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Monks for Hire:

Liang Wudi's use of Household Monks (*jiaseng* 家僧)

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### Abstract

Throughout history, Chinese monastic Buddhism has been characterised by a dichotomy between its religious ideal of austerity, and the factual wealth of its monasteries. While this contradiction often formed the basis for criticism on Buddhism and/or its institutions, it appeared to be unproblematic to most early Chinese Buddhist commentators, who frequently idealise the (conceptual) poverty of monks, whilst writing on the lavish adornments of their monasteries. The potential tension between an idealised detachment from material possession on the one hand and the accumulation of wealth on the other, was dissolved by making a distinction between the personal wealth of individual monks, and the collective wealth of the monastic community as a whole. However, during the reign of Liang Wudi 梁武帝 (r. 502-549), we see the emergence of an interesting form of personal financing of monks, namely the practice of imperially paid household monks (*jiaseng* 家僧). This paper investigates this unique clerical title, which did not last long after Emperor Wu's reign. What were the motives for hiring monks on a personal basis and how did this tie in with Wu's political use of Buddhism? Who were these monks, and what was their function? Was there any opposition against them on the basis of their payment?

## I. Introduction

When Liang Wudi 梁武帝 (r. 502-549) ascended the throne, he faced some major challenges. First was the problem of legitimacy. Emperor Wu had seized power from one of his kinsmen, Xiao Baorong 蕭寶融 (488-502), last emperor of the preceding Qi dynasty (479-502 CE), in revenge for the murder of his older brother. According to traditional Chinese political theory, that would make Emperor Wu a usurper, as the founder of a new dynasty had to come from outside the imperial family.<sup>1</sup> Aside from his personal problem of legitimation, he inherited an empire that was marked by centuries of devolution. The Liang dynasty (502-557 CE) was only one of the short-lived Southern Dynasties that followed each other in rapid succession after the disintegration of the Han dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE), while the North of China was governed by an equally chaotic sequence of non-Chinese tribes. The political reality of the time was that neither wealth nor political power was concentrated in the throne. Rather, it was a small number of powerful literati families that manipulated the imperial court, monopolised the higher offices and collected great wealth. By the time of the Liang the ranking of eminent literati families according to a Nine Ranks (*jiu pin* 九品) system had been solidified in genealogies (*baijia pu* 百家譜), implying that all but the lowest ranks were virtually closed off to newcomers.<sup>2</sup> While those with enough money to bribe their way (higher) into a falsified genealogy could still gain access to these upper social strata, most families not included in these lists were condemned to the lower offices, if any were given to them at all. These lower class literati families were designated as 'Cold gate families' (*hanmen* 寒門), referring to their limited career

possibilities and the accompanying impoverishment. Military families were also often of the *hanmen* group, as military activities were regarded as inferior.<sup>3</sup> The limited career options of the low-ranking families and their treatment as second-rate citizens was the cause of grave social tension at the time when Emperor Wu ascended the throne. Aside from these frictions, the unchallenged position of the powerful literati families meant that they could often not be bothered to perform the duties attached to their administrative rank, leaving the country with an ineffectual government, rife with corruption.

In an attempt to stabilise the country, Emperor Wu took several measures in the imperial administration to counter some of the political and social fragmentation. He created new academies in which to educate members of low ranking families and frequently assigned its alumni to important positions in his administration. The purpose of these reforms in the educational system was to offer equal opportunities to all literati families based on meritocracy rather than nepotism, in the hope of alleviating frustrations and circumventing the influence of the powerful aristocratic families.<sup>4</sup> In addition he ordered a review of the genealogies, which served as *de facto* registers of social rank, to purge it from its most flagrant abusers.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, in reality Emperor Wu's political position was too weak to effectively break the high ranking families' position of power through such reforms, nor was it his intention to do away with them all together, for the relationship between the literati and the emperor was one of co-dependence. Emperor Wu in fact relied on the sanction of the literati as keepers of the Confucian tradition to legitimise his claim on the throne.<sup>6</sup> In turn, the literati families needed the

emperor figure just as much, as the legitimacy of their claim to rule society came from the traditional Confucian state, which had at its base an emperor figure that, through a set of elaborate rituals, carried out the Mandate of Heaven, essential to the preservation of cosmic order. The literati families' titles derived their prestige from the fact that they were bestowed by the emperor, so it was in their own best interest to sustain the ritual role of the imperial persona. Not possessing the necessary political and military authority to centralise power around the throne, it was this ritual aspect of emperorship in which Emperor Wu decided to make a real difference.<sup>7</sup> After all, as emperor he alone had the prerogative to make changes in imperial ceremony, which meant that he could take control of the one area where the literati families stood weak. Emperor Wu realised that, in order for his reforms to be effective and to have a lasting effect, he could not simply make changes as he saw fit, for this would never be accepted without the backing of solid historical or scriptural precedent. Therefore Liang Wudi was careful to provide a sound scriptural foundation for his reforms. When starting out on the reform of imperial ceremony in 502, the year of his enthronement, he surrounded himself with competent and trusted scholars (all of whom derived from *hanmen* families), who would meticulously comb the Confucian scriptures in search of historical precedents to justify his reforms.<sup>8</sup>

Still, as there was no alternative to the Confucian tradition for the practical administration and legislation of the empire, Emperor Wu had no choice but to continue his (ritual) role as Confucian head of state. Just as the foreign invaders in the North had understood the need to maintain the Confucian state structure as the proven way to administer such a vast empire, so

did Emperor Wu realise the unfeasibility of totally restructuring the existing system. But he also realised that to continue in his role as Confucian head of state would for ever leave him in a vulnerable position, as it essentially left him dependant on the Confucian tradition, dominated by the literati families, for his prestige as emperor. For this reason he set out to rebuild the ritual role of an emperor with Buddhist concepts, with the purpose of creating his very own legitimacy as a ruler, based on an entirely new vision of society and emperorship.<sup>9</sup> By constructing a new vision of society based on Buddhist concepts and virtues, he sought to further close the rift between the different layers of the community.

This idea to make use of Buddhism must have predated his ascension of the imperial throne, as it was clear from the onset that Buddhism was going to play the leading role in Emperor Wu's reforms. This we may surmise from the fact that for his inauguration as founding Emperor of the Liang dynasty, he chose the eighth day of the fourth month, a date that by the early sixth century was already widely recognized among Buddhists as the birthday of Śākyamuni Buddha.<sup>10</sup> But whereas the reform of Confucian ritual could go ahead relatively unchallenged, based on his imperial prerogative to make changes to it, things were not so straightforward for his Buddhistically inspired reforms. Here, Emperor Wu had to overcome the tension that existed between the monastics who had left the family-life in the pursuit of unworldly goals and the lay followers who still dwelled in this world. As only the monastic community (*saṃgha*) was the bearer of the Buddha's teaching, it was they who had the spiritual authority to judge which interpretation was correct and which was not. Therefore it was

important for Emperor Wu to ensure himself of the sanction of the Buddhist monastic community if his Buddhist reforms were to be believable. For his theoretical, ideological needs, Wu would appeal to influential, well-respected scholar-monks (so-called *dharma*-masters, *fashi* 法師) on an individual level, rather than seek the scholarly sanction of the *samgha* as a whole. The latter would not only be unpractical, but getting the opinions of all monks in the capital aligned would in all likelihood prove to be impossible, as there were not only doctrinal disagreements among the monastics, but political ones as well. When prestigious scholar-monks like Baozhi 寶誌 (418?-514)<sup>11</sup> and Sengyou 僧祐 (445-518)<sup>12</sup> signed off on Wu's Buddhist political, social and doctrinal theories, this was a potent tool to attempt to quell any voices of dissent. However, these monks' prestige in the Buddhist community also meant they still maintained their independent status throughout their voluntary association with him, and as such he could not order them to serve his agenda like the government officials appointed by him. For this purpose he created the position of *jiasang* 家僧 'Household-monks', who served as his personal monks and were lavishly compensated as such for their services. But before we turn our focus on the *jiasang* themselves, we shall first address Emperor Wu's attempts to control the monastic community, in which context the development of the aforementioned clerical rank has to be seen.

## II. Liang Wudi's attempts to control the *samgha*

If Buddhism was going to play an instrumental role in Liang Wudi's bid to redefine the ceremonial role of an emperor, it was of course necessary to assert some form of control over its most important representatives, namely the Buddhist monastics. Although Emperor Wu was not the first politician to attempt to enforce such measures of restraint since the advent of Buddhism in China,<sup>13</sup> his methods were highly versatile and often original in conception, and his motivations for doing so went beyond the traditional concern for social and political stability. For one, his relationship with the *samgha* was comparable to the precarious balance between himself and the literati families. He needed the sanction of the Buddhist monastics (or at least its clerical elite residing for the most part in the metropolitan area) to legitimise his interpretations of Buddhist texts along with his fusion of Buddhist and imperial ritual, while the Buddhist clergy sought to profit from the prestige of imperial sanction and the ensuing material wealth it ensured. At the same time he sought ways to tip the balance of interdependence in his favour, lest he would for ever remain in the weaker position of having to 'buy' the monastic community's loyalty through donation. To achieve this, he followed a double strategy: on the secular level he wanted to subject the monks to a set of secular laws, inspired by the Buddhist disciplinary rules (*vinaya*), while on a religious level he wanted to portray himself as spiritual head of the Buddhist church in the figure of a *Bodhisattva*-emperor.<sup>14</sup>

In some early attempts to control the monastic community, Emperor Wu focussed on cleaning up the behaviour of its individual monks and nuns. Already in 508 Emperor Wu had

ordered Fayun 法雲 (467-529), who as we shall see had just been appointed as *jiasang* in that same year, to compile a set of Rules for Monks (*sengzhi* 僧制), which was to become 'a norm for all who came after him'.<sup>15</sup> The compilation of such officially sanctioned rules of conduct served the double purpose of curbing the *samgha*'s de facto autonomous status within society by subjecting it to government scrutiny, and of ensuring that Emperor Wu's desired image of Buddhist ruler was not tarnished by the unruly behaviour of the monks that were its most visible representatives. With this purpose in mind, Emperor Wu conceived of the idea to assert his personal control over the *samgha*'s behaviour by proclaiming himself 'Lay Rectifier of Monks' (*baiyi sengzheng* 白衣僧正)<sup>16</sup> sometime between 519 and 522, and by establishing a law codex based on the Buddhist disciplinary rules. In the biography of the monk Zhizang 智藏 (458-522) we find a rendering of a very interesting discussion that ensued after Emperor Wu asked for this monk's opinion concerning his plan.<sup>17</sup> A central theme in this debate is the assumption that the final stage of the decline of the Buddhist Law (*mofa* 末法) had arrived.<sup>18</sup> In this time, it was believed, a *Bodhisattva*-king could preserve something of the True Law by personally disciplining the monks and nuns, who by then were marked by moral depravity and ignorance.<sup>19</sup> In the end, however, Emperor Wu had to admit defeat to Zhizang's arguments and he subsequently abandoned the whole idea of becoming a lay Rectifier of Monks.<sup>20</sup> What happened to the laws for monks is not clear, as they are no longer extant.<sup>21</sup> There is one case which suggests that these laws were in effect for at least a short while during Emperor Wu's reign. In the biography of Baochang 寶唱 (466-?), famous author of the *Mingseng zhuan* 名僧



傳 (Biographies of Famous Monks) and purportedly of the *Biqiuni zhuan* 比丘尼傳 (Biographies of Nuns),<sup>22</sup> we can read how Baochang was banished to Yuezhou by Emperor Wu for abandoning his post as abbot of the Xin'an 新安 monastery. Baochang, being a monk, requested to be judged by the Rectifier of Monks, Huichao 慧超 (?-526), according to the 'laws which were established on the basis of the *vinaya*'.<sup>23</sup> Huichao sentenced Baochang to exile with penal servitude (*tu* 徒) in Guangzhou. Exile does not occur anywhere in the *vinaya* literature as a form of punishment. However, it is a common form of punishment in secular law, which seems to implicate that at least for a while Emperor Wu's civil codex based on *vinaya* was in effect.

Having seen his ambition to personally become a Rectifier of Monks thwarted by Zhizang's rebuttal, Emperor Wu set out on a different course, and shifted his focus back to developing the *bodhisattva* ideal.<sup>24</sup> In 519 he reinvented the so-called *bodhisattva* ordination ceremony and in a large orchestrated event became the first to take these renewed *bodhisattva* vows.<sup>25</sup> As argued by Andreas Janousch, he sought to become spiritual leader of both the lay people and the monastic community at once.<sup>26</sup> These new *bodhisattva* vows proved to be an enormous success with the Buddhist laity, and large numbers of followers took these vows to become part of a new spiritual community of people committed to its ideals.<sup>27</sup> The fact that so many lay Buddhists took these vows put pressure on the monastic community to clean up their acts from within, for if the lay people could hold to a certain set of proscriptions, how much more could be expected of the clergy, who were after all the bearers of this tradition?

Strengthened by the success of his *bodhisattva* ordination ceremony, Emperor Wu increased the pressure on the monastic community. After all, no matter how meticulously Emperor Wu crafted an image of himself as a *bodhisattva* saviour, if the Buddhist monastic community did not reflect the aura of sanctity he relied on for spiritual and ritual authority, then it would all be an empty measure. An important step in polishing the image of the clergy was the promotion of a vegetarian diet, which tied in with his carefully sculpted social ideology of karmic interconnectedness.<sup>28</sup> The question of the rise of vegetarianism as a norm in Chinese Buddhism is a complex one, and as such lies beyond the scope of this paper. But what is interesting to note in the context of Emperor Wu's attempts to control the *saṃgha*, is the tone in which the debates about vegetarianism in monastic life were held around 522 CE. Emperor Wu shows great confidence in his role as *Bodhisattva*-emperor when he proclaims:

今日僧眾還寺已後，各各檢勒使依佛教。若復飲酒噉肉不如法者，弟子當依王法治問。  
 諸僧尼若被如來衣不行如來行，是假名僧，與賊盜不異。如是行者猶是弟子國中編戶一  
 民。[...] 不問年時老少，不問門徒多少，弟子當令寺官集僧眾[...] 捨戒還俗著在家服。<sup>29</sup>

From now on, after you have returned to your monasteries, each and every one of you shall restrain themselves in accordance with the Buddha's teachings. Should you still drink wine and eat meat, and act contradictory to the *Dharma*, I shall have you punished according to state law. All those monks and nuns who wear the Tathāgata (i.e. Buddha) robes but do not act according to the Tathāgata path are

falsely assuming the title of monk and differ not from thieves or brigands. Those who act like that shall be looked upon as someone listed in the state population register.<sup>30</sup> [...] Irrespective of a monk's age or number of disciples, I will order the monastery officials to assemble the community of monks and [...] excommunicate them and make them dress in lay garments.

Here we see the end stage in an evolution towards an ever more outspoken challenge to the independent status of the *saṃgha*. Hardened by his previous failure to become Lay Rectifier of Monks, Emperor Wu emphasised his resolve by threatening to do exactly what he had not dared to do before, and that was to punish those who did not follow the new rule against eating meat according to state law, rather than according to the *vinaya*. One can wonder if Emperor Wu actually had sufficient power or influence to implement these threats, as there is to our knowledge no record of any monk or nun being stripped of his or her monastic robe for breaking any of the *vinaya* or *bodhisattva* regulations. Nonetheless, a few years after his *bodhisattva* ordination, Emperor Wu must have felt secure enough in his position as spiritual leader of the Buddhist community that he no longer saw the need to solicit support from the entire monastic community, but could now reversely put pressure on them with the backing of a small clerical elite and the many lay people whom had been won over by the appeal of the emperor's reinvented religious community. This brings us back to the *jiaseng*, who can certainly be seen as part of the clerical elite tied in with the emperor to work for a common goal. In the following

part we shall find an answer to the following questions: who exactly did Wu select as his personal monks? Were their duties strictly religious, or was there a more compelling reason for their appointments? What was the social background of the *jiaseng*? And were they subject to criticism for their blatant association with a worldly ruler, either from within or without the monastic community?

### III. Monks of the Imperial Family

The term *jiaseng* 家僧 appears for the first time during the reign of Liang Wudi, and did not last much beyond it either. Given Emperor Wu's calculated involvement with Buddhism and the total lack of earlier references to this term in the historical sources, it is highly probable that this clerical title was created by him to fulfil a specific purpose in his Buddhist reforms. Of the thirteen biographies in Buddhist sources to identify their subjects as *jiaseng*, eight held the title during the Liang. These were: (1) Fachong 法寵 (451-524)<sup>31</sup>, (2) Sengqian 僧遷 (465-523)<sup>32</sup>, (3) Sengmin 僧旻 (467-527)<sup>33</sup>, (4) Fayun 法雲 (467-529)<sup>34</sup>, (5) Huichao 慧超 (?-526)<sup>35</sup>, (6) Mingche 明徹 (? -522)<sup>36</sup>, (7) Sengqian 僧遷 (495-573)<sup>37</sup>, and (8) Sengjiapoluo 僧伽婆羅 (\* Saṃghavara?/ Saṃghabhara?, 460-524)<sup>38</sup>. Of the other five monks that were designated as *jiaseng* in the sources, four held the position during the Sui 隋 dynasty (589-618 CE), and only one during the early Tang 唐 (618-907 CE).<sup>39</sup> As the biographies of the Sui and Tang dynasty *jiaseng* lack all detail other than the basic mention of their appointment to this post, we shall focus our attention

on the biographies of the Liang dynasty *jiaseng*, which provide us with some very interesting information about the nature of this title.

Before we look into the details of the individual *jiaseng*, it is important to note that all *jiaseng*, with the exception of Sengjiapoluo (who was of Funan origin),<sup>40</sup> were descendants of traditional Southern military or low-ranking families, which were therefore at most so-called 'Cold gate families' (*hanmen* 寒門). It seems as though Emperor Wu's policy of appointing members of the low-ranking literati families to office was extended to include his Buddhist reforms, as many of these individuals, excluded as they were from the higher circles of political, economical and intellectual life, would abandon the outlook on a civil career as a lower grade official and instead choose to adopt the life of a Buddhist monk as a means to gain access to the upper social strata.<sup>41</sup> Thus the appointment of monks from low-ranking family descent to the position of *jiaseng* would not only serve to enhance social harmony as it created new perspectives for this social class, but it would undoubtedly have ensured a higher degree of gratitude, loyalty and obedience from those selected for this job.

The biography of our first *jiaseng* Fachong's starts off stereotypically with saying that he wanted to become a monk at a very early age. However, his parents did not give their permission, as they wanted him to marry. Fachong agreed to marry on the condition that he would afterwards be free to join the *samgha* (which means after he had secured a male heir to continue the family line). In 508, Fachong was invited by Emperor Wu to become a Monk of the

[Imperial] Family on the basis of his unfaltering adherence to the *vinaya*, which, in light of what follows, is rather interesting. Once Fachong had been made *jiaseng*

敕施車牛人力衣服飲食，四時不絕。寺本陝小，帝為宣武王修福，下敕王人繕改張飾以待寵焉。因立名為宣武寺也。<sup>42</sup>

[Emperor Wu] ordered carts, oxen, labour service, clothes and food to be provided to him all year round. And as his monastery was initially rather small and the emperor wished to confer blessings on [his deceased older brother], the prince of Xuanwu,<sup>43</sup> he ordered the [former] prince's attendants to expand and embellish [his old monastery] and treat [Fachong] like an honoured guest there. Thereupon the name of the monastery was changed to Xuanwu si.

This passage leaves little to the imagination as to what lavish rewards were bestowed upon those who became Emperor Wu's personal monk. However, according to the same proscriptive precepts Fachong was praised to uphold, it was forbidden for fully ordained monks and nuns to hold or accept gold, silver and other valuables.<sup>44</sup> In addition, the *bodhisattva* rules that were so ardently promoted by Emperor Wu also tend to condemn the *samgha's* involvement in commercial activity, as well as the exploitation of domestics and animals.<sup>45</sup> Although in reality many monasteries and members of the monastic community had extensive personal dealings with money, often as the result of commercial activities, this feature of the Chinese monastic

world was always vulnerable to criticism by monastics and lay people alike.<sup>46</sup> It is all the more striking that Emperor Wu on the one hand endeavoured to enforce the *vinaya* regulations, while on the other hand he went against this basic proscription, showing his pragmatic approach to solving the issues involved with his Buddhist reforms. While at first glance, it might seem that a *jiasang* was invited by the emperor only to become a sort of personal 'field of blessing (*futian* 福田)' that allowed him or his relatives to accrue personal merit by making donations, it is clear that this specific clerical title was created with political goals in mind. The sumptuous funding linked with the *jiasang* position certainly came with strings attached, as we can surmise from the case of Fayun.

Fayun, who is praised together with Zhizang and Sengmin as the 'Three Great Dharma Masters of the Liang Dynasty',<sup>47</sup> was appointed as *jiasang* by imperial decree in 508, for which he was given a very generous stipend.<sup>48</sup> Here there is no more mention of any religious motives for making Fayun a Household Monk. On the contrary, the use of the phrasing 'financial compensation' (*ziji* 資給) make it appear that he was recruited for an important job. If so, Fayun was put to work to earn his rewards, as can be seen from his appearances in some form or function all over the Buddhist sources. Already in 508, just before or after his appointment, Fayun was ordered to make a commentary on the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (*Great Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra*). Emperor Wu attached a great deal of importance to the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, not only because of its importance to the elucidation of the *bodhisattva* path, but also because he believed that copying and reciting this text would confer blessings upon his

deceased parents and protect the empire from ill fortune.<sup>49</sup> Interestingly, when some eminent courtiers asked Fayun to lecture on his commentary, he feigned an illness and did not go. Emperor Wu ordered him to do it anyway, demonstrating the emperor's influence over Fayun, whose relationship with Wu resembled that of an employee and an employer.<sup>50</sup>

Also in that same year, Fayun was appointed as abbot of the Guangzhai 光宅 monastery,<sup>51</sup> where he was given as first duty the task to compile a set of Rules for Monks (*sengzhi*), as we have discussed above. Here we see Fayun for the first time as a spokesman for Liang Wudi's Buddhist reform efforts, and it would not be the last time. Fayun's next intervention would come at the formally organised debates about the existence of the 'soul' (*shen* 神)<sup>52</sup>, which took place at the court between 507 and 508.<sup>53</sup> These debates about an enduring self have to be seen in the context of Emperor Wu's stress on the workings of karmic retribution in the world to allow his image of universal *Bodhisattva* saviour to take full effect. After all, if there were no enduring self to benefit from the karmic blessings of his Buddhist activities (which is what Emperor Wu's political adversaries sought to prove), then his new imperial ideology would lose all practical applicability and popular appeal. After all the arguments for and against had been presented, Fayun was ordered to send a circular to all aristocratic men of influence at court (*wanggong chaogui* 王公朝貴), asking for approval of Emperor Wu's views on the existence of the 'soul'. Interestingly enough, although the circular itself was written by a monk, it was addressed to members of the secular authorities and, as such, no monks are among the sixty-two respondents.<sup>54</sup> This suggests that the circular was



highly politically charged, and served as no less than a role call for Emperor Wu's political allies. Among the sixty-two respondents, for instance, we find the five 'Erudites of the Five Classics' (*Wujing boshi* 五經博士).<sup>55</sup> It is clear that no one in Emperor Wu's bureaucracy could escape the increased Buddhification of his administration.

Fayun's name also pops up in relation to the *bodhisattva* ordination ceremony of 519,<sup>56</sup> and the debates about the vegetarianisation of the *sangha* in 522.<sup>57</sup> In 525, Fayun was further appointed as *da sengzheng* (Head Rectifier of Monks), making him responsible for the conduct of all monastics in the empire.<sup>58</sup> In short, Fayun was active in just about every aspect of Emperor Wu's Buddhist reforms, and can therefore be seen as one of his most important allies. One might wonder just how much his 'generous stipend' had anything to do with this. Upon his death, Fayun was buried with full imperial honours at the Dinglin 定林 monastery (at the foot of Mount Zhong 鍾山), where two other *jiasang* were buried as well.<sup>59</sup>

Turning our attention to the other *jiasang*, we can point out that Huichao had also, like Fayun, combined the functions of (*da*) *sengzheng* and *jiasang*. Other than the fact that his biography also mentions a sizeable remuneration for his job as *sengzheng* (and probably *jiasang* as well), not many more details are provided.<sup>60</sup> The same can be said for Sengmin, whom, it was said, was provided with the four necessities (i.e. clothing, shelter, medication and food),<sup>61</sup> and for Mingche, who received personal financial support all year long without fail.<sup>62</sup> However unfortunate this lack of information is, it puts all the more focus on the great financial compensation given to these monks, which was apparently deemed such an important feature,

that is was repeated in the biography of every *jiaseng* to have held the title during the Liang. This close (financial) relationship with the emperor went at the cost of much of the monks' independence, and was therefore frowned upon by those within the monastic community who wanted to preserve their independence and focus on spiritual, rather than worldly goals.<sup>63</sup> Perhaps this is why our next *jiaseng*, Sengjiapoluo, chose to publicly redistribute the money that was given to him.

婆羅不畜私財，以為囑施成立住寺。<sup>64</sup>

[Sengjia]poluo did not accumulate personal wealth, but gave it away [to finance] the construction of a monastery to live in.

By giving away all the wealth he was given as *jiaseng*, Sengjiapoluo showed either true virtue or a sensitivity to the problem of accumulating wealth as a monk. His solution, however, is rather creative, as it can be understood that he donated this wealth for the construction of a monastery of his own. In this way the money he gave away in a public display of piety would in the end flow back to his monastery.

The biography of our last *jiaseng* paints a colourful picture of how monks in the capital sometimes clashed in competition over imperial favour. Sengqian's (465-523) biography is almost taken up completely by the following anecdote:

天監十六年夏，帝嘗夜見沙門慧詡。他日因計法會，遷問詡曰：‘御前夜何所道。’詡曰：‘卿何忽問此。’而言氣甚厲。遷抗聲曰：‘我與卿同出西州，俱為沙門。卿一時邀逢天接，便欲陵駕儕黨。我惟事佛。視卿輩蔑如也。’眾人滿坐，詡有慚忤。<sup>65</sup>

In the summer of the sixteenth year of Tianjian (517), Emperor Wu spent a whole night talking with the *śramaṇa* Huixu. Another day, as a *Dharma*-assembly was being planned, [Seng]qian asked [Hui]xu: ‘What did you and the emperor talk about the other night?’ ‘Why do you ask me this, so out of the blue?’ [Hui]xu barked back in an aggressive tone. [Seng]qian, now raising his voice as well, said: ‘You and I both hail from Xizhou, and we are both *śramaṇas*. You have only met with the emperor once, and already you want to shove aside someone from your own kind to better yourself. I serve only the Buddha. When I look at people of your sort, I have nothing but disdain.’ As the seats were completely filled with people, [Hui]xu felt extremely humiliated.

It is perhaps a little ironic that Sengqian accuses Huixu of putting his own interests before those of a fellow monk, and by extension the monastic community, when he himself is a personal advisor to the emperor. Especially the remark that he serves only the Buddha seems ill-considered, to say the least. One cannot help but feel that Sengqian felt jealous and threatened by the fact that another monk had managed to keep the emperor interested for a whole night while talking about something he was not meant to know. Or at least that is how he interpreted

Huixu's reluctance to reveal the topic of his conversation with Emperor Wu. This anecdote is a good example of how Emperor Wu's large-scale sponsoring of Buddhism was not all positive for this religion. His attempts to gain control over the *saṃgha* by forging alliances with individual monks brought out feelings of rivalry and suspicion within the monastic community. Many of the metropolitan clergy were formerly members of low-ranking, impoverished literati families who saw the tonsure as a means to gain access to the upper social strata that were otherwise blocked off to them by the powerful families. As metropolitan monks they could either live a leisurely life of luxury or they could rekindle their frustrated ambitions by trying to incur the favour of the emperor. *Jiaseng* like the monks discussed above would not necessarily have shared in political power, but their immense prestige would have certainly gained them lots of influence in the society of the time, not to mention financial gain. If it was cooperation Emperor Wu needed from the monks to give his Buddhist reforms legitimacy, then there was no shortage of men who were more than happy to oblige. Still, as always, there were those who refused to be controlled, which only widened the cracks in the monastic community.<sup>66</sup>

## Conclusion

At a time when the Buddhist clergy was the object of frequent criticism by traditionalist members of the literati for their accumulated wealth and economic activities (both undoubtedly fuelled by the fact that they were exempted from taxes), it was a risky strategy for Emperor Wu to base his reform of imperial ritual in part on members of the monastic community. Although certain

elements of the Buddhist doctrine could elevate him from a Confucian head of state to a universal saviour figure, it would require a delicate touch to balance out the negative features associated with some of the (metropolitan) clerical elite. As we have discussed, Emperor Wu adopted several strategies to control the behaviour of individual monks and nuns, with varying degrees of success. By hiring personal attending monks (*jiasang*) he sought to acquire a foot in the door of the otherwise closed-off and de facto autonomous *sangha*. These *jiasang*, of which Fayun is without a doubt the most visible example, were put to work in Wu's buddhistically inspired reforms, and they were lavishly compensated for their support. Though there are to our knowledge no explicit examples of attacks on this newly created clerical rank, the comments made by Huijiao and others show that such close, personal associations by monastics with the emperor and other members of the ruling elite were frowned upon not only by Liang Wudi's political adversaries, but by members of the Buddhist monastic community as well. This shows just how precarious it was to restore social harmony, as closing one rift could easily open another. Perhaps it is this underlying potential for friction that caused subsequent emperors (with the exception of the Sui dynasty emperor Wen) to abandon the practice of appointing *jiasang* all together. Certain is that the economic activities of monasteries and their subsequent wealth were the subject of much more controversy in the centuries following Liang Wudi's reign.

## References

Abbreviations

T. : *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經 (A New Buddhist Canon Compiled in the Taishō Reign-era [1912-26]). Edited by Takakusu Junijirō 高楠順次郎, Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭. 100 vols. Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōtai, 1924-1932. Texts are indicated by 'T.' followed by the text number, and, when appropriate, the page, register (a, b, or c) and line number(s).

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<sup>1</sup> See Buttars, *The Formation and Demise of Royal Houses*: 45-49; 259-263.

<sup>2</sup> The Nine Ranks system was created by Cao Cao 曹操 (155-220) and institutionalized during the Wei 魏 kingdom (220-265 CE) as a modified version of the earlier Han selection system for government officials. During the Han dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE) local officials were expected to recommend candidates for office from their local area, based on ‘public opinion’ of the candidate’s reputation. Under the Nine Ranks system, officials called ‘arbiters’ (*zhongzheng* 中正) were appointed by the court with the sole task of evaluating possible candidates within their jurisdiction, and ranking them on a scale from one to nine. Appointments to office were then made on the basis of these ratings. Shortly after it was initiated, the political instability of the times, and the inevitable resulting decentralisation, caused the court to lose its grip on the Nine Ranks system. Consequently, control over the official selection process shifted from the court and local administration towards the members of the official class themselves. Needless to say that this led to much abuse, as the members of the official class started closing their ranks to newcomers and essentially became a hereditary elite which basically looked after its own interests, and where the rank of an individual was determined by family descent and intermarriage between powerful clans. After the north of China was overrun by non-Chinese nomadic tribes, the hereditary Northern families fled south to set up an imperial court in the new capital Jiankang 建康 (the region of present day Nanjing). The traditional Southern families, who had up till then resided in what was to all intents and purposes a frontier land of Chinese civilisation, had not been part of this process which had taken place largely in the former

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metropolitan region up North, and they were therefore effectively excluded from the higher ranks. The Nine Ranks system remained in operation throughout the Southern dynasties until it was finally abolished by the Sui dynasty emperor Wen (r. 581-604) in 583 CE. See Holzman, 'Les débuts du système medieval de choix'. See also Grafflin, 'Reinventing China': 146-148; Jansen, *Höfische Öffentlichkeit*: 33-34; Holcombe, *In the Shadow of the Han*: 77-81; Lee, *Education in Traditional China*: 123-131.

<sup>3</sup> For the development of family classifications, see Grafflin, 'Reinventing China'.

<sup>4</sup> See Janousch, *The Reform of Imperial Ritual*: 60-68; De Rauw, *Beyond Buddhist Apology*: 5-22.

<sup>5</sup> *Liang shu* 梁書 (*History of the Liang Dynasty*, compiled by Wei Zheng 魏徵 and Yao Silian 姚思廉 between 626 and 636) 1: 22-23. For the genealogies, see Johnson, *The Medieval Chinese Oligarchy*: 36f.

<sup>6</sup> A time-honoured strategy followed by Southern Dynasty Emperors to ensure the support of the traditional powerful families was by forging marriage alliances to them. The Liang crown prince, Xiao Gang, for example, was married off to a woman from the influential Wang 王 clan. See *Liang shu*, 1: 158. Cf. Buttars, *The Formation and Demise of Royal Houses*: 90. Also see Mather, 'Intermarriage as a Gauge of Family Status'.

<sup>7</sup> For a comprehensive study of Emperor Wu's reforms in Confucian imperial ritual, see Janousch, *The Reform of Imperial Ritual*.

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<sup>8</sup> Emperor Wu appointed five of his most trusted military aids, who came from the (per definition) low ranking ‘military families’ (*junjia* 軍家), to each supervise the compilation of one branch of the so-called Five Rituals (*wuli* 五禮) which were to make up his new ritual code. These Five Rituals were the ‘rituals for auspicious events’ (*jili* 吉禮), ‘rituals for inauspicious events’ (*xiongli* 凶禮), ‘rituals for guests’ (*binli* 賓禮), ‘rituals for military events’ (*junli* 軍禮), and ‘rituals for blessings’ (*jiali* 嘉禮) (see *Liang shu*, 25: 381). The five men appointed by Emperor Wu were a few years later made Erudites of the Five Classics (*Wujing boshi* 五經博士) and each placed at the head of a department of the newly founded School of Five Halls (*Wuguan* 五官), a university dedicated exclusively to the study of the Five Classics of Confucianism (i.e. the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經), the *Book of Odes* (*Shijing* 詩經), the *Book of Documents* (*Shujing* 書經), the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋), and the *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記)) and open to members of low-ranking literati families. For the names and functions of these five men, see *Liang shu*, 25: 381.

<sup>9</sup> For a comprehensive study of Emperor Wu’s political use of Buddhism, see De Rauw, *Beyond Buddhist Apology*.

<sup>10</sup> *Liang shu*, 2: 34.

<sup>11</sup> Baozhi’s biography, contained in the *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 (*Biographies of Eminent Monks*, T.2059; compiled by Huijiao 慧皎 (497-554) ca. 530; T.2059.394a15-395a3) says that he died in the winter of 514. Nobody knew his age, but it was believed that he had stopped aging around his fifties. A man who claimed to be Baozhi’s maternal uncle said that he was four years

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younger than him, which meant that Baozhi would have been ninety-six years old at his time of death. For a translation of the biography with a short introduction, see Berkowitz, 'Account of the Buddhist Thaumaturge Baozhi'.

<sup>12</sup> For a translation and discussion of Sengyou's biography (*Gaoseng zhuan*, T.2059.402c3-403a2), see Link, 'Shih Seng-yu and his Writings'. Sengyou had cordial ties with the Emperor, up to the point that his dealings with the court raised suspicions with the other monks. On the Emperor's order both parties came together to settle this matter (T.2059.402c21).

<sup>13</sup> For a short overview of state regulation of Buddhist monks and nuns, see Heirman and De Rauw, 'Offenders, Sinners and Criminals': 71-75.

<sup>14</sup> The concept of the *bodhisattva* as a saviour figure was popular in Chinese Buddhism. At the time of Liang Wudi it had already undergone centuries of development. Generally speaking, in early Buddhism a *bodhisattva* was a being destined to reach enlightenment. As this was considered to be rare, it was thought that only one *bodhisattva* would exist at any given time (i.e. a future Buddha). Thus the attainment of bodhisattvahood, like Buddhahood, was reserved for the exceptional person. In a later development, the ideal of the *bodhisattva* (as used by Emperor Wu in relation to his imperial persona) was expanded in its application. Over time the *bodhisattva* transformed into a being that is on the verge of attaining enlightenment, but for altruistic reasons chooses not to do so in order to save as many people as possible from suffering. Many *bodhisattvas* were believed to be active at the same time (which sparked a large-scale devotional movement within Buddhism), and in addition it was now said to be

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possible for everyone to aspire to bodhisattvahood. In other words not only monks and nuns could make progress towards enlightenment, but the laity, who before had been reduced to mere supporters of the *saṃgha*, could achieve enlightenment as well by following the *bodhisattva* path. The career of a *bodhisattva* was believed to start with the arising of the aspiration to strive for Buddhahood (Skt. *bodhicitta*, Ch. *putixin* 菩提心), and involves the development of the six perfections (Skt. *pāramitā*, Ch. *liu du* 六度 or *boluomiduo* 波羅蜜多). These are: generosity (Skt. *dāna*, Ch. *bushi* 布施), moral virtue (Skt. *sīla*, Ch. *chijie* 持戒), forbearance (Skt. *kṣānti*, Ch. *renru* 忍辱), fervour in religious practice (Skt. *vīrya*, Ch. *jingjin* 精進), meditation (Skt. *dhyāna*, Ch. *chanding* 禪定), and insight into the true nature of things (Skt. *prajñā*, Ch. *zhahui* 智慧). While the last five *pāramitās* are mainly intended for the *bodhisattva* himself to attain Buddhahood, it is the first *pāramitā* of giving that invokes the *bodhisattva* to share his knowledge with others and help those in need. For more on the *bodhisattva* ideal in East Asia, see Kawamura, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine*.

<sup>15</sup> *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳 (*Further Biographies of Eminent Monks*, compiled by Daoxuan 道宣 (596-667); T.2060.464b5). These rules are not extant, so we cannot be sure what was in them, but given Emperor Wu's subsequent attempt at controlling the Buddhist monastic community, these were most likely rules of conduct for monks and nuns taken from the Buddhist disciplinary rules (*vinaya*), meant to be enforced.

<sup>16</sup> The title of *sengzheng* 僧正 'Rectifier of Monks' was given to the supervisor of the Buddhist *saṃgha*, who was primarily responsible for upkeeping the moral standards of the monks and

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nuns. The *sengzheng* was recruited from within the *saṃgha* and appointed by the emperor. The term *sengzheng* first appeared under the Liang dynasty, though the institution itself was already in use by previous emperors under varying designations (see Forte, 'Daisōjō'). The *baiyi* 白衣 ('White Clad', Skt.: *avadātavasana*) in Emperor Wu's title, refers to his lay status, generally indicating a layman who observes the lay precepts (Skt. *pañcaśīla*, Ch. *wujie* 五戒) without having been ordained. The five lay precepts prohibit (1) killing, (2) stealing, (3) sexual misconduct, (4) lying, and (5) the consumption of intoxicating substances (usually alcohol). Though the term 'white clad' was universally understood to refer to Buddhist lay devotees, in China it was rather uncommon to actually wear white garments as a sign of one's lay status. See Seiwert, *Popular Religious Movements*: 153-157.

<sup>17</sup> Zhizang's biography can be found in the *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* T.2060.465c7-4467b27. For more on Zhizang and his clash with Emperor Wu, see De Rauw, 'Beyond Buddhist Apology: 189-196; Janousch, 'The emperor as bodhisattva': 136-140.

<sup>18</sup> For an overview of the development of the concept of the decline of the Buddhist Law, see Nattier, *Once Upon a Future Time*.

<sup>19</sup> The *vinaya* master by Daoxuan 道宣 (596-667) paints a grim picture of the condition of the Buddhist monastic community during the final stage of the Buddha's Teaching when he says: 'In the final period, [...] (Buddhist disciples) give free rein to passion. They are greedy, and they consider wine and meat as the basic requirements for their bodies.' *Guang Hongming ji* 廣弘明



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集 (*Further Collection for the Propagation and Clarification [of Buddhism]*), a collection of apologetic texts compiled by Daoxuan in 664) T.2103.292b17-19.

<sup>20</sup> Zhizang argued that a) in the period of the final decline of the Buddhist Teaching it is impossible to correct the behaviour of the corrupted monks anyhow; and b) that Emperor Wu should focus on compassion and forgiveness (essential features of the *bodhisattva*), rather than on punishment, as this is what Buddha had done with his evil cousin Devadatta.

<sup>21</sup> A glimpse of how regulations might have been conceived can be obtained from a somewhat later code, the *Daoseng ge* 道僧格, *Regulations for the Taoist and Buddhist Clergy*, included in the civil Tang code issued in 637 by Emperor Taizong. In the extant Tang code, the *Tang Lü Shuyi* 唐律疏義 (*Tang Code with Commentary*) of 737, the *Daoseng ge* is no longer included, but specific regulations for monks and nuns are still there. Although the *Daoseng ge* is no longer extant today, we can get a fairly good idea of its contents from the *Soṅniryō* 僧尼令, its Japanese counterpart, contained in *Ryō no Gige* 令の義解: 81-89. The eighteenth article stipulates that monks and nuns may not accumulate for themselves land, buildings and other forms of wealth nor may they buy or sell for profit or lend at interest. Property acquired in that way will be confiscated by the civil authorities. Although it remains unclear whether the *Daoseng ge* has ever been put into practice, it does show how sensitive the issue of personal wealth remained even in later times. For an introduction to the history and contents of the *Daoseng ge*, see for instance Weinstein, *Buddhism under the T'ang*: 17-22; and Ch'en, *The Chinese*

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Transformation of Buddhism: 95-105. For a translation of the *Soṅniryō*, see Sansom, 'Early Japanese Law': 127-134.

<sup>22</sup> For a detailed study of Baochang, including the problem concerning his authorship of the *Biqiuni zhuan*, see De Rauw, 'Baochang'.

<sup>23</sup> *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* T.2060.427c10-12.

<sup>24</sup> For more details, see De Rauw, 'Beyond Buddhist Apology': 35-49.

<sup>25</sup> By the early sixth century, the *bodhisattva* ideal had firmly lodged itself in the thought-patterns of Chinese Buddhists, and it had become fashionable among laymen and monks alike to take the *bodhisattva* vows (*pusa jie* 菩薩戒) to affirm their aspiration to strive for Buddhahood for the sake of others. An important text in the development of these *bodhisattva* vows was the *Fanwang jing* 梵網經 (*The Brahmā's Net Sūtra*, T.1484). Although, traditionally, the *Fanwang jing* is said to have been translated from Sanskrit into Chinese by Kumārajīva in 406, it is in fact a text composed in China probably around the middle of the fifth century. The main body of the text consists of a set of fifty-eight so-called *bodhisattva* rules, intended to provide the Chinese Buddhist community with a guideline of moral precepts. At the time of Emperor Wu, various methods of *bodhisattva* ordination, based on the *Fanwang jing* and other scriptural sources, were used side by side. Through a careful selection of passages from several of these existing methods, Emperor Wu constructed his own unique *bodhisattva* ordination ritual. The performative aspects of this ritual are preserved in a manuscript entitled *Chujiaren shou pusa jie fa* 出家人受菩薩戒法 (*Procedure for Ordaining Those Who Have Left the Family Life in the*

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*Bodhisattva Precepts*, Pelliot 2196), which has been transcribed and edited with a short introduction by Tsuchihashi, 'Perio hon 'Shukke'nin ju Bosatsukai hō'. For Emperor Wu's scriptural sources and a summary of the procedure described in this manuscript, see Janousch, 'The emperor as bodhisattva': 116-121, 123-128.

<sup>26</sup> See Janousch, 'The Reform of Imperial Ritual': 173-227.

<sup>27</sup> In the account of Emperor Wu's *bodhisattva* ordination of 519 as contained in the biography of the monk Huiyue 慧約 (450-535), who acted as Master of Ceremonies on the occasion, it is said that on that day alone another forty-eight thousand people were registered (*zhuji* 著籍) as *bodhisattva* disciples (*Xu Gaoseng zhuan* T.2060.469b28). If the account is accurate, this would mean that everyone who took the *bodhisattva* vows was entered into a register. Since there is no mention of this register in other sources, it is impossible to ascertain what the function of such a register might have been. Was a person's real name entered into this register, or was the newly ordained *bodhisattva*'s religious name written down so as to create an alternate community of initiated? Did the *bodhisattva* ordination come with any rights or duties such as exemption of taxes (like an ordained monk or nun) or obligatory financial contributions? Were these registers consulted when it was time to appoint offices or consider promotions? Unfortunately, until some new sources turn up, we may never know the answer to these tantalising questions. Regardless of the fact whether or not these registers were used as an incentive or pressure tool, the massive scale on which the people of the Liang are said to have

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taken the *bodhisattva* vows suggests that this strategy of Emperor Wu was one of the most successful in the whole campaign for the Buddhification of state and court ritual.

<sup>28</sup> In short, Emperor Wu stressed the Buddhist view that all living beings are interconnected in a karmic fate, as the animal you eat could very well be the reincarnation of a deceased relative. Thus the adoption of a vegetarian diet was not only necessary to avoid bad *karman*, it was also a sign of compassion (*ci* 慈, an important trait of the *bodhisattva*), and, from a Confucian point of view, of filial piety (*xiao* 孝) to boot! For more details, see De Rauw, 'Beyond Buddhist Apology': 80-165.

<sup>29</sup> *Guang Hongming ji* T.2103.297c7-14.

<sup>30</sup> When someone was ordained as a monk or nun, that person was effectively struck from the population registers, thus exempting him or her from taxes and corvée labour. When Emperor Wu says that he will look upon the misbehaving clergy as people on the population registers, he means that he will deal with them as normal subjects.

<sup>31</sup> *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* T.2060.461a16-c9.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* T.2060.461c10-22.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* T.2060.461c23-463c12.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* T.2060.463c13-465a19.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* T.2060.468a1-b20.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* T.2060.473a25-474a2.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid. T.2060.475c27-476a24. Notice that there were two different monks with the name Sengqian. The second Sengqian was *jiasang* to Liang Wudi, but later became Rectifier of Monks (*sengzheng* 僧正) for the Later Liang 後梁 (555-587 CE).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. T.2060.426a19.

<sup>39</sup> The *jiasang* of the Sui were: (1) Tanxie 曇瑋 (ca. 536-618), *ibid.* T.2060.670a27; (2) Zhiwen 智文 (509-599), *ibid.* T.2060.609c27; (3) Huijing 慧淨(d.u.), *Da Tang neidian lu* 大唐內典錄 (*Tang Dynasty Catalogue of the Buddhist Scriptures*, compiled by Daoxuan 道宣 (596-667) in 664) T.2149.281c20; and (4) Huisheng 慧乘 (d.u.), *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* T.2060.633b25. Wuji 無跡 (846-925) is mentioned as *jiasang* for the Tang (*Song Gaoseng zhuan*, T.2061.898a12). The occurrence of *jiasang* in the Sui dynasty is not surprising, since the strategies used by Emperor Wen 文 (r. 581-604) to legitimise his claim on the throne show some remarkable similarities to those of Liang Wudi, including the adoption of the epithet ‘Bodhisattva-Emperor’ (*pusa huangdi* 菩薩皇帝). See *Nanshi* 南史 (*History of the Southern Dynasties*, compiled by Li Yanshou 李延壽 between 627 and 649), 7: 219; *Suishu* 隋書 (*History of the Sui Dynasty*, compiled by Wei Zheng 魏徵 between 629 and 636), 34: 1010.

<sup>40</sup> Funan 扶南 was a pre-Khmer kingdom situated around the Mekong delta, known for its strong mercantilism. At the peak of its power around the third century CE, it spanned the area of modern day Cambodia, Southern Vietnam, Laos, and part of Thailand. It was at the time of the Liang dynasty part of the Indian cultural sphere of influence.

<sup>41</sup> Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*: 9.

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<sup>42</sup> *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* T.2060.461b24-26.

<sup>43</sup> Prince of Xuanwu is the posthumous title conferred by Emperor Wu on his older brother, Xiao Yi 蕭懿, whose murder in 500 had been the reason for launching his campaign against the Qi.

<sup>44</sup> In the early fifth century, four full *vinayas* (monastic codes) were translated into Chinese. In chronological order, these are: *Shisong lü* 十誦律 (T.1435, *Sarvāstivādivinaya*), *Sifen lü* 四分律 (T.1428, *Dharmaguptakavinaya*), *Mohesengqi lü* 摩訶僧祇律 (T.1425, *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*), and *Mishasai bu hexi wufen lü* 彌沙塞部和醯五分律 (T.1421, *Mahīsāsakavinaya*). In sixth century China, the three first of these *vinayas* were predominantly used in ordination ceremonies (for details, see Heirman, ‘Can We Trace the Early Dharmaguptakas’: 407-419). A century later, during the early Tang dynasty, the *Dharmaguptakavinaya* was strongly promoted by influential Buddhist masters, and around 705–710, it was even imposed by imperial decree as the only *vinaya* to be followed in the Chinese empire (see Heirman, ‘Can We Trace the Early Dharmaguptakas’: 414, 419-423 and Heirman, ‘Vinaya from India to China’: 192-195). The *Dharmaguptakavinaya* consequently became the reference point for monastic discipline in China. The proscription against possession of valuables can be found in all four *vinayas*: *Dharmaguptakavinaya* T.1428.619b23-25; *Mahīsāsakavinaya*, T.1421.37a27-b6; *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*, T.1425.310c7-312c2; *Sarvāstivādivinaya*, T.1435.51a27-b29. For comparative details, see Gernet, *Buddhism in Chinese Society*: 154-156.

<sup>45</sup> This precept can be found, for instance, in the *Fanwang jing* T.1484.1005c24-1006a1.

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<sup>46</sup> As has been discussed by Gregory Schopen ('Two Problems in the History of Indian Buddhism' and 'The Good Monk'), numerous *vinaya* passages as well as inscriptional evidence leave no doubt that from very early times Indian monks and nuns had a lot of money to spend. As shown in the groundbreaking work of Jacques Gernet (Buddhism in Chinese Society: 153-186), monastic commentaries, civil documents and even management reports of monasteries discovered in Dunhuang all bear witness of the extensive engagement of many members of the monastic community in commercial activities.

<sup>47</sup> *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* T.2060.548b12. All three were masters of the Satyasiddhi (Ch. Chengshi 成實) school of Buddhism, which was the predominant philosophical school during the Southern Qi and most of the Liang. It is said that Emperor Wu later shifted his interest to Madhyamaka (Ch. Sanlun 三論). See Ch'en, Buddhism in China: 129-134.

<sup>48</sup> *Xu Gaoseng zhuan*, T.2060.464b4.

<sup>49</sup> Yan Shangwen, Liang Wudi: 160-165. Emperor Wu also wrote his own commentary on the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*. Though the commentary itself was lost to time, its preface is preserved in the early-sixth-century Buddhist catalogue *Chu sanzang jiji* 出三藏記集 (*Collection of Records Concerning the Translation of the Tripitaka*, compiled by Sengyou 僧祐 (445-518) ca. 515; T.2145.53b28-54c11).

<sup>50</sup> *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* T.2060.464b1-3.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid. T.2060.464b5. The Guangzhai monastery was founded by Emperor Wu shortly after he ascended the throne in 502. It was his former residence which by his order had been converted into a monastery (*Liang shu*, 49: 698 and *Nan shi*, 72: 1780).

<sup>52</sup> The term *shen* is multivalent, and what is meant by *shen* could (and still can) be very different depending on the person who uses the term. In the debates at the court of Emperor Wu, *shen* was mostly used by the Buddhist defenders of the concept to designate an enduring self which migrated from one existence to another. This belief in an enduring self is one of the idiosyncrasies of medieval Chinese Buddhism, as most schools of Indian Buddhism denied that there was such a thing as an *ātman*, a permanent identity that travelled from one form to the next through the process of rebirth. This is the doctrine of no-self (Skt. *anātman*, Ch. *wuwo* 無我). See Lo, 'The Destiny of the 'Shen' (Soul)'.

<sup>53</sup> See Janssen, *Höfische Öffentlichkeit*: 215-218; Lai, 'Emperor Wu of Liang on the Immortal Soul'; Liu, 'Fan Chen's 'Treatise'.

<sup>54</sup> The circular and the letters of the respondents can be found in the *Hongming ji* 弘明集 (*Collection [of Texts] for the Propagation and Clarification [of Buddhism]*), a compilation of apologetic texts compiled by Sengyou 僧祐 (445-518) ca. 515; T.2102.60b6-68c15). These letters add little to the debate about the existence of an enduring self, but in general merely praise the Emperor's theory in the loftiest words, and occasionally rehash his arguments for emphasis.

<sup>55</sup> See note 8.



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<sup>56</sup> *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* T.2060.464c5-14. Fayun was a bit reluctant to take the *bodhisattva* ordination himself at first, but after 'repeatedly pressing him with awards (累勸獎)' Emperor Wu succeeded in persuading Fayun to go ahead with the ordination ceremony. This again shows the business-like relationship between the two men.

<sup>57</sup> On the twenty-third day of the assembly at which the vegetarianisation of the monastic community was discussed, Fayun was charged with reciting and expounding the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* (*Sūtra on the Buddha's Parinirvāṇa*), with particular emphasis on the fourth fascicle of the text, condemning the consumption of meat and fish (*Guang hongming ji* T.2103.299a1-8). Three Chinese translation versions of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* exist at this time: (1) the *Da banniyuan jing* 大般泥洹經 in 6 fascicles (T.376), a short, preliminary translation by Faxian 法顯 (? - 422), made between 416 and 418; (2) the *Da banniepan jing* 大般涅槃經 in 40 fascicles (T.374), a more complete version, translated by Tanwuchen 曇無讖 (?Dharmakṣema) (385-433) between 414 and 421 (also called the Northern Text); and (3) the *Da banniepan jing* 大般涅槃經 in 36 fascicles (T.375), which is a revision and integration of versions (1) and (2), edited by Huiyan 慧嚴, Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 and others during the first half of the Liu Song (420-479) Dynasty (also called the Southern Text). The *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, which teaches that all sentient beings possess the Buddha-nature and therefore the potential for attaining Buddhahood, had become very popular at this point in time, as it was considered to be the ultimate teaching of the Buddha. In fact, there were so many commentaries on the (*Mahāyāna*) *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* that Emperor Wu of the Liang commissioned Baoliang 寶亮

(444-509) and others to collect all existing commentaries in a collection called 'Collected Explanations of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*' (*Da banniepan jing jijie* 大般涅槃經集解) in 71 scrolls (T.1763).

<sup>58</sup> *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* T.2060.464c15.

<sup>59</sup> Fachong and Mingche were also buried at the Dinglin monastery. There were actually two Dinglin monasteries, both located on Mount Zhong (just northeast of the capital Jiankang). The original monastery was built in 424 by Huijue 慧覺 (d.u.). When the Indian monk Dharmamitra (*Tanmomiduo* 曇摩蜜多, 355-442) came to this temple in 433, he made such an impression that he was allowed to build a second monastery on the West flank of Mount Zhong. This was called the Upper Dinglin 定林上 monastery and the original was renamed Lower Dinglin (下) monastery. The Upper Dinglin monastery was the scene of great translation and compilation activity at the time of Emperor Wu. In 508, for example, Sengmin 僧旻 (467-527), who was revered together with Zhizang 智藏 (458-522) and Fayun as one of the three great Dharma masters of the Liang (T.1779.716b13-15, T.2060.548b12), was detached from the Zhuangyan 莊嚴 monastery to the Upper Dinglin monastery to start work on a monumental compilation of essential passages from the *sūtras*, titled *Zhongjing Yaochao* 眾經要抄 (*Most Essential Copies of the Collected Scriptures*, not extant) in eighty-eight scrolls (cf. *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* T.2060.426c8-9). More than thirty people were involved in this project alone (cf. *Da Tang neidian lu* T.2149.266b20-24), and apparently the people involved in these kinds of projects were not only Buddhist monks. Lay scholars were assigned to them as well, such as Liu Xie,

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author of the *Wenxin diaolong* 文心調龍 (*On the Literary Mind and Ornate Rhetoric*) and of the Buddhist apologetic treatise *Miehuo lun* 滅惑論 (*On the Elimination of Doubts*, T.2102.49c3-53c19). See *Liang shu*, 50: 712.

The fact that the abbot of the before mentioned Guangzhai monastery was appointed by imperial edict, and that monks and laymen could be assigned to the Upper Dinglin monastery to work on imperially sponsored projects concerning the Buddhist scriptures, suggests that these two monasteries were state-sponsored. The burial of three *jiaseng* at this site with full imperial honours further strengthens this hypothesis. A fourth factor which pleads for this, is the assertion that during the debates on the adoption of a vegetarian diet for all monks and nuns, it was stressed that no meat was ever served at the Dinglin and Guangzhai monasteries, singling them out as examples to be emulated by non-state-sponsored monasteries (*Guang Hongming ji* T.2103.299b13-18). On the various functions and designations of the state-sponsored monasteries (the so-called 'Great Monasteries,' *dasi* 大寺), see Forte, 'Daiji'.

<sup>60</sup> *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* T.2060.468a21.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* 462c13. Sengmin appears to have been mainly assigned to the compilation of encyclopaedic reference works on Buddhist doctrine (see note 58).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* 473b25.

<sup>63</sup> In his preface to the hagiographic *Gaoseng zhuan*, Huijiao criticises the worldly and sycophantic clergy that surrounded Emperor Wu. He says that in judging the worthiness of a particular monk, one should not be blinded by worldly success: 'If men of real achievement

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conceal their brilliance, then they are eminent (高 *gao*) but not famous (名 *ming*); when men of slight virtue happen to be in accord with their times, then they are famous but not eminent.'

Translation by Wright, 'Biography and Hagiography': 392-395.

<sup>64</sup> *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* T.2060.426a20.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.* T.2060.461c16-22.

<sup>66</sup> A case in point is Zhizang, who openly admonished Liang Wudi when he wished to assert himself as 'White Clad Rectifier of Monks'.