor bestowed upon him by emperor Xianzong (1251-1259 CE) of the Yuan dynasty. See "Tie Ge" *Yuan Shi*, Vol.125, pp.3074-3075.

treated him with great honour and kept him in the capital, also appointing him as the highest monk official. As the highest monk official, it is natural to assume that Sahajaśrī intentionally did not mention his connections with the former regime. This might be the reason why in Sahajaśrī's biography and epitaph it did not record he was given the State Preceptor title by the Yuan regime.

One more piece of evidence can demonstrate that Sahajaśrī was one of the closest Buddhist associates of the Yuan imperial court. When the Mongolian dynasty was overthrown by Chinese rebellion in 1368, the Chinese emperor, in order to consolidate his power, adopted a conciliation policy towards Tibet.⁶⁶ Rather than sending military troops, he sent delegations to Tibet, and promised that those who worked for the Yuan dynasty would enjoy their prestige if they cooperated with the new regime. However, it took six long years for the high monk officials who worked for the Yuan to accept the Ming rulers. On the sixth year of the Hongwu era, the former Yuan imperial preceptor paid tribute to the first Ming emperor in person.⁶⁷ Soon after this Sahajaśrī was invited by the Ming emperor to the imperial court. For the last

⁶⁶ See *Ming Taizu Shilu* (明太祖实录) vol.42, where records he sent diplomat to Tibet with his decree: “昔我帝王之治中国，以至德要道，民用和睦，推及四夷，莫不安靖。…朕乃命将率师悉平海内，臣民推戴为天下主，国号大明，建元洪武。式我前王之道，用康黎庶。惟尔吐蕃，邦居西土，今中国一统，恐尚未闻，故兹诏示。” p.827. When the Tibetan officials came to surrender (*Ming Taizu Shilu*, vol.61, p.1189), Zhu yuanzhang showered them with gifts and granted them official ranks.

⁶⁷ The last Yuan Imperial Preceptor reached Nanjing, the Ming capital, in the twelfth month (Chinese lunar calendar) of the fifth year of the Hongwu era (1382 CE). He was officially seen by the Ming emperor in the second month of the sixth Hongwu era (1373 CE). See the *Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty*, Vol.77, p.5 and Vol.79, pp.1-2.

six or seven years Sahajaśrī stayed in Wutai Shan, which was in Ming territory. If Sahajaśrī was not a close Yuan Buddhist associate, why was it only after the former Yuan highest monk official yielded to Ming authority that Sahajaśrī met the first Ming emperor? As soon as Hongwu ascended the throne, he invited all famous Buddhist monks in the country to attend his alms giving; even Sahajaśrī's disciple Zhiguang left Wutai Shan and went for that alms-giving in the capital.⁶⁸ Why did Sahajaśrī not go to the Ming capital until the former Imperial Preceptor met the Hongwu emperor? Obviously he was not sure how the new emperor would treat former Yuan high-ranking monks until the last Yuan imperial preceptor met the first Ming emperor. Eventually, Sahajaśrī had the necessary encouragement to come down from Wutai Shan to meet the first Ming emperor.

Sahajaśrī's relationship with the Ming emperor

In the seventh year of the Hongwu era, 1374, this first Ming emperor bestowed on Sahajaśrī a title of *shanshi chanshi*,⁶⁹ which means 'the Chan master who betters the world'.

⁶⁸ Song Lian (宋廉 1310–1381), "Jiangshan Fohui Ji(蒋山佛会记)" in Luo Yexia ed., *Song Lian Quanji* (宋廉全集), Hangzhou: Zhejiang Guji Chubanshe, 1998, pp.562-64. Also see, Shen Defu (沈德符 1578-1642), *Wanli Yehuo bian* (万历野获编) Vol.27, 'Shi Jiao Shengshuai(释教盛衰)', Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1980.

⁶⁹*The Veritable Record of the Ming* (明太祖实录) Vol.4, "By decree, the Indian (xizhu) monk Paṇḍita Sahajaśrī was appointed Shanshi Chanshi ("the Chan Master who betters the world") while Rdo rje bkra shis dpal bzang po (Duo'erzhiqieliieshisibazangbu) was appointed Dugang Fuchanshi ("Discipline Overseer, the Vice-Master of Chan"); imperial edicts were conferred upon them. Shisibazangpu was Helin Guoshi, that is, State Preceptor of the Mongol regime in Qaraqorum." p.1636. The above translation is done by Hoong Teik Toh. See Hoong Teik Toh, "Tibetans in Ming China", p.75.

Sahajaśrī was not the only person to get this title. As soon as the Ming regime was established, the Hongwu emperor bestowed this title on a monk called Huitan, and appointed him as the highest monk official to be in charge of Buddhist affairs. Huitan's office was therefore called Shanshi Yuan, which means 'the office of the Shanshi master'. However, Huitan, the first Ming Shanshi master only lived for another four years after he was appointed.⁷⁰ Some buddhologists and historians have erroneously ignored Sahajaśrī's existence. They consider that after Huitan died, and before the second governing body for Buddhist monks was set up (which happened ten years later), there was no special Buddhist institute in charge of Buddhist affairs.⁷¹

Sahajaśrī was the second person who was assigned as the highest Buddhist leader of the Ming dynasty. Even though there was a three-year gap between the first Buddhist leader Huitan and the second leader Sahajaśrī, as mentioned above, that is because it was not until the seventh year of the Hongwu era that Sahajaśrī met the Ming emperor. Here are some reasons to believe Sahajaśrī was the highest Buddhist leader in the Ming dynasty.

Firstly, the term *shanshi* which means "to better the world", first appeared in the Wudai period (the tenth century), there was a monk called *shanshi dashi*.⁷² Until the Ming dynasty the term *shanshi* was not used as an official monk title. Since the Hongwu emperor bestowed this title on Huitan as the highest monk official of his empire; this term was adopted as

⁷⁰ Ming He, *Buxu Gaoseng Zhuan* 《补续高僧传》, Vol.14 "Jueyuan Tan Chanshi Zhuan", in 卅XZ Vol.134, pp.254-255.

⁷¹ Xie Chongguang, *Zhong Guo Seng Guan Zhi Du Shi* (中国僧官制度史), Xining: Qinghai Renmin Chubanshe, 1990, p.238.

⁷² *ibid.*, p.237

referring to the highest monk official even by the Qing dynasty.⁷³ In other words before and after Sahajaśrī was given this *shanshi* title, it had been used as the title of the highest monk official.

Secondly, Sahajaśrī died on the twenty-fourth of the fifth month 1381 (Chinese lunar calendar); early in the sixth (lunar calendar) of the same year, immediately after Sahajaśrī's death, court officials of the bureau of rites suggested setting up a new governing body to be in charge of Buddhist affairs.⁷⁴ By the end of that year, Shanshi Yuan, the office of the Shanshi Master, was withdrawn and replaced by a new system called Senglu Si.⁷⁵ The highest monk official in the new system was still called Shanshi.⁷⁶

Thirdly, in Sahajaśrī's epitaph, which was written by a monk official in the central Senglu Si, it is clearly stated that he was given the Shanshi Chanshi title to govern all the Buddhist monasteries in the empire; and a silver seal was given to him to exercise his right as the highest monk official.

What is more, there is an imperial decree to prove Sahajaśrī was given the title and the authority to be the highest monk official of his time.⁷⁷ There are two versions of the decree bestowing the title Shanshi Chanshi on Sahajaśrī. One is contained in the *Emperor Hongwu's Collected Works*;⁷⁸ and the other is kept in his minister Song Lian's *Song Lian's Collected*

⁷³ *Daqing Huidian Shili* (大清会典事例), Vol.92, "Nei Wu Fu, Zhang Yi Si", Shanghai:

Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1899.

⁷⁴ Shi Huanlun, *Shi Jian Jigu Lue Xuji* (释鉴稽古略续集), Vol.2, T.49, p.931.

⁷⁵ *Ming Taizu shilu* Vol.140 and Vol.188, p.2829.

⁷⁶ Zhang Tingyu, *Ming Shi* (明史) Vol.74 "Baiguan Libu".

⁷⁷ *The Veritable Record of the Ming* (太祖实录), Vol.4, p.1636.

⁷⁸ Zhu Yuanzhang, 'the Entire Corpus of Emperor Gao's work (高皇帝御制文集)', in Ge yinliang (Ming), *Jinling Fancha Zhi*, Taipei: Xinwenfeng Chubanshe, 1986, p.23.

Works.⁷⁹ These two versions are not exactly the same. Most of the decrees in the Hongwu period were drafted by his ministers and finalised by himself. The following is the exact words that the emperor used when he appointed Sahajaśrī as the highest monk official:

Sahajaśrī is a citizen of the western region. He was born with an intelligent and compassionate character. Carrying the Buddha's teaching and abandoning his native land, he crossed the dangerous desert towards the East. Sahajaśrī travelled several tens of thousands of *li*, and finally reached our land. I observed he is really wholehearted in transmitting the Buddha's teachings. Therefore, I reward him with the title of *shanshi chanshi*. Also I award Rdo rje bkra shis dpal bzang po [a Tibetan monk who arrived in the Ming capital in the same year when Sahajaśrī arrived] with the title of *dugang* (discipline overseer) to assist the *chanshi* and lead all the Buddhist monasteries under heaven.

As we discussed earlier that Huitan was appointed as the highest monk official, and his title was "Shanshi Chanshi". The above decree proves Sahajaśrī was given the same title. Not only was he was given the title, it is clearly stated that his role or duty was to lead all the Buddhist monasteries under the heaven. This confirms the title "Shanshi Chanshi" that Sahajaśrī enjoyed was not an honorific title, he was assigned as the highest monk official.

Sahajaśrī's role in Chinese Buddhism

During the Yuan Ming transition, the Chinese social order was severely disturbed. Monks became reluctant to follow the strict *viyana* rules. Married monks lived in monasteries

⁷⁹ Luo Yuexia, ed., *Song Lian Quanji*, Hangzhou: Zhejiang Guji Chubanshe, 1999, p.809.

together with their wives and disciples. Monastic duties were ignored. Buddhist monasteries became refugee camps for criminals and orphans. Apparently, the monastery where the first Ming emperor spent his childhood was a very good example. As an orphan the First Ming emperor was abandoned into the care of a Buddhist monastery as a youth, and his master was a married monk. During this period, civil wars and famine made many Buddhist monasteries to be abandoned or disused. The First Ming emperor's monastery was also abandoned due to lack of food. After he left the monastery, Zhu Yuanzhang joined the Chinese rebellions and eventually became an emperor. The chaos, which was left behind by the civil war, had to be cleared up by the Ming emperor in order to sustain his power.

When he established his regime, the first task for the Hongwu emperor, was to end the dislocation, vagrancy, and mendicancy of the war years. As an ex-member of the *sangha*, the Hongwu emperor certainly knew the importance of Buddhism in terms of stabilising the social order. As an Indian monk, who had been respected by the Mongolians, Tibetans and Chinese, Sahajaśrī was perfect to fit in the role of the highest monk official, and to help the Ming emperor to strengthen his authority towards the Tibetans and Mongolians. It was under such circumstances that Sahajaśrī was appointed as the highest monk official. As a great *vinaya* master, and a witness of the demise of Buddhism in Kashmir, Sahajaśrī was desperate to restore the neglected Buddhist order. With Zhiguang's assistance, Sahajaśrī translated a *vinaya* book called *Ba Zhi Jie* (八支戒)⁸⁰, which was extremely popular among lay Buddhists at that time. Moreover, he ordained more than eighty thousand people, who were from nearly all over the country. Numerous donations and many gifts were sent to him; without a second thought he distributed them to those who were poor and needy.

⁸⁰Song Lian (Luo Yuexia ed.), *Song Lian Quanji* (宋廉全集), p.1426.

It was not long before the emperor noticed Sahajaśrī's humble attitude. In Sahajaśrī's biography it says that every time the emperor passed the area where Sahajaśrī lived, he would come and visit Sahajaśrī, and discuss Buddhism with this foreign monk. After returning to the palace the emperor wrote poems⁸¹ to praise Sahajaśrī's knowledge; also the emperor instructed the Bureau of Rites not to set any restriction upon those who wanted to receive ordination from Sahajaśrī. Therefore, the role Sahajaśrī played was one of being a moral model for other monks and lay Buddhists; at least, this was the emperor's intention. Not only was Sahajaśrī a *vinaya* master, he was also a great practitioner of meditation. As a very experienced meditation master, he was keenly interested in Chinese Chan practice. After being appointed as the highest monk official, Sahajaśrī did not stay in his office; he spent a long time visiting many of the Chan patriarchs' monasteries.

As the highest Buddhist official Sahajaśrī may not have been the most competent at his job. We can see this from one of the Hongwu emperor's decrees. In a decree called *Instruction to Paṇḍita Shanshi Chanshi*,⁸² it mentions that the emperor heard the Chan master was willing to visit other parts of the country after his first trip to Chan Buddhist monasteries. However, he was advised by others not to leave the capital without the emperor's permission, and Sahajaśrī was not happy with that. When this news went to the palace, the emperor decreed that Sahajaśrī was free to travel whenever and wherever he wanted to visit. This shows that as the highest monk official Sahajaśrī travelled very much and did not always fulfil his official

⁸¹ "Yuzhi Shanshi Chanshi Ge (御制善世禅师歌)" in Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, p.190-191; "Ming Ban Di Da Wen Chan (命班的答稳禅)" in *Jinling Fancha Zhi*, p. 42.

⁸² Qian Bochong ed., *Quan Ming Wen* (全明文), Shanghai : Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1992, p.99.

duties. What is more, because he liked tranquil places, Sahajaśrī lived in mountain spots outside the capital, and that was not the monastery where the office of the highest monk official was situated. Because he was not so competent at his job, it is hard for historians to find his achievements to prove his existence. This may be one of the reasons why Sahajaśrī was neglected.

Śāripūtrā (室利沙 ?--1246)

The name of this Buddhist is mentioned in *Buxu Gaoseng Zhuan* (补续高僧传) as Shilishalibudelo (实哩沙哩卜得罗).⁸³ He is referred to by Hoong Teik Toh as Śāripūtrā.⁸⁴ However, according to the Chinese pronunciation there are two more syllables, *shili*, in front of Śāripūtrā. These two characters cannot be transliterated as any Sanskrit words other than Śrī, which is an honorific prefix or affix to names of gods, great men, and books (this proves that before Śāripūtrā arrived in China, he had gained great fame already). However, Chinese names rarely have more than four syllables. Most Chinese names are formed of three syllables or characters: one is the surname, and the other two are given names. In tune with Chinese tradition, Śāripūtrā was given a typical Chinese name, “Shilisha”,⁸⁵ which is shortened from Shilishalibudelo by omitting libudelo. In other sources he was addressed either as Dashan Guoshi (大善国师 the state preceptor of great righteousness),⁸⁶ or as Bandida Daguoshi

⁸³ Minghe (明和 Ming dynasty), p.531.

⁸⁴ Hoong Teik Toh, “Tibetan Buddhism in Ming China”, PhD Thesis of Harvard University, 2004. P.167.

⁸⁵ Zhencheng (Ming dynasty), *Qingliang Shanzhi*, Beijing, zhongguo shudian, 1989, pp. 36-37.

⁸⁶ Minghe, *Buxu Gaoseng Zhuan* (补续高僧传, 大善国师) in 卅 XZ, Vol.77, p.531.

(*Pandita*, the great state preceptor);⁸⁷ this is the shortened title that was bestowed upon him by the Renzhong emperor in 1423. His full title was *Yuanjue miaoying cihui ji fuguo guangfan hongjiao guanding dashan daguoshi*.⁸⁸

Śāripūtrā's origin

There is no direct evidence to indicate where Śāripūtrā came from. Some Chinese scholars locate his home country as Nepal⁸⁹, although this assertion does not arise from any specific historical evidence. In *Buxu Gaoseng Zhuan*, it is clearly stated that Śāripūtrā was the second son of the king of the eastern Indian kingdom-*Zagema*. As is common knowledge, Gotama Buddha was born in Nepal, which was regarded by the Chinese as central India, in Chinese *Zhong tianzhu*.⁹⁰ So Śāripūtrā could not be a Newar. Rather he was a member of the royalty of East India. Where is this *Zagema* (拶葛麻) kingdom? In *Ming Shilu* there is the following entry:

⁸⁷ Zhu, Yizhu (1629-1709), *Qinding Rixia Jiuwen Kao* (钦定日下旧闻考), Taipei : Guangwen Shuju, 1968, Vol.77.

⁸⁸ *Ming Renzong Shilu* (明仁宗实录) Vol.2: “永乐二十二年十月初八日册封皇后...孝陵殿命西天刺麻板的达为圆觉妙应慈慧济辅国光范 洪教灌顶大善大国师僧录司右善世智光为圆融妙慧净觉弘济光范衍教灌顶广善大国师谷赐金印”, p.65.

⁸⁹ Cui Zhengsen, *Wutai Shan Fojiao Shi*, Taiyuan: Shanxi Renmin Chubanshe, 2000, p.700.

⁹⁰ For example, in the dedicatory inscription for the relic pagoda of the “ Indian great Chan master who betters the world” *Paṇḍita* (西天善世大禅师板的达公设利塔铭有序), Laifu writes “There are five kingdoms in *tianzhu*, which together make up India. To the south it adjoins the Indian Ocean; to the west it controls Persia; to the north it neighbours the snow mountain; to the east it borders Campa; the central kingdom is called Kapalivastu. This is surrounded by the other four kingdoms, and this is the place where the Buddha was born... Sahajaśrī was born in the same kingdom as the Buddha...”

[On the *wuxu* (戊戌) day of the first month, 1423] the Bengalese *Ceguma* (侧古麻) Buddhist priest Ku-la-mo-la (苦刺默刺) etc, came to pay tribute to the Ming emperor. *Renyin* (壬寅)... The Bengalese *Ceguma* Ku-la-mo-la etc made their adieus to the Ming court. The emperor presented everyone with paper money, one hundred ingots of gold, two bolts brocade,⁹¹ and one linen-and-silk fabric robe.⁹²

The above record reveals that in the early 15th century Buddhism in Bengal was still, to a certain extent, active under sultanate Muslim control. This entry is rare and valuable to the present research as it supports the fact that Śāripūtrā's East Indian origins and his Buddhist background are not in conflict.⁹³ More excitingly, Śāripūtrā's homeland, *Zagama*, and Kulamola's homeland, *Ceguma*, could be two different transliterations of the name of the same kingdom. Three factors support this theory: there is a twenty year gap between Śāripūtrā & Kulamola's appearance in the Chinese records; different interpreters have different accents; and the two monks arrived in China by different routes.⁹⁴

⁹¹ "Two bolts brocade" is the translation of *caibi er biaoli* (彩币二表里). All kinds of silk products is collectively called *Caibi* (彩币). *Biaoli* (表里) refers to two different kinds of clothes material-outer surface and lining.

⁹² *Taizong Shilu*, Vol.267.

⁹³ We could not find any native Buddhist activity in the east Bengal region in the records of Zheng He's sea voyages. See Paul Pelliot, "Les grands Voyages maritimes chinois au debut du XV siecle" in *T'oung Pao*, 1933, pp.237-452. Also see J.V.G., Mills, *Ma Huan, the Overall Survey of the Oceans Shores 1433*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.

⁹⁴ Śāripūtrā came to China via Nepal and Tibet; Bengali ambassadors and Chinese envoys (who were dispatched to Bengal) traveled by sea.

In modern Bangladesh, there is a minority tribe called Chakma. They live in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, which borders Burma. As to Chakma's origins, anthropologists have varying views.⁹⁵ The Chakmas themselves claim their progenitors were of the Kshatriya caste, into which Gautama Buddha was born. In his book *Ethnicity and National Integration in Bangladesh*, Barua interprets the word 'Chakma' thus:

The word 'chakma' has originated from the compound word sakya-Mong or Sak-Mong which means the king of the Sakya or Sak, a term given by the Burmans and the Arakanese to the kings of the Chakma tribe in the past. The Chakmas call themselves changma. In support of this it is said that the language of chakma still retains many vocabulary and grammatical links with Prakrit and Pali languages which were prevalent in Magadha (Bihar) in the past.⁹⁶

Evidence for Śāripūtrā as a Chakma

In the 14th century a Chakma raja did establish a kingdom in the Chittagong and Arakan area.⁹⁷ At the beginning of his book on the Chakmas, Talukdar first reconstructed a brief Chakma history from various records in different languages. According to Talukdar, in the 14th century a Chakama raja called Marekyaja who emigrated from Arakan to Bengal, which borders the Arakan region and Chittagong, established his kingdom there.⁹⁸ This explains

⁹⁵ S.P., Talukdar, *The Chakmas Life and struggle*, Delhi: Gian Publishing House 1988, pp.6-7.

⁹⁶ Barua, p.30.

Talukdar interpreted the term 'chakma' as the people of Tsak/Thek (sakya). See Talukdar S.P., *The Chakmas Life and Struggle*, pp.5-6.

⁹⁷ Barua, p.4.

⁹⁸ S.P., Talukdar, *The Chakmas Life and Struggle*, Delhi: Gian Publishing House, 1988.

why there is no mention of this East Indian Buddhist kingdom in Chinese records prior to the fifteenth century. Śāripūtrā's royal status and his Buddhist background are well suited to life in this Buddhist kingdom. According to Śāripūtrā's biography, he was the second son of the King of *Zagema* in east India. If *Zagema* is the Chinese transliteration of Chakma, we would not be surprised that a Chakma royal prince should have renounced his worldly status and joined the Buddhist order, because that was a long established tradition in the Shakya clan, and one can indeed trace this practice back to Shakyamuni Buddha. The Chakmas claim they are the descendants of the Shakya clan into which the Buddha was born as crown prince.

East India--Bengal was the breeding ground of Mahayana Buddhism. The Chinese Buddhist traveller, Faxian, mentioned in his itinerary (399-414) the Kingdom of Champa on the southern bank of the Ganges where he came across much evidence of living Mahayana Buddhism. In the 7th century Xuanzang (602-664), the most famous Chinese pilgrim in India, recorded various accounts of the persecution of Buddhism by Shashanka, the king of Gauda (North West Bengal). Xuanzang wrote about Mahayana Buddhism in various parts of Bangladesh, which also contained some Theravada schools. From the seventh century until the twelfth-century Muslim invasions, Mahayana Buddhism, particularly tantric Buddhism, experienced a golden era in Bengal. Tantric masters such as Atish Dipankar (980-1053) appeared in Bangladesh during this era, and their scholastic works on Tantrism are still studied today by Tibetan Buddhists.

The prevalence of Tantric Buddhism in east India had a stronger impact on the Chakmas than on the neighbouring Theravada Buddhist country of Burma. Attempts to adopt Burmese Buddhism by some senior members of the Chakma Buddhist community during the 15th century were not successful. As Dr. B. P. Barua writes:

The Buddhism which prevailed during the 19th century in Eastern India (comprising Chittagong proper, Chittagong hill tracts, Tipera, Laksham and comilla) was not a Theravada one. It was a mixture of Tantric faith, Hinduism and various other obscure religious cults.⁹⁹

The Chinese records do not give any indication that Śāripūtrā had any obvious connection with Tantrism. However, since according to a Tibetan source Śāripūtrā was invited to Tibet to perform tantric rituals for a prominent Tibetan leader,¹⁰⁰ one can assume that Śāripūtrā was associated with Tantrism. This also explains why the Ming emperor bestowed upon Śāripūtrā a title with *abhiseka* in it. Moreover it gives us another reason for believing Śāripūtrā was a Chakma, as his Buddhist practice matches the tradition of this East Indian minority - the Chakmas.

The work entitled *Rixia Jiuwen Kao* (日下旧闻考), which provides information on the capital city, mentions that in the early years of Emperor Yongle, there lived an Indian monk called *Pandita*, a great state preceptor from the western region, who presented the Emperor with a golden Buddha statue and a blueprint of the Diamond Throne pagoda (which exists in

⁹⁹ Baruya Sitamsu Bikasa, *Buddhism in Bangladesh/Sitangshu Bikash Barua*, Chittagong Bangladesh: s.n., 1990, p.5.

¹⁰⁰ See Hoong Teik Toh, *Tibetans in Ming China*, pp.166-7. According to Minghe, “Buxu Gaoseng Zhuan”, the Indian monk (whose name is given as shili shalibudeluo 实哩沙哩卜得囉) visited the Yongle court in the year of jiawu, that is, in 1414 and, later, the Renzong emperor entitled him Dashan Guoshi. Dashan Guoshi passed away in China on February 20, 1426. The Chinese source also gives the name of his teacher, namely, Gunaluona Mahesami (孤捺罗纳麻曷萨弥 Gunaratna Mahāsvāmi). See 卅 XZ, Vol.77, p.531.

Bodhgaya). It goes on to explain that the style and size of this pagoda is exactly the same as that in central India.¹⁰¹

Bodhgaya is the place where the Buddha attained enlightenment, so all Buddhists treasure it as one of the most important pilgrimage sites. In the case of the Burmese, one can read in their inscriptions that the Burmese king Kyanzitta (1040-1112) had sent craftsmen to Bodhgaya to repair the Mahabodhi temple, so that the upkeep of that holy site became a tradition with Myanmar kings, who continued to send missions to Bodhgaya to repair the temple and also to donate temple slaves and land to Bodhgaya.¹⁰² In Bodhgaya we also find archeological remains which support the Burmese inscription.¹⁰³

Chittagong Hill Tracts is the corridor that linked Burma and India. Most of the Indian cultural influences reached Burma via Chittagong Hill Tracts, and vice-versa, since Burmese artists, traders and pilgrims who went to India must have passed through Chittagong Hill Tracts. The chakmas who were living in Chittagong Hill Tracts must also have had knowledge of Bodhgaya. As Buddhists themselves, it is very likely that many Chakmas would have gone to Bodhgaya on pilgrimage together with the Burmese. In the 13th century a Burmese king asked his Bodhgaya embassy to make detailed drawings of the Bodhgaya pagoda. We can assume that Śāripūtrā must have visited Bodhgaya as he was addressed as the Bodhgaya abbot in Tibet. Śāripūtrā had a passion for restoring and reconstructing pagodas which were in poor

¹⁰¹ Zhu, Yizun (朱彝尊 1629-1709), *Rixia Jiuwen Kao* (钦定日下旧闻考), Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1968, Vol.77.

¹⁰² Roger, Bischoff, *Buddhism in Myanmar A Short History*, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1995, p.25.

¹⁰³ L.S.S., O'Malley, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Gaya*. Calcutta: the Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1906, p.48.

condition. While he was living in Bodhgaya, Śāripūtrā must have witnessed and participated in one of these restoration projects. The knowledge and technical experience of building a seventy metres high pagoda which he thus acquired would have enabled him to reconstruct pagodas in Nepal and later on in China.

The route Śāripūtrā took to China

Śāripūtrā joined the order at the age of sixteen. According to his biography he travelled extensively through the “five Indias”, and many people were converted to Buddhism through his influence. He had a special interest in worshipping stupas. Stupa worship has been a very common practice for Buddhists particularly among south and south-east Asians. As mentioned above, Burmese kings continuously supported the Bodhgaya Buddhist society, and detailed drawings of the Bodhgaya pagoda were made at the request of a Burmese king in the 13th century. According to Chinese sources, Śāripūtrā presented detailed drawings of the Bodhgaya pagoda to the Chinese emperor, Yongle.¹⁰⁴ Is there any connection between these two sets of drawings?

Śāripūtrā in Nepal

Śāripūtrā's biography mentions that he visited a place called Diyong (地涌)pagoda. Because the pagoda was in a bad condition, Śāripūtrā suggested to the king of that country that he reconstruct it. Where is this Diyong pagoda? The first record of Diyong pagoda in Chinese sources is found in Zhiguang's biography. Zhiguang was sent to Tibet and Nepal by the Ming emperors as their envoy. On his first trip to Tibet and Nepal he worshipped at Diyong pagoda. Unfortunately, not much information about this pagoda is contained in the

¹⁰⁴. Zhu Yizun, *Rixia Jiuwen Kao* (日下旧闻考): “成祖文皇帝时，西番班迪达来贡金佛五躯，金刚宝座规式，诏封大国师，赐金印，建寺居之。寺赐名真觉。成化九年，诏寺准中印度式，建宝座，累石台五丈……”，p.1290.

Chinese records. In the Ming Veritable Records (*Ming Shilu*) and the Ming History DiYong Pagoda is briefly mentioned as a kingdom next to Nepal. And the king of that country was called Ke Ban. However, Petech believes Diyong Pagoda and Nepal were not two independent kingdoms:

The name of Ti-yung-ta remains unexplained, but it can only indicate the chiefship of Bhatagaon; and its prince must have been Jayasthiti Malla and his line. Khopava, the Newari name for Bhatgaon, transcribed by the Chinese as Ko-pan, was sometimes taken by them for the name of the king of Ti-yung-ta, and sometimes correctly understood as a city or its district.¹⁰⁵

Therefore, we can be certain that before Śāripūtrā arrived in China, he lived in Bhatagaon and helped the King to restore Diyong pagoda. During the restoration of Diyong pagoda, people discovered that underneath the old central wooden pillar Śāripūtrā's name was carved. It must have been thought a miracle.

Śāripūtrā in Tibet

In 1413 the Ming Emperor Yongle appointed the prince of Rygal rtse as *da situ* (大司徒), but by the time the Ming envoys brought the edict to Gtsang, the prince of Rygal rtse had passed away, and his son Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags (1389-1442) therefore inherited his

¹⁰⁵L. Petech, *Medieval History of Nepal*, p.210.

father's title - *da situ*.¹⁰⁶ Hoong Teik Toh noticed in *Rab rrtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam par thar pa dad pa'i lo thog dngos grub kyi char 'bebs*. that at that time several Indian monks were invited to Lcang ra to perform tantric rituals. Among them was a monk called Śāripūtrā, who was said to have been a mkhan po (abbot) of Rdo rje gda (bodhgaya).¹⁰⁷ This bodhgaya abbot Śāripūtrā and the above-mentioned Chakma prince monk Śāripūtrā can be identified as the same person.¹⁰⁸ Hoong in his "Tibetan Buddhism in Ming China" gives an account of the above event. However, he does not know who the Ming emperor's envoy was; and from the

¹⁰⁶ This appointment was followed by the Sa Skya leader Kun dga' bkra shis pa's meeting with the Chinese emperor in 1413. Kun dga' bkra shis was bestowed a title Dacheng fawang (the dharma king of Mahayana) in Jun 1413 in Nanjing. The appointment to Rgyal rtse price arrived in Tibet in December 1413. Because Rgyal rtse price is the main supporter of Sa Skya Buddhism in Tibet. See Gu Zucheng *Ming Shilu Zangzu Shiliao* (明实录藏族史料) Vol.1, Xizang Renmin Chubanshe, 1982, p.152. Also Xiong Wenbin has discussed this in his *Zhong Shiji Zangchuan Fojiao Yishu* (中世纪藏传佛教艺术), Beijing: Zhongguo Zangxue Chubanshe, 1996, pp.18-22.

¹⁰⁷ Hoong, p.166.

¹⁰⁸ Zhu Yizun, *Rixia Jiuwen Kao* (日下旧闻考) Vol.77, under "Zhenjue Si Jingang Baozuo Beiji (真觉寺金刚宝座塔碑记)" it accounts that in the Yongle era an Indian *panca-vidya Pandita* presented the Ming emperor the blue print of the Vajrasana (Bodhgaya pagoda). From Śāripūtrā's biography, we learned that he gained a *panca-vidya Pandita* religious title when he was in India. Most importantly in *Qingliang Shanzhi*, it says after Śāripūtrā passed away Xuangde emperor instructed to store the Indian monk's ashes in two places, one is in Zhenjue Monastery, Beijing; and the other is in Yuan Zhao Monastery, Qingliang Mountain. Therefore this *panca-vidya Pandita* cannot be anyone else, but our Chakma prince monk Śāripūtrā.

information provided in *R:49-51*, Hoong is puzzled by the invitation to Śāripūtrā. He writes: “*R:49-51* seems to place the invitation from *gong ma ye vang rgyal po* (Zhu Di) some time during *chu mo sbrul gyi lo* (1413) or *shing pho rt’I lo* (1414)—I am not sure whether it should be interpreted that the invitation came twice.”¹⁰⁹

According to the Tibetan scholar, Jinmeizhaba, the 1413 Ming emperor’s missive to Rygal rtse was carried by Hou Xian (候显).¹¹⁰ In *Ming Shilu* and *Ming Shi* there is no mention of Hou Xian being given such a task; however, after transliterating the Tibetan text of the letter from the Yongle emperor which the 1413 embassy carried to Tsong kha pa, inviting him to visit the Ming court, Dieter Schuh discovered that Hou Xian carried an important message from the Ming emperor to Tsong kha pa, even though he was specified as the Chinese ambassador to Nepal and Diyong pagoda. Elliot Sperling further points out that Hou Xian also delivered a Ming emperor’s letter to the 5th Karma-pa.¹¹¹ Therefore, it can be proven that Hou Xian visited not only one but several Tibetan hierarchs on his way to Nepal. After Hou Xian accomplished his mission in Nepal and Diyong Pagoda (地涌塔), he returned to China via Tibet again. At that time, Śāripūtrā must have been enjoying international fame. In all the places Hou Xian passed through, such as Tibet, Nepal and Diyong Pagoda, their kings and princes were well acquainted with Śāripūtrā. If Hou Xian had invited Śāripūtrā to go and meet the Chinese emperor in 1413, in 1414 Hou Xian must have heard more about Śāripūtrā along

¹⁰⁹ Hoong, p.167.

¹¹⁰ Jinmeizhaba (晋美扎巴), *Jiangzi Fawang Regongdansangpaba Zhuan* (江孜法王热丹贡桑帕巴传), Lasa: Xizang Renmin Chubanshe, 1987, p.169. Hou Xian was a very influential eunuch in the early Ming dynasty. See *Mingshi* (明史, 列传一百九十二, 宦官一), P.3405.

¹¹¹ Elliot, Sperling, “The 1413 Ming embassy to Tsong-kha-pa and the arrival of Byams-chen Chos-rje Shakya Ye-shes at the Ming court.” In *Journal of Tibet Society*, 1982, pp.105-108.

his journey. It would not be surprising for Śāripūtrā to get another invitation from Hou Xian, who was representing the Chinese emperor.

Śāripūtrā was mentioned as the abbot of Bodhgaya. He was not the only royalty present during his time in Bodhgaya. Burmese pilgrims frequented the places in India associated with the life of the Buddha, and Bodhgaya was one of their favourites. According to a Bodhgaya inscription, written in Burmese, the Burmese King Putasin Mañ sent men and money from Burma to repair the religious buildings at Bodhgaya in India. That project of restoration finished on Sunday 13th of October 1298, and two of king Putasin Mañ's own children were dedicated as slaves there.¹¹² According to Than Tun's research, becoming a pagoda slave did not mean a loss of social status at that time. Burmese kings often dedicated their own children as slaves to pagodas.¹¹³ A similar practice was also found among Chinese emperors. Once a Chinese prince was born, the imperial family would select a suitable boy to join the Buddhist order in the name of the newly born prince. Was Śāripūtrā tonsured under this practice?

Śāripūtrā and Hou Xian¹¹⁴

In *Ming Shilu* and *Ming Shi* there is no record of when Hou Xian returned from his 1413 mission to Nepal. However, according to tradition, when Ming envoys return home, monarchies of the countries which had been visited would send tributes to the Ming emperor

¹¹²G.H., Luce (1889-1979), *Inscriptions of Burma*, plate No. 299 of portfolio 9-14. Oxford: Printed ... at the University Press, [1933]-1956.

¹¹³Than Tun, *History of Buddhism in Burman 1000-1300 AD*, Rangoon: Burma Research Society, 1978, p.62.

¹¹⁴L.C., Goodrich, *Dictionary of Ming Biography 1368-1644*, New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1976, P.522.

with the returning envoys. In *Ming Shilu* we find that Nepalese King Śaktisimha Rāma sent ambassadors to China in 1414.

[In the eighth month of the twelfth year, (August 29th, 1414)]
Shadixinge of Nepal sent ambassadors to bring tribute. Shadixinge
was appointed king of Nepal and was granted a seal of gilt silver and a
patent.¹¹⁵

Therefore, we can be fairly sure that Hou Xian returned to the Ming capital in August 1414. In Yuanzhao Monastery, Wutai Shan, there is an inscription which reads “Emperor Gao sent his eunuchs to Gelimawo of Tibet to invite the *Pandita* state preceptor, who came to the east and never returned.”¹¹⁶ This *Pandita* state preceptor could not be anyone other than Śāripūtrā. Despite the error in naming the emperor (Gao instead of Wen), this record provides the valuable information that Śāripūtrā came to China from Tibet and with a eunuch envoy. This eunuch should be Hou Xian because just before Śāripūtrā came to China it was Hou Xian who delivered the edict to Lcang ra of Tibet, where Śāripūtrā stayed.

Hou Xian, was highly praised by Qing historians. However his biography in *Ming Shi* (History of Ming) did not give us much information about his origin. In some recent research Yang Shiyu discovered Hou Xian was of Tibetan origin, and studied Tibetan Buddhism in monasteries when he was young.¹¹⁷ This background helped him to accomplish several missions to Tibet and Nepal successfully as the Ming ambassador. In 1414, shortly after he

¹¹⁵ *Ming Shilu*, Vol.13, p.1777.

¹¹⁶ Wan Zhichao, pp.17-26.

¹¹⁷ Yang Shiyu (杨士钰), *Houxian Zhuan* (侯显传), Lanzhou: Gansu Minzu Chubanshe, 2008, p.68.

accompanied Śāripūtrā to Beijing to meet the emperor, Hou Xian was dispatched to Bengal.¹¹⁸

It seems Hou Xian's mission to Bengal has something to do with Śāripūtrā.

According to Hou Xian's biography, in August of 1415, Yongle emperor wanted to contact Bengal, and so Hou Xian was assigned this task as the Ming envoy to eastern India. In fact before 1415, Bengalese kings sent tribute many times to the Ming court,¹¹⁹ but only from 1415 did the Ming emperor start to pay attention to Bengal. Chinese historians suggested that this was because a Ming envoy led by Yang Min (杨敏) returned from Bengal in 1414 and brought back a giraffe. This giraffe is considered as the Chinese legendary auspicious animal *qilin* (麒麟). According to Chinese legend *qilin* only appears when the empire is governed by sage emperors.¹²⁰ This may have interested the Chinese emperor, Yongle, who was ambitious, and wished to legitimise his obscured usurpation over his nephew.

However, the meeting with Śāripūtrā must also have provided the emperor with further information about eastern Bengal, particularly about the Buddhist holy site Bodhgaya. Therefore, the Yongle emperor sent Hou Xian to Bengal. In Chinese records concerning Hou Xian's first journey to Bengal, Bodhgaya is emphasized.

According to the *Ming Shi*, during his visit to Bengal, Hou Xian went to Bodhgaya where he worshipped the holy site and presented gifts to the local chieftain. Sonargaon (in Chinese *shao na pu er*), the kingdom where Bodhgaya is located is mentioned for the first

¹¹⁸ Zhang Tingyu, *Mingshi* (明史, 列传一百九十二, 宦官一), P.3405.

¹¹⁹ Sen Tansen. *Buddhism, Diplomacy and Trade: The Realignment of Sino-Indian Relations, 600–1400*, Honolulu: Association for Asian Studies. University of Hawai'i Press, 2003, pp. 71-74.

¹²⁰ Zhang Zhijie (张之杰), "Mingdai de Qilin--Zheng He Xia Xiyang Wai Yizhang (明代的麒麟—郑和下西洋外一章)", *Kexue Yuekan* (科学月刊), 1997.5, pp.367--373.

time in Ming history. As discussed above, Śāripūtrā had lived in Bodhgaya and had been addressed as the abbot of Bodhgaya. The embassy to Bengal was led not by others such as Zheng He or Yang Min, who were more experienced admirals and had visited Bengal previously, but by Hou Xian, who brought back Śāripūtrā from Tibet. This shows that Hou Xian was chosen to serve this mission with a special purpose, and Yongle emperor was not interested in Bengal only because they presented a giraffe: the meeting with Śāripūtrā must also have aroused his admiration for Bengal and particularly for Bodhgaya. For this reason, Emperor Yongle dispatched Hou Xian to Bengal, with the main objective of paying respect to Bodhgaya.

An interesting fact should be singled out regarding Emperor Yongle's embassies: most of the embassies sent abroad during the Yongle era were led by eunuchs. This suggests that this emperor trusted eunuchs more than his courtiers. Because most Ming ministers were Confucians, they respected Confucius more than their emperors. They could challenge the emperor's decisions on the basis of Confucian thought. The reason for sending envoys to neighbouring countries and south-east Asian countries was to search for his nephew Jianwen, the defeated emperor and legitimate heir to the throne.¹²¹ Emperor Yongle could not trust those Confucians with this task. He may have feared that when the Confucian courtiers found Jianwen, they might change sides and assist him to in attacking Yongle himself. Throughout the whole Ming dynasty we can see this struggle—imperial authority came into in conflict with Confucian ideas. Eunuchs were so influential in Ming politics that Henry Tsai even describes them as the third administrative hierarchy as significant as the civil and military

¹²¹ Zhang Tingyu, "Zheng He Zhuan" in *Ming History* we read: "成祖疑惠帝亡海外，欲踪迹之", p.3405.

hierarchies. Through these eunuchs Ming emperors could exercise their power in all areas of government.¹²²

Śāripūtrā and Ming emperors

Where did Śāripūtrā meet the Yongle emperor? There is a confusion regarding to this question. In *Qingliang Shanzhi*, we read that he met Yongle in the Dashan Hall,¹²³ which was well known to historian as it was destroyed by Emperor Jiajing in the late Ming dynasty. Elsewhere, however, it is said that Śāripūtrā met the Ming emperor in the Fengtian Hall.¹²⁴ As the new Fengtian Hall in Beijing had not completed until the 18th year of the Yongle era, it seems only one Fengtian Hall existed in 1414. This was in Nanjing, or Jingshi (京师), as the capital was called normally. Where, then, is the Dashan Hall? There is no solid evidence to prove that the Ming palace in Nanjing had such a Hall. We find no reference to the Dashan Hall in *Hongwu Jingcheng Tuzhi*.¹²⁵ The Dashan Hall was described by the late Ming officials

¹²² Tisa, Shih-shan Henry, *The Eunuchs of the Ming Dynasty*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1996.

¹²³ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi* (清凉山志): “大圆照寺，显通之左，古称普宁寺。永乐初，印度僧室利沙者来此土，诏入大善殿，坐论称旨，封圆觉妙应辅国光范大善国师，赐金印，旌幢遣送台山，寓显通寺。至宣德初，复诏入京，广宣秘密。无何，辞归山，上未许，明日示寂，上闻，痛悼之。御祭火化，敕分舍利为二，一塔于都西，建寺曰真觉，一塔于台山普宁基，建寺曰圆照”，p.36-7.

¹²⁴ Minghe (明河), “Dashan Guoshi” Buxu Gaoseng Zhuan (补续高僧传·大善国师传): “永樂甲午，入中國。謁 文皇帝於奉天殿。應對稱旨。命居海印寺。丁酉。奉 命游清涼山。還都。召見武英殿。天語溫慰。寵賚隆厚。授僧錄闡教。命居能仁寺”，卅 XZ, Vol.77, p.53.

¹²⁵ *Hongwu Jingcheng Tuhi* (洪武京城图志) was edited in the 28th year of the Hongwu era by the Ministry of Rites with the detailed illustrations of the Ming Nanjing Palace.

as a Tibetan Buddhist shrine in the Ming Beijing Palace, containing huge amounts of Buddhist treasure,¹²⁶ in *the Ming Veritable Record* we could not find any record of Nanjing palace having had such a hall, certainly not when Kamapa visited Yongle emperor in Nanjing in the early Yongle era. In *Qinglian Shanzhi* we find Śāripūtrā was not the only person who was received by the Yongle emperor in the Dashan Hall. Shakya Ye-shes was received there too. In *the Ming Veritable record* we can see that the Yongle emperor did meet Shakya Ye-shes but the Dashan Hall was not mentioned there at all.¹²⁷ As discussed earlier, it was Hou Xian who took Śāripūtrā to China on his way back from Nepal, the Nepalese embassy was received by the emperor in the 8th month of the 12th year of the Yongle era (1414) at the Fengtian Hall in the imperial palace. Therefore, Śāripūtrā could meet the Ming emperor at the same time with the Nepalese envoy. The meeting was very pleasant, and Śāripūtrā was showered with gifts. The emperor assigned Haiyin monastery as Śāripūtrā's residence in Beijing.

In 1425, Yongle's son, Zhu Gaochi, ascended the throne. He held a Buddhist ceremony to bless his enthronement. As an expert in tantric rituals, and known as the abbot the Bodhgaya of India, Śāripūtrā was chosen to be the leader of this ceremony. This ceremony must have been exceedingly important and held with all the proper solemnities, and presumably attended by most of the senior monks. A *chanjiao* (阐教) monk official was not suitable to be the leader of it, therefore, Śāripūtrā was granted a title "Yuanjue Miaoying Cihui Puji Fuguo

¹²⁶ "Shijiao Bu Kao" *Gujin Tushu Jicheng* (古今图书集成, 释教部考) in 卅 XZ Vol.77, p. 59. Also See Xian Yan (夏言 Ming Dynasty), *Xia Guizhou Wenji* (夏桂洲文集) Vol.14: "议除禁中释殿及毁销佛骨疏" (国家图书馆藏—中国基本古籍库).

¹²⁷ *Ming Taizong Shilu* (太宗实录): "(永乐十二年) 十二月癸巳, 乌思藏尚师释迦也失来朝", Vol.159.

Guangfan Hongjiao Guanding Dahan da Guoshi (圆觉妙应慈慧普济辅国光范宏教灌顶大善大国师)”. Śāripūtrā was referred to as *Dashan Guoshi* in some Chinese books.¹²⁸ Zhu Gaozhi lived for less than one year after he was enthroned. In the following year, Yongle’s grandson Zhu Zhanji became the fifth Ming emperor, and held a similar Buddhist ceremony, which was also performed by Śāripūtrā. Thus, during his thirteen-year stay in China,¹²⁹ Śāripūtrā had served three Ming emperors.

Śāripūtrā and Shākya Ye-shes

Shakya Ye-shes arrived in China in the spring of 1414, staying in Xiantong monastery on Wutai Shan. According to *Qingliang Shanzhi*, Emperor Yongle was not informed his arrival until the eleventh month (lunar) of that year. Then the emperor dispatched Hou Xian to Wutai Shan to invite Shākya Ye-shes to the capital. Here we must ask two questions. Why did Hou Xian not take him to the capital directly? Since there were two capitals, in which capital did the emperor meet him?

We believe that Hou Xian on his return journey from Nepal took Shākya Ye-shes to China. As foreign diplomats, the Nepalese envoy went to the capital directly. As for Shaya Ye-shes this was not necessarily the case. At the time they arrived in China, the Ming emperor was absent from both capitals, as he was marching his army to the North with the aim of punishing Mongolian invaders.¹³⁰ Initially Yongle had invited Tsong-kha-pa, the founder of the Tibetan

¹²⁸ Minghe (明河), “Dashan Guoshi (大善国师)” of *Buxu Gaoseng Zhuan* (补续高僧传), in 圻 XZ, Vol.77, p.53.

¹²⁹ *ibid.* Śāripūtrā passed away in 1426.

¹³⁰ *Ming Taizong Shilu*, “永乐十二年三月丙戌，命皇太子监国，留守事宜一循永乐八年之制。...（三月）庚寅，...车驾发北京，皇太孙从行”，Vol. 149, p.3. *Ming Taizong Shilu*, “(永乐十二年) 八月辛丑，车驾至京师，上御奉天殿”，Vol.154, p.1.

Yellow Hat Buddhist sect to China. However, Tsong-kha-pa declined this invitation politely, instead sending his disciple Byams-chen Chos-Rje Shakya Ye-shes in his place. There was an uncertainty as to whether the Chinese emperor would accept this replacement. Given the importance of Wutai Shan to Tibetan Buddhists, it is understandable Shakya Ye-shes chose to stay on Wutai Shan while Emperor Yongle was still in the battlefield.¹³¹

When Emperor Yongle ascended the throne he was advised by a minister to increase the political significance of Beiping (former name of Beijing) and to name it as the northern capital. This he did, and thus the name Beijing replaced Beiping.¹³² As mentioned above, Yongle overthrew the legitimate emperor, who was based in Nanjing. It must have been difficult for Yongle to live in the antagonistic environment that must have resulted. Therefore, at the beginning of his regime, he had a strong motive to shift the capital to the North. However, there were various reasons preventing him from doing this immediately. Nevertheless it did not stop him to live in his formal princely palace, he constantly on the horse back travelling in between the two capitals. This was particularly true after the 7th year of the Yongle era.

Citing records of Shakya Ye-shes in Tan Qian's renowned private history of the Ming dynasty, Elliot Sperling believes the Yongle emperor received Shakya Ye-shes on *guisi* day of the twelfth month of the 12th year of the Yongle era (third of Feb, 1415).¹³³ In fact, we can

¹³¹ Yu Qian (喻谦 Ming dynasty), *Xinxu Gaoseng Zhuan* (新续高僧传) in DZZBB Vol.27, Taipei: Huayu Chubanshe, 1986, Vol.19.

¹³² *Ming Taizong Shilu*, “(永乐元年) 礼部尚书李刚等言, 自昔帝王或起布衣平定天下, 或系外藩入承大统, 而于肇迹之地, 皆有陞荣。切见北平布政司实皇上承运兴之地, 宜遵太祖高皇帝中都之制立为京都。曰: 可其以北平为北京”, Vol.16, p.2.

¹³³ Elliot Sperling, p.107.

confirm the accuracy of Tan Qian's account from the *Ming Veritable Record* itself.¹³⁴ In the fourth month of the following year (the 11th of May, 1415) we also noticed in the *Ming Veritable Record* that the Yongle emperor bestowed a title on this hierarch.¹³⁵ In her article, Chen Nan states that the Yongle emperor received Shakya Ye-shes in Nanjing.¹³⁶ According to Farmer, that Emperor Yongle was in the North (mostly in Beijing) between 1413--1416.¹³⁷ Where did Emperor met Shakya Ye-shas, Nanjing or Beijing? If Yongle dispatched Hou Xian to welcome this Tibetan hierarch in the eleventh month of the twelfth year of the Yongle era, it is very unlikely he could succeeded in this mission within one month, travelling from Nanjing to Wutai Shan and then bring back Shakya Ye-shes to Nanjing. Nevertheless we read from the *Ming Veritable Record* that after defeated the Mongolian the emperor returned to *jingshi*,¹³⁸ which still referred to Nanjing at that time.¹³⁹ Also, on the new year's day of the

¹³⁴ *Ming Taizong Shilu*, “(永乐十二年) 十二月, 癸巳, 乌思藏尚师释迦也失来朝”, Vol. 159, p.3.

¹³⁵ *Ming Taizong Shilu*, “(永乐十三年) 夏四月...命尚师释迦也失为妙觉圆通慧慈普应辅国显教灌顶弘善西天佛子大国师”, Vol.163, p.1. Also see Karmy, Heather, *Early Sino-Tibetan Art*, Warminster: Aris and Philips, 1975, pp.81-82.

¹³⁶ Chen Nan (陈楠), “Shi Jia Ye Shi Zai Nanjing, Wutai Shan Jiqi Yu Chengzu Guanxi SHishi Kaoshu (释迦也失在南京, 五台山及其与明成祖关系史实考述)”, in *Tibetan Studies*, 2004.3, pp.99-106.

¹³⁷ Edward, Farmer, *Early Ming Government, the Evolution of Dual Capitals*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, East Asian Research Centre, 1976, pp.117-119.

¹³⁸ *Ming Taizong Shilu*, “(十二年) 八月辛丑朔, 车驾至京师, 上御奉天殿, 文物群臣上表贺...”, Vol.154.

¹³⁹ *Ming Taizong Shilu*, “(十八年九月), 丁亥, 上命行在礼部自明年正月初一日始正北京为京师, 不再称行在...”, Vol.229.

13th year of the Yongle era, all government officials had an audience with the emperor at the Fengtian Hall. That could be in Nanjing, as the new Fengtian Hall in Beijing had not finished until the fifteenth year of the Yongle era according to *Ming Taizong Shilu*.¹⁴⁰ To add more confusion to this matter, in the second month of the thirteenth year of the Yongle era, the emperor ordered a national exam to be held in Beijing. Hong Ying and the other 348 people were chosen as *Juren*;¹⁴¹ eight days later the emperor met Hong Ying and the other 348 *Juren* in the Fengtian Hall.¹⁴² If this Fengtian Hall where Yongle met these 349 *Juren* was in Nanjing, it is hard to explain for a big group of people travelling to Nanjing to meet the emperor in eight days time. Considering that the two capitals were more than a thousand kilometres apart, and the still very primitive methods of transport, for such a large group of people travelling from Beijing to Nanjing within such a short time was impossible. Either the editor of the *Ming Taizong Shilu* made a mistake, or an old Fengtian Hall had existed in Beijing before the new one which was completed in 1419. Further evidence indicates an old Fengtian Hall had existed in Beijing. In *Huang Ming Shi Gai*, written by a Grand Secretary of Emperor Tianqi (1621-1627), we read Emperor Yongle was in Beijing in the spring of 1413.¹⁴³ Therefore, we believe Shākya Ye-shes met Yongle in Beijing in 1413. Shākya Ye-shes did not stay long in Beijing. Soon after giving *abisheka* blessing to the Yongle

¹⁴⁰ *Ming Taizong Shilu*, “永乐十五年四月，西宫成。其制：中为奉天殿，殿之侧为左右二殿...”，Vol.187, p.1.

¹⁴¹ *Ming Taizong Shilu*, “(十三年二月)，壬辰，行在礼部会试天下举人得洪英等三百四十九人...”，Vol.161, p.5.

¹⁴² *Ming Taizong Shilu*, “(十三年三月)，己亥朔，上御奉天殿 试选中举人洪英等三百四十九人...”，Vol.162, p.1.

¹⁴³ Zhu Guozhen (朱国桢 1557-1632), *Huang Ming Shigai* (皇明史概), Yangzhou: Jiangsu Guangling gu ji ke yin she, 1992 (reprint), p.146.

emperor,¹⁴⁴ he set off for Wutai Shan. Four letters that Yongle wrote to Shākya Ye-shes are recorded in *Qingliang Shanzhi*. The dates are the sixth month of 1415, autumn of 1417, spring of 1419 and spring of 1421. During this time Shākya Ye-shes's stayed in Xiantong Monastery¹⁴⁵ of Wutai Shan. In Śāripūtrā's biography, we read: "in *dingyou* (1417) under [the Yongle emperor's] orders [Śāripūtrā] went to Wutai Shan", and Śāripūtrā stayed in Xiantong Monastery while he was on Wutai Shan.¹⁴⁶ In the 1417 letter to Shākya Ye-shes, the Yongle emperor wrote "the autumn wind is sighing in the trees, winter comes early on Wutai Shan... (I) dispatched a bearer to deliver some newly made robes and coats to you..." Putting the above information together, we could assume that Śāripūtrā was the bearer who was sent by the Yongle emperor to Shākya Ye-shes on Wutai Shan. Moreover, when Śāripūtrā returned to the capital, the Yongle emperor summoned him at Wu-ying Hall and appointed him as Instructor (*chanjiao* 阐教) and moved Śāripūtrā to Nengren Monastery. There are two reasons for moving Śāripūtrā to Nengren Monastery; first because of his connection with Shākya Ye-shes who was the abbot of this monastery; second, this monastery functioned as one of the state monasteries in Beijing, and it hosted important monk officials such as *chanjiao*.

Śāripūtrā lived in Xiantong Monastery during his visit to Wutai Shan. Tibetan Buddhism was introduced to Wutai Shan during the Yuan dynasty. However, most Tibetan monks who lived on Wutai Shan had their own monasteries. As they had different customs and lifestyle,

¹⁴⁴ Gushridkavbcupab Lobzangtshevphe (固始葛举巴·洛桑泽培), *Monggu Fojiao Shi* (蒙古佛教史), Chen Qingying & Uliji Trans.(陈庆英, 乌力吉), Tianjin: Guji Chubanshe, 1990, p.63.

¹⁴⁵ This monastery was renamed as the present name and reconstructed to welcome the fifth Karma-pa to Wutai Shan in 1407.

¹⁴⁶ Minghe, *Buxu Gaoseng Zhuan* (补续高僧传, 大善国师) in 卅 XZ Vol.77, p.531.

Chinese monks and Tibetan monks did not live in the same monastery. For instance, when Sahajśrī lived on Wutai Shan, he stayed in Xitian (western heaven) Monastery¹⁴⁷. In 1405, the Buddhist office on Wutai Shan was set up in Xiantong Monastery, and the monk officials there were Chinese monks. After Karma-pa's arrival in 1407, a new tradition was established with Tibetan and Chinese monks living in the same compound. This tradition is unique to Wutai Shan.

Śāripūtrā's contribution to Chinese Buddhism

Unlike Sahajśrī, who travelled all over China, Śāripūtrā spent most of his time in Beijing. He had thousands of followers in Beijing. Śāripūtrā taught his followers in accordance with their aptitude. He did not point out the ultimate goal to his disciples directly, but guided them step by step. He thought the difficulties would appear overwhelmingly if he tried to show people the whole "Buddhist path" directly. After Yongle moved the capital to Beijing, Nengren Monastery became the most popular place to host Tibetan monks.¹⁴⁸ The Yongle emperor appointed Shākya Ye-shes as the abbot of Nengren Monastery, but Shākya Ye-shes did not spend much time there. It was Śāripūtrā who resided in Nengren Monastery for about

¹⁴⁷ In his biography, it says Sahajśrī lived in Shou'an chan chapel, and it did not say he lived in Xitian monastery, which was founded by Bāspa, who is Kubilakan's imperial preceptor. During the Yuan dynasty this was the most important monastery on Wutai Shan. However, in *Qingliang Shanzhi*, under 'Pu'en si 普恩寺 (another name for Xitian monastery 西天寺)', it says in early days of Hongwu era, Sahajśrī lived here. It supports the assumption that Sahajśrī tried to disconnect his ties with the Yuan court.

¹⁴⁸ Du Changshun, "Mingdai Liuzhu Jingshi de Zangchuan Fojiao Sengren" (明代留住京师的藏传佛教僧人), in *Zhongguo Zangxue*, 2005.2, p.61.

ten years and was the monk official who was in charge of the monastery. He was thus the intermediary between the Chinese authorities and Tibetan monks in Beijing.

Other Indian monks on Wutai Shan

Sahajaśrī and Śāripūtrā were not the only Indian monks who made a pilgrimage to Wutai Shan during the Ming dynasty. There were other less well-known Indian monks who lived on Wutai Shan. An inscription at Yuanzhao monastery, which was built to look after Śāripūtrā's pagoda, reveals that in this monastery there was a registry post--*dugang*, and it seems this post was occupied by Indian monks only. "In the past, we have built monasteries on this mountain to accommodate monks as the place of praying for protecting our nation. Now, instructing Banmagumaluo replace Manggeluobulajia as *dugang* and the abbot of Yuanzhao monastery, together with Congling, the right Enlightener (右觉义) of Wutai Shan Buddhist office, lead Chinese and foreign monks to practice Buddhism." Banmagumaluo and Manggeluobulajia are not Chinese monk names. Chinese Buddhism had some communication with Nepal. Particularly Zhiguang, Sahajaśrī's Chinese disciple, was sent to Nepal as the Chinese emperor's envoy. Therefore, we are not surprised if there were a few more North Indian (including Nepal) Buddhist generations that continuously interacted with Sahajaśrī's spiritual descendants in China. Zhiguang himself had some Nepalese disciples, we can positively suggest that Zhiguang would not be the only one in China who had foreign disciples; his Indian (including Nepalese) confreres could had their own kin disciples as well.

In Li Rihua (李日华)'s *Liuyan Zhai Biji* , it recorded that during Wanli era there were five eastern Indian monks (锁南曩结, 锁南陆竹, 锁南坚铎, 展阳喃渴, 朵儿只忒) who visited Wutai Shan.¹⁴⁹ The reason they came to China, according to themselves, was because

¹⁴⁹ Li Rihua (1565-1635), *Liuyan Zhai Biji* (六研斋笔记), China: Qing Kangxi Qianlong jian [i.e. between 1662 and 1795] xiubu kanben (SOAS).Vol. 2, pp.32-36.

they admired Chinese culture and also because they came to pay their respect to their progenitor, who was a *Paṇḍita* and national preceptor in the Xianzong emperor's reign. What confuses us here is that no record that the Xianzong emperor had an East Indian national preceptor who can be found in any Ming books. The only East Indian monk who possibly can fit in this role was Śāripūtrā. However, Śāripūtrā was not appointed as national preceptor by Xianzong, he was appointed by the Xuanzong emperor. These five East Indian monks chose Wutai Shan as their first stop, where Śāripūtrā's pagoda was constructed according to his own will. So could it be they misplaced the Xuanzong emperor as the Xianzong emperor?¹⁵⁰

The influence of Indian monks on Wutai Shan

The roles that Sahajaśrī and Śāripūtrā played in Chinese Buddhism were of leaders of all Buddhist traditions in China. Both of these masters are regarded as Indian in origin by the Chinese. They were great masters of *tantriyāha* (which is why they were addressed as *Pandita*) and had strong associations with Tibetan Buddhism. Their rich experiences in different Buddhist traditions and their Indian origins made them the best choice as Buddhist leaders for Ming emperors who needed to enhance their authority over Tibetans and Mongolians. Sahajaśrī and Śāripūtrā's appointments can be regarded as reinforcing Ming government police efforts towards political unification of China and Tibet through Buddhist influence. Wutai Shan possibly is the most important Mahayana Buddhist holy site outside India, and it has an irreplaceable position in Tibetan Buddhism. In order to reinforce their authority, Ming emperors combined these two forces (internationally recognised great Indian masters and the most important Buddhist holy site) by constructing these great Indian

¹⁵⁰ See Hoong Teik Toh, *Tibetans in Ming China*, pp.222-224. The author believes these five foreign monks were Uyghurs.

tantriyana masters' relic pagodas on Wutai Shan after they passed away. Even the Xuanzong emperor funded the building of a new Tibetan monastery on Wutai Shan to look after Śāripūtrā's pagoda.¹⁵¹ The Ming emperors' aim in supporting Tibetan Buddhism on Wutai Shan is very clear – it was to strengthen the Ming government's authority over Tibet and Mongolia. As a result, Tibetan Buddhism continued to flourish on Wutai Shan during the Ming dynasty, and did not fade away with the decline of Mongolia's influence in northern China after the demise of the Yuan dynasty.

Neither Sahajaśrī nor Śāripūtrā stayed very long on Wutai Shan. Sahajaśrī lived in Xitian Monastery of Wutai Shan for five years. Śāripūtrā resided at Xiantong Monastery with Shākya Ye-she during his visit on Wutai Shan for several months. Their contribution to Wutai Shan Buddhism had been long lived as two Indian Buddhist lineages were established on Wutai Shan after their pagodas were constructed there.

According to their biographies, both of these Indian monks needed to go back to Wutai Shan at the end of their life's journey. After they passed away, pagodas were constructed as their memorials. The places where their pagodas stand became Indian Buddhist monks' favourite spots on Wutai Shan, and the monastery which was constructed to look after their pagodas followed an Indian lineage.¹⁵² These foreign monks worked not only as monk officials, but also for the bureau of translation. Foreign envoys and delegations who came to China must have exchanged messages with these foreign monks. Evidence for these Indian

¹⁵¹ Zhencheng, *Qinliang Shanzhi*, pp.36-7.

¹⁵² Wang Zhichao, in the stele, which was erected in front of sahajaśrī's pagoda, it mentioned Kumarasri in the sponsor list. Also in the edict for protecting Yuanzhao monastery, it mentioned Banmagumalu replaced Manggeluobulajia as the abbot of Yuanzhao monastery, p. 11; p.17.

monks working in the bureau of translation can be found in *Siyi Guan Kao* (四夷馆考).¹⁵³ The legends of the holy mountain Wutai Shan, therefore, must have been passed to other foreign countries through these Indian monks. Apparently one of Sahajaśrī's Nepalese disciples went back home after his master passed away.¹⁵⁴ In later days one of the Chinese monks went on pilgrimage to India, where he was advised by an Indian monk that after returning home he should build huts on Wutai Shan to accommodate pilgrims.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ This book was written by Wang Zongzai (王宗载) in 1580. In the second volume of this book, it says: “(西天馆) 至今贡使久不通, 本馆虽设有专官, 其所习番文止《真实名经》, 不可通于文移往来”. Tsuji Naoshirō (辻直四郎 “西天馆译书调查报告” 《东洋学报》, Vol.31.2, 1947) considers this book - *Zhenshi Ming Jing* (真实名经), which is used at the Bureau of Translation as the text book, is translated by Yuan monk Shizhi. Indeed the version in the Taisho canon No.1190 *Shengmiao Jixiang Zhenshi Ming Jing* (圣妙吉祥真实名经) is translated by Shizhi. However, in Zhiguang's biography (in *Jinling Fancha Zhi*, pp. 290-1) we noticed this sutra - *Zhenshi Ming Jing* is included in his translation list. We also learned that in his biography many of his Nepalese disciples worked in the Bureau of Translation (see “Xitian guoshi Zhuan” in *Buxu Gaosengzhuan*, Vol.1). Therefore, we believe this version of *Zhenshi Ming Jing*, which was used as the text book for training interpreters at the Bureau of Translation, was translated by Zhiguang.

¹⁵⁴ In *Ming Taizu Shilu* we read “In the ninth month of the fourteenth year of the Hongwu era, after Sahajaśrī passed away, two of his disciples Kumarasri (古麻辣室哩) and Shandanshili (山丹室利) required to return their home country (Nepal). The emperor fulfilled their wish”, Vol.139.

¹⁵⁵ Minghe, “Qing Wutai Shan Qingliang Si Shamen Shi Yuanxiu Zhuan (清五台山清凉寺沙门释源修传)” in *Buxu Gaoseng Zhuan* (补续高僧传), Vol.38.

Wutai Shan and the East Asian Buddhists during the Ming dynasty

As Professor Barrett commented that international pilgrimage on Wutai Shan may have been the product of Chinese imperial propaganda.¹⁵⁶ During the Tang and Song dynasties, many Japanese and Korean monks made their pilgrimage to Wutai Shan in China. Inspired by the Chinese, after returned home some Japanese and Korean monks duplicated their own Wutai Shan.¹⁵⁷ However, we hardly find any information about the East Asian Buddhists's association with Wutai Shan during the Ming dynasty. The following section will tell us What had stopped the Korean and Japanese Buddhists coming to Wutai Shan.

Wutai Shan and Korea:

Around 1350 years ago, a celebrated Korean monk visited Wutai Shan, his name was Chajang (慈藏 608-686). Born into an aristocratic family, both of his parents were devoted Buddhists, he rejected the King's offer of a very promising political career to devoted his life completely to Buddhism. In 636 Chajang came to China and visited Wutai Shan, there and then he was inspired by Mañjuśrī and received a Sanskrit mantra, a text, a robe and a relic. He was also told by the Dragon God from Taihe Chi (太和池) to build a nine-storey pagoda in Hwangnyong-sa when he returned home to Shilla. After returning to Shilla, Chajang was appointed as *taegukt'ong* (Great State Monk) by the king and response for organising Shilla Buddhism and supervising the Shilla Buddhist order. In this service, he arranged the rules,

¹⁵⁶ T.H., Barrett, "On The Road to China:The Continental Relocation of Sacred Space and its Consequences", in James Benn, Chen Jinhua and James Robson, ed., *Images, Relics and Legends – The Formation and Transformation of Buddhist Sacred Sites*, forthcoming book.

¹⁵⁷ Kamata Shigeo, "Dong-Ya diqu fojiao shengdi Wutaishan he Wutai xinyang zai Riben de chuanbo" *Wutaishan yanjiu* 16 (1988), pp.4-6.

lifestyle and method of study of *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunis* and oversaw all matters concerning the vinaya rules. It was Chajang who created Odae-san¹⁵⁸ on T'aebaek-san in Korea.¹⁵⁹

Following in the footsteps of Chajang, the next distinguished Korean monk who went to Wutai Shan was Hyech'o (慧超 704–783)¹⁶⁰ who gained fame in China by assisting the Indian master Amoghavajra with his translation work. He also made a pilgrimage to India via the South China Sea from Tang.

Other Korean monks who went to Wutai Shan are Nangji (朗智)¹⁶¹ in the Tang dynasty. In Ennin's famous diary we read a Korean monk at Dengzhou Chishan Fahua Yuan¹⁶² described his own experience at Wutai Shan to Ennin, this Korean monk is Seongnim (圣林).¹⁶³ In 1341, Hyewol, (慧月) another Korean monk, who was famous for repairing the engraving blocks of Buddhist sutras at Yunjü Monastery (云居寺) in Fangshan (房山) near Beijing. The reason he came to China was to pay pilgrimage to Wutai Shan, but somehow on his return journey he stopped at Yunjü Monastery and seeing how badly those engraving blocks were

¹⁵⁸ It is the Korean pronunciation of Wutai Shan.

¹⁵⁹ Kim Young-tae, "Buddhism in the Three Kingdoms" in *The History and culture of Buddhism in Korea*, Seoul: Dongguk University Press, 1993, P.64.

¹⁶⁰ See Chae Taeg-su, "The Unified Shilla Period" in *The History and culture of Buddhism in Korea*, 1993, P.105.

¹⁶¹ Iryon (一然 1206-1289), *Samguk yusa* (三国遗事) Vol.5, in T.49, no.2039, pp.1015–1016.

¹⁶² 登州赤山法华院

¹⁶³ Ennin (圆仁 794-864), *Nittō guhō junrei gyōki* (入唐求法巡礼行纪), Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1985, p.190.

damaged, then decided to make fund rising for repairing the Stone blocks of Buddhist sutras, and been remembered for that even since.¹⁶⁴

During the Ming dynasty there were few Korean monks on Wutai Shan. In contrast, communication between the Korean and Ming governments was continual with Korean envoys visiting the Chinese court frequently during the Ming dynasty. Therefore the infrequency of Korean Buddhists' contact with Wutai Shan was not attributable to China and Korea's foreign policy nor to the difficulty of communication.

When the teachings of Neo-Confucianism, based on the studies of Zhi Xi (1130-1200), became largely influential in Korea in the late thirteenth to the mid fourteenth century, they changed the understanding of the meaning of Confucian and Buddhist values in that country. This new understanding was expressed in polemical memorials and treatises and was applied by literati to reform the Korean polity and when this proved unsuccessful, they was used to justify the overthrow of the Koryŏ dynasty (918-1392).¹⁶⁵ Goulde analysed the anti-Buddhist literature that appears from the time of king Kongmin until the overthrow of Koryŏ dynasty and found that this can be divided according to three attitudes, "The first saw Buddhism as a valid religious tradition that should continue but be reformed. Those who proposed this view reflected a Zennist point of view. Many of the ideas and practices of Buddhism could aid in government, but the economically debilitating patronage of state Buddhism of the preceding centuries had to be abandoned. The second attitude saw Buddhism as antithetical to the ideals

¹⁶⁴ Jia Zhidao (贾志道, Yuan dynasty), "Chongxiu Huayan Tang Beiji" (重修华严堂经本记), in *Rixia Jiuwen Kao* (日下旧闻考) Vol. 131.

¹⁶⁵ John Isaac, Goulde, "Anti-Buddhist Polemic in Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century Korea: the Emergence of Confucian Exclusivism", Ph.D Thesis of Harvard University, 1985, Chapter2-3, pp.108-207.

of good government, but it could still be allowed as a private tradition, suitably controlled by the government. The third attitude was the most extreme. It wished not only to eliminate Buddhism from the government but also to eliminate it from Koryŏ society.”¹⁶⁶ among the literati, there was a change in the understanding of Buddhism from being a state-protecting to a state-disrupting element and this was a repercussion consequent to heavy patronisation of Buddhism by previous dynasties including Koryŏ, that had given Buddhism a high status in the society, allowing Buddhist institutions to enjoy many privileges. As the religious institutions became extremely powerful economically and politically, criticism of them also gained strength. With the arrival of the anti-Buddhist Neo-Confucian thought into Korean society, they found a perfect weapon to attack Buddhism.

After the collapse of the Koryŏ. This anti-Buddhist movement gained more force. In the 1392 memorial of Inspector General Nam Chae (1351-1419) we read “...the examples of Chinese dynasties show that they received no benefit from Buddhism, the Silla dynasty that collapsed because of Buddhism, the Koryŏ king Ŭijong who fed over thirty-thousand monks in one year and visited more than ten temples each month and yet was unable to escape assassination, and finally king Kongmin who held the Manjusri Assembly, worshipped the Buddha to the end and yet was not saved from destruction.”¹⁶⁷ He recommended that T’aejo read the histories and classics and there find the true principles of government in the examples

¹⁶⁶ *ibid.*, pp.176-177.

¹⁶⁷ “T’aejo sillok” in *Chosŏn wangjo sillok* (The veritable Records of the Chosŏn Kingdom), National Committee for the Compilation of History, Seoul: T’amgudang, 1980, p.2. Also see Goulde, “Anti-Buddhist Polemic in Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century Korea: the Emergence of Confucian Exclusivism”, p.213.

of Shun and Yü.¹⁶⁸ T'aejo (founder of Chosŏn dynasty), himself a Buddhist believer, had to deal with the power and prestige of the very elite that had so eagerly supported him in his bid for power, but who did not share the same faith in Buddhist beliefs. The tension that existed between Yi Sŏnggye (T'aejo) and his Confucian supporters caused this first Chosŏn monarch many problems during his reign. Decades later, the Korean Neo-Confucianists won their battle by convincing T'aejong (Yi Pangwŏn r.1400-1418) to go against Buddhism. In the year 1405 and 1406 Buddhist monasteries were purged during which some 232 temples were destroyed.¹⁶⁹ Additionally, a huge amount of monastic properties were nationalised and ten thousand temple slaves were handed over to the army. This Buddhist persecution even forced a group of Zen monks to leave Korea for China to seek the aid of the Chinese Ming emperor Zhi Di (r.1403-1425).¹⁷⁰ The Buddhist suppression under the Chosŏn dynasty by the Neo-Confucianists severely damaged the strength of Korean Buddhism. This may explain why we hardly seen any Korean Buddhists on Wutai Shan.

Wutia Shan and Japan

Since the Tang, the Japanese government had been sending many people as diplomats to China to study Chinese culture who then were transferred back to Japan where this collective knowledge was eventually digested as their own. Among these Japanese diplomats (in Japanese *kentō-shi*) a large number of them were Buddhist monks and many of these either visited or stayed on Wutai Shan. The earliest Japanese monk who went to Wustai Shan was

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ *T'aejong sillok* (The Veritable Records of T'aejong), p.11.

¹⁷⁰ *ibid. Sejong sillok*, p.3.

Nara Kofuku-ji monk Lingxian (灵仙 ?-827).¹⁷¹ He was an expert in translating Sanskrit Buddhist texts into Chinese. He lived on Wutai Shan for at least 7 years. His activities there were even heard of by the Japanese emperor. Other celebrated Japanese monks such as Ennin, who inherited the leadership of the Tendai sect after Saichō's death, had studied the Pure Land teachings at Zhulin Si (竹林寺) on Wutai Shan, during his sojourn in China. "He (Ennin) returned to Japan in 848, and the following year he established on Mount Hiei a centre for *nembutsu* practice-contemplation and invocation of Amida, the central practice of Pure Land Buddhism-called Jōgyō Zammai-dō (Hall for Walking Meditation)¹⁷². He also instructed that the *nembutsu* mantra 'Namu Amida Butsu' (I take refuge in Amida Buddha) be chanted without interruption for seven days after his death. It was Ennin's time that Pure Land teachings and *nembutsu* practice began to flourish on Mount Hiei."¹⁷³ Obviously Ennin had been inspired by the Buddhist practices on Wutai Shan and brought them back to Japan. His teachings on Pure Land had laid the foundation for the future Jōdo and Jōdo Shin Schools in Japan. Huie (惠萼) was another celebrated Japanese monk diplomat after Ennin. He visited Wutai Shan three times. In 844, during his second visit he brought some of the Japanese empress' hand made robes and other valuable offerings to Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī to fulfil her wish. In 862, after the third visit to Wutai Shan, he brought back a wooden Guanyin (观音)

¹⁷¹Gao Licheng, "Tang Shiqi Riben Liuxueseng Yijing Dashi Lingxian Kao (唐朝时期日本留学僧译经大师灵仙考)", <http://fanwenzaixian.com/lunwenfanwen/Culture/sort0195/43265.html>, 18/08/2009

¹⁷² In Zhulin Si, where Ennin had studied the Pure Land teachings, Fazhao (法照) had started this "walking while chanting the name of Amida Buddha" tradition. In the Tang dynasty there was a such hall in Zhulin Si.

¹⁷³Yoshiro Tamura, translated by Jeffrey Hunter, *Japanese Buddhism a Cultural History, A Cultural History*, Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Co., 2000, P.80.

image with him. However on his return journey, they experienced a huge storm at sea, and his vessel was brought back to an island. He then built a shrine to house this image, and thereafter this wooden image has been called the “Bukenu Guanyin” (Not-willing-to-leave Avalokitesvara) and the island thereafter has been connected with Avalokitesvara’s residence Potalaka, hence it was named as Putuo Shan (Potalaka Mountain). Gradually this island become another very popular pilgrimage centre in China.¹⁷⁴

In the Song dynasty, Diaoran (儋然) after visited Wutai Shan in China, requested that the Japanese emperor rename Atago-san (愛宕山) as Wutai Shan (Godai-san in Japan) and to build a monastery equivalent to Da Qingliang Si (大清凉寺) of Wutai Shan in China. Before the emperor could fulfil his wish Diaoran passed away, it was Jōjin (成尋) carried on the task of building a monastery according to Wutai Shan’s Qingliang Si on Saga-san (嵯峨山) in Kyoto. Upon its completion, Japan had managed to duplicated their own Wutai Shan and “moved” the earthly home of Mañjuśrī to Japan. This shift made those Japanese who want to pay pilgrimage to Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī so much easier.

Chan (禅 Zen in Japanese) practice became even more dominant in Chinese Buddhism after the Tang and during the Song dynasties. This trend also spread to Japan. According to Hirakawa “Buddhism did not become a religion of the individual until the Kamakura period (1185-1333). During this period Hōnen (1133-1212) and Shinran (1173-1262) taught the Pure Land teachings. Their doctrine did not provide for the stability and peace of the nation but for the salvation for the individual. Eisai (1145-1215) and Dōgen (1200-1253) transmitted the Zen tradition from China, and this Zen practice was also to be cultivated for the liberation of the

¹⁷⁴ On Egaku, see Chün-fang Yü, “P’u-t’o Shan: Pilgrimage and the Creation of the Chinese Potalaka”, in Susan Naquin and Yü Chün-fang, eds., *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 215-216, 240-241.

individual. Buddhism directed at the salvation of the individual was taught in the Kamakura period.”¹⁷⁵ In other words it is Pure Land and Zen practices that made Buddhism more Japanese, contrasting to the earlier periods when Buddhism was like an unpacked suitcase which was imported from China and its introduction and advocacy was due the imperial states’ interests and it bore a state-protection function.

Since the 12th century, although the Japanese and Yuan governments were hostile to one other, Chan (Zen in Japanese) monks frequently travelled between these two countries. For instance, the Linji Chan sect monk Yishan yining (一山一宁 1247-1317) was dispatched to Japan by the Yuan government after the Mongols’ twice failed in their military conquest attempts, as they wanted to use influential Chan monks to persuade Japanese governors to be submit to their leadership.¹⁷⁶ Yishan Yining was arrested after arriving in Japan and imprisoned for a time. It was this celebrated monk’s virtue that gradually moved the Japanese imperial family who later gave him the title of State Master (*guoshi*). After Yisha Yining, there were other Yuan Chan monks who went to Japan, for instance, Daoyin (灵山道隐 1255-1325), Zhengcheng (清拙正澄 1274-1339), Chujun (明极楚俊 1262-1336). All of whom belonged to Linji Chan sect. Their influence in Japan made Linji Chan very popular

¹⁷⁵ Hirakawa Akira, “Buddhism and the Religious Characteristics of the Japanese” in Minoru Kiyota ed., *Japanese Buddhism: Its Tradition, New Religions and Interaction with Christianity*, Tokyo: Kenkyusha Printed Co., 1987, p.18.

¹⁷⁶ Hu Xinian trans., Kimiya Yoshihiko (木宫泰彦), *Rizhong Wenhua Jiaoliu Shi* (日中文化交流史), chapter 5, (Beijing: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1980), pp.508-16.

there.¹⁷⁷ As a result, inspired by these Chinese Chan monks, many Japanese monks visited China. According to Kimiya Yasuhiko there were 222 Japanese monks visited China during the Yuan, and 114 during the Ming dynasty.¹⁷⁸

As Japanese scholars noticed most of these Japanese monks visited the *Jiangnan* area in China.¹⁷⁹ We cannot find any Japanese Buddhists who visited Wutai Shan or even the North China. The Mongols and Tungus invasions are the main cause for this phenomena. While the Mongols were dominating the North China, the Chinese cultural centre shifted towards the South. Consequently Buddhist monasteries along the Yangtze River became extremely prosperous as many Buddhist Mountains and holy sites in South China were visited more often than Wutai Shan. Although Wutai Shan did not lose any of its prestigious status during the Ming dynasty, its southern counterparts' abrupt rise did have some negative effects on Wutai Shan's popularity. What is more, there were more famous Chan masters living in the south than in the north while Japanese Buddhists were more interested in Chan practice during the Yuan and Ming dynasties. Therefore, Buddhism in the South as a whole package was more attractive to Japanese.

¹⁷⁷ Yang Zengwen (杨曾文), "Liancang Shidai Riben Minzu Fojiao De Xingcheng (鎌倉时代日本民族佛教的形成)" in *Riben Fojiao Shi*, Hangzhou: Zhejiang Renmin Chubanshe, 1995, p.187. Also see Hu Xinian tran. (木宫泰彦著), *Rizhong Wenhua Jiaoliu Shi*, chapter 5, Beijing: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1980, P.465.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.* Also see Michibata Ryōshū (道端良秀), *Zhongri Fojiao Youhao Liangqian Nian Shi*, Beijing: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1992, p.85.

¹⁷⁹ Hu Xinian tran. (木宫泰彦著), *Rizhong Wenhua Jiaoliu Shi*, chapter 5, Beijing: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1980, P.465.

In general Wutai Shan still functioned as an international Buddhist centre during the Ming dynasty. Many Tibetans and Mongolians frequently visited here, and its international fame had not faded away as evidenced by the pilgrimage made by some Indian monks. Wutai Shan (Godaisen in Japan, and Odae in Korean) had been duplicated both in Korea and Japan solidly as popular pilgrimage sites. Therefore, Wutai Shan is not a geographical coordinate anymore, it became an international Buddhist faith associated with bodhisattva Mañjuśrī.

Chapter Three

A comparative study of the Monk-official System on Wutai Shan and in Nanjing

Right from the start of his reign, Zhu Yuanzhang established governmental organs to enhance the control over Buddhism. The first government institution for Buddhism was the Bureau of the Buddhist Patriarch (Shanshi Yuan 善世院). In 1382 a more systematic administrative institution -- The Central Buddhist Office (Senglu Si) replaced the Bureau of the Buddhist Patriarch, and Buddhist offices were created at the prefectural, sub-prefectural, and county levels at the same time. Through investigating various Wutai Shan inscriptions this chapter will discuss how these Buddhist offices functioned on Wutai Shan. Using Nanjing Buddhist office as a model, we shall try to reconstruct the Wutai Shan monk official system during the Ming dynasty. Also by comparing and contrasting these two Buddhist centres, this chapter will illuminate how different Buddhist monasteries were organised.

The Beginning of the monk official system

In the first government institution for Buddhism, known as the Bureau of the Buddhist Patriarch (Shanshi Yuan), a monk called Shi Huitan was appointed as the Bureau head, and he was given an official rank of 2a.¹⁸⁰ Though this initial system was set up very quickly after the Ming dynasty was founded, it did not extend down to provincial levels at this preliminary

¹⁸⁰ *Ming Taizu Shilu* (明太祖实录) Vol.29, Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo. 1962 (Reprint), p.500.

stage.¹⁸¹ In 1381 the Ministry of Rites sent a memorandum to the first Ming emperor suggesting the setting up of new religious control bodies. The Ming emperor approved the suggestion and a new official control body was set up in 1382 with the name of Senglü Si (the Central Buddhist Office 僧录司). Regarding why the first Ming emperor created this new monastic administrative system, Yü Chün-fang, Brook Timothy and Gerritsen Anna all have discussed it.¹⁸²

This new institution was responsible for the registration of Buddhist monks and monks' certificates, and for the administration of monasteries. However, government departments could intervene in Buddhist affairs if a monk broke the secular law.¹⁸³

There were eight monk officials in the Central Buddhist Office. Their posts were left and right Worthies (善世); left and right Instructors (阐教); left and right Lecturers on Sutras (讲经); left and right Enlighteners (觉义).

The monk-officials' duties are as follows:

1. The Left Worthy holds the official seal (掌印) and the right Worthy is in charge of affixing the seal (封印). Any major statement issued from this office should be authorized with the

¹⁸¹ Anna, Gerritsen, "The Hongwu Legacy: Fifteenth-Century Views on Zhu Yuanzhang's Monastic Politics", pp.57-8; also see Xie Chongguang, *Zhongguo Sengguan Zhidu Shi* (中国僧官制度史), Xining: Qinghai Renmin Chubanshe, 1990, p.238.

¹⁸² Yü Chün-fang, *The Renewal of Buddhism in China*, pp.166-170; Brook, *The Chinese State In Ming Society*, pp.142-6; Gerritsen, "The Hongwu Legacy: Fifteenth-Century Views on Zhu Yuanzhang's Monastic Politics", pp.56-62.

¹⁸³ Huanlun (幻轮, Ming dynasty), *Shishi Jigu Lue Xuji* (释氏稽古略续集), Jiangsu: Guangling Guji Keyinshe, 1992, p.159.

official seal, which means both Worthies had to be in agreement. Moreover, without the remaining six officials' witnesses the statement is still not valid.

2. The left Worthy is also responsible for monks' meditation practice. He should guide monks by studying cases of enlightenment. In fact he is in charge of all affairs relating to Buddhist practice.
3. The left and right Instructors assist Worthies in supervising Buddhist practice.
4. The left and right Lecturers of Sutras take charge of receiving lay patrons, and propagating the Buddha's teaching.
5. The left and right Enlighteners are responsible for upholding monastic regulations and seeing that those who break the monastic rules should be punished accordingly. They are also in charge of the finance and property of the Tianjie monastery (where the Central Buddhist Office is located) and various donations. They have to keep clear records and accounts which are subject to external inspection.
6. All monk officials are expected to attend monks' examination boards.

Under this central Buddhist office, at different levels of government administration Buddhist offices are also established. For instance, at provincial level (府), there is an office known as the provincial Buddhist Office (Senggang Si 僧纲司), staffed by a Supervisor (Dugang 都纲) and an assistant Supervisor (Fu Dugang 副都纲). At the prefectural level (州) there is an office known as the Prefectural Buddhist Office (Sengzheng Si 僧正司) with a Regulator (Sengzheng 僧正). At the county level (县) there is an office known as the County Buddhist Office (Senghui Si 僧会司) with a Coordinator (Senghui 僧会). These Buddhist officials do not receive any stipend from government.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ Zhang Tingyu, *Ming History* 《明史·职官志》 Vol.74, Reprint Taipei: Guofang Yanjiuyuan, 1962, p.778.

Table 1

Structure of the Buddhist Offices:

Office Ranks	Central Buddhist Office 僧录司	Provincial Buddhist Office 僧纲司	Prefectural Buddhist Office 僧正司	County Buddhist Office 僧会司
6a	Left Worthy Right Worthy			
6b	Left Instructor Right Instructor			
8a	Left Lecturer on Sutras Right Lecturer on Sutras			
8b	Left Enlightener Right Enlightener			
9b		Supervisor		
			Regulator	
				Coordinator

Wutai Shan Monk officials

If the Great Wall is evidence of conflicts between Chinese and northern minorities in China, then the Buddhist activities on Wutai Shan provides evidence of the amity among these northern minorities and the Chinese. As the previous chapters have shown Wutai Shan has been recognised as a holy place by Chinese, Mongolian, Tibetan, Nepalese, Japanese, Korean and many other Buddhists. All these Buddhists believe it is the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī’s earthly home. Therefore, different Buddhist traditions built their own monasteries on this mountain. In a way religious activities on Wutai Shan are quite like those of Jerusalem. However, unlike Jerusalem there is no conflict among different Buddhist traditions on Wutai Shan. They have cooperated and coexisted quite peacefully. Because of its unique character, the monk official system during the Ming dynasty on this mountain also was unique. There

were two types of monk officials on Wutai Shan namely honoris causa monk officials and administrative monk officials.

Honoris causa monk officials

These were highly respected monks. Because of their outstanding achievements they were given high honours by the Ming emperors. Their biographies can be found in various sources. From the imperial court records to the local gazetteers, they were well portrayed. The following list may not include all honoris causa monk officials, but these were among the most highly regarded.

In 1370, Baojin Bifeng had bestowed on him the title of “The great Chan Master of nirvana-illumination and perfect enlightenment” (Jizhao Yuanming Da Chanshi 寂照圓明大禪師),¹⁸⁵ when he was invited to Nanjing, the Ming capital, to preach the dharma to the first Ming emperor.

In the early years of the Yongle era (1403-1424), Karmapa (Gelima in Chinese), a prominent Tibetan religious and political leader, was given the title of “ the great treasure Dharma King of the tathagata,”¹⁸⁶ the independent Buddha of great compassion of Western

¹⁸⁵ 寂照圓明大禪師: In “the Inscription of Restoration of Yuanzhao Monastery (Wang Zhichao, p.17)” which was composed by the thirteenth Ming emperor. We read the first Ming emperor bestowed this title on Chan Master Baojin Bifeng.

¹⁸⁶ This title had been inherited by the Buddhist leader of Tibetan karma bka'-brgyud sect through out the Ming dynasty. See Hugh Richardson, “Halima” in Goodrich ed., *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368-1644*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1976, pp.481-483.

Heaven” (Rulai Dabao Fawang Xitian Dashan Zizai Fo 如来大宝法王, 西天大善自在佛).¹⁸⁷

Though this Tibetan monk did not live on Wutai Shan for long, because of his influence, Tibetan Buddhism revived there after nearly half a century of decline since the collapse of the Mongolian empire.

Śāripūtrā came to China in the early years of the Yongle era. He was summoned to the imperial Dashan Hall to discuss Buddhism with the emperor. Emperor Xuande granted the title of “the great compassion national master of complete enlightenment, miraculous response and glorious model of assisting ruler of the country” (Yuanjue Miaoying Fuguo Guangfan Dashan Guoshi 圆觉妙应辅国光范大善国师), with a golden seal.

In 1538 CE, a stele, which was to praise the Chan master Baoshan who rebuilt Jingang Ku (金冈窟), was erected. The setting up of this stele was witnessed by Jiancan (a Tibetan monk) the abbot of Yuanzhao monastery. This abbot had been granted the title of “the national preceptor of proclaiming compassion of the Buddha, the great wisdom dharma king of Western Heaven” (Hongci Yujiao Guoshi Xitian Fozi Dahui Fawang 弘慈翊教国师 西天佛子大慧法王).¹⁸⁸ This was in the 17th year of the Jiajing era. Unlike other Ming emperors who were great patrons of Buddhism, Emperor Jianjing was a Daoist, and he suppressed Buddhism. So supposedly this “national preceptor” title was not bestowed by the Jiajing emperor, rather it was given by Jiajing’s predecessor, the Zhengde Emperor, who was a devotee of Tibetan Buddhism.

¹⁸⁷ Zhencheng, *Qingling Shanzhi*, Beijing: Zhong Guo Shu Dian, 1989 (reprint), p82. Also see Yuqian (喻谦), *Xinxu Gaoseng Zhuan* (新续高僧传-兴福篇第九之四-五台山显通寺沙门释葛里麻传), DZZBB Vol.27, p385.

¹⁸⁸ Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, pp.233-235.

Miaofeng, was granted the title of “the real son of the Buddha” (Zhenzheng Fozi 真正佛子), and was given a purple robe and a golden hat.¹⁸⁹ Throughout the entire Ming dynasty, Miaofeng was the only Chinese monk who enjoyed this “Son of the Buddha” title. Even though some other monks, who were born in China, were given this sort of title, they had followed Indian or Tibetan Buddhist traditions, for instance Zhiguang (Sahajāsī’s Chinese disciple) was given a title of “the Buddha’s Son of Western Heaven” (Xitian Fozi 西天佛子). This title is lower only than “the Dharma King” which was only given to Tibetan religious leaders, such as Karmapa and so forth. Chinese monks were usually given the honorific title “Chan Master”, which is much lower than “the son of the Buddha”. Why was a Chinese monk given such an outstanding title? This was because of Miaofeng’s upbringing. He had a close relationship with a Ming prince Shanyin (山阴), who predicted that Miaofeng would be a great Buddhist master in the future when he was still a teenage boy. A Taiwanese scholar Jiang Canteng even regarded Miaofeng as Prince Shanyin’s Buddhist “substitute”.¹⁹⁰ With his close relationship with Prince Shanyin, later on Miaofeng gained Empress Dowager Li’s favour. His achievement touched on different spheres. He was not only a great Chan Master and a great architect, but he was also a great philanthropist.

The majority of *honoris causa* monk officials were Tibetan monks. One of the reasons Tibetan monks were given high honors is because they had political significance to the Ming dynasty. Although the Mongol Empire did not exist anymore, the Mongols had not been completely defeated. They still controlled the northern area where the modern Mongolian Republic and Inner Mongolia are today. The Mongols were still a significant threat to the

¹⁸⁹ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, Beijing: Zhongguo Shudian, 1989 (reprint), pp.90-92.

¹⁹⁰ Jiang Canteng (江灿滕), *Wanming Fojiao Conglin Gaige Yu foxue zhengbian Zhi Yanjiu* (晚明佛教丛林改革与佛学争辩之研究), Taipei: Xin Wenfeng Chubanshe, 1990, p.94.

Ming dynasty, especially when the capital shifted to Beijing, which was just a few hundred miles away from the Mongols. So the Ming emperors were trying to conquer them, or at least to drive them further away from Beijing. However, their intention could not be satisfied. Once, the Ming emperor was captured by the Mongols during battle (Therefore, they rebuilt the Great Wall. The existing Great Wall was built mostly during the Ming dynasty to prevent Mongol cavalry from advancing).¹⁹¹

Under these circumstances, if the Mongols made a coalition with the Tibetans, the result would be unimaginable for the Ming emperors (Mongols and Tibetans had been close allies during the Yuan dynasty). So being fully aware of this potential danger, Ming emperors wanted to use Tibetan monks' influence to suppress troubles in the frontiers. They designated missions to send their messages to Tibet, and welcome Tibetan monks to China, then to bestow on them titles and valuable gifts. As mentioned in my introduction, Wutai Shan is a holy place for Tibetans, because Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī is a very important figure in *Tantric* Buddhism; he is considered as the progenitor of *Tantric* Buddhism. Therefore, for the sake of protection of the empire, Wutai Shan had a political significance for the Ming dynasty.

Administrative monk officials

The Buddhist administrative monk official system was set up in 1382. However, there was no such office on Wutai Shan until the third year of the Yongle era (1405).¹⁹² The setting up of the Buddhist Office on Wutai Shan was a result of the acceptance by the first

¹⁹¹ *Ming Yingzong Shilu* (明英宗实录), pp.3490-3493.

¹⁹² Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, “至明太宗文皇帝敕重建, 感通神应, 自昔未有, 故赐额”大显通”. 古传中有两堂圣众, 非戒定慧全者, 莫预此寺. 自明初以来, 敕旨护, 凡十余道. 永乐三年, 设僧纲司, 率合山僧祝厘, 本州岛月给僧粮. 至嘉靖间, 始革其粮.” p.36.

important Tibetan political and religious leader, Karmapa, of the Yongle Emperor's invitation to come to the Ming capital to pay his respects to the Yongle emperor in person, and after that Karmapa had requested to visit Wutai Shan. In order to receive such an important leader, a Buddhist office on the level of level the provincial one, was set up there. When the system was created by the first Ming emperor, the monk officials were not paid by the government. However the Yongle Emperor instructed that the Wutai Shan monk official should enjoy a stipend which was paid by the prefectural government.¹⁹³

According to a stele, which concerns Wutai Shan monks winning a tax-exempt case against the local government,¹⁹⁴ a Central Buddhist Office (*senglu si*) was set up on Wutai Shan from the early Ming dynasty by the Yongle Emperor. However, in *Qingling Shanzhi* we read there was only one Provincial Buddhist Office (*senggang si*) on Wutai Shan set up by the Yongle Emperor.¹⁹⁵ Both the inscription and the gazetteer were completed in the late Ming dynasty around the Longqing (1567-1573) and the Wanli (1573-1620) era, more than one hundred years after the Buddhist office was set up on Wutai Shan. The mountain gazetteer, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, was modelled on a more elaborate mid-Ming version mountain gazetteer that was written by Qiuya (秋崖), who happened to be a monk official himself.¹⁹⁶ Therefore, we have more reason to believe that the Yongle emperor only set up a provincial Buddhist office on Wutai Shan initially.

¹⁹³ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu* (五台山碑文选注), Taiyuan: Beiyue Wenyi Chubanshe, 1995, pp.2-5.

¹⁹⁵ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p.35.

¹⁹⁶ Zhencheng, *Qinliang Shanzhi*, p.17. Also in the same book, Zhencheng noted Qiuya was assigned to reside in Guangzong Monastery by the Zhengde emperor. See Zhencheng, p.37.

The above mentioned tax exemption case was engraved on the reverse of a stele “The (Yingzong) emperor’s instruction on patronising Xiantong Monastery in Shanxi Wutai Shan (皇帝敕谕护持山西五台山显通寺)”¹⁹⁷ at least one hundred years after the erection of the stele bearing this imperial edict. The anonymous writer did not relate a single tax-exempt case, but rather he related a series of cases where Wutai Shan monk officials were continually fighting for their rights through many generations as government posts changed hands. This stele is extremely important to this chapter in that it is illustrative of the role played by monk officials on Wutai Shan, and of how these succeeded one other. From the Yingzong emperor’s edict we find a monk called Congling was given a “Right Enlightener” rank, and at the back of the stele, the anonymous writer accounts for five monk Enlightener officials one after another through four different generations. All five were closely related either as master and disciple or as disciples of the same master. All of them were Enlighteners and each concurrently held the position of abbacy at Xiantong Monastery, therefore we can conclude that the administration system at Xiantong Monastery was (in Buddhist terms) hereditary. The following quotation shows how these five monk Enlightener officials are related:

“In the thirteenth year of the Zhengtong era (1448), Congling held the post of Right Enlightener of the Central Buddhist Office, and he was imperially appointed to supervise monks on this mountain, he also concurrently held the position of abbacy [at Xiantong monastery]. In the seventeenth year of the Chenghua era (1482), Dingwang (定旺), a disciple of Congling (从铃) was promoted to the office of Right Enlightener of this [Central Buddhist] Office. In the twelfth year of

¹⁹⁷ Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwén Xuānzhu*, Taiyuan: Beiyue Wenyi Chubanshe, 1995, p. 1.

Hongzhi era (1500), Puxian (普显), a disciple of Dingwang succeeded in getting this job. In the tenth year of Zhengde era (1515), Mingxuan (明玄), a disciple of Puxian took over his master's position in this office. In the twelfth year of Jiajing era (1533), Mingxü (明续), a junior fellow of Mingxuan took of this position as imperially appointed supervisor of Wutai Shan.”¹⁹⁸

Monk officials were not respected much by the Ming Buddhist historians. Eminent monks in the Ming were rarely associated with monk official titles. Particularly from the mid-Ming onwards when the sale of monk official ranks gained momentum, we hardly see any mentions of these monk officials in books on eminent monks like *Daming Gaoseng Zhuan* (大明高僧传), *Buxu Gaoseng Zhuan* (补续高僧传), or books on Buddhist history composed in the Ming like *Shishi Jigu Lüe Xuji* (释氏稽古略续集). So did not in the Ming Wutai Shan gazetteer *Qingliang Shanzhi* (清凉山志). Therefore, it is very hard to get a clear picture of the Wutai Shan monk official system in the Ming dynasty. However we are fortunate that there are many Ming Wutai Shan inscriptions that have survived to this day, from which we can partly reconstruct the monk official system. The followings information on monk officials is given in chronological order. On these inscriptions monk officials were often mentioned at the end as witnesses. Most of these inscriptions commemorated the construction or reconstruction of a monastery and included monk officials' names on the witness list to legitimise the newly constructed or reconstructed monastery and so had a political context in it.

In the stele “Imperially bestowed on Puji Chan Monastery” (敕赐普济禅寺碑记)¹⁹⁹, which was composed in 1487, it is recorded that the setting up of this stele was witnessed by

¹⁹⁸ Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, p.3.

¹⁹⁹ Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, p.197.

the abbot of Yuanzhao Monastery, the 21st of patriarch of Linji Chan school, great Chan Master—Jingcheng (净澄); the abbot of Xiantong Monastery--Puxian; Chan Master Qingxiu (清修); the head officer of the Wutai Shan Buddhist Office Baotian (宝天); and imperially appointed Wutai Shan Right Enlightener, Dingwang (定旺).

From the above stele we can see there were many monk officials on Wutai Shan: Enlightener of the Central Buddhist Office, Supervisor--the head of Wutai Shan Buddhist Office (*dugang si*), as well as Chan Masters. We may get confused that as to whom the superior official was on Wutai Shan, the Enlightener, the Chan Master Qingxiu, or even the head of the Wutai Shan Buddhist Office Baotian. In a way this reflects the chaos caused by the sale of monk official appointments in the Buddhist administration system on Wutai Shan. This monk official power clash on Wutai Shan became worse as we will see later on.

According to the ‘Stele Commemorating the Reconstruction of Yühua Chi Imperially bestowed Wanshou Chan Monastery (chongxiu yuhuachi chici wanshou chansi beiji 重修玉华池敕赐万寿禅寺碑记),’²⁰⁰ erected in 1495, Dingwang (定旺) was mentioned as the Left Enlightener of the central Buddhist Office. Therefore between 1487 to 1495, Dingwang had a promotion from the Right Enlightener to the Left Enlightener. Luonamanganla (a non Han Chinese monk name) was mentioned as the head of the Wutai Shan Buddhist Office on the witness list. Showing that some time in between 1487 to 1495, the head of Wutai Shan Buddhist Office, Baotian was replaced by Luonamanganla. In 1499, according to the records of the tax exemption case discussed above, Dingwang’s disciple Puxian had the title of Right Enlightener. In 1506 Dingwang was still holding the Left Enlightener title according to ‘The

²⁰⁰ Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwén Xuánzhū*, pp.203-206.

Inscription of Reconstructing the Buddha Hall in Sanquān Monastery (重修三泉寺佛殿碑记).²⁰¹

There must have been a power competition among Buddhist monasteries on Wutai Shan since, as time goes on, more abbots from different monasteries entitled Enlighteners. In the ninth year of Zhengde era (1514), A monk who was called Yuanju was mentioned as the Enlightener on the witness list of 'Reconstructing of Puji Chan Monastery'. On this same inscription of 1514, Puxian was mentioned as the Supervisor, the head of the Wutai Shan Buddhist Office. We have discussed earlier that in 1499 Puxian enjoyed an Enlightener title, Why fifteen years later did he become a Supervisor (*dugang*), a lower rank compare to his previous? We noticed that the Supervisor, the head of the Wutai Shan Buddhist Office, was always an abbot of a monastery. We also note that before Puxian became the Supervisor of Wutai Shan, in 1458 when Banmagumalo was appointed as the Supervisor of Wutai Shan, he was the abbot of Yuanzhao Monastery; in 1495 when Luonamanganla was appointed as the Supervisor of Wutai Shan, he was the abbot of Guangyuan Monastery. There is a possibility that the Wutai Shan Buddhist head Office shifts from one monastery to another, when an abbot was appointed as the head of the Wutai Shan Buddhist Office. If this is the case, when the Buddhist head Office moved to Xiantong Monastery, Puxian as the abbot of this monastery must have been concurrently holding two titles: Enlightener and Supervisor.

Another interesting point is that in 1514 there was a female Supervisor (*dugang*) on Wutai Shan, whose name is Jingyü (净玉).²⁰² She was a very influential figure during her

²⁰¹ Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, pp.212-215.

²⁰² Wang Zhichao, "The Inscription of repairing of Gufo Nunnery and Installing the Holy statue in the Iron Roof Tile Hall (重修古佛庵并建铁瓦佛殿圣像碑文)", "Chici Puji Chansi Beiji (敕赐普济禅寺碑记)", in *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, pp.218-223.

time on Wutai Shan as she had a very wide social network. In the thirteenth year of Hongzhi era (1503) she had collected donations for casting Buddha images for Sanquan Monastery (三泉寺), then she had three years of sealed meditation at Gufo Nunnery (古佛庵), immediately after that she restored this run down nunnery over the ensuing three years from 1506 to 1509.

In 1515, when another imperial sponsored monastery was completed, the emperor bestowed the name Guangzong on the monastery, he also appointed Huishou the abbot of Guangzong Monastery as the Right Enlightener, a post to be held concurrently with the abbacy of this monastery. Together with Huishou, two Supervisors (*dugang*) of the Wutai Shan Buddhist Office were promoted as Right Enlightener at the same time. In the same year, according to the record of the tax exemption case mentioned earlier, Mingxuan inherited his master's place as the Right Enlightener. Therefore, there were at least four Right Enlighteners on Wutai Shan in this year. Once more we see the power competition among Wutai Shan Buddhist monasteries.

In 1538, a stele praising the Chan Master Baoshan reconstruction of Jingang Ku (金剛窟), was erected. On the witness list we see, Jingyü (female) still held a Supervisor title while other witnesses listed were Jiancan (坚参), the abbot of Yuanzhao monastery, who had been granted the title of 'the national master of proclaiming the compassion of the Buddha, the great wisdom dharma king of the Western Heaven(*hongci yujiao guoshi xitian fozhi dahui fawang* 弘慈翊教国师, 西天佛子大慧法王)'; and Mingzhao (明照), the abbot of Xiantong Monastery, who was having Left Enlightener title.

However, in a stele 'the monograph on reconstruction of the Asoka erected Sakyamuni Buddha Body Relic Pagoda of Wutai Shan Da Tayuan Monastery (五台山塔院寺重修阿育王所建释迦文佛真身舍利宝塔碑并铭)', written by Zuyin (祖印), we read on the witness list that in 1538 the Left Enlightener of the Central Buddhist Office and holder of the abbot-

ship of Xiantong Monastery was Mingxüan (明玄). By comparing the above two inscriptions (Rebuilding Jingang Ku and Reconstruction of Asoka Pagoda) an interesting point revealed here is that in 1538 there were two abbots in Xiantong Monastery and both had the Left Enlightener title. Mingxü (明续) is mentioned here (in the Reconstruction of Asoka Pagoda) as the Supervisor (*dugang*) of the Wutai Shan Buddhist Office. As we have discussed earlier that Supervisor post was usually held by the abbot of a monastery. Could it be possible there were three abbots (明照, 明玄, 明续) in Xiantong monastery in 1538?

In 1541, on the stele commemorating the reconstruction of Youguo Monastery (重修佑国寺碑记),²⁰³ the witness list shows that Gao'an was the abbot of Yuanzhao Monastery while concurrently held the title of "the National Master of Proclaiming the Compassion of the Buddha" (弘慈翊教国师). However, as mentioned above, Jiancan was still holding in 1538. Could these two names refer to the same person, or did the latter inherit the former's title?²⁰⁴

In 1582, when the Wanli Emperor on behalf of his mother, the Empress Dowager Li, donated a great deal of gold for the reconstruction of the Sakyamuni Buddha Real Body Relic Pagoda, a stele was erected to commemorate this event. On the witness list the head of Wutai Shan Buddhist Office was, Zhilong, is mentioned. At this time the abbot of Tayuan Monastery (the site of the pagoda) was given the highest monk official rank--Left Worthy of the Central Buddhist Office. On another stele,²⁰⁵ composed 15 years later by the emperor to bestow a set of the *tripitaka* on Wutai Shan, it confirmed that Zhilong still was the head of the Wutai Shan

²⁰³ Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, p.245.

²⁰⁴ See Chapter 5, "Yanjiao Monastery (演教寺)", there we are going to discuss about this Tibetan monk more.

²⁰⁵ "The Imperial Edict to Wutai Shan" 敕谕山西五台山碑文, written by the Wanli emperor. See Wang Zhichao, pp.27-29

Buddhist Office and Yuanguang--the abbot of Tayuan Monastery was still held the highest ranking monk official.

The following table has listed all the administrative monk officials that I have collected from various inscriptions:

Table 2. Wutai Shan Monk officials

	Name of the official	Office	Title	Other occupation	Residence	Relation to the previous officer	Contemporary monk officials	Source
1405		Wutai Shan Buddhist Office						镇澄, <清凉山志>, 大显通寺条
1448-1486	Congling	Central Buddhist office	Right Enlightener	Abbot of Xiantongsi	Xiantongsi		Dugang-Changlu	皇帝敕谕护持山西五台山显通寺碑文
1448-?	Chang Lu	Wutai Shan Buddhist office	Dugang (Supervisor)				Right Enlightener-congling	皇帝敕谕护持山西五台山显通寺碑文
1458-?	Banmagumalo	Wutai Shan Buddhist office	Dugang (Supervisor)	Abbot of Yuanzhaosi	Yuanzhaosi		Right Enlightener-Congling	皇帝敕谕护持山西五台山圆照寺碑文
1486-1495	Dingwang	Central Buddhist office	Right Enlightener		Xiantongsi	congling's disciple	Dugang-Baotian;	皇帝敕谕护持山西五台山显通寺碑文, 敕赐普济禅寺碑记
?-1487-?	Baotian	Wutai Shan Buddhist office	Dugang (Supervisor)				Right Enlightener-Dingwang	敕赐普济禅寺碑记
?-1487-1495	Duanzhuba		Chan master	Abbot of Yuanzhaosi	Yuanzhaosi		Left Enlightener-Dingwang	重修玉华池 敕赐万寿禅寺碑记
?-1495-1506	Dingwang	Central Buddhist office	Left Enlightener		Xiantongsi		Chan master of Qingxiu; Dugang-luonamangala;	重修玉华池 敕赐万寿禅寺碑记

?-1495-1506-?	Luonamang-anla	Wutai Shan Buddhist office	Dugang (Supervisor)	Abbot of Guangyuansi	Guangyuansi	Chan master of Qingxiu; Left Enlightener-Dingwnag; dugang-Puxian	
?-1506-1514-?	Puxian	Wutai Shan Buddhist office	Dugang (Supervisor)	Abbot of Xiantongsi	Xiantongsi	Dingwang's disciple	重修三泉寺佛殿之碑记, 敕赐普济禅寺重修碑记
?-1514-?	Yuanju	Central Buddhist office	Enlightener				敕赐普济禅寺重修碑记
?-1514-?	Daojing			Abbot of Yanjiaosi			敕赐普济禅寺重修碑记
?-1514-?	Jingyu (female)	Wutai Shan Buddhist office	Dugang (Supervisor)				敕赐普济禅寺重修碑记
1515-?	Mingxuan	Central Buddhist office	Right Enlightener		Xiantongsi	Puxian's disciple	皇帝敕谕护持山西五台山显通寺碑文 (tax-waiver)
?-1515	Duanzhu	Wutai Shan Buddhist office	Dugang (Supervisor)				广宗寺碑文
?-1515	Duanjin	Wutai Shan Buddhist office	Dugang (Supervisor)				广宗寺碑文
1515-?	Huishou	Central Buddhist office	Right Enlightener		Guangzongsi		广宗寺碑文
1515-?	Duanzhu	Central Buddhist office	Right Enlightener		Guangzongsi		广宗寺碑文
1515-?	Duanjin	Central Buddhist office	Right Enlightener		Guangzongsi		广宗寺碑文
?-1538-?	Mingzhao	Central Buddhist Office	Left Enlightener		Xiantongsi		宝山玉大和尚缘起行实功德碑文
?-1538-1541-?	Mingxuan	Central Buddhist Office	Left Enlightener	Abbot of Xiantongsi	Xiantongsi	Puxian's disciple	五台山大塔院寺重修阿育王所建释迦文佛真身舍利宝塔碑并铭 and 钦差敕建五台山大方圣佑国禅寺碑记

?-1538-1541	Mingxu	Wutai Shan	Dugang		Xiantong		Left Enlightener	五台山大塔院寺重修
-?		Buddhist	(Superv		si		Mingxu	阿育王所建释迦文佛真身舍利宝塔碑并铭
		Office	isor)					and
								钦差敕建五台山
								大方圣佑国禅寺碑记
?-1557-?	Daji	Central	Left					云中代府张氏斋僧
		Buddhist	Enlighte					积善行实碑记
		Office	ner					
?-1582-1607	Yuanguang	Central	Left	Abbot of	Tayuansi		Dugang-Zhulong	敕建五台山五塔院寺碑记
-?		Buddhist	Worthy	Tayuansi				and
		Office						敕谕山西五台山碑文
?-1582-1607	Zhulong	Wutai Shan	Dugang				Left Worthy	敕建五台山五塔院寺碑记
-?		Buddhist	(Superv				yuanguang	and
		Office	isor)					敕谕山西五台山碑文

From the above table we can see that all the Wutai Shan monks who held posts in the Central Buddhist Office were abbots of imperially patronized monasteries. The closer their relationship with the imperial family the higher their ranks are. Among all, the abbot of Tayuan Monastery, Yuanguang, were given the highest rank; the abbots of Xiantong Monastery held the Enlightener post for many generations, so throughout the Ming dynasty Xiantong Monastery gained the most favour from the Ming imperial family. Even though these monks were administrative officials, in fact some of them did not have any administrative responsibility at all in the Wutai Shan Buddhist Office as they bought their ranks to obtain a prestigious status. That is why quite often several monks bear the same title at the same time.

The aim of this sect is to reconstruct the Wutai Shan monk official system. By the gathering of datas from various inscriptions we can see the official administrative system on Wutai Shan did not functioned properly as a hierarchy among the monasteries had not formed. Though there had been a Buddhist Office on Wutai Shan since the Yongle era, there were no

clear rules of selecting the head of the Buddhist Office. Whether this Supervisor was selected according to his ability and moral conduct we are not sure, as sometimes this post was handed down from master to disciple. There are four main reasons that caused the total or partial failure of the monk official system on Wutai Shan. The sale of the monk official ranks by the Ming government had corrupted the system severely. Furthermore, the complex of Wutai Shan Buddhism made it difficult to be administrated under a single system. Thirdly, the different types of Buddhist traditions, customs and languages could be a big barrier for the head of the Buddhist office to overcome. In addition to these, the power competition among different monasteries on Wutai Shan is another reason for the failure of this system. From various inscriptions we noticed there were four or five Enlighteners from different monasteries who coexisted, not to mention those *honoris causa* monk officials.

The administrative system of the Nanjing monasteries

At first, the central Buddhist office was established at Tianjie monastery, and all monasteries in Nanjing were under its direct control. When the Ming capital was moved to Beijing, the Nanjing central Buddhist office still functioned, but its jurisdiction was limited to Nanjing and the surrounding area only. The Beijing central Buddhist office took overall control of the country. In the 23rd year of the Chenghua era, the emperor gave instructions to reduce the number of Buddhist and Taoist officials. Several monk official posts in the Nanjing Central Buddhist Office were withdrawn, with only right Worthy, right Lecturer on Sutras, and left and right Enlighteners remaining.²⁰⁶ According to *Jinling Fancha Zhi*, in the late Wanli era, more monk officials in the Nanjing central Buddhist office had been eliminated

²⁰⁶ *Ming Xiaozong Shilu*, Vol.5, pp.83-84.

with only one Left Enlightener and three Right Enlighteners left. These four monk officials lived in four major monasteries, at Linggu, Tianjie, Baoen and Nengren.

In the early years of the Ming dynasty, the Ming emperor Taizu decreed that monk officials and abbots should be selected through examination,²⁰⁷ in fact some monk-officials and abbots in Nanjing were appointed by the Ming emperor Taizu himself. For example, in 1382, Zhongxi (仲羲) was called from Zhejiang province to Nanjing and appointed as the abbot of Liang Zhigong Ta monastery;²⁰⁸ in 1376, Zongle was called to Nanjing and appointed as the abbot of Tianjie monastery.²⁰⁹

For other positions in monasteries, however, there were no clear selection procedures. In some cases they were nominated by the abbot, and in other cases posts were assigned by government officials.

Once the Yongle emperor had shifted the capital to Beijing, the appointment of monk-officials and abbots of major monasteries in Nanjing consisted of three stages. First the nominees were tested by the Nanjing Ministry of Rites; then the list of chosen nominees was sent to the Central Ministry of Rites; finally, it was approved both by the Central Ministry of Rites (礼部) and the central Ministry of Administration (吏部).

In the middle period of the Ming dynasty, the administrative system of monastic leadership in Nanjing became corrupted. Huo Tao (霍韬), the minister of the Nanjing ministry of rites, wrote:

²⁰⁷ Ge Yinliang, *Jinling Fancha Zhi*, Vol.2, p.52.

²⁰⁸ Yu Qian, “Ming Jinling Linggu Si Shamen Shi Zhongyi Zhuan (明金陵灵谷寺沙门释仲羲传)”, *Xinxu Gaosengzhuan* (新续高僧传) Vol. 51, , P.78.

²⁰⁹ Minghe (Ming), *Buxu Gaosengzhuan* ,Vol.14, “Lingyin Xingyuan Ming Chanshi Zhuan (灵隐性原明禅师传)”, P.96.

“Those monk officials, who were appointed to supervise the monks in the (southern) capital and its surrounding area, should not show Nengren Monastery favour only (when selecting monk officials)... If there is a vacancy, the government should examine abbots of major monasteries and choose the most suitable one to fill the post. The monks in Nengren monastery have subverted the system for years. If there is a vacancy (in Nanjing Central Buddhist Office), they recommend (monks) only from Nengren monastery, and regard the post as their own property. The unfair selection leads to injustice. ... Monks also use money to bribe government officials in order to get the license to administer the *yoga* sect, and thus to cheat innocent people. Crafty monks and greedy officials collude with each other, and the original examination system has fallen into disuse. Cunning monks take advantage of greedy ministers to line their own pockets. Nothing is worse than this.”²¹⁰

In *Jinling Fancha Zhi*, Ge Yinliang wrote: “according to his majesty’s decree: five monasteries—Linggu, Tianjie, Tianxi, Nengren, and Jiming are the major monasteries in the capital. From now on if the post of abbots in these monasteries is vacant, we must choose monks who have great virtue and examine them. Those who are accomplished in religious knowledge may be appointed as abbots of these five monasteries. Recommendations cannot be made without good grounds...recently the selections of monk officials have been based on drawing lots. The monk officials are in charge of monastic properties, provisions, justice, i.e. the most important roles in the Buddhist administration. At present, they are selected by drawing lots (抓阄), and not according to their virtues.”²¹¹

²¹⁰ Huo Tao (Ming), *Huo Wenmingong Quanji* (霍文敏公全集, 南京礼部公行), Beijing: the National Library Of China (北京国家图书馆藏), (Reprint) Qing Tongzhi era (清同治刻本), Vol.9.

²¹¹ GeYinliang, *Jinling Fancha Zhi*, pp.52-53.

In the late years of the Wanli era, government officials introduced new regulations for selecting monk officials to prevent corruption in monasteries. According to the new regulation, if there was a vacancy for the Left Enlightener, a test on Buddhist sutras was given by the Nanjing Ministry of Rites to those three Right Enlighteners, and two of them are chosen as candidates. If there is a vacancy for a Right Enlightener, a test on Buddhist sutras was given by the Nanjing Ministry of Rites to the abbots of eight major monasteries, and three of them are short-listed. If there was a vacancy for the abbot of a major monastery, a test was given to the abbots of three medium monasteries, and one is chosen together with four sutra expert monks (通经僧), thus producing a shortlist of five. If there was a vacancy for a medium monastery abbot, sutra expert monks should be tested, and four of them are chosen as the candidates. As the second stage, the selected candidates are sent to the Nanjing Ministry of Rites to take the second test. After that the decision will be made.

Regulations were also made regarding the qualifications of the exam participants. Seniority should be considered when choosing candidates; and monk official candidates could not be those who came from the monastery where the vacancy occurred; candidates have to be chosen from other monasteries. This is to avoid partiality. Those who have offended *vinaya* rules are disqualified from being considered as candidates.²¹²

These were the official government regulations. The following two examples shows monks in Nanjing indeed followed regulated procedures.

In the *Monograph of Qixia Monastery* (栖霞志), we find an epigraph which described how monk officials were selected in reality. It is called “the Epigraph of Venerable Shan who was the Right Enlightener at the Central Buddhist Office in Nanjing concurrently holding the abbacy in Da Tianjie Monastery; former abbot of Qixia Monastery; who followed the Song

²¹² Ge Yinliang, *Jinling Fancha Zhi*, p.467.

Shan [Shaolin Monastery] lineage of the Chan sect”²¹³ It states: Xingshan, whose family name was Xue, was apprenticed to Ven. Dafang in a formal religious ceremony when he was fourteen. ... He was fully ordained at the Tianjie Monastery. ... In the 31st year of the Jiajing era (1552), he was recommended by Ven. Fahui to be the abbot of Qixia Monastery and approved by the Nanjing Ministry of Rites. At that time, Qixia Monastery had been in decline for a long time, and very few monks were living there. Xingshan tried his best to restore its prosperity by building a meditation hall, and reinstating the dharma preaching tradition...in the first year of the Longqing era (1567), there was a vacancy for a Right Enlightener, and the Ministry of Rites set an exam for (abbots of) major monasteries, and Xingshan came first. He went to the capital (to receive the official nomination). In the early spring of the following year, he was appointed as the abbot of Tianjie Monastery... together with other Enlighteners he put a great deal of effort into managing this monastery.”²¹⁴

From *Wanli Yehuo Bian*, we read:

“Monks in the two capitals are subject to the Ministry of Rites. When an abbot’s post is vacant, the minister of the Ministry of Rites will hold a competition among them, and choose the best one as the abbot. (I) went to visit Jinling (Nanjing), and saw that the bearing of the abbots of the three monasteries was very dignified. That is because Linggu, Taijie and Baoen are the three biggest monasteries, with several thousand monks...The abbot of Linggu monastery is very young and his demeanour is upright. (Someone) showed me their

²¹³ 南京僧录司右觉义兼住大天界寺前栖霞寺住持嵩山禅善公碑铭

²¹⁴ Sheng Shitai (Ming), “Qixia Xiaozhi (栖霞小志)” in *Nanjing Wenxian* (南京文献), Nanjing: Tongzhi Guan (通志馆), 1947, pp.313-314.

exam papers, which are written in exquisite prose, no different from that of the great Confucian scholars'. What is more they have new words and elegant sentences. The questions in the paper are based on the *Diamond Sutra* and the *Śūraṅgama-sūtra* etc..."²¹⁵

In conclusion, Nanjing monk officials were given clear roles to play. Though in the middle Ming dynasty the system was corrupt, after a monastic reform by the Nanjing government in the Wanli era, with new meticulous regulations, monk officials were given clarified duties, and they were selected through examination. Then the monk official system started to function again.

Comparison of the monk official system in Nanjing and Wutai Shan

Unlike monk officials in Nanjing Central Buddhist Office, who were selected through examination, at Wutai Shan Buddhist Office, from its beginning there was no such a tradition. Monk officials were either appointed by emperors or inherited from their masters. The reason those Wutai Shan monks were appointed as Central Buddhist office officials was because they had been the abbots of imperially patronized monasteries. Abbots of these monasteries would not only take over the abbacy from the predecessor but also inherit their rank at the Central Buddhist Office. From the content of those inscriptions on Wutai Shan we can see there was not a fully functioning system that had been established to administer Wutai Shan Buddhism. Whoever was close to the emperor then was dominant on Wutai Shan.

When the monk official system was established in 1382, the Hongwu emperor had clearly defined that the Central Buddhist Office should be set up in Nanjing-its capital, and Senggang Si should be set up at provincial capitals. Wutai Shan was neither a national capital

²¹⁵ Shen Defu (1578-1642), *Wanli Yehuo Bian*, Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1959, pp.687-688.

nor a provincial capital, but two unmatched offices were set up at Wutai Shan. It made those officials difficult to perform their duties. The situation in Nanjing was much better; when the Central Buddhist Office was set up in Nanjing city, the emperor clearly instructed there was no need to set up other Buddhist offices in Nanjing, and not even in its surrounding counties, such as Shangyuan and Jiangning.²¹⁶

The Wutai Shan gazetteer, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, which was composed in the Ming dynasty, does not contain any information about the administrative monk official system at Wutai Shan. All the information of monk officials I have obtained is from various inscriptions, in most of which these administrative monk officials were mentioned as witnesses of different events. From these inscriptions we see the Buddhist office on Wutai Shan was not a mere name, to certain extend, monk officials performed some of their duties. Why were they not accounted in the Wutai Shan gazetteer?

During the Ming dynasty, especially around the Middle and late Ming dynasty, monk officials had a really bad reputation. A well learned monk, Yuancheng (1581 ~ 1626), reveals to us how corrupt these monk officials were: “The emperor Taizu set up the monk official system, there were eight officials in the central Buddhist office, namely, left and right Worthies, left and right Instructors, left and right Lecturers on Sutras, and left and right Enlighteners. Furthermore he set up provincial, prefectural and county Buddhist offices. Those who have not a thorough understanding about Confucianism are not qualified to be any of those officials. How sad it is that Buddhism is subject to Confucianism...that made the real cultivated Buddhist monks despised as not worth a fig, and abandoned. Worthless fellows, (in order to get appointed as monk officials) either bribe the relevant officials themselves or indirectly obtain the good offices of someone who is influential in the matter at hand. Have

²¹⁶ Ge Yinliang, *Jingling Fancha Zhi*, the fifteenth year of the Hongwu era, p.32.

they ever thought about the sense of honour or of shame? They appeal to those officials like dogs appeal to their masters. The bad one models oneself on the worse one. Have they ever studied the dharma and vinaya?”²¹⁷

Another possible reason for ignoring these monk officials is because Buddhist monks do not consider gaining political power as an honour. Recorded eminent monks on Wutai Shan during the Ming dynasty did not have any administrative official ranks. Neither did those four outstanding eminent monks²¹⁸. Those who had been recorded as eminent monks on Wutai Shan during the Ming dynasty are either great Chan masters, or founders of big monasteries. Even scholastic monks were not that much recognised at Wutai Shan. During the Ming dynasty Wutai Shan monks paid much more effort to encouraging monks to practice rather than preaching. For instance, Chan master (Bao)Jin Bifeng²¹⁹ refused his disciples’ request to leave any testimony before he died. He said: “even those *tripitakas* are becoming old papers, how can my words be worth anything?”²²⁰ Another Chan master-Guyue was not happy when his master asked him to study sutras during his early monkhood. He wanted to commit his effort to practice only. After attaining enlightenment in Sichuan, he was asked to give a speech, but he firmly refused.²²¹

During the early days of the Ming dynasty the Central Buddhist Office was set up in Nanjing, and high monk officials were appointed to be abbots of major monasteries in Nanjing. When the political centre shifted to the North, more northern monks were appointed

²¹⁷ Yuancheng (圆澄), *Kaigu Lu*, 圀 XZ Vol.114, p.730.

²¹⁸ Lianchi Zhuhong (莲池祿宏), Hanshan Deqing (憨山德清), Zibo Zhenke (紫柏真可, Ouyi Zhixu (藕益智旭).

²¹⁹ See Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, pp.81-82.

²²⁰ *ibid*.

²²¹ See Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, pp.83-84.

as high monk officials and another Central Buddhist Office was set up in Beijing--the north capital--to take over the responsibilities of the one in Nanjing. Even a half of Nanjing monk officials were cut off in the middle of the Ming dynasty.²²² In the late Ming, most of the high monk official posts in Nanjing central Buddhist Office were vacant.²²³ On the contrary, when Wutai Shan Central Buddhist Office was set up, the highest monk official there was Right Enlightener. In the late 16th century, the monk official on Wutai Shan Central Buddhist Office was promoted to the highest rank as left Worthy.

In Nanjing, during the Ming dynasty all monk officials lived in those three major monasteries; concurrently they were the abbots of those major monasteries. A monk official should not be selected from the monastery where the residency was, he must have been chosen from other monasteries in order to avoid corruption. The abbots of medium monasteries were selected in a different way: if there was a vacancy of abbotship the Nanjing central Buddhist Office should set a test among virtuous monks in that monastery, and chose the best one as the abbot. To select a small chapel's leader also was different. The Nanjing Central Buddhist office could directly chose one as the leader of a small chapel.²²⁴ The way that abbots were chosen in Nanjing indicates that the Nanjing Central Buddhist Office had the authority of overall control of all monasteries in that territory. Among major, medium and small monasteries there was a hierarchical system. Monks did not necessarily belong to a particular monastery; all monasteries can be considered as a whole system, and monks could flow from one to another.

²²² *Ming Xiaozong Shilu* Vol.5, pp.83-84.

²²³ *ibid.*

²²⁴ Ge Yinliang, *Jingling Fancha Zhi*, p.467.

Although there was also a Central Buddhist Office on Wutai Shan, the monasteries there did not follow the same monastic administration as in Nanjing. Rather it had a federal arrangement. It was not the business of the Wutai Shan Buddhist Office to interfere in the affairs of an individual monastery. Wutai Shan monk officials played a role of intermediary between the Ming government and individual monasteries on Wutai Shan.

Chapter Four

Monasticism On Wutai Shan

The revival of the late Ming Buddhism is evidenced by a series of monastic reforms by a group of elite Buddhist monks. These monastic reforms concentrated on reviving the traditional practices and disciplines of public monasteries (十方丛林). To sustain or create new public monasteries was vital in order to restore people's faith in Buddhism, because Buddhist monasticism had been severely corrupted in the other type of Buddhist monasteries-hereditary monastery (子孙丛林), which led to much criticism of Buddhism from every stratum of Ming society. The only way to revitalise the lifeline of Buddhism at that time was to restore the traditional practices and disciplines of public monasteries. Some of the late Ming period monastic reforms have already been studied by different scholars such as Yü Chünfang, Jiang Canteng etc. However, another contemporary monastic reform led by a group of Wutai Shan monks has not been studied yet.²²⁵ In this chapter we are going to discuss public monastery reform on Wutai Shan; we shall also compare the reform of public monasteries on Wutai Shan with that of its southern counterparts, which was led by eminent monks such as Zhuhong (1523-1615) and Deqing (1546-1623), both of whom had visited and lived on Wutai Shan for some time.

²²⁵ Starting dates of their reforms are Wutai Shan Lion's Den in 1586, Yunqi in 1573, and Caoxi in 1601.

The origin of the public monastery

It has been conventionally understood that Chinese Buddhism reached its full glory during the Tang and that after the Tang, except for the Chan School during the Song, Buddhism went into a steady decline. Chan Schools continuously developed during the Song. One of the results of the Chan development is the establishment of the public monastery. It is unclear when or where exactly the first official “public monastery” was established, but there are indications that they started to come into being in the late Tang.²²⁶

Public Monasteries are so called because they serve all Buddhist monks and some of the abbots of public monasteries are elected by their communities. In *Qingyuan Tiaofa Shilei* (ed. in 1202), we read:

If there is an abbacy vacancy in a public monastery, the local government should authorise the local Buddhist office to call upon the abbots of all the local public monasteries to elect four or five senior monks who are highly respected by the community. Thereafter, the shortlist will be presented to the local government, and the local governor would make the final decision and appoint the abbot. However, if the local governor thinks none of the short-listed candidates merit that abbacy, he has the right to appoint someone who is recommended by the neighbouring community of his jurisdiction as abbot.²²⁷

²²⁶T. G., Foulk, “Myth, Ritual, and monastic practice” in *Religion and Society in Tang and Sung China*. ed. by Ebrey, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993, pp.164-165.

²²⁷ Xie Shenfu (谢深甫), *Qingyuan Tiaofa Shilei* (庆元条法事类·住持问道释令), Taipei: Xinwenfeng Chubanshe, 1976 (reprint), Vol.15, p.476.

To distinguish it from a hereditary monastery, in which the abbacy is passed on from master to disciple and there is no government involvement, this type of monastery is called a public monastery.

The Public monasteries during the Song owned a large amount of property. Most of the well-known and important monasteries were public monasteries, had spacious compounds encompassing over fifty major and minor structures,²²⁸ and accommodated a large number of residences (mostly for clergy), with support from the state. The hereditary monasteries during the Song dynasty mainly comprised mid-sized and smaller ones. Some of them may have belonged to certain rich families and functioned as ancestors' shrines, controlled by that family.

The decline of Public monasteries

The relative position of the public monasteries and hereditary monasteries in the Ming had been reversed compare to the Song. The proportion of the public monasteries and hereditary monasteries is one to one hundred according to Zhencheng (镇澄).²²⁹ The decrease in the number of public monasteries is a good indication that Buddhism had deteriorated. In Zhencheng's time, within one Buddhist establishment monks divided themselves into small groups according to their lineage. This practice made a monastery no different from a lay

²²⁸ Foulk, T. Griffith, pp164-167.

²²⁹ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p.182. This might be a magnified figure, but to certain extent it reflected the reality of the lack of public monasteries.

family, in which a father's property is divided to his sons.²³⁰ Buddhist establishments lost their religious character. There are many reasons for this decline.

Yuancheng (1516-1626), a late Ming Chan master, concluded that the corruption of Buddhism had two causes: wrong government policy and monastic mismanagement. Yuancheng was born and brought up in Kuaiji (modern Hangzhou), which was one of the most prosperous cities in late Ming China. However, material prosperity did not prevent the decline of Buddhist practice. In 1607 Yuancheng, in the opening line of *Kaigu Lu* (慨古录), expressed his deep concern about the chaotic situation in Buddhism: "long gone the purified Buddhism, the monastic regulations have been completely ignored. The Buddha sun is going to sink, and the *Sangha* treasure is almost extinct. I am deeply afraid that the persecution of three Wu emperors²³¹ alike is not far off."²³²

During the Ming dynasty, Buddhism was cautiously controlled by the government. Although the first Ming emperor made a benevolent gesture towards Buddhism by favouring individual Buddhist monks and patronising monasteries on a large scale in his early reign, he soon

²³⁰ See Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi* "Recently, the monasteries under the Heaven all turned into private cloisters. Some masters founded public monasteries, but they cannot stop overindulging their disciples. When those masters are alive, the name of those monasteries are public, after those masters died (those monasteries) became their disciples' (property). Those disciples divided those establishments into small sections, lived like lay families. (近代以来, 天下丛林, 皆变为私家院矣。虽有人师, 立十方院, 然亦不能不溺爱于子孙。于其生也, 名曰十方, 及其没也, 尽为子孙有矣。至于分烟割井, 若俗家然)", p.182

²³¹ Emperor Taiwu (拓跋焘 424-451) of the Northern Wei, Emperor Wu (宇文邕 561-578) of the Northern Zhou, and Emperor Wuzong (李炎 841-846) of the Tang.

²³² Yuancheng, *Kaigu Lu* (慨古录), "去古日远, 从林之规扫地尽矣! 佛日将沉, 僧宝殆灭, 吾惧三武之祸, 且起于今日也, 能不叹乎", p.726.

realised that giving religion too much privilege could make religious organisations a breeding ground for various troubles. Therefore, he abolished the monk official system after Sahajaśrī died, subsumed the monk officials into his bureaucratic system, and tightly monitored Buddhist activities. Clerical ordination and the setting up of new monasteries etc required government permission. The tight control of Buddhism to a certain extent helped the Ming government to increase its power to prevent rebellions from gathering followers in the name of belief; however, by interfering in Buddhist internal affairs it limited Buddhist development. In the mid Ming dynasty, social conditions were relatively peaceful and stable, and both population and economy enjoyed constant growth. Inevitably the number of monks and priests also rose sharply. In order to control the size of religious organisations the Ming government went so far as to stop clerical ordination. In the 45th year of the Jiajing reign (1566), in order to restrict the spread of the White Lotus, the court adopted imperial inspector (御史) Bao Chengyin's recommendation to ban Buddhist ordinations, preaching, and vagrancy. For about fifty years no Buddhist ordination was held.²³³ As a result, monks complained that the decline of Buddhism was not the fault of Buddhists themselves, but rather that improper government policy had obstructed the development of Buddhism. Moreover, restricting ordination did not stop the growth of the clerical population. Whenever the government had financial difficulties, they sold certificates to monks and priests and granted them legitimate status; except for "the sale of ordination certificates, which definitely did continue to adulterate the composition of the *sangha*, attempts to limit the number of monasteries and to control monks with monk-officials, failed to accomplish the purposes for which they were designed."²³⁴ Brook regards as mistaken the claim that the sale of ordination

²³³ Yuancheng, *Kaigu Lu*, p.731.

²³⁴ Yü, Chün-fang, *The Renewal of Buddhism in China*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1981, p.171.

certificates corrupted the system of clerical certification, debasing the quality of the clergy and giving Buddhism a bad name. He believes that those purchasers were not monks. As he said:

“The polite fiction surrounding the sale of certificates was that the purchaser was a monk. In fact, most if not all purchasers were simply paying the government a flat fee for a permanent tax exemption. The assumption that purchasers were monks rests on a misapplied comparison to the sale of Imperial Academy studentships (*jiansheng*), which also started in 1451 as an emergency measure to raise funds for the defence of the northern border after the Zhengtong emperor had fallen into Mongol hands. Some *jiansheng* did go on to take up positions in the Imperial Academy and seek to advance into the bureaucracy. Few, if any, who bought a monk’s certificate as a lump-sum prepayment on future service levies were interested in becoming a monk. Who would want to buy his way into such a non-lucrative profession? This was simply a way of raising relief grain by borrowing on future tax earnings, and seen as such at court.”²³⁵

We disagree with Brook’s view as the purchasers were not monks. Some of the ordination certificates purchasers might not be monks but others were genuine monks. We have discussed elsewhere that monks even bought monk official ranks to show their prestigious

²³⁵ Brook, *the Chinese State in Ming Society*, p.151

position in the Buddhist community.²³⁶ Evidence from Wutai Shan shows that monks who owned ordination certificates paid taxes to the government.²³⁷

To grant monk certificates in such way had damaged the ordination system, and made monks reluctant to study the *vinaya* systematically. Hence, the monastic code was, to a large extent, neglected. Criticism of the neglect of the monastic code in the mid and late Ming came from both inside the *sangha* and outside. Zhixu (1599~1655), one of the four late-Ming eminent monks, stated: “when the dharma is not properly studied, the ordination is not properly taken; [monks] certainly do not venerate and observe the *vinaya*, and do not know

²³⁶ See p.98. Also Yuancheng, a Ming monk commented on the sale of monk official ranks (太祖制僧录司官八员，曰：左右善世、左右阐教、左右觉义、左右纪录；乃至僧纲、僧会，非洞明道学，德性可推者，莫堪此职。奈何至柔之教，受制于儒者之门 致使真正高贤，蔑视如介，弃而勿顾。不肖之徒，或上银请纳，或嘱托人情，曾何知节义廉耻?) in *Kaigu Lu*, p.368.

²³⁷ In an inscription about tax exempt cases on Wutai Shan, it recorded that in the mid to late Ming dynasty the local government imposed taxes and levy on Wutai Shan monks from time to time. See Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, “In the fortieth year of Jiajing era, ...apart from exempting levy horses and wild mushroom as taxes, which case file has been kept in the local archive...The last magistrate of Wutai County, Yuan, did not follow the existing regulations, blindly believed his officers’ fabricated report that the twelve major monasteries on Wutai Shan have more than 10000 monks, thousands of horses and ten thousand *dan* of grain in their barns; plus they own one thousand hectares of land without paying tax...(于嘉靖四十年... 除马匹天花等菜已以详究革去，立有卷案外今该县去任袁知县不遵旧例，听信吏书亡捏诸山十二寺，僧有万余，马骡千匹，积粟万石，重地千顷，不纳税粮....)”, pp.3-4.

they have a mission to carry on the lineage.”²³⁸ The famous late Ming Confucian Huang Zongxi (黄宗羲 1610-1695) also condemned the poor quality of Buddhist clergy due to no proper ordination having been taken: “[in monasteries] hundreds [monks] live together, one ordains another. Most of which are of the indolent kind.)”²³⁹ We may not trust Huang’s accusation, but “one [monk] ordains another” should be the reality that his accusation based on. One monk ordains another certainly is impropriety. One of the causes for this phenomenon should be the ban of ordination ceremony by the Ming government. Monks cannot be ordained through the proper way, they had to find a different way of extending their lineage.

Revival of Public monasteries

The late Ming period is considered as among the most active and creative periods in Chinese intellectual history. This phenomenon can certainly be attested in Buddhism. A group of talented, well-educated and charismatic monks stood out in the late Ming dynasty, and carried out a series of monastic reforms by either establishing new public monasteries or reviving the rundown public monasteries. This movement swept away their prolonged obscurity. Their reforms restructured monastic management and reinforced the importance of ordination, and monastic discipline.²⁴⁰ There are quite a few examples of monastic reforms by

²³⁸ Zhixu (智旭), *Lingfeng Zonglun* Vol.53, “惟其道无足传, 法无足受, 不知戒律之当尊, 不知绍续之正务.” in DZZBB, Vol.23.

²³⁹ Chen Naiqian ed., *Huang Lizhou Wenji* (黄梨洲文集), “什百为偶, 甲乙相授, 类多堕麻之徒” Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1959, p.287.

²⁴⁰ For instance, Yuanqing, a Wutai Shan monk, after receiving his ordination in the South, put a huge effort into reactivating the ordination ceremony and revitalising the Lü (*vinaya*) tradition on Wutai Shan. See Zhencheng, pp.86-88.

great Buddhist leaders which achieved great success in the late Ming dynasty. Those monastic reforms have been studied by contemporary eastern and western scholars in detail. This chapter is dedicated to the comparison of two distinct monastic reforms²⁴¹ with the monastic reform at Lion's Den Public Monastery (狮子窝十方净土院) on Wutai Shan. In the following pages we will examine in some detail areas of their monastic administration. For instance, the emphasis on observing the *vinaya*; the abbotship selection/election; monastic welfare; financial management and monastic education.

The origin of “pure rules (清规)”

In each case of the following monastic reforms a new set of regulations was enacted by the reformers. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the origin and development of Chinese monastic regulations (Pure Rules) before discussing the monastic reforms. In the early stage of Chinese Buddhism before the complete *Vinaya* was introduced to China,²⁴² great Buddhist leaders in China had created a set of regulations or guidelines for Buddhist communal living. The eminent Song Buddhist historian Zanning (920-1001) praised Daoan (312-385) as a “pioneer of *Sangha* regulations” in China.²⁴³ However, the *Sangha* regulations which were

²⁴¹ These two reforms led by Zhuhong in Yunqi and Hanshan in Caoxi. We will discuss them later in this chapter.

²⁴² The first complete *Vinayas* appeared at the beginning of the fifth century, when the texts of four separate schools were brought to China. *The Sarvāstivāda Vinaya* was introduced by Puṇyatāra, who came to China from Kaśmīri (罽宾) and was patronised by the ruler Yao Xing. See Yifa, *The Origins of Buddhist Monastic Code in China* Honolulu : University of Hawaii Press, 2002. p.352.

²⁴³ Zanning, *Dasong Sengshi Lue* (大宋僧史略), T.54, p.241.

created by Daoan and others like him must have been based on what they codified from monks who had traveled to China from Indian or Central Asian Buddhist communities. After the complete version of Indian Buddhist regulations—*Vinaya*—appeared in China these *Sangha* regulations, which were created by Chinese masters, were not abandoned but instead became supplementary rules of the *vinaya*. These supplementary rules have been regarded as important as the *Vinaya* itself; more importantly these supplementary rules were created to suit the specifics of Chinese monastic life. The development of *Sangha* regulations had never ceased during the development of Buddhism in China. From Daoan to Huiyuan (334-416), then from Daoxuan (596-667) until the late Ming masters Zhuhong, Hanshan etc many Chinese Buddhist masters had contributed to the development of the *Sangha* regulations, otherwise known as the Pure Rules.

The establishment of Shizi Wo (Lion's Den) Public Monastery

In 1586, fifty-three Buddhist monks²⁴⁴ led by Zhiguang (智光)²⁴⁵ and Jingli (净立) built a new monastery on Wutai Shan, and named it Lion's Den. The reason for setting up Lion's Den according to Zhencheng was the shortage of public monasteries. This public monastery was built for all Buddhist monks to stay in, and all monks were to be treated equally. There was to be no distinction between permanent residential and visiting monks. Wutai Shan was a pilgrimage centre, where tens of thousands Buddhists would visit each year, especially during the summer. As some of the major monasteries on Wutai Shan had been patronised by the

²⁴⁴ According to imperial inspector Li Shida (李思达), there were one hundred and twenty-three monks, including ordained monks and non-ordained novices. See Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, pp.180-181.

²⁴⁵ This Zhiguang is not the same person who we discussed in previous chapters.

imperial family, they did not lack financial support, and penniless visiting monks were not welcomed by them. As Zhencheng complained “Hence Chan masters from ten directions gradually drifted away. In the end they (hereditary monasteries) rejected visitors and closed their doors to outsiders.”²⁴⁶ Some of those monasteries even divided up the monastic properties exactly like ordinary householders. For instance, in a late Ming inscription²⁴⁷, we see that Xiantong monastery had “the fourth abbot”, and “the central abbot”. Presumably the monastery was divided into several parts, and each abbot was in charge of his own section. These monks were more concerned about their material possessions than their religious mission. Zhencheng strongly criticised this practice of dividing one monastic establishment into several units and monks took the monastic property as their own.²⁴⁸ Reacting against this corrupt practice, Zhiguang led a group of monks and lay Buddhists to set up a new monastery on Wutai Shan.

In *Qingliang Shanzhi*, five other public monasteries were briefly mentioned along with Lion’s Den (狮子窝).²⁴⁹ Since the source about Lion’s Den is not rich, none of the other five public monasteries have been well documented. In order to have a clearer picture about the administration of public monasteries on Wutai Shan, this chapter will discuss them as a whole.

²⁴⁶ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p.182.

²⁴⁷ Wang Zhichao, “Qinchai Chijian Wutaishan Da Wansheng Youguo Chan Si Beiji (钦差敕建五台山大万圣佑国寺碑记)”, in *Wutai Shan Beiwén Xuanzhu*, pp.243-5.

²⁴⁸ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p.182.

²⁴⁹ Guanhai Si (观海寺), Jixiang Si (吉祥寺), Youguo Si (佑国寺), Da Wenshu Yuan (大文殊院), Huzhong An (护众庵)--Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, pp.41-2.

The emphasis on studying and observing the *vinaya* and monastic disciplines

The records about these public monasteries in *Qingliang Shanzhi* are very brief, with only two to three lines on each. Nevertheless, in each case *vinaya* observance was stressed. In all of these public monasteries, there was a combined practice of *vinaya* with either Chan, or sutra studies or Pure Land. On the other hand we could not find any emphasis on *vinaya* studies in other monasteries in *Qingliang shanzhi*. The revival of Buddhism in late Ming dynasty was embodied in an awareness of the importance of the observance of *vinaya* rules. The following six points were emphasised in the monastic reforms on Wutai Shan.

1. *Posadha* (布薩):²⁵⁰ This is listed in the main guidelines of Lion's Den monastic regulations. "On the fifteenth of each month, on the occasion of reciting *prātimoksa*, all members should gather together in the monastery, apart from those who are a hundred *li* away. Those who do not participate in the recitation ceremony will be refused a meal."

²⁵⁰ This is the recital ritual. The recital of the *prātimoksa* (the 250 precepts for ordained monks) forms the central part of this ritual. The ritual originated in India and was at least as old as the Vinaya Pitaka (Sukumar Dutt, *Early Buddhist Monachism, 600 B.C.-100 B.C.*, p. 99). Twice monthly, on the days of the full moon and half moon, monks gathered together to listen to the recitation of the Pratimoksa. Any monk who committed an offense while the rules were being read aloud had to confess in front of the assembly. He would then receive either absolution or punishment, depending on the nature and severity of the offense. This ritual has been considered to be of the utmost significance for the maintenance of a highly disciplined monastic life.

2. *Biezhong* (别众)²⁵¹: this is a minor offence in Buddhist *vinaya*. In *Qingliang Shanzhi* under the entry for Jixiang monastery (Auspiciousness Monastery) we read: “Jixiang Si, also called Qingliang Qiao (the bridge of clear and cool), situated at the south hill of Central Terrace. Venerable Sitan rebuilt it, after four generations venerable Lichen is in charge of it now. [The principle rules of this public monastery are] no tonsure²⁵²; no separate meals; no personal property; do not *biezhong*. Whenever there is a manual work, the abbot would be the first person to do it. [It has set such a great example] therefore people not only within the Shanxi province know this public monastery, also people from the surrounding provinces, and it has never been short of great talents here for many generations.”²⁵³
3. *Varsa*, or summer retreat. In the entry of Youguo Monastery, the editor praised the monks’ diligence in Chan practice and their strict manner of following the monastic discipline. In Particular the *varsa* practice was mentioned.
4. Do not take separate meals. In the main monastic guidelines of Lion’s Den also in Jixiang monastery this rule is stressed. In Lion’s Den if a monk takes a separate meal from the rest

²⁵¹ For a monk schismatically or perversely to separate himself in religious duties from his fellow monks is called *biezhong*. This is kind of offence in *vinaya* rules is called *duskṛta* (突吉罗).

²⁵² Which means no monk was allowed to have disciples in this monastery.

²⁵³ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p.42.

of the residents, that person should be fined with one *dan* of rice, which will be used for public purposes.²⁵⁴

5. No personal property: the monastic property does not belong to any individuals, it belongs to the whole *sangha*. In early Buddhism, monks were not allowed to possess anything apart from three robes and some basic necessities. However, in late Ming, monastic properties fell into some individual monks' hands, and disciples inherited them from their masters. The inheritance acted in the same way as a normal Chinese family. Thus the united *sangha* was separated into parts with the division of monastic properties. In order to prevent this corrupt practice, the founders of Lion's Den emphasised the prohibition of personal property.
6. No disputes: In Lion's Den, the *sangha* asked Zhencheng to create a set of monastic guidelines. There are only eight of them, and the last one was this: "if members of our *sangha* have disagreements, they should talk and explain calmly. No one is allowed to lose control and fight. The offenders will be refused a meal (until they confess)."

The development and continuity of Buddhism to a large extent depends on the unity of the *sangha*. A united Buddhist community need a code for regulating monks' behaviour. In the early stage of Buddhism, the Buddha made six principal rules on reverent harmony or unity of the Buddhist Order: (1) To unify their respectful deportment to be the same; (2) To unify their chanting; (3) To unify their purpose; (4) To unify their practices of purity; (5) To unify their

²⁵⁴Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p.183. "During mealtimes, every one should be treated equally. There is no distinction between resident monks and visiting monks. No one is allowed to have a private meal. For having a private meal once, the offender should be fined one *dan* of rice, which will be used for public purposes."

view; (6) To unify their benefits.²⁵⁵ The above six points emphasised in Wutai Shan public monasteries served for the same purpose--to keep the unity of a monastic community.

Abbacy

In *Kaigu Lu* Yuancheng complained indignantly and at great length about the chaotic state of Buddhism in the late Ming dynasty. At the same time, he speculated about the causes for the decadence of Buddhism and put forward some solutions. One of the solutions was to be more cautious when electing the abbot of a monastery. He pointed out that many of his contemporary abbots lacked talent or virtue, and made little study of Buddhist doctrine. Because they were skilled at socialising, through their wide range of social networks they became abbots. This had led to many kinds of corruption in Buddhism. Yuancheng also analysed the importance of the abbotship to the monastic administration. He advocated that morality and religious accomplishment should be the fundamental basis for choosing an abbot, and appealed for democratic elections to produce an abbot who was really worthy of that position.

Among all the famous monastic reforms in the late Ming period, only in the regulations of Lion's Den (狮子窝) do we find that the abbot was elected by the community.

“When the construction of the monastery is complete, it will belong permanently to the people who come from all directions and wholeheartedly commit to Buddhist practice. It is not permitted for the abbot to transmit the abbacy to his own disciples. If the relatives or

²⁵⁵ *Shisong Lü*, “见和同解，戒和同行，利和同均，意和同悦，身和同住，语和无诤”，in T.23, p.367.

disciples of an abbot craving the monastic property appropriate it, they should be sent to the court for stealing. It is righteous to eliminate them from the monastery.”²⁵⁶

There was no permanent leadership in this monastery. At the beginning of each year all residents of Lion’s Den (狮子窝) elected an honourable monk as the abbot. All monks were to follow his instructions on both big and small matters. At the end of the year the abbot should resign, but if he was invited to remain he was allowed to serve as abbot for another year. However, after two years if he still clung to the leadership and did not want to abdicate, he would be eliminated from the monastery.

Monastic welfare

In this section we will not discuss the charitable work which was done by the monastic community, but rather we are going to look at the *sangha*’s own welfare, including how Buddhist monks dealt with their own health, old age etc. To become a monk means to give up the right to have your own family. In the Ming dynasty, the social welfare system was far from perfect, so people tended to have big families as an insurance against the difficulties of life. Without family support the *sangha*’s own welfare was an important issue in the monastic administration system. Particularly in the Wutai Shan public monasteries monks were not allowed to have disciples, and the *sangha*’s own welfare was considered a priority - more so than in other monasteries. Rules on the *sangha*’s own welfare were clearly drawn up to ensure that monks would be looked after when they were sick, and old.

In Lion’s Den, there were halls for old, sick and homeless monks. In its fifth monastic guideline we read: “The monastery is set up for old monks and sick monks as well. Those who are over sixty and homeless are allowed to live in the older people’s hall. Those who are

²⁵⁶ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, pp.182-183.

sick and homeless are allowed to stay in the Long life Hall.” For those who disobeyed this rule, the penalty was very severe, even for those administrators of the monastery. “If members of our community have illness, difficulties etc, even if they are away from the monastery, the rest of members should bring them back and treat them properly. If the abbot does not follow this regulation, he should be expelled from the community.”

Monastic financial management:

In Brook’s article “Institution” he interprets a famous Ming Buddhist gentry Qiu Lian (1644–1729)’s comments on the importance of monastic property as “without land, no income; without income, no institution; no institution, no Buddhism. Qiu’s declaration that property provides the base of Buddhism would not have shocked his readers with the realization that the feet of the church were made of clay.”²⁵⁷ From this message we can see monastic income in the Ming to a large extent depended on the land that they owned. According to imperial inspector Li Shida’s account, one hundred and twenty three monks and lay male followers joined this Buddhist society in Lion’s Den initially. Nowhere was there any mention of the amount of land that Lion’s Den owned, but there is no doubt that without a certain amount of land to support this society, it would not have been able to feed so many people who devoted their energy purely to religious practice.

In Zhencheng’s statement about launching this society, he mentioned that many members were from the social elite and senior officials. Therefore we can speculate they must have supported Lion’s Den financially. In the following chapter we are going to discuss how Empress Dowager Li donated a set of *tripitaka* to this monastery and sponsored the building

²⁵⁷ Brook, “Institution” in *Critical Terms in Buddhism*, ed. by Donald Lopez, Chicago, Ill., London: University of Chicago Press, 2005, P.149.

of a *ta* (塔) to store it. Previously Empress Dowager Li had also given alms in Lion's Den, although we are not clear whether she had donated any land to Lion's Den. But in other cases when religious buildings were constructed in her name, she often donated some land for their maintenance.²⁵⁸ With support from the imperial family and senior officials Lion's Den became one of the major monasteries on Wutai Shan. In the late Ming dynasty Wutai Shan's major monasteries owned large amounts of land; for instance Lingjiu monastery (Pusa Ding) had one thousand eight hundred and sixty-seven acres of land.²⁵⁹ Therefore, we may surmise that Lion's Den also owned enough land to support its community. Only with financial resources could Lion's Den make those promises for looking after all old and sick monks.

The financial management in this public monastery was distinct from that in other major monasteries on Wutai Shan in that it had a coparcenary arrangement. First of all, no individual could receive donations or other gifts in the monastery's name or distribute funds; this included the abbot himself. Three members of the *sangha* were in charge of the finance. One dealt with income, one kept the records, and the third monitored the expenses. Second, no relatives or disciples could inherit property from members of this public monastery. If anyone contravened this regulation, the monastery would sue them for stealing. Third, the abbacy was not perpetual in this public monastery. In other words there was no absolute authority in Lion's Den, but every member could express his view and exercise his right to vote for

²⁵⁸ In the early Wanli era, Empress Dowager Li built a rest house in between Wutai Shan and Beijing for venerable Chetian (彻天), abbot of Fenglin Monastery on Wutai Shan, with a donation of 170-200 acres land for its maintenance.(Wang Zhichao, p300-302)

²⁵⁹ Fan Duixiang 范堆相, *Xinzhou Diqu Zongjiao Zhi* (忻州地区宗教志), Taiyuan: Shanxi Renmin Chubanshe. 1993. p.131.

someone he trusted. This democratic regulation prevented corruption, and safeguarded the monastic properties.

Monastic education

In the late Ming period, Buddhist monasteries paid much attention to monastic education. Many monasteries set up schools for their youth. In these monastic schools Buddhism was not the sole subject on their curriculum. Confucian studies also carried some weight in monastic education. However as it was forbidden to tonsure disciples in Lion's Den and other public monasteries on Wutai Shan, there were rarely any young novices in these public monasteries. We have no information about youth education in these Wutai Shan public monasteries. What we know about their monastic education is that they concentrated on Buddhist doctrinal studies. In Lion's Den as soon as the monastery was established the monastic community invited twelve Buddhist masters to give lectures there. In the audience there were many retired government officials and some member of the social elite, who had been closely associated with Confucianism. Compared with other monastic schools the Buddhist society in Lion's Den was more like an advanced academy. Debates and discussions were often held among the well educated crowd. Each individual contributed his own thoughts and understanding of Buddhist doctrines and practices.

Reform of Yunqi (云栖) Monastery²⁶⁰

Zhuhong (株宏 1535-1615)²⁶¹, a native of Hangzhou, joined the Buddhist order at the fairly late age of thirty-two. However, as he came from a wealthy gentry family, he was well equipped with various kinds of knowledge, namely Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. After six years of travelling throughout the whole country to seek instruction from prominent teachers, especially Chan masters, in 1571 he ended up in Yunqi Mountain outside Hangzhou. The reputation of Ming Buddhist monks in general was notorious. The overall picture of Ming Buddhism was well depicted in Ming novels as a corrupt religion. Complaints about the *sangha* were frequent and vociferous in Ming society. Many Buddhist elite monks expressed their concerns and analysed the causes of this decline and made proposals and some of them even instigated reforms. One of the great examples is Zhuhong's monastic reform at Yunqi monastery, Hangzhou. Yü Chün-fang divided Zhuhong's criticisms of the decay of Buddhism into three categories: the degeneration of Chan practice, neglect of discipline and secularisation.²⁶² Though this tendency to decay was difficult to curb, still Zhuhong put a huge effort into challenging it by prescribing internal monastic reform. He started his reform by building Yunqi monastery as a model of "pure living", and created a new set of monastic regulations to govern the recruitment, training and supervision of Yunqi monks. Baizhang, a Tang Chan monk, has been traditionally claimed as the first person to draw up rules and regulations for monastic life. A book entitled *Pure Rules of Baizhang* had been compiled by

²⁶⁰ In this section some of Zhuhong's work I have adopted Yü Chün-fang's translation.

²⁶¹ Together with Zibo Zhenke (1543-1603); Hanshan Deqing (1546-1623); Ouyi Zhixu (1599-1655), are called Four Great Masters of the late Ming dynasty.

²⁶² Yü Chün-fang, *The Renewal of Buddhism in China*, chapter 7 "Internal Causes of Monastic decline in the Ming Dynasty", pp.170-191.

imperial order in the Yuan dynasty to guide monastic life.²⁶³ However, Zhuhong was dissatisfied with this version of the Pure Rules and cast doubt on its authenticity:

“The *Pure Rules* is a work expounded by later writers, but is not that written by Baizhang.... It is undoubtedly true that Baizhang was the first to establish the system of ‘public monasteries’ and made rules to govern the monastic community. But the complexity of the *Pure Rules* and the triviality of its finer points only make a person befuddled and bewildered. If he has to spend all his time trying to study the intricate details, how can he devote his energy to pursuing the Way? That is why I believe that the *Pure Rules* as we know them now are a product of latter-day busybodies, and do not represent Baizhang’s original intention.”²⁶⁴

According to Zhuhong *Pure Rules* were not practicable anymore because they were not written by the great Chan master Baizhang, and do not represent his original intention. However, this is not the only reason why Zhuhong created a new monastic code. Rules were often altered to fit the changing social role of the monastery. The composition of the Buddhist community was in flux, and new sets of regulations are needed when time and environment changes. Otherwise, *vinaya* would be sufficient, without the need of any other monastic code. Here we shall examine Zhuhong’s monastic reform from the following five aspects:

²⁶³ See Yifa, *The Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002.

²⁶⁴ Zhuhong, *Yunqi Fahui Vol.26*, 76b-77a, “Baizhang Qinggui” quoted by Yü Chün-fang, see *The Renewal of Buddhism in China*, p.193.

Observing the *vinaya*

Zhuhong felt that the main cause for the decline of Buddhism was the neglect of monastic discipline. Therefore, he tirelessly directed his energy to stressing the importance of strict adherence to *vinaya* rules. By the late Ming dynasty, the traditional ritual of “semi-monthly *prātimoksa* recitation” had been long forgotten by most of the monks. In order to revive this tradition Zhuhong related the stories of Sengyun, a Northern Qi (550-577) monk, to highlight the importance of this ritual:

“Seng-yun of the Northern Ch’i dynasty (550-589) lived in Pao-Ming Si, and he was famous for his ability to lecture. On the fifteenth day of the fourth month during the ceremony of reciting the *Pratimoksa*, he told the assembly: ‘everyone can recite the precepts, and it is unnecessary to listen to them so often. Why don’t we simply have one monk explain the meaning to young novices for their understanding?’ No one dared to object to him, and from then on the practice of reciting commandments was abolished. On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when the monks assembled, Yun was missing. They went out to search for him everywhere and finally found him in an old tomb. His body was covered with blood. When asked, he said that a ferocious being with a huge knife had scolded him, saying: ‘Who did you think you were that you dared to abolish the ritual of reciting precepts and substitute for it having a monk lecture on their meaning?’ After that the being stabbed him with the knife, and the pain was unendurable. The people took Yun back to the monastery. He repented sincerely and for the next ten years observed the ritual of semi-monthly recitation of the *pratimoksa* faithfully. On the day he died, a strange fragrance filled the room, and he

died joyfully. The people all respected him for his ability to acknowledge his mistake and correct it during his lifetime.”²⁶⁵

After relating this dramatic anecdote, Zhuhong concluded with the following observation: In the present age, it is fashionable to study sutras and *shastras*, but discipline is treated with neglect. For over two thousand years, the practice of semi-monthly recitation of the *prātimoksa* has not been continued. Though I am not talented, I have revived this practice in my mountain monastery. Some people have reservations about this, but in the story of Sengyun, reward and retribution are as clear as day and night. I hope readers will ponder this well.²⁶⁶

Comparing Zhuhong’s reform and the reform on Wutai Shan reveals that both had re-established the *prātimoksa* recitation tradition. This *prātimoksa* recitation tradition is very important to the unity of the monastic community. It is not only a recitation ceremony but also a religious ritual to solve disputes in front of every member of the *sangha*. This *prātimoksa* ritual acted as the religious court, each individual is a judge also being judged by his or her fellow monks. Confessions are also made during the recitation ceremony in front of everyone, and each individual’s behaviour has been measured by the rules which was outlined by the Buddha himself. Major offences should be punished, if necessary: the offenders are expelled from the community in order to maintain the monastic unity. The reintroduction of this tradition in a sense marks the revival of Buddhism in the late Ming dynasty.

The importance of economy in Zhuhong’s reform

²⁶⁵ Zhuhong, *Yunqi Fahui* Vol.15, 56b-57a, as translated by Yü in *The Renewal of Buddhism in China*, p.200.

²⁶⁶ *ibid.*

The success of Yunqi Monastery was due in no small part to Zhuhong's supervision of its institutional economy. With regard to donations to the monastery, Zhuhong had a unique approach, which we may find very commercial. He thought material and spiritual values were never far apart; in fact they were convertible. In his *A Record of Self Knowledge* (自知录), he assigned certain monetary values to particular deeds, often calibrated to how much it cost to perform them. For instance, the spiritual value of making Buddhist images, building monasteries, buying furnishings and ritual utensils, and donating or redeeming monastic property he set at one merit point per hundred copper cash spent. The more you paid out on the material account, the more you gained on the spiritual account.²⁶⁷

From his approach to donations, and his influence in China we can conclude that Yunqi must have attracted many donors. However, Zhuhong did not spend much money on improving the quality of life at Yunqi monastery. He required his fellow monks to have a frugal lifestyle by disciplining them to eat simple food and drink plain tea, and by restricting the building of luxurious halls in Yunqi monastery and so forth. He also created a tactical financial management system in Yunqi in order to prevent corruption. He instructed that the key of the coffer should be kept by the *Yuezhong* (悦众), and the coffer should be kept by the *Kufang* (库房), and all the incomes and expenses should be laid out clearly by the accountant and witnessed by the *zhiyuan* (直院).

Another interesting point which deserves to be mentioned here is that those who neglected or transgressed monastic disciplines or caused disturbance in the monastic community would be punished with financial penalties. Among the financial penalties, the largest was ten taels of silver. In an article about the prohibition of his kinsmen from being recruited into Yunqi monastic order, he wrote that if anyone dared to admit Zhuhong's kin to be tonsured in Yunqi

²⁶⁷ Yü Chün-fang, *The Renewal of Buddhism in China*, p.238.

monastery, that person would be fined ten taels of silver. In order to prevent his family gaining any privilege in his monastery, he severed all ties between his monastery and his family members. The smallest penalty was ten *wen*²⁶⁸. For example, if someone failed to attend the *prātimokṣa* recitation and did not give reasons beforehand, he was fined ten *wen*.

Unlike the case of Lion’s Den monastery, the found of this monastery in Yunqi did not rely on any high government official’s political nor financial support. The establishment of Yunqi monastery was purely based on Zhuhong’s personal influence in the local arena.²⁶⁹ His popularity was not only limited among the local illiterate followers, whom supported him to found this establishment. Later on his fame rose to the elite class in southern China. His wide social network enabled him to initiate many charity projects to support those who poor and needy, and his compassion also extended to animals. One of his most famous charitable project is called “the free life pond” (放生池) in the Western Lake (西湖).²⁷⁰ Zhuhong’s actions of using his monastic fund to support different types charity is unseen in Wutai Shan monastic reform.

Monastic Education at Yunqi

From the rules which Zhuhong had created for Yunqi monastery we can see that he focused monastic education on the practical side of Buddhism. He did not advise monks at his monastery to spend their time studying irreligious and worldly knowledge. He demanded

²⁶⁸ This is the smallest monetary unit in the Ming dynasty, in English, a ‘cash’.

²⁶⁹ Deqing, “Lianchi Dashi Taming” (莲池大师塔铭), in *Hanshan laoren Mengyou Ji* (憨山老人梦游集) Vol.27, p.300-1.

²⁷⁰ Deqing (1546-1623), *hanshan Laoren Mengyou Ji* (憨山老人梦游集) Vol.20, “Zhu Santan Husheng Di Yin” (筑三潭护生堤引) in 卮XZ, Vol.73, P.610.

strict adherence to Buddhist orthodoxy from his fellow monks. As Ming China was a Confucian society, many of Zhuhong's contemporary monks liked to dabble in calligraphy, poetry and the art of letter writing, which were the three genteel pursuits of the Confucian literati. However, Zhuhong thought this amateur interest could only hinder their progress in Buddhist understanding, which should be their ultimate pursuit. However, in terms of moral conduct he totally accepted Confucian virtues and values, for example filial piety, respect for the teacher, and loyalty to the sovereign were clearly advocated by Zhuhong.

In *The Agreement with the Sangha*²⁷¹ Zhuhong condemned those who study rhyming poetry, music, and other miscellaneous arts for social purposes; those who study such heretical learning as astrology, geomancy, healing water with spells read over it, and Taoist alchemy; those who study heretical practices such as holding the breath, unnatural feats of meditational sitting, and the five divisions and six volumes (*wubu linjuan*)²⁷². All these were to be expelled from his monastery.²⁷³

At Yunqi Monastery there were two main halls—the Great Hall and the *vinaya* Hall, where the principal activities were carried out. In each hall Zhuhong requested its residents to study Buddhist doctrines and *vinaya* accordingly. In the Rules of the *vinaya* Hall²⁷⁴ we read each person should have the *vinaya* Sutra, whose commandments he has received, the *Rules and Ceremonials for a Novice*, the *Extracts from the Four Division Vinaya*, and the *Further*

²⁷¹ Zhuhong (Ming), *Yunqi Fahui*, vol.32, 27-29.

²⁷² They are a group of works written by Luo Qing (1509-1522) in the fourth year of Zhengde (1506). The author and his followers were of a heretical sect, the Wuwei Jiao, and these works were condemned by the Ming government as heretical and were suppressed. They were burned in the 46th year of the Wanli era (1618).

²⁷³ Yü Chün-fang, *Renewal of Buddhism*, p.203.

²⁷⁴ Zhuhong, *Yunqi Fahui*, vol.32, pp.7-9.

Elucidation of the Commentary on the Bodhisattva Precepts. Those who have received the ten precepts should study *vinaya* for five years. During this time, they are not allowed to go out to attend lectures, but they may study sutras inside the monastery. They take turns in setting grains of rice in the courtyard for [hungry] ghosts, attending semesters in the Great Hall, serving as acolytes, and taking care of the sick when there is no one else to do so. Those who have received the *Bhikshu* precepts may take turns leading prayers, teaching required sutras, chanting the five, ten, and *Bhikshu* precepts, and delivering admonitions. Those who have received the bodhisattva precepts may take turns chanting the bodhisattva precepts, lecturing on Buddhist teaching, teaching Mahayana scriptures, serving as priors, and receiving robes from the laity. In the Rules of the Dharma Hall we read that, in studying the sutras, one ought to follow the order stipulated. Everyone should memorize by heart the *Fo Yijiao Jing*, the *Instructions of Weishan* (为山), and the *Record of the Exalted Acts of Buddhist Monks* (缁门崇行录), and conscientiously act in accordance with the teachings embodied in these works. Every fifteen days, several persons are selected at random and examined on these. Lecturers take turns lecturing on the Pure Land sutras, first the Smaller *Sukhāvātīvyūha Sutra* and next the *Guan Wu Liang Shou Jing*. After these, they lecture on the *Lotus Sutra*, the *Sūrangama Sutra*, and the others. When they finish the cycle, they start again. People who study doctrine are divided into two groups: those of dull intelligence should read the text, and those of sharp intelligence should study its meaning. Those of the latter group should be further differentiated into two groups: one group practises according to the teachings; and the other group gives lectures to make clear the doctrine. Those who are chosen to be lecturers on the sutras must be persons endowed with sharp intuition and persons who act with strict

discipline. They must be chosen with great care and become a select group, lest they bring shame to Buddhism.²⁷⁵

We noticed that in Yunqi monastery, the education system entirely excluded lay Buddhists: all the lecturers and students were clergy, and the content of the teachings were all about Buddhism and monastic discipline. Unlike Lion's Den monastery on Wutai Shan, the education system in Yunqi monastery had different grades according to students' age group and intelligent capacity, and different subjects according to their interests. This self maintained education system was different from Lion's Den and Caoxi monastery which we will discuss later. In the other two reforms we see the lay Buddhists were involved in the monastic education, and Confucian teachings were taught to young novices in Caoxi monastery.

Abbacy

Before he passed away, Zhuhong did not appoint a successor, and there is no clear description in Zhuhong's work of how the future abbot should be chosen.

When he was 74 years old, he wrote a will to his fellow monks that because of his old age and worsened illness, even though he had written a will before, but that did not express all that he wanted to enjoin. In this will, he informed his fellow monks that the future abbot (of Yunqi) must be perfect in his understanding and morality, and if there were no such monk then seniority in ordination should be taken as the criterion. Whoever took the position, his rules should not be violated.

One of the main causes of the late Ming monastic reforms was to oppose the emphasis on monastic lineage, and the reformers wanted to pass their leadership to someone capable but

²⁷⁵ See Yü Chün-fang, *Renewal of Buddhism*, pp.220-221.

not necessarily their own disciples. In the case of the Lion's Den monastic reform, we see an even more strict rule prohibiting members of the community from receiving any disciple to avoid corruption. We see the Lion's Den abbot was elected by the monastic community, and served for a two-year term rather than lifelong. In Yunki's case, Zhuhong served as the abbot for life: he was the sole authority in the monastic community. He did not appoint anyone as his successor; rather he let his community to choose their own leader.

Monastic Welfare at Yunki

At Yunki Monastery, there was a special hall for old monks, and a hall for monks who were sick. In *Yunki Gongzhu Guiyue* Zhuhong wrote "those who are seventy years old and have been perfectly behaved and have practised in Yunki have the right to live in the Old People's Hall; those who are eighty [and have not strictly followed the monastic regulations] will be judged individually from their conduct, then told whether they deserve to live there or not; monks who are ninety years and above have priority to live in this old people's hall. All these old monks' expenses, for instance medicine food etc, are paid by the monastery."²⁷⁶ Zhuhong even considered the diet for old monks, which should be soft and easy to digest. Sick monks, according to their illness, were treated differently. Those who were seriously ill would be given a private room with intensive care; those who were less seriously ill would live with other monk patients in a big room. Moreover, those monks who understood medicine would be tested, and would then work as doctors looking after patients in this hall. All medical and food expenses would be paid by the monastery.

²⁷⁶Zhuhong, *Yunki Fahui* vol. 8, pp.4813-4814.

Regarding the monks' own welfare we can see that the Wutai Shan monastic reforms took a very similar approach to Yunqi's. As these reformers all knew each other, we may suggest here that when they were drafting the regulations, messages could have been exchanged.

Hanshan's monastic reform in Caoxi (曹溪)²⁷⁷

The need for reform in Caoxi was urgent by the time Hanshan arrived there. We read the following message in Hanshan's autobiography: "In Spring, during the first month, I arrived at Caoxi and found that the Sixth Patriarch's nine hundred year old monastery, the very source of Chan Buddhism, had been converted into a meat market. Squealing animals were being slaughtered, dressed, and butchered. Stinking piles of worm infested guts filled the stately courtyard. Huckstering vendors in clap-board stalls shouted for the milling crowds' attention. The entire place was in total disarray. Even the graveyard, intended only for clerical remains, had been invaded by the dead relatives of neighbouring villagers. The monks still in residence at Caoxi were as helpless as sheep. Whether from bribery or fear, they did nothing to oppose the profanation of this hallowed place. Merchants, tradesmen, and an assortment of brigands conducted their vile business without any opposition from clerical or civil authorities."²⁷⁸

Hanshan was not only a great Buddhist master but also a practitioner of geomancy (风水). Hanshan blamed the decadent state of Buddhism, particularly Chan Buddhism in the Ming dynasty to a certain extent on the desolation of Caoxi monastery, where the most famous

²⁷⁷ In this section, many of the quotations from *Hanshan's Autobiography* are from Richard Cheung's translation.

²⁷⁸ Richard Cheung Trans., *Hanshan's Autobiography* (憨山大师自传), Hongkong: H.K. Buddhist Book Distributor, 1993, p.20.

Chan patriarch Huineng had preached and popularised Chan in the South.²⁷⁹ Hanshan's reform in Caoxi was summarised in ten points by his gentry follower Feng Changli (冯昌厉). To restructure the layout of the monastery was listed as the first priority; to build a new patriarchal Hall for pilgrims to worship as the second; the third was to select suitable monks and ordain and train them properly; the fourth, to drive rogues out of monastery; the fifth, to reclaim the monastic properties to support the *sangha*; the sixth, to stress the importance of *vinaya* and to ban animal sacrifice; the seventh, to clear the overdue land rent for the benefit of the monastery; the eighth, to remit the due tax; the ninth, to regain the mountainous land behind the monastery and stop the misappropriation of cunning landlords;²⁸⁰ and the last, to set up the Chan meditation hall in order to consolidate the foundations of the monastery.²⁸¹ Many scholars have already discussed Hanshan's monastic reform.²⁸² In this chapter we shall focus on the aspects of his reform that I have addressed in the context of Wutai Shan monastic reform, namely, emphasis on observing the *vinaya*; the abbotship selection/election; monastic welfare; financial management and monastic education.

Emphasis on the observance of *vinaya*

²⁷⁹ Hanshan, “天下禅宗一派，出于曹溪，今其道不彰，必源头壅塞，宜疏浚之。” in 卮 XZ, Vol.73, p.817.

²⁸⁰ No.5 and No.9 are both about the monastic properties. No.5 particularly refers to the shops which were owned by the monasteries. No.9 was a law case to reclaim back the land which belonged to the monastery.

²⁸¹ Feng changli (冯昌厉), *Caoxi Zhongxing Lu* (曹溪中兴录) in 卮 XZ Vol.73, pp.807-815.

²⁸² Jiang Canteng (江灿藤), “Wanming Fojiao Conglin Gaige Yu Foxue Zhengbian Zhi Yanjiu (晚明佛教丛林改革与佛学争辩之研究”, Taipei: Xinwenfeng Chubanshe, 1990. Yü Chün-fang, *The Renewal of Buddhism in China*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1981.

Among Hanshan's ten points of reform three concerned the importance of the *vinaya*. For instance point number three was about reintroducing ordination to the monastery. When Hanshan arrived in Caoxi in 1600, most of the monks lived in their farm houses and not in the monastery. "When young children join the order at Caoxi, they witness their masters working in the fields, exactly like other ordinary farmers. Therefore, these young monks are unaware of their mission to enter the order. Those masters have never taught their disciples anything about Buddhism. The reason for raising disciples is that they need more labour in the farm."²⁸³ Inside the monastery only the abbot and few monk keepers who were looking after the patriarchal hall resided. Therefore, Hanshan gathered all the monks at Caoxi and selected about one hundred monks aged between twenty to forty to be ordained, and required them to live inside the monastery and follow the regular monastic routine.

In his ten reforms, number four and number six were also about impelling monks to follow *vinaya* rules. There were many rogues living at Caoxi when Hanshan arrived there, most of them illegal migrants. Through various tricks and devices (women, alcohol and gambling etc) they appropriated monastic property in front of its gate and set up some improper businesses. According to Hanshan's account Nanhua (南华) monastery in Caoxi had almost become a slaughter house, and the Buddha halls had become cowsheds and pigpens. That was totally against the spirit of Buddhism. As this practice had been continued for hundreds of years, without a prominent leader who could influence government officials and the local leading gentry, the practice of animal sacrifice could not be prohibited. With a great effort, Hanshan eventually succeeded in his reform and made Caoxi a very agreeable place for genuine Buddhists to come and practise and worship.

²⁸³ Feng changli (冯昌厉), *Caoxi Zhongxing Lu* (曹溪中兴录) in 卅 XZ Vol.73, p.809.

Monastic Education at Caoxi

Hanshan not only paid attention to the adult monks' education and provided them with proper monastic training, but also worked very hard on young novices' education. First of all he carefully selected capable teachers. Among hundreds of monks he chose only three on the basis of their Buddhist and Confucian knowledge, to teach young novices. He valued their moral conduct as part of the requirement. Then he persuaded young monks' masters to send their disciples aged between eight and twenty to the monastic school. He also created a syllabus for his monastic school. For the first year, these novices were to study basic Buddhist doctrines, *vinaya* and commentaries. After that some outstanding students could continue their education. For the next three years these students would systematically study Confucianism under some great local elite gentries, who were carefully chosen by Hanshan. Finally if they passed their exam, these novices could be ordained and enter the meditation hall to practice Chan.

Monastic welfare at Caoxi

Although Hanshan's monastic reform affected the whole monastery in Caoxi, monastic management in Caoxi was akin to a federal system. There were many units in the monastery, and since Hanshan was not the abbot, his jurisdiction was limited to one part of it—the Meditation Hall. He regarded the position of Caoxi in Chinese Buddhism as equivalent to Zhu Si (洙泗) Academy, where Confucius taught his disciples, in Confucianism.²⁸⁴ As we mentioned above, the Chan patriarch Huineng was based in Caoxi and under his influence Chan Buddhism was popularised in the whole of China. Hanshan's ambition was to reverse

²⁸⁴ *ibid.* p.819.

the decline of Buddhism, and he strongly believed that the revival of Buddhism in China must start from Caoxi as here was the root of Chan Buddhism in China. Before Hanshan implemented his reform in Caoxi, the Chan tradition had been almost lost there. The site of the old meditation hall was occupied by seven monks' units, and pigpens and cowsheds (presumably owned by monks) were everywhere. What Hanshan did was to pay those monks to move out with ten times the value of their properties, and then demolish all the old buildings in order to rebuild a very spacious two storey meditation hall. After completing the physical structure of the Chan Tang (meditation hall), Hanshan created a new set of regulations for its residents. Here we are going to discuss that part of it which concerns the monks' welfare.

As Hanshan claimed in his regulation, this new Chantang (meditation hall) was to serve all Buddhist monks. In other words, within this monastery there were two parts, with Chan Tang serving as part of the public sector, and the rest of the monastery remaining as a hereditary monastery (子孙丛林). Although the meditation hall functioned as a public monastery, guest monks were treated differently from the residential monks. Visiting monks did not live and eat together with the local residential monks. There were other new halls built for visiting monks. Even among visiting monks, there was discrimination. In Hanshan regulation, he clearly stated: "In general, visitors should live in Wai Tang (outer hall) and junior guest masters should serve them tea and treat them sincerely. However, if some elite doctrinal masters or Chan masters came to visit, the head of the Meditation Hall should be informed, and these masters should be invited to live in Nei Tang (inner hall) and treated with respect."²⁸⁵ On the occasion of an alms giving, guest monks enjoyed the same rights as residential monks.

²⁸⁵ Hanshan, *Caoxi Baolin Chantang Shifang Changzhu Qinggui* (曹溪宝林禅堂十方常住清规), 卅 XZ, Vol.73, p.829.

Among the resident monks, those who had duties, for example in the farm, kitchen, storehouse, etc. would have priority in receiving some allowance. “In theory all monks should be treated equally, however, sometime our strength does not match our ambitions, we cannot pay the same allowance to everybody.”²⁸⁶ In terms of public affairs (manual labour) the head of the meditation hall would give instructions, however there was no indication in the regulation that he would lead the monks and work together with them.

Monastic economic management at Caoxi

Before Hanshan’s reform, financial management at Caoxi was disastrous. The monastery owned a huge amount of land, but could not collect any rent from it. The heads of each of the monks’ units took turns to be the director of the farming village; when these heads were on duty they tried to extract profit for themselves rather than the monastery, so they worked in collusion with tenant farmers to appropriate benefits for each other. The monastery had to take out usurious loans to meet their expenditure.²⁸⁷ When Hanshan realised what was happening, he abolished the old practice and followed *Baizhang Pure Rules* as a model to set up a new monastic administrative system. He appointed ten monks as new directors of the farming villages to be in charge of rents, and he selected four monks as accountants to be in charge of revenues and expenditure; each item of income and expenditure had to be clearly recorded in the monastic account book.²⁸⁸ However, this reform could be carried out only

²⁸⁶ *ibid.*

²⁸⁷ Feng Changli, *Caoxi Zhongxing Lu*, 卅 XZ, Vol.73, p.810.

²⁸⁸ *ibid.*

with the imperial eunuch Li Jing's help and cooperation.²⁸⁹ Because this had deeply affected many individual monks' interests, and despite the fact that Hanshan enjoyed great prestige in the Buddhist community, he had to rely on someone who had great political power to back up his reform. With his political influence Hanshan also helped Nan Hua monastery to recover some over-charged taxes. In short, his economic reform in Caoxi was extremely beneficial to the whole monastery but not to individuals, and for this reason Hanshan made some enemies at Caoxi and eventually had to leave.

The above reforms applied to the whole monastery. Now let us have a look at Hanshan's reform of financial management of the Meditation Hall which he set up as a public section to receive visiting monks and pilgrims, against the tradition in Caoxi "where monks did not live and eat together, did not follow the *vinaya* rules and behaved no differently from those authorised migrants who lived nearby"²⁹⁰. The Meditation Hall functioned in the same way as other monks' units in Caoxi, namely the monks themselves were in charge of administration, finance etc. Their income mostly came from the rent of its village land--Zixun Zhuang 紫荀庄²⁹¹. However that income still could not meet all the expenditure in the Meditation Hall. They still relied on lay Buddhists' support and donations. All major expenses the director of

²⁸⁹ Hanshan had a close connection with the imperial court, and had a very good reputation among imperial eunuchs. When the imperial eunuch appointed mine tax collector, Li Jing, came to Caoxi to burn incense, Hanshan called all the monks together, and in front of this imperial eunuch he introduced this reform.

²⁹⁰ Feng Changli, *Caoxi Zhongxing Lu* (曹溪中兴录), "凡本寺僧徒, 分烟散火, 居止不一, 而清规不行。即十方衲子, 礼祖而至者, 茫然无归。虽有祖庭之设, 无复清修之业, 甚至不异编氓, 岂禅源根本之地焉", 卅 XZ, Vol.73, p.828.

²⁹¹ Hanshan bought this village with his own money.

the Meditation Hall had to discuss with other senior monks and he himself could not make the decision alone. The accountant was obliged to record each usage clearly in the account book. All the income had to be recorded in the account book and the director of the Meditation Hall was not allowed to deal with any accountancy work.

Abbacy

Hanshan did not or could not convert the whole monastery into a public monastery; only part of it, the Meditation Hall, functioned as part of the public sector. The abbacy in Caoxi was still passed on from master to disciple, and not by election. Here what we are going to discuss, therefore, is the way they chose the director of the Meditation Hall, which Hanshan had built from scratch. In Hanshan's *Regulation for All Residence* (常住规约) we could not find an indication of how the director was chosen. Hanshan only wrote about what kind of moral qualities the director should possess. What we do know is that after Hanshan left Caoxi a monk called Sengang (僧昂) took over the leadership role in the Meditation Hall.²⁹² Sengang was not Hanshan's disciple but he was a well educated elder monk in the monastery. When Hanshan set up the monastic school for young novices, Sengang was one of the three monk teachers who were chosen by Hanshan. Because the reform had harmed many local monks' individual interests, they were not satisfied with the new regulations created by Hanshan. Therefore, they accused Hanshan of having misappropriated their common wealth. The case lasted several years, during which Hanshan could not live at Caoxi. Eventually when Hanshan won the case, and the government adjudicated the meditation Hall in favour of

²⁹² Hanshan, "Shi Caoxi Baolin Ang Tangzhu (示曹溪宝林昂堂主)" in *Hanshan Laoren Mengyou Ji*, 卅 XZ, Vol.73, pp.823-4.

Hanshan, the abbot Yuanzu (愿祖) committed suicide. Because of this dramatic incident Hanshan refused to return to Caoxi; instead he sent his disciple Yuanxiu to be the director of the Meditation Hall. Therefore, we can see that the director of the Meditation Hall was not elected by its community but appointed by Hanshan himself.

Conclusion

In each case of these three reforms, we noticed that a new set of monastic regulations were created. These sets of monastic regulations have a common framework: the emphasis on the importance of monastic disciplines; on enforcing the monastic financial management; and on paying attention to monastic education etc. But the details of each set of monastic regulations differ according to social and economic environments. Compared with Yunki and Caoxi monastic regulations, Lion's Den monastic regulations are much simpler. Either the detailed version had been lost, or the pristine type of northern Buddhism in China did not need trivial regulations, just a few brief guidelines being sufficient. Throughout my research I have noticed that written material about Buddhism in north China is much scarcer than for south China.²⁹³ Due to the more developed economic environment, South China was more prosperous than the North in the Ming. Printing technology and institutions were more

²⁹³ In Shengyan's *Mingmo Fojiao Yanjiu* (明末佛教研究) he listed Buddhist masters and eminent lay Buddhists in different schools. In this book we can see not only that the number of northern Buddhists were less than in the south, but also the volume of their works are far less than southerners', pp.32-34; pp.23-30; pp.296-302.

advanced there. It would have been much easier for a southerner to publish his work. That was why the *tripitaka* carving institution shifted to the south from Wutai Shan.²⁹⁴

Gentry lay Buddhists' involvement is very noticeable in these monastic reforms. In Wutai Shan retired government officials were part of the monastic community. They practised and studied Buddhism together with other monks. They too were monastic reformers together with leading monks because they not only supported the monastic reform financially but also physically practised the newly established monastic rules. In the other two reforms we did not see any gentry lay Buddhist abode inside the monastery, rather they practised Buddhism at home and kept their distance from the monastic community. The southern gentry Buddhists' involvement in these monastic reforms is different from that in the north. Their contribution to the monastic reform is more evident in monastic education and financial support of the monastic communities. To a certain extent the growth of the lay Buddhist population in the late Ming dynasty and their involvement in monastic reforms triggered the revival of Buddhism. Through their influence in their Buddhist communities some gentry members established their authority in their local arenas.

The establishment of Lion's Den was led by a group of monks and lay Buddhists; there was no emphasis on any individual monk or lay Buddhist. In the other two cases, the reforms were instigated by two great leaders. The development of these three monasteries followed established traditions, for instance, in Lion's Den on Wutai Shan, there was no a permanent authority, and the abbacy would change hands every two years through election; however, in Caoxi the abbot was appointed by his predecessor; in Yunqi the abbacy was a lifelong job, and

²⁹⁴ See Dai Lianbin, "The Economics of the Jiaxing Edition of the Buddhist Tripitaka", *T'oung Pao* 94 Vol.73, (2008), pp.306-359.

the new abbot was selected according to his predecessor's will. In all three cases we noticed that the abbacy did not pass from master to disciple. Therefore, we can say that these three places are public monasteries, and their intention of reviving public monastery monasticism had succeeded. Indeed because of the successful reform at Lion's Den, later on there were a few more monasteries on Wutai Shan that followed this trend and converted to Public monasteries.

Monastic penalties (for causing disturbances and transgressing the rules) in these monasteries also reflected the economic difference between the south and the north. In order to meet the social changes of a more commercialised system in the south, Zhuhong in his monastic reform adopted some southern social practices by imposing fines on offenders. In Lion's Den of Wutai Shan monks who had violated monastic rules were punished by not having meals or doing some labour. This reveals that monks on Wutai Shan did not have much cash to spend, and possibly this phenomenon applies to the whole north China, where economic development was far behind the South.

All three reforms are similar but different according to each local social background, in the past "Pure Rules" were created for Chan monasteries only. In the late Ming it was different, particularly in Lion's Den and Yunqi Monastery different types of practice (Chan, Pure Land, Lü, and Huayan) co-existed side by side in the same compound. Master to disciple lineage had been less regarded, replaced by self-learning or group practice.²⁹⁵ In the previous chapters we have discussed monk officials, we have noticed the monk officials in Wutai Shan did not have much practical power in managing the monasteries compared with the southern monk officials in Nanjing. Their role was that of a co-ordinator between monasteries rather than jurisdictional leader. In these reforms we can see something similar to that pattern, especially

²⁹⁵ Shengyan, *Ming Mo Fo jiao Yan jiu*, p.66.

in the Jiangnan region, where Zhuhong led his reform. We learned the reformer was the authority, and under this authority there was hierarchy: the structure of the system was well designed, and rules were clearly and very detailed outlined. On Wutai Shan the reform was carried by a group of monks and lay people together. There was not a permanent authority, even the abbot was watched by the monastic community, and the monastic community had the right to impeach the abbot. The monastic community in Yunqi was big, partly because of the density of local population, partly because of the wealth it had attracted. The age-range of Jiangnan monastic community was wide (from very young novices to 90 years plus old monks), in Lion's Den, 60 years old plus were given the right to live in the Old People's Hall instead of 90 years.

In the late Ming period, there were many monastic reforms throughout the whole of China.²⁹⁶ These three monastic reforms were selected for discussion here because they are representative. They represented three main dominions in China, the Yellow River, the Yangtze River and the Pearl River. These three reforms were chosen also because they were led by eminent monks. Particularly Hanshan and Zhuhong were regarded as patriarchs in Chinese Chan and Pure Land Buddhist schools. Their reforms were not confined to their own time and place but rather their influence went beyond time and place. Thirdly the intentions of

²⁹⁶ Deqing, "Lushan Yunzhong Shifang Changzhu Beiji" (庐山云中十方常住碑记), "Wujiang Jiedai Si Shifang Changzhu Ji" (吴江接待寺十方常住记), "Gaoyou Zhou Beihaitai An Jiedai Shifang Changzhu Ji" (高邮州北海台庵接待十方常住记), in *Hanshan laoren Mengyou Ji*, Vol.26, 卅 XZ Vol. 73, pp.645-6; p.650, pp.651-2. Mizang (密藏), *Mizang Chanshi Zhiding Lengyan Si Guiyue* (密藏禅师制定楞严寺规约), http://taipei.ddbc.edu.tw/sutra/IB118_002.php, 03/08/2010.

their monastic reforms are very similar to each other, and the whole of China followed their example. These three reforms embodied the spirit of that era.

Chapter Five: Ming Imperial Patronage of Wutai Shan

Ever since Wutai Shan was first established as a sacred site by the bodhisatva Mañjuśrī's residence there, it has never lacked imperial patronage. In this chapter we piece together what can be learned from the available sources to trace the development of Wutai Shan's connection with the Ming imperial family, and examine how close this connection became. We also investigate the extent to which imperial patronage influenced Wutai Shan Buddhism, as well as looking at the various donors from the imperial family, the different types of imperial patronage, the purposes of the donations, the uses to which they were put and related issues.

Establishment of Ming imperial connection with Wutai Shan

Wutai Shan did not receive much attention from the Ming imperial family in the dynasty's early period. Although the dynasty's founder, the emperor Hongwu, was keen to adopt Buddhism as a means to stabilise the social order that had been deeply disrupted by the

dynastic war, his passion for Buddhism was mainly expressed through the construction of huge monasteries in his new capital Nanjing and by inviting most of the eminent monks from all over China to come there to perform Buddhist ceremonies of commemoration for the war dead. During this emperor's reign Buddhist monasteries were built on an unprecedented scale in Nanjing. Among the eminent monks invited, Sahajaśrī and (Bao)jin Bifeng were from Wutai Shan. In the previous chapter we discussed Sahajaśrī's relationship with the first Ming emperor. Here we focus on Baojin Bifeng. Like Sahajaśrī, Baojin Bifeng had been summoned to the imperial palace by the last Yuan emperor,²⁹⁷ who gave him the title Jizhao Yuanming (Great Chan Master) and offered him the abbotship of Haiyin monastery in the Yuan capital (Beijing). However, Bifeng refused the emperor's beneficence and insisted on returning to Wutai Shan. After taking the throne Hongwu immediately summoned hundreds of eminent monks to Nanjing, and of these Baojin Bifeng was listed among the top ten.²⁹⁸ Like his predecessor, the first Ming emperor also offered Bifeng a residence in his capital. This time Jin did not refuse, and he remained in the Ming capital²⁹⁹ for the remaining six years of his life.

The emperor's invitation to the capital of these eminent monks can be seen as the Emperor's attempt to use their influence to promote benevolence toward him and to stabilise the disrupted social order, thereby secure his position. Unlike Baojin Bifeng, Sahajaśrī was not among the first group of monks invited to Nanjing. This shows that Sahajaśrī was not trusted

²⁹⁷ Wang Zhichao, "Jizhao Yuanming Jin Gong Sheli Taming You Xu (寂照
圓明金公設利塔銘有序)", p.177.

²⁹⁸ *ibid.* p.178.

²⁹⁹ *ibid.* p.178.

by the Ming Emperor on account of his close association with the Yuan court during their last years, for this reason he was not considered suitable for the emperor's mission.

Hongwu set up his new capital at Nanjing on the south bank of the Yangtze River. As a result Buddhism became more prosperous in the region along the lower Yangtze. By contrast, government patronage for Buddhism in northern China, including Wutai Shan, suffered in the opening era of the Ming dynasty. Even when the emperor ordered monuments for Bifeng and Sahajaśrī to be constructed on Wutai Shan after their deaths,³⁰⁰ this action was intended to honour the two great monks for their contribution to his empire rather than to support Wutai Shan Buddhism per se. Hongwu did not pay any particular attention to Wutai Shan Buddhism. A typical example demonstrating his ignorance of Wutai Shan Buddhism is his creation of the monk official system, which we discussed in previous chapters, where no Buddhist office was set up on Wutai Shan during the thirty years of his reign.

On his death Hongwu's throne passed to his grandson, as the crown prince had died some years previously. Before the second Ming emperor was able to establish his authority, however, he was replaced by his uncle Yongle, one of the most famous emperors of late imperial China. Yongle ruled China only for 22 years but his achievements span many fields. The Yongle Encyclopaedia (永乐大典) was edited under his personal instruction; in his time, the technique of making porcelain was developed to a very advanced level; politically,

³⁰⁰ Hongwu wrote poems to them which were carved on their tombstones after they passed away. Wang Zhichao, pp.177-184; pp.185-193. In *Qingliang Shanzhi* there is an entry about Xitian Si, on which according to Zhencheng an imperial seal was bestowed by the founder of the Ming dynasty. However, I believe the imperial seal was not bestowed on the Xitian Si, this seal was bestowed to Sahajaśrī, who lived there for some time before he met the Ming emperor. See Chapter Two “Trans-cultural Pilgrims”.

Yongle's admirals spread China's influence into south-east and even parts of south Asia; in science, through the explorations of the emperor's fleets the Ming Chinese acquired an unrivaled knowledge of the globe than any other nation in the world. According to the available historical records and archaeological evidence the earliest Ming patronage of Wutai Shan Buddhism began with Yongle. His first acts in support of Wutai Shan Buddhism were to set up a Buddhist office there in the third year of his reign, and to order the local government to supply monthly provisions to this office.³⁰¹

For political reasons Yongle abandoned Nanjing, which his father had built with so much effort, and established a new capital in his own political territory. This was at Beijing, the site of the old Yuan capital. However, shifting the capital north was not an easy task, taking nearly twenty years to accomplish. Buddhism in the North began to thrive as the result of moving the capital to Beijing. During the process of shifting the capital to the North Yongle had already begun to patronise the reconstructions of some major monasteries on Wutai Shan. The motivation for his patronage can be understood as a wish to strengthen the cultural base of the North as a foundation for his new political capital.

Today the largest and the most prominent monastery on Wutai Shan is Xiantong Monastery. There is an entry on this monastery in *Qingliang Shanzhi* in which Zhencheng (1547-1617) writes: "...when Ming Taizong the Wen Emperor (Yongle) commanded the reconstruction, (during the reconstruction) people saw manifestations of celestial beings for which there was no precedent in the history of Wutai Shan. Therefore, the Emperor bestowed the name Da Xiantong (manifestations) on this monastery...."³⁰² Hence we know the name Da

³⁰¹ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, pp.35-36. This practice began in 1405 and lasted about 120 years. It was brought to an end by the Daoist Emperor Jiajing.

³⁰² Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, pp. 35-36.

Xiantong was given by Yongle. However, Zhencheng does not give us the exact year when the Xiantong monastery was rebuilt under the emperor's command, nor the precise reason for the reconstruction of the monastery.

On a Wanli era stele commemorating the completion of the Yongming Qichu Jiuhui Great Hall (永明七处九会大殿) we read "...when Chengzu (Yongle) bestowed the book '*Foqu Mingjing* (佛曲名经)' on this monastery [in 1417], five hundred arahants manifested in the air and danced. Therefore, the emperor commanded Da Jixiang Xiantong monastery to be reconstructed. In the 36th year of the Wanli era (1606), the great master Miaofeng, who was born in Puban, cast a bronze pavilion and stored it in Xiantong monastery. The [Wanli] emperor commanded 'Huguo Shengguang Yongming Monastery (护国圣光永明寺) to be built'"³⁰³ This stele, which still standing in Da Xiantong monastery today, honours master Miaofeng's great contribution of the cast bronze pavilion. The Wanli emperor commanded Xiantong monastery to be reconstructed and renamed it as Huguo Shengguang Yongming Monastery.

The writer of this inscription provides the important information that in 1417 the emperor Yongle distributed a book on Buddhist ritual music to Wutai Shan and reconstructed this monastery. However, this reconstruction of Da Xiantong monastery was not the first one commanded by Yongle. In Tayuan monastery we find a stele erected in 1538 according to which Yongle had reconstructed Xiantong Monastery in 1407.

Unlike his father, who had himself been a Chinese Buddhist monk, Yongle was more interested in Tibetan Buddhism. This was no doubt the result of living in Beijing for more than twenty years before ascending the throne. Beijing as the former Yuan capital was the home of many Tibetan monks and monasteries. Surrounded with such an environment, Yongle

³⁰³ Wang Zhichao, Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu, P.307.

would surely have been influenced by this Buddhist tradition. As soon as he ascended the throne Yongle sent envoys to invite an important Tibetan monk to come to Nanjing to give him the *abhisecani* blessing. In the official invitation letter he wrote: "...in those days when I was still living in the North, I had heard your venerable name, and keenly wanted to meet you. Now I have ascended the throne and ensured peace in my country. The thought of meeting you has been cherished so long ... I sincerely hope Karmapa can come to the Middle Kingdom and to spread the Buddha's teaching."³⁰⁴ When Karmapa eventually came to Nanjing meet him, Yongle granted him a title which was as honourable as the one which Bāspa had from the Yuan Dynasty. This was the first time a Tibetan monk had been given such a high ranking title under the Ming dynasty.

After meeting Yongle in Nanjing, Kamapa requested a visit to Wutai Shan. Before this visit and in order to receive Kamapa better, Yongle ordered the reconstruction of some of the major monasteries on Wutai Shan. This was the first imperial patronage Wutai Shan received from the Ming dynasty. Thus, Wutai Shan regained the prestigious position it had held during the Yuan dynasty among the imperials and the Tibetans.

The imperial construction of temples for Tibetan Buddhists reflected both the personal and strategic interests of emperors, which were distinct from those of wider society. Thus the Ming rulers followed the Yuan practice of establishing patron-client relations with high Tibetan and Mongol lamas.

³⁰⁴ Dpa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba (巴俄.祖拉陈瓦), *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston* (智者喜宴), Beijing: Minzu Chubanshe, 1986 , Vol.2, p.1001. Chinese translation see Deng Ruiling 邓锐玲, "Xianzhe Xiyan Ming Yongle Shi Shangshi Halima Jinjing Jishi Qianzheng (贤者喜宴明永乐时尚师哈立麻晋京纪事笺证)", in *China Tibetology* (中国藏学), 1992.3.

As a capable war leader Yongle had fought against Mongols many times in the Gobi desert. Although he travelled widely in China he never visited Wutai Shan, supposedly the most important Buddhist site in northern China. Indeed, none of the Ming emperors visited Wutai Shan. This is in striking contrast with both their predecessors the Mongol emperors and their successors the Manchurians, both of whom frequently visited Wutai Shan.

Monasteries patronised by the Imperials

A stele [诸山大小寺] erected in the Wanli era records all the major and minor Buddhist establishments.³⁰⁵ Altogether 89 establishments are mentioned. Of these, 23 are recorded as having been patronised or supported by the imperial household. The following chart shows how these monasteries were supported and who supported them.

Table 3. Monasteries patronised by the imperials:

Monastery	Sponsors	Status of sponsorship	Era	Sources
显通寺（永明寺）	Chengzu Shenzong	Chi Jian (constructed with government funds)	Yongle, Wanli	
菩萨顶（文殊院）	Chengzu Xianzong Shenzong	Chijian	Yongle, Chenghua, Wanli	Qingliang Shanzhi, p. 37, p.132.
塔院寺（慈寿寺）	Chengzu Shenzong	Chijian	Yongle, Wanli	
圆照寺	Xuanzong Yingzong	Chijian	Xuande, Tianshun	Wang Zhichao, p. 009, p.205, p.228.

³⁰⁵ Wang Zhichao, pp.280-282.

Monastery	Sponsors	Status of sponsorship	Era	Sources
广宗寺	Wuzong	Chi Jian	Zhengde	Wang Zhichao, p. 13, p.15, p. 228. Qingliang Shanzhi, p. 37.
三塔寺	Shenzong	Chijian	Wanli	Qingliang Shanzhi, p.40.
广缘寺		Chici (bestowed by imperial order)		Wang Zhichao, p. 205, p.228. Qingliang Shanzhi, p.38
Zhulin Si 竹林寺	Shenzong	Chici	Wanli	Wang Zhichao, p.303
Yanjiao Si 演教寺 (中台)	Wuzong	Chici	Zhengde	Qingliang Shanzhi, p.233
Puji Si 普济寺 (碧山寺)	Shenzong	Chici	Wanli	Wang Zhichao, pp. 200-221; Qingliang Shanzhi, p.38
Yuhua Chi 玉华池 (万寿寺)	Xianzong	Chici	Chenghua	Wang Zhichao, p.203
Shizi Wo 狮子窝	shenzong	Chi Ci	Wanli	Qingliang Shanzhi, pp.135-6
Puguang Si 普光寺	Taizu	Chixiu 敕修 Restored by Imperial Order	Hongwu	Qingliang Shanzhi, p.51

Monastery	Sponsors	Status of sponsorship	Era	Sources
Fenglin Si 风林寺	Empress Dowager Li (圣母)	Cizang 赐葬 A funeral was carried out by Imperial Order	Wanli	Qingliang Shanzhi, p.41; Wang Zhichao, p.300
Huguo Si 护国寺	Empress Dowager Zhou (国母)		Hongzhi	Qingliang Shanzhi, p.41
Dailuo Ding 大螺顶	Empress Dowager Li (圣母)		Wanli	Wang Zhichao, p.276
Lingying Si 灵应寺 (北台)	Empress Dowager Li (圣母)		Wanli	Qingliang Shanzhi, p.44
Jin'ge Si 金阁寺	Prince of Dai (代王)	Wangjian		Wang Zhichao, p. 241, p.246
Luohou Si 罗侯寺	Prince of Zhao (hui) 赵惠王	Wangjian		Qingliang Shanzhi, p.38
Boruo Si 般若寺	Prince of Jin 晋王	Wangjian	Chenghua	Qingliang Shanzhi, p.38
Lingfeng Si 灵峰寺	Imperial relative 周皇戚			Qingliang Shanzhi, pp.42-3
Shuxiang Si 殊像寺	Shenzong	Jiang Bai Jin (皇上奖白金) White gold were rewarded by the Emperor	Wanli	Wang Zhichao, p.289
Pu'en Si 普恩寺	Yingzong	Ci Zangjing (赐藏经) <i>Tripitaka</i> was bestowed by Imperial Order	Tianshun/ Zhengtong	Qingliang Shanzhi, p.31

The above 23 Wutai Shan Buddhist establishments were patronised by the Ming emperors or members of the Ming imperial household. A good indication of the popularity of Wutai Shan with the Ming imperials is that throughout the 276 years of the Ming dynasty no other Buddhist mountains attracted as much imperial attention. Notwithstanding the data I have collected above, it must considerably underestimate the number of Wutai Shan monasteries that received imperial patronage as a great deal of evidence must have been destroyed with the passage of time. The Ming Wutai Shan steles even include some *chici* (敕賜) monasteries, though no clear indication is given as to the imperial patrons who built them. For this reason I have not included them here.³⁰⁶

Monasteries Restored by Emperors with Government Funds (敕建)

Among the above monasteries, four were constructed or reconstructed by imperial order and with corvee and large amounts of money from the government treasury. These were Xiantong, Tayuan, Yuanzhao and Guangzong Monasteries and their construction was by the orders of Yongle, Xuande, and Zhengde.

Xiantong Monastery (显通寺), imperial patrons -Yongle, Wanli

In the fifth year of Yongle's reign twenty thousand artisans and labourers were sent to Wutai Shan under imperial order for the reconstruction of Xiantong Monastery. The supervision committee included two eunuchs, Yang Zhong and Yang Sheng, plus some provincial governors, proving that not only the imperial palace but also the regional government was involved in this project. As mentioned above the reason for the reconstruction of this monastery was to provide for the visit by the famous Tibetan lama Karmapa. This is the first

³⁰⁶ Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, p.228, p.243.

recorded restoration project on Wutai Shan patronised by imperial order.³⁰⁷ As previously mentioned, before this project Yongle had already given orders for the setting up of a Buddhist office on Wutai Shan. In the late Ming dynasty, the Wanli emperor also reconstructed this monastery, renaming it Huguo Shengguang Yongming Monastery (护国圣光永明寺).³⁰⁸ However, we do not know whether the reconstruction funds came from the government treasury or from the imperial palace treasury.

Yuanzhao Monastery (圆照寺), imperial patrons -Xuande, Yingzong and Longqing

We have discussed Śāripūtrā in a previous chapter, and we know that the emperor Xuande (1426-1436) gave instructions for two pagodas to be built in his honour. One is in Zhenjue Monastery in Beijing, the other in Yuanzhao Monastery on Wutai Shan. Zhencheng states in *Qingliang Shanzhi* that Xuande not only built a pagoda for Śāripūtrā on Wutai Shan but also constructed a monastery around the pagoda. This is apparently attested to in a later dedication inscription composed by the emperor Longqing (1567-1573) to mark the reconstruction of this monastery in 1569 after it was destroyed by fire.³⁰⁹ From Longqing's inscription we learn that a eunuch called Yang Ying and some provincial government officials were appointed by his forebear, Emperor Xuande, to build the pagoda to enshrine Śāripūtrā's relics. In the above two inscriptions there is no clear reference as to when this project was started or completed. However, the 1458 inscription by the emperor Yingzong (1436-1450, 1457-1465) gives us an

³⁰⁷Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, p.138. Also see Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, pp.35-36.

³⁰⁸ See Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, p.307.

³⁰⁹ Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, pp.17-18.

idea when it was completed.³¹⁰ From the known date of Śāripūtrā's death, 1426 (the first year of the Xuande's reign), we can conclude that the pagoda on Wutai Shan was completed 30 years after his death. We have no direct evidence however as to why it took so long for the pagoda to be built. Piecing all the information together suggests that the emperor sent his personal representative and commanded both him and the local provincial government officials to be jointly in charge of this project. From this joint charge, we believe the funds for constructing Yuanzhao Monastery came from state tax revenues; corvee may also be have used for the construction. Further, the term *chijian* (敕建) is attached to the name of this monastery in several places.³¹¹

Guangzong Monastery (广宗寺), imperial patrons - Hongzhi and Zhengde

The reconstruction of Guangzong Monastery began in the second year of Zhengde's reign (1507). According to Zhengde's edict, the emperor Hongzhi (Zhengde's father) wished to set up a Buddhist monastery at the top of the eastern peak of Wutai Shan. Due to the harsh weather condition at the top of the mountain, Hongzhi ordered metal tiles to be cast for this monastery. However, the emperor died before he could complete his plan. To fulfil his father's wish Zhengde sent the eunuch Chang Min (常敏) to Wutai Shan to supervise the project. When Chang Min and the regional officials reached the site they experienced overwhelming weather condition. In addition the road was very precipitous, and Chang Min realised it would be extremely difficult to complete such a project. Chang Min reported this to the emperor and suggested an alternative plan, namely to build the monastery next to Xiantong Monastery. Zhengde approved Chang's plan and asked the regional military general and provincial

³¹⁰ Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, p.9.

³¹¹ Wang, Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, p.228, p.205.

officials to support the project by sending artisans and labourers to Wutai Shan, also to share the costs.³¹² We are not clear when this project was completed however in 1515, on the eunuch Jiao Ning (焦宁)'s request, Zhengde bestowed the name Guang Zong³¹³ on this monastery. Meanwhile he promoted the abbot Huishou and two other Tibetan monks who resided in this monastery to the rank of Right Enlighteners (觉义).³¹⁴ From other sources we learn that the emperor bestowed a seal to protect this monastery and selected Qiuya (秋崖) and nine other eminent monks to reside there.³¹⁵ This again proves that Tibetans and Chinese monks lived in the same religious compounds during the Ming dynasty. Did they practice their different Buddhist traditions together or separately? What about eating habits? We cannot answer these questions.

³¹² See Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, p. 13, “合用钱粮并各色匠役人夫，即行都布按三司从宜分派措用”；Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, pp. 216-7, “合用木石等料，会议各官行人，附近州县预为措办”. In the Ming dynasty, particularly in the mid and late Ming dynasty, military soldiers were used as labourers for constructing some big governmental projects. As a result they were not familiar with fighting skills and Ming's defensive capability was severely weakened.

³¹³ From this name we may presume that the reason Zhengde built this monastery was to pray for an heir.

³¹⁴ Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, p.15.

³¹⁵ Zhencheng, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, p.37.

Monasteries which were Built by Emperors without Governmental Funds or Funding of Uncertain Origin³¹⁶

Tayuan Moanstery (塔院寺), imperial patrons - Yongle, Wanli

Tayuan Monastery was established by Yongle but its modern layout was designed and constructed under the Empress Dowager Li's patronage in the early years of Wanli era. The scale of Empress Dowager Li's patronage exceeded Yongle's and is more evident in Tayuan Monastery. In contrast to Yongle's use of government funds, there is no definite indication that the funds for Empress Dowager Li's reconstruction of Tayuan monastery came from the government treasury.

From its name, we can tell that Tayuan (literally "the courtyard of the pagoda") Monastery was built around a pagoda. It is sometimes said that this pagoda was built by the Indian King Asoka in third century BCE but obviously this cannot be true. We are not clear when this pagoda was erected. However, we do know that the extant version of it was designed by a Nepalese architect during the Yuan dynasty.³¹⁷ In the early Ming period the pagoda was reconstructed at the request of Karmapa. Yongle ordered the same team who restored

³¹⁶ Tayuan Monastery was constructed with governmental funds by Yongle's order. However, we are not sure where the funds came from when Madame Li reconstructed this monastery in her son's name (Wanli).

³¹⁷ Min Bahadur Shakya, "Nepalese Buddhist artist Arniko and his contribution to Buddhist heritage of China" <http://www.scribd.com/doc/25702931/Nepalese-Buddhist-Artist-Arniko-and-His-Contribution-to-Buddhist-Heritage-of-China>. 24/01/2010. Also Huang Shangzhang, "Wutai Shan Da Tayuan Si Baita de Laiyuan Yu CHuangjia Xin Kao (五台山塔院寺白塔的来源与创建新考)", in *Jinyang Xuekan* (晋阳学刊), 1982.1, p.54.

Xiantong Monastery to complete this project,³¹⁸ after which a monastery was built around this pagoda.³¹⁹ In the seventh year of the Wanli era, Empress Dowager Li sponsored a new restoration of this pagoda.³²⁰ Empress Dowager Li played an important role in the revival of Buddhism in the late Ming period. When her husband died, her son, the emperor Wanli, was still very young. She and the Grand Secretary Zhang Juzheng (张居正) formed a strong alliance, acting as the regent governors, her orders could be given in her son's name. Therefore, Tayuan monastery was designated *chijian* (敕建)—built by imperial order. As she was a pious Buddhist, she patronised many Buddhist monasteries throughout the country of which Tayuan Monastery was only one.

In the late Ming most of the imperial patrons claimed that their donations came from the privy purse, not the central government treasury, so the people were not troubled. There were probably two reasons for this. First, many Confucian bureaucrats criticised the Ming imperial court's spending on religious activities.³²¹ Furthermore, from a religious point of view, by patronising Buddhist monasteries with their own money they could accumulate more merit for themselves. Particularly among imperial ladies motivations were mostly very personal.³²² The empress dowager had sufficient income to sponsor major constructions such as Tayuan. The disadvantage of this individual patronising of particular Buddhist establishments on the part of imperials was that Buddhist establishments tended to lack ongoing institutional support. As

³¹⁸ Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, p.239.

³¹⁹ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p.36.

³²⁰ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi* pp.133-134.

³²¹ Susan Naquin, *Peking: Temples and City Life, 1400-1900*, P.132.

³²² Quite often these imperial ladies or even some emperors made a vow or promise to a particular deity. If this prayer was answered they would repay it by donating money or presenting gifts or sponsoring a building project, etc.

Naquin says: "...however, given the highly divergent religious interests of Ming rulers, it seems most likely—and quite in keeping with the personal nature of this sort of action—that individual emperors dictated this kind of budgeted support only during their lifetimes."³²³

Da Wenshu Monastery (大文殊寺), Imperial Patrons - Chenghua

Zhenrong Yuan (真容院) was rebuilt by Yongle who gave it the present name of Da Wenshu Monastery (commonly known as Pusa Ding).³²⁴ According to Zhencheng, Yongle bestowed some valuable Sanskrit sutras on the monastery and these scriptures were written in an Indian style with the Emperor's preface.³²⁵ Where did these sutras come from? In *QLSZJY* (清凉山志辑要) we learn that these sutras were brought back from Tibet early in Yongle's reign by Sahajaśrī's disciple Zhiguang and the eunuch Houxian.³²⁶ The emperor ordered that the wood that was to have been used for his coffin should be engraved for printing these sutras instead. The first copy was bestowed on Da Wenshu Monastery. The question arises as to who would or could read these Sanskrit sutras. Could it mean that there were Indian or possibly some Tibetan monks who understood Sanskrit living there?

³²³ Naquin, *Peking: Temples and City Life, 1400-1900*, p.151.

³²⁴ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, pp.131-132: 宪宗：...是年六月，复敕谕五台大文殊寺：朕惟佛氏以空寂为宗，慈济为用，阴翊皇度，开觉生民，神化之功，幽明无间。是以华夷愚智，家户奉行，非勉之而然，乃自然也。其于治道，岂不裕哉。朕嗣位以来，至善之道，罔不思隆。今承皇考崇善保民之心，敕建五台山文殊寺，僧二十名，月给粮六斗，命尔短竹斑丹禅师焚修。上祝国厘，下祈民福。

³²⁵ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p.37.

³²⁶ L. Carrington, Goodrich, "Hou Hsien" in *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1976, pp.522-23.

Later in the mid Ming period this monastery was reconstructed by order of the emperor Chenghua.³²⁷ Following in his father Yingzong's footsteps, Chenghua continued to patronize religious establishments on Wutai Shan. Both Chenghua and his father had difficult ascents to the throne. Following his favorite eunuch Wang Zhen (王振)'s suggestion, Yingzong led a huge but inexperienced army to the northern border to fight the invading Mongols. The consequences of this rash military deployment were disastrous. Yingzong's army of half a million men was crushed and Yingzong himself was captured. The Mongols held him hostage while negotiating with the Beijing government. As the Mongols had a very greedy request, the Ming government could not make an agreement with them. In the end, officials in Beijing decided that "The state is more important, the sovereign is less (社稷为重, 君为轻)", and with the agreement of the dowager, the emperor's younger brother was enthroned and the Mongols' threats and demands were ignored. A year later when Yingzong returned to Beijing his brother refused to hand over power but rather had Yingzong put under house arrest, treating him poorly while in confinement. Now Yingzong's son had been appointed crown prince before his father was captured but even though this young prince was not displaced immediately, as his uncle strengthened his grip on power his displacement was only a matter of time. However, events later shifted in Yingzong's favour. Eight years after Yingzong lost the throne his brother's only son died and the palace fell into chaos. At this point Yingzong staged a lightning coup and regained power. As a Buddhist Yingzong must have prayed a great deal to various Buddhist deities during his time as a captive of the Mongols also when he was under house arrest in the palace. Shortly after Yingzong re-ascended to the throne, he issued at least three edicts concerning Wutai Shan, which we will discuss later. From these edicts we will see his strong interest in Tibetan Buddhism on Wutai Shan. Was this due to his

³²⁷ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, pp.131-132.

having come under the influence of the Mongols during his time in captivity? While held by them the Mongols treated him with respect. Mongolian Buddhists followed the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, and Wutai Shan had a special place in their religious sentiments. As late as the late Ming a certain Mongol chieftain requested permission from the Ming court to make a pilgrimage to Wutai Shan.³²⁸

Emperor Yingzong's son Chenghua rebuilt Da Wenshu Monastery in the 17th year of his reign. His edict says: "My understanding of Buddhism is that Śūnyatā is its principle, mercy and charity are its instruments. It assists emperors in governing the country indefinitely, and enlightens the masses. The benefits of its teaching can be seen in all spheres. Therefore, [no matter whether] Chinese or non-Chinese, wise or foolish, all follow this teaching. No one forces them to practice the teaching of Buddhism, but [people] follow this teaching naturally. In terms of pursuing the Way, doesn't it enrich the state and the people? Since I ascended the throne, I have been always promoting the Way which leads to absolute righteousness. Now following my father's path of promoting the way of righteousness and protecting the people, [I] decree the [re]building of Wenshu monastery on Wutai Shan, [to accommodate] twenty monks, monthly pension six decaliters of grain, and I appoint you Duanzhubandan Chan master (a Tibetan monk) to lead them to practice"³²⁹

³²⁸ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p.174. "明隆庆五年，虏酋俺鞑，款关效贡，仰五台圣境，奏请欲来进香，..."

³²⁹ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p.132. "朕惟佛氏以空寂为宗，慈济为用，阴翊皇度，开觉生民，神化之功，幽明无间。是以华夷智愚，家户奉行，非勉之而然，乃自然也。其于治道，岂不裕哉。朕嗣位以来，至善之道，枉不思隆。今承皇考崇善保民之心，敕建五台山文殊寺，僧二十名，月给粮六斗，命尔短竹斑丹禅师梵修".

This reveals that the monastery was rebuilt to accommodate Tibetan and perhaps also Mongolian monks. Both Yingzong and Chenghua promoted Tibetan Buddhism on Wutai Shan. Does this show a strong Mongol-Tibetan influence? Does this project indicate their appreciation to the Mongols? These two emperors' intentions to patronise Tibetan Buddhism may lack substantial physical evidence, but the result of this patronage may be seen in that Tibetan Buddhism continuously enjoyed high prestige on Wutai Shan during their reigns, and many Tibetans and Mongolians were consequently encouraged to make pilgrimage there. In the late Ming period the emperor Wanli sent the eunuch Li You to Wutai Shan to reconstruct this monastery.³³⁰

Santa Monastery (三塔寺), imperial patron —Wanli

There is also an entry in the *Qingliang Shanzhi* stating that in the early years of Wanli's reign, Santa (three pagodas) Monastery was constructed under imperial order. A monk called Liaochen (了尘) was appointed abbot there.³³¹

³³⁰ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p.37.

³³¹ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p.40

All together, six emperors (Yongle, Xuande, Yingzong, Chenghua, Zhengde, and Wanli) constructed or reconstructed six different monasteries ten times.³³² The motivations of Ming emperors for patronising these monasteries differed. Although the early Ming emperors' motivation for patronising monasteries on Wutai Shan involved their spiritual interests, political strategy was a more significant factor. By contrast, the mid and late Ming emperors' motivations were more personal than political, and most of the funds came from their private resources rather than from tax revenues. Looking at the monasteries which received imperial patronage it is apparent that Tibetan Buddhism was the main interest of these emperors. Ming emperors's favour of Buddhism is reflected in the government officials' complain: "Since moving the capital [to Beijing], among all things we have neglected, nothing can be compared with the Imperial College (太学), among all things we have innovated, nothing can be compared with Buddhism establishments."³³³

³³²Xiantong Monastery 显通寺(永明寺) by Yongle and Wanli;

Pusa Ding 菩萨顶 (文殊寺) by Yongle (Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p.37), Chenghua (Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p.132) and Wanli (Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p.37);

Tayan Monastery 塔院寺 (慈寿寺) by Yongle and Wanli;

Guangzong Monastery 广宗寺 by Zhengde (Wang Zhichao *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, p. 13, 15; Zhengcheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p.37);

Yuanzhao Monastery 圆照寺 by Yingzong (Wang Zhichao, p.9, p.205, p.228.);

Santa Monastery 三塔寺 by Wangli (Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p. 40).

³³³ *Ming Yingzong Shilu* (明英宗实录) Vol. 23, "迁都以来, 所废弛者, 莫甚于太学, 所创新者, 莫多于佛寺", pp.455-456.

“Bestowed by imperial order” (敕賜) Monasteries

Imperial patronage was signalled by special language. An establishment that had been built or restored with imperial funds could preface its name with *chijian* (敕建) or *chixiu* (敕修), meaning established or restored by imperial command. Names and gifts were announced as having been “bestowed by imperial order” (敕賜). Six monasteries on Wutai Shan prefaced their names with “bestowed by imperial order” or *chici* (敕賜) in Chinese.

Ming imperials gave gifts to Wutai Shan monasteries for several reasons. First, eminent monks like Bifeng, Deqing, Zhencheng, Miaofeng and others who had done outstanding work were received by the Ming imperials and were even summoned to the palace. As a result of their personal connections with the Ming imperials, gifts were given to their monasteries on Wutai Shan. Moreover, gifts were sometimes made when miracles and other unusual phenomena had occurred at some monastery. These occurrences were considered auspicious signs for good governance and the good fortune for the empire.

A name was sometimes bestowed on a particular monastery by the emperor at the request of a regional prince or an imperial eunuch. From the monastery's point of view, to have a name bestowed in this way was to have its status legitimised. In the Ming dynasty individuals were forbidden by law to build religious institutions,³³⁴ unless they first received permission from the authorities. The following *chici* (敕賜) monasteries were either newly established or

³³⁴ Throughout the whole Ming dynasty the authorities had emphasised many times individuals were not allowed to establish monasteries without government permission. For example in *Diangu Jiwen* (典故纪文) there is such an entry: “天顺初，留守右街小旗陈福奏：‘洪惟太祖高皇帝创业之初，建创寺观，设立僧道，已有定额。其后往往私创庵院，滥将无籍之徒收充...其余滥设寺观尽行拆毁。’从之。”, p.231.

built from the ruins of a disused monastery. Therefore, their establishment must have been authorised by the emperor.

Wanshou Monastery 万寿寺 (also known as Yuhua Pond 玉华池)

In 1495, during the reconstruction of the monastery of Yuhua Pond, an imperial censor (御史), composed an article to commemorate the event.³³⁵ The censor's name was Tian Yi, and he was a native of Shanxi province. In this article we read that in 1481 the emperor Chenghua had a statue of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī cast and that he donated it to Wutai Shan, though whether this statue was given to Yuhua Pond or another monastery the high-ranked bureaucrat did not make clear. However, in the *Qingliang Shanzhi Zhencheng* mentions that in the seventeenth year of the Chenghua era (1481), in order to bless his mother's good health, the emperor had cast a gilded image of Mañjuśrī and dispatched the eunuch Li Zhen to enshrine it in Wenshu Monastery (commonly known as Pusa Ding)³³⁶ on Wutai Shan. We can therefore conclude that there was no direct connection between this imperial donation and Yuhua Pond. Reading further in the article we learn that it was Li Zhen and the other eunuchs who after returning to the palace requested the emperor to bestow a name on Yuhua Pond. The emperor acceded to this request, bestowing the name "Wanshou" on the monastery. As mentioned previously the reason for obtaining a bestowed name was usually to legitimise a monastery's status. From Tian Yi's article we find that the monastery was founded by a Buddhist monk three generations earlier, presumably without government authorisation.

³³⁵ Wangzhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, pp. 203-205.

³³⁶ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p.132, "[成化]十七年，上为圣母祈安，造镀金文殊像，高一丈六寸并画佛百轴，香金五百两，布帛千疋，念珠万串，遣太监李珍赍送台山文殊寺，供养散施".

Therefore, the third abbot petitioned the eunuchs who carried out the emperor's mission, to grant a name to his monastery. Tian Yi mentions specifically not only that the emperor bestowed the name "Wanshou Chan Monastery" on Yuhua Pond, but also that the Ministry of Rites of the central government granted a letter or certificate (札付) to this monastery. We do not find such a formula in any other similar case on Wutai Shan. Due to lack of evidence we cannot determine exactly how significant this letter/certificate was to the monastery.

Yanjiao Monastery 演教寺 (中台)

In the seventh year of his reign, the emperor Zhengde instructed a certain Tibetan monk (Rdo rje rgyal mtshan 朵而只坚) to set up a new monastery at the top of the central peak of Wutai Shan. The tiles used for constructing this monastery were not normal ones but were made of iron instead. Zhengde bestowed the name "Yanjiao" on this monastery, and issued an edict to protect and support the monks who lived there.³³⁷

The construction of this monastery with its metal tiles was not unique to Wutai Shan. In fact quite a few monasteries were built with metal tiles in other places. One such monastery in particular, Tiewa Chanlin (铁瓦禅林) of Ming construction, still stands today in a suburb of Beijing and merits a mention here. We can read the words engraved on the iron tile "made in the tenth year of the Zhengde era by Pusa Ding (菩萨顶正德十年造)"、"Iron Tile Monastery, Pusa Ding of Wutai Shan (五台山菩萨顶铁瓦寺)" on the surface of the iron tiles.³³⁸ These words are confusing because Pusa Ding was not built with iron tiles. How can we explain this? We learn that the land where Guangzong Monastery was built belonged to

³³⁷ Zhencheng, p. 133 "(正德)七年春, 上敕梵僧朵而只坚, 于中台顶, 建寺一区, 铸铁为瓦, 赐额曰演教, 并敕旨护持。"

³³⁸ <http://org.bjfh.gov.cn/zf-zhdj/szb/zyj/y3.htm> 2007/11/23

Pusa Ding.³³⁹ It is possible that Guangzong Monastery was considered an annex of Pusa Ding. However, Guangzong Monastery was colloquially called Brass-tile Monastery for its main hall which was built with brass tiles. More clearly we note in one of the emperor Zhengde's edicts to Guangzong Monastery that this brass-tile monastery was completed in the 9th year of his reign,³⁴⁰ while Yanjiao Monastery, colloquially called "Iron-tile Monastery", was begun in the 7th year of Zhengde's reign. The conclusion drawn is that the two metal-tile monasteries were constructed on Wutai Shan at the same time. The following paragraphs will affirm that Guangzong Monastery and Yanjiao Monastery followed the same Buddhist tradition and since both projects were associated with the imperial palace, these brass tiles and iron tiles would have been cast in the same foundry. The best explanation for the mystery is that after the completion of these monasteries the left-over tiles with the engraved words were donated to other Buddhist establishments.

There is no other entry on Rdo rje rgyal [mtshan] (朵而只坚) in *Qingliang Shanzhi*. Nor is there any mention in books on Ming history or in the records of any of the Ming emperors. However, in a Qing period book about the landscapes of Beijing, *Liuli Chang Za Ji* (琉璃厂

³³⁹ Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, p. 216: 《广宗寺修铜瓦铜脊佛殿碑文》“臣[常敏]回到敕建显通寺内，会同前项各官，同往菩萨顶相看空地二段，原系菩萨道场[寿宁寺]。臣会同各官量度此地，无劳民妄费之力，有坚固久运[远]之基，堪以盖造佛殿...”大明正德三年。

³⁴⁰ Wang Zhichao, p. 15: 《广宗寺碑文》—朱厚照“...先年御马监太监常敏会同有司盖造铜瓦文殊宝殿，钟鼓楼，山门，僧房，墙垣等项已完。今御马监太监焦宁奏请寺额，特赐名‘广宗’...大明正德十年十一月初五日”

杂记), we read there were three pagodas outside Wuta Monastery (五塔寺).³⁴¹ The biggest of these was thought by the author to be the Śāripūtrā's pagoda, but there was no inscription or epitaph attached to it. The second one was Sang rgyi Rdo rje (桑节朵而只)'s pagoda which had an inscription that could be read clearly. The smallest one of the three was dedicated to another famous Wutai Shan Tibetan monk, Blo bzang bsdn pa (罗 or 老藏丹巴).³⁴² All three of these monks had lived on Wutai Shan, and all of them had made important contributions to the development of Wutai Shan Buddhism.³⁴³ None of the three pagodas exists any longer, but fortunately in the early nineties of the last century a stele bearing Sangye Rdo rje's (桑节朵而只) epitaph was excavated and is now kept in Beijing Stone Carvings Art Museum (石刻艺术馆). This inscription was erected by Sangye Rdo rje's eldest disciple Rdo rje rgyal mtshan (朵而只坚参), who had held title of Imperial Inspector of Wutai Shan Hongci Yujia National Preceptor (钦依提督五台弘慈翊教国师). Having identified Rdo rje rgyal [mtshan] (朵而只坚) with the office of Imperial Inspector of Wutai Shan Hongci Yujiao National Preceptor, we can piece together the life of this Tibetan master on Wutai Shan.

³⁴¹ Bao Shixuan 包世轩, "Yuan Da Huguo Renwang Si Jiuzhi Jiqi Xiangguan Wenti Kaocha" 元大护国仁王寺旧址及相关问题考察, *Beijing Wenbo* 北京文博, <http://www.bjww.gov.cn/2004/6-28/118.html>, 23/08/2008.

³⁴² Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, pp.102-3.

³⁴³ Zhou Zhaoxiang (周肇祥), *Liuli Chang Zaji* (琉璃厂杂记) Vol.2: "极乐寺在高梁桥西约二里, 明以牡丹胜。.....西数十武曰五塔寺, 明真觉寺也。.....寺西僧塔三, 大者无碣, 制特宏丽。疑即板的达藏骨处。次者碑题《大隆善护国寺大国师张公塔记》, 张名桑节朵而只, 山后人, 差封乌斯藏法王。.....正德七年(1512年)立。小塔坚牢, 修净若拭, 提督五台山番汉僧象罗藏丹巴塔也。" Quoted by Bao Shixuan, see <http://www.bjww.gov.cn/2004/6-28/118.html>, 23/08/2008.

We don't know when Rdo rje rgyal mtshan (朵而只坚参) was given this state preceptor position but it may have been an appointment conferred on him by the emperor Hongzhi (1488-1505) or even by Zhengde, who was the most fervent practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism among the Ming emperors. (He even granted himself the title “Daqing Dharma King”, 大庆法王). In a Jiajing era stele³⁴⁴ we find that after the title Hongci Yujiao National Preceptor (弘慈翊教国师) the name Gao'an (高庵) was attached rather than Rdo rje rgyal mtshan (朵而只坚参). Traditionally Tibetan monks were addressed by their lay names on certain occasions. Could Gao'an have been Rdo rje rgyal mtshan (朵而只坚参)'s lay name?

To date I have found four occurrences of Rdo rje rgyal mtshan (朵而只坚参)'s name on various inscriptions, one is on his master's epitaph and a further three are on Wutai Shan steles that witness various events. On these three Wutai Shan steles the title is the same but the names attached to it are different. On one his personal name is given as Gao'an (高庵). On the other two steles his name appears as Rgyal mtshan (坚参).³⁴⁵ We can speculate that this is the shortened name of Rdo rje rgyal mtshan (朵而只坚参). Following by his personal name in one of these two steles there is this conferment of the honorary title “Western World Buddha Son Great Wisdom Dharma King (诰封西天佛子大慧法王)” by imperial mandate.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁴ Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, p. 244, “钦差兼大圆照寺弘慈翊教国师高庵” in “钦差敕建五台山大万圣佑国禅寺碑记” 大明嘉靖岁次辛丑（二十年1541）立。

³⁴⁵ Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, p. 235, “钦差提督五台山兼管番汉一带寺宇，弘慈翊教国师，大圆照住山坚参” in “五台山金刚窟般若寺重开山第一代住持嗣裔临济二十四世宝山玉大和尚缘起实行功德碑文” 大明嘉靖十七年立。

³⁴⁶ Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, p.240. “钦差提督五台钦制番汉一带寺宇弘慈翊教国师兼大圆照寺住山坚参，诰封西天佛子大慧法王” in “五台山大塔院寺重修阿育王所建释迦文佛真身舍利宝塔碑并铭” 大明嘉靖十七年立。

This title ranks even higher than his master's—Western Buddha Great National Preceptor (清觉广智妙修慈应翊国衍教灌顶赞善西天佛子大国师).

The emperor appointed Rdo rje rgyal mtshan to be in charge of the construction of Yanjiao Monastery and he lived there most of this time. Upon its completion, the two monks who lived in this Monastery were Daojing (道璟) and Nandasri (南达室哩).³⁴⁷ From his epitaph we learn that Rdo rje rgyal mtshan's master Sangye Rdo rje also lived in Yuanzhao Monastery for a year. We know that when Śāripūtrā passed away the emperor instructed that two pagodas be built for him. One of these is in Yuanzhao Monastery on Wutai Shan, the other is in Zhenjue (or Wuta) Monastery in Beijing. After Sangye Rdo rje's death his pagoda was built next to Śāripūtrā's in Beijing. It would appear that Rdo rje rgyal mtshan had some kind of connection with Śāripūtrā, and that Yuanzhao Monastery on Wutai Shan was part of their lineage.³⁴⁸

Under the entry for “Yuanzhao Monastery” in *Qingliang Shanzhi*, Zhencheng mentions that in the Zhengde era a monk called Lcang Rgyal mtshan (张坚参) was given the title Western World Buddha Son Dharma King.³⁴⁹ Lcang is Rgyal mtshan's master's surname, but his

³⁴⁷ Wang Zhichao, p. 222, 钦依提督五台山兼住演教寺禅师道璟，耆旧南达室哩 in 《敕赐普济禅寺重修碑记》大明正德甲戌（9年1514）庚午月

³⁴⁸ The Buddhist practice at Yuanzhao Monastery has been a mixture of Tibetan Buddhism and Chinese Buddhism at present.

³⁴⁹ 《清凉山志》卷三“大圆照寺”：“显通之左，古称普宁寺。永乐初印度僧室利沙者来此土，诏入大善殿，坐论称旨，封圆觉妙应辅国光范大善国师。赐金印、旌幢遣送台山，寓显通寺。至宣德初复诏入京，广宣秘密。无何，辞归山，上未许，明日示寂。上闻痛悼之，御祭火化，分舍利为二：一塔于都西，建寺曰真觉；一塔于台山普宁基，建寺曰圆照。正德间封张坚参为法王，赐银印，兼有都纲印。”

master never held this title. It was Rgyal mtshan who held this title. From the dates of these steles we can see that Rdo rje Rgyal mtshan lived on Wutai Shan for at least 21 years.

An interesting point I would like to address here is that the year the emperor ordered Rdo rje rgyal mtshan to build Yanjiao monastery on Wutai Shan, the seventh year of the Zhengde era, was the same year that his master Sangye Rdo rje died. As we mentioned earlier, Sangye Rdo rje's title was Western World Buddha Son Great National Preceptor (Qingjue Guangzhi Miaoxiu Yingci Yuguo Yanjiao Guanding Zanshan). Because the two characters "Yanjiao" were included in his title, we can ask whether Yanjiao Monastery was built as a memorial to Sangye Rdo rje.

The Lion's Den 狮子窝 (大护国文殊寺)

We discussed this monastery in the previous chapter. Here we concentrate specifically on its connection with the imperial family. In a book about the life of the Ming imperial palace written by a eunuch,³⁵⁰ we read that in the Wanli era certain eunuchs representing the emperor would travel throughout China to burn incense at sacred sites. For example, in the *Qingliang Shanzhi* we notice that two eunuchs were dispatched to Wutai Shan to give alms.³⁵¹ There were two places that were mentioned in this event. One of these was The Lion's Den. This monastery was founded by a group of Buddhist monks to practice Pure Land Buddhism. However, pointed out earlier, it was against the law to found religious establishments

³⁵⁰ Liu Ruoyu (刘若愚 1541-?), *Minggong Shi* (明宫史), Shanghai: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1935.

³⁵¹ One of the eunuchs was called Cao Feng (曹奉). We find that in the following year he went to Putuo Mountain to donate a set of tripitaka there. See Wang Hengyan ed., *Putuo Luojia Xinzhi* (普陀洛伽山志), Hangzhou: Zhejiang Sheying Chubanshe, 1990, Vol.4, p.174.

privately, therefore in order to obtain a legal status, the head monk might have taken the opportunity during the ceremony of giving alms, to petition the imperial family to bestow a name on this establishment. Subsequently, in March of the following year the imperial family not only bestowed the name “Da Huguo Wenshu Monastery (大护国文殊寺)” but also donated a *tripitaka* to The Lion’s Den.³⁵² In order to restore this set of *tripitaka* in this monastery the imperial family also sponsored to build a *tripitaka* hall by giving one thousand taels of “white gold”.

Zhulin Monastery 竹林寺

In Zhencheng’s epitaph we find the term *Chici* (敕赐) attached to this monastery. We read that although it was Zhencheng who restored this historic Buddhist establishment, most of the funds came from the imperial palace. Comparing the restoration of Zhulin (bamboo grove) monastery with that of Tayuan monastery we notice that both were sponsored by the Ming imperials. However, there is subtle but significant difference in the words commemorating imperial sponsorship. In the case of the Tayuan monastery it reads “All the cost came from the treasury of the inner palace,”³⁵³ whereas with the Zhulin monastery it reads “Restored after long time of disuse, (the cost of the restoration) mostly came from the treasury of the inner

³⁵²Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, “二十六年夏六月，遣御马监太监王忠，曹奉于五顶并狮子窝等处，修建弘福万寿报国佑民吉祥大斋。于千佛澡浴池，设大施会，十方四众，皆得饱满。秋九月，遣官曹奉赍白金一千两，于狮子窝修建洪福万寿藏经楼阁。二十七年春三月，遣御马监太监王忠，赍送佛《大藏经》一藏于狮子窝，并赐寺额“大护国文殊寺”），p.135.

³⁵³ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, “所费金钱，计出内帑...”，p.134.

palace.”³⁵⁴ From the wording of the latter inscription, we can see that the imperial palace sponsored the restoration of Zhulin Monastery, but the person who initially proposed to restore this disused monastery was not a member of the imperial family. The Ming imperials simply donated some money in support of this project but were not responsible for initiating it. In the case of Tayuan Monastery it was the empress dowager who proposed restoration sending her representatives to take charge of the project, and she was the sole donor. That is why Tayuan Monastery was designated *chijian* (敕建), while Zhulin Monastery was designated *chici* (敕赐). Although it is not clear which member of the imperial family donated the money for Zhulin Monastery,³⁵⁵ nevertheless we can see it was due to Zhencheng’s influence that the Ming imperials supported its restoration.

Zhencheng was born in Wanping county near Beijing. At the age of fifteen he joined a Buddhist order. He was interested in expounding Buddhist texts, particularly from the School of Huayan Buddhism. At this time there were several famous masters in Beijing who gave lectures on Buddhism. Over the next ten years Zhencheng studied with each of them one by one, grasping the essence of their teachings. Although he practiced Chan Buddhism with some famous masters, his main interests remained in the study of Huayan teachings. When Hanshan visited Beijing Zhencheng was regarded as the leading scholar of Huayan Buddhism in the city and later on, when Hanshan launched the Unreserved Assembly for Almsgiving (无

³⁵⁴ Wang Zhichao, p. 303 久废复葺，所用多出内帑...

³⁵⁵ There were two possible imperial patrons who donated this money, one is the Wanli emperor himself, or it could have been his mother Empress Dowager Li.

遮大会)³⁵⁶ at Wutai Shan, he invited Zhencheng to assist him in lecturing on Huayan Buddhism.³⁵⁷ After the Unreserved Assembly for Almsgiving Hanshan insisted that Zhencheng stay on Wutai Shan. Zhencheng accepted, living on Wutai Shan for most of the rest of his life. Since Wutai Shan had been the base camp of the Huanyan School, Zhencheng felt he was in his element and his teaching on the schools teachings won great popularity, and he was regarded as the leading teaching master in the whole northern China. Even Hanshan commented that no one else in northern China could match him.³⁵⁸ Zhencheng was a real character in late Ming Buddhism. He was involved in a debate about Chengguan (澄观)'s criticism on Sengzhao (僧肇)'s work the *Discourse on Immobility of Matters* (物不迁论) and many leading Buddhist masters, including Hanshan disagreed with Zhencheng. However, Zhencheng did not allow his personal relationships interfere with his views on Buddhism but he was relentless in debate even when his close senior friend Hanshan was against him.³⁵⁹

Zhencheng contributed greatly to Wutai Shan Buddhism. His book *Qingliang Shanzhi* (*The Gazetteer of Cool and Clear Mountain*) offers us extremely valuable information about Ming period Wutai Shan Buddhism and is one of the main research resources for this thesis. From this book we can see Zhencheng possessed great learning in Buddhist history, and his exquisite writing and beautiful poems provide us with a clear picture of Ming Wutai Shan. Another contribution he made to Wutai Shan Buddhism was to draw up a monastic code for

³⁵⁶ Else where it was translated as "Assembly without distinction", see Deeg Max, "Origins and development of the Buddhist Pancavarsika," part 2: China, in *Nagoya Studies in Indian Culture and Buddhism*, No.18 (1997), pp.63-96.

³⁵⁷Deqing, *Hanshan Laoren Mengyou Ji* (憨山老人梦游集), Vol.27, p.14.

³⁵⁸Deqing, *Hanshan Laoren Mengyou Ji* (憨山老人梦游集), Vol.27, p. 14.

³⁵⁹ Jiang Canteng has discussed this debate in detail. See Jiang Canteng, 《晚明佛教丛林改革与佛学争辩之研究》, Taipei, Xinwenfeng Chubanshi, 1990.

The Lion's Den, as we have discussed in previous chapters. Moreover he was the initiator behind the restoration of Zhulin Monastery, and it was his influence that gained sponsorship for that project from the imperial palace.

Imperial women and Wutai Shan

Empress Dowager Zhou (the Chenghua emperor's mother) with Huguo monastery³⁶⁰

As with the Empress Dowager Li, Empress Dowager Zhou was not the empress when her husband was alive. She was promoted to Noble Consort (*guifei*) because she gave birth to the future emperor. Her husband was Yingzong, who had been captured by the Mongols and replaced by his brother as the emperor by the Ming court officials during his captivity. Though the Empress Dowager Zhou remained in the palace, her husband's uncertain political career added new dimensions to her life.

As the first Ming Imperial woman to support Wutai Shan Buddhism, Empress Dowager Zhou definitely deserves some attention here. Her connection with Wutai Shan was either influenced by her husband or by her brother (or cousin)³⁶¹ who became a Buddhist monk before she went to the imperial palace. Both her husband and her brother supported Wutai Shan Buddhism by distributing money to build new monasteries and distributing *tripitakas* to Wutai Shan. However, her connection with Wutai Shan Youguo Monastery started much later, only after her grandson Hongzhi had been enthroned, did she sponsor the rebuilding of this monastery. The intention of her support for Wutai Shan Buddhism is clearly expressed in the

³⁶⁰ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p41.

³⁶¹ Some scholars say not her brother but her cousin. See Yue Shengyang (岳升阳), <http://www.bjww.gov.cn/2006/4-10/17759-2.shtml>, 10/10/2006. Also see Shu Xiaofeng (舒小峰): Beijing Liangchu Mingdai Zhou Jixiang Ta Kaobian (北京两处明代周吉祥塔考辨), Beijing Wenbo (北京文博), 2003.2, pp.59-67.

name of this monastery, Huguo, which means protect the state. As her grandson's mother died when the child was still very young, Empress Dowager Zhou brought up Emperor Hongzhi. She was concerned greatly over her grandson's welfare and therefore prayed to the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī to protect him. As a result her passion towards Buddhism particular to Wutai Shan Buddhism passed on to her grandson, a subject discussed earlier in this chapter when Emperor Hongzhi ordered the building of a new monastery, Guangzong, on Wutai Shan.

Empress Dowager Li (Wanli) with Fenglin Monastery (凤林寺)

There is an entry about this monastery In *Qingliang Shanzhi*: “In the Jiajing era Ven. Chetian (彻天) set up a chapel here, when one night a group of thugs tried to break into his chapel but there were two tigers guarding the gate. This shocked them so much that they were tamed by Chetian's supernatural ability. Hence Chetian was called Chan Master Erhu (two tigers). In the early years of the Wanli era, Ven. Chetian's name was heard by the Emperor, and his chapel also had been expanded into a monastery, the [bestowed] plaque name is ‘Fenglin’. In the fifth year of the Wanli era, when the imperial palace intended to build ‘Cishou Monastery’³⁶² [the palace] ordered officials to call upon Chetian [to take charge this project], but he refused. When the officials forced him to go, Chetian went on a hunger strike and seven days later he died. The imperial palace paid their respects at his funeral, and [instructed that] a pagoda be built for him on Wutai Shan.”³⁶³

³⁶² This monastery is in Beijing. See the inscription which was to mark the completion of the reconstruction of the Pagoda in Tayuan Monastery in Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, p.262.

³⁶³ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p. 41.

Because Zhencheng, the author of *Qingliang Shanzhi*, was a contemporary of Chetian, we may believe the authenticity of this story, however, it is odd that such an important event was recorded only in *Qingliang Shanzhi*, while the tone of the description was deliberately vague. There were other eminent monks living on Wutai Shan at this time, but none mentioned this event in their biographies. In the following section we shall try to dig a bit deeper to find out what happened to this monk.

In early years of his reign Wanli was too young to play the role of an emperor and the role fell to his mother, Empress Dowager Li. The extract discussed above gave no indication as to who was giving orders from the imperial palace at the time, but we can be sure that it was Empress Dowager Li.

Cishou Monastery was built at the outskirts of Beijing. If the monastery was being built in Beijing, why did Empress Dowager Li ask a Wutai Shan monk to take charge of the project? In a Tayuan Monastery inscription composed by the Grand Secretary Zhang Juzheng we find the reason. Zhang wrote: “in the autumn of the 6th year of the Wanli era, the [imperialy ordered] construction of Cishou monastery was completed. In the following spring with the money from her food allowance she [Empress Dowager Li] dispatched the eunuchs Fan Jiang and Li You to Wutai Shan to construct Huguo Youmin Shijiawen Buddha Relic Treasure Pagoda (护国佑民释迦文佛舍利宝塔)...” This was because “... Our holy mother the Cisheng Xuanwen Mingsu (慈圣宣文明肃) Empress Dowager, wished to set up a monastery in front of Wutai Shan Lingjiu Hill, where the Asoka pagoda is, for the purposes of praying for the deceased emperor Mu (her husband), and also for the paternity of the imperial line. However due to the location being too far from the capital the plan was cancelled; instead in a western suburb of Beijing, a monastery called Da Cishou was constructed. Nevertheless our

holy mother was so devoted and did not forget her initial promise, therefore she sent her eunuchs to Wutai Shan to restore this pagoda ...”³⁶⁴

From the above statement we realise that Empress Dowager Li originally planned to build Da Cishou monastery on Wutai Shan and this is why Chetian was asked to take charge of the project.

Hanshan, whom we have already mentioned as one of the four most eminent monks of the late Ming dynasty, was also a contemporary of Chetian and he sheds light on the question of why Empress Dowager asked specifically for Chetian on this project. Hanshan composed a statement for the completion of Daci Xuanwen Monastery in which he remarks on the connection between Empress Dowager Li and Chetian. He wrote:

“In the early years of the Wanli era, our holy mother the Xuanwen Mingsu empress dowager wishing to ensure the happiness of the late emperor’s spirit and the protection of the present emperor’s life, ordered a Buddhist ceremony to be performed. From all the holy mountains in China, starting with Wutai Shan, she invited twelve eminent monks, and Chetian was listed the first. [After the ceremony] Empress Dowager Li built Fenglin Monastery on Wutai Shan for Chetian to live in. Because Wutai Shan was far away from the Ming capital, [Empress Dowager Li] also built another monastery—Daci Xuanwen Monastery at Fangshu Qiao (方顺桥) of Mancheng County in Baoding prefecture as a station [for him]. About thirty acres of farm

³⁶⁴ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, pp.142-143.

land was purchased, and [the income from the land] was used for the maintenance of the monastery....”³⁶⁵

Another reason why Chetian was asked to take charge of the Da Cishou project may have been the fact that he was an experienced architect. From an inscription in Fenglin Monastery we learn that he had been in charge of the construction of many monasteries and bridges throughout the Zhengde, Jianjin, and Longqing eras. His name was heard by court eunuchs and he was consequently invited by those eunuchs to supervise other construction projects.³⁶⁶ Still, some big questions remain: why did he refuse to take the project? Who were the officials pushed him so hard? Were they monk officials or government officials?

Empress Dowager Li and the *Tripitaka*

What was Empress Dowager Li's purpose in distributing the *tripitaka*? There can be no doubt that she was a genuine Buddhist. However, distributing *tripitaka* to many parts of China also reinforced her holy mother image, strengthened her influence and secured her status. Empress Dowager Li was not the empress while her husband was alive. If she had not given birth to the emperor Wanli, she would have remained a palace maid. She used her Buddhist influence to gain more respect within the court and throughout the country. Consequently her image had been transformed into a combined political and religious figure—Nine Lotus Holy Mother (Jiulian Shengmu). Throughout the whole of Chinese history all imperial women who aimed to intervene in politics seem to have resorted to this strategy to strengthen their positions.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁵ Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, pp.300-301.

³⁶⁶ Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, pp.253-255.

³⁶⁷ T. H., Barrett, *The Woman who Discovered Printing*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008.

Wutai Shan received fifteen sets of *Tripitaka* among which nine were given by Empress Dowager Li.

Table 4. Empress Dowager Li and *Tripitaka*:

Donor	Monastery	Number of sets	Year	Source
Emperor Yingzong	Puen Monastery	One	The 10 th year of Zhengtong era (1445)	Zhencheng, p. 39
Emperor Yingzong	Five Terraces	Five	The 2 nd year of Tianshun era (1558)	Zhencheng, p. 131
Empress Dowager Li	Tayuan monastery	Two	The 13 th year of Wanli era (1585)	Zhencheng, p. 135; Wang Zhichao, p. 272
Empress Dowager Li	Lion's Den Monastery	One	The 27 th year of Wanli era (3 rd month) (1599)	Zhencheng, p. 135
Empress Dowager Li	Yanjiao Monastery (centre terrace)	One	The 27 th year of Wanli era (5 th month)	Zhencheng, p. 135
Empress Dowager Li	Lingying Monastery (north terrace)	One	The 27 th year of Wanli era (the 6 th month)	Zhengcheng, p. 135

Empress Dowager Li	The rest of the three terraces	Three	The 28 th year of Wanli era (4 th month) (1600)	Zhencheng, p. 136
Empress Dowager Li	Xiantong Monastery	One	The 34 th year of Wanli era (1606)	Wangzhichao, p. 295.

Apart from the above nine sets of the *tripitaka*, we learned that Empress Dowager Li also distributed a set of continuation *tripitaka* to Tayuan Monastery around the 14th year of the Wanli era.³⁶⁸ Elsewhere, we noticed she dispatched her palace eunuch Li You to distribute “fojing (佛经)” to Wutai shan in the 9th year of the Wanli era.³⁶⁹

Empress Dowager Li with Lingying Monastery (北台)

This monastery was built on the North Terrace of Wutai Shan. According to *Qingliang Shanzhi* in the early years of the Longqing era (1567-1572) a monk called Yuanguang³⁷⁰ and his disciple Minglai came to live here. As the North Terrace is the highest peak on Wutai Shan it is extremely cold and windy there, many pilgrims suffering from this severe weather and some of them even died. Yuanguang and his disciple built this monastery and supplied

³⁶⁸ Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, p.272.

³⁶⁹ Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, p.276.

³⁷⁰ On one of the Tayuan Monastery inscriptions-”Xu Zangjing Beiwen (续藏经碑文)” (Wang Zhichao, p. 272), we noticed the abbot of Tayuan Monastery was also called Yuanguang. That inscription was erected on the 14th year of Wanli era, therefore, these ‘two’ Yuanguang lived on Wutai Shan at the same time. Could we suggest these ‘two’ Yuanguang refer the same person?

pilgrims with food and accommodation. In the fifteenth year of the Wanli era, a monk called Foxiu had raised funds for casting a Mañjuśrī image on North Terrace but unfortunately he died before he could accomplish his plan. When Empress Dowager Li heard of this, she donated money to fulfil Foxiu's wish, that of casting a Mañjuśrī image, and dispatched Chen Ru, her palace eunuch to bring the image to the North Terrace on Wutai Shan where, thereafter, it became an official site for national blessing.³⁷¹

Empress Dowager Li with Dailuo Ding (大螺顶)

When Li You, a palace eunuch, was dispatched to Wutai Shan in the 9th year of Wanli era (1580), he discovered this site and suggested to Empress Dowager Li that a monastery be built there, and this suggestion was granted, with Baozhu from Tianning monastery being appointed as the first abbot here. In the 16th year (1588) Empress Dowager Li ordered eunuch Zhang Ben to build a Buddha Hall at this monastery. Later on under Empress Dowager Li's instruction Chen Ru, and Duan Peng completed this monastery. Dailuo Ding followed a public monastic tradition, abbots being appointed by the imperial palace and forbidding the office of abbot from being passed on from a master to his disciple.³⁷²

Like other influential imperial women who acted as the head of the state, the Ming imperial women particularly Empress Dowager Li's support for Buddhism had a political meaning. Wu Zetian in the Tang and Cixi in the Qing all shared the same faith with the Ming Empress Dowager Li. They used religion to reinforce their holy image, and to strengthen their influence and secure their status in a very male dominant society. When Zhu Yuanzhang established the Ming dynasty, modelled on the Tang and Song, he created the Ming Law. In

³⁷¹ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p. 44.

³⁷² Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, pp. 276-277.

Da Ming Lü, we read women were prohibited entering into monasteries.³⁷³ This restriction had been stressed many times by the Ming emperors. Regarding Ming emperors and government forbidding women going to Buddhist and Daoist monasteries (nunneries), Jian Ruiyao has singled out all the entries in the *Ming veritable Records*.³⁷⁴ Jian Ruiyao has noticed that the restrictions on women going to Buddhist temples and monasteries became more relaxed in the later Ming, not as severe as the early period.³⁷⁵ However Jian did not discuss imperial women's involvement with Buddhism. Empress Dowager Li had close relationships with Deqing, and with Zhuhong. Both of these two great masters had great influence in the later Ming Buddhist society. Empress Dowager Li's involvement with Buddhism had lifted up women's status in Buddhist society of the late Ming. We can find many more records of Women practicing Buddhism in the later Ming. Great Buddhist masters also encouraged women to practice Buddhism.³⁷⁶ These interactions of Ming women with Buddhism are unseen in the early period of the dynasty. This attitude change of women practicing Buddhism can be partly contributed to Empress Dowager Li's dedication to Buddhism.

Prince Patrons

Prince Dai (Zhu Chenglian 1466—1489) with Puji Monastery (碧山寺)

³⁷³ Huan Xiaofeng ed., *Da Ming Lü* (大明律), Shenyang: Liaoshen Shushe, 1990, p.87.

³⁷⁴ Jian Ruiyao, *Mingdai Funü Fojiao Xinyang Yu Shehui Guifan* (明代妇女佛教信仰与社会规范), Taipei: Daoxiang Chubanshe, 2007, pp.22-27.

³⁷⁵ *ibid.* p.130.

³⁷⁶ Zhuhong, "Funü Wangsheng Lie (妇女往生类)", *Wangsheng Ji* (往生集) in DZZBB, Taipei: Huayu Chubanshe. 1984. p.146. There are many letters that Hanshan replied to women who sought for religious insight from him. These letters are kept in Hanshan Dashi Mengyou Ji (憨山大师梦游集).

The author of the *Qinglian Shanzhi* wrote thus about Puji monastery: “Puji Monastery is in Huayan Valley, it is also called Beishan (North Hill) Monastery. During the Chenghua era, Prince Dai, Chenglian (成炼), heard of Guyue’s wonderful meditative attainment, and this was followed by the establishment of the monastery. Now one hundred years later, it served as Prince Dai’s family chapel.”³⁷⁷ In the same book the author also provided a biography of this Buddhist master, Guyue. Regarding the origin of this monk, Zhencheng in *Qingliang Shanzhi*³⁷⁸ and Yu Qian in *Xinxu Gaoseng Zhuan* (新续高僧传)³⁷⁹ recorded that Guyue was born in a nearby county of Beijing. However, a much earlier record, the *Epitaph of Master Guyue* tells us that Guyue was born in Mengjin of Henan province.³⁸⁰ We don’t know where

³⁷⁷Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p.38.

³⁷⁸ This book was written in the late 15th century or the early 16th century, more than 100 years late after Guyue’s death. Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, “孤月禅师, 燕京河漕人”, p. 83.

³⁷⁹ This book was written in the early Qing dynasty, even later than *Qingliang Shanzhi*. 《新续高僧传》卷十九：习禅编第三之九，五台山普济寺沙门释净澄传，“释净澄，字孤月，姓张氏，宛平人。”

³⁸⁰ This stele was excavated a few years ago by monks in Puji Monastery, this is the first attempt to study this work. On “The Epitaph of Chan master Guyue” we read in line five, “Master [Guyue] is from Mengjin of Henan. His surname is Zhang, and he get tonsured in Souning [monastery] of Zifu [another name for Wutai Shan].” In line twenty we read “The seventeenth year of the Hongzhi era (1505). ... Erected by his grand disciple Shi Daming on the first day of the ? Month.” (《孤月禅师塔铭》：line 5, 师者，乃河南孟津人，姓张氏，祝发于紫府寿宁，澡心于□南圣母□可于西蜀...line10 敕赐普济禅寺成之后王□逝矣。至今贤王三代相继...line11 钦差守备天城□都知监吴公迈□遣人□请于天城宏法，□捐施白金与师建塔...line12...老禅师文□往二十余年... line14 老禅师年高八旬有三，利生□十余...line 20 大明弘治十七年（1505）...□□吉旦法孙释达明立）

Zhencheng and Yu Qian got their information, but we do know that Guyue's epitaph was erected by his grand disciple twenty years after he passed away, so we have more reason to trust his epitaph than the two later works.³⁸¹

According to his biography in *Qingliang Shanzhi*,³⁸² after both his parents died, Guyue became a Buddhist monk whereafter as a young monk he was drawn toward meditative practice rather than theological studies. Not long after his first master passed away. Then he met Qingshan, a senior monk from Shouning Monastery on Wutai Shan, and later became his disciple. Guyue was given a new name, Jingcheng, by Qingshan and worked in Shouning monastery for a year before he left Wutai Shan for Beijing, where he studied Chan Buddhism under Yuexi. Some time later he left Beijing and travelled south where, while crossing the Yellow River, he was nearly drowned. He settled on a snow-capped mountain in Sichuan province where he lived in seclusion for three years pursuing meditative practice and his achievement was exceptional as a result. It was reported that he could enter into *samādhi* for days, and could hear people talking fifty kilometres away. In the first year of the Tianshun era (1457) he was invited back to Wutai Shan where Prince Dai invited him to his palace to deliver a talk on Chan, after which the Prince built Puji monastery for him on Wutai Shan.

At present two steles still stand at this monastery, written by two different people. They recounted how the Puji Monastery was built. One stele was in praise of the eunuch Jin's contribution to the construction, the inscription being composed by a court official, Zhang Jun, at the invitation of another court eunuch, Gao. In this statement Zhang wrote that in the

³⁸¹ *ibid.*

³⁸² Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, pp.83-84.

second lunar month of 1486 when eunuch Jin, the grand commandant³⁸³ was stationed in Huai'an³⁸⁴, he sighed [at the site of Puji monastery] that though there had once been a monastery, due to neglect of maintenance, nature had reclaimed the site [so that nothing was left but the name of the monastery]. Therefore, Jin invited Guyue to collect alms for reconstruction of this monastery.

³⁸³ 守备: This was a military rank that existed in the Ming and the Qing dynasties. The first Ming emperor created this position in Yingtian Fu to take charge of the surrounding military forts. Therefore, it was a very important post. Later on the Ming government also set up this post under regional commander to guard important forts along the borders. Particularly after the Tumu Crisis (土木堡之变) the power of these eunuch generals had strengthened, their posts in the military forts along the Ming borders were equally important controlled by the regional commander and the Imperial Inspector. According to *Wanli Yehuo Bian* (万历野获编), during the Zhengde era eunuch generals were posted to Yungui, Liangguang, Sichuan, Fujian, Huguang, Jiangxi, Zhejiang Datong.

Zhanyi maixian(占役买闲): *zhanyi* means the eunuch military officer privatised his soldiers, he could assign his soldiers to any tasks, and not strictly of a military nature. *Ming Shi* (明史·兵志一): In the Hongzhi era, eunuch Liu Gong assigned thousands of soldiers to work on government farms for his own profit in Liaoyang. These military soldiers almost became eunuchs' personal servants, and completely neglected their military duties.

³⁸⁴ In this article Huai'an was referred to as a military garrison. In the Chenghua era there were many military guards along the northern frontier. The Huai-an garrison was not far from Wutai Shan. There was another city in Ming China which was also called Huai'an. This Huai'an city was an important Grand Canal city where Prince Gaoxu (高煦 1385－1426) staged a rebellion in 1426.

On the other stele, however, we read a different story about how this monastery was constructed. The following is the translation of the inscription “Chici Puji Chan Si Beiji”:

“Prince Dai--Chenglian, Madam Yao(his wife), Lady Wang Miaocheng, (Lady) Wang Miaofu, the eldest son [of Prince Dai] Prince Wuyi-Congmo³⁸⁵, the second son Prince Lechang-Congji, the third son Prince Jiyang-Congzhu, fourth son Cong ?, the eldest grandson Junzhang.³⁸⁶

Guyue, the twenty-sixth generation inheritor of Linji Chan School, made a vow to build [Puji monastery]. [Guyue] was tonsured as a child and this early start ensured him a solid foundation in Buddhist training. Originally [Guyue] joined Chanan monastery in Beijing in the early years of Chenghua era, before he was invited by the Wutai Shan Buddhist Office to give talks. As the audience was getting bigger and bigger, [the place where he lived] could no longer accommodate the crowds, thus [Guyue] chose the site of a pond below the North Terrace [to build a new monastery]. After draining the pond, a foundation was laid where to the east was Xiao’e, to the south Yinniu Pond, to the west, Jingangku monastery, and to the north Huayan peak, altogether it is about twenty *mu*³⁸⁷. However, due to lack of

³⁸⁵ In Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, it was written as 聰沐, however, in *Ming Shi* the name of this prince is 聰沫. See *Ming Shi*, Vol.117, p.3582.

³⁸⁶ Same as the above case, Wang Zhichao misspelled 俊杖 as 俊林. See *Ming Shi* (明史), Vol.117, p.3582.

³⁸⁷ One *mu* equals six hundred and sixty six square metres.

funds, halls were only half completed. With a hope to win prince Dai's support [I] wrote to him, [and as a result] Prince Dai totally supported this project. [With Prince Dai's support we could] obtain construction materials locally, soon after that the whole project was completed. The project started at the beginning of the first lunar month 1486 and was completed at the end of the ninth lunar month, 1487. From the start to the finish the project took around one year, consisting of a five bay Grand Hall, a five bay Heavenly King Hall, and a three bay Front Gate. Also in the front of the monastery compound, there is a one bay Qielan (伽蓝) Hall while at the back of the monastery compound is the courtyard of the abbot with a five bay hall. On each sides of the compound there are sixteen rooms...though the monastery is completed still it has not been named and without a name how it could be known, therefore, Prince Dai appealed to the imperial court to grant a name to this monastery and immediately the emperor bestowed the name "Puji Chan Si" on it. Prince Dai kneeled down in receiving the name plaque...the first lunar month in the twenty-third year of the Chenghua era (1487) Wupu Mountain Li Miaoneng. ”³⁸⁸

There is a confusion regarding to the completion date of this monastery as opposed to the date the stele was erected as seen from the content of the inscription above. In logic the stele would be erected after the completion of the monastery. Notwithstanding that it was erected in the first lunar month in 1487, the inscription however mentions the monastery as having being completed in the ninth lunar month 1487. The author could not have been that careless to

³⁸⁸ Wang Zhichao, Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu, pp.218-223.

have made such a mistake. When a monastery erects a stele, it was the practice that well known individuals were invited to compose the text of the inscription with the information provide to them. Therefore, the dates confusion must have been based on the information which was provided by the monastery and we may question here how could this happen. One possible scenario is that the founder of this monastery relied on both Eunuch Jin and Prince Dai's aids to complete his project. In order not to offend either of them-the emperor's personal servant and the emperor's cousin, both of whom were very influential in the territory where Wutai Shan was located, Guyue erected two steles to praise each of them. To express his equal appreciation to both, he used the same date as the erection date of the two steles.³⁸⁹ To prove this for certain is a larger project then this chapter can undertake as subtle political environment in the Ming local arenas can be treated as a separate thesis.

Prince Zhaohui (赵惠王) with Luohou Monastery (罗候寺)

We know little about Prince Zhaohui's sponsorship of Luohou monastery. The only information we have is in *Qingliang Shanzhi* where the author mentioned briefly that in the Chenghua era this monastery was renovated by Prince Zhaohui. In the early years of the Ming dynasty, when the first Ming emperor appointed his twenty-four sons to different princedoms to protect his empire, he bestowed unique princely single-character (一字王) title to each of them. Under this titular system, the eldest son of each Single-character Prince inherited his father's title and princedom while the younger sons would be given two-character princely titles to show their lower rank. For instance, Prince Dai was the third Son of the First Ming emperor, the eldest son of Prince Dai was entitled to enjoy the Prince Dai rank. As Prince

³⁸⁹ The text of the second stele, attributed to eunuch Jin, shows that it also was erected on the same day as this stele.

Zhao (Hui) was the eldest son of his family, he inherited the Prince Zhao title. Hui was his posthumous name. After the death of these one-character princes they would be given another character posthumously by the emperor to differentiate them from other living princes, i.e. their eldest sons. As one-character Princes were given a second unique character after they passed away, we can identify who this prince Zhao is—Zhu Zhanqiao (朱瞻堦). His father, Zhu Gaosui, was the third son of the Yongle emperor and was given a ‘Jian’ (赵简王) character following his death. Zhu Zhanqiao’s elder brother died in youth, as the second son of Prince Zhao he inherited the principedom, which was in Zhande (彰德).

Prince Dai³⁹⁰ with Jin’ge (golden pavilion) Monastery

Jin’ge Monastery was one of the most well know monastery during the Tang dynasty as it was built by Bukong (Amoghavajra, 705-774) one the four most celebrated translating masters, and Emperor Daizong of the Tang was a devoted patron of this monastery. However, with the passage of time, when Ven. Liaoji (了机) arrived here in the fourth year of the Jiajing era (1525) nothing was left here but abandoned ruins.³⁹¹ However, with the efforts of Liaoji the Jin’ge monastery regained its popularity, benefiting particularly from Prince Dai’s patronisation, it became one of the biggest monasteries on Wutai Shan. There are two inscriptions that were erected in the late Jiajing era giving an account the connection of Prince Dai and his palace lady Zhang with the Jin’ge monastery.

During the Jiajing era, Prince Dai’s principedom Datong was in constant turmoil. The local army rebelled on several occasions, and the prince had to flee away from his palace. In the sixth year of the Jiajing era the fifth generation Prince Dai, Junzhang died and his eldest son

³⁹⁰ See *Ming Shi*, Vol.117, pp3581-85.

³⁹¹ Wan Zhichao, *Wutai Shan beiwen Xuanzhu*, p.249.

Chongyao inherited the title. In the twelfth year the local army rebelled yet again, and Prince Dai-Chongyao fled to Xuanfu. In the twenty-fourth year of the Jiajing era, Prince Dai's brothers turned against him and invited the Mongols to raid Datong. In the twenty-sixth year, Chongyao died, and his son Tingqi (廷琦) became Prince Dai. The remaining sources state Prince Dai assisted in the reconstruction of Jin'ge monastery. However because there were a few generations of Prince Dai who lived in the Jiajing era, we are not sure which one patronised Jin'ge Monastery.

The two existing inscriptions was composed by Liaoji and a Datong general, Jiang Yingkui³⁹² respectively and the dates when they were erected were the thirty-sixth year and thirty-seventh year of the Jiajing era. The first inscription was dedicated solely to Lady Zhang, who possibly was Prince Dai-Tingqi's consort or perhaps his mother. The second inscription was dedicated to Prince Dai and his family. From the content of these two inscriptions we can see that the main donor from Prince Dai's palace was Lady Zhang. Apart from patronising the construction of the monastery she also gave a half ton of bronze to cast an eighteen meters high "thousand arms and thousand eyes" Avaloktisvara bodhisattva statue.³⁹³ Even though the principedom was in such terrible turmoil state still a prince's consort could raise this huge amount of funds to construct Jin'ge Monastery indicating that these Ming princes led a very luxurious and comfortable life. Compared with the connection between Prince Dai and Puji monastery, the support that Jinge monastery received came from only one generation Prince Dai, quite likely this donation came from Lady Zhang in the name of Prince Dai. Puji monastery, by contrast, enjoyed continuous support from different generations of Prince Dai, and it even became Prince Dai's family chapel (家庙).

³⁹² 赐进士及第少司马兵部左侍郎云中东闽蒋应奎.

³⁹³ Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, pp.246-251.

Prince Jin (晋王) With Boruo Monastery (般若寺)

Boruo Monastery was very famous during the Tang dynasty, as Chan' master Wuzhuo (无著) entered a cave here and never returned,³⁹⁴ and people believed he attained enlightenment there. The most celebrated Indian monk Buddhadrā (佛陀波利) followed Wuzhuo's footstep and did not return, and the Buddhadrā's pagoda still stands there today. In the Chenghua era a Chan master whose name was Lichan (立禅) lived here. With Prince Jin's assistance, he rebuilt it.³⁹⁵ The first Prince Jin, whose principedom was in Taiyuan, was the Hongwu emperor's third son. This Prince Jin who assisted Lichan to rebuild Boruo Monastery was the fourth generation of their lineage.³⁹⁶

Imperial relatives Patronage of Wutai Shan

Imperial relative Zhou (皇戚周善世) with Lingfeng Monastery (灵峰寺)

In *Qingliang Shanzhi* Zhencheng mentioned that in the Chenghua era there was an imperial relative who visited Wutai Shan and donated three thousand taels of silver to rebuild Lingfeng Monastery where under Yibin's leadership Chan practice was emphasized. Interestingly this imperial relative held a monk official title-*Shanshi*,³⁹⁷ which is the highest monk official rank during the Ming dynasty. The surname of this imperial relative is Zhou. As we discussed earlier in this chapter, Chenghua's mother was Empress Dowager Zhou, so the question

³⁹⁴ Yanyi (延一), "Wuzhu Heshang Ruhua Boruo Si (无著和尚入化般若寺)", in *Expanded Records of the Clear and Cool Mountain* (广清凉传, completed in 1060), T.51, p.1111-12.

³⁹⁵ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p.38.

³⁹⁶ See *Ming Shi*, Vol.116, pp.3562-64.

³⁹⁷ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p.42-43.

arises, could this *Shanshi* monk be related to her? In the *Ming Shi* we find the following extract regarding Empress Dowager Zhou:

“Xiaosu (Dowager Zhou’s bestowed name) had a younger brother called Jixiang. When he was young he went out to play whereupon (he met a monk and) left home joining the Buddhist order. His family did not know where he had gone. Xiaosu almost forgot him (after she entered into the palace). One night, she dreamed of a Buddhist guardian god (伽蓝) who came to her and told her where her brother was. The emperor Yingzong also had the same dream and in the morning they dispatched a eunuch to search her lost brother according to the location as it appeared in their dreams. Just as expected the eunuch found him in the Qielan (伽蓝) Hall of Baoguo Monastery and he was then summoned to the palace.”³⁹⁸

From this entry we are certain that Empress Dowager Zhou indeed had a Buddhist monk brother or cousin. The name of this monk was Jixiang. Two inscriptions which are attributed to him are still standing today. Although the legibility of these inscriptions has suffered from the passage of time, they still reveal that he was given the *Shanshi* rank in the 17th year of the Chenghua era (1481). Also we read that he visited Wutai Shan, and there experienced a vision of a golden lamp.³⁹⁹ whereupon he sponsored the rebuilding of a place the name of which no longer legible due to the poor weathering of the inscription, but located in Yangbai Valley on Wutai Shan. Indeed the Ming Lingfeng Monastery was located in Yangbai Valley as stated

³⁹⁸ *Ming Shi* 《明史》 vol.300, p.7673.

³⁹⁹ “一日，忽思五台□□□□□□之特蒙俞允，出内帑、金帛、宝幡异品以充其行，志境毕合，遂见金灯之祥。于时依阳白峪重修□□□□□□焉，自是归来杜门不出，日诵法华、华严诸典，匠人不废”。See Shu Xiaofeng (舒小峰), “Beijing Liangchu Mingdai Zhou Jixiang Ta Kaobiao (北京两处明代周吉祥塔考辨)”, *Beijing Wenbo* (北京文博), 2003.2, pp.59-67.

clearly by Zhengcheng in *Qingliang Shanzhi*.⁴⁰⁰ Therefore we are certain that this imperial relative is Ven. Jixiang, who was the Empress Dowager Zhou's brother.

Conclusion

In order to strengthen the Ming government's authority, many Ming emperors enforced the banning of illegal temples and local practices.⁴⁰¹ "These non-legal temples, referred to as *Yinci* (immoral temples) included Buddhist monasteries as well."⁴⁰² Many well established Buddhist monasteries gained imperial recognition in the form of a plaque granted by the emperor while those without imperial sanction tried every possible means to gain exemption from demolition. The following story about Zhao Jixiang (empress dowager Zhou's brother) impeaching a local governor for demolishing Buddhist and Taoist monasteries shows that during the Ming dynasty the control over of illegal temples was very rigorously enforced:

In April, the governor of Shouzhou, Liu Gai, pulled down Buddhist monasteries and Taoist temples. The left worthy (*Zuo Shanshi*) Zhou Jixiang etc appealed to the Imperial Court to condemn Liu Gai, and exempt all (illegal) Buddhist monasteries and Taoist temples from demolition. The Minister of Rites sent a memorial to the throne that Zhou Jixiang himself should be condemned for obstructing government official from carrying out the new policy. At the end the

⁴⁰⁰ "灵峰寺，阳白谷，唐建。成化间，义宾上人约五十三人，结社参禅。皇戚周善世来游，观众有感，割金三千重修”，in Zhengcheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p.42.

⁴⁰¹ See He Xiaorong, "Mingchao Jinzhi Sichuang Siyuan Tongjibiao (明朝禁止私创寺院统计表)" in *Mingdai Nanjing Siyuan Yanjiu*, pp.13-16.

⁴⁰² David Faure, "The Chinese emperor's informal empire: religion and the incorporation of local society in the Ming". In Shu-min-Huang, and Cheng-Kuang Hsu, eds. *Imagining China: Regional Division and National Unity*. p.29.

emperor (the son of Zhou Jixiang's nephew) ordered: the government has repeatedly voiced [its policy on] the restriction on Buddhists and Taoists from building new temples. Zhou Jixiang should be punished for hampering government officials in performing their duties, but tentatively we let him go without charge.⁴⁰³

This movement of suppressing Buddhist monasteries and illegal temples in the late 1400s and early 1500s still intense and was widespread throughout China.⁴⁰⁴ This is why many monasteries on Wutai Shan used their connections with the imperial family to protect themselves from this suppression. As a result many patrons from the imperial family have been recorded in various sources. Compared with the imperial patrons there were not many individual lay Buddhist patrons that had been recorded. The following chapter will discuss ordinary lay Buddhist patronage towards Wutai Shan.

⁴⁰³ *Ming Xiaozong Shilu*, Vol.25, p.15.

⁴⁰⁴ David Faure; Brook 1993; Thornton 1996.

Lay Buddhist patronage towards Wutai Shan

In the previous chapter we discussed how popular Wutai Shan was among the Ming imperial family through many generations. Comparing the rich literary resources on imperial patronage to Wutai Shan, there is much less evidence to connect with lay Buddhists' patronage. Could this be the result of the lack of lay patrons to Wutai Shan? As it was one of the most popular Buddhist pilgrimage sites in Ming China, Wutai Shan could not be short of lay Buddhists' support. If not because of that, what were the reasons that made lay patronage anonymous?

Gentry, farmer, artisan and merchant, the social structure of the Ming society

Brook has done some research on gentry patronage towards Buddhism in late Ming China. As Professor Barrett pointed out that:

“Brook’s work shows conclusively that Chinese Buddhism at the very least possessed the economic means to revive itself long after its alleged age of glory had departed, and so suggests that the late Ming Buddhist leaders studied by Chün-fang Yü, Zhang Shengyan and others were perhaps not as marginal as our prejudices in favour of “Confucian China” would have us believe. But it does raise some questions about the totality of the phenomenon of patronage (or, yet more broadly, Buddhist economic activity) which he has apparently left beyond his remit--despite a few pages about the (in his eyes) subsidiary phenomenon of merchant patronage of Buddhism.”⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰⁵ T.H., Barrett, Review of Timothy Brook, *Praying for Power: Buddhism and the Formation of Gentry Society in Late-Ming China*, in *China Quarterly* 140 (1994), p.1552.

In this section we shall investigate merchant patronage of Buddhism on Wutai Shan, but before that we first look at the perception of merchant in Ming society.

Traditionally Chinese rulers and their officials always supposed to emphasise agriculture while restraining commerce. The social structure was in theory formed by gentry, farmer, artisan and merchant and in that order. When Zhu Yuanzhang established his empire, immediately thereafter he distributed land to poor farmers and created records to prevent the gentry from taking peasant land.⁴⁰⁶ In fact he did this partly to restore stability to a deeply disturbed society and so to secure his power. Also, because he was born into a destitute peasant family with poverty-stricken tenant farmer parents, he sympathised greatly with these poor farmers. In Zhu Yuanzhang's early reign, there is an incident that reveals how much he disliked those rich merchants. "In the Hongwu era, a rich man Shen Xiu (Shen Wansan) helped to build one-third of the Ming capital (Nanjing) and then requested permission to sponsor a feast for the emperor's army. The emperor, restraining his anger, said 'An ordinary man who rewards the whole national army is considered as a rebel, and should put to death.' [and Shen was imprisoned]; Empress Ma then petitioned [her husband] that 'Evil minded people will be punished by nature, so your majesty need not sentence him to death.'

⁴⁰⁶ Edward Dreyer, *Early Ming China: A Political History 1355-1435*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982. p.123. Also see *Ming Taizu Shilu Vol.49*, "富民多豪强，故元进此辈欺凌小民，武断乡曲，人受其害...使天下一主，则强凌弱、众暴寡，富者不得自安、贫者不能自存矣。今朕为尔主，立法定制，使富者得以保其富、贫者得以全其生。尔等当循分守法，能守法则能保身矣。毋凌弱，毋吞贫，毋虐不，毋欺老。"

As a result, Shen Xiu was released from prison and exiled to Yunnan.”⁴⁰⁷ The exact word that the emperor used to describe Shen Wansan was “*pifu* (匹夫)”, which had a derogatory meaning here. Shen, however, was the richest man of his day and in no sense ordinary. His punishment derived from his ability to reward the army in this extravagant way, due to the fact that he was an extraordinarily rich merchant and this made the emperor feel very uncomfortable or even jealous. His intention might be to please the emperor but the latter took it as a conspicuous display of wealth. From the above, we note that in the early Ming dynasty, merchants as a profession were still in public considered low and not respected. Since there was no role for them to play in the public realm, monasteries would not be honoured to be closely related to them.

However, the social structure had transformed along with the rise of commercial commodities in southern China by the late Ming period. The mercantile capitalist economy replaced the old natural economy. People’s attitudes towards politics, society, life and nature also had changed. The traditional monophyletic Confucian practice among the elite was challenged by the new economic developments. The influence of the merchant class on late Ming religious and philosophical groups was enormous. The religious and philosophical groups started to go beyond the traditional boundaries in their thinking also. Prior to the Ming, the Neo-Confucian Zhu Xi’s “*lixue*” had been accepted as the creed of authority. However, during this period of transformation, Wang Yangming’s “*xinxing* (心性)” offered a new interpretation of Confucianism. “*Xinxing*” emphasizes intuitive ability, which shared some common understanding with the Buddhist concept of “mind only (唯识)” and influenced later

⁴⁰⁷ 《明史》 Vol.113, “太祖孝慈高皇后传”, 洪武时, 富民沈秀者助筑都城三分之一, 请稿军, 帝忍日: 匹夫稿天下之军乱民也, 宜诛之。后谏日, 不祥之民, 天将诛之, 陛下何诛焉! 乃释秀, 戍云南”, p.1470.

Confucian generations immensely. The late Ming lay Buddhist movement was also a result of it, hence many members of the gentry did not reject Buddhism as heterodoxy but merged it with their Confucian practice. Moreover, being a merchant was not regarded as a low profession anymore. According to Wang Yangming gentry, farmer, artisan and merchant are just different careers but practice the same principle.⁴⁰⁸ Being a merchant does not stop someone to become a sage. This interpretation, which gained popularity immediately as “the reality of gentry life, especially from the mid-sixteenth century forward, was not political, but economic. Every examination candidate aspired to enter the political system, but every candidate also understood that the numbers were overwhelmingly against launching a civil-service career. Starting roughly in the 1510s, the number of candidates for degrees began to expand considerably - there was no change in the capacity of the bureaucracy to absorb these men.”⁴⁰⁹ As a result, many of them became businessmen in different fields, which has been the subject of detailed discussions by some scholars.⁴¹⁰ If the social attitude toward commerce had changed, why then did no rich individuals wish to reveal their sponsorship of Buddhism? Ming Confucians, more specifically Ming southern Confucians, had changed their attitude towards Buddhism as well as their perception about commerce and trade. Nevertheless, there

⁴⁰⁸ 古者四民异业而同道，其尽心焉，一也。士以修治，农以具养，工以利器，商以通货，各就其资之所近、力之所及者而业焉，以求尽其心。其归要在于有益于生人之道，则一而已。士农以其尽心于修治具养者，而利器通货犹其士与农也。工商以其尽心于利器通货者，而修治具养犹其工与商也。故曰：四民异业而同道。See “Jiean Fangong Mu Biao (节庵方公墓表)”, *Wang Yangming Quanj*, Vol.25, pp.940-941.

⁴⁰⁹ Brook, 1993, p.18.

⁴¹⁰ Liu Xiaodong 刘东东, “Lun Mingdai Shiren de Yiye Zhisheng (论明代士人的‘异业治生’)”, *Shixue Yuekan* (史学月刊) 2007.8, pp.96-102.

were voices against this transformation. A high government official (Liu Zongzhou 刘宗周 1578-1645) criticised Wang Yang-ming's school thus: "After the Yue native Wang Shouren (Wang Yangming) passed away, Wang Ji (王畿) first inherited this lineage and brought the philosophical school a further step closer to Buddhist Chan. The lineage then was handed down to Zhou Rudeng 周汝登, and Tao Wangling 陶望龄, [and with these philosophers' interpretations] this philosophical school was even more interwoven with Buddhist Chan. By the time the lineage was passed down in turn to Tao Shiling, Shouren's philosophical school had fallen to rock bottom. Shiling taught at White Horse Mountain. Mostly his teaching was about cause and effect (karma)."⁴¹¹ In fact many northern local government officials were not comfortable with the power and influence that Buddhism enjoyed in the local society. As Timothy Brook said: "Antipathy for eunuchs is not sufficient to explain why North Zhili gentry liked to complain about the power and influence of Buddhism in their gazetteers, as they did with untiring consistency. That complaint is of a piece with the northern gentry's reputation as a dourly Confucian lot who were unsympathetic to the cultural and political enthusiasm of their southern counterparts. The taste for abbatial friendships and monastic patronage so strong among the Jiangnan gentry was not something most of them shared..."⁴¹² When compiling the local gazetteer some magistrates even deliberately avoid mentioning any Buddhist activity while others, in compromise, devoted only a very small space to write on religious activity. Under such an unfriendly environment toward Buddhism, it is understandable that Ming northern merchants, particularly those who without any political power, preferred to keep a very low profile when supporting Buddhism in order to avoid unnecessary trouble.

⁴¹¹ *Ming History*, Vol. 255, pp.6591-6592.

⁴¹² Timothy, Brook, *The Chinese State in Ming Society*, 2005, p.165.

More lay gentry Buddhists in South China

There were, for several reasons, more lay Buddhists in south China than North. First, the population in the south was denser than in the north. Most of the major wars occurred in north and for this reason the area was consistently a war zone and the land suffered from depopulation. To remedy this, the emperors of the early Ming period several times had to transfer people to northern China. Secondly, lay Buddhist movements cannot be separated from the activity of the monastic clergy. Yü Chünfang has discussed the causes of the revival of late Ming Buddhism, one of which was the rise of the four great Buddhist masters who were all from the Jiangnan region. From Shengyan's research on Ming lay Buddhists we can see most of the famous lay Buddhists in that period were from the Jiangsu and Zhejiang area.⁴¹³ Thirdly, that most of the celebrated lay Buddhists belonged to the gentry class, as stated elsewhere in this chapter, and is due to the popularisation of Wang Yangming's new interpretation of Confucianism. After a long period of stagnation, Buddhism experienced a renaissance in the late Ming period when members of the Chinese elite were drawn to Buddhist texts, doctrine, and meditation practices. Hence, it gave a chance for many of the gentry to study Buddhism and, following on from this experience, to become adherents of Buddhism. In fact, all four of those great masters in the late Ming Dynasty had a solid Confucianist education and in a way they belonged to the gentry class. According to Shengyan's research celebrated lay Buddhists in north China were very rare, only five being accounted for whereas in southern China there were seventy famous lay Buddhists. In Jiangsu alone there were thirty-one.

⁴¹³ Shengyan, *Mingmo Fojiào Yanjiu*, pp.273-4.

To avoid competing with imperial family

The Ming government officials, particularly in the late Ming period, had obtained more power in decision-making regarding national affairs. Following previous Han Chinese empires, Ming society adopted Confucianism as its core moral norm. Ming government officials could reject the emperor's order if they considered that it contradicted Confucianism. The power struggle between the emperor and his ministers reached its peak when Wanli refused to meet his ministers on a daily basis. This power conflict is reflected in the fact that mid to late Ming emperors, in order to patronise Buddhism, had to do so as imperial patrons rather than through state support. Both imperial family members and ordinary lay Buddhists adhered to the same norm of patronage. However, the Ming state did not like it that gentry patronage was a matter of undertaking the construction of an almost autonomous space within local society. In order to avoid being considered as competing with the imperial family in patronising Wutai Shan Buddhism, the majority of lay donors on Wutai Shan would have remained unknown for this reason.

The location of Wutai Shan

Some patronising of monasteries by the gentry was to establish their public authority in their local societies. However Wutai Shan as a pilgrimage centre is situated deep inside the mountains and far away from any civilised society. People came to Wutai Shan to seek religious inspirations and obtain merits rather than to establish their status and so someone who had that intention would not succeed. For instance in the seventeenth year of the Wanli era, one of the four late-Ming distinguished masters, Zhenke, initiated the printing of the

Buddhist *tripitaka* in stitched binding style (方册)⁴¹⁴ on Wutai Shan,⁴¹⁵ and some very influential lay patrons (including Lu Guangzu 陆光祖) responded by supporting this project. However, as the location was so remote and the cost to support the project so high this sum could not be obtained locally. Four years later the printing project had to shift to Southern China, to Jiaxing, where there were many wealthy lay gentry patrons. Hence this version of *tripitaka* is also called Jiaxing *tripitaka* rather than Wutai Shan *tripitaka*.

A donor list for the repair and restoration of the White Pagoda⁴¹⁶

A rare inscription reveals that most of Wutai Shan lay patrons were from northern China. Competition from Southern pilgrimage centres like Jiuhua Shan and Putuo Shan combined with inconvenient transportation should be the main reasons which restricted many southern Buddhists from coming to Wutai Shan. This inscription was erected to praise those who had contributed to the restoration of the White Pagoda. Most of the donors mentioned were lay Buddhists and apart from Wutai Shan itself, sixteen other places are mentioned including counties, a provincial capital, prefectures, sub-prefectures, and even villages.⁴¹⁷ All of these places are located in Northern China, such as Shanxi province, North Zhili (modern Hebei province), Henan province and Shandong province. On the list we can find some of the

⁴¹⁴ Dai Lianbin, "The Economics of the Jiaxing Edition of the Buddhist Tripitaka", *T'oung Pao* 94 (2008), pp.306-359.

⁴¹⁵ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, pp.92-95.

⁴¹⁶ Wang Zhichao, *Wutai Shan Beiwen Xuanzhu*, pp.228-230.

⁴¹⁷河间府三十铺, 山西太原府, 顺德府 (邢台), 广平府 (邯郸), 藁城县, 中原 (河南), 山东济南府章丘县, 龙泉关, 安平县, 淳县 (原平), 五台县, 繁寺县, 冀州, 东鹿县, 大同府, 祁县.

donors' professions: oil mill owner, carpenter, brick layer and blacksmith. These donors either had contributed money or labour to this project. Money donors may have gone on pilgrimage to Wutai Shan in person, or fund-raising monks had passed their doors collecting money where they lived. Among the donors, we find no one who reveals their profession as merchant. From other Ming inscriptions on Wutai Shan we find gentry donors, village farmer donors, artisan donors among the four classes but again no merchant donor is mentioned. This evidence attests that merchants were still considered as a low profession and even if they donated money to religious sites, they would still rather remain anonymous, or was it perhaps because Buddhist monasteries did not want to list them?

Government officials' protection and patronage

In *Qingliang Shanzhi*, there is a chapter dedicated to the gentry patrons. However, all of these gentry patrons were Ming government officials, and not a single merchant or rich landlord was included. To list all those local and central government officials as its patrons could inspire the contemporary and future local government officials to protect the religious environment on Wutai Shan, or deter them from interfering with monastic affairs. Six Ming local and central government officials were listed in a chapter called "*Ming gong wai hu*" along with other government officials from the previous dynasties in *Qingliang Shanzhi*. All six are from the Ming Jiajing era onwards and although there were other government officials connected with Wutai Shan before the Jiajing era, nevertheless these were not included. The reason why they emphasised government officials' protection on Wutai Shan is, for about one hundred years from the reign of Yongle until the Jiajing reign, monks were given stipends on Wutai Shan and exempted from labour and military duties. The Jiajing emperor, however, issued anti-Buddhist legislation revoking their exemptions and compelling Wutai Shan monks

to serve labour and military duties, and under this new religious guidelines the local government had more jurisdiction over religious activities on Wutai Shan. The reason for listing these six late Ming government officials in their mountain gazetteer was to protect Wutai Shan’s privilege which was bestowed by previous Ming emperors. In a sense these officials were guardians rather than patrons.to Wutai Shan.

Table 5. Government officials’ protection and patronage:

Name	Official title	Native	Year	M o n k friends on Wutai Shan	Event
Li Wenjin 李文进	Censor in chief of Xuanda region (a 2a rank 总督宣大都御史)	Bashu (Sichuan)	Jiajing xinyou (1561)	Chu Feng (Chan master)	Previously a Datong general suggested the exemption of monks’ military duty. In 1561 Li Wenjin again sent a report to the Shanxi provincial government to exempt monks’ military and tax duties. It succeeded.
Hu Shun’an 胡顺庵	Provincial Administration Vice commissioner of Hexi reign, Commander in Chief of Yanmen (守河东道，视兵雁门)	Donglai (Shandong)	Wanli gengchen (1580)		Prevention of people in Hunyuan and Ying, two sub-prefectures, from deforesting on Wutai Shan
Gao Wenjian 高文荐	Grand coordinator (a 2b rank巡抚山西)	Bashu (Sichuan)	S a m e a s above		Same as above

Z h a n g Weicheng 张惟诚	Provincial Administration Vice Commissioner of Yanpin reign (雁平道)	Yongqing (Hebei)	Wanli <i>xinsi</i> (1581)		Stopped local government taxing on Wutai Shan monks
Lu Guangzu 陆光祖	H e a d o f Ministry of Personnel (吏 部尚书)	Pinghu (Zhejiang)	Wanli <i>Xinmao</i> (1591)	Zibo, Daokai Chan masters	On his retirement trip home, he visited Wutai Shan and stayed in Longquan Monastery. He also adopted Wutai as his personal name.
Wen Zhenheng 文震亨	Secretariat drafter (a 7b rank, but as the Grand Secretary's Personal assistant this official was very influential 中翰)	Wuxian (Jiangsu, Suzhou)	Chongzhen <i>xinsi</i> (1641)	Yun Zhen (<i>vinia</i> master)	When he was dispatched by the c e n t r a l government to distribute salaries to the military base in Datong, he came to Wutai Shan and had a miraculous vision at Mimo Yan t e m p l e . Therefore, he sponsored the setting up of a seven-day long ritual at Zhenrong Yuan monastery.

What type of Buddhism did these officials practice? Why they were attracted to Wutai Shan Buddhism? Through studying these officials’ interests and practices it will help us to understand the role that Wutai Shan Buddhism played in society. The following story is how Li Wenjin became a Buddhist and how he practised Buddhism. When Li Wenjin worked in central government before he was appointed to Datong, he regarded Buddhism as heresy and suggested that the Ming emperor should ban it. After being ignored by the emperor he felt

very dejected and, spoke of his misery to a hermit, Mr. Fang who asked him whether he knew anything about Buddhism. Li replied when he started to learn the Confucian classics as a youth, he heard that Buddhism was a weird cult that bewitched people. The hermit questioned his reasoning that without having read anything about Buddhism, how could one say it bewitched people? He suggested Li should examine Buddhist books carefully, after which if he still could not find anything valuable, then he could exterminate it, and in that case nature would help him to achieve that goal. Li started to read Buddhism and three months later he said to Mr. Fang: "Due to your instruction, I have received the great sage (the Buddha)'s core teaching, and that is not lesser than our own sage's (Confucius); even deeper and much clearer. The nature of human beings is also called by the Buddha *tathagatagarbha*, which has a dualistic meaning: emptiness and non-emptiness. So-called emptiness means at origin our nature was not polluted by selfish motives nor spoiled by material possessions; there was no private interest. So-called non-emptiness means that the real nature is not illusion - it is substantial and clear, and the virtue it accomplishes is pure. Its dualistic meaning of emptiness and non-emptiness however are not two different things. It is just our mind only. Zhu Xi criticized Buddhism as nihilism, but while he only saw the emptiness in Buddhism he did not realize its virtue of non-emptiness. In the past Cheng (Yi and his brother Cheng Hao) regarded benevolence, justice, courtesy and wisdom as qualities we were born with, to use his words 'God given, nature endowed'. Now observing the gist of Buddhism (I can see) that the *tathagatagarbha* possesses uncountable virtues and wonderful compassion, they are as good as benevolence, justice, courtesy and wisdom. Everything in the universe is a reflection of my mind, therefore the course of nature is my mind and not that I come from the nature; what a

great teaching! If not a sage of transcends the world, how could someone come out with this!

I used to think I was born from the universe, now I know I manifest the world.”⁴¹⁸

The revival of late Ming Buddhism was experienced both in the Chinese elite class and also among the vast number of illiterates. For various reasons Buddhism had intertwined with people's lives of the late Ming and became inseparable from them. Traditional Chinese custom was very superstitious and consequently the Ming Chinese felt compelled to visit to all kinds of religious sites, whichever effectively answered their intercessions, revisiting them again and again. Maybe this was why Li Wenjin and other Confucians thought Buddhism bewitched people and misguided people from the Way. However, through the above story we read that once Li had wholeheartedly studied Buddhism, he changed his view towards it. As his approach was different from that of the illiterate class, we can call Li and his like-minded fellow members of the gentry 'elite Buddhists'. Studying Buddhism scholastically and through the practice of Chan seems to be the norm for most elite Buddhists. A high central government official, who adopted Wutai as his name, Lu Guangzu's Buddhist experience also shared a similar pattern: study Buddhism scholastically and practise Chan. Both Li and Lu connected with Wutai Shan through some of the Chan monks there. Li and Lu were supervised by Wutai Shan elite Chan masters in practising meditation and the sharing of meditative insights with them. Lu was one of the co-founders for carving the *tripitaka* project on Wutai Shan, and closely worked with some of the elite monks on Wutai Shan.⁴¹⁹ Therefore, we can say that the Ming elite Chan and *vinaya* masters' influences had helped Wutai Shan to maintain its prominent position in late Ming society.

⁴¹⁸ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, pp.158-160.

⁴¹⁹ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, p.92.

Founders of new Buddhist establishments in the Jiajing reign

During the Ming dynasty, on Wutai Shan in no period other than in Jiajing's reign were Buddhist establishments built in such large numbers. All of these new establishments were founded by monks. The Jiajing emperor had a reputation of being a pious Daoist. Official and literal records reveal this emperor issued many anti-Buddhist regulations.⁴²⁰ Official records also tell us that many Buddhist monasteries were demolished in the Ming capital in his early reign. Our first thought would be when many Buddhist establishments were closed down by government, a lot of influential monks fled away from city centres and moved to relatively remote areas like Wutai Shan. However, through He Xiaorong's research on Ming Buddhist establishments in Beijing, we notice that the fact is not in accord with the official records.⁴²¹ Jiajing's anti-Buddhist legislation, to a certain extent, was effective in the Ming capital, particularly in relation to the Tibetan monasteries and the high-ranked lamas. The reason for this can be seen in the actions of Jiajing's immediate predecessor, Zhengde, who was a zealous supporter of Tibetan Buddhism. During his reign there was a boom in construction of Tibetan temples in Beijing, mostly because Zhengde had invited many Tibetan monks to Beijing and assigned residencies and stipends to them and this caused a lot of criticism that Jiajing must have been aware of when he was a prince. Though Jiajing's anti-Buddhist policies were applicable to all types of Buddhism, the Chinese tradition of Buddhism had become deeply rooted in people's day to day lives and was inseparable from it; on the other hand Tibetan Buddhism had not gained significant support from the Chinese communities in

⁴²⁰ *Shizong Shilu*, Vol.83; Huanlu, *Shishi Jigu Lüe Xüji* (释氏稽古略续集) vol.3; *Ming Huidia* (明会典) vol.104.--These three works has been quoted by He Xiaorong, *Mingdai Nanjing Siyuan Yanjiu*, pp.20-24.

⁴²¹ He, Xiaorong, *Mingdai Beijing Fojiao Siyuan Xunjian Yanjiu*, pp.267-283; pp.561-578.

Beijing and once its sole and most powerful supporter was gone, Tibetan Buddhism vanished very quickly under the anti-Buddhist policies of the new regime.

The following table shows how many establishments were built (not including rebuilt) on Wutai Shan in the Jiajing era.

Table 6. New Wutai Shan establishments in the Jiajing reign:

Name of the establishment	Location	Date of founding	Founder	Causes
Riguang Monastery	Xixian valley	Jiajing era	Dufeng	Not clear
Baolin Monastery	North to Riguang Monastery	Jiajing era	Gudeng Chan master	Not clear
Fenglin Monastery	Fenglin valley	Jiajing era	Chetian	Not clear
Tiansheng Monastery	Jinggou valley	Jiajing era	Not clear	Not clear
Jingtu Chapel	Xixian valley	Jiajing era	Yufeng (pure land School master)	Yufeng practised asceticism. He chanted the name of <i>Amitābha</i> for 40 days without sleeping. As he gathered more and more followers, he then set up this cloister.

Longxing Chapel	Xixian valley	Early Jiajing era	Daxu	After having a vision of a golden girl holding a lotus flower with illuminating lights, he set up this cloister on the site.
Dabo Chapel	Zixia valley	Jiajing <i>jiazi</i> (1544)	Wubian Chan master	A huge brass alms-bowl was dug out on the site where he practised meditation; after that he set up this cloister.
Longshu Chapel	Che valley	Early Jiajing era	Baoyin, Chufeng, Yutang,	Not clear
Xifeng Chapel	Northern side of Tianpen Peak	Jiajing era	Baofeng Chan masters	Not clear
Huayan Chapel	North east of Xifeng Cloister	The end of Jiajing era	Gutan	This cloister was set up because Gu Tan was a Huayan expert.
Baitou Chapel	5 kilometres north east of Nantai	Jiajing era	Nameless	An ascetic, who was born with grey hair, had miraculous power.

Timothy Brook noted that the differences between chapel and monastery: “As the late-Ming author Feng Menglong explained in one county gazetteer he wrote, published in Fujian in 1637, the distinction had primarily bureaucratic significance: *si* were institutions that had

received official authorisation and on that basis had a right to expect the magistrate's protection, whereas *an* were privately founded and hence of dubious legality.⁴²² Though against the government legislation, lay Buddhists nevertheless supported these places. The contradiction of Ming Jiajing emperor's anti-Buddhism and Ming people's enthusiastic support of Buddhism shows the imperial power had weakened compared with the early period of Ming dynasty. From the above table we also see that Chan monks were the majority among all, and various Buddhist practices coexisted on Wutai Shan such as the Pure Land School and with monks who had miraculous powers.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have analysed the reasons why there was a lack of records on ordinary lay patronage to Wutai Shan. There were political reasons such as the desire of ordinary lay patrons to avoid being accused of competing with imperial patronage or when the theoretical low status of the merchant class encouraged them to keep their financial status low key. Other reasons such as its remote location stopped many ordinary lay Buddhists from paying a visit, and the philosophical environment in northern China was still dominated by conservative Confucians with an anti-Buddhist attitude. Further, northern China's economic power was far weaker than the South's in the Ming dynasty. All of these factors make it difficult to trace lay Buddhist patronage of Wutai Shan during the Ming dynasty.

However, that does not mean Wutai Shan had been short of patronage from lay Buddhists. Through the frequent constructions of Buddhist establishments on Wutai Shan, it is attested that it was still a very lively pilgrimage centre. Many distinguished Buddhist masters used their religious influence on elite lay Buddhists and had protected Wutai Shan from local

⁴²² Brook, *Praying for Power*, p.6. Also, *Shouning Daizhi* (1637; repr. 1983), p.3.

government officials' harassment from time to time. Further, they maintained Wutai Shan's superior status and enabled it to continuously enjoy the privileges that Ming emperors bestowed on it. By studying these masters we also learnt that Chan Buddhism was the mainstream on Wutai Shan although there were a variety of practices there during the Ming period.

Conclusion

Ever since Wutai Shan was established as the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī residence, this holy site has attracted pilgrims from all over the Buddhist world. After the decline of Buddhism in its motherland, the mountain came to have even greater significance to Buddhists. “That the long centuries since the passing of the Buddha were also of little account because the realm still possessed not only the mere traces of the past Buddha but also a live bodhisattva, who might yet – if one’s karma was right --be encountered in the sacred domain of Wutai Shan.”⁴²³

The miraculous visions experienced by many pilgrims inspired generation after generation of pious Buddhist followers from all over the Buddhist world to worship this great being. Chapter 1 provided a brief review of Buddhist history of Wutai Shan as the background to Wutai Shan’s sacred status, which has been acknowledged by many nations. This chapter also reviewed the development of Ming Buddhism in the political context of the period.

It is widely believed that Buddhism died out in India after the Muslim invasion of the 12th century. However, as we saw in Chapter 2, from the start to the very end of the Ming dynasty foreign pilgrims, particularly Indian Buddhist pilgrims, could be seen on Wutai Shan. This shows that although Buddhism did decline sharply in its motherland it must have survived in marginal areas of the South Asian subcontinent. Chapter 2 focused mainly on two celebrated Indian masters, Sahajaśrī and Śāripūtrā. The first of these two came to China from western India (Kashmir) but originated from Nepal. The second was born in a royal family from East India (Chittagong Hill Tracts, modern Bangladesh), later became an abbot at Bodhgaya for a

⁴²³ T.H., Barrett, *On The Road to China: The Continental Relocation of Sacred Space and its Consequences*, p.8.

time, and finally via Nepal and Tibet came to China. Both these Indian monks were highly respected by the Ming emperors, who appointed them as high-ranking monk officials. These appointments, even including that of the highest monk official, were made at least partly out of political motivations. The background to this is the two Indian monks' close association with elite Tibetan lamas. The Mongols and the Tibetans had for centuries shared a feeling of affinity through the bond of Buddhism. The Ming emperors were well aware of this and aimed to use the good office of the Tibetan lamas, who had great influence on the Mongols, to urge restraint on the Mongol marauders and thus neutralize the greatest threat of the Empire. Śāripūtrā's appointment in particular obviously reflects this motivation. Śāripūtrā came to Ming court with Hou Xian, who was assigned a secret mission to Tibet. When Hou Xian returned to China from Tibet he took Śāripūtrā back with him. Henry Tsai commented thus on Hou Xian's mission to Tibet: "Ming Shi says that the purpose of Hou Xian's embassies to Tibet was to invite the Buddhist hierarch Halima, who was said to have possessed magic power, to Nanjing. But on further investigation, this might not have been the only purpose. By the end of the fifteenth century, the Tibetans lamas were known to command the obedience of the converted Mongols on spiritual matters. Emperor Yongle's chief motive was probably to cultivate good relations with the Tibetan lamas so that the Mongols could be tamed."⁴²⁴ Although these two great Indians did not stay long on Wutai Shan, they nevertheless thought highly of this sacred domain. Before they passed away both requested to go and stay on Wutai Shan and to be buried there. The Ming emperors built each of them a monastery at the site of their pagodas on Wutai Shan. These monasteries carried on their Indian lineages, and later attracted further Indian pilgrims to Wutai Shan.

⁴²⁴ Henry, Tsai Shih-shan, *The Eunuchs in the Ming Dynasty*, p.125.

In contrast to its decline in India, in Japan and Korea Buddhism flourished continuously throughout the Ming dynasty period. However we do not find any pilgrims from these two countries on Wutai Shan. Wutai Shan was constantly in the war zone after the Northern Song, and the War between the Mongols and Japan may have been one reason preventing Far Eastern Buddhists coming to Wutai Shan. The main reason, however, that Wutai Shan no longer attracted these pilgrims was that was that competing sites had been established in their own countries. In consequence Japanese and Korean pilgrims who sought Mañjuśrī's inspiration could now go to Godaisen in Japan and Odae in Korea respectively.

As we noted, while the two most celebrated Wutai Shan pilgrims were appointed as monk officials, the role they played had more to do with the aims of Ming central government than with religious considerations. In Chapter 3 we investigated the monk official system on Wutai Shan and compared it with the system in Nanjing, which was documented in detail by a late Ming government official. Wutai Shan was an international pilgrimage centre during the Ming dynasty, the local monk residents were not only Chinese but also included Indians, Nepalese, Tibetans and Mongolians. These foreign monks followed different Buddhist traditions, and their practices, living habits and languages were different. Consequently, the Wutai Shan monk official system was more complicated than Nanjing's. In Nanjing through the monk official system the connection among Buddhist monasteries was very tight. As all the major monasteries in Nanjing were founded or re-founded by the Ming emperors, the local government officials had more jurisdiction in monastic affairs. On Wutai Shan though some of the monasteries were also founded by the Ming emperors, the local government had little influence in monastic affairs. Interestingly the Wutai Shan monk officials did not have much power to interfere in any individual monastery's business either. The relations between

monasteries on Wutai Shan resembled a federal system, with the monk officials as their headmen.

By the late Ming period the monk official system had become so corrupt that monks could even buy ranks. Thus the author of the Ming Wutai Shan gazetteer did not even bother to mention any of these monk officials in his book. The whole monastic system was endangered. The quality of Buddhist monks had declined so badly that criticism on Buddhist monks came from every corner. The need for a Buddhist revival was urgent. Some elite monks realised that the most effective way to achieve this goal would be to transcend sectarian rivalries and stress religious cultivation, particularly the observance of monastic discipline. Because of the negligence of monastic discipline, the *sangha* had lost its unity. Monks who lived in the same monastery were even divided into different factions. In Chapter 4 we discussed how Wutai Shan monks tackled this issue by reviving the public monastic tradition. We also compared the public monastic reform on Wutai Shan with some other monastic reforms in the South. There are three reasons making this comparison worthwhile. First, through this comparison we can see that the Buddhism in Northern China was somewhat different from the South; secondly, the other two reforms were led by Zhuhong (Lianchi) and Hanshan (Deqing) who were highly respected by their contemporaries and later generations, and both of these two great masters had been to Wutai Shan before they started their reform; thirdly, these three reforms happened in the Yellow River region, the Yangtze River region, and the Peal River region around the same period, hence it shows this movement was carried on through out the whole country. From their start dates we can see that Wutai Shan public monastic reform was a pioneer in this movement.

No religious institution can survive without political protection and the support of lay followers. The last two chapters of this paper focused on patronage of Wutai Shan. Chapter 5

was dedicated to the imperial patronage. Wutai Shan did not gain much attention from the Ming emperors until after Yongle ascended to the throne. There were two reasons for the Yongle emperor to turn his attention to Wutai Shan. First, he had invited a Tibetan hierarch (Halima) to Nanjing and to give him a religious blessing, and Halima requested a visit to the mountain. The second reason was that this emperor wanted to shift the Ming capital from Nanjing to Beijing, which many government officials did not consider suitable to be the Ming capital as its economy and cultural environment were far inferior to the southern capital Nanjing. Yongle started to patronise Wutai Shan Buddhism in order to pave the way for shifting the Ming capital to the north. Following in Yongle's footsteps, many other Ming emperors patronized Wutai Shan Buddhism. Among the Ming imperial families' patronage to Wutai Shan, Empress Dowager Li's contribution was appreciated the most. After the long years of suppression during the Jiajing era, Buddhism started to revive again in China with this empress dowager's support. She and Empress Wu of the Tang are the two most prominent female patrons in Wutai Shan Buddhist history. Their passion towards Buddhism matches each other. Their political careers are also very similar. Both used their Buddhist influence to assist and secure their political careers at court.

The discussion of lay patronage to Wutai Shan in the last chapter reveals that although monasteries were well supported by lay Buddhists, few rich merchants liked to publicise their identities. They preferred to remain anonymous in order not to attract attention. This shows there was a contrast in the merchant class of their richly endowed wealth and their poorly regarded status in the Ming northern conservative society. Nonetheless through various inscriptions we were able to trace Wutai Shan's popularity not only among elite Buddhists but also among the illiterate. Its popularity among the latter is probably the reason Wutai Shan could survive as a pilgrimage centre for so long.

When Buddhism had almost disappeared in its motherland, when Chinese Buddhism's glorious golden period had long gone and been suffering continuous decline, Wutai Shan still survived as a popular international pilgrimage centre in Ming China. It managed to attract many Tibetans, Nepalese, and Indians generation after generation throughout the three centuries of the Ming rule. At the national level, from the imperial family to the poorest peasant, Wutai Shan was well supported by all strata. But with the rise in popularity of some southern Buddhist pilgrimage mountains, such as Putuo and Jiuhua, Wutai Shan had certainly experienced competition, and suffered a decline in southern Chinese pilgrims.

Appendix I

Monastic guidelines of Lion's Den

Since the monastic guideline of Lion's Den is the core material for understanding the monasticism of public monasteries on Wutai Shan, it should give a clearer picture of monasticism in Ming public monasteries on Wutai Shan if we include this set of guidelines in this chapter. This set of guidelines is very brief compared with other guidelines or pure rules which were created by the late Ming Buddhist reformers in south China. The following is the translation of this set of guidelines:

1. When the monastery is completed, it will belong permanently to the people who come from all directions and are wholeheartedly committed to Buddhist practice. It is not permitted for the abbot to transmit the abbacy to his own disciples. If the relatives or disciples of an abbot craving for the monastic property appropriate it, they should be taken to the court for stealing. It is righteousness to drive them away from the monastery.
2. The abbacy is not perpetual in this monastery. At the beginning of each year, [all residents of Lion's Den] elect an honourable monk as abbot. All monks should follow his instructions in both big and small matters. At the end of the year the abbot should resign; if he is invited to remain he may serve as abbot for another year. But after two years if he still clings to the leadership and does not want to stand down, he should be expelled from the monastery.
3. The abbot should not receive any donations or other gifts personally on behalf of the monastery. It is advisable to choose three members as treasurers, one in charge of receipts, one in charge of records and the third in charge of expenditure.

4. During mealtimes, every one should be treated equally. There is to be no distinction between resident monks and visiting monks. No one is allowed to have a private meal. For having a private meal once, the offender should be fined one *dan*⁴²⁵ of rice, which will be use for public purposes.

5. The monastery is intended also for monks who are old or sick. Those who are over sixty and homeless may live in the Elder Hall. Those who are sick and homeless are allowed to stay in the Long-life Hall.

6. On the fifteenth of each month, on the occasion of reciting *Patimoka*, all should gather together in the monastery, apart from those who are a hundred *li*⁴²⁶ away. [with in one hundred li] Those who do not participate will forfeit the right to have a meal.

7. If members of our society experience illness, difficulties etc, even if they are away from the monastery, the rest members should bring them back and treat them properly. If the abbot does not follow this regulation, he should be expelled from the community.

8. If members of our society have disagreements, they should talk and explain calmly. No one is allowed to lose control and fight. The offenders will be forbidden to have a meal (until they confess).⁴²⁷

⁴²⁵ A unit of dry measure for grain equal to 100 liters.

⁴²⁶ A unit of length equal to half kilometer.

⁴²⁷ Zhencheng, *Qingliang Shanzhi*, pp.182-3.

Appendix II

“明故大隆善护国寺西天佛子大国师张公墓塔记”

The epitaph for the late Western World Buddha Son, Great National Preceptor Zhang of
the Ming Da Longshan Huguo Monastery

桑节朵而只(1445年—1512年)，正德七年(1512年)八月初五日卒于大隆善护国寺(今护国寺)。明武宗命工部给棺营葬，建塔于都城西香山乡公之下院观音寺。公之长徒奉?提督五台铃制番汉兼住圆照寺朵而只坚参为之立碑)

Sangye Rdo rje (1445-1512) passed away on the fifth day of the eighth month of the seventh year of the Zhengde era (1512). The emperor Ming Wuzong instructed the Ministry of Works to furnish all the needs for his funeral. His pagoda was built at Guanyin temple, an annex of Xianggong, at the foot of Fragrant Mountain, on the western outskirts of Beijing. His eldest disciple, an imperial instructed Wutai Shan inspector of instructing both Tibetan and Chinese [Buddhists] concurrently holding the post of abbot at Yuanzhao Monastery Rdo rje rgyal mtshan to set up this epitaph.

公姓张氏，讳桑节朵而只，先世山后人。景泰辛未(1451年)礼清心戒行国师为师。

The Master [Sangye Rdo rje]’s ancestors originally lived in Shanhou and his surname is Zhang (Lcang in Tibetan), and we can venture that his personal name is Sangye Rdo rje. In

the *xinwei* year of Jingtai era (1451) he took the tonsure under national preceptor Qingxin Jiexing.

成化六年(1470年)奉宪宗皇帝?命差往乌思藏，封阐化国王，公到彼处彰我圣朝褒封恩赉之典。

In the sixth year of Chenghua era (1470), on the the emperor Xianzong's order, he was dispatched to Tibet to bestow the title Chanhua King [to the local chieftain] on behalf of the emperor. In Tibet Master (Sangye Rdo rje) demonstrated how generous and benevolent of the Ming imperial court is.

成化十五年(1479年)方回京师，蒙赐宴赏升国师，封净慈利济。弘治二年(1489年)彰德赵王聘公于天宁寺讲习观法。

[He] did not return to Beijing until the fifteenth year of the Chenghua era (1479). The emperor threw a banquet for him and promoted him to the rank of national preceptor with the title of Jingci Liji. In the second year of Hongzhi era (1489) prince Zhao in Zhangde⁴²⁸ invited him to Tianning Monastery to preach and teach meditation methods.

庚戌(1490年)隐迹于五台山圆照寺，修习本佛哑曼绕葛功课，加持六字真言。

⁴²⁸ Zhangde (modern Anyang in Henan province) was the fief of prince Zhao. The third son of Emperor Yongle was given this fief and his offspring inherited this principedom throughout the rest of the Ming dynasty.

In the year of gengshu (1490) [he] withdrew from society and lived in seclusion at Yuanzhao Monastery on Wutai Shan, and practiced “Buddha nature Yama loka(?)”⁴²⁹, he also recited the Avalokiteśvara mantra “om ma ni pad me hum”.

辛亥(1491年)皇上崇尚秘教，钦取召于禁庭，奉命译写各佛修习讲说秘密戒法。

In the year of *xinhai* (1491), because the emperor deeply believed in Tantrism, he summoned him to the inner court of the imperial palace. [He] was under the emperor’s order to translate different mantras which had been practiced by various Buddhas.

壬子(1492年)加升西天佛子，赐蟒衣、金嵌宝石冠、织金袈裟。又赐金印一颗重二百五十两。加封清觉广智妙修慈应翊国衍教灌顶赞善西天佛子大国师。

In the year of *renzi* (1492), [he] was promoted as the Buddha Son of the Western World, and was given a robe with the design of the serpent, a golden hat inlaid with precious gems, a golden thread woven kasaya (cassock for Buddhist monks), plus a two hundred fifty taels gold seal. The title bestowed upon him was Qingjue Guangzhi Miaoxiu Ciyong Yuguo Yanjiao Guanding Zanshan, the Buddha Son of the Western world great national preceptor.

公生于正统乙丑(1445年)十月十七日，享年六十有八。长徒国师卜以是年九月十五日葬公于塔，以谨终也。正德七年冬十月十七日立石。

Master [Sangye Rdo rje] was born on the seventeenth day the tenth month of the year of *yichou* of the Zhengtong era (1445), and he died at the age of sixty eight *sui*. The National

⁴²⁹ 本佛哑曼绕葛

preceptor [Rdo rje rgyal mtshan] who is his eldest disciple buried his ashes under this pagoda to commemorate him. This epitaph was erected on the seventeenth day of the tenth month, the winter of the seventh year of the Zhengde era.

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