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Biographies of Eminent Monks in a Comparative Perspective: The Function of the Holy in Medieval Chinese Buddhism

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Summary

In this paper I propose a new direction for the study of Huijiao's Biographies of Eminent Monks. I begin the discussion with some comments on Arthur Wright's influential study *Biography and Hagiography: Hui chiao's Lives of Eminent Monks*. I take issue with Wright's view on Huijiao's attitude toward miracle stories; according to Wright, Huijiao

was less concerned to awe the simple with accounts of miracles than to persuade the nobles and the literati that Buddhism was intellectually respectable and that its clergy had led useful, creative, and well disciplined lives.

With this statement Wright imports into the study of medieval Chinese Buddhism the kind of "two-tier model" that Peter Brown saw in the scholarship on the history of Christianity and criticized. I argue that we need to dispense with the broad interpretive framework that Wright uses, namely that there is a religion of the masses that is opposed to a religion of the elite, and that we must question Wright's characterization of that elite culture as disdainful of tales of miracles and the supernatural. At the same time we must turn to a careful and detailed consideration of the actual contents of Huijiao's biographical collection. In fact from a careful reading of the collection and related texts a remarkably different picture of Huijiao's view of miracles and miracle workers begin to emerge.

Wright and others relied heavily on Huijiao's preface in their analysis of the

nature of this biographical collection. Calling attention to Huijiao's heavy dependence on Baochang, I suggest that Huijiao's preface may have been a rather tendentious document and that significant gaps may have existed between this preface (including the tenfold scheme of classifying biographies) and the actual content of the work itself. An account of the content of the collection that relies heavily on Huijiao's preface, as is the case with Wright's classic study, needs to be reexamined in the light of studies that focus on individual biographies in the collection rather than the editor's presentation of these biographies.

In the second part of this paper, I argue that Peter Brown's functionalist study of "the holy" and "holy men" in late antiquity in the West offers us some useful insights that might lead us to a very different approach to the study of Chinese "Biographies of Eminent Monks." I attempted to illustrate this approach by discussing the biography of Tanchao (419 - 492), which is found in the "meditation masters" section of Huijiao's collection. I attempt a functionalist reading of Tanchao's life here, suggesting that one of its main concerns was the preservation of the order of society. Tanchao mediated between the villagers in this world and the dragons who rule in the other world. The rain miracle story that constitutes the main part of the story told in this biography does not deny the basic structure of dual hierarchies in which the worldly hierarchy is implicitly supported by an other worldly hierarchy. The situation that necessitated Tanchao's intervention was a malfunctioning or disorder of this structure. It was by accident that people disturbed the dragon's residence. When the dragons were infuriated and made an oath to stop the rain, a monk, who was an outsider and had a reputation for extraordinary spiritual power that reached even to the gods, had to be brought in. Only after the monk had succeeded in converting the dragons to Buddhism could the dragons be persuaded to abandon their oath and bring down rain. I suggest further that the story of Tanchao's miraculous feat at Mt. Lingyin, with its emphasis on converting local dragons, could also be read as a story that describes how Buddhism came to be accepted locally in an area that was not very far from the capital.

Keywords : 1.Huijiao (Hui-chiao). 2.Biographies of Eminent Monks (Gaoseng zhuan). 3.Arthur Wright. 4.Peter Brown. 5.Tanchao

1. Huijiao's Biographies of Eminent Monks

In this paper I should like to propose a new direction for examining the standard Chinese Buddhist biographical collections, based on my reading of Peter Brown's various writings on "holy men" in Late Antiquity. I should like to suggest that a reading of Peter Brown's work can offer a number of fruitful insights that might well be applied to the study of Chinese Buddhist biographies, and beyond the biographies to a study of the function of the monk in Chinese society. To begin with I offer some brief critical reflections on current scholarship on these biographies.

Arthur Wright's well-known article on Huijiao's Biographies of Eminent Monks originally published in 1954, is still frequently cited today as the standard reference work on this collection of the biographies of early Chinese Buddhist monks. [1] This influential article, however, reflects very clearly its author's pointed understanding of both Chinese civilization and the nature and position of Buddhism within that civilization. For this reason any discussion of its contribution must first consider some of its basic underlying assumptions. [2] As I began to work on medieval Chinese Buddhist biographies, I noticed certain basic, and I believe problematic, assumptions in Wright's study, and consequently became sceptical about Wright's account of Huijiao's collection.

The following statement is typical of Wright's discussion:

He (Huijiao) was less concerned to awe the simple with accounts of miracles than to persuade the nobles and the literati that Buddhism was intellectually respectable and that its clergy had led useful, creative, and well disciplined lives. (386.)

In this statement, Wright imports into the study of medieval Chinese Buddhism the kind of "two-tier model" that Peter Brown has criticized extensively. [3] Huijiao's treatment of miracles is then explained in terms of that basic model. Miracle stories "awe the simple", but are not "intellectually respectable" for "the nobles and the literati".

In the context in which he makes the above statement Wright asserts that Huijiao, "who was steeped in Chinese historiographical tradition", was trying to write "a work within that tradition, one that would meet the prevailing standards for secular literary and historical writing." Wright "ventures to suggest" that Huijiao's adoption of the conventions of secular historical writing "was motivated by a desire — conscious or unconscious — to rescue Buddhist biography from the limbo of the exotic, the bizarre, and give to the lives of the monks a place of honour in the cultural history of China. In short, one of his motives.....was to advance the naturalization of monks and monasticism in Chinese history and society. "(385). Wright goes on to contrast Huijiao's biographies with "hagiographies" of the great figures of the Indian tradition and what he calls the "popular Chinese literary genre.....whose highly colored stories

were intended to entertain, with "morals" thrown in for those with a taste for them" (386).

I would like to argue that we need to dispense with the broad interpretive framework that Wright is using, namely that there is a religion of the masses that is opposed to a religion of the elite, and that we must question Wright's characterization of that elite culture as disdainful of tales of miracles and the supernatural. At the same time we must turn to a careful and detailed consideration of the actual contents of Huijiao's biography collection. In fact from a careful reading of the collection and related texts a remarkably different picture of Huijiao's view of miracles and miracle workers begins to emerge, as the following comments make clear.

- a) In his tenfold classification of biographies Huijiao placed the category of "miracle workers" (or "wonder workers"?, shenyi) in the third position: the opening section on translators is followed by the large and central section on

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exegetes; the section of miracle workers is placed immediately after this section, preceding the sections on meditation masters and vinaya specialists. In the two later biographies of eminent monks collections modeled after Huijiao's collection, the title given to the miracle workers section is modified and becomes "cosmic response" (gantong), a term that harmonized better with contemporary Chinese Buddhist scholasticism. In these later collections the section was also placed in a lower position: the section of translators was followed by one on exegetes, meditation masters, vinaya specialists, and defenders of the teaching, and only then by the section on miracle workers. I am inclined to interpret these changes as indications that later compilers of Biographies of Eminent Monks felt that Huijiao had actually placed excessive and undue emphasis on miracle workers. This is actually a somewhat surprising situation, since Daoxuan, who introduced these changes, was himself keenly interested in miracle stories and compiled a comprehensive collection of miracle stories toward the end of his life.

- b) In these collections each of the ten sections concludes with comments by the compiler about the nature of the categories of monks whose biographies make up these sections "Lun yue....." Huijiao's comments on "miracle workers" culminate in a defense of the extraordinary feats described in the biographies of the monks he included in this section (395ab).
- c) In his preface (or postscript, in the form in which the collection is reproduced in the Taisho collection) Huijiao lists a number of sources that he consulted in compiling the collection. This list includes several works that were obviously collections of miracle stories. The majority of these works consulted by Huijiao are now lost, but many fragments, particularly of miracle story collections, have been preserved in a medieval Buddhist encyclopedia, the Fa yuan zhulin or The Jade Forest in the Garden of Buddhist Teachings. In an earlier study I collected these fragments and compared them with the corresponding passages in Huijiao's biographies. The result was striking.^[4]Huijiao often edited and rephrased the passages describing miracles, but he also carefully

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preserved the details of the miracle stories he used. In some cases miracle stories about famous monks that were found in independent miracle story collections were inserted into larger biographies that he copied from other sources that were less interested in miracle stories. This practice might confirm Wright's view that Huijiao was a good historian who collected information from a wide range of sources and paid attention to details of the accounts in the source he used. But it also indicates that Huijiao collected miracle stories diligently and used them liberally in compiling his Biographies of Eminent Monks.

My observations on Huijiao's use of earlier miracle story collections has led me to conclude that Huijiao was in fact deeply interested in miracle stories. I believe furthermore that, contrary to Wright's general assumption, members of the literati group in medieval China were also themselves quite interested in miracle stories. A rich tradition of miracle story collections existed by the time Huijiao produced his biography collection; indeed, interest in these stories was so great that a number of compilations of miracle stories were in circulation when Huijiao went to compile his collection of biographies.

Beyond just proposing that Wright's understanding of Huijiao's attitude towards miracles needs to be questioned, I should also like to raise the issue of Huijiao as the model historian. I have become increasingly sceptical about the commonly held view that Huijiao was a great historian. One important work that Huijiao used in compiling his collection is something called Biographies of Famous Monks compiled by Baochang during the period 510 to 513. [5] This was a large collection consisting of 30 fascicles. Baochang was a disciple of Sengyou (445~518), arguably the most important figure in early Chinese Buddhist historiography, who compiled several collections of historical documents. Since Huijiao appears to have completed his collection around 530 or 531, he must have been at work on his collection of monks' biographies at a time when the large collection compiled by Baochang already existed. Baochang's collection has disappeared, probably due to the popularity of Huijiao's later collection; and only parts of Baochang's collection are now known through a summary that a Japanese monk Sōshō

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produced during the Kamakura period. [6] Yet, a comparison of the fragments preserved in Sōshō's summary and the corresponding passages in Huijiao's collection indicates that Huijiao was heavily indebted to Baochang's collection. An overwhelming majority of the monks whose biographies are found in Huijiao's collection appear to have had biographies in Baochang's collection. In cases where Baochang's biographies are preserved in Sōshō's summary, Huijiao turns out to have reproduced intact the biographies Baochang prepared with only relatively minor editorial revisions. Even Arthur Wright noted this close relationship between Huijiao and Baochang, without, however, drawing what appears to me to be a natural conclusion: the credit for compiling the first extensive collection of the biographies of early Chinese monks should go to Baochang and not to Huijiao at all ! [7]

In spite of the extensive reliance on Baochang's collection Huijiao does not mention Baochang's work in the long list of his sources in the preface/postscript. Furthermore, in one widely quoted passage Huijiao states that his was a collection of "eminent" monks rather than "famous" monks (419a24 ~ 27). "Eminence" here is self-consciously contrasted with "fame", a kind of temporary and vacuous success. Huijiao is here indirectly but obviously referring to Baochang's collection which bore the title *Biographies of Famous Monks*. Having determined Huijiao's close reliance on Baochang's work, I can no longer read this high-minded declaration about the nature of his collection at its face value. This passage is a covert and I would argue quite unfair dig at Baochang's work, which Huijiao had used very closely.

Both Arthur Wright and Makita Tairyô, who wrote an authoritative article on Huijiao's collection in Japanese, based their discussions of Huijiao's biographical collection on Huijiao's preface and on the biography of Huijiao that is found in Daoxuan's *Further Biographies of Eminent Monks*. In Wright's and Makita's discussions Huijiao is seen as a great historian who adapted the well established conventions of Chinese historiography to the task at hand and produced a remarkable history of Chinese Buddhism written as a biographical collection. To

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illustrate this, both Wright and Makita devote considerable attention to the ten categories that Huijiao used in classifying his biographies. As I began to see Huijiao's preface as a rather tendentious document that covers up its author's overwhelming indebtedness to Baochang's existing collection, I have also become aware of the possibility that authors such as Wright and Makita may have been unfortunately misled by their uncritical reliance on Huijiao's preface.

In my opinion not only did modern authors such as Wright bring unwarranted assumptions to their reading of Huijiao's collection; they also missed the fact that significant gaps appear to exist between Huijiao's self-presentation and his comments on the nature of his work on the one hand and the actual contents of the work itself, on the other hand. As in the case of the study of Huijiao's attitude toward miracles, we need to put aside a framework imposed on the collection, this time one imposed on it by Huijiao himself, and turn to its contents directly. A careful reexamination of the contents of the collection in fact produces a very different understanding of the nature of this collection.

I became aware, for example, that the framework of a collection called *Biographies of Eminent Monks* that divides the "biographies" into ten categories has the ultimate effect of homogenizing what are extremely diverse stories told about very different types of monks that are included in the collection, merely by grouping certain accounts together and them juxtaposing them with the other groups. *Biographies of well-known monks* which were based on stupa or tomb inscriptions dominate certain categories, while in other categories the biographies seem to consist largely of miracle stories, often about relatively obscure monks, about whom little else might have been known. But these miracle story biographies, forming as they sometimes appear to do the substance of some of the independent categories of biographies, were then given the same status as the biographies in the other categories that were actually very different in nature. Miracle stories have become a species of *Biographies of Eminent*

Monks, and in this way we are asked to read them not just as familiar miracle stories: we are asked to read them as biographies that are virtually indistinguishable from other biographies that have very different origins and characteristics.

The categories in fact help to construct a notion of what it means to be an eminent monk. Yet, the ten categories used to classify diverse biographies

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sometimes appear to have been imposed on the biographies artificially; sometimes the choice of the category for a given biography does not seem to be unambiguously dictated either by the contents of the biographies or the self-understanding of their subjects. Nevertheless, the category justifies and explains the choice of the monk as an example of an eminent monk and the inclusion of his biography into the collection.

Existing scholarship on Huijiao's collection that focuses on his preface and the organization of the collection tends to underestimate the diversity of the actual contents of the collection and just how artificial the categories are. A different strategy that emphasizes the contents of the collection as a whole inevitably leads us to a very different understanding of the nature of Huijiao's collection, and in fact that of the entire tradition of the Biographies of Eminent Monks collections in medieval China. What we find in these collections is not so much a set of standardized biographies but rather a massive and diverse collection of historical facts and stories about monks. Read in its entirety the collection does not readily form a coherent whole; the framework that Huijiao imposed on it only gives it an appearance of such coherence.

The study of the Biographies of Eminent Monks has so far been carried on for the most part by positivistically minded historians. These scholars have used the work as their principal source for constructing a modern critical history of early Chinese Buddhism and have therefore tended to dismiss passages describing miracles and other legendary stories simply as unreliable sources for their historical reconstructions. Yet, miracles and legendary stories played important roles in early Chinese Buddhism. As such they are themselves an important part of this "historical" reality. As our understanding of the contents of the Biographies of Eminent Monks changes and we no longer regard the collection as a harmonious and systematic collection of biographies but see it instead as a diverse collection of stories about monks, we will also have to readjust our view about the nature of the kind of "history" that we are attempting to write. It is here that I wish to suggest that Peter Brown's theoretical reflections scattered throughout his stimulating writings about Late Antiquity may be particularly helpful to us.

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2.The Holy Man in medieval Chinese Buddhism

Though this may not be palatable to some of my colleagues in religious studies, I would like to begin my discussion here by pointing out that in discussing Brown's views in a broader comparative context it would be a mistake to focus on "holy men" as a religious type.^[8] It would be a mistake to begin our discussion by looking for "holy men" in Chinese Buddhism. Instead I propose that we focus our attention on the way Brown formulates his questions as he approaches the topic of "holy men." ^[9]

Brown talks about the "idea of the holy" (175), "the loci of the holy" (176), and the "function" of the holy men. I found the following paragraph particularly intriguing:

Unlike paganism and much of Judaism, the Christian communities were prepared to invest individual human beings with supernatural powers or with the ability to exercise power on behalf of the supernatural. It was as precisely identifiable bearers of the holy, and as the heirs of an imagined genealogy of similar bearers of the holy — apostles, martyrs,

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prophets — that the Christian leaders were able to form the Christian communities. The groups that took up a stance to the society and culture of their times were formed around known and revered loci of the holy.....and these loci tended to be human beings. As the rabbis told Justin martyr: "but as for you, who have forsaken God and put your trust in a man, what salvation can await you?" (176)

Brown then continues to compare the developments in Western and Eastern Christendom in terms of different attitudes toward the holy: "In the West the precise locus of the supernatural power associated with the holy was fixed with increasing precision" (178); "At the same time, the eastern Church had entered on to what came to strike early medieval western observers as a baffling 'crisis of overproduction' of the holy. More men were accepted as bearers or agents of the supernatural on earth, and in a far greater variety of situations." (179). "The rise and function of the holy man in the sixth-century eastern Mediterranean as revealed in the work of John of Ephesus stands in marked contrast to the world of religious experiences — mainly crystallized around relics — revealed in the works of John's contemporary, Gregory of Tours." (182).

Furthermore, describing the eastern Mediterranean world, "The holy escaped social definition — or, rather, its absence of social definition became intelligible — because it was thought of principally as a power that "manifested" itself in a manner that was as vivid as it was discontinuous with normal human expectations." (182) "Sanctity, for East Romans, always bordered on the paradoxical. For what we have are men with "reputation of power"; yet this power was thought to have been drawn from outside any apparent nick in the power-structure of society. " (183~184). In contrast, "The holy, in the West, could be defined as it was in the east, in terms of a stark discontinuity between the human and the non-human..... And yet this discontinuous holy is deeply inserted into human society. In the most poker-faced and unparadoxical manner it makes clear who has received grace in its sight and who has

not.....I would risk the suggestion that these phenomena reveal a mentality where the holy plays a more permanent role in law and in politics than it would ever play in East Rome."(192). "Byzantine society could take the strain of life on its own, frankly

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secular, terms. Ringed, in the early Middle Ages, on one side by Islam, where religion and law fused, and on the other by a Western Europe, where religion blew through gaping cracks in the structure of society, Byzantines could keep the holy where they needed it — in so doing, they preserved a vital part of its meaning — it was an unexpected wellspring of delight in the scorching summer of Mediterranean life" (195).

In his discussion of Byzantine holy men Brown develops this basic viewpoint into a stimulating disussion of the manner in which holy men "functioned" as "objective mediators" (132). Brown's discussion of Byzantine holy men is guided by a powerful Durkheimian vision: the sacred, or the holy, functions to integrate society. Brown developed this "functionalist" insight, whose principal weakness is often said to be its inability to explain changes adequately, into a stimulating account of the transformation of late antiquity into early medieval society.

Does this challenging reading of the "biographies" of Byzantine holy men help us in reading biographies of medieval Chinese Buddhist monks? Were these monks seen as the "locus of the supernatural power"? And if so how did they "function" to integrate society? How did the particular way in which the locus of supernatural power, or the holy, was conceived in medieval Chinese Buddhism affect the way in which the Buddhist community there developed and shaped the entirety of Chinese civilization? These are certainly important and provocative questions, and we will benefit from details of Brown's discussion as we pursue these questions concretely. I find this to be a compelling project, but one that would demand breadth and maturity of scholarship well beyond my reach at the present time. What I should like to do here is to illustrate the kind of analysis that such a study might entail with a small and perhaps peripheral example.

As I noted in discussing Huijiao's Biographies of Eminent Monks miracle stories are scattered widely in all categories of the biographies contained in this work. This seems to indicate, that at least as far as Huijiao was concerned, these monks were almost invariably seen as bearers of the holy and possessors of supernatural powers. When, for example, we are told that the learned monk Huiyuan struck the ground at Mt.Lu, and caused a spring to open at the site where he planned to build a temple, he is certainly described as a human locus of supernatural power. This story is immediately followed by another that describes

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how Huiyuan put an end to a drought by reciting the Dragon King Scripture (358a). [10]The "crisis of the overproduction of the holy" that Peter Brown notes was also an important issue in medieval Chinese Buddhism. In another study I am examining how at the beginning of the 7th century when relics were distributed throughout the empire, the monks who took these relics to their destinations were pressured to report on the miracles that occurred as the relics were lowered into the stupa. Details of the relic distribution and the miracles reported are incorporated in a large number of biographies collected in Daoxuan's Further Biographies of Eminent Monks a work that was compiled after the model first established by Huijiao.[11]I would now like to give an example of a biography in which we might well see the monk as an outside figure that contributed to maintaining the order of the society, also following Peter Brown's lead.

I will begin my discussion with a summary/translation of a short biography: the biography of Tanchao (419~492) that is found toward the end of the section on "meditation masters" in Huijiao's collection(400ab). Though Baochang's biography of this monk is now lost, Soshō's summary of Baochang's collection indicates that Tanchao was the subject of the 29th biography in the "Chinese meditation masters" section in this collection (fascicle 20, 3Bb). It would be safe to assume that Huijiao's biography of this monk was for the most part based on the biography Baochang used in his collection.

Monk Tanchao was tall and impressive in appearance; he was a strict vegetarian and wore simple clothing. At first he resided at the Longhuasi, or Dragon Flower temple, in the capital city [Jiankang of the Song dynasty, 420~479]; in the year 453 he went southward to Shixing on a sight-seeing trip. He spent nights alone under trees, but he was not harmed by tigers nor by wild buffaloes. Sometime during the Daming period (457~465) he returned to the

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capital city. After Emperor Gao of the Qi dynasty (479~502) established the new dynasty, he was ordered to go to Liaodong [to the north outside of the territory of the new dynasty] to promote meditation. He stayed there for two years and returned to the capital city in 482.

Then he unexpectedly went to Mt. Lingyin in Qiantang. Every time he practiced meditation, he did not come out of his meditative state for many days. Sometime later he unexpectedly heard the sound of wind and thunder. Suddenly a man holding a tablet appeared in front of him, announcing the appearance of a noble person. Soon another man appeared. He was extremely handsome and accompanied by lines of soldiers decorated with feathers. This man sat down on a low seat and paid his respects to the monk; he then said, "I, a disciple, reside in a place seven miles away. The realm under my responsibility includes this present place. I heard that the dharma master has come here, and for that reason I came here to pay my proper respects. Last winter people at the Fuyang District dug at the foot of Mt. Lu (?) to collect clay for baking tiles and disturbed the ground around the dragons' residence. The dragons

were infuriated and decided to stop the rain for 300 days. Today over 100 days have passed. Wells and ponds have dried up; the crops that were planted in the fields are long gone. You, 'the dharma master', have the spiritual power that reaches the gods. If you plead to put an end to this situation caused by an event in the past, your conduct will surely have cosmic effects. The rain will come and will benefit the multitude of people."

Tanchao replied, "You, 'the patron of the monastic community', have the power to cause clouds to rise and bring down rain. How could I, a monk, do that? "The god said, "Those in my division are capable only of causing clouds to rise. We cannot cause rain to fall. This is why I have made this request. "In the end Tanchao acceded to the request. The god immediately disappeared.

Tanchao then travelled southward, and after five days reached Mt. Chiting. From a distance he uttered spells for the dragons and preached on the Buddhist teaching. In the evening numerous dragons took on human form and presented themselves to Tanchao to pay respects to him. Tanchao preached further. Consequently, the dragons begged him to allow them to take the Three Refuges. They declared themselves to be dragons. When Tanchao asked them to cause

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rain to fall, they looked at each other but did not say anything.

During the night they came again to Tanchao in a dream and said, "Originally, we were infuriated, and therefore made the oath. You, 'the dharma master', have guided us to a life of good conduct. We do not dare to disobey your order. At meal time tomorrow rain will fall."

The next morning Tanchao went to the Linqiansi or "Facing the Spring" Temple. He sent a man to the District Magistrate, telling him to arrange a boat to be sent out into the Jiang river and the Dragon King Scripture to be recited on that boat. The District Magistrate asked the monk to go out in the boat himself. When he finished reciting the scripture, heavy rain came. Everyone, on every level of society, was satisfied, and the year's harvest was plentiful. Tanchao died in 492 at age 74. (400ab)

As I read this biography, one of its major concerns seems to be the preservation of the order of society. Tanchao is not a "mediator" in the same sense as in Peter Brown's analysis of Byzantine "holy men"; he mediates between the villagers in this world and the dragons who rule in the other world, and not between villagers. Nevertheless the Buddhist monk, a master of meditation and a kind of "holy man" is also called upon to secure the basic structure of society.

The story makes repeated references to worldly and otherworldly hierarchies. The worldly hierarchy, represented here by the Founding Emperor of the new Qi dynasty and the local official ("District Magistrate"), appears to be mirrored in the corresponding hierarchy of gods. The concerns of these two hierarchies overlap with each other. The emperor has the authority to send monks on missionary assignments to teach meditation; a local magistrate is obviously concerned about the drought and is willing to have a boat sent out into the river and a scripture recited from the boat.

The impressive deity who visited Tanchao is informed about the human conduct that had angered the dragons and caused the drought; although he is concerned about the drought, however, he and his retinue of gods can only make the clouds rise. They cannot cause rain to fall, for it is the dragons that control the rain.

The rain miracle story that constitutes the main part of Tanchao's biography in the *Biographies of Eminent Monks* collection does not deny this basic structure of dual hierarchies in which the worldly hierarchy is implicitly supported by an

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other-worldly hierarchy. The situation that necessitated Tanchao's intervention was a malfunctioning or disorder of this structure. It was by accident that people disturbed the dragons' residence. When the dragons were infuriated and made an oath to stop the rain, a monk, who was an outsider and had a reputation for extraordinary spiritual power that reached even to gods, had to be brought in. Only after the monk had succeeded in converting the dragons to Buddhism could the dragons be persuaded to abandon their oath and bring down rain.

Stories about encounters between Buddhist monks and beings of the other world (gods, mountain gods, ghosts, dragons, etc.) are found frequently in Huijiao's collection as well as in later collections of the *Biographies of Eminent Monks* series. I am inclined to interpret these stories as stories connected with missionary works carried out by Buddhist monks, a point to which I shall return below. Monks in these stories succeed in establishing Buddhist centers by converting local deities. The situation appears to have been somewhat analogous to that of winning the support of secular rulers and government officials. What monks win from secular rulers and officials is patronage; what Tanchao obtains after converting the dragons was their obedience. Tanchao does not challenge the dragons' control over rain. Once the monks' supernatural power was reconized, representatives of this-worldly and other-worldly hierarchies are free to come to them for help when the normal course of events has been disturbed by accident.

Focusing our attention on this basic pattern, which appears to be found frequently in stories about the exercise of supernatural power by Buddhist monks in medieval China, I want to try to speculate about the "function" of these monks, in a way similar to that in which Peter Brown has described the function of "holy men" in Byzantine culture. I would like to suggest that in the Chinese case, the monks might have helped to maintain the social order by providing what was understood to be emergency solutions to the crises that arose from its malfunctioning. Under normal circumstances the virtue of the officials of this world and the power of officials in the other world, that included creatures like dragons, are believed to make certain that everything worked smoothly — for example, that rains came at the appropriate time. Unpredictable occurrences such as drought threaten the society by undermining the credibility of this entire

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symbolic order. This was the moment for Buddhist monks to step in: Buddhist monks were then requested to perform their "rain magic". We can imagine that the risks

might not have been very high for either the monks concerned or for the members of local society. Monks were brought in from the outside. If the rain failed to come, they could simply return, or made to return, to where they came from. The credibility of the local order was also not likely to have been affected further by this failure. If the rain in fact came, as invariably it does in the monks' biographies, the credibility of the local order would have been restored, and, in fact, strengthened by incorporating the role of the monk into the order itself.

This speculative analysis of the role of Buddhist monks would suggest that there must have been constant demand for supernatural feats by Buddhist monks. It is in the nature of things that many events of diverse kinds threaten the order of this world in a way similar to drought; people must have been tempted to turn to Buddhist monks to neutralize the challenges that these events presented. Buddhist monks appear to have responded to these requests as they expanded their influences in rural and mountainous areas outside of major cities. A pressure for the "overproduction of the holy", to return to Peter Brown's language, might have resulted from this.

In theory there was no inherent reason that indicates that Buddhist monks alone were capable of performing this function, and I assume that appeals to other religious figures were also made frequently. It might be important, however, to remember that Buddhism was a foreign religion, and Buddhist monks came to local communities from "outside", particularly during the time when Buddhism was beginning to penetrate local communities in medieval China. As the "outsiders" par excellence they might have had a particularly strong appeal in this regard. More detailed descriptions of other-worldly hierarchies often appear in Daoist sources. With a closer relationship to local deities, who formed part of the local other-worldly hierarchy, Daoist priests might have been less suited to perform the function that we are attributing to Buddhist monks here.

As I noted above I also read the story of Tanchao as a story about the spread of Buddhism, and in support of this reading I consider some of the geographical information given in the story. In the table of contents that is attached at the end

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of the Taisho edition of Huijiao's collection Tanchao is identified as a monk at Mt. Lingyin in Qiantang (421b17).^[12] But in the table of contents that Soshō reproduced of Baochang's collection Tanchao is identified as a monk at the Longhuasi temple. Moreover, Huijiao mentions explicitly that Tanchao was affiliated with the Longhuasi temple in the capital city and that he kept returning to the capital over and over again. As we noted above, Huijiao also notes explicitly that when the rule of the new Qi dynasty began, Tanchao was sent to Liaodong to engage in missionary activities. Tanchao was a monk who frequently moved between the flourishing Buddhist temples in the capital city and areas near and far where Buddhism was not as securely established.

With this in mind it seems natural to read the story of Tanchao's miraculous feat at Mt. Lingyin, with its emphasis on converting local dragons, as a story that describes how Buddhism came to be accepted locally in an area that was not very far from the capital. This story of Tanchao's feat at Mt. Lingyin forms a coherent whole by itself; it

probably first circulated as an independent miracle story rather than as a part of a biography. At some later point this miracle story was incorporated into the biography of Tanchao, who must have been fairly well known as a monk in the Longhuasi temple in the capital city. Or it might be more accurate to say that the miracle story was transformed into a biography by adding a short introductory paragraph, and a sentence at the end giving the date of his death and his age.

The name Qiantang appears in the annal of the Founding Emperor of Qin dynasty in Sima Qian's Book of History completed around 90 B.C. [13] In 907 Qian Liu founded the kingdom of Wuyue with the capital in Hangzhou; this kingdom came to be known for its generous support of Buddhism. Later in 1127 the Song dynasty lost its Northern capital and moved its capital to this same city, which was then called Lin'an. Thus, in later years this area became an important center of Buddhism in South China.

In spite of its early origin and later renown as a major Buddhist center, Huijiao's collection contains only two biographies that mention this location: the
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above mentioned biography of Tanchao and that of Huiji, who was born in 412, seven years before Tanchao, and died in 496, four years after him (379ab). In his biography Huiji is said to have been originally from Qiantang, and after his teacher Huiyi (372~444) of the Zhiyuansi died in the capital city Jiankang of the Liu Song dynasty in the year 444, he left the city and stopped at the Xianmingsi temple in Qiantang on his way to Kuaiji and elsewhere. He then became a major figure, establishing new temples and giving lectures, and was later appointed as the head of the Buddhist communities in ten cities in the area. The name of Mt. Lingyin or the temple in that mountain is not mentioned in this biography.

In the Korean edition of Huijiao's collection reproduced in the Taisho collection, the name of the mountain where Tanchao meditated and experienced a miraculous encounter is given as Mt. Lingyuan.[14] The name is given as Mt. Lingyin in three other important versions consulted by the editor of the Taisho collection, and here I tentatively followed this variant reading. The famous Lingyinsi temple, closed down during the persecution of Buddhism in Huichang period (841 ~ 846), was reestablished under the last ruler of the Wuyue kingdom and prospered during the Southern Song period.

The Universal History of Buddhism (Fozu tongji) completed by Zhipan in 1269 mentions that the temple at Mt. Lingyin is said to have been founded by an Indian monk Zhu Huili in the year 326 (339c). I am inclined to believe that this information given in a source dating from a time when the temple and its location had become a major center of Buddhism is probably a piece of later fabrication, and that at the time Tanchao is said to have visited Mt. Lingyin it was a rather obscure place, which may well have been left untouched by Buddhist missionaries active in the area. The miracle story indicates that Tanchao stayed at Mt. Lingyin for a period of time, practicing meditation. It does not mention a temple on the mountain nor any permanent residence where he might have stayed.

Tanchao is then said to have gone to Mt. Chiting, located at a distance of five days travel from Mt. Lingyin, and from there he is said to have visited the

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Linquansi temple to have a boat sent out onto the river and the scripture recited. I have so far not succeeded in identifying the location of Mt. Chiting; the place appears to have been associated with a dragon cult.

The characterization of Tanchao as a monk at Mt. Lingyin in the table of contents attached to Huijiao's collection appears to imply that Tanchao became a mountain monk, establishing a permanent residence at Mt. Lingyin and ending his life there. But neither the biography as a whole nor the miracle story indicates unambiguously that this was the case. If we take the miracle story about dragons as originally a separate story that was later incorporated or transformed into this biography, it will be more natural to assume that Tanchao's stay at Mt. Lingyin was of a limited duration; he may have left behind him a new Buddhist center there, or possibly strengthened the Buddhist community that already existed there. In either case I am inclined to read the miracle story as a story about the penetration of Buddhism into local communities outside of major urban centers in South China.

This line of speculation points to a larger framework for an examination of the biographies in Huijiao's collection. When the ruling Jin dynasty lost its northern capital in Chang'an in the year 316, a large part of the Chinese aristocracy moved southward to Jiankang, or the present day Nanjing. In the South Buddhism became fashionable at the court and among members of the aristocracy. New temples were built and Buddhist communities were established in rapidly developing centers of power and wealth in south China. E. Zürcher named this phenomenon "gentry Buddhism" and made it the subject of his masterful work, *The Buddhist Conquest of China* first published in 1957.

Both Baochang and Huijiao lived and worked under the Liang dynasty, known for its pro-Buddhist policies, particularly under the famous Emperor Wu (reign: 502~549). The first massive collections of biographies of Chinese monks were thus produced in the South, and shows a greater familiarity with the situation of Buddhism there. It might be revealing to examine Huijiao's collection with some emphasis on the biographies of monks who lived in the South, paying special attention to the manner in which these biographies reflect the gradual spread of Buddhism from urban areas to less populated rural areas and monastic centers in mountains. Such an investigation, looking closely around

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the edges of Zürcher's "gentry Buddhism", might result in a rather different picture of the Buddhist Conquest of China. But I am here running way ahead of myself. In order to carry out this project properly I will have to learn a great deal more about the dramatic changes that took place both in the cities and rural villages between the 4th to 6th century. Our discussion of the loci and function of the "holy" based on a study of carefully chosen biographies from Huijiao's collection could then proceed to a broader investigation of the dynamics of medieval Chinese society.

In any case, it would owe a great debt to Peter Brown's work on late antiquity, and to his powerful insights that holy men function in society in certain ways as that society is undergoing significant change. It is there that I believe we need to focus our attention — on the underlying principles of Peter Brown's investigation, looking closely at medieval China itself, rather than on any comparison between Chinese and Western holy men as discrete and comparable categories.

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LIST OF CHARACTERS

Baocharlg 寶唱	chiting 赤亭
Chu sanzang ji ji 出三藏記集	Daming 大明
Daoxuan 道宣	Fayuan zhulin 法苑珠林
Fozu tongji 佛祖統紀	Fuyang 富陽
gantong 感通	Gao 高
Hangzhou 杭州	Huichang 會昌
Huiji 慧基	Huijiao 慧皎
Huiyi 慧義	Hyiyuan 慧遠
Jiang 江	Jiankang 建康
Kōsōderl no sekitsu (jō, ge) 高僧傳 成立	kuaiji 會稽
Liaodong 遼東	Lingyin 靈隱
Lingyuan 靈苑	Linquansi 臨泉寺
Longhuasi 龍華寺	Lun yue 論日
Makita Tairyō 牧田諦亮	Meisōdenshō 名僧傳抄
Mingxiangji 冥祥記	Qian Liu 錢繆
Qiantang 錢塘	Sengyou 僧祐
shenyi 神異	shiji 史記
Shixing 始興	Sima Qian 司馬遷
Sōshō 宗性	Tanchao 曇超
Wu 武	Wuyue 吳越
Xianmingsi 顯明寺	Zhipan 志磐
Zhiyuansi 祇洹寺	Zhu Huili 竺慧理

《高僧傳》的比較研究：中古中國佛教聖僧的功能

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提要

在本論文中，作者提出一個解讀慧皎《高僧傳》的新方向。首先針對亞瑟·賴特的力作《傳記與聖賢傳：慧峻的高僧傳》，提出討論和批評。有關慧皎對於神異事蹟的態度，我與賴特的看法並不相同；賴特認為，慧皎「比較不想、以神異的描述來讓普通人畏敬，比較注重說服貴族和知識分子，讓他們相信佛教的學理淵深值得尊敬，佛教僧但也過著濟世的、有創發性的、戒律嚴謹的生活。」因此，賴特就引用彼得·布朗在研究基督教史所使用和所批評的「雙層模式」，來研究中世紀的中國佛教。我主張我們必須放棄賴特所使用的廣泛闡釋架構：相對於精英分子的宗教，另有一種廣大庶民的宗教。我也主張我們必須質疑賴特對於那種精英文化的看法：鄙視神異故事和神通。同時，我們必須仔細而深入地探討慧皎《高僧傳》的實際內容。事實上，只要我們仔細研究《高僧傳》和相關典籍，就可以發現慧皎對於神異事蹟和神異僧的看法，絕非如賴特所說。

賴特和其他人在分析慧皎《高僧傳》的內容時，大都依據慧峻的序。我提醒大家注意慧峻的觀點主要來自寶唱，因此我認為慧皎序別有目的，而且在序（包括把傳記分成十科）和內文之間可能存有相當大的差距。對於慧皎《高僧傳》內容的研究，如果以他的序為主要論點（就像賴特的古典研究一樣），就必須重新給以檢驗，我們應該把重點放在個別的傳記之上，而非編輯者對於這些傳記的觀點。

在本論文的第二部分，我認為彼得·布朗在研究西方近古時期的「神」和「聖者」時所採用的功能主義方法，可以提供給我們在研究中國《高僧傳》時的借鏡，也許會讓我們發現一片新天地。我當試以討論〈習禪科〉的曇超（419~492）傳，來說明這種研究方法。我試著以功能主義的觀點來解讀曇超的生平，認為維持社會秩序是〈曇超傳〉的主要關注點之一。曇超在此世界的村民和統治彼世界的龍之間坐禪。下雨的神異故事，構成傳中的主要部分，並不否認此世界與彼世界的基本結構，在這個結構中，此世界隱約受到彼世界的支持。當這個結構的運作不良或脫序時，便需要曇超的介入。

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人們在無意中擾亂到龍宮，激怒了龍，使得龍因忿立誓要停止下雨，這時候就必須請來局外人的禪師，他以特殊神通力聞名，甚至可以與天神交往。一直要等到這位禪師降服龍皈依佛教之後，龍才肯收回咒誓，把雨降下來。我進一步認為，曇超在靈苑山的示現神通（重點在降服當地的龍皈依），也可以解讀為描述佛教如何在離京城不太遠的地區被當地人所接受。

[1] "Biography and Hagiography: Hui-chiao's Lives of Eminent Monks", Silver Jubilee volume of the *Jimbun Kagaku Kenkyusyo*, Kyoto University, Kyoto, 1954, pp. 383~432.

[2] Some of these limitations are shared in the more recent and more sophisticated study by Makita Tairyō, *Kosoden no seiritsujo*, and *Kosoden no seiritsuge* in *Tohogakuho* (Kyoto), 44(1973), pp.101~125 and 48 (1975), pp. 229~259.

[3] Peter Brown, *Society and the Holy in Later Antiquity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford, 1982), particularly in pp. 8~13.

[4] "Two Sources of Chinese Buddhist Biographies: Stupa Inscriptions and Miracle Stories", *Monks and Magicians Religious Biographies in Asia* (Oakville, Ontario, 1988), pp. 119~228.

[5] Baochang's biography is found in *Further Biographies of Eminent Monks* pp.426b~427c.

[6] "Meisōdeshō", *Xu zangjing* vol. 134, pp. 1~17B.

[7] "Biography and Hagiography", pp.408~412.

[8] As an example of a study that compares Byzantine and Medieval Chinese Buddhist "holy men", see Samuel N. C. Lieu, "The Holy Man and their Biographers in Early Byzantium and Medieval China", *Maistor: Classical Byzantine and Renaissance Studies for Robert Browning*, edited by Ann Moffat (Canberra, 1984), 113~147. The original version of my paper was prepared as a response to Prof. Lieu's paper at a Departmental Colloquium that was held at McMaster University in January.

[9] I found the articles in *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* most helpful in acquainting myself with the theoretical insights of his large and learned body of work. The passages from Peter Brown quoted below have been taken from this work. See also *The Cult of the Saints Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1981) and *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978). For a lengthy review of the *The Cult of the Saints* see Jacques Fontaine, "Le culte des saints et ses implications sociologique: reflections sur un recent essai de Peter Brown", *Analecta Bollandiana* 100 (1982), pp. 17~41.

[10] I discussed this passage in the "Two Sources of Chinese Buddhist Biographies", p.141. It was probably Baochang who inserted the miracle stories, taken from the *Mingxiangji* into the well-known biography of Huiyuan that was found in *Sengyou's Chu sanzang ji ji*, 109b~110c.

[11] I am planning to present some of the preliminary findings of this study in a paper to be read at the Medievalist Conference in Kalamazoo, Michigan in May, 1992.

[12] It is possible that this table was prepared by someone other than Huijiao.

[13] Shiji fascicle 6 (Zhonghua shuji edition, vol. 1), p.260.

[14] See "Taisho shinshu daizokyo kando mokuroku" in Hobo somokuroku vol.1, p.539a. The biography is found in vol. 32, p. 875 of the published edition of the the Korean collection.