
Where the Two Worlds Met: Spreading a Buddhist

Canon in Wanli (1573–1620) China

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Abstract

The imperial bestowal, as a major way of distributing the Buddhist canon, profoundly affected the contours of Buddhism in late imperial China. But why did the inner court engage in the distribution? How did it choose the recipient from the outside world? How was it possible for an aspirant to the canon to win out among the competitors? These questions concern the dynamics and mechanism behind the diffusion of the canon. They also cast new light on the relationship between Buddhism and the state and local society by revealing how the two otherwise separated worlds interacted. This paper is intended to tackle these unexplored questions by examining the extensive bestowal of the Ming Beizang during the Wanli court (1573–1620). It first makes a survey, revealing how uneven the distribution was in terms of both time and region. It then explores the motives of the imperial members as patrons in the context of court politics. Its focus, however, is on the agents and elements working behind the selection of the beneficiaries, and how their interplays conditioned the influence of the canon in local societies. In the process, the roles of the emperor, court women, eunuchs, officials, monks, and local elites are all examined.

The Chinese Buddhist canon (*hanwen fojiao da zangjing* 漢文佛教大藏經), which consists of several thousand volumes of Buddhist literature, serves as the major source of Chinese Buddhist doctrines and exegesis. Initially compiled in the sixth century in handwritten form, this canon began to use printing technology in its production in the tenth century. Since then, more than twenty printed editions of it have been produced and circulated in East Asia, but most no longer exist in their entirety today. Through its wide circulation, the Buddhist canon has significantly influenced the liturgy and the life of the *sangha* (the Buddhist community), and facilitated the domestication of Buddhism in East Asia. Current scholarship on this canon is mostly philological, historical, and technological in nature, stressing the survey of diverse editions of the canon, their interrelationships, and variations in individual scriptures. In contrast, little attention has been given to its dissemination.¹

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¹For current studies on the printed Chinese Buddhist canon, see Yasuhiro Sueki, *Bibliographical Sources for Buddhist Studies: From the Viewpoint of Buddhist Philology*, Addenda III (Tokyo, 2001), pp. 181–210; Nozawa Yoshimi 野沢佳美, *Daizōkyō kankei Kenkyū bunken mokuroku* 大藏經関係研究文献目録 (Tōkyō, 1993); *idem.*, “Daizōkyō kankei Kenkyū bunken mokuroku: hoi, tsuika” 大藏經関係研究文献目録 補遺・追加, *Tōyō shi ronshū* 東洋史論

Like in other religious canons, circulation is a precondition in order that this canon could exert its intended function. This lacuna has thus prevented us from understanding not only a significant aspect of the canon itself but also the spreading of Buddhism across space and over time.

This paper is an effort to fill in this gap. It will examine the diffusion of the Northern edition produced in the Yongle period (1403–1424) (*Yongle Beizang* 永樂北藏; hereafter cited as *Beizang*) in Wanli (1573–1620) China,² with a focus on the socio-political dynamics behind the dissemination and its corresponding consequences. This paper will develop four sections, beginning with a survey of the circulation of this canon in Wanli China and an examination of the motivations of its main patrons. I then present two case studies, showing some monk's journeys to Beijing in pursuit of the *Beizang* and their experiences there. In the third section I will analyze how, and to what degree, competing agendas and interests interplayed in this process, with an emphasis on the mobilisation of local people and their active participation. In the last section, my focus will shift from cooperation to conflicts among participants, particularly those between eunuchs and local residents, and examine how these conflicts impacted the development of the temple receiving a canon. Finally, I will end this paper with some concluding remarks.

1. Distributing the Canon Nationwide: A Survey

The *Beizang* had a special status in all of the Buddhist canons that were carved and circulated during the Ming period (1368–1644). This dynasty created four editions of the canon, three sponsored by the government and one sponsored by private individuals.³ Regarding the editions, a contemporary author commented as follows:

There are two versions, northern and southern, of [the Buddhist] canon [produced] in our dynasty.⁴ The northern version is preserved in the inner court and cannot be obtained without the imperial bestowal. Hence, those owned by various temples are mostly the southern version. However, [the quality of the southern one] is much worse. Sometimes several words or even lines

集10 (1997), pp. 65–72; 15 (2003), pp. 19–34; Fang Guangchang 方廣錫, “Chūgoku ni okeru daizōkyō no genjō to tenbō” 中國における大藏經研究の現状と展望, trans. Kida Tomō 木田知生, *Ryūkyoku Daigaku bukkyō bunka kenkyūjo kiyō* 龍谷大學佛教文化研究所紀要 34 (1995), pp. 128–150; Li Fuhua 李富華 and He Mei 何梅, *Hanwen fojiao da zangjing yanjiu* 漢文佛教大藏經研究 (Beijing, 2003).

²This canon was reprinted, under the title *Yongle Beizang* 永樂北藏, by Xianzhuang shuju in Beijing in 2000.

³In addition to the *Beizang*, two southern editions of the canon were carved with government money: one is the *Hongwu nanzang* 洪武南藏 (Reprint Chengdu, 1999) and the other the *Yongle nanzang* 永樂南藏. The only private-sponsored edition is the *Jiaxing canon* (Reprint *Mingban Jiaxing da zangjing* 明版嘉興大藏經 [Taipei, 1986–1987]; *Jiaxing zang* 嘉興藏 [Beijing, 2008]). For studies on the Buddhist canon produced in the Ming dynasty, see Li and He, *Hanwen fojiao da zangjing yanjiu*, pp. 375–508; Hasebe Yūkei 長谷部幽蹊, “Mindai ikō ni okeru zōkyō no kaichō” 明代以降における藏經の開雕, *Aichigakuin daigaku ronsō, ippan kyōiku kenkyū* 愛知學院大學論叢 一般教育研究 31.1 (1983–84), pp. 3–28. Specifically, for the *Hongwu nanzang*, see He Mei 何梅, “Ming chuke nanzang yanjiu” 明《初刻南藏》研究, *Minnan foxueyuan xuebao* 閩南佛學院學報 1 (2001), pp. 99–115; Darui Long, “A Note on the Hongwu Nanzang, a Rare Edition of the Buddhist Canon”, *The East Asian Library Journal* 9.2 (2000), pp. 112–147. For the *Yongle nanzang*, see Nozawa Yoshimi 野沢佳美, *Mindai daizōkyō shi no kenkyū: nanzō no rekishigakuteki kiso kenkyū* 明代大藏經の研究: 南藏の歴史學的基礎研究 (Tōkyō, 1998). For the *Jiaxing canon*, see Nakajima Ryūzō 中嶋隆藏, *Min Banreki Kakōzō no shuppan to sono eikyō* 明萬曆嘉興藏の出版とその影響 (Sendai, 2005); *idem.*, “Kakōzō nyūzō butten to Mitsuzō Dōkai no tachiba” 嘉興入藏佛典と密藏道開の立場, *Tōhō gakuhō* 東方學報 113.1 (2007), pp. 34–50.

⁴When this essay was written, the Hongwu southern edition had fallen into oblivion and would not reappear until 1934, while the carving of the *Jiaxing* edition was still in process. In this sense, it is true that only two Ming editions of the Buddhist canon existed.

are dropped, making it no longer comprehensible. On the rare occasion that [people] obtain a copy of the northern version, [they feel] no less lucky than when they personally visit the Vulture Peak and listen to the Buddha's preaching [of Buddhist teachings].⁵ 我朝大藏有南北二本, 北本定大內, 非敕賜不可得, 故諸山所有南本爲多。然差之爲特甚, 或脫數字數行至不成讀。間得北本, 不減躬詣靈山, 聞廣長舌親宣也。⁶

The southern edition refers to the Yongle southern canon (*Yongle nanzang* 永樂南藏) and the northern edition the *Beizang*, both of which were carved with government funds during the Yongle period (1403–1424).⁷ The *Beizang* was modelled on the *Yongle nanzang*'s content. But when compared to the latter, it is better in quality and looks more elegant because the number of words carved on each page was purposely reduced by the Yongle emperor. Afterwards, the *Beizang* was used explicitly as a gift by the royal family to their favourite temples and monks.

Such a special status greatly increased the difficulties in the transmission of the *Beizang*. Unlike the *Yongle nanzang* which could be purchased by anybody and taken to anywhere, the special status of the *Beizang* made its transmission much more complicated. To print and decorate this canon costs an estimated six hundred *taels* of silver, much higher than the price of the southern canon, which was in the range of 65 to 289 *taels* depending on the quality.⁸ To deliver the *Beizang* was also challenging, for many of the recipient monasteries were chosen for political reasons and thus were located deep in mountainous or frontier areas. Even when the canon arrived at its destination, it did not mean the end of the trouble. A separate building was required to store the canon, and a stone stele needed to be erected with a protection edict (*huchi* 護敕) carved on it.

Although the carving of the *Beizang* was finished in Zhengtong 10 (1445), it was rarely bestowed during the following one hundred years. Things changed significantly in the Wanli period, however. Based on local and monastic gazetteers, I have identified more than one hundred copies of this canon that were bestowed across the empire. Table 1 below provides a general look at these bestowed copies of the canon.

Based on this Table, a further spatiotemporal analysis reveals several points in the circulation deserving special attention. First, the distribution was not constant, and there were some waves of bestowal. More specifically, twelve copies were sent out in the first ten years, but this number nearly tripled to thirty-three in the next twelve years. In the decade after Wanli 22 (1594) the bestowed copies further increased, although slightly, and then dropped by 57 percent in the fourth decade. During the six years from Wanli 43 (1615) to 48 (1620),

⁵ *Guangchang she* 廣長舌 literally means a wide and long tongue. It is one of the Buddha's thirty-two characteristic marks, and often used to refer to the Buddha himself.

⁶ Feng Mengzhen 馮夢禎, *Kuaixuetang ji* 快雪堂集, in *Siku quanshu cummu congshu* 四庫全書存目叢書 (Jinan, 1995; *jibu* 集部, vols. 164–165) 26, p. 6b.

⁷ The *Beizang* was enlarged in the Wanli period by adding forty-one more cases of Buddhist texts. See Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清, *Hanshan laoren mengyou ji* 憨山老人夢遊集, in *Wan xu zangjing* 卍續藏經, 150 vols. (Reprint Taipei, 1968–1970) [cited as *X* hereafter], vol. 73, no. 1456, 29.668b.

⁸ So far no study has been made about the printing expenses of the *Beizang*, and this estimated figure of six hundred *taels* is quoted from a paper I am working on. For the printing cost of the *Yongle nanzang*, see Lianbin Dai, "The Economics of the Jiaxing Edition of the Buddhist Tripitaka", *T'oung Pao* 94. 5 (2008), p. 346. For the printing the Daoist canon in the early seventeenth century, which cost 720 *taels* of silver, see Knud Lundbaek, *Joseph de Premare (1666–1736), SJ: Chinese Philology and Figurism* (Aarhus, 1991), pp. 33, 62. My thanks are to Prof. Timothy H. Barrett for this reference.

Table 1 The Spatiotemporal Feature of the *Beizang* Distribution in the Wanli era⁹

| Place | Time (Wanli) | 11–22 | | | | 23–32 | | | | Unclear | Total |
|---------------------------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|-------|
| | | 1–10 | 11–13 | 14–15 | 16–22 | 23–26 | 27–28 | 29–32 | 33–42 | | |
| North Zhili ¹⁰ | Non-Beijing | | | | | | 1 | | 2 | | 3 |
| | Beijing | 9 | 2 | 6 | 1 | | 1 | 3 | | 2 | 24 |
| Shanxi | | 2 | | 3 | | | 5 | | 2 | 3 | 15 |
| Shaanxi | | | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | 2 |
| Henan | | | | 1 | | | | | | | 1 |
| Shandong | | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | | | 4 |
| Zhejiang | | | | 3 | | 5 | | 4 | | 2 | 14 |
| South Zhili | | 1 | | 4 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 6 | | 3 | 26 |
| Fujian | | | | | 1 | 2 | | | 1 | | 4 |
| Huguang | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | 1 | 3 |
| Jiangxi | | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 6 |
| Guangdong | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Guangxi | | | | | | | 1 | | | | 1 |
| Sichuan | | | | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | | | 3 |
| Yunnan | | | | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | | | 3 |
| Guizhou | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | 2 |
| Total | Sub-total | | 4 | 22 | 7 | 22 | 13 | | | | |
| | Total | 12 | | 33 | | 35 | | 15 | 3 | 14 | 112 |

only one copy was issued. The distribution peaked during two periods, Wanli 14–15 (1586–1587) and Wanli 27–28 (1599–1600) respectively, but in the period from Wanli 23–26 no copies of the canon were despatched at all. Geographically, among all fifteen province-level administrative units, North Zhili and Shanxi received forty-two copies and South Zhili and Zhejiang forty, together taking up seventy-three percent of the canons granted in the Wanli reign. Moreover, in the first twenty-two years North Zhili and Shanxi received fifty-one percent while South Zhili and Zhejiang only got twenty-four percent of all given canons. After that, the latter outweighed the former with a ratio of forty-three to twenty-six percent. In particular, changes in Beijing's share in these two phases deserve special attention. Beijing received twenty-four copies and ranked first among all places obtaining canons, but its percentage among the whole country dropped from 40 to 8 from the first half to the second.

Since the circulation of the *Beizang* is significantly different in time and space, questions arise: How could temples that were far away from the capital be chosen as candidates to accept the *Beizang*? To what degree was the acquisition of this canon decided by chance? What elements were at work behind the acquisition of a canon? How did these conditions eventually affect the acquisition process?

⁹For recent studies on the bestowal of the *Beizang*, see Nozawa Yoshimi 野沢佳美, “Mindai hokuzō kō 1: kashi jōkyō o chūshin ni” 明代北藏考(一): 下賜狀況を中心に, *Risshō daigaku bungakubu ronshō* 立正大學文學部論叢 117 (2003), pp. 81–106; He Xiaorong 何孝榮, *Mingdai Beijing fojiao siyuan xiujian yanjiu* 明代北京佛教寺院修建研究 (Tianjin, 2007), pp. 317–322. In comparison, we can see how the *Yongle nanzang* was circulated in Li Jining 李濟寧, “Fo jiao da zangjing de diaoke, yinshua, liutong zhidu” 佛教大藏經的雕刻、印刷、流通制度, *Wenjin xuezhì* 文津學誌 1 (2003), pp. 56–60.

¹⁰The term *zhili* 直隸, meaning “directly ruled,” indicates regions directly ruled by the central government. Since the Ming had two capitals, there were two Zhili provinces in this dynasty. The region known as North Zhili (*Bei Zhili* 北直隸) was composed of parts of the modern provinces of Hebei, Henan, Shandong, and the

We can begin with Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555–1636; *jinsi*, 1589),¹¹ a devout Buddhist and leading artist of the time, who observed that “Currently, belief in Buddhism in the realm is rather thriving. . . . [But] it is rare [among temples] to obtain the bestowed canon of 5,480 fascicles. There is not a single copy even in an area for one thousands *li* around. If [a copy] does exist, the place must be as famous as the E’mei mountain and the five sacred mountains,¹² where grand ceremonies of worshipping heaven have been conducted, or in the second capital (i.e., Nanjing) and the cradle where the emperor founded the dynasty (i.e. Fengyang 鳳陽 in Anhui), where various deities have manifested themselves for the first time. If not, they should be located in [Mount] Jin, [Mount] Jiao, and the Luoia [island] (i.e. Putuo island),¹³ which are the deepest point of rivers and seas”. (今海內奉大雄之教甚盛. . . 其得敕賜大藏經五千四百八十卷者蓋寥寥乎. 千里而遙, 曾無一焉. 間有之, 必其封望之名山, 如三峨五嶽者. 又不然, 則如陪京興都, 神靈之發迹也. 又不然, 則如金、焦、落伽, 江海之奧區也.)¹⁴ Dong listed conditions for the acquisition of the *Beizang*, but he left some essential problems unexplored.

As spreading the *Beizang* was a time- and money-consuming enterprise, the first question to ask is why people would take the trouble to do it at all. Judging from the “protection edict” accompanying the bestowed canons, we now know that Empress Dowager Cisheng 慈聖 (1545–1614) and her son the Wanli emperor (r. 1573–1620) served as major benefactors for the distribution.¹⁵ Cisheng was famous as a devoted Buddhist believer and patron of Buddhism.¹⁶ Wanli, although less enthusiastic about Buddhism than his mother, was still a Buddhist follower.¹⁷ Circulating the *Beizang* constituted an important part of their Buddhist enterprise. As a consequence, in Wanli 14 (1586) and 15 (1587), Cisheng bestowed fifteen

administrative districts of Beijing and Tianjin. The South Zhili (*Nan Zhili* 南直隸) included parts of what are today the provinces of Jiangsu, Anhui, and the administrative district of Shanghai.

¹¹Dong Qichang was one of the most important painters and calligraphers in late imperial China, and his art was profoundly influenced by Chan Buddhism. See Timothy Brook, “Rujia de zongjiao: Dong Qichang de fojiao yu Xu Guangqi de jidujiao” 儒家士大夫的宗教: 董其昌的佛教與徐光啟的基督教, *Zhongguo xueshu* 中國學術 17 (2004), pp. 174–98; Hasegawa Masahiro 長谷川昌弘, “Tō kishō to Zen” 董其昌と禪, *Tōyōgaku ronshū* 東洋學論集 no. 1(1994), pp. 141–156.

¹²*San’e* 三峨 refers to Mount E’mei, for it has three major peaks called *Da’e* 大峨, *Zhong’e* 中峨, and *Xiao’e* 小峨, respectively. *Wuyue* 五嶽 refers to five sacred mountains in traditional Chinese culture, including Mount Tai 泰山 in Shandong, Mount Heng 衡山 in Hunan, Mount Hua 華山 in Shanxi, Mount Hen 恆山 in Hebei, and Mount Song 嵩山 in Henan.

¹³Mount Jin and Mount Jiao, both located in Jiangsu and close to the mouth of the Yangtze River, had some famous Buddhist monasteries in late imperial China.

¹⁴Dong Qichang, *Rongtai ji* 容台集 (Taipei, 1968) 7, p. 963.

¹⁵Scholars have assumed that these canons were all dispatched by Cisheng, although sometimes in the name of Wanli. But this was not true on some occasions. For an example of such exceptions, see Qian Bang 錢邦 and Fan Chengxun 范承勳, (eds.), *Jizushan zhi* 雞足山志 (Taipei, 1985) 8, p. 475.

¹⁶For Cisheng’s biography, see Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉, et al., (eds.), *Mingshi* 明史 (Beijing, 1974) 114, pp. 3534–3536. Also see Luther Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, (eds.), *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368–1644* (New York, 1976), pp. 856–859. For current studies on Cisheng, see Susan Naquin, *Peking: Temples and City Life, 1400–1900* (Berkeley, 2000), pp. 156–161; Chen Yunü 陳玉女, “Ming Wanli shiqi Cisheng taihou de congfo: jian lun fo, dao shili de duizhi” 明萬曆時期慈聖皇太后的崇佛: 兼論佛、道勢力的對峙, in her *Mingdai fojiao yu shehui* 明代佛教與社會 (Beijing, 2011), pp. 96–146. My manuscript studying the mid- and late Ming Buddhism, which is now under review for publication, devotes almost one chapter to Cisheng’s religious activities. Also see Nie Furong 聶福榮, “Wanli chao Cisheng Li taihou chongfo kao lun” 萬曆朝慈聖李太后崇佛攷論, MA thesis, Jilin University 吉林大學, 2007.

¹⁷Shen Defu 沈德符, *Wanli yehuo bian* 萬曆野獲編 (Beijing, 1959) 27, p. 679, mentions briefly Wanli’s belief in Buddhism.

copies of the canon to fifteen temples.¹⁸ Three years later, she sponsored the printing and distribution of more than twenty copies at her own cost.¹⁹ In Wanli 27 (1599) and 28 (1600), Wanli became the major driving force behind the successive waves of canon-granting.²⁰ Buddhism has a consistent policy of encouraging people to circulate Buddhist sutras, claiming that it is most effective in collecting merits and that in doing so people will be rewarded ten thousand times what they have expended (舍一得萬報).²¹ In this sense, it is easy to understand the engagement of Cisheng and Wanli in the circulation of the *Beizang*.

But this explanation is not enough; the shift from Cisheng to Wanli as the primary patron circulating the canon actually hints at a strong political shift, and the imperial motives on these occasions were frequently not so much religious as they were socio-political. Protection edicts that accompanied each bestowed canon remained unaltered in content for the periods specified, and they reveal clearly a socio-political motivation. In the 1584 edict, Wanli said, “I think that Buddhist teachings have all been included in the canon. [Thus], it would be helpful to protect the state and assist the people if [we] use [the canon] to transform and guide good people and to enlighten the deluded”. (朕惟佛氏之教, 具在經典, 用以化導善類, 覺悟群迷, 于護國佑民, 不為無助.)²² Here the emperor was simply using a traditional formulation to justify his favour of Buddhism. But in the 1587 edict, notably, Cisheng said, “[In doing so, I] wish that the emperor and the crown prince rule the world forever, and that the ministers be loyal and children be filial”. (祝皇帝皇儲而永禦萬邦, 願臣忠子孝.)²³ On the surface, it was suitable for Cisheng to express this wish given her status as the reigning emperor’s mother and the head of the inner court but, in the context of the Wanli period, she actually touched upon a very sensitive political event – the succession issue that dominated the Wanli court – when mentioning the crown prince. Wanli’s empress did not produce him a son. According to the established primogeniture system, his first son, born by one of his courtesans, thus had the privilege of succeeding the throne. But Wanli himself preferred his third son because the latter was born by his beloved courtesan. A stalemate, usually called the succession issue, thus formed and lasted several decades.²⁴ In the process, Cisheng took a stance in opposition to that of Wanli. Judging from her consistent standpoint, the crown prince mentioned in the protection edict must have referred to Wanli’s oldest son,²⁵ and in doing so she made the bestowal of the *Beizang* a declaration of her stance within the strife-ridden court.²⁶

¹⁸ Qiang & Fan, *Jizushan zhi* 8, p. 474.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 8, p. 475.

²⁰ Yinguang 印光, *Qingliangshan zhi* 清涼山志 (Taipei, 1980) 7, p. 221.

²¹ For example, see *Dezang pusa benyuan jing* 地藏菩薩本願經, in *Taishō shinshū dai-zōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經, (ed.) Takakusu Junjirō, et al., 100 vols. (Tōkyō, 1924–32) [hereafter T] 13, no. 412, 2.786c–787a.

²² Qian and Fan, *Jizushan zhi* 8, p. 474.

²³ *Ibid.*, 8, p. 475.

²⁴ For the succession issue in the Wanli period, see Gu Yingtai 谷應泰, *Mingshi jishi benmo* 明史紀事本末 (Beijing, 1958) 67, pp. 1061–1076; Ray Huang, 1587, *A Year of No Significance: The Ming Dynasty in Decline* (New Haven, 1981), pp. 75–103.

²⁵ This was not the only case in which Cisheng prayed for the benefit of Wanli’s first son. For another similar example, see Mizang Daokai 密藏道開, *Mizang kai chanshi yigao* 密藏開禪師遺稿, in *Mingban Jiaying da zangjing: Jingshan cang ban* 明版嘉興大藏經: 徑山藏版, 40 vols. (Taipei, 1987), vol. 23, no. B118, 1.11b, 12c–13a.

²⁶ Due to the involvement of court strife, the distribution of the *Beizang* could turn into a fatal event. For example, the eunuch Zhang Ben 張本 (?–1595?) was sentenced to death in 1595. The charge against him was that he had fabricated an imperial order to give a copy of the *Beizang* to Hanshan Deqing, who had been respected by

The political flavour is strongest in the 1599 edict. Shown in Table 1, at least twenty-one copies of the canon were bestowed in the two years of Wanli 27 and 28. Wanli himself was the driving force behind this wave of distribution, and he disclosed his intention in the protection edict: “[I wish that the circulation of copies] could make me healthy and peaceful and keep the inner court stable and in order. [I] repent for [my] previous wrongdoings and pray for longevity and permanent blessings. [I wish that] the people be tranquil, the country be safe, and the world under Heaven be peaceful. [In this way], [people] in the four seas and eight directions will all return to the teaching of benevolence and sympathy (i.e. Buddhism), and I am able to rule the state in the non-action way”. (保安眇躬康泰，宮壺肅清，懺已往愆尤，祈無疆壽福，民安國泰，天下太平。俾四海八方，同歸仁慈善教，朕成恭己無為之治道焉).²⁷ The most telling thing here is that the emperor himself was the only key word. Wanli’s first desire was to keep the inner court stable and in order. Given that Wanli would not solve the succession issue until two years later, this edict reveals how troubled he felt about the court strife it caused. His regret for his wrongdoings is also revealing. Owing to his failure in establishing the favourite son as his heir, Wanli had refused to take his responsibility as the ruler for a long time.²⁸ Wanli was not a fool unable to recognise his mistakes, but he had little intention of correcting them. Instead, he wished that he could continue to rule in the so-called “non-action” way, which was a euphemism for his laziness in administration.

2. From the Inner Court to Local Temples: Two Journeys

Significant as it was, the part that the emperor and the dowager empress played in the distribution of *Beizang* was only one side of the story which is comparatively simple. Given that they were generally confined to the inner court, it is tricky but significant to know how their world was channelled towards the world outside and how the latter operated when pursuing the canon. For that reason, in this section, I shall examine two cases in the hope of gaining a glimpse of these important aspects.

In the autumn of Wanli 38 (1610), the monk Pumen Weian 普門惟安 (1546–1625), the abbot of Fahaichan Chapel 法海禪院 at Mount Huangshan, set off on a trip. His destination was Beijing, from which he was determined to bring home a copy of the *Beizang*. He made careful preparations for this trip. He took with him a local painter well known for his landscape paintings of Mount Huangshan. To their disappointment, although the paintings of Fahaichan Chapel that they submitted impressed both Wanli and the crown prince, neither of them showed interest in the temple itself.²⁹ Before heading for Beijing Weian also asked Bao Ying’ao 鮑應鰲 (*jinshi*, 1595), a native of She 歙 county where Mount Huangshan was located and then an official in the Ministry of Rites, to write a “tribute essay” (*shu* 疏) for

Cisheng as her personal master, nine years before. For the event, see *Ming Shenzong shilu* 明神宗實錄 (Reprint. Taipei, 1962–68) 285, pp. 5291–5292.

²⁷ Yinguang, *Qingliang shanzhi* 7, p. 222.

²⁸ For Wanli’s evident and protracted inaction in administration, see Ray Huang, “The Lung-ch’ing and Wan-li reigns, 1567–1620”, in *The Cambridge History of China. vol. 7, The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644, Part 1*, (eds.), Denis Twitchett and Frederick Mote (Cambridge, London, New York, 1988), pp. 515–517.

²⁹ The painter was Zheng Zhong 鄭重, who is said to have observed Tiandu peak, where Fahaichan chapel was, for one year before drawing it. See Min Linsi 閔麟嗣, *Huangshan zhi dingben* 黃山志定本, in *Zhongguo mingshan zhi* 中國名山志, (eds.) Jiang Yasa 姜亞沙 et al. (Beijing, 2005; vols. 9–10) 3, p. 576. For the response of Wanli and the crown prince, see *ibid.*, 2, p. 341.

Fahaichan Chapel. Bao in turn persuaded Yu Yuli 于玉立 (*jinshi*, 1583), his fellow official in the same ministry, to write another tribute essay and to make donations to the temple.³⁰ Their essays attracted the attention of Tang Binyin 湯賓尹 (1569–1628?; *jinshi*, 1595), who wrote four lines in praise of it.³¹ Tang, a native of Xuan sub-prefecture, was an influential official leading the so-called Xuan Faction (宣黨), one of the three major factions in the late Ming political context.³² Although Tang's four-line eulogy was simple, it should have helped enhance the popularity of Fahaichan Chapel in the capital.

It was eunuchs who brought good fortune to Weian and his temple.³³ Ma Jin 馬進 (d. u.), a eunuch at the Directorate of the Imperial Stables (*yuma jian* 御馬監), was in charge of Ciming si 慈明寺, one of Cisheng's private temples. Upon meeting Weian, Ma Jin claimed that in meditation he had seen Weian, and thus invited the latter to stay at Ciming si. Weian accepted the invitation. Later, through Ma's network, especially a Buddhist association (*hui* 會) organised by eunuchs in the Directorate of Imperial Stables, Weian attracted more and more eunuchs.³⁴ When Ma Jin held vegetarian feasts for monks at Mount Panshan 盤山 in Ji 薊 county (present-day Tianjin) at Cisheng's order, Weian went with him. This trip turned out to be a turning point in Weian's life. He met an otherwise unknown old man, Zuo Xiang 左相 (d. u.), at Mount Panshan.³⁵ When Zuo learnt that Weian aspired to build a monastery, complete with an imperially-bestowed canon, he gave him three hundred *taels* of silver. This gift further encouraged donations from Bao Ying'ao and another two natives of Huizhou 徽州. Finally, with this money, through a eunuch, Weian obtained a copy of the *Beizang*. Then, through the eunuch Yan Luan 閻鸞 (d. u.),³⁶ Weian submitted a memorial to Cisheng requesting a name for the temple and a protection edict for the canon.³⁷ In the sixth month of Wanli 39 (1611), Wanli renamed Fahaichan Chapel as Ciguang si 慈光寺. Concurrently, a seven-tier gold-blended (*shenjin* 滲金) statue of the four-faced Vairocana (*simian piluzhena* 四面毘盧遮那) commissioned by Cisheng was about to be completed.³⁸

³⁰Bao Ying'ao had encountered Weian in Datong, Shanxi, and seems to have discussed Buddhist teachings with him. See *ibid.*, 5, p. 131. As for Bao's and Yu's essays, see *ibid.*, 3, pp. 562, 610.

³¹Tang Binyin also lent support to other temples on Mount Huangshan, including Zhibochan Chapel 擲鉢禪院, Shizi lin 獅子林, and Cuiwei si 翠微寺. See, *ibid.*, 2, p. 217; 3, pp. 510–511, and 518–519.

³²For Tang's political life, see Harry Miller, "Opposition to the Donglin Faction in the Late Ming Dynasty: The Case of Tang Binyin", *Late Imperial China* 27.2 (2006), pp. 38–66.

³³This case was not an exception. Susan Naquin, *Peking: Temple and City Life, 1400–1900* (Berkeley, 2000), p. 180, points out that "eunuch initiative was especially important during the first half of the dynasty, but even as the number of new temples gradually decreased, eunuchs continued to play a vital role as patrons". For eunuchs' relationships with Buddhism, see Chen Yunü, *Mingdai ershi si yamen huanguan yu Beijing fojiao* 明代二十四衙門宦官與北京佛教 (Taipei, 2001); He Xiaorong, "Mingdai huanguan yu fojiao" 明代宦官與佛教, *Nankai xuebao* 南開學報 1 (2000), pp. 18–27.

³⁴For the invitation, see Min, *Huangshan zhi dingben* 2, pp. 330–331. For the travel, see *ibid.*, 5, p. 126, 137, and 144.

³⁵Bao Ying'ao claimed that Zuo Xiang was a Shanxi person, while Yue Hesheng insisted that he was a resident of Pinggu in Beijing. Probably Zuo was a Shanxi people who migrated to Pinggu. See *ibid.*, 3, p. 496; 5, p. 126.

³⁶Pan Zhiheng confused *yan* 閻, the surname of Yan Luan 閻鸞, with a homophone "顏". See Min, *Huangshan zhi dingben* 2, p. 331.

³⁷For Weian's acquisition of the canon, see *ibid.*, 3, pp. 562–563; 5, pp. 136–137. For Weian's memorial requesting for the name-tablet, see *ibid.*, 3, pp. 455–456. The protection edict collected in the same book has a mistake: this canon was bestowed in Wanli 39 rather than Wanli 27. See *ibid.*, 3, pp. 449–450.

³⁸In the Tantric Buddhism, the four-faced Vairocana refers to dharma-body as wisdom (*zhi fa shen* 智法身) in the Diamond realm (*jinggang jie* 金剛界; Skt. *Vajradhātu*). See the *Jinggangding yuqie zhong yuechu niansong jing* 金剛頂瑜伽中略出念誦經, *T.* 18, no. 866, 1.227b–c. That the four-faced Vairocana sits on a pedestal comprising one thousand lotus has a textual basis the *Fanwang jing* 梵網經, *T.* 24, no. 1484, 2.1003b.

To decide where the statue should go, it was said that Cisheng, Wanli, and his empress cast three lots (*nian* 拈) and all their divinations pointed towards Mount Huangshan.³⁹ An extant memorial submitted by the otherwise unknown eunuch Cai Qin 蔡欽 (d. u.), however, records that Cai requested that the statue be given to Weian's temple. This suggests that the choice of Mount Huangshan may have been associated with the efforts of eunuchs. No matter how the decision was arrived at, the statue was finally given to Ciguang si. In addition, Cisheng awarded Weian one purple robe,⁴⁰ twelve smaller Buddha statues, one walking staff (*zhang* 杖), and five hundred *taels* of silver.⁴¹

Weian's success in the capital became a bugle call to mobilise in the Huangshan area. Thrilled, a local of Huangshan then resident in Beijing immediately sent a messenger back reporting the bestowment of this canon and fellow locals assembled to prepare for the unusual event. Fahaichan Chapel was too small to have a separate building for storing the canon, as was required, so Weian's disciples discussed this situation with laymen, and then decided to build a new pavilion to house it temporarily. Since Tang Binyin happened to have returned home, he was invited to coordinate these matters. Tang accepted the invitation and wrote two essays requesting support for this temple.⁴²

It proved a big challenge to deliver the canon and statues from Beijing to south China. In the sixth month of Wanli 40 (1612), three eunuchs, including Ma Jin and Yan Luan, received Cisheng's order to escort the items to Fahaichan chapel now called Ciguang si. Although they used the postal system (*yidi* 驛遞), they did not arrive in Shandong until two months later. Mi Wanzhong 米萬鍾 (1570–1628; *jinshi*, 1595) who held Weian in high regard thus arranged grain transporting ships to take the group south along the Grand Canal. But they ran into serious trouble when they arrived in Hangzhou at the southern end of the Canal, and decided to take a rest in Zhaoqing si 昭慶寺. Hangzhou then suffered from a flood and, mysteriously, a rumour spread that this flood was created by the Buddha statues that they were carrying.⁴³ Hangzhou residents rallied together intending to destroy the statues, and the situation became so chaotic that it threatened to spin out of control. Yue Yuansheng 岳元聲 (1557–1628; *jinshi*, 1583) wrote an urgent letter on the behalf of the envoy, and local officials responded by dispatching four hundred labourers who shipped this cargo safely to She county on the same day.⁴⁴

³⁹Min, *Huangshan zhi dingben* 2, p. 212; 3, pp. 453–455, 495, 498–499. Yue Hesheng said that the canon was bestowed after Weian's reception of those Buddha statues, while Bao Ying'ao claimed a reverse order, which obtains support from Pan Zhiheng. See *ibid.*, 3, pp. 495–496, 562–563; 5, pp. 126–128.

⁴⁰The purple robe was against Buddhist regulations regarding monks' clothing, but after it was first used in 690 by Empress Wu (r. 690–705) to honour monks whom she favoured, it gradually became a conventional imperial gift. Monks received the robe in recognition of their great achievement and contribution, but over time the value of this robe as a mark of distinction was reduced partly because of the scramble for it among prominent monks and their followers, which in turn sparked criticism. See John Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture* (Princeton, 2002), pp. 100–103. Huang Minzhi 黃敏枝, *Songdai fojiao shehui jingjishi lunji* 宋代佛教社會經濟史論 (Taipei, 1989), pp. 444–460; Wang Xiulin 王秀林 and Zhang Junmei 張君梅, “Ai seng buai ziyi seng' xiaokao” “愛僧不愛紫衣僧”小考, *Renwen zazhi* 人文雜誌 no. 6(2002), pp. 108–111.

⁴¹Min, *Huangshan zhi dingben* 5, pp. 126–128.

⁴²For Tang's activities during that period, see *ibid.*, 3, pp. 492–494, 565; 4, pp. 743–762.

⁴³The rumour had it that Buddha was the daughter of the Water Mother (*shuimu* 水母), who cannot stand three straight days without rain.

⁴⁴For the general situation, see Min, *Huangshan zhi dingben* 2, p. 330; 3, p. 451, 503. For Bao's letter, see *ibid.*, 5, pp. 126–128. For Mi Wanzhong's meeting with Weian, see *ibid.*, 3, pp. 639–660. For the trouble in Hangzhou,

Like Weian, monks of Huangbo si 黃蘗寺 in Fuqing 福清, Fujian, also obtained a copy of the *Beizang*, but the price they paid was much higher. In Wanli 29 (1601), Zhengyuan Zhongtian 正圓中天 (?–1610), who was restoring Huangbo si, set off on a long trip to the capital in an attempt to obtain the canon. He spent the following eight years in Beijing, but failed to secure the faintest hope of a bestowal and ultimately died there with regret. To fulfill his will, his grandson-disciple Xingci 興慈 (?–1618) and Xingshou 興壽 (?–1626) went to Beijing after his death.⁴⁵

This time it was not eunuchs but Ye Xianggao 葉向高 (1559–1627; *jingshi*, 1583),⁴⁶ then the senior grand secretary, who came to their rescue. Ye was a native of Fuqing, and Huangbo si was thus a temple of his hometown. Owing to this link, Xingci and Xingshou frequently visited him asking for help. Six years later, a chance finally came with Cisheng's death in 1614. In the autumn of that year, in order to pray for the posthumous blessings for his mother, the Wanli emperor “chose famous mountains and old monasteries in which to place the Buddhist canon. Six places were chosen in the realm, with Huangbo[su] included”. (擇名山古刹, 分置藏经. 海内共六处, 而黄蘗在其中.)⁴⁷ It was said that more than twenty candidate temples competed for those six copies. The names of all candidates were listed in a single memorial, and finally Huangbo si was one of the winners.⁴⁸ This result was not as accidental as it may appear however. Ye had taken trouble to handle Cisheng's funeral, and thus won Wanli's appreciation.⁴⁹ Shortly after the funeral, Ye's repeated request for retirement was finally sanctioned by the emperor, and this canon was what Wanli wanted him to boast about at home. In addition to the canon, Wanli also granted Huangbo si a name plaque, three purple robes, one walking staff, and one alms-bowl.⁵⁰ In retrospect, it took as long as at least fourteen years for Huangbo si to obtain the canon, which forms a sharp contrast to the speed with which Ciguang si obtained theirs.

Both Weian and Zhongtian were part of a group of monks in search of the *Beizang*. As early as Wanli 16 (1588), it was already reported that “people in the realm swarmed like porcupines into the capital seeking the canon. Officials tired of them and dared not to report their requests [to their superiors]”. (時天下乞藏, 聞風蝟集, 所司厭之, 不敢以聞.)⁵¹ This helps explain why one year later, as mentioned above, Cisheng printed and distributed more than twenty copies at her own cost. For those aspirant monks, it was Zhongtian rather than Weian who was more representative, for their efforts mostly ended in vain or even with tragedy. In Wanli 29 (1601), for example, when a monk set off for Beijing in pursuit of a

see *ibid.*, 2, pp. 342 and 5, pp. 129–130. Nevertheless, the statues did not arrive in Ciguang si until Wanli 43, see Pan Zhiheng 潘之恒, *Huanghai* 黄海, in *Siku quanshu cummu congshu*, vols. 229–230, pp. 67–68.

⁴⁵ *Huangboshan zhi* 黃蘗山志 (Taipei, 1986) 3, p. 106. According to Ye Xianggao, however, Zhongtian stayed in Beijing for about sixteen years, which means that he arrived in Beijing at least eight years earlier than 1601. See Ye Xianggao, *Qubian* 蘧編, in *Siku jinhui shu congkan bubian* 四庫禁毀書叢刊補編 (Beijing, 2005; vol. 25) 10, p. 520 b; *idem.*, *Cangxia xuchao* 蒼霞續草, in *Siku jinhui shu congkan* 四庫禁毀書叢刊 (Beijing, 2000; *jibu* 集部, vols. 124–125) 5, p. 680a.

⁴⁶ For Ye Xianggao's biography, see *Mingshi* 240, pp. 6231–6238. Also see Goodrich and Fang, (eds.), *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, pp. 1567–1570.

⁴⁷ *Huangboshan si zhi* 6, p. 240.

⁴⁸ Ye, *Qubian* 10, p. 520 b, claims that only five copies were bestowed this time.

⁴⁹ For Ye's devotion to Cisheng's funeral and Wanli's appreciation for his efforts, see *Qubian* 8–9, pp. 504–19b. Also see Ye Xianggao, *Lunfei zhouchao* 論扉奏草, in *Siku jinhui shu congkan*, *shibu* 史部, vol. 37, pp. 354b–416a.

⁵⁰ Ye, *Cangxia xuchao* 5, p. 680a.

⁵¹ Lu Jianzeng 盧見曾, *Jingshan zhi* 金山志 (Taipei, 1980) 9, p. 464.

canon, Feng Mengzhen 馮夢禎 (1548–1608; *jinsi*, 1577) cautioned him, “Easier said than done! Last spring Dharma master Ru left [for Beijing] as vital as a dragon, but now he has been mired in Northern China and found nowhere to obtain the canon. Why should [we] make more trouble by sending you there?” (談何容易! 去春如法師行, 氣猛如龍, 今滯於北, 藏無影響, 寧煩益以子耶?)⁵² Dharma master Ru referred to Furu 傅如 (fl. 1606), who had headed for Beijing one year before. It is unknown whether Feng Mengzhen finally dissuaded the monk from carrying out of his plan, but evidently his concern was not without foundation: Furu finally returned to Hangzhou, after staying in Beijing in vain for at least two years.

3. Canon, Patrons, and Local People: the Context

The high esteem in which the *Beizang* was held and its limited supply encouraged competition among monks aspiring for it, but how could temples like Ciguang si and Huangbo si obtain copies of the canon? To examine if there was anything other than random chance at work, I shall turn to the local context in which the monks and their temples existed.

Weian and Ciguang si cannot be fully understood without understanding Mount Huangshan, where the temple was located, and Huizhou, the jurisdiction of which the temple was subject to. The Huangshan area was five hundred kilometres in circumference, with its major part in three counties of Xiuning 休寧, She, and Taiping 太平. During the period under discussion, this area was home to two most influential groups: Huizhou merchants (*huishang* 徽商) and a large number of *jinsi* holders.⁵³ In other words, Mount Huangshan was located in a region of wealth and literary talent, as was Ciguang si. Before the sixteenth century, local people paid little attention to the mountain. Things started to change in Jiajing 21 (1542) when sixteen local literati organised the Tiandu association (*tiandushe* 天都社) and spent one day together at the Tiandu peak of Mount Huangshan composing poetry.⁵⁴ These participants lacked influence even on a regional level, but the gathering soon became a memorable event locally. As local wealth increased rapidly, the social status of local sons grew quickly and the people of Huizhou felt increasingly dissatisfied with the obscurity of their hometown and wished to reshape its image. As an important step they chose to promote Mount Huangshan. Fortunately for them, this mountain was extremely beautiful. To cast it as China's foremost mountain, within a short period of time they compiled at least three voluminous books exclusively lauding this mountain.⁵⁵

Pan Zhiheng 潘之恒 (1556–1621) served as a coordinator in this movement through his extensive network of elites within Huizhou and beyond, particularly in Jiangnan.⁵⁶ Pan was

⁵²Feng, *Kuaixuetang ji* 4, p. 30a-b.

⁵³For Huizhou merchants, see H. T. Zurndorfer, “Learning, Clans, and Locality in Late Imperial China: A Comparative Study of Education in Huichow (Anhui) and Foochow (Fukien) 1600–1800. Part II”, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 35.2 (1992), pp. 109–144; Michael Szonyi, *Practicing Kinship: Clan and Descent in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, 2002).

⁵⁴Tiandu is the major peak of Mount Huangshan. For the first association named after it, see Min, *Huangshanzhi dingben* 2, pp. 324–326; 5, pp. 211–112.

⁵⁵For the ambition of those people, see Pan, *Huanghai*, pp. 49–50.

⁵⁶Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖, *Tang Xianzu ji* 湯顯祖集 (Shanghai, 1973) 40, pp. 1255–1258, says that Pan Zhiheng “cultivated friendship with the literati in the realm by means of his literary talent” (以文名交天下士). For a

born into a Huizhou merchant family, but his talent for literature showed at an early age and attracted wide attention. He re-established the Tiandu Association sixty-nine years after its first gathering. In this newly founded association, composing literary work, practicing meditation, and reciting the Buddha's name were central to the group's activities. Pan Zhiheng also organised the Pumen association, which was exclusively devoted to Buddhism. Some members of these two associations overlapped. The Tiandu Association declared itself to be the protector of the Pumen Association,⁵⁷ and they often acted together.⁵⁸ Besides, Pan Zhiheng had a close connection with leading literati of the age, like Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (1568–1610; *jinshi*, 1592), Li Zhi 李贽 (1527–1602), Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖 (1550–1616; *jinshi*, 1583), and Tu Long 屠隆 (1543–1605; *jinshi*, 1577).⁵⁹ Obviously, such a large network enabled him to get wide support for his undertakings. For example, when compiling the *Huanghai* 黃海 for Mount Huangshan, he attained assistance from as many as fifty-five literati to collate the draft.⁶⁰

In this process of promoting local pride, the wide connection of Huizhou people also allowed them to secure assistance from other regions. Huizhou was in the vicinity of the core region of the Jiangnan region, through which it was successful in establishing close relationships with other parts of the country. Many leading literati of the time, such as Feng Mengzhen, Yuan Huang 袁黃 (1533–1606; *jinshi*, 1586),⁶¹ Ge Yinliang 葛寅亮 (*jinshi*, 1601), Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582–1664; *jinshi*, 1610), and Xu Xiake 徐霞客 (1587–1641) in Jiangnan participated in this enterprise. They visited this area and composed laudatory writings for it.⁶² Besides, there were even some literati who participated in the campaign but did not visit this area. For example, a literary man in Hangzhou wrote a piece to praise the purity and beauty of Mount Huangshan, but he admitted that he had never visited the mountains and his essay was based only on what he heard from Tang Binyin and Pan Zhiheng.⁶³ Dong Qichang moved further to rank Mount Huangshan as the sixth most important mountain in China, but he did not actually visit it as well.⁶⁴ Many of these participating literati were high-ranking officials and had national reputations. As a result of their collective acts, the influence of the Huangshan area expanded quickly.⁶⁵

The backing of Weian by Huizhou people in Beijing took place in this context and was part of an escalating long-term effort to promote local pride. The imperial presence in

comprehensive study about Pan, see Zhang Qiuchan 張秋嬋, "Pan Zhiheng yanjiu" 潘之恒研究 (PhD dissertation, Suzhou University, 2008).

⁵⁷ Min, *Huangshanzhi dingben* 3, pp. 487–488.

⁵⁸ For example, see *ibid.*, 3, p. 565, and Pan, *Huanghai*, p. 35.

⁵⁹ Goodrich and Fang, (eds.), *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, includes the biographies for some of these figures. For Li Zhi, see pp. 807–818; For Yuan Hongdao, see pp. 1635–1638; for Tu Long, see, pp. 1324–1326. In addition, for Tang Xianzu, see his biography in *Mingshi* 235, pp. 6015–6016.

⁶⁰ On this kind of networks, see Tobie Meyer-Fong, "Packaging the Men of Our Times: Literary Anthologies, Friendship Networks, and Political Accommodation in the Early Qing", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 64, 1 (2004), pp. 5–56.

⁶¹ For Yuan Huang, see Goodrich & Fang, (eds.), *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, pp. 1632–1635.

⁶² Feng Mengzhen recorded his trip to Mount Huangshan in the form of poetry, essays, and diaries. See, for example, Min, *Huangshanzhi dingben* 4, pp. 674–87; Feng, *Kuaxuetang ji* 26, pp. 6–11, 406–408. For other people, see Min, *Huangshanzhi dingben* 5, pp. 38–65; Pan, *Huanghai*, pp. 46–47, 53, 107–111, 119–121.

⁶³ Pan, *Huanghai*, p. 59.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁶⁵ Wang Shihong 汪士鋐, (ed.), *Huangshan zhi xujì* 黃山志續集, in *Zhongguo mingshan zhi*, vol. 11, p. 7.

Ciguang si marked a peak of this campaign,⁶⁶ which in turn advanced such efforts. When comparing Buddhist temples in the area, Bao Ying'ao clearly pointed out that Ciguang si was in high esteem due to its reception of the bestowed statues.⁶⁷ Not surprisingly, therefore, Weian and the statues, as well as the canon and the gorgeous scenery, were the most common topics in the literary works related to Ciguang si. More interestingly, Weian and the canon were mentioned much more because of the royal flavour they carried than their religious value.⁶⁸

In fact, Weian's Buddhist undertaking had been interwoven with local society as early as when he started building Ciguang si. Weian, a Shaanxi native, was a disciple of Kongyin Zhencheng 空印鎮澄 (1547–1617) at Mount Wutai and had spent most of his time in North China before heading southward in Wanli 32 (1604).⁶⁹ By Wanli 34 (1606) when he decided to stay in Huangshan,⁷⁰ Buddhism had little influence in local society. Ciguang si was originally a Daoist Zhusha abbey 朱砂庵 built in the Jiajing period (1522–1566) and Wu Yangchun 吳養春 (?–1626), a wealthy Huizhou merchant,⁷¹ was its major patron. In a visit Weian impressed Wu so deeply that the latter donated Zhusha abbey to him.⁷² Weian then renamed the abbey as Fahaichan Chapel and took it as the base to start his initiative. On the model of the Shiziwo 師子窩 at Mount Wutai, he built the Pumen Association (*Pumenshe* 普門社) to practice meditation and a Huayan Hall for laymen to recite sutras. These programmes quickly attracted nearly one hundred followers and, by Wanli 37 (1609), twenty-four small huts intended for meditation had appeared nearby.⁷³ But such growing appeal did not help Weian to garner more financial support. Ultimately, this increase in the number of residents, coupled with an untimely famine, economically crushed the temple.⁷⁴ In this sense, Weian's attempt to obtain a copy of the *Beizang* was a desperate effort to survive.

As far as Huangbo si is concerned, although less material is available when compared with Ciguang si, it still shows its heavy reliance on local sons. Huangbo si had a much longer history than Ciguang si. This monastery was already acclaimed as a great Buddhist site in the Tang dynasty (618–907). It was destroyed by fire in Jiajing 35 (1562) when Japanese pirates threw the area into chaos, which was followed by neighbouring people preying on

⁶⁶After the bestowal, Ciguang si's ties with the inner court still carried on for some time. For example, an unsubstantiated story says that Wanli collected several thousand *taels* of silver for the temple after learning that it could not afford the buildings to house the canon and statues. See Min, *Huangshan zhi dingben* 3, p. 499. Pan, *Huanghai*, p. 179a, also shows that Ma Jing was still in the Ciguang si in Wanli 43 (1615).

⁶⁷Min, *Huangshan zhi dingben* 3, p. 568.

⁶⁸For example, see Pan, *Huanghai*, p. 164b, 173b.

⁶⁹Owing to Jiang Canteng's 江燦騰 continuous efforts, we can now have a much better appreciation of Zhencheng's contribution to the intellectual world of the late-Ming Buddhist society. See Jiang, *Wan Ming fojiao gaige shi* 晚明佛教改革史 (Guilin, 2006), pp. 299–382; *idem.*, “Wanming ‘Wu buqian lun’ de zhengbian yanjiu: Zhujia yijian yu Kongyin Zhencheng de dabian” 晚明《物不遷論》的諍辯研究：諸家的意見與空印鎮澄的答辯, *Dongfang zongjiao yanjiu* 東方宗教研究 2 (1990), pp. 185–227.

⁷⁰For Weian's miraculous meeting with Mount Huangshan and the hardship that he experienced in the early stage of his staying there, see Min, *Huangshan zhi dingben* 2, p. 375; 3, p. 498; 5, pp. 132–133, 170.

⁷¹Like other Huizhou merchants, the Wu family amassed wealth mainly through salt, silk, wood and *qianzhuang* 錢莊 (the old-style private bank).

⁷²Min, *Huangshan zhi dingben* 2, pp. 342–343, 390. There was a mysterious story about this conversion from a Daoist temple to a Buddhist one, see *ibid.*, 2, pp. 212–213, 365–366. This was not the only case that Wu shifted his support from Daoism to Buddhism. For another instance, see *ibid.*, 2, p. 238.

⁷³Jiyin 紀蔭, *Zongtong bianian* 宗統編年 X 86, no. 1600, 31.291c–92a.

⁷⁴For Weian's increasing attraction, see Min, *Huangshan zhi dingben* 3, p. 474; 4, p. 703, 716. For the famine, see *ibid.*, 4, p. 767; 5, p. 136.

its land assets. Later, Zhongtian built a small yard behind the old site of the temple, but he was slow in restoring the monastery because few people found interest in it. Finally, he headed off to Beijing. Regarding his motivation, it was said that “[he] recognised that this enterprise was too big while [his personal] strength was limited, and that the grand initiative [of rebuilding the temple] could not be accomplished without having the imperial virtue and the Dharma treasure. Therefore, [he] bravely made a trip to the court requesting an imperially-bestowed canon”. (既而思業大力微，非帝德法寶難鎮宏基，遂奮然赴闕，奏請龍藏。) ⁷⁵ Zhongtian’s efforts ended with a tragedy after being mired hopelessly in Beijing for eight years. Unlike him, his grandson-disciple changed the strategy and turned to Ye Xianggao for assistance. Ye was interested in Buddhism but was not a devoted Buddhist follower; he also had an interest in Daoism, and also in Christianity, which had recently been introduced in China. ⁷⁶ Nonetheless, he still lent support to monks of Huangbo si when the chance came up.

Not only was Ye Xianggao the key to acquiring the canon, but he also played a significant role in restoring Huangbo si. He personally escorted the canon to Huangbo si. Then, with four hundred *taels* of silver he had personally donated, plus more he had collected from his relatives and friends, he began to build the canon-storing pavilion and other buildings. It took Ye more than one year to finish the project, during which he enlisted support from the Magistrate of Fuqing county, the Lin family nearby, and other devout believers. Besides his material contributions, Ye left at least ten poems and one tribute essay to this monastery which, later, together with his anecdotes related to the locality, became an inspiration for other visitors. ⁷⁷ The project that Ye Xianggao completed was not that big in scale, but his participation set up an example for local elites to emulate and thus instilled new energy to the monastery. ⁷⁸ As an acknowledgement of his efforts, the monastery even built a separate room to worship his portrait.

Nonetheless, what was motivating Ye Xianggao to act deserves further exploration. As a politician who was supposed to be Confucianism-oriented, Ye was quick to feel it necessary to justify his involvement with Buddhism. In response to criticism that he was protecting heterodox groups, he claimed that “people do not understand that there is kind of an undeniable principle in the universe. [In fact], although as holy as the founding emperor (i.e. Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 [r. 1368–1398]), [he] still preserved the teaching [of Buddhism]. When I was in the secondary capital (i.e. Nanjing), I saw monastic lands everywhere in the suburbs, all bestowed by the founding emperor. It has been several thousand years since Huangbo[si] became a [Buddhist] site, which is further glorified by the order of the reigning emperor; how could we not treat it with reverence?” (不知宇宙間既有此一種道理，自不可廢。以高皇帝之神聖，猶存其說。余在留都，見其上刹名田遍滿畿甸，皆高皇帝所

⁷⁵ *Huangboshansi zhi* 3, p. 106.

⁷⁶ For Ye Xianggao’s relationship with Christianity, see Chi Huizhong 池惠中, “Fuzhou ‘Sanshan tang’ de huihuang yu yinmie” 福州“三山堂”的輝煌與湮滅, *Zhongguo tianzujiao* 中國天主教 3(2010), pp.38–39. In a discussion with Giulio Aleni (1582–1649), a famous Jesuit missionary, Ye Xianggao criticised the Christian method of accumulating merits. See Erik Zürcher, “Confucian and Christian Religiosity in Late Ming China”, *The Catholic Historical Review* 83.4 (Oct., 1997), pp. 634–635.

⁷⁷ *Huangboshansi zhi* 6, pp. 240–251; 7, pp. 313–325.

⁷⁸ Ye, *Qubian* 10, p. 520 a-b.

給賜也。黃蘗之為道場，已數千年，重以今天子之命，安可不恭？⁷⁹ Ye's argument was smart and potent, but it does not reveal the whole story. On a deeper level, his activities actually had much to do with his experiences in political life. In response to a friend who criticised him for neglecting contemporary politics, Ye Xianggao said:

Since I resigned office and returned home, in retrospect, I found everything like flowers in the sky and the moon in water. . . . Suddenly, your letter came . . . blaming me for not fulfilling my duty of loyalty. . . . Mr. Li Jiu said that many people have been misled by [the conviction] that they, although in seclusion, should be concerned with matters at court. He is certainly correct in this respect. . . . My hometown is a coastal region, where local people are so coarse that they lack the capability of appreciating mountains and waters. . . . There is a Buddhist site [built in honor of] Patriarch Huangbo (i.e., Huangbo Xiyun 黃蘗希運 [751?-850]),⁸⁰ and it has been in ruin for a long time. On the day when my request [for retirement] was sanctioned, the emperor ordered eunuchs to escort a canon to the monastery. [Consequently], I had no choice but try my best to restore [the monastery]. The construction project has been roughly completed, and now [the monastery] is good enough to be called an extremely beautiful Buddhist site. Furthermore, two mountains called Fulu and Lingyan are about one *li* away. Caves there are the most gorgeous in the realm, but no people have ever stepped in them. After I returned home, local residents, aware that I am fond of travel, took forks and hoes to dredge the blocked [watercourses] and to dispose of the filth. They took much trouble to renovate it, making [the area] several dozens of *li* around [as beautiful] as a fairyland. . . . I [visit] Huangbo[si] in the morning and [Mount] Lingyan and Fulu in the afternoon. In free time, [I] go to Baxian rock, where I request wine to quaff. [Then I board a boat] breaking the waves with help of the wind, and [finally] return home after crossing the sea. . . . I have surpassed the arena of reputation and interest, and acted at will without being restricted by moral regulations. 自罷政歸來，回視一切如空花水月 . . . 忽奉來函 . . . 至責仆不能効忠 . . . 李九老嘗言“江湖而懷廟廊之憂，此語誤了多少人”，殊甚有見 . . . 家在海上，鄉人皆椎鄙，不知山水為何物，登山臨水為何事。有一黃蘗祖師大道場，亦久圯。仆得請之日，主人遣中貴人賚送藏經於其地。不得已，力為經營興復，今稍就緒，足稱祇林絕勝。又有福廬、靈岩二山相去里許，岩洞之勝，甲於宇內，從來無有迹者。自仆歸，而鄉人知其好游，乃相與持錫荷鋤，疏湮剪穢，大加葺治，迴環數十里，煥若仙都 . . . 仆朝於黃蘗，夕靈岩、福廬，少暇則至八仙岩，呼酒痛飲，乘風破浪，浮滄海而歸 . . . 而仆已超然名利之場，蕩然禮法之外。⁸¹

Mr. Lijiu refers to Li Tingji 李廷機 (1542–1616; *jinshi*, 1583). Li entered the Grand Secretariat (*neige* 內閣) in Wanli 35 (1607), but he soon became the major target of criticism from censors and was finally forced to resign office in Wanli 40 (1612).⁸² Ye's appreciation of Li's words reflected a subtle situation he faced himself. Ye had submitted over seventy memorials requesting retirement before the emperor sanctioned it. On the other hand, although Ye had already become the senior grand secretary, the highest civil post in the Ming dynasty, he was then only in his forties. In this sense, his retreat from court was not

⁷⁹Huangboshansi zhi 6, pp. 241–242. A similar defense against this criticism could be found in *Qubian* 10, p. 523a.

⁸⁰For a biography of Huangbo Xiyun, see Zanning 贊寧, *Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳, T 50, no. 2061, 20. 842b–c.

⁸¹Ye, *Cangxia xuchao* 22, pp. 362a–b. In *ibid.*, 3, p. 618b, Ye Xianggao also explained the way of enjoying the beauty of the nature.

⁸²For Li Tingji, see his biography in *Mingshi* 217, pp. 5739–5741.

so much intended to end his political career as to express his discontent with the emperor and to avoid possible dangers in an unfavourable situation.⁸³ Nevertheless, Ye's engagement in Huangbo si was more than a convenient and temporary fondness. In reality, he was then taking pains to advance the reputation of his hometown, and his backing of Huangbo si was part of this big plan. To that end, not unlike what Pan Zhiheng did, Ye also used his own network in officialdom and invited his friends to boast about it.⁸⁴

4. Eunuchs, Abbots, and Local Society: the Arena

Since different forces were motivated to participate in the circulation of the *Beizang* for different reasons, they must have had their own agendas and interests in the process. What was the interplay among these agendas? What consequences did they bring about, desired or not, when they were in direct competition with each other? These questions concern the degree to which a bestowed copy of the canon could take root in local society, and how the results affected the development of Buddhism at various but mainly local levels.

In spite of his success in obtaining the canon, Weian did not die without regret. His last words are that "I will come back to accomplish the task". (再來了此一局) Very likely such regret was related to his failure to rebuild the temple as planned. Due to the lack of a suitable storage place, the bestowed canon was damaged by bookworms. Weian made a perfect design for the hall housing the bestowed Vairocana statue, but it was never constructed during his lifetime.⁸⁵ The statue was hence dismantled into several parts and placed in different rooms. In addition, the financial supply for Ciguang si was so unstable that it was reported that hundreds of monks had to depend on bamboo seeds for survival over a period of several months. Given that this temple had previously obtained support both from the inner court and local society,⁸⁶ such a poor condition invites explanation.

Alarmed by a much higher chance of decay in temples where abbotship was inherited only from master to disciple, Weian vowed at the outset to run the temple in the way of a public (*shifang* 十方) monastery.⁸⁷ Such an administrative way was particularly attractive to local patrons for two reasons. First, it proved that Weian was selfless, which in turn increased the chance to choose a qualified abbot. Pan Zhiheng pointed out that a Buddhist temple should not be headed by a selfish person, and that the decay of Buddhism in the Ming dynasty, when compared with its golden times in previous dynasties, had much to do with a shift in the selection of the abbot from public recommendation to inheritance between masters and disciples.⁸⁸

⁸³In Ming China, requests for retirement, in many cases, were intended by court officials to express their political opinions or to exert pressure on the rulers. See Li Jia 李佳, "Ming Wanli Chao Guanyuan 'Qixiu' Xianxiang Fenxi" 明萬曆朝官員"乞休"現象分析, *Qishi xuekan* 求是學刊 2 (2009), pp. 133–138. The resignation of both Li Tingji and Ye Xianggao largely reflected deterioration of the central administration during the Wanli period. For a brief description of the situation, see Twitchett and Mote, (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China*, vol.7, pp. 529–530.

⁸⁴In *Cangxia xuchao* 14, p. 574b, Ye Xianggao defended his efforts to glorify Mount Fulu, which was actually a small hill.

⁸⁵Pan, *Huanghai*, pp. 67–68.

⁸⁶For voluntary donations of local residents to this temple, see Min, *Huangshanzhi dingben* 3, pp. 498–500.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 5, pp. 134–135.

⁸⁸Pan, *Huanghai*, p. 37a–b.

More important, a public monastery opened a door for patrons to take part in, if not control, the running of the temple. Two of three regulations that Pan Zhiheng set for the Pumen Association were as follows:

First, once the association is built, it should be permanently shared by people of the Way from ten directions, and the head of the chapel is prohibited from accepting disciples without permission. In the case that his disciples or family members attempt to control the property, [they] should be charged with stealing property of monks of the ten directions and discarded by all for the common benefit of the monastery. Second, this chapel does not establish a constant head. A virtuous person will be selected as the leader at the start of a year. All things, big or small, will be carried out according to his directions. He steps down at the end of the year. If invited for the post once again, he will lead for another year. [A leader] who is reluctant to resign would be abandoned by all people. 一、是院既成，永與十方爲道者共，不許火主私度弟子。如火主弟子、家人爭主其業者，坐盜十方僧物，以叢林大義共擯之。一、是院無常主，每歲首推有德一人爲主事，無大小悉聽施行，至歲終告退。如更請，更主周歲。貪位不退者，共擯之。⁸⁹

Two points here deserve particular attention. First, it imposed strict restrictions on the abbot lest he take full control the association. Second, the yearly selection of the abbot paved the way for lay patrons to wade into the choosing of the leader of the temple and thus its daily running. This latter point confirms an argument presented by Jiang Wu that the involvement of literati with monastic administration was no longer a rarity but had become a reality in the late Ming and early Qing period.⁹⁰

At the same time, as the major patrons of Weian when he was in Beijing, eunuchs were also using this opportunity to their own benefit. Their interests were often found in conflict with those of local society. When the news came to the Huangshan area that three eunuchs would escort the canon to Ciguang si, for example, it created panic. Bao Ying'ao had to write a letter to reassure local people that in their visits to local communities these eunuchs would not bother them like other eunuchs did. This episode reveals a tension between eunuchs and local society, which was very popular in late Ming China.⁹¹

What's worse was that the eunuchs seem to have arranged a monk in place of Weian to run Ciguang si. In the second month of Wanli 39 (1611), a monk called Ruxiao 如孝 (d.u.) was assigned as the abbot of Ciguang si by the Ministry of Rites. Three invitation letters to this monk are extant, written by Weian, eunuchs, and others respectively. Weian may have quit the abbotship voluntarily as planned, but this does not automatically eliminate the possibility of underhanded tactics. More important, when comparing these letters with common practice of the day, the presence of eunuchs was telling, and so was the absence of the local elite of Huizhou. Ruxiao was obviously a monk who was then in Beijing or at least North China, and it seems safe to assume that he had a close relationship with the

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 37a-b.

⁹⁰ Jiang Wu, *Enlightenment in Dispute: The Reinvention of Chan Buddhism in Seventeenth-Century China* (Oxford, New York, 2008), pp. 258–263.

⁹¹ For an instance of trouble that eunuchs made in local society when escorting the Buddhist canon, see Feng, *Kuaxuetang ji* 57, pp. 23–24. Generally speaking, during the second half of the Wanli period, eunuchs obtained an infamous reputation when the emperor dispatched them everywhere in the country as *kuangjian* 礦監 (eunuchs of mining intendants) and *shuijian* 稅監 (eunuchs of tax collectors). See Zhao Yi 趙翼 and Wang Shumin 王樹民, *Nian'er shi zhaji jiaozheng* 廿二史劄記校證 (Beijing, 2001) 35, pp. 796–797; Gu, *Mingshi jishi benmo* 65, pp. 1005–1024.

eunuchs and his assignment was arranged mainly by eunuchs. These kinds of practices were not unusual in temples favoured by eunuchs, but local residents of the Huangshan region apparently did not welcome this arrangement. They did not hide their indifference to this new abbot, as evidenced by the fact that after his appointment, only on one occasion was Ruxiao mentioned in passing in those heavy books about Ciguang si and the mountain.⁹² In sharp contrast to Ruxiao's disappearance in local history, Weian continued to enjoy support from local society. With support from local residents, for example, he built an independent hall for himself, where a Dabei Buddha with fourteen arms was erected in the middle, with Yaowang 藥王 (*Bhaiṣajya-rāja*) and Yaoshang 藥上 (*Bhaiṣajya-rāja-samudgata*) placed on both sides. His calling for the casting of a big bell for the hall received prompt response from a powerful local family.⁹³

It might be safe to assume that the collision between eunuchs and local residents, to a large degree, frustrated Weian's efforts to reinvigorate Ciguang si. Later, when commenting on eunuchs' contribution, one author lamented that Ma Jin did not finish constructing the monastery because he believed an unfounded slander.⁹⁴ Although not known for sure, very likely this slander was related to friction between eunuchs and local residents. And the result was that the situation at Ciguang si became even worse in the Ming-Qing transition period.

And then once again Huizhou merchants came to rescue. Yulin Tongxiu 玉林通琇 (1614–1675) was a talented monk who was respected as the State Master (*guoshi* 國師) by the Shunzhi emperor (r. 1644–1661).⁹⁵ When visiting Ciguang si in 1662, Tongxiu predicted that it would revive soon.⁹⁶ Four years later, after learning from Tongxiu's disciple of the recent situation of Ciguang si, Huang Zhuan 黃僎 (fl. 1670), a local son of the Huangshan area who had been the biggest salt merchant in Yangzhou for twenty years, decided to rebuild the temple.⁹⁷ Roughly from 1666 to 1670, after spending more than forty thousand *taels* of silver, the project was finished. This renewed Ciguang si had the main Buddha hall, Chan hall, the pavilion for storing canon, and over one hundred rooms, thereby becoming the largest monastery in the region.⁹⁸ By the final years of the seventeenth century, more than one thousand monks were recorded to reside in this monastery. In 1737, unfortunately, Ciguang si caught fire and never recovered from the loss.

Tension between eunuchs and local society was also found in the case of Huangbo si. A eunuch called Wang Ju 王舉 (d.u.) was ordered to escort the canon to Huangbo si, with a protection edict and three hundred *taels* of silver as travel expenses. An interesting conversation then took place between Ye Xianggao and the eunuch in charge of Directorate of Ceremonial (*sili jian* 司禮監). Ye said, "The temple at the desolate hill (i.e., Mount Huangbo) has been in ruin for a long time and no longer deserves to bother eunuchs. It might be better to allow the monks to bring the canon back home by themselves". (此荒山

⁹²For the invitation letters and the official document assigning Ruxiao as the abbot, see Min, *Huangshanzhi dingben* 3, pp. 451–153; 5, pp. 134–137, 141–144.

⁹³For the building of the hall, see *ibid.*, 2, pp. 212–13, 331; 3, pp. 472–474. For the bell, see *ibid.*, 3, pp. 521–524.

⁹⁴Xu Chengyao 許承堯, *Sheshi xiantan* 歙事閑談 (Hefei, 2001) 13, p. 427.

⁹⁵For a biography of Yuling Tongxiu, see Chaoyong 趙永, (ed.), *Wudeng quanshu* 五燈全書 X 82, no. 1571, 68.320a–21b.

⁹⁶Xu, *Sheshi xiantan* 3, pp. 413–414.

⁹⁷Min, *Huangshanzhi dingben* 2, pp. 357–358.

⁹⁸*Ibid.* 2, pp. 404; 5, p. 111. Wang, *Huangshanzhi xiji* 3, pp. 159–164.

梵宇久废, 不足以烦中使者. 不如使僧自赍之为便.)⁹⁹ The eunuch declined the advice on the grounds that the emperor's order must be obeyed. When reaching the Huai River, however, the eunuch escorting the canon was robbed by bandits and lost all of his money. Finally, only with help from the vice censor-in-chief of Zhejiang, who allowed him to use the courier system, was the eunuch able to deliver the canon to its destination. Ye Xianggao made no comments when recounting this event, but his initial attempt to persuade eunuchs from going to Fuzhou is intriguing. Did he fear that the eunuch would bother Huangbo si and the local society around? No matter what the reason was, his role as the major patron evidently protected Huangbo si from being abused by the eunuchs.

The arrival of a bestowed canon was a sensational event in local society. People came together from all directions to witness this unprecedented event, all viewing it as a local pride. The acquisition of this canon, together with the involvement of Ye Xianggao as a senior grand secretary, indeed instigated local people to invest in the monastery. Previously, although monks had attempted to restore Huangbo si for more than four decades, they had not attracted much attention in the local society. After the bestowal, however, things changes significantly. In Chongzhen 2 (1629), resident monks Longbi 隆必 (d.u.) and Longrui 隆瑞 (d.u.) constructed two guest halls on two sides of the hall.

A landmark event in the history of Huangbo si finally took place in Chongzhen 3 (1630). In the spring of that year, Longbi, Longrui, Ye Xianggao's grandson Ye Yifan 葉益蕃 (1595-?), and other lay followers invited Miyun Yuanwu 密雲圓悟 (1566–1642), probably the most famous contemporary Chan master of the Linji school, to be its abbot. This meant that about seventy years after Zhongtian started his efforts, Huangbo si took the first step to transform from a hereditary temple into a public one.¹⁰⁰ Although Yuanwu left soon afterward, this change placed the monastery on an expressway to development. In the winter of Chongzhen 6 (1633), Longbi and Longrui, in cooperation with lay followers, invited Chan master Feiyin Tongrong 費隱通容 (1593–1661) as new abbot of Huangbo si and thus made it a public monastery permanently. Tongrong, a native of Fuqing, was Yuanwu's disciple and was successful in attracting many monks. Three years later, when Tongrong left, Longrui again worked with lay followers to invite Yinyuan Longqi 隱元隆琦 (1592–1673) to be the abbot of the monastery. Longqi, also a native of Fuqing, was Tongrong's disciple. After taking up the abbotship, Longqi attracted many monks to Huangbo si in a short period of time, thereby making a greater contribution to its revival than his predecessors. In addition, he started new projects in Chongzhen 13 (1640), including building the main hall on its original foundation.¹⁰¹

This flourishing state of Huangbo si constitutes a sharp contrast with the happenings of Ciguang si at the same time. An author ever boasted the prosperity of Huangbo si in the Ming–Qing transition period: “The world was then in chaos, about which both the clergy and laypersons were concerned. Fortunately, the ancestral way remained the same, and the great teaching (i.e., Buddhism) did not change. [People] who mastered *Mahāyāna* (the great vehicle) and became enlightened with the Chan teaching were not fewer than several dozen.

⁹⁹ *Huangboshansi zhi* 6, p. 241.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 3, pp. 120–121.

¹⁰¹ For Tongrong, see *ibid.*, 3, p. 125. For Longqi, see *ibid.*, 3, pp.127–129.

It is really not deceptive to say that Chang'an is chaotic while our country is in peace". (時適世界紛紛，僧俗戚戚，幸祖道如故，大教不祧，而親領大乘，同悟禪宗者，不下數十人。所謂長安甚鬧，我國晏然，誠不虛矣。)¹⁰² What was the difference between these two monasteries? Two points deserve particular attention. First, the conversion of Huangbo si into a public monastery opened the door for monks belonging to Miyun Yuanwu's lineage to join it.¹⁰³ Yuanwu's lineage was the most powerful and influential force within the *sangha* of the age, and their participation in Huangbo si thus provided it with tremendous momentum to move forth. Second, it is noticeable that among nine extant essays petitioning the abbotship, some were written by the main patrons of the monastery.¹⁰⁴ This fact suggests a strong involvement of local elites in the management of monastic affairs, which undoubtedly increased their interest in this monastery. Eventually, with this new momentum, Longqi and Huangbo si became increasingly influential in the Ming-Qing transition period. In Shunzhi 11 (1654), after being invited many times, Longqi sailed off to Japan with thirty monks. He founded the Ōbaku sect, which gradually became the third biggest Chan School in Japan,¹⁰⁵ and extended Huangbo si's influence beyond the borders.

Some Concluding Remarks

Bestowals of the *Beizang* represent one of the major modes in the circulation of the Chinese Buddhist canon. When compared with those editions which could be purchased simply with money, this process was much more complicated. In the Wanli era, the *Beizang* was distributed in China at an unprecedented rate. This study has examined this striking phenomenon, and it allows us to view in some detail the rich complexity inherent in the process. We should note that the two cases under scrutiny both come from south China. Thus, some conclusions below might not be applicable to north China, where many aspects of the social, economic, regional, and cultural surroundings were distinct.

Although random chance might work sometimes, this study shows that when and where this canon travelled was not as accidental as it appeared, nor was it decided by the patrons at will. A variety of forces were involved in the bestowals, including the inner court consisting of the emperor, court women, eunuchs, and local society where local elites, merchants, and common people were active. These people played different roles, with Cisheng and Wanli at the top end of the hierarchy as the major patrons. Eunuchs served as a bridge linking the two worlds, which otherwise did not readily interact, and thus to a large part decided the selection of a favoured monk or temple. It was owing to the collective efforts of these

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 2, p. 73. “長安甚鬧，我國晏然” alludes to a story that took place between Chan master Yaoshan Weiyuan 藥山惟儼 (751–834) and a monk surnamed Gao. See Puji 普濟 (ed), *Wudeng huiyuan* 五燈會原 X 80, no. 1565, 5.116a.

¹⁰³ For Miyun Yuanwu's lineage, see Wu, *Enlightenment in Dispute*, pp. 129–133. For Feiyin Tongrong, see *ibid.*, pp. 207–223.

¹⁰⁴ *Huangboshan zhi* 6, pp. 281–289.

¹⁰⁵ For the Ōbaku sect, see Helen Baroni, *Ōbaku Zen: the Emergence of the third Sect of Zen in Tokugawa, Japan* (Honolulu, 2000); Takenuki Gensho 竹貫元勝, “A Study on Yingen Ryuki(隱元隆琦 1529–1673): His Mission and Its Development in Pre-modern Japan”, in *Higashi Ajia Bukkyō no shomondai: Seigen Hakushi koki kinen ronshū* 東アジア佛教の諸問題: 聖嚴博士古稀記念論集, (eds) Shengyan et al. (Tōkyō, 2001), pp. 51–72. For the newest study of Longqi, see Jiang Wu, *Leaving for the Rising Sun: Chinese Zen Master Yinyuan and the Authenticity Crisis in Early Modern East Asia* (Cambridge, 2014).

people that the *Beizang* could really be bestowed from the inner court and transported to local temples.

The *Beizang* had a good reputation in quality but was very limited in supply. Thus it is not hard to predict that there would be strong competition among monks aspiring after it. In the strange surroundings of the imperial capital, monks coming from south China found that people from the same place as themselves were the most supportive force and thus heavily relied on them. These people were national elites but at the same time usually remained connected with their hometowns. Not only were these people able to command local resources, but they could mobilise resources outside the region through their networks, which were established primarily through the civil service examination and commerce. In this sense, the clear regional inequality in the distribution of the *Beizang* both resulted from and reflected regional differences in the ability to mobilise resources.

This examination through case studies, has also revealed the complexity in the motivations of people involved. All participants had their own agendas and interests, differing significantly not only between the clergy and the layperson but also among members within each group, such as the emperor and the dowager empress, or the gentry and merchants. Religious commitment was at work, but non-religious reasons were often more significant. Among all possible motivations, local pride, which seems to have become much more apparent in late Ming China than before, played a particular role in encouraging local sons to act in accord to advance the reputation of their hometown.

Thanks to the tremendous religious and non-religious capital carried by the *Beizang*, it could be expected that acquisition of this canon would bring new momentum to the growth of the temple involved. However, the various agendas and interests were often found to be in conflict, and that the interplay of related forces thus had a tremendous effect on the role that a bestowed canon could play. The degree that a temple rooted in local society largely decided the degree that the latter lent support to it. When a dilemma came up, the development of the temple involved would be negatively influenced. In the case of Ciguang si, for example, conflicts between eunuchs and local residents largely prevented the temple from achieving big improvements after receiving the canon.

In a broader view, the bestowal of the *Beizang* took place in the context of the late Ming Buddhist revival.¹⁰⁶ It partly reflected and partly prepared the way to the revival, and this study has thus provided us with a unique chance to view this unexpected religious movement. The involvement of participants that spanned diverse social groups points to the great popularity that Buddhism was then enjoying in south China. The arrival of the canon in local society, as demonstrated in the two cases, to a varied degree facilitated the domestication of Buddhism and helped it expand to new regions, or even to a new country, as displayed

¹⁰⁶For the most important studies on the late Ming Buddhist revival to date, see Chün-fang Yü, *The Renewal of Buddhism in China: Chu-Hung and the Late Ming Synthesis* (New York, 1981); Timothy Brook, *Praying for Power: Buddhism and the Formation of Gentry Society in Late-Ming China* (Cambridge, 1993); Jiang Canteng, *Wan Ming fojiao gaige shi*; Chang Sheng-yen 張聖嚴, *Minmatsu chügoku bukkyō no kenkyū: tokuni Chigyoku o chūshin to shite* 明末中國佛教の研究: 特に智旭を中心として (Tōkyō, 1975); and Chen Yunü, "Mindai Bukkyō shakai no chikiteki kenkyū: Kasei Banreki Nenkan o Chūshin Toshite" 明代仏教社會の地域的研究-嘉靖萬曆年間(1522-1620)を中心として (PhD. diss., Kyūshū University, 1995); Jennifer Eichman, "Spiritual Seekers in a Fluid Landscape: A Chinese Buddhist Network in the Wanli Period (1573-1620)" (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 2005). My book manuscript, converted from my Ph.D. dissertation entitled "A Fragile Revival: Chinese Buddhism under the Political Shadow, 1522-1620" (Vancouver, 2010), also takes this unexpected Buddhist revival as its major subject.

in the case of Huangbo si. On the other hand, we may have some new understanding of the relation between Buddhism and the state and local society in late imperial China. The diversity in the motivations of people involved is telling. A significant implication of this phenomenon was that their cooperation was conditional, which would dissolve relatively easily in unfavourable situations. Meanwhile, in the process of acquiring the canon, a heavy reliance on local society rather than on the *sangha* itself deserves particular attention in the sense it suggested that the revival rested on a shaky foundation. [welcomezdw@gmail.com](mailto:welcomedw@gmail.com)

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