

Esoteric, Chan and *vinaya* ties in Tang Buddhism

The ordination platform of the Huishan monastery on Mount Song in the religious policy of Emperor Daizong

Abstract

This paper explores the reconstruction of the ordination platform in the Huishan monastery 會善寺 on Mount Song in 767 in the context of the reinforcement of pro-Buddhist policies at the court of Emperor Daizong 代宗 (r. 762–779). The *vinaya* monks and state officials who engaged in this platform's reconstruction are identified as associates of two prominent monastic figures: Amoghavajra (Bukong jin'gang 不空金剛; 704–774), an Esoteric leader at the imperial court; and Songshan Puji 嵩山普寂 (651–739), regarded as the seventh patriarch in the Northern Chan tradition. The key roles played by disciples of these two masters in the reconstruction of the Huishan platform attest to significant congruence in ritual practices between proponents of the Esoteric and Chan groups in Tang dynasty China, primarily in the areas of precept conferral and monastic ordination.

Keywords

Mount Song, Huishan monastery, Northern Chan, Esoteric Buddhism, *vinaya*, precept conferral

Introduction

During the Tang dynasty, the reign of Emperor Daizong 代宗 (r. 762–779) was second only to the reign of Empress Wu Zetian 武則天 (r. 690–705) in terms of imperial patronage of Buddhism. Daizong assumed the role of universal Buddhist monarch (*cakravartin*) and granted the Buddhist *saṅgha* and its foremost leader Amoghavajra (Ch. Bukong jin'gang 不空金剛; 704–774) an unprecedented amount of power.¹ In 767, at the start of a new era that Daizong named Dali 大曆 (Grand Reign), many large-scale Buddhist projects were realized under the

¹ Amoghavajra, an Esoteric master of allegedly Sogdian origin, became a paramount Buddhist leader at the imperial court during a period of highly militarized political turbulence in the territorial centre of the Tang Empire following the rebellion of General An Lushan 安祿山 (703–757) in 755. Together with his monastic followers, he introduced a wide repertoire of apotropaic rituals and ceremonies in response to the government's demands for rites that would help to sacralize imperial sovereignty. The apparent success of these rituals helped him to secure the trust and support of the imperial elite. The major sources of biographical information on Amoghavajra are the *Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳 (*Biographies of Eminent Monks [Compiled] under the Song Dynasty*; hereafter *SGSZ*), T 2061 712a24–714a20; the *Da Tang gu dade zeng sikong dabianzheng guangzhi Bukong sanzang xingzhuang* 大唐故大德贈司空大辨正廣智不空三藏行狀 (*Account of the Conduct of the Former Great Worthy Bestowed with the Title Minister of Works, Dabianzheng Guangzhi Trepitaka Bukong of the Great Tang*), T 2056 292b1–294c13; and a stele inscription composed by Amoghavajra's disciple Feixi 飛錫 (?–?) in 774 and included in Yuanzhao's 圓照 (718–800) *Daizong chao zeng sikong dabianzheng guangzhi sanzang heshang biaozi ji* 代宗朝贈司空大辨正廣智三藏和上表制集 (*Memorials and Edicts of the Venerable Monk Dabianzheng Guangzhi Trepitaka, Bestowed [with the Title] Minister of Works by the Daizong Court*), T 2120 848b14–c3. For the most comprehensive studies on Amoghavajra, see Orlando 1981, Yang 2018 and Goble 2019.

auspices of the imperial elite with the explicit aims of bestowing divine protection on the state and sacralizing the sovereign status of the emperor.²

This paper focuses on one of the key projects of that year – the re-establishment of the ordination platform in the Huishan monastery 會善寺 on Mount Song 嵩山. This was omitted from the *Daizong chao zeng sikong dabianzheng guangzhi sanzang heshang biaozi ji* 代宗朝贈司空大辨正廣智三藏和上表制集 (*Memorials and Edicts of the Venerable Monk Dabianzheng Guangzhi Trepitaka, Bestowed [with the Title] Minister of Works by the Daizong Court*), the official record of Daizong's Buddhist construction projects, which explains why it has previously escaped the attention of Buddhist scholars. Therefore, the most detailed accounts of the platform's reconstruction are a stele inscription that is included in the *Songyang shike jiji* 嵩陽石刻集記 (*A Collection of Stone Inscriptions from Songyang*) under the title 'Songshan Huishansi jietan bei' 嵩山會善寺戒壇碑 ('Stele Inscription on [the Establishment of] the Ordination Platform in the Huishan Monastery on Mount Song')³ and a text by Lu Changyuan 陸長源 (d. 799) entitled 'Songshan Huishansi jietan ji' 嵩山會善寺戒壇記 ('Record of the Establishment of an Ordination Platform in the Huishan Monastery on Mount Song') that he composed while serving as prefect of Ruzhou in Henan (*Ruzhou cishi* 汝州刺史) in 795.⁴ According to the stele inscription, the project was initiated and sanctioned by a triumvirate consisting of Wang Jin 王縉 (700–781), Du Hongjian 杜鴻漸 (709–769) and Yuan Zai 元載 (713–777), all of whom were chief ministers at Emperor Daizong's court.⁵ The same source also asserts that the platform was originally established by the prominent monk Yixing 一行 (683–727), a disciple of Vajrabodhi (Ch. Jin'gangzhi 金剛智; 671–741), one of the foremost Indian missionaries of Tantric Buddhism in China during the Tang era. However, in 755, it was desecrated during the rebellion of General An Lushan 安祿山 (703–757).

It is my contention that the reconstruction of this ordination platform was an integral link in a chain of projects initiated by Amoghavajra and his imperial patrons with the aim of institutionalizing Esoteric Buddhism as China's imperial religion. Securing official recognition and veneration of Vajrabodhi – Amoghavajra's master – was one aspect of this strategy. It seems that Amoghavajra's intention was to revive precept conferral on the platform according to a tradition that was closely associated with Vajrabodhi with the ultimate goal of enhancing his master's prestige both on Mount Song and nationally. Given that Yixing and Amoghavajra were both disciples of Vajrabodhi and keen supporters of his Esoteric theology, the reconstruction of the platform and subsequent resumption of ordination ceremonies there may be viewed as a symbolic enterprise that was entirely consistent with Amoghavajra's promotion of Esotericism at Daizong's court. It also served to enhance the status of a group of Chan monks on Mount Song who traced their lineage to the seventh Chan patriarch, Songshan Puji 嵩山普寂 (651–739). At least two of the platform's attendants were affiliated with both the 'Northern Chan' group on Mount Song and Amoghavajra's Esoteric intimate circle, which suggests considerable affinity between these two 'traditions' in their ritual practices, including precept conferral.

Overall, then, it seems that both Esoteric and Northern Chan monks, as well as members of the imperial elite, had key roles to play in the re-establishment of the ordination platform at

² For an overview of Emperor Daizong's Buddhist policies, see Weinstein 1987, 77–89.

³ Ye Feng (ed.) 1979, 10212–10213.

⁴ *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文 (*Complete Prose of the Tang*; hereafter *QTW*), 510. 5185.

⁵ For biographies of Wang Jin, see *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 (*Old History of the Tang*; hereafter *JTS*), 275–276 (in the biography of Emperor Daizong); *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 (*New History of the Tang*; hereafter *XTS*), 145. 4715–4717; and *JTS* 118. For biographies of Du Hongjian, see *JTS* 108. 3282–3285 and *XTS* 126. 4422–4424. For biographies of Yuan Zai, see *JTS* 118. 3409–3416 and *XTS* 145. 4711–4715.

Huishan. This provides a new perspective on a long-standing scholarly debate on the nature of Esoteric Buddhism in Tang China, and especially whether it should be defined as a discrete category of teaching with its own unique set of texts, techniques and doctrines.⁶ Indeed, this case study suggests that it may be advisable to construe Tang Buddhism not in the conventional sense as a number of distinct ‘traditions’ or ‘schools’ but rather as a number of social formations that formed intersecting networks with shared repertoires of ritual practices. The affiliations of particular historical figures within these formations may then be defined on the basis of their Esoteric and/or Chan lineages,⁷ as well as their level of expertise in *vinaya*.

Mount Song: links between Esotericism and Northern Chan

Mount Song hosted a Buddhist community known as the ‘Northern Chan school’ that was associated with Shenxiu 神秀 (607–706) and Puji 普寂 (651–739), who are regarded as the sixth and the seventh patriarchs, respectively, within the tradition’s lineage.⁸ In particular, the region’s reputation as a centre of Northern Chan teaching was built on Puji’s long residency on Mount Song, where he was registered with the Songyue monastery 嵩嶽寺.⁹ However, the members of the Chan group who proclaimed their allegiance to Shenxiu and Puji also actively engaged and collaborated with Esoteric teachers. For instance, Śubhākarasiṃha (Ch. Shanwuwei 善無畏; 637–735), who is regarded as one of the major transmitters of Esoteric teaching from India to China during the Tang era,¹⁰ met a number of monks with links to the Mount Song community, including Shenxiu’s student Jingxian 敬賢 (660–722), who was a resident of the Huishan monastery.¹¹ With Jingxian’s assistance, Śubhākarasiṃha produced a

⁶ Scholars have addressed the nature of the ‘Esoteric Buddhist tradition’ in China from a variety of angles, without consensus. For instance, Geoffrey Goble (2019) categorizes it as a distinct ‘school’ associated with the Esoteric monks Śubhākarasiṃha (637–735), Vajrabodhi (671–741), and Amoghavajra. On the other hand, Robert Sharf (2002, 2017) intimates that the texts and techniques that these three monks promoted were not perceived as a distinct doctrinal or bibliographical category in Tang China, so the ‘school of Esoteric Buddhism’ is a misnomer. Meanwhile, Koichi Shinohara (2014) and Henrik Sørensen (2011) have suggested that, although there was a specific moment when Indian missionaries introduced the ‘Buddhist tradition’ to the Tang court, related practices and ideas had been present in China for several centuries prior to that date. Charles Orzech (2006, 57), in his study ‘The “Great Teaching of Yoga”, the Chinese Appropriation of the Tantras, and the Question of Esoteric Buddhism’, stresses that, while there is no evidence that Amoghavajra intended to establish a new ‘sect’ of Esoteric Buddhism, he and his first generation of disciples did consider themselves practitioners of a special ‘Yogic’ tradition with a distinct pattern of initiation and ritual services that was closely linked to the *Vajraśekhara Sūtra* (*Jin’gangding jing* 金剛頂經; T 848). In this paper, I mainly use ‘Esoteric’ as an operational term to designate specific forms of Buddhism and related ideologies promoted by Amoghavajra, his direct disciples and secular patrons at the imperial court and nationwide.

⁷ Charles Orzech (2006) and Chen Jinhua (2010) have challenged the firmly established view that the first Esoteric lineages formed in the Song dynasty by demonstrating that there was a coherent notion of a Yogic lineage as early as the mid-Tang. Textual evidence dating to the earlier dynasty indicates that Amoghavajra’s lay disciples mimicked their Chan predecessors by constructing the first Esoteric lineages and using them to secure elite patronage with a view to enhancing their status in Chinese society. Orzech (2006, 54) summarizes this process as follows: ‘the appearance of exclusive lineage claims – *zong* in its strongest sense – is best understood as a form of jockeying for patronage between the advocates of Yoga teaching and Chan proponents in the metropolitan context at the end of the eighth century’.

⁸ On the formation of the ‘Northern Chan school’ and the veneration of Shenxiu and Puji as its patriarchs, see, for instance, Faure 1997.

⁹ See Faure 1997.

¹⁰ On Śubhākarasiṃha, see Goble 2019, 17–21.

¹¹ For a biography of Jingxian, see the stele inscription ‘Tang Songshan Huishansi gu Jingxian dashi shenta shiji’ 唐嵩山會善寺故景賢大師身塔石記 (‘Record of the Stone Relic Stūpa of the Late Great Master Jingxian of the Huishan Monastery on Mount Song of the Tang [Dynasty]’), composed by Yang Yu 羊愉 (?–?), *QTW* 3676–3677.

meditation manual entitled *Wuwei sanzang chanyao* 無畏三藏禪要 (*Tripitaka Master Śubhākarasimha's Essential [Instructions] for Meditation*; T 18 917) that contains a description of a tantric bodhisattva precepts conferral ritual.¹² Śubhākarasimha also associated with Puji's disciple Shouzhi 守直 (700–770), on whom he conferred the bodhisattva precepts,¹³ and Wengu 溫古 (?–?), a one-time resident of Songyue monastery who assisted the Indian master with his translation of Esoteric scriptures in Chang'an.¹⁴ However, it was Yixing, the architect of Huishan's ordination platform, who was widely regarded as Śubhākarasimha's most outstanding follower. An adept of both Northern Chan and Esoteric teachings, he studied Chan meditation with Puji on Mount Song before becoming a disciple of Śubhākarasimha and then Vajrabodhi.¹⁵

In a lineage chart that the bureaucrat-literatus Li Hua 李華 (707–779) appended to Śubhākarasimha's biography, Shenxiu appears directly below Śubhākarasimha, and Puji below Shenxiu,¹⁶ which suggests close connections between the three figures. The obvious inference is that these 'Northern Chan' monks and their 'Esoteric' teachers probably shared many concepts and techniques. Indeed, a host of scholars have highlighted their doctrinal affinity as well as parallels in the ritual practices outlined in manuals that are attributed to them, including the aforementioned *Wuwei sanzang chanyao*.¹⁷ The consensus is that they developed a number of similar techniques, especially with regard to meditation and the conferral of the bodhisattva precepts.¹⁸

The extensive contacts between the Chan group associated with Mount Song and Esoteric masters based in Chang'an, as well as their shared repertoire of ritual techniques, raise questions about the precise purpose of the platform that was re-established in the Huishan monastery in 767 and indeed the network of individuals who initiated and oversaw its reconstruction.

The ordination platform in the Huishan monastery: a 'maṇḍala platform'?

¹² This manual was probably dictated by Śubhākarasimha and transcribed by Jingxian in Chang'an at some point between 716 and 735. For a discussion, see Lin 2017, 122. For a detailed study of the *Wuwei sanzang chanyao* and other manuals, see Pinte 2014, esp. 76–80, 118–127 and 137–138.

¹³ For a discussion on the exchanges between prominent members of eighth-century Northern Chan and Esoteric Buddhist circles, see: Tanaka 1975, 109–124; Yanagida 1985; Faure 1997, 85–86; 125–127; Sørensen 2011, 298–302; Sharf 2017; Lin 2017.

¹⁴ Wengu's doctrinal affiliation is unknown, but he served as a scribe (*bishou* 筆受) during the translation of two scriptures – the *Jin'gangding yujia zhong luechu niansong jing* 金剛頂瑜伽中略出念誦經 (*Sūtra of Mantra Recitation Abbreviated from the Yoga of the Vajra-uṣṇīṣa*; T 866), and the *Qi juzhi fomu zhunti daming tuoluoni jing* 七俱胝佛母准提大明陀羅尼經 (*Sūtra of Seven Koṭis of Buddha-Mothers, Cundādevī Great Vidyā Dhāraṇī*; T 2155). See Yang 2018, 233.

¹⁵ Yixing became a disciple of Vajrabodhi around 720. See Chen 2010, 114.

¹⁶ *Xuanzong chao fanjing sanzang shanwuwei zeng hongluqing xingzhuang* 玄宗朝翻經三藏善無畏贈鴻臚卿行狀 (*Necrology of Śubhākarasimha, Trepitaka and Translator during the Reign of Xuanzong, to whom the Title of Director of the Court of State Ceremonial Was Bestowed*), T 2055 290b16–292a26.

¹⁷ See Lin 2017 for a comparison of Śubhākarasimha's *Wuwei sanzang chanyao*, Amoghavajra's *Shou putixin jieyi* 受菩提心戒儀 (*Manual of Receiving Bodhicitta Precepts*; T 915), Shenxiu's 神秀 (606–706) *Dasheng wufangbian* 大乘五方便 (*Five Skilful Means of Mahāyāna*; T 2834), and Zhanran's 湛然 (711–782) *Shou pusa jieyi* 授菩薩戒儀 (*Manual of Bodhisattva Precepts Conferral*; X 1086). Klaus Pinte (2014) extensively explores the roles of Śubhākarasimha's and Amoghavajra's manuals in the Esoterization of ordination rituals in Japan. For a discussion of two ritual manuals from Dunhuang (P. 3920 and P. 3913), both ascribed to Amoghavajra, see Wang 2018, 196–217 and Goodman 2013.

¹⁸ For a discussion of the conferral of bodhisattva precepts as a prerequisite for meditation in Esoteric and Chan texts, see Sharf 2017, 98–112.

‘Platform’ (*tan* 壇) and ‘ordination platform’ (*jietan* 戒壇) are highly debated and contested terms for structures that hosted a variety of rituals across Tang China,¹⁹ most notably the conferral of the bodhisattva precepts upon large groups of laypeople and monastics.²⁰ It is generally accepted that the latter was a relatively common ceremony that was widely adopted and performed by Chan as well as Esoteric devotees.²¹ Full monastic ordination (*upasampadā*) – the standard procedure by which novices were accepted into the *saṅgha* in the presence of officials – was also conducted on a platform, in this case known as a *jietan*.²² In Esoteric Buddhism, the term *tan* is also used in reference to a ritual sanctuary, or maṇḍala (*mantuluo* 曼荼羅), which may be designated as either a *daochang* 道場 (ritual sanctuary) or a *tanchang* 壇場 (ritual altar) in Tang dynasty Esoteric sources.²³ Maṇḍalas were constructed in China from the middle of the seventh century onwards for the specific purpose of hosting a consecration ritual known as the *abhiṣeka* (*guanding* 灌頂).²⁴ Esoteric masters who were active in the imperial court widely disseminated this ritual as a standard initiation into Esoteric teaching.

According to both the ‘Songshan Huishansi jietan bei’ and Lu Changyuan’s ‘Songshan Huishansi jietan ji’, the ordination platform in the Huishan monastery was established by Yixing and the otherwise unknown *vinaya* master Xuantong 玄同 (?–?) as a ‘place to receive precepts’ (受戒之所).²⁵ However, Lu Changyuan adds the valuable detail that it was also ‘a platform for the correct contemplation of the Five Buddhas’ (五佛正思惟戒壇).²⁶ This is a reference to the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, which consists of five sections (or divisions) dedicated to the Five Buddhas: Akṣobhya, Amitābha, Ratnasambhava, Amoghasiddhi, and the central deity Mahāvairocana.²⁷ Indian Esoteric masters introduced this type of maṇḍala to China in the early eighth century, after which it was soon employed in the conferral of the bodhisattva precepts. It was also utilized during repentance rites (*chanfa* 懺法) that were designed to help practitioners acknowledge and atone for their sins in the course of meditation, *sūtra* recitation, or the visualization of deities.²⁸ However, certainly from the mid-eighth century onwards, it was most closely associated with *abhiṣeka* ceremonies.

The Vajradhātu Maṇḍala is based on the *Vajrasekhara Sūtra* (*Jin’gangding jing* 金剛頂經; T 848), one of the texts that Vajrabodhi brought to China in 723. The Indian master then

¹⁹ For a discussion of the evolution of the term *tan* and its implications during the Tang dynasty, see Goodman 2013, 6–8.

²⁰ The bodhisattva precepts are taken by a crowd of laypeople and monastics before a divine assembly of buddhas and bodhisattvas on a platform (*tan*) or in a ritual sanctuary (*daochang* 道場) where these celestial beings are invoked. Thus, during the ceremony, the platform accommodates both the deities and the initiates. On the bodhisattva precepts in China, see Funayama 1995 and 2004; Adamek 2007, 78–84; and Groner 1990, 223–229.

²¹ See Sharf 2017, 102–103.

²² In contrast to bodhisattva precepts, full monastic ordinations (*upasampadās*) were authorized by – and conducted in the presence of – a quorum of at least ten monks. Monastic ordination, including the selling of ordination certificates (*dudie* 度牒 or *gaodie* 告牒), which proved monastic status and exempted the holders from taxes and corvée labour, became highly lucrative for both the imperial court and local government after the devastation caused by An Lushan’s rebellion in 755. This led to an unprecedented rise in monastic ordinations and the establishment of numerous ordination platforms during what was known as the ‘platform movement’. See McRae 2005, esp. 78–88; and Barrett 2005, 103–122.

²³ Goodman 2013, 6; Shinohara 2014, 9; and Orlando 1982, 142, note 41.

²⁴ For more information on the *abhiṣeka* and the classification of maṇḍalas, see Shinohara 2014, 28–64. For a general history of the *abhiṣeka*, see Davidson 2011.

²⁵ *Shike shiliao xinbian* 石刻史料新編 1979, 10212; and *QTW* 510. 5185.

²⁶ *QTW* 510. 5185.

²⁷ For a recent detailed discussion of the Vajradhātu (Five Buddhas) Maṇḍala, including its use in Chinese Esoteric Buddhism, see Wang 2018 (esp. 168–174 for a discussion on Amoghavajra’s usage of this particular maṇḍala). Wang’s study is based on murals and manuals from Dunhuang.

²⁸ For more information on the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala repentance rites, see Wang 2018, 196–233.

translated parts of the *sūtra* with Amoghavajra, and other sections with Yixing.²⁹ He also established a number of maṇḍalas to aid the promulgation of Esoteric teaching throughout China (於是廣弘密教).³⁰ One of these was used for Yixing's *abhiṣeka* ceremony (立壇灌頂),³¹ after which he reportedly 'entreated [Vajrabodhi] to translate the [relevant] manual [into Chinese], so that the procedures could be circulated [widely]' (請譯流通).³² There is no concrete evidence that all of the maṇḍalas constructed by Vajrabodhi and Yixing were inspired by the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala.³³ However, given that the platform founded by Yixing in the Huishan monastery was based on that maṇḍala, it may have been that the others were, too. If that were indeed the case, it is plausible that Vajrabodhi and Yixing's collaboration on the establishment of these consecration platforms and their translation of the *Vajraśekhara Sūtra* marked the beginning of a significant expansion in rituals based on the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala throughout the Tang Empire.

Similarly, Amoghavajra's biographies indicate that he played a key role in promoting Vajrabodhi's ideas on ritual practices based on the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala. As a teenager, he received the 'precepts of a Bodhi mind' (*putixin jie* 菩提心戒) from Vajrabodhi based on the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala.³⁴ Later, he became the principal monastic leader at the imperial court under three successive emperors – Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–756), Suzong 肅宗 (r. 756–762) and Daizong. In the course of his service to these rulers, he introduced a wide repertoire of rituals and ceremonies based on the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala and then performed these rites for members of the imperial family, chief ministers and the military elite. For instance, in 747, he was asked to construct a maṇḍala inside the imperial palace in order to conduct an '*abhiṣeka* of the Five Divisions' for Emperor Xuanzong.³⁵ Seven or eight years later, an imperial order instructed him to travel to the Hexi Corridor (*Hexi zoulang* 河西走廊), where the general Geshu Han 哥舒翰 (d. 757) was the military governor. Geshu, his subordinates and several thousand local laypeople all received the *abhiṣeka* of the Five Divisions and were instructed in the use of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala. Finally, in 768, he performed another large-scale *abhiṣeka* (again presumably based on the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala) at the Daxingshansi monastery 大興善寺 in Chang'an for government ministers, army commanders and imperial eunuchs.³⁶

Amoghavajra also incorporated the five-part structure of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala into new monastery constructions and *sūtra* translations.³⁷ For instance, it was woven into his new translation of the *Sūtra for Humane Kings* (*Renwang jing* 仁王經), the central text of his ideology and related practices, which he completed for Daizong in 765.³⁸ Two years later, when

²⁹ The partial translation undertaken by Vajrabodhi and Yixing is the *Jin'gangding yujia zhong luechu niansong jing*; see note 14, above.

³⁰ *Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu* 貞元新定釋教目錄 (*Catalogue of Newly Established Texts of Buddhism from the Zhenyuan [Era]*), composed by Yuanzhao 圓照 (718–800), T 2157 875a18; translation by Chen 2010, 114.

³¹ *Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu*, T 2157 875a20.

³² *Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu*, T 2157 875a21; translation by Chen 2010, 114.

³³ Chou 1945, 275, 280; Wang 2018, 168.

³⁴ *Da Tang gu dade zeng sikong dabianzheng guangzhi Bukong sanzang xingzhuang*, T 2056 292b28; translation by Orlando 1981, 136.

³⁵ Orlando 1998, 142.

³⁶ Wang 2018, 172.

³⁷ On Amoghavajra's translations, see, for instance, Orzech 2006, 50–51.

³⁸ This *sūtra*, which is primarily concerned with state protection, was first translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva (Jiumoluoshen 鳩摩羅什; 334–413). Amoghavajra started his retranslation in the aftermath of An Lushan's rebellion, when there was a very real threat of Tibetan invasion (see Orzech 1998, 161). See Orzech 1998, 174–191 for more information on the *Sūtra for Humane Kings* and Amoghavajra's commentaries on it; and Orzech 2006, 62–63 for a discussion of the echoes of the *Vajraśekhara Sūtra* within this text. Importantly, Harriet Hunter (2018, 90) has recently demonstrated that although Amoghavajra incorporated Vajradhātu elements in the ritual

thirty-seven monks were ordained by imperial edict, they were obliged to chant the new version of the *Sūtra for Humane Kings* and perform the rituals in the newly established Jin'ge monastery 金閣寺 on Mount Wutai.³⁹ Clearly, then, Amoghavajra was a strong advocate of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, which suggests that he and his imperial patrons prioritized the reconstruction of Yixing's platform in the Huishan monastery.

In parallel with its function as a 'maṇḍala platform', Huishan's platform was also the venue for full monastic ordinations (*upasampadās*). For instance, several monks' biographies in the *Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳 (*Biographies of Eminent Monks [Compiled] under the Song Dynasty*), compiled by Zanning 贊寧 (919–1001) in the tenth century, mention that such ordinations took place at Huishan, with the first registered case being that of Yuanxiu 圓脩 (735–833), who reportedly received the full precepts at the age of twenty (每年於嵩陽會善寺納戒).⁴⁰ This allows us to date his ordination to 755, just before the platform was destroyed during An Lushan's rebellion. The first registered case of full ordination after the platform's reconstruction was that of Puyuan 普願 (748–835), who received the precepts in 777.⁴¹ Hence, there is strong evidence that the Huishan platform hosted Esoteric rites as well as ordination ceremonies both before and after the rebellion. This dual function is understandable, given the close similarities between the *upasampadā* and *abhiṣeka* ceremonies. Indeed, Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667), an eminent *vinaya* reformer and the initiator of a 'platform movement' in China, envisioned an ordination platform as a five-tier structure that would serve as a divine location for the Buddha's presence⁴² – a notion that has clear parallels with both the symbolism and the structural arrangement of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala during the *abhiṣeka* ritual.

The restoration of the platform in 767 was a significant political act. 'Platform-staged' rituals associated with Vajrabodhi's Esoteric teaching spread rapidly during the Indian master's time in China with the support of local adherents, such as Yixing. Later, under the auspices of another disciple of Vajrabodhi, Amoghavajra, these rites were disseminated even more widely and became institutionalized. Therefore, the re-establishment of the Huishan platform might be considered as part of a coherent national strategy orchestrated by Amoghavajra and his imperial patrons in which Esoteric Buddhism was used as a tool to sacralize the new emperor's mandate.

In the next section, I will explore the network of individuals who participated in the re-establishment of the ordination platform at Huishan. As we shall see, several of Puji's disciples were not only closely associated with the imperial officials who initiated this project but also played key roles in some of Amoghavajra's other schemes. This suggests that the bonds between the monks in the orbit of Amoghavajra and the holders of Puji's lineage on Mount Song were just as strong, if not stronger, under Emperor Daizong as they had been in the 720s. Moreover, their collaboration in the restoration of the Huishan platform indicates that the mountain remained a vibrant hub of interaction and exchange between the two groups.

Network links

Officials' patronage of Esoteric and Northern Chan monks

According to the 'Songshan Huishansi jietan bei', Wang Jin initiated the re-establishment of

manuals that complement his 'translation' of the *Renwang jing*, he borrowed much of the ritual structure from the *Susiddhikara Sūtra*.

³⁹ Lehnert 2011, 356; Orzech 1998, 161 and 174–191.

⁴⁰ T 2061 774c12.

⁴¹ T2061 775a07–08. Puyuan studied under the prominent Chan master Mazu Daoyi 馬祖道一 (709–788). *SGSZ* mentions two other monks who were ordained in the Huishan monastery: Puhui 普會 (807–888), T 2061 781a10–11; and Zhenjun 貞峻 (847–924), T2061 810a29.

⁴² MacRae 2005, 72 and 90–93.

the ordination platform in the Huishan monastery when he presented a letter to the court: ‘Vice-Marshall in Henan, Palace Attendant, Vice-President of the Secretariat, Chief Minister Wang Jin reported to the throne that he had obtained a statement from Chengru [of] the Anguo monastery’ (河南副元帥黃門侍郎平章事王縉奏得安國寺僧乘如狀).⁴³ After due consideration of this letter, in which Chengru 乘如 (698–778)⁴⁴ presumably requested some sort of government assistance for the restoration, Emperor Daizong authorized the project. The official imperial notification of agreement (*chidie* 敕牒) was signed by the emperor’s chief ministers – Wang Jin himself, Yuan Zai and Du Hongjian.⁴⁵

This triumvirate comprised a pro-Buddhist political clique that was instrumental in the establishment of Esotericism as the ‘imperial religion’ during the reign of Emperor Daizong.⁴⁶ In addition to being adepts of Esoteric teaching, they all had close personal ties to the Indian transmitters of Esoteric Buddhism to China. For instance, Du Hongjian was not only initiated into the Esoteric tradition by Vajrabodhi but also composed the latter’s biography.⁴⁷ The three officials also commended Amoghavajra to Emperor Daizong and played a key role in securing his place at the heart of the imperial elite. Moreover, they co-designed, sponsored and granted official approval for a host of large-scale, pro-Buddhist projects, including new monasteries and chapels that were specifically designed as venues for Amoghavajra’s ritual ceremonies. Indeed, their signatures appear on all of the major decrees relating to Amoghavajra’s proposals that are listed in the *Daizong chao zeng sikong dabianzheng guangzhi sanzang heshang biao zhi ji*, the official compendium of edicts issued during Daizong’s reign. The budgets for these construction projects and the lavish ceremonies that were held at the completed venues were enormous, and the *saṅgha*’s power and authority rose to unprecedented levels under the triumvirate’s patronage. For instance, when the grand Jin’ge monastery was founded as a new centre for Esoteric teaching on Mount Wutai in 767, Wang Jin personally authorized the local monks to canvass the surrounding prefectures and counties, gather people together, conduct lectures and solicit money.⁴⁸

In parallel with their promotion of Amoghavajra’s projects, Wang Jin, Du Hongjian and Yuan Zai provided systematic and consistent support to monks who traced their lineage to Songshan Puji.⁴⁹ Indeed, a set of Dali-era stelae inscriptions from Mount Song attests that the three officials helped to establish that lineage. At least three of these inscriptions identify a certain Tanzhen 曇真 (704–763), of the Jing’ai monastery 敬愛寺 in Luoyang, as a member of the Shenxiu/Puji lineage. For instance, in ‘Dongjing da Jing’aisi Dazheng chanshi bei’ 東京大敬愛寺大證禪師碑 (‘Stele Inscription for the Chan Master Dazheng of the Great Jing’ai Monastery in the Eastern Capital’), Wang Jin identifies Tanzhen as a direct disciple of Songshan Puji.⁵⁰ According to this inscription, although Tanzhen died in the Jing’ai monastery

⁴³ *Songyang shike jiji*, 10212.

⁴⁴ For further details of this monk, see Uchida 2007 and below.

⁴⁵ *Songyang shike jiji*, 10212.

⁴⁶ For further details of these ministers’ patronage of Esoteric Buddhism, and especially Amoghavajra, see Goble 2019, 148–173.

⁴⁷ *SGSZ* describes Du Hongjian as a ‘consecrated disciple’ (*guanding dizi* 灌頂弟子) of Vajrabodhi as well as the latter’s biographer. See Goble 2019, 140.

⁴⁸ *JTS* 118. 3417. For further details of the construction of the Jin’ge monastery, see Birnbaum 1983, 14–16 and 25–38.

⁴⁹ Du and Wei 1993, 197 have highlighted these officials’ support for the ‘Northern Chan’ group.

⁵⁰ This inscription is the only extant source with biographical information on Tanzhen. In his inscription for Changzhao 常照 (705–763) entitled ‘Gu Zhongyue Yue chanshi taji’ 故中岳越禪師塔記 (‘Record of the Stele for the Late Chan Master Yue [from] Zhongyue’), Li Hua refers to Changzhao’s teacher as the ‘*ācārya* of the Jing’ai monastery’ (*QTW* 316. 3210), which must be a reference to Tanzhen. Huangfu Shi 皇甫湜 (777–835), in a stele inscription entitled ‘Huguosi Wei shi jie’ 護國寺威師碣 (‘A Stone Tablet for Master Wei of the Huguos

in 763, his remains were buried in the Songyue monastery on the northern slope of Mount Song (葬於嵩嶽寺之北阜)⁵¹ in homage to his master, Puji. It is notable that Daizong waited until 767 before conferring the posthumous title ‘Dazheng chanshi’ 大證禪師 (‘Chan Master of Great Realization’) on Tanzhen.⁵² Of course, this was also the year that the Huishan ordination platform was re-established. According to the ‘Songshan Huishansi jietan bei’, Wang Jin composed his stele inscription for Tanzhen on Mount Song in 769 (the fourth year of the Dali era);⁵³ a certain Xu Hao 徐浩 (703–782) then transcribed the text on the mountain later that year.⁵⁴ A member of the triumvirate (元載王縉之黨),⁵⁵ Xu Hao often served the three officials as both a calligrapher and an author. For instance, in addition to transcribing Wang Jin’s composition, he wrote an epitaph for Du Hongjian upon the latter’s death in 769; and he transcribed an epitaph for Amoghavajra in 781.⁵⁶ Moreover, according to the *Taozhai cangshi ji* 匄齋臧石記 (*Records of the Stones Stored by Taozhai*),⁵⁷ he wrote an account of the Huishan monastery.⁵⁸

In ‘Dongjing da Jing’aisi Dazheng chanshi bei’, Wang Jin constructs a Chan lineage in which he presents Tanzhen as a lineal disciple of Guangde 廣德 (?–?), who in turn is identified as the Chan patriarch who succeeded Puji (大通傳大照. 大照傳廣德. 廣德傳大師).⁵⁹ This is the oldest extant source to mention the otherwise unknown Guangde. From it, we may surmise that Wang Jin considered Guangde as the eighth patriarch and Tanzhen as the ninth. However, this means there is a significant discrepancy between Wang Jin’s text and a number of contemporaneous inscriptions relating to Puji’s disciples. For instance, a certain Master Hongzheng 宏正 (弘政; ?–755?)⁶⁰ is identified as the eighth patriarch (i.e. Puji’s direct successor) in several inscriptions that predate ‘Dongjing da Jing’aisi Dazheng chanshi bei’, including two compositions by Li Hua 李華 (717?–774?) that date from around 754 and 764.⁶¹ Similarly, Dugu Ji 獨孤及 (725–777) names Hongzheng as the eighth patriarch in an inscription

Monastery’), states that Master Chengwei 承威 (d. 770) of the Jing’ai monastery, a native of Luoyang, inherited the teaching from Tanzhen and Guangde (依同學廣師. 證師講習其傳), *QTW* 687. 7037.

⁵¹ *QTW* 370. 3758.

⁵² *QTW* 370. 3758.

⁵³ *Songyang shike jiji*, 10213.

⁵⁴ The information that Wang Jin composed and Xu Hao transcribed the stele inscription for Tanzhen on Mount Song (縉撰徐浩書在嵩嶽寺) is contained in the registered record of the stele inscription for Chan Master Dazheng (大證禪師碑節錄) in the *Songyang shike jiji*, 10209.

⁵⁵ *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 (*Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government*; hereafter *ZZTJ*), 224. 3352.

⁵⁶ For the stele inscription composed by Yan Ying 嚴郢 (d. 782) in 781 and transcribed by Xu Hao, see *Daizong chao zeng sikong dabianzheng guangzhi sanzang heshang biaozi ji*, T 2120 847a2–b7.

⁵⁷ *Taozhai cangshi ji*, in *Xuxiu siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書 (*Complete Collection of the Four Treasuries: Continued and Revised*; hereafter *XXSKQS*), 26. 604.

⁵⁸ The *Tangwen xushi* 唐文續拾 (*Supplement of Prose of the Tang Dynasty*), ed. Lu Xinyuan 陸心源, includes fragments of a text entitled ‘Huishansi can bei’ 會善寺殘碑 (in *XXSKQS* 13. 347). The author is not named, so we do not know for sure that these are passages from Xu Hao’s account of the Huishan monastery. However, Uchida 2006 notes that ‘Huishansi can bei’ includes a biographical account of Master Chengru, who oversaw the re-establishment of the monastery’s ordination platform in 767. For more on Chengru, see below.

⁵⁹ *QTW* 370. 3757.

⁶⁰ There are no biographies of Master Hongzheng in the normative monastic collections, so our knowledge of him is entirely based on the aforementioned stele inscriptions. For a discussion, see Chen 2006, 138–141.

⁶¹ ‘Zuoxi Dashi bei’ 左溪大師碑 (‘Inscription for Master Zuoxi’), *QTW* 320. 3241, and ‘Gu Zhongyue Yue chanshi taji’, *QTW* 316. 3210, respectively.

dating from 771.⁶² From this, it seems that Wang Jin hoped to promulgate an alternative version of the lineage in which he substituted Guangde for Hongzheng.

Wang Jin's patronage of Guangde (and indeed Tanzhen) may be explained by the fact that he and his family had very strong links to Songshan Puji and his disciples. For example, in 'Dongjing da Jing' aisi Dazheng chanshi bei', he states that he studied under Puji and befriended Guangde while serving as a local official in the county of Dengfeng 登封 (where Mount Song is located). Some years later, it was one of Tanzhen's disciples, Zhengshun 正順 (?-?), who entrusted Wang Jin with the task of composing the stele inscription for his late master (緝嚙官登封. 因學於大照. 又與廣德素為知友. 大德弟子正順).⁶³ Moreover, in his memorial for their late mother, Wang Jin's elder brother Wang Wei 王維 (699–761), the celebrated poet, states that she was one of Puji's disciples for more than thirty years (師事大照禪師三十餘歲).⁶⁴ In addition, Wang Wei himself lived as a recluse on Mount Song, during which time he associated with several monks in the orbit of Shenxiu and Puji, including the latter's disciple Chengru 乘如,⁶⁵ Yifu 義福 (658–736; a major disciple of Shenxiu who may also have studied under Vajrabodhi)⁶⁶ and Jingjue 淨覺 (683–750; a disciple of Shenxiu).⁶⁷

It seems that Wang Jin had at least one powerful ally in his attempt to establish a new Chan lineage in which Guangde took the place of Hongzheng and Tanzhen was named as the ninth patriarch. The Song dynasty epigraphic collection *Jinshi lu* 金石錄 (*Catalogue of Golden Stones*), compiled by Zhao Mingcheng 趙明誠 (1081–1129), attests that another member of the triumvirate, Du Hongjian, composed an inscription for Guangde entitled 'Tang Guangde chanshi bei' 唐廣德禪師碑 ('Stele for Chan Master Guangde of the Tang [Dynasty]') in the seventh year of the Dali era⁶⁸ – that is, 772, three years after Wang Jin had composed his inscription for Tanzhen. Once again, Xu Hao was commissioned to transcribe the text.⁶⁹ Unfortunately, this inscription has been lost, so we cannot know for sure that it corroborated Wang Jin's recent identification of Guangde as the eighth Chan patriarch. However, the simple fact that Du Hongjian agreed to write it serves as further evidence that he, Wang Jin and Xu Hao were prime movers in a campaign to elevate Tanzhen and Guangde to the status of Chan patriarch and supported other disciples of Puji while simultaneously championing Amoghavajra and his large-scale projects, including the establishment of the Jin'ge monastery on Mount Wutai and the restoration of the ordination platform at Huishan. Indeed, in addition to playing key roles in the latter project, at least two of Puji's disciples were members of a broad network of monastics who implemented the long-term, state-sponsored establishment of *abhiṣeka* sanctuaries across the Tang Empire.

Ties between Esoteric and Northern Chan monks

⁶² In an inscription entitled 'Shuzhou Shangusi Jueji ta Sui gu Jingzhi chanshi beiming' 舒州山谷寺覺寂塔隋故鏡智禪師碑銘 ('Stele Inscription for the Jueji Pagoda [Established in the] Shangu Monastery in Shu Prefecture [for] the Late Chan Master Jingzhi of the Sui [Dynasty]'), *QTW* 390. 3973.

⁶³ *QTW* 370. 3758.

⁶⁴ See Wang Wei's 'Qing shi zhuang wei si biao' 請施莊為寺表 ('Memorial Requesting Permission to Turn My Estate into a Monastery'), *QTW* 324. 3290.

⁶⁵ For more on Chengru, see below.

⁶⁶ There is some doubt about whether Yifu and Vajrabodhi ever met. See Faure 1997, 81 and Sørensen 2011, 299 for discussions.

⁶⁷ For a discussion of Wang Wei's Buddhist connections, see Yang 2007, 108–122.

⁶⁸ *Jinshi lu* (in *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (*Complete Collection of the Four Treasuries*); hereafter *SKQS*), 681. 210.

⁶⁹ *SKQS* 681. 210. Another Song-era compendium, *Mochi bian* 墨池編 (*Collection of Ink Pond*; in *SKQS*), compiled by Zhu Changwen 朱長文 (1039–1098), suggests that Xu Hao performed this task in Dengfeng. See *SKQS* 812. 886

The ‘Songshan Huishansi jietan bei’ and Lu Changyuan’s ‘Songshan Huishansi jietan ji’ provide details of at least some of the monastics who were involved in the reconstruction of Huishan’s ordination platform in 767. For instance, both of these texts state that Chengru 乘如 (698–778) was in charge of the project. Uchida Seiichi 内田誠一 has compiled the most comprehensive account of this monk’s life on the basis of information gleaned from a number of epigraphical sources, including the fragmentary record of the Huishan monastery entitled ‘Huishansi can bei’, which was possibly transcribed by Xu Hao.⁷⁰ Uchida asserts that Chengru studied under Puji on Mount Song before imperial edicts summoned him first to the Anguo monastery 安國寺⁷¹ and then to the Ximing monastery 西明寺 in Chang’an, where he worked alongside Yuanzhao 圓照 (718–800), a disciple and biographer of Amoghavajra, on a series of major translation projects.⁷² According to Yuanzhao himself, Chengru was also one of the forty-nine monks whom Amoghavajra summoned to the Daxingshan monastery, Chang’an’s foremost Esoteric institution, in 764. (On this occasion, Chengru travelled to the capital from the Jing’ai monastery in Luoyang; 東都敬愛寺僧乘如.)⁷³ If we assume that this was the same Chengru who requested the restoration of Huishan’s ordination platform, then, in the person of a single monk, we have a disciple of Songshan Puji *and* a member of Amoghavajra’s inner circle.

Chengru summoned seven *vinaya* masters to supervise Huishan’s re-established platform in 767. The ‘Songshan Huishansi jietan bei’ names two of them – Congru 從恕, from the Xianggu monastery 香谷寺, and Huishen 惠深⁷⁴ – while the ‘Songshan Huishansi jietan ji’ mentions Zangyong, the superior incumbent of the Anguo monastery (安國寺上座藏用), Xingyan, the *bhadanta* of the Shengshan monastery (聖善寺大德行嚴), and Lingzhen and Huihai, two *bhadantas* from the Huishan monastery itself (會善寺大德靈珍. 惠海).⁷⁵ We lack further information on any of these individuals, aside from Zangyong (?–789/90), whose biography appears in the *SGSZ* under the title ‘Tang jingshi Anguosi Zangyong zhuan’ 唐京師安國寺藏用傳 (‘A Biography of Zangyong of the Anguo Monastery in the Capital of the Tang’).⁷⁶ According to this account, Zangyong hailed from Mount Song, where he studied under Puji’s disciple Huikong 慧空 (696–773/4).⁷⁷ In addition, Yuanzhao mentions that Zangyong, from the Jianfu monastery, was another of the forty-nine monks whom Amoghavajra summoned to the Daxingshan monastery in 764 (薦福寺僧藏用).⁷⁸ Clearly, then, like Chengru, Zangyong had close ties to both the Chan monastic community on Mount Song and Amoghavajra’s Esoteric circle in Chang’an.

The ‘Songshan Huishansi jietan bei’ and the ‘Songshan Huishansi jietan ji’ both state that the seven *vinaya* masters who were summoned to Huishan’s platform in 767 also engaged in the ‘annual construction of ritual sanctuaries of Mahāyāna precepts’ (*meinian jian fangdeng*

⁷⁰ See note 54, above. For a thorough investigation of ‘Huishansi can bei’, see Uchida 2006.

⁷¹ A group of statues that was found in the ruins of the Anguo monastery, including representations of Ratnasambhava Buddha as well as several attendants and guardian deities related to the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, is now on display in the Beilin Museum. These sculptures suggest that the monastery had strong connections to the Esoteric tradition. See Wang 2018, 14–15; and Jin 2003.

⁷² Uchida 2006, 60.

⁷³ *Daizong chao zeng sikong dabianzheng guangzhi sanzang heshang biaozhi ji*, T 2120 830b05.

⁷⁴ *Songyang shike jiji*, 10213.

⁷⁵ *QTW* 510. 5185.

⁷⁶ T 2061 803a14–b3.

⁷⁷ Chan Master Huikong of the Guangfu monastery is listed as one of Songshan Puji’s forty-six disciples in *Jingde Chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄 (*Record of the Transmission of the Lamp*), composed by Daoyuan 道原 (d. after 1004), T 2076 224c02.

⁷⁸ T 2120 830b10.

daochang 每年建方等道場)⁷⁹ elsewhere in China. Although we know very little of the nature of these structures, there is some evidence that they were used for the Esoteric rituals that were synonymous with Amoghavajra's group. In 760, in direct response to Suzong's edict to establish *abhiṣeka* sanctuaries (*guanding daochang* 灌頂道場) throughout China on an annual basis,⁸⁰ Amoghavajra asked the emperor for permission to build one at the Xiangshan monastery.⁸¹ Suzong's successor Daizong finally granted this request in 771,⁸² and two years later Amoghavajra's prominent disciple Tanzhen 曇貞 (fl. 724–777)⁸³ oversaw the construction of a similar and identically named structure in the Cien monastery 慈恩寺.⁸⁴ Most of the sanctuaries that were erected in this period seem to have been *ad hoc* structures that were constructed for specific ritual occasions. However, we also know of at least three permanent examples: two at the Daxingshan monastery (constructed in 763 and 774) and another at the Qinglong monastery 青龍寺 (constructed in 775).⁸⁵ Interestingly, the *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 (*Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government*) states that Daizong personally decreed the establishment of the sanctuaries at Qinglong and Huishan (敕於靈感⁸⁶會善二寺置戒壇),⁸⁷ which may indicate that there were close links between the two institutions and their members. The fragments of data relating to these *abhiṣeka* sanctuaries suggest that they were typically overseen by seven monks. For instance, seven monastics supervised the Qinglong sanctuary, while fourteen administered the two sanctuaries in the Daxingshan monastery.⁸⁸

All of this building activity indicates that Daizong and his chief ministers made every effort to realize his predecessor Suzong's vision of a network of *abhiṣeka* sanctuaries throughout China's monasteries. Supervision of the resulting constructions was then placed in the hands of high-ranking monks, who used the structures as venues for various rituals.

The *vinaya* context

In addition to their dual affiliation to the aforementioned Northern Chan and Esoteric circles, the monks who were summoned to oversee Huishan's re-established platform were all *vinaya* specialists. The standard full monastic ordination was typically conferred according to the precepts of the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*,⁸⁹ a text that had become the pre-eminent *vinaya* manual

⁷⁹ Amoghavajra felt that the Mahāyāna tradition was entirely compatible with the Yogic tradition. For a discussion of the relationship between Mahāyāna and Yoga in his works, see Orzech 2006, 42–43 and 46–52.

⁸⁰ See Chen 2010, 167–168.

⁸¹ See 'Qing yu Xingshansi zhi guanding daochang zhuang yi shou' 請於興善寺置灌頂道場狀一首 ('A Memorial Requesting the Establishment of an *Abhiṣeka* Sanctuary at Xingshan Monastery') in *Daizong chao zeng sikong dabianzheng guangzhi sanzang heshang biaozhi ji*, T 2120 829b22–c5.

⁸² See 'Xie enci da Xiangshansi shi jie fangdeng bing liang liaoliao biao yi shou' 謝恩賜大興善寺施戒方等并糧料表一首 ('A Memorial Expressing Gratitude for an Imperial Kindness [in Permitting the Establishment of] a Mahāyāna Precept Platform and in Granting Food Supplies and Other Materials') in *Daizong chao zeng sikong dabianzheng guangzhi sanzang heshang biaozhi ji*, T 2120 838b2–15.

⁸³ Note that this is not the aforementioned Chan master Tanzhen.

⁸⁴ See 'Da Tang Qinglongsi sanchao gongfeng dade xingzhuang' 大唐青龍寺三朝供奉大德行狀 ('Biography of the Great Virtuous Master, the Imperial Chaplain of Three Courts at the Qinglong Monastery of the Great Tang [Dynasty]'), biography of Huiguo 惠果 (746–805) by an unknown author, T 2057 294c28–29; Chen 2010, 149.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ The Qinglong monastery is also known as 'Lingansi'; see Chen 2010, 178–179.

⁸⁷ *ZZTJ* 249. 8061.

⁸⁸ According to Chen 2010, 168, Huishen 惠深 and Huihai 惠海 were among the monks who oversaw the sanctuaries at the Daxingshan monastery. As we have seen, Huishen and Huihai are also named as members of the cohort of monk–caretakers who administered Huishan's ordination platform (*Songyang shike jiji*, 10213; *QTW* 510. 5185). There is, however, insufficient evidence to allow us to identify these monks as the same individuals.

⁸⁹ Monks were required to study the *Sifen lü* 四分律 (Dharmaguptaka *vinaya*) prior to ordination and in order to

by the Tang dynasty. However, there is some evidence that the Esoteric masters Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra both favoured the rival Sarvāstivāda *vinaya*.⁹⁰ According to his biographer Zhao Qian 趙遷 (?-?), for many years Amoghavajra was the only Sarvāstivāda *vinaya* master in China, where he personally ordained twenty thousand disciples in his preferred tradition (其登戒壇. 二千弟子. 一切有部. 獨為宗).⁹¹ Amoghavajra himself received full ordination in the Sarvāstivāda tradition from his teacher Vajrabodhi at the Guangfu monastery 廣福寺, Luoyang, in 724 and thereafter became a renowned expert in the Sarvāstivāda *vinaya* texts (善一切有部律).⁹² This monastery, where Vajrabodhi resided until his death in 741, had a *stūpa* chapel (*tayuan* 塔院, Skt. *caitya*) that Emperor Xuanzong commissioned specifically for Vajrabodhi as well as another chapel that housed an old stone ordination platform, in accordance with the Sarvāstivāda tradition (一切有部古石戒壇院).⁹³ In 772, Amoghavajra issued an edict in which he explained that he had made a vow during his full ordination ceremony to assume personal responsibility for the maintenance of the second chapel, which his master had funded out of his own pocket (右件戒壇院是不空和上在日. 捨衣鉢興建. 當不空進具之日. 亦有誠願. 許同修葺).⁹⁴ The edict also contained a request for fourteen monks from various monasteries to oversee the two chapels. Seven of these monastics would practise Esoteric Buddhism for the benefit of the state in the *stūpa* chapel, while the other seven, all of whom would be *vinaya* masters of impeccable conduct (名行律師),⁹⁵ would supervise the chapel with the stone ordination platform. Given Amoghavajra's expertise in the Sarvāstivāda *vinaya*, and the stone platform's original use in Sarvāstivāda rituals, it is logical to assume that he intended to revive Sarvāstivāda ordinations at Guangfu and wished to install monks who were fellow Sarvāstivāda *vinaya* adepts.

There are striking parallels between Amoghavajra's description of Guangfu's stone platform and the accounts of Huishan's ordination platform in the 'Songshan Huishansi jietan bei' and the 'Songshan Huishansi jietan ji'. First, both platforms were destroyed during An Lushan's rebellion. Second, each platform was overseen by seven *vinaya* monks who supervised the annual erection of 'ritual altars' (*tanchang* 壇場),⁹⁶ a term that is surely synonymous with the aforementioned 'ritual sanctuaries' (*daochang* 道場). Given that these monks were all *vinaya* experts, it seems highly likely that they officiated at all of the platforms' *vinaya* ceremonies, such as the conferral of ordinations, and probably also delivered sermons.

We saw earlier that at least some of the monks who were summoned to Huishan's restored platform in 767 were affiliates of Puji's Chan lineage. In light of this, it is interesting that Wang Jin not only identifies Puji's disciple Tanzhen as Northern Chan's ninth patriarch in his stele inscription for the master, but also claims that he studied the Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya* (習根本

qualify as *vinaya* masters. On the formation of the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* school in China and its rise to pre-eminence in the Tang period, see Satō 1986, 116–327.

⁹⁰ Yijing 義淨 (635–713) travelled to India and returned with the Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya*, one of the *vinayas* of the Sarvāstivāda tradition, which he translated between 700 and 703. However, by then, advocates of the Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* were already well on the way to establishing its dominance over the other *vinaya* traditions. See Yifa 2002, 6. For a discussion of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya*'s place within the Sarvāstivāda tradition, see Enomoto 2000, 239–249.

⁹¹ *Da Tang gu dade zeng sikong dabianzheng guangzhi Bukong sanzang xingzhuang*, T 2056 294b20.

⁹² Orlando 1981, 28.

⁹³ *Daizong chao zeng sikong dabianzheng guangzhi sanzang heshang biaozi ji*, T 2120 841a28; and *Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu*, T 2157 878a10.

⁹⁴ *Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu*, T 2157 878a11; and Orlando 1981, 234.

⁹⁵ *Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu*, T 2157 878a11.

⁹⁶ *Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu*, T 2157 878a11–12.

律).⁹⁷ This suggests that there was probably a close affinity between Northern Chan full ordinations and those associated with the Sarvāstivāda tradition. Moreover, we may infer that *vinaya*-based ordination ceremonies, especially those that adhered to the Sarvāstivāda practices, were integral components of the religious repertoires of both Esoteric and Chan ideologists during Emperor Daizong's reign.

Conclusion

This paper has explained that Yixing established the ordination platform in the Huishan monastery on Mount Song at some point between 720 and 741, during his collaboration with Vajrabodhi, an Indian Esoteric Buddhist missionary. It was one of a number of projects that Vajrabodhi and his followers initiated at this time to promote the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala throughout China. Thereafter, the platform was used for a variety of ceremonies, perhaps including Esoteric rituals, the conferral of the bodhisattva precepts and full monastic ordinations, until its destruction during An Lushan's rebellion in 755. However, it was restored twelve years later as part of a national construction project devised by Emperor Daizong, his chief ministers and Vajrabodhi's most prominent disciple, Amoghavajra, to bolster Esoteric Buddhism and its related ritual practices in the country's great court-sponsored monasteries. If, as this paper has suggested, the platform's original function was to aid the dissemination of Vajrabodhi's Esoteric teaching, then its reconstruction would have been entirely in keeping with Daizong's other religious policies, which included the construction of *abhiṣeka* sanctuaries each year, massive consecration ceremonies and the translation of Esoteric texts. Moreover, Huishan was renowned as one of the first Chinese Buddhist communities to welcome Vajrabodhi's teaching, so it was only natural for Amoghavajra and his imperial patrons to make the monastery a focal point of their pro-Esoteric activities.

The re-establishment of the Huishan platform reflects an ongoing close affinity between the monastic followers of two prominent individuals: Songshan Puji and Amoghavajra. As this paper has shown, Shenxiu and Songshan Puji – the sixth and seventh Northern Chan patriarchs, respectively – collaborated closely with some of the Esoteric missionaries to China, including Śubhākarasimha and Vajrabodhi, during the reigns of Emperors Xuanzong and Suzong. Subsequently, during the reign of Emperor Daizong, a number of Puji's disciples participated in the reconstruction of Huishan's platform – a project that was the brainchild of Vajrabodhi's disciple, Amoghavajra – along with other pro-Esoteric schemes, such as the annual construction of *abhiṣeka* sanctuaries. This highlights Northern Chan monks' continuous support for the imperial government's religious policy throughout much of the eighth century. In addition, these monks' close ties to Esoteric masters, and their consequent proximity to the imperial elite, explains the formation and subsequent legitimization of their particular branch of the Chan lineage and the identification of two of Puji's disciples as new Chan patriarchs under the auspices of pro-Esoteric ministers. Moreover, these personal ties confirm the enduring and increasingly strong bond between the Chan proponents on Mount Song and the circle of Esoteric monks at the imperial court with respect to their doctrinal beliefs and ritual practices during the reign of Emperor Daizong. Given the decades-long collaboration between Esoteric and Chan affiliates on Mount Song, it is certainly feasible that members of these two groups shared the Huishan monastery's ordination platform for the purposes of conferring the bodhisattva precepts and delivering sermons.

Finally, it should be remembered that the Huishan platform was also used as a venue for full monastic ordinations (*upasampadās*), and that the monks who supervised its activities from 767 onwards were *vinaya* specialists. Meanwhile, given Vajrabodhi's and Amoghavajra's

⁹⁷ In 'Dongjing da Jing' aisi Dazheng chanshi bei', *QJW* 370. 3758.

adherence to the Sarvāstivāda *vinaya* tradition, the *vinaya* masters whom the latter summoned to the old stone ordination platform in the Guangfu monastery may have conducted ordinations in accordance with that tradition. We also know that Master Tanzhen, one of Puji's disciples, studied the Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya*. All of this suggests a close affinity between Esoteric and Northern Chan ordinations, both of which may have been conducted in accordance with the Sarvāstivāda tradition, as well as the possible use of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya* as an ordination manual in the Huishan monastery.

In conclusion, then, Huishan's ordination platform was a structure that exemplified the full complexity of the religious landscape on Mount Song and served as a meeting point for Esoteric and Northern Chan groups who played key roles in both the formulation and the implementation of Emperor Daizong's pro-Buddhist policies.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO) and by the Dissertation Fellowship from The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Program in Buddhist Studies administered by the American Council of Learned Societies. I am very grateful to Bart Dessein for reading the manuscript and offering many useful comments. I also appreciate the valuable comments by the *Buddhist Studies Review's* anonymous reviewers. However, any remaining shortcomings are my own.

Abbreviations

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| <i>JTS</i> | <i>Jiu Tangshu</i> 舊唐書. Comp. Liu Xu 劉昫 <i>et al.</i> Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975. |
| <i>QTW</i> | <i>Quan Tangwen</i> 全唐文 (= <i>Qinding Quan Tangwen</i> 欽定全唐文). Comp. Dong Hao 董浩 <i>et al.</i> Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983. |
| <i>SGSZ</i> | <i>Song gaoseng zhuan</i> 宋高僧傳. Comp. Zanning 贊寧 (919–1001). T (see below) 2061 50. |
| <i>SKQS</i> | <i>Siku quanshu</i> 四庫全書 (= <i>Jingyin Wenyuange siku quanshu</i> 景印文淵閣四庫全書). Comp. Ji Yun 鴟喙 <i>et al.</i> Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1983–1986. |
| T | <i>Taishō shinshū daizōkyō</i> 大正新修大藏經. Ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 <i>et al.</i> Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1935. |
| X | <i>Dai-nippon Zokuzōkyō</i> 大日本續藏經. Ed. Maeda Eun 前田慧雲 and Nakano Tatsue 中野達慧. Taipei: Xinwenfeng chuban gongsi, 1968–1970. |
| <i>XTS</i> | <i>Xin Tangshu</i> 新唐書. Comp. Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 <i>et al.</i> Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975. |
| <i>XXSKQS</i> | <i>Xuxiu siku quanshu</i> 續修四庫全書. Ed. Gu Tinglong 顧廷龍 <i>et al.</i> Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002. |
| <i>ZZTJ</i> | <i>Zizhi tongjian</i> 資治通鑑. Comp. Sima Guang 司馬光. Beijing: Guji chubanshe, 1956. |

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