

## **Addressing the Mind: Developments in the Culture of Confession in Sui-Tang China**

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### **Abstract**

This article addresses the multivalence of confession-repentance practice (*chanhui* 懺悔) in Chinese Buddhism of the sixth and seventh centuries in light of the polemical reformation of repentance practice in Chan texts of the eighth century. Drawing from her research on the Sui-Tang Buddhist site known as Baoshan 寶山 (Treasure Mountain) in present-day Henan, the author first discusses inscribed passages from the *Mahāmāyā-sūtra* (*Mohemoye jing* 摩訶摩耶經) and the *Vinayaviniścaya-Upāliparipṛcchā-sūtra* (*Jueding pini jing* 決定毘尼經), supplemented by verses ascribed to Lingyu 靈裕 (518–605), one of the co-founders of Baoshan. Subsequent sections focus on passages from early Chan texts, tracing shifts in the soteriological rationalization of *chanhui* versus Chan practice. In previous work, the author discussed ways that fifth and sixth-century precepts and repentance liturgies, as well as texts on spiritual causes and remedies for disease, contributed the emergence of a distinctive Chan ideology of practice in the eighth century. In this article, further expanding on connections between repentance ritual, buddha-response, and buddha-nature, the author discusses different modes of confessional “addressing the mind.” Buddhist concern with volition and *kleśa* (deep-seated karmic effects) is also briefly compared with Foucault’s discussion of psychoanalytic confession; the author proposes that what links these disparate confessional modes is the creation of enhanced awareness of the elusiveness of the causal power that shapes the self. Finally, the author proposes that the logic of practice at work in repentance liturgies and Chan anti-liturgical rhetoric is not really so different as it may appear.

### **Keywords:**

Chinese Buddhism, confession-repentance practice, Baoshan, Chan/Zen

## 針對心靈 ——中國隋唐懺悔文化的發展

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### 摘要

本文探討中國佛教的懺悔實踐，從六至七世紀的廣泛流行到八世紀禪宗文獻中的論證改革的轉型。作者依據對隋唐佛教聖地寶山（在今之河南）的研究，首先討論石刻《摩訶摩耶經》與《決定毘尼經》中的一些段落，是由寶山創始人之一的靈裕（518–605）所增補的句子。接著，探討早期禪宗文獻中的一些內容，以追蹤懺悔解脫論與禪修的轉變。作者在以前的論著中，曾討論過五至六世紀的戒律、懺悔儀式，以及疾病的精神導因與治療的文獻是如何促成八世紀時獨特的禪宗修行思想的出現。在本文中，作者詳述懺悔儀式、佛感應與佛性的關連，來討論針對心靈懺悔的各種不同方式。同時，簡單地比較佛教的意願和煩惱（*kleśa*）與傅柯（1926–1984）的精神分析式告解，進而認為這些迥然不同的懺悔形式是對造就自我的因果力量提高覺知的產物。最後，作者指出懺悔儀式的實踐和禪宗反儀式論點的邏輯其實並沒有像表面上的那麼不同。

### 關鍵詞：

中國佛教、懺悔、寶山、禪

## Introduction

This article addresses a particular soteriological trajectory in Chinese Buddhism, comparing a local instantiation of the widely-practiced rites of confession and repentance (*chanhui* 懺悔)<sup>1</sup> in the sixth and seventh centuries with the increasingly polemical reformation of repentance practice in Chan 禪 texts of the eighth century. An ostensible opposition between ritual and Chan/Zen is inscribed in current popular views of Buddhism. Although confession and repentance is a long-standing practice with roots in the *uposatha* ceremony of the earliest saṅgha and remains central to Chinese Buddhist devotional practice, it is seldom recognized in Chan (Zen) circles as an integral part of the tradition to which Chan belongs. As an attempted counterbalance, here I wish to highlight certain shared soteriological underpinnings that bind together *chanhui* and Chan. And although it is beyond the scope of this article to adequately address debates over the psychological strengths or shortcomings of Buddhist practice, these contemporary issues are part of the implicit context for the theme of “addressing the mind.” In the following examples we will see different modes of addressing the mind: rebuking it, confessing and repenting its karmic burdens, evoking the means to transform it, attempting to present it, and turning it on its own emptiness of essence. The desire to decisively alter the indeterminable power of existential conditioning may be seen in both confrontation of the karma-burdened self and propitiation of the buddhas and/as buddha-nature.

Drawing from research on the Sui-Tang Buddhist site known as Baoshan 寶山 (Treasure Mountain) in present-day Henan, I first discuss inscribed passages from the *Mahāmāyā-sūtra* and the *Vinayaviniścaya-Upāliparipṛcchā-sūtra*, supplemented by verses ascribed to Lingyu 靈裕 (518–605), one of the

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<sup>1</sup> *Chanhui* 懺悔 is often translated “confession and repentance,” but I also use “repentance practice” or simply “repentance” to refer to the range of practices associated with this term. The following definitions and terms are condensed from the Digital Dictionary of Buddhism ([http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb/pcache/61id\(b61fa-6094\).html](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb/pcache/61id(b61fa-6094).html). Accessed 2/7/15): “To repent of any negative actions one may have done in one’s present or past lives, so as to clear oneself of karmic obstacles that may be causing one worldly difficulties or restraining one’s spiritual progress. To confess one’s crimes before the Buddha. (Skt. *pratideśayati*, *kaukrīya*; *atyaya-deśanā*, *deśana*, *deśanā-karaṇa*, *deśanā-karaṇīya*, *deśayati*, *nivedayati*, *pāpa-deśanā*, *pratikṛta*, *pratideśanā*, *kṣamāpatti-pratideśana*). 懺 is the transliteration of *kṣamā*, 悔 its translation, i.e. repentance; but also the first is interpreted as confession, cf. 提 *deśanā*, the second as repentance and reform.”

co-founders of Baoshan. Subsequent sections focus on passages from early Chan texts, tracing a process of reformulation or rejection of the soteriological value of *chanhui*. Buddhist preoccupation with the power of repentance ritual to eliminate deep-seated karmic effects is also briefly compared with Foucault's discussion of psychoanalytic confession. I propose that what links these disparate confessional modes is the creation of enhanced awareness of the elusiveness of the causal powers that shape the self. Finally, I propose that the logic of practice at work in repentance liturgies is not really as different from the logic of practice in Chan anti-liturgical rhetoric as it may seem.

## Baoshan

Baoshan is a network of rock-cut caves, devotional and memorial inscriptions, reliquary niches with portrait statues, and stelae and inscriptions with references to constructions and restorations. The site seems to have first attracted Buddhist attention due to its proximity to one of the passes through the Taihang 太行 mountains that linked the Northern Qi 北齊 (550–577) capital of Ye 鄴 with the former Northern Wei 北魏 (386–534) capital of Luoyang 洛陽 to the south (Henan), and with the Northern Qi secondary capital Jinyang 晉陽 (present-day Taiyuan) in the north (Shanxi).

It is said that Baoshan was first marked as a Buddhist place by the monk Daoping 道憑 (488–559) during the Eastern Wei 東魏 (534–550). Daoping's disciple Lingyu won imperial recognition for the site, and appears to have been the designer of the devotional program at the main cave, Dazhusheng 大住聖, which is the source for the inscriptions discussed here. Baoshan has a distinguished heritage stemming from the brief but brilliant efflorescence of Northern Qi Buddhism: Daoping was the disciple of the Northern Wei 魏 master Huiguang 慧光 (468–537), who was later considered the founder of the Southern Branch of the Dilun 地論 (Stages Treatise) school that developed in Ye. The "Southern" and "Northern" designations are based on the biographies of Bodhiruci 菩提流支 (d. 527) and Huiguang in the *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳,<sup>2</sup> which show two lines of affiliation based on exegesis and practice of the Yogācāra tenets of Vasubandhu's *Daśabhūmikasūtropadeśa*,<sup>3</sup> a commentary on the

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<sup>2</sup> T 2060, 50: 429a5–16, 607c19–20.

<sup>3</sup> *Shidi jing lun* 十地經論, T 1522, 26; translated in 511.

*Daśabhūmika-sūtra* on the ten stages of the bodhisattva path, included in the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra*.<sup>4</sup>

Dazhusheng cave provides a focal point from which to explore the intersections between Dilun soteriology, final age eschatology, and repentance practice. Working from scriptural models, in the fifth through eighth centuries Chinese Buddhists developed new rituals for taking the bodhisattva precepts, and these ceremonies included formulae of confession and repentance: *chanhui*. Repentance and precepts were soteriologically linked as vows; that is, harnessing the power of volition in order to remove the effects of its past misuse. Recognizing one's past negative actions and praying to the buddhas to aid in removing karmic residue was an important initial stage of the bodhisattva path. Indeed, many Chinese Buddhist rituals exhibit a basic structure that includes repentance as a constituent element.<sup>5</sup> What is at stake in Dilun practice and on display in the design of Dazhusheng cave is belief in the capacity of repentance rituals to remove *kleśa*, deeply engrained habitual afflictive patterns, through the evocation of mutually responsive buddha-nature/presence.

Before proceeding further, I would like to briefly note the important place that studies of *chanhui* have in the field of medieval Chinese Buddhism. I cannot list all the relevant work, but Daniel Stevenson's 1987 dissertation, "The T'ien-T'ai Four Forms of Samādhi and Late North-South Dynasties, Sui, and Early T'ang Buddhist Devotionalism," is an invaluable orientation to the relevant texts and soteriological issues. Stevenson provides both schematic comparison and in-depth discussion of the fifth- through seventh- century Chinese devotional-liturgical materials incorporating *chanhui*, as well as their Indian counterparts, in order to contextualize Zhiyi's 智顓 (538–597) work. Kuo Li-ying's 1994 monograph on fifth- through tenth-century repentance texts (*Confession et contrition dans le bouddhisme chinois du cinquième au*

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<sup>4</sup> The two lines of affiliation were said to stem from disagreements between Bodhiruci and Ratnamati 勒那摩提 (active early 6th cent.) at the Northern Wei-sponsored translation atelier in Luoyang. Their dispute concerned interpretation and translation of the *Daśabhūmikasūtropadeśa*. The Northern Branch was said to descend through Bodhiruci, Daochong 道寵 (d.u.), Buddhaśānti 佛陀扇多 (d.u.), and Sengchou 僧稠 (480–560), while the Southern Branch lineage was considered to be Ratnamati, Huiguang, Daoping, and Lingyu. See Williams (2002, 106–12).

<sup>5</sup> As discussed in Stevenson (2008), a great range of Chinese Buddhist rituals are encoded with a common ritual syntax that includes repentance as an integral element.

*dixième siècle*) remains seminal for *chanhui* studies. Wang Juan's 汪娟 1998 work *Dunhuang lichen wen yanjiu* 敦煌禮懺文研究 (*Research on Dunhuang Ritual and Repentance Texts*) adds the important dimension of Dunhuang-based research. Focusing on Dilun materials in his examination of repentance rituals, Bruce Williams's 2002 dissertation, "*Mea Maxima Vikalpa: Repentance, Meditation, and the Dynamics of Liberation in Medieval Chinese Buddhism, 500–650 CE*," and his 2005 article have been essential aids in my Baoshan explorations. Shioiri Ryōdō's 塩入良道 monumental 2007 publication *Chūgoku bukkyō ni okeru zanpō no seiritsu* 中国仏教における懺法の成立 (*The Development of Penitential Methods in Chinese Buddhism*) is highly recommended, but I confess and repent that I have not yet read it. More recently, Eric Greene's 2012 dissertation, "Meditation, Repentance and Visionary Experience in Early Medieval Chinese Buddhism," explores the interesting question of pre-Chan "school" understandings of meditation, and examines selected *dhyāna* (*chan* 禪) manuals and repentance rituals to support the observation that "in fifth- and sixth-century China *chan* seems to have been valued in large measure as a means of divining the efficacy of such rites [i.e. *chanhui*], which during this time were beginning to form the core of Chinese Buddhist liturgical life" (2012, 11). Greene's study centers on two texts in order to elucidate the connection between repentance rites and meditation in Chinese Buddhist concerns about the efficacy of practice. He thus follows up on themes introduced in the earlier works mentioned above, particularly Stevenson's dissertation, where soteriological and psychological links between meditation and repentance practice in Chinese Buddhist texts of the fifth and sixth centuries are discussed at length. Tracking some of the same themes, in my 1998 dissertation and subsequent 2007 work *The Mystique of Transmission*, I identified fifth- and sixth-century precepts and repentance liturgies and related visualization practices, as well as texts on spiritual causes and remedies for disease, as contributing to a uniquely Chinese Buddhist discourse on meditation that influenced the emergence of a distinctive Chan ideology of practice in the eighth century. Here, further expanding on the connections between repentance ritual, buddha-response, and buddha-nature, I compare different modes of confessional "addressing the mind."

### ***Mahāmāyā-sūtra***

The *Mahāmāyā-sūtra* (*Mohemoye jing* 摩訶摩耶經, *Sūtra of the Buddha's Mother Mahāmāyā*) is said to have been translated by the monk Tanjing 曇景,

active during the southern Xiao Qi 蕭齊 dynasty (479–502). It includes a brief version of the story of quarreling monks that became one of the framing episodes for the “decline of the Dharma” motif.<sup>6</sup> However, the passage carved inside Dazhusheng cave is taken from a different part of the text and centers on individual liberation rather than eschatology. The Buddha’s mother Mahāmāyā is the main speaker; we see her receiving her son’s prophesy that she will attain the first of the stages leading to final nirvāṇa, that of *śrotāpanna*: stream-winner. Though the prediction is couched in terms of the pre-Mahāyāna path, it is presented in the manner of a *bodhicitta*-like moment that both initiates and encompasses fulfillment of the path. This is followed by the assembly’s prayer for the liberation of all beings.

In the following selections from the inscribed passage, we see the mind, specifically the volitional mind (*xinyi* 心意), “addressed” by the long-suffering speaker:

At that time the World-Honored One saw from afar that his mother had come and she was paying homage in her heart. Her body shook like the agitation of the four great seas stirred by the Kings of Mount Sumeru. When the Tathāgata had seen his mother thus, he used the Brāhmanical Voice to say to her: “What your body is going through is entirely caught up in sorrow and joy. You should cultivate nirvāṇa and forever transcend sorrow and joy.”

When Mahāmāyā heard the Buddha's words, she joined her palms and bowed her head and contemplated this wholeheartedly. Kneeling before the Buddha, she prostrated herself to the ground. She concentrated her efforts in mindfulness, and all entanglements subsided. Then she spoke verses of praise to the Buddha:

“For countless eons you have been drinking my milk and have thus transcended birth, old age and death, attaining the peerless Way. You should repay my kindness in raising you by cutting off the root of my three poisons. I take refuge in the Great Hero, the unstinting benevolent one. I take refuge in the Master Tamer, the highest unsurpassable one. I take refuge in the Teacher of Gods and Men, forever parted from the bonds of ignorance and lust. Morning and night in each of the three times of day this recollection is not cut off, I prostrate and make obeisance to the supreme Great Dharma King. Now in your field of blessings I want to grow the seedlings of merit, I pray

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<sup>6</sup> *Mohemoye jing*, T 383, 12: 1013b14–1024a20; Nattier (1991, 168–70).

only that you bestow your mercy and speedily cause me to achieve the wondrous fruit. I have long had this great purpose, and thus I birthed in the palace of a great king a huge body the color of the finest gold, its radiance illuminating the ten directions, with face completely round and pure like the full moon of autumn.”

. . . the Buddha due to his supramundane powers recognized her destiny. Because of the confluence of good roots and pure practice, [Mahāmāyā] would break the ties of eighty million burning [defilements] and achieve the fruit of the stream-winner. At this she raised her joined palms and said to the Buddha: “[From] the prison of birth and death, the confirmation of escape!” When the great assembly had the opportunity to hear these words, with one voice they said: “We pray that all beings attain liberation, just as Mahāmāyā has done right now!”

Then Mahāmāyā said to the Buddha: “It is like a fierce fire heating hot iron—if one touches it, one’s body and mind [experience] burning pain. Life and death in the world are also like this, what comes and goes are all accumulations of suffering. The basis of the sufferings of the ordinary masses all stem from their volitions. Following desires impetuously, they deceive the many beings. They revolve through the Five Paths and suffer the harsh winds [of karma]. It is like a play.”

Then in front of the Buddha, Mahāmāyā castigated her own volitions, saying: “Why do you always do what is unbeneficial? Wandering in the realm of the six senses you do not settle, chaotic imaginings drag you along without ever ceasing. What can be discriminated is all inauspicious. Why do you delude me and then allow [delusions] to collect there?

. . . .

“In an instant you cause me to [live] in a heavenly palace, with sweet dew as my food and drink, indulging myself with the five desires. In an instant you cause me to be stuck in hell, drinking molten copper and swallowing balls of hot iron. Just from my past lives as an ox, [one could] pile up the skins as high as Mount Sumeru.

. . . .

“You stupid volitions, though you have already repeatedly gone through the five desires of all the worlds, [enjoying] gold, silver, precious things, wives, children, female slaves and servants, elephants, horses, carriages, residences, property, and peopled towns, all quickly

perishes and everything is impermanent; temporarily owned by someone, [all possessions] will eventually wear away. It is like resting in an inn without a settled host.

....

“You stupid volitions, since long ago you have pulled me along, going and coming everywhere, and I have always submitted, never disobeyed. Today, I wish to concentrate on hearing the Dharma, [so] do not turn back to vexations or become obstructions. You yourselves also ought to be disgusted and want to transcend all sufferings, speedily seek nirvāṇa, and quickly obtain peace and joy.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Corresponding to T 383, 12: 1005b16–1006a25. The translation is from the following text, based on *in situ* examination at Dazhusheng cave and checked against Lee (1998, 41–2).

爾時世尊遙見母來內懷欣敬舉身動搖如須彌山王及四大海鼓動之相于時如來既見母至便以梵音而白母言身所經 / 處與苦樂俱當修涅槃永離苦樂爾時摩訶摩耶聞佛此語合掌低頭一心思惟長跪佛前五體投地專精正念諸纏消伏即於佛前以偈讚曰汝從無數劫 / 恒飲我乳汁故離生老死得成无上道宜應報恩養斷我三毒本歸命大丈夫无貪惠施者歸命調御士最上无能過。歸命天人師永離 / 癡愛縛晨夜各三時念想不斷絕稽首頭面禮无上大法王今於汝福田欲長功德芽唯願施慈悲速令成妙果久有此大志故生大王 / 宮巨身紫金色光明照十方面貌悉圓淨猶如秋滿月爾時世尊即白母言諦聽諦聽善思念之初中後善其義深遠其語巧妙純一无雜具足清白 / 梵行之相摩訶摩耶聞此語以佛神力故即識宿命并以善根純熟時故破八十億洞燃之結得須陀洹果即起合掌而白佛言生死牢獄已證解脫時會大眾聞 / 此語已異口同音而作是言願一切眾生皆得解脫如今現在摩訶摩耶時摩訶摩耶而白佛言譬如猛火燒於熱鐵若有觸者身心焦痛世間生死亦復如是所 / 往來處皆是苦聚凡集苦本皆由心意隨欲輕躁戲卡眾生輪轉五道疾於猛風猶如拍鞠時摩訶摩耶即於佛前而自剋責其心意言汝常何故作非利益 / 遊六塵境而不安定亂想事挽无時暫亭所可緣慮皆非吉祥何故或我而便集彼譬如有人恒墜於地而彼大地未曾損益然其耕器日就消毀在生死海亦 / 復如是恒棄身命不可稱載而我神識初不增減汝能令我作轉輪聖王統四天下七寶具足須與令我退為蝦蟇須與令我作貧賤人東西馳走求乞衣食須 / 與令我作大長者積財巨億名稱普聞須與令我在天宮殿飲食甘露五欲自恣須與令我居止地獄飲於融銅吞熱鐵丸我但過去曾經牛身積聚其皮高須彌 / 山猶於生死未得解脫須與復獲无量名字或曰大家或曰僕使或曰轉輪聖王或曰帝王或曰天龍夜叉乾闥婆阿修羅迦樓羅緊那羅摩睺羅伽人及非人 / 或曰畜生或曰餓鬼或曰地獄眾生有如是等種種名號汝癡心意雖復曾經具世五欲金銀諸珍妻子奴婢象馬車乘屋舍田宅人民聚落尋皆散滅共就无 / 常暫為己有會歸磨滅猶若旅舍憩无定主上至諸天五欲自在福盡臨終五相現時徘徊顧戀心懷愁苦及在人中 貧窮下賤為人 / 所使若居王位互相討伐 / 君臣父子競共殘滅下至

This passage graphically describes the consequences of the incessant flow of self-obsessed volitional thought, that which is conditioned and produces further conditioning. It evokes the wide range of sufferings to which the karma-bound are subject. Most importantly, it places the responsibility for suffering squarely on the sufferer's own shoulders, in her own head.

The audience is shown that the true purpose of repentance is not the Sisyphean task of scrubbing away the karmic residue of endlessly arising transgressions. Rather, attention is drawn to one's own constructions as the source of the continual reinforcement and recreation of the afflictive patterns that bind all beings to delusion. The *Mahāmāyā* thus provides scriptural support for one of the practices that Baoshan co-founder Lingyu emphasized: *chanhui*, confession and repentance practice. Let us look at the Dazhusheng liturgy that makes Lingyu's praxicology more explicit.

### *Chanhui wen*

The repentance liturgy here referred to as the *Chanhui wen* (*Lue li qijie foming chanhui deng wen* 略禮七階佛名懺悔等文, *The Text of the Abridged Confession and Repentance for Venerating Buddha Names in Seven Stages*) is inscribed at the farthest west end of the lower register to the west (left) when one faces the Dazhusheng doorway. The apparent source of the confessional script is the *Jueding pini jing* 決定毘尼經 (*Vinayaviniścaya-Upāliparipṛcchā-sūtra, Sūtra of the Inquiry of Upāli Regarding Determination of the Vinaya*), a portion of which is closely reproduced.<sup>8</sup> The wall includes

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/ 地獄屠割燒煮畜生之中 / 更相吞害皮肉筋力償其 / 宿債為業所逼不得自在 / 餓鬼之中飢渴所逼東西 / 馳走唯見火聚及熱鐵輪 / 長隨其後五道生死有如 / 是等種種眾苦不可稱計 / 汝癡心意往昔已來長牽 / 於我去來諸處恒相順從 / 初未違異我於今日欲專 / 聽法勿復惱亂而為障礙 / 亦宜自應厭離諸苦速求 / 涅槃，疾獲安樂時摩 / 訶摩耶即於佛前而說偈言 / 唯願注法雨洽潤於枯槁 / 普生法萌芽 / 開發漸滋受 / 令我及眾曾善根普純熟 / 或於諸道果次第隨所獲 / 願時施甘露消滅貪恚原

<sup>8</sup> *Jueding pini jing*, T 325, 12: 39a7–27, said to have been translated by Dharmarakṣa 竺法護 (265–ca. 313) at the end of the third century. However, Bruce Williams points out that the term “*chanhui*” did not come into use until ca. 400 and speculates that Dharmakṣema 曇無讖 (ca. 385–433) may have been the translator (2002, 34 n. 32). There are two related texts that may have been based on a written form of the Dazhusheng liturgy: the Dunhuang text *Lue li qijie foming chanhui deng wen* (Beijing 8344/you 宇 16), and a section of Zhisheng's collection of liturgies compiled in 730, the *Ji zhujing chanhui yi*, T 1982, 47:

two other scriptural sources with supplemental lists of buddha names that seem to have been intended to be recited as part of a ceremony.

The Dazhusheng *Chanhui wen* begins with homage to the groups of buddhas individually named in the adjacent inscriptions. The confession and repentance begins with the line “I/We take refuge and repent” (*guiming chanhui* 歸命懺悔)<sup>9</sup> and proceeds with a comprehensive catalogue of the categories of offenses that the practitioner may have committed in this and previous lifetimes. In the course of this litany the practitioner prays that the buddhas to whom she has confessed will “compassionately recollect me/us” (*cinian wo* 慈念我) and “should recollect me/us” (*yinian wo* 憶念我). The repentance concludes with prayers for merit transfer and collective refuge.

. . . .

I take refuge and confess [and repent]:

“May all the buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, of these many kinds of worlds who constantly reside in this world,<sup>10</sup> may these World-Honored Ones compassionately recollect me. I now in all cases repent those obstructing offenses which I have committed: the mass of offenses which I have committed in this life or in previous lives since beginningless time, no matter whether I have done them, instructed others to do them, or seen them done and taken pleasure in that; . . . . Now all the buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, should bear witness to and know me; should recollect me.”

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456b27–457a27. For overviews of the development of repentance texts in China, see Kuo (1994); Wang (1998); Williams (2002). Besides the *Jueding pini jing*, early translations and apocrypha that served as key sources for repentance practice included the *Banzhou sanmei jing* 般舟三昧經 (*Pratyutpannabuddhasaṃmukhāvasthitasamādhi-sūtra*, a.k.a. *Bhadrapāla-sūtra*), translated by Lokakṣema in the late second century (T 418, 13); the *Jinguangming jing* 金光明經 (*Suvarṇaprabhāsottama-sūtra*, *Sūtra of Golden Light*), translated by Dharmakṣema (T 663, 16); and the *Fanwang jing* 梵網經 (*Brahmajāla-sūtra*, *Sūtra of Brahma's Net*), probably compiled in Central Asia or China around 430–480 (T 1484, 24).

<sup>9</sup> In the Dazhusheng carving the character 悔 is missing, but it occurs in the corresponding *Jueding pini jing* text.

<sup>10</sup> The line 如是等一切世界諸佛世尊常住在世 is from the *Jueding pini jing*, T 325, 12: 39a7; see Lee (1998, 39). This was the source for practices focused on the thirty-five buddhas of confession, and the inclusion of this line is an important indication that practitioners felt themselves to be accessing forms of buddha-presence in this world, not distant in space or time.

Again, before all the buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, I say:

“If I, in this life, or other lives, have ever practiced giving alms or kept the pure precepts, even to the extent that I have donated one morsel of food to an animal or practiced pure conduct, may these roots of goodness which I have bring sentient beings to maturity, may these roots of goodness which I have cultivate *bodhi*, may these roots of goodness which I have extend to ultimate wisdom, may these roots of goodness which I have, may they all, the whole accumulated, compared, reckoned, or calculated amount, be transferred to Supreme Ultimate Enlightenment. Just as what the past, future, and present buddhas have done has been transferred, I also likewise transfer.<sup>11</sup> The merit from confessing and repenting all my transgressions, sympathetically delighting in all blessings [of others], and inviting the buddhas, I vow to dedicate to the accomplishment of supreme wisdom. The past, future, and present buddhas are among sentient beings the most superlative; in the immeasurable sea of their merit [I] take refuge, making obeisance with joined palms.”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The translation up to this point is from Williams (2002, 123–4), with minor modifications; see pp. 124–36 for a discussion of sources and related texts. Lee (1998, 39) has a transcription of the text based on the rubbing at Academia Sinica and filled in lacunae by consulting Zhisheng’s version; Williams consulted her transcription and the Dunhuang text.

<sup>12</sup> In the following transcription of the Dazhusheng inscription, characters in parentheses are supplemented from the *Jueding pini jing*, T 325, 12: 39a7–27.  
 懺（悔如）是等一切世界諸佛世尊常住在世 / 是（願諸）世尊當慈念我若我此生若我前生從无 / 始生死已來所作眾罪若自作若教他作 / 見作隨喜若塔若僧四方僧物若自取若教人 / 取見取隨喜或作五逆无間重罪若自作若教 / 他作見作隨喜十不善道自作教他作見作隨喜 / 所（作罪）鄣或有覆藏或不覆藏應隨地獄餓鬼 / 畜生及諸惡趣邊地下賤及弥戾車如是等處 / 所作罪鄣今皆懺悔今諸佛世尊當證知我當 / 憶念我復於諸佛世尊前作如是言若我此 / 生若於餘生曾行布施或守淨戒乃至施與畜 / 生一揣之食或脩淨行所有善根成就眾生所有善根脩行菩提所有善根及无上 [智所有善 / 根一切合集計校籌量悉皆迴向阿耨多羅 / 三藐三菩提如過去未來現在諸佛所作迴 / 向我亦如是迴向眾罪皆懺悔諸福盡隨 / 喜及請佛功德願成无上智去來現在佛於 / 眾生最勝无量功德海歸依合掌礼]

The final section in bold typeface is not in Lee (1998) or Williams (2002), but is found in the *Ji zhujing chanhui yi*, T 1982, 47: 457a24–27 at the end of Zhisheng’s version of the repentance liturgy. These lines were recorded at Dazhusheng cave in July of 2005, when I spent two weeks copying and photographing the inscriptions with the invaluable help of Shen Ruiwen 沈睿文,

Moving toward the cave door from this liturgy and vow, the practitioner is provided with additional panels of inscriptions listing the names of the buddhas of the ten directions, the names of the thirty-five buddhas of confession from the *Jueding pini jing*, and the names of the fifty-three buddhas. The lists of ten and fifty-three buddhas are from the *Guan Yaowang Yaoshang er pusa jing* 觀藥王藥上二菩薩經 (*Sūtra on Visualizing the Two Bodhisattvas Bhaiṣajyarāja and Bhaiṣajyasamudgata*).<sup>13</sup> The upper register has an additional list of twenty-five buddha names from the *Foming jing* 佛名經 (*Sūtra of Buddha-Names*).<sup>14</sup> The combined eighty-eight buddhas (fifty-three and thirty-five) of repentance have continued to serve as a popular liturgical framework over the centuries. The many buddha names and images inscribed outside and inside Dazhusheng cave could be apprehended together to represent the buddhas described in the *Chanhui wen* liturgy collectively and synchronically, a cosmic array not limited to a particular Pure Land or a particular time. Evoked as a comprehensive collectivity, each grouping also represents a specific function. The buddhas of the ten directions provide a basis for a maṇḍala-like visualization of space, the seven buddhas of the past prompt the practitioner to recollect previous cycles of regeneration and decline of the Dharma,<sup>15</sup> the fifty-three buddhas from the *Guan Yaowang Yaoshang er pusa jing* signify purification of transgressions (Rösch 2008), and the thirty-five buddhas from the *Jueding pini jing* serve as witnesses for the repentance ritual.

The Dazhusheng *Chanhui wen* is an early Chinese version of the *Seven Stage Buddhanāma* (*Qijie foming* 七階佛名), a liturgical format based on Indian precedents that became standard in China. Stevenson (1987, 249–464) provides in-depth discussion of this genre in the context of a wide range of fifth- and sixth-century devotional liturgies that center on or incorporate

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a professor in the archaeology department of Peking University, and his wife Wang Jing 王靜, a professor at Renmin University. When we were making our notes and included these lines, I did not realize that the entire portion in brackets, above, is apparently not legible in the *Academica Sinica* rubbing. I would like to go back and recheck the inscription but have not had the opportunity.

<sup>13</sup> T 1161, 20: 662a2–8, 663c8–29.

<sup>14</sup> T 441, 14: 159c14–161c1.

<sup>15</sup> Many early Buddhist sources contain a standard list of six past buddhas: Vipassī/Vipaśyin, Sikhi/Śikhin, Vessabhū/Viśvabhū, Kakusandha/Krakucchanda, Koṇāgamana/Konākamuni/Kanaka, Kassapa/Kāśyapa. Versions are found at Bhārhut, ca. 2nd cent. BCE; Sāñcī ca. 1st cent. BCE; and the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra* (DN 14).

repentance practice.<sup>16</sup> He identifies three lenses through which to examine devotional rituals of the period in question, namely: (1) internal form and procedure, (2) contextual setting and pattern of usage, and (3) relevant broader soteriological themes (Stevenson 1987, 254). In “Seeing Through Images: Reconstructing Meditative Visualization Practice in Sixth-Century Northeastern China,” Bruce Williams (2005) discusses the *Seven Stage Buddhanāma* form in the context of Baoshan as an instantiation of Dilun soteriology. Both Stevenson and Williams demonstrate the intricate connections among ritual elaborations developed in subsequent Sanjie 三階 (Three Levels), Jingtū 淨土 (Pure Land), and Tiantai 天臺 practice-orientations.<sup>17</sup>

Did practitioners of different sorts come together to chant the writing on the wall at Dazhusheng cave, or was it a symbolic representation of doing the practice in totality and in perpetuity? Perhaps both, but I suggest that Lingyu and his followers did intend this to be a script for practice done *in situ*. Monks and nuns who had memorized the liturgy and buddha names may have led the

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<sup>16</sup> Williams (2005, 65–9) discusses the apparent anomaly that the liturgies included under the “*qijie*” rubric actually involve eight or nine registers of buddha names, and thus suggests that *qijie* refers to seven stages of ritual in the form introduced by Ratnamati, rather than seven registers of buddhas.

<sup>17</sup> By capitalizing all of these practice-affiliations, I am not thereby asserting that these are institutionally distinct “schools” during the period in question. Much ink has been spilled over the misleading retrospective over-reification of sectarian identities practiced by previous generations of scholars. At the same time, I also think that the correctives have sometimes resulted in overly militant rejection of practice-identities that were meaningful to the practitioners themselves. For example, a Dilun lineage is articulated in the Baoshan inscription for Lingyu. Sanjie, in part due to imperial proscriptions, gained a distinctive identity. And while devotional practice focused on rebirth in Amitābha Buddha’s Pure Land (Jingtū) did not in China form an exclusive sect, it was a meaningful paradigm and set of references, functioning in tandem with but not reducible to other devotional foci. Stevenson notes that his comparison of liturgical materials of the period reveals “the Pure Land and Three Stages legacies of Shan-tao and Hsin-hsing are by far the best represented. T’ang period compendia such as Tao-shih’s *Fa-yüan chu-lin* and, especially, Tao-sheng’s *Chi chu ching li-ch’an i* give the practices of these two traditions a very high profile. Moreover, works connected with the Three Stages and northern Pure Land movements (either directly or peripherally) make up the greater percentage of the liturgical pieces to be found in the Tun-huang manuscript collections” (1987, 264).

performance.<sup>18</sup> The mountainside terrace in front of the cave could have served as a platform for repentance and bodhisattva precepts ceremonies. One estimates that the terrace could accommodate about thirty-five people, if the extra space needed to perform prostrations is taken into account.

This cave may also have been used for individual intensive repentance and visualization practice. In the vicinity of Yingjue 應覺 temple near Ye—Lingyu’s home monastery and a major Buddhist center during the Northern Qi—there is a small cave temple with features very similar to those of Dazhusheng. This is Cave Three of Fenglongshan 風龍山, which, according to Li Yuqun (1998, 67–75), appears to have been carved in the latter part of the sixth century, probably earlier than Dazhusheng. Like Dazhusheng, it has three main niches with Vairocana, Amitābha, and Maitreya, as well as smaller niches with the thirty-five buddhas from the *Jueding pini jing* in a different arrangement.

Petra Rösch (forthcoming) argues that the caves at Fenglongshan and Dazhusheng cave could have served as separate chambers for recitation of the buddha names and confession liturgy at the prescribed six times of the day and night.<sup>19</sup> According to the *Jueding pini jing*, the ritual was to be practiced in an isolated place (*duchu* 獨處) while visualizing the buddhas of confession, until the appearance of the buddhas confirmed that the practitioner had achieved purification: “A bodhisattva<sup>20</sup> thus visualizes (*guan* 觀) these thirty-five buddhas as if they were in front of him/her, and contemplates (*siwei* 思惟) the merit of the Tathagāta. He/she ought to perform this pure confession and repentance; if the bodhisattva is able to completely purify these transgressions, at that time the buddhas will reveal their bodies for him/her.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> On the conjunction of image-making, buddha-name recitation, and repentance as a group practice, see Wong (2008).

<sup>19</sup> Rösch cites Lee Yu-min’s reconstruction of visualization and confession practice at Dazhusheng in order to draw parallels with Fenglongshan; see Lee (1998, 20–9).

<sup>20</sup> The earlier part of the sūtra enumerates the vows of the great bodhisattvas to act as intercessors and saviors, then the discourse turns to the practices and possible transgressions of bodhisattvas who are in the household or have left the household; the transition from salvific to aspiring bodhisattvas is seen at T 325, 12: 38b22–28.

<sup>21</sup> See *Jueding pini jing*, T 325, 12: 38c19–39b1; these are the last two lines.

## Dilun Repentance Verses

Repentance formulae and bodhisattva precepts vows functioned as mutually reinforcing performative utterances, believed to actualize the salvific power of the act of committing to the bodhisattva path. Acknowledging one's past negative actions and praying to the buddhas to aid in removing karmic residue was an important initial stage of the path. This gained critical importance in Dilun soteriology, for the power of repentance to remove *kleśa* meant that it gave access to the *tathāgatagarbha*, and in the context of final-age ideology this endeavor was considered urgent.

Williams argues that the Dilun monks active in Ye during the Northern Qi developed a rather concrete notion of what it meant to achieve buddhahood. He demonstrates that the Dilun translators and exegetes promoted the notion that repentance rituals not only renewed bodhisattva vows and removed the effects of past evil deeds (karma), but even eliminated the *kleśas* that condition one's actions. This was a radical claim that meant repentance itself could effect liberation (2002, 152–58). Further, he draws attention to the unusually explicit meditative visualization instructions given in the *Guanfo sanmei hai jing* 觀佛三昧海經 (*Sūtra on the Ocean-Like Samādhi of Contemplating the Buddha*),<sup>22</sup> a text in the family of visualization scriptures to which the Baoshan-inscribed *Guan Yaowang Yaoshang er pusa jing* belongs. The *Guanfo sanmei hai jing* recommends repeated purification through repentance in order to achieve clear visualization of the marks of the buddhas. At the same time, monks were aware of the need to rationalize this in terms of the *Prajñāpāramitā*-based emptiness discourse that was integral to the *Madhyamaka* and *Yogācāra* treatises they studied. Williams discusses a commentary that addresses this issue, the *Jin'gang xian lun* 金剛仙論 ([*Vajraśrī's?*] *Commentary on the Vajracchedikā*).<sup>23</sup> Taking up the *Diamond Sūtra*'s repudiation of knowing and accessing buddhas through visualization of their marks, the commentary proposes two kinds of dharma-body. Williams summarizes: “Here the ‘*dharmakāya* of the dharma-nature’ (*faxing fashen* 法性法身; Skt. *dharmatādharmakāya*) was distinguished from the ‘*dharmakāya*

<sup>22</sup> T 643, 15; likely to be a Central Asian apocryphon. See Yamabe (1999).

<sup>23</sup> T 1512, 25; translation attributed to Bodhiruci; Williams cites Funayama (2006) for a discussion of this treatise. The treatise is said to be a commentary on Vasubandhu's *Jin'gang banruo poluomi jinglun* 金剛般若波羅蜜經論 (*Treatise on the Diamond Sūtra of the Perfection of Wisdom*), translated by Bodhiruci in 535 (T 1511, 25).

of expediency' (*fangbian fashen* 方便法身; Skt. *upāyadharmakāya*). The *dharmakāya* of the dharma-nature is the *dharmakāya* in its ultimate nature. The *dharmakāya* of expediency is the *dharmakāya* that responds to activities and includes both the *sambhogakāya* and *nirmāṇakāya*" (2005, 58).

In the Baoshan context, Lingyu's understanding of the way that repentance accesses expedient buddha-responsiveness and the ultimate *dharmadhātu* is captured in a repentance poem/prayer attributed to him in the *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林 (*Jade Grove of the Dharma Garden*), entitled *Zongchan shi'e jiwen* 總懺十惡偈文 (*Verses on Comprehensive Repentance for the Ten Evil Deeds*).<sup>24</sup> This is the second half of the text:

違犯諸如來	[I] violate the Tathāgata's
一切清淨戒	pure precepts.
嫌恨與愛憎	Resentment and regret, love and hate—
無心而不有	never has my heart been without them.
是罪若不懺	If I do not repent this misconduct,
長夜熏自心	through the long night [of saṃsāra] it poisons my mind.
積熏而不已	If its noxious fumes accumulate without end,
變成地獄處	it will turn into a place in hell,
及與諸苦具	complete with instruments of torture.
諸佛於爾時	At that time even all the buddhas
皆悉不能救	will be utterly unable to save [me],
唯除自發露	unless I myself reveal
所造諸愆咎	the blameworthy acts I have done.
應佛菩薩心	By responding to the mind of the buddhas and bodhisattvas,
隨順本淨性	and following one's originally pure nature,
無始時無明	beginningless ignorance
自此漸微薄	from then on gradually weakens.
是故懷慚愧	Therefore I take my shame to heart,
深心悔諸罪	and with profound mind I repent all transgressions.
願佛放慈光	I beseech the buddhas to spread the radiance of their compassion
照及苦眾生	and shine it on suffering beings;
所有煩惱聚	make the <i>kleśas</i> accumulated
皆令悉消滅	all entirely disappear.
自性清淨心	One's own nature, pure mind,
從此至究竟	from this reaches its ultimate [state],
平等真法界	the undifferentiated absolute <i>dharmadhātu</i> ,

<sup>24</sup> See *Fayuan zhulin*, T 2122, 53: 918c23–919a27.

於今得圓滿 and attains perfection now.<sup>25</sup>

Lingyu evokes the suffering of the unliberated vividly, highlighting one's own chaotic emotions and willful actions as the source, also the theme of the *Mahāmāyā* passage. The verses provide a step-by-step explanation of the spiritual physics of repentance. If one is able to realize and render transparent one's transgressions through sincere repentance, one's own pure nature innately responds to the mind of the buddhas. The responsive compassion of the buddhas then eliminates *kleśas*, the latent habitual unwholesome or delusory patterns that keep one in bondage. The elimination of these obscuring patterns of behavior then removes the errors of perception that are the only barrier to enlightenment and the ultimate buddha-realm, undifferentiated *dharmadhātu*.

“Southern Branch” Dilun monks were particularly interested in scriptures that expounded on *tathāgatagarbha* (innate potential buddha-nature). They were influenced by Paramārtha's 真諦 (499–569) Yogācāra commentaries on the nature of the fundamental consciousnesses, *ālayavijñāna* (storehouse) and *amalavijñāna* (pure, equivalent to *dharmadhātu*). Practice of *chanhui* for the elimination of defilements became a key focus of practice, as removal of accrued negative patterns of thought and action allowed one's fundamental affinity/identity with buddha-nature to be actualized.

Abandoning the technical language of Yogācāra scriptures and commentaries (Williams 2002, 153–5), Lingyu's poem provides images of psychical-physical processes: transgressions are revealed in the mirror of self-disclosure/buddha-gaze, this is accomplished through the innate resonance between buddhas and buddha-nature, and *kleśas* disappear through the catalytic effect of the buddhas' compassion. He evokes the emergence of the tortures of hell out of toxic emotions as though this were a natural effect rather than a mandated punishment. He then describes the mind's gradual purification following the mutually responsive, mirror-like awareness generated in repentance.

For Lingyu, the power of *kleśas* gradually weakens, while his fellow Dilun monk Tanqian 曇遷 (542–607) used an image of instant transformation for a similar effect. In Tanqian's repentance poem, the *Shie chanwen* 十惡懺文 (*Text of Confession for the Ten Evil Deeds*),<sup>26</sup> an image suggesting

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, T 2122, 53: 919a15–28; for this translation I consulted and used phrases from translations by Williams (2002, 154) and Kim (2005, 334–7).

<sup>26</sup> *Fayuan zhulin*, T 2122, 53: 918b9–c22.

alchemical transformation is used to express the sudden effect of repentance: “From beginningless time the ten unwholesome acts are all produced from the perverted perspective of *kleśas*. Now, because of relying on the strength of the true perspective of buddha-nature (*foxing zhengjian* 佛性正見), I publicly confess and repent (*falu chanhui* 發露懺悔) and [my transgressions] are thereby extirpated. It is like a bright pearl thrown into turbid water; through the power and virtue of the pearl the water immediately becomes transparent. The power and virtue of buddha-nature is just like this.”<sup>27</sup>

For Lingyu and Tanqian, it is confession that enables the resonant response/identity between the buddhas and buddha-nature, which initiates fundamental change. This resonance was also meant to be realized in the merit-field of collective and public ritual. Like the opening up and clearing away of the mind in repentance, the generous expenditure of one’s limited physical and material resources actualized membership in collective vows that accessed the inexhaustible merit-field of the buddhas. Links between generosity, buddha-presence, removing *kleśas*, and becoming a buddha are repeated themes in the other scriptural passages carved at Dazhusheng.

Reinforced by the Sanjie, Jingtu, and Tiantai movements, variations on this soteriology established repentance practice as a fundamental Buddhist practice during the seventh century. In a previous work I explored a few of the connections between Sanjie and the nascent Chan movement (Adamek 2007, 120–8). Here I suggest that Sanjie and Chan represent two extremes in the spectrum of repentance-centered soteriology, a soteriology deeply influenced by the Dilun masters. I am not arguing for a chain of genealogical influences carried through specific texts and individuals, though certain links can be traced.

I argue that Chan successfully usurped a field of practice that had been dominated by repentance. In Chan’s well-known criticisms of (1) repentance, (2) cleansing of *kleśas*, and (3) seeking signs of buddha-response, there may have been more at stake than elitist rejection of credulous popular Buddhism. Rather, these signature criticisms could indicate that the power of these practices was still at work within the soteriology of realizing one’s own buddha-nature. I suggest that scapegoating these practices may have served to

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, T 2122, 53: 918c11–14. I consulted and adapted translations in Williams (2002, 155) and Chen (2002, 96 n. 25). Williams (2005, 62–3) also discusses Lingyu’s and Tanqian’s verses. Tanqian’s verse makes use of a long-standing Buddhist metaphor; we see it used as an illustration of the power of faith in the *Milindapañha* (*The Questions of King Milinda*); see Conze (1959, 152).

absolve Chan's debts to the exegetical-devotional fervor of the sixth century. The intense soteriology of faith-based "buddha-becoming" was complex and difficult to sustain, but it shaped numerous subsequent developments and helped generate more streamlined forms of practice.

The complexity of individual confession and visualization practice promoted in texts like the *Jueding pini jing* was accompanied by large-scale collective devotions, which appears to have generated a variety of simplified forms. For example, a Sanjie practitioner who joined in communal offering even in a small way could access the merit-field of the buddhas and bodhisattvas. The Jingtuo practitioner who recited the name of a single buddha could be reborn in the Pure Land. As has been extensively discussed by scholars of early Chan, we find comparable praxicological reductionism at work in eighth-century texts that contributed to the development of a distinctive Chan polemical style, as contending arguments for "one practice" and "formless practice" were advanced.

The apocryphal *Vajrasamādhi-sūtra* is a pivotal text in this regard. Its *tathāgatagarbha*-based teachings promote access to original enlightenment through contemplation practice, but it does not reject the devotional soteriology of access to the buddhas: "That virtuous one arouses the thought of *bodhi* at the sites of the [three] buddhas: that is, (1) the buddha endowed with all the meritorious qualities of the fruition, (2) the *tathāgatagarbha*-buddha, and (3) the buddha as image" (Buswell 2007, 206).

Moreover, the final teaching in the *Vajrasamādhi-sūtra* is repentance:

"Oh son of good family! The mind of a person who encourages all sentient beings to keep this *sūtra* will be constantly concentrated; he will never forget his original mind. If he forgets his original mind, he then must repent. The practice (dharma) of repentance produces clarity and coolness (*śītībhūta*)."

Ānanda stated: "Repenting of previous evil deeds does not mean that they have receded into the past."

The Buddha responded: "So it is. It is like bringing a bright lamp into a dark room: the darkness instantly vanishes. Oh son of good family! We do not say that we have repented from all previous evil deeds; and yet we still say that they have receded into the past."

Ānanda asked: "What is meant by 'repentance'?"

The Buddha replied, "By relying on the teachings of this *sūtra*, one accesses the contemplation of true reality. As soon as one accesses that

contemplation, all evil deeds will vanish completely. Leaving behind all evil destinies, one will be reborn in the Pure Land, where one will quickly achieve *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*” (Buswell 2007, 306–7)

In his explication of this passage, Wōnhyo 元曉 (617–686) is careful to underline that it is the present flow from the seeds of past deeds in the *ālayavijñāna* that is dispelled by repentance, not the deeds in the past, which are non-existent. He further distinguishes this from eradicating the fetters (figurative for the *kleśas*), the compulsions that would produce evil deeds in the future. So in one sense the role of repentance is limited to a provisional mop-up, rather than breaking the self-perpetuating patterns that produce the seeds. However, in the last words spoken by the Buddha in the sūtra, repentance is folded into reliance on the sūtra and accessing contemplation of true reality, which is the non-existence of evil deeds or destinies (Buswell 2007, 307).

Repentance here signifies the non-distinction between relying on buddha-words as buddha-presence, and having faith in the buddha-nature of the mind. This pivotal reflexive resonance between refuge and self-realization is at the heart of *tathāgatagarbha* discourse. It is at work in the Dazhusheng *Chanhui wen* prayer that the buddhas “*nian wo* 念我” (recollect me), the Sanjie practice of *ren’e* 認惡 (acknowledging the evil of one’s nature) and the Jingtu practice of *nianfo* 念佛 (buddha-recollection).

I argue that this thread continues in the eighth-century Chan practice of *wunian* 無念 (no-thought) as the realization of buddha-nature. The tension and complementarity between *wunian* and *nianfo* is at the crux of the question of Chan’s claim to iconoclasm. *Wunian*, while claimed to be subitist rejection of meditation, nevertheless retained roots in *nian* as “buddha-recollection.” While in Japan *wunian* and *nianfo* would become hallmarks of sectarian division between Zen and Pure Land practice, in China and Korea many masters continued to advocate both and theorize their relationship.

Eighth-century Chan works emphasized subitist focus on the pivotal nature of all practices: true repentance is realizing no-repentance, the true nature of the mind is no-thought. In these movements one can see the aspects of giving and receiving intention/attention functioning as a virtual “point” that is both the fervently practicing self and the purifying mirror of the buddha-other: both self-power and other-power, and neither. Lingyu’s buddha-reflection through repentance and the later Chan reflexive non-reification of buddha-nature were both aimed at realization of original nonduality. While later practice traditions in Japan drew a firm line between devotion and

introspection, in the next section I trace the ways that reflexive devotional soteriology turned inward and remained alive within Chan.

## Chan and Repentance

The influence of Chinese *tathāgatagarbha* and Yogācāra thought on Chan notions of buddha-nature has been well-explored. The important role played by bodhisattva precepts ceremonies, including their repentance aspects, in the formation of early Chan has been discussed by Yanagida Seizan, Paul Groner, John McRae, and others, including myself. I now focus more narrowly on a chain of references reinterpreting or rejecting repentance practice in early Chan literature. I argue that the soteriology of sixth-century repentance practice remained embedded in Chan soteriology through its very scapegoating of repentance.

Tiantai Zhiyi's work has been shown to be a formative influence in the development of Chan's subitist ideology. Bernard Faure argued that the nascent Chan movement appropriated the highest level of Zhiyi's classification of the teachings ("perfect and sudden") and rejected the foundational levels (Faure 1986), and we see this pattern also in the case of repentance practice. In his *Shi chan poluomi cidi famen* 釋禪波羅蜜次第法門 (Explaining the Sequence of Teachings on the Perfection of Meditation), Zhiyi articulates three mutually-reinforcing and hierarchical acts in the repentance ritual. These three are (1) acknowledging one's sins according to the Vinaya, (2) seeking miraculous signs attesting to the removal of karmic residue, and (3) meditating on the empty nature of sins.<sup>28</sup> The first level was the tacitly accepted "Hīnayāna" foundation for the precepts. The second level, the seeking of signs, was the key element in many of the repentance and bodhisattva precepts texts.<sup>29</sup> Within the ordered yet flexible logic of Zhiyi's system, the ultimate third level or "truth of the middle" was manifested in practice of the two expedient levels while realizing their emptiness. This dialectic was offered in a dual form in the *Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀 (*The Great Cessation and Insight*),<sup>30</sup> where Zhiyi distinguished between

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<sup>28</sup> T 1916, 46: 485–486; see Kuo (1994, 62–4).

<sup>29</sup> Jinhua Chen argues that when Zhiyi administered confessional rituals, he probably relied on the *Jingguangming jing*-based traditions of Dharmakṣema's group, as transmitted through the disciples of Dharmakṣema's contemporary Xuangao 玄高 (d. 444); see Chen (2002, 73).

<sup>30</sup> T 1911, 46.

phenomenal repentance (*shichan* 事懺) and repentance through principle (*lichan* 理懺).<sup>31</sup> Zhiyi's higher levels did not exclude repentance ritual performance, but this would become the point of departure for Chan rhetoric demoting all phenomenal purification practices.

Paul Groner notes a trend that he calls the “professionalization” of bodhisattva precepts rituals in the eighth century, which were used to attain good luck in marriage, birth, and travel, and were also used in funerals and the dedication of new buildings (1990, 235). This ritual specialization, in which Tiantai monks were particularly active, appears to have contributed to the polarization of what had previously been complementary or synonymous: ritual and contemplative practice. Repentance liturgies continued to develop and proliferate, but antinomian rhetoric emphasizing the non-existence of defilements in realization of true mind began to establish its own oppositional trajectory.

Certain synchronicities are indicative of their differential cohabitation of the same milieu. For example, Zhisheng 智升 (active ca. 700–740) finished his compendium of repentance liturgies, the *Jizhujing chanhui yi* 集諸經禮懺儀 (*A Compilation of Repentance Rituals from the Sūtras*) in 730, around the same time that Shenhui 神會 (684–758) was issuing the public challenge that launched the “Southern school” of Chan. Further, the coexistence of eighth- and ninth-century repentance ritual texts and early Chan texts in the Dunhuang cache indicates their shared importance in that practice community.

Tracing a series of discursive shifts in the treatment of repentance practice, we begin with Shenxiu's 神秀 (d. 706) *Dasheng wusheng fangbian men* 大乘無生方便門 (*Teachings on the Expedient Means of Attaining Birthlessness in the Mahāyāna*). It opens with a collective precepts ritual and a script for audience responses. The liturgy includes taking the buddhas and bodhisattvas as preceptors, repeating the precepts, and confessing and repenting. However, at the end the practitioner ritually repeats that the true nature of one's own mind is the same as the nature of the precepts: “To maintain the bodhisattva precepts is to maintain the precepts of the mind, because the buddha-nature is the ‘nature of the precepts’ (*jiexing* 戒性). To activate the mind (*qixin* 起心) for the briefest instant is to go counter to the buddha-nature, to break the bodhisattva precepts” (McRae 1986, 171–2). Here both the conventional and ultimate meanings of the precepts are retained.

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<sup>31</sup> T 1911, 46: 13c22–26. The influence of Zhiyi's classification according to principle and phenomena are discussed in Stevenson (1987, 354–61) and Williams (2005, 59–64).

However, Shenhui's subsequent critique of the Northern school targeted all practices aimed at purification, claiming that they contributed to misrecognition of the nature of the mind. As this critique gained force, true practice was redefined as the non-objectification of practice. Any accommodation of conventional practice became problematic. Yet, as Stevenson points out, even Shenhui recommended recitation of the *Diamond Sūtra* in order to eradicate karmic impediments (1987, 361).

The late eighth-century *Liuzu tanjing* 六祖壇經 (*Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch*) provided a platform for a reformulation of practice on Shenhui's terms, even if it did not support his claimed transmission status as Huineng's 慧能 (638–713) sole heir. In the Dharma talk following the story of his reception of the robe, Huineng, the putative sixth Chan patriarch, goes through four of the stages of a bodhisattva precepts ceremony. Each stage is reinterpreted as an aspect of taking the “formless precepts”: taking refuge in the three bodies of the buddhas, the four vows, repentance, and taking refuge in the Three Treasures (Yampolsky 1967, 141–6).<sup>32</sup>

This is the passage on repentance: “Good friends, what is confession and repentance (*chanhui* 懺悔)? ‘Seeking forgiveness’ (*chan*) is, for one’s whole life, to not-do (*bu zuo* 不作). ‘Repentance’ (*hui*) is to know that the wrongs and evil deeds you have done in the past were never separate from mind. It is useless to verbally [confess] before the buddhas. In this teaching of mine, by not-doing to forever cease [wrongdoing] is called repentance.”<sup>33</sup> “Not-doing” refers to not doing evil, shorthand for the first of the Three Pure Precepts based on the *Avatamsaka-sūtra*.<sup>34</sup> Here, it is reinterpreted in the sense of no-thought: to be free of action in the midst of action.

The most thorough-going Chan rejection of repentance is found in the *Lidai fabao ji* 歷代法寶記 (*Record of the Dharma-Treasure through the Generations*), compiled in ca. 780 by disciples of the Bao Tang 保唐 founder Wuzhu 無住 (714–774). In the *Lidai fabao ji*, Wuzhu calls his fellow disciples raving idiots for wanting to practice the six daily periods of worship

<sup>32</sup> On the social and literary contexts of the creation of Huineng as the paradigmatic Chan ancestor, see Jorgensen (2005).

<sup>33</sup> Based on Yampolsky (1967, 144–5), with modifications.

<sup>34</sup> In the *Avatamsaka-sūtra*, the second or “purity” stage of the bodhisattva path is grouped into three levels: (1) the ten prohibitive precepts of traditional Buddhism, (2) the obverse of the ten evil acts, positive cultivation of right action, word, thought, and (3) compassion and altruistic acts towards all beings, which are to be further developed in succeeding stages. This was simplified into the “Three Pure Precepts”: avoid all evil, do all good, save all beings.

and repentance.<sup>35</sup> In his instructions for practice he says: “Regard non-obstruction as repentance. Regard no-thought as the precepts, non-action and nothing to attain as meditation, and non-duality as wisdom. Do not regard the constructed ritual arena as the *bodhimāṇḍa*.”<sup>36</sup> The *Lidai fabao ji* emphasizes *wunian* to the point of making it into a *dhāraṇi* incantation, and Wuzhu’s signature teaching is “at the time of true no-thought, no thought itself is not.” Wuzhu firmly adheres to the principle that realization of no-thought is at once the emptiness of transgression and the perfection of the precepts.

Compiled in 801, the *Baolin zhuan* 寶林傳 (*Transmission of the Baolin [Temple]*) pinpoints repentance as the pivot of the exchange between the putative second and third Chan patriarchs, Huike 慧可 (487–593) and Sengcan 僧璨 (d.u.). Afflicted with a chronic ailment, Sengcan asks Huike to administer the rites of repentance for him. Performance of *chanhui* rites for those seeking relief from illness would have been one of the accepted functions of the clergy. Huike asks him to bring his transgression (*zui* 罪), and when Sengcan is unable to do so, Huike declares that he has administered repentance.<sup>37</sup>

This encounter was reproduced and expanded in the eleventh-century *Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄 (*Record of the Transmission of the Lamp [compiled in] the Jingde era*).<sup>38</sup> More significantly, it is likely to have been the model for the famous *Jingde chuandeng lu* dialogue wherein Huike asks Bodhidharma to pacify his mind, to which Bodhidharma replies, “Bring me your mind.” Huike replies that he cannot find it anywhere, and Bodhidharma tells him that he has thus pacified his mind for him.<sup>39</sup>

The “bring me your mind” and “bring me your transgression” motifs are also found in the Dunhuang text that Jeffrey Broughton calls *Record II*, in passages that purport to be Huike’s answers to a disciple’s questions:

[Huike was asked] another question: “Teach me to quiet the mind.” He answered, “Bring your mind here and I will quiet it for you.” [The disciple] went on: “Just quiet my mind for me!” [Huike] answered, “This is like asking a craftsman to cut out a garment. Once the

<sup>35</sup> *Lidai fabao ji*, T 2075, 51: 186c28–187a8.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, T 2075, 51: 185c26–186a5.

<sup>37</sup> *Baolin zhuan* fascicle 8, in *Zhongguo fojiao congshu: Chanzong bian*, 1.18: 649–50, 653.

<sup>38</sup> *Jingde chuandeng lu*, T 2076, 51: 220c14–23.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, T 2076, 51: 219b8–23.

craftsman gets your silk, then he can set his blade to work. Without having seen the silk, how could he have cut out the pattern from space for you? Since you are unable to present your mind to me, I don't<sup>40</sup> know what mind I shall quiet for you. I certainly am unable to quiet space!"

[The disciple] went on: "Administer confession and repentance for me." [Huike] answered, "Bring your transgressions here, and I will administer confession and repentance for you." [The disciple] went on: "Transgressions lack any characteristic of form that can be apprehended. I [don't] know what to bring!" [Huike] answered, "My administration of confession and repentance to you is over. Go to your quarters." Comment: If there is transgression one must confess and repent, but since one does not see transgression, it is unnecessary to confess and repent.<sup>41</sup>

In the Huike material in the *Baolin zhuan, Record II*, and *Jingde chuandeng lu* dialogues, it is the indeterminability of the transgression and the "self" who committed it that is interrogated. Huike offers his arm to Bodhidharma<sup>42</sup> and Sengcan presents his afflicted body to Huike, but both are stumped when it comes to bringing the "mind" or their transgressions. These episodes give flesh and blood to Chan antinomian claims, based in Yogācāra doctrine—that the discriminatory function of mind that produces "characteristics" (*xiang* 相) is the illusory locus of transgression and moral distinctions, and that once one

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<sup>40</sup> Broughton adds the negative from P 3018, not present in S 2715; see Broughton (1999, 128 n. 97).

<sup>41</sup> *Record II* is a synoptic text of Beijing *su* 99 and S 2715; this translation is based on Broughton (1999, 42), with minor modifications. For an account of the extant Dunhuang manuscripts, see Broughton (1999, 121 n. 12). In *Record II* dialogue one sees the immediacy-in-dialogue that would become characteristic of the Chan literary style, but traces remain of the expository style of the standard question-and-answer format. Intriguing as these texts are, the fact that they include so many of the features of late eighth-century Chan literature (colloquialism, subitism, Daoist influence, and criticism of reified notions of meditation and transgression) may mean that they are later than Broughton suggests. At the same time, one cannot rule out the possibility that some of the material in these texts is from earlier strata in the formation of Chan.

<sup>42</sup> This story first appears as a motif of patriarchal succession in the early eighth-century *Chuan fabao ji* 傳法寶紀 (*Annals of the Transmission of the Dharma-Treasure*), where Huike instantly cuts off his arm when Bodhidharma asks him if he could give up his life for the sake of the Dharma; see Yanagida (1971, 365).

ceases the production of characteristics in no-thought, one realizes the fundamental non-existence of transgressions.

In the famous “mirror” verses attributed to Shenxiu and Huineng in the *Platform Sūtra* (to which we will return at the end), the mirror-mind metaphor is used to reject the notion that there is any validity to practices bent on purifying the mind of “dust,” *kleśas* (Yampolsky 1967, 128–33).<sup>43</sup> This is the antithesis of the use of the mirror in Lingyu’s verse, where removal of *kleśas* allows the practitioner’s mind to mirror the *dharmadhātu*. Instead, in the formative Chan polemic captured in the war of the verses in the *Platform Sūtra*, emphasis on the non-reality of *kleśas* is itself reified, made into a “mirror-stand.”

Similarly, I suggest, the Chan master’s typical challenge to a disciple to “bring me” something indeterminable (your transgression, your mind, a rhinoceros) that echoes through Chan encounter-dialogue literature has roots in the formative Chan rejection of the practice of bringing one’s *kleśas* and confessing and repenting before the buddhas, represented by images and preceptors. The Chan master becomes the one to whom one presents one’s mind, and also the one who smashes the notion of the suchness mirror/matrix as “other.”

## Addressing the Confessing Animal

In our own intellectual milieu, one of the most widely recognized voices on the confessional mode is Michel Foucault’s, which I can neither address adequately nor ignore. Confession is a key theme in *The History of Sexuality* and a thread running throughout Foucault’s writings on the politics of language and the “technologies of the self” (Foucault [1976] 1978; 1988). One obvious gap between his work and this one is that Baoshan’s culture of confession and repentance was not centered on sexuality. Yet there is a critical intersection in the two confessional contexts—the effect of an enhanced awareness of causality.

Tracing historical connections between the pressures brought to bear on the procedures of confession and the development of scientific discursivity, Foucault asks, “How did this immense and traditional extortion of the sexual confession come to be constituted in scientific terms?” He includes the

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<sup>43</sup> In this famous episode, the fifth patriarch Hongren has asked the monks to write verses to demonstrate their understanding.

following in the catalogue of means: “*Through the postulate of a general and diffuse causality*. Having to tell everything, being able to pose questions about everything, found their justification in the principle that endowed sex with an inexhaustible and polymorphous causal power” ([1976] 1978, 65).

I would suggest that in the medieval Buddhist soteriological project of removing *kleśas*, it is volitional conceptualization rather than sexuality that is endowed with this inexhaustible and polymorphous causal power. Mahāmāyā’s lament addressed to her own volitions is based on the fundamental Buddhist teaching that *samskāras* or constructing activities, the fourth of the five *skandhas* or factors of personality, is the function through which intention-driven thoughts and actions are generated. It is these karma-producing activities that have the power of ongoing conception of the self, by which beginningless polymorphous births are tied to polymorphous deaths. Moreover, in Buddhist attitudes to volitional conceptualization there is also an intrinsic “principle of latency.” We could substitute for “sex” the word “conceptualization” in the following sentence, and express a Buddhist principle: “If it was necessary to extract the truth of sex through the technique of confession, this was not simply because it was difficult to tell, or stricken by the taboos of decency, but because the ways of sex were obscure; it was elusive by nature; its energy and its mechanisms escaped observation, and its causal power was partly clandestine” (Foucault [1976] 1978, 66).

Volitional thought is karmic, and the Buddhist subject is made aware that deeds of body, speech, and mind—especially those he/she cannot remember from past lives—continue to beget further volitional acts though mechanisms that escape ordinary observation. The confession and repentance liturgy is meticulous and even redundant in categorically including all past lives and every act, utterance, and intention that the subject desires to be exposed to the penetrating gaze and purifying gaze of innumerable buddhas.

In various works, Foucault returns to a key moment in the creation of the modern subject: the Reformation, when confession to a priest and absolution were renounced. Instead, the practice of the pious became private prayer, attempting to create a subject whose self-awareness is consciousness of an unmediated relationship with God. At the same time, this personal articulation corresponded to a burgeoning professional discourse (scientific, legal, and medical) on sexuality, and this became part of the arsenal of technologies of knowledge and power contributing to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century progressive rationalizations of labor (Foucault [1976] 1978, 17–35, 58–73, 116–31).

The arrival of Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* was, unlike Mahāmāyā's, conceived as liberation. This corresponded with further removal of mediators and the distancing of God as wholly transcendent and eventually dispensable. As the judge of the self became ever more interiorly unmitigated and externally rationalized, absolution became indeterminable.

Somehow, across the gaps of time and place that we have just traversed so quickly, it appears that confession still retains its character as both revealer and congealer of potent latencies. It also remains a quintessential medium of relationship, even in the disembodied, fragmented, and solipsistic interactions of social media. Conception of the parties and witnesses to the transactions may change radically, but desire for absolute self-exposure appears to be as resilient as its object is elusive. And in the pursuit of further means, technologies, or *upāya* of transparency, there remains an implied other, even if it is conceived as oneself.

Facing the outer west wall of Dazhusheng cave, the means appear straightforward: one confesses and repents to individually named buddhas, thereby invoking an incalculability of salvific expedients. At the same time, this ritual of erasure of self-conditioning through relationship with skillful illusion was not regarded as antithetical to the verses that are carved on the outer east wall, the *Wuchang ji* 無常偈 (*Verses on Impermanence*) based on the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra*. Without any reference to bodhisattvas or buddhas, these verses glorify “tranquil extinction” as permanence, joy, self, and purity (*chang le wo jing* 常樂我淨). This is symmetrically presented as the clear mirror of the “compounded things” (*zhuxing* 諸行, *saṃskāras*) marked by suffering, impermanence, and no-self. The rites of recitation that take place before these two walls, the confession of innumerable consequential acts and the celebration of the extinction of their traces, were meant to actualize the true nature of the reflexive subject, the own-nature that mirrors/is buddha-nature. Baoshan's inscriptions includes references to the evil of defiled nature that would seem at home in Christian contexts, yet the difference is that defiled nature is said to be conditioned through past directions taken by the practitioner's mind, as provisionally effective and ultimately empty as the buddhas she evokes. The devotee is seen by/as buddha, and only damned insofar as her vision is self-eluded.

## Conclusion

In the context in which confession-repentance was engraved at Dazhusheng cave, the “technology of the self” at stake was the real possibility of *chengfo* 成佛, becoming buddha (Tsiang 2008). The means were at once immediate access (*tathāgatagarbha*), intercessional access (the great bodhisattvas), and cosmic access (Vairocana). In the *Mahāmāyā-sūtra*, the Buddha’s mother addressing (and dressing down) the mind that has been formed through her volitional thought is like an extended personal confession and repentance encompassing all the possible destinies of delusion. Just on the other side of the wall, the *Chanhui wen* provides the means to turn the performative power of thought back on itself, by calling on the buddhas to bear witness. The scene fulfills the *Jueding pini jing* prescription for practice in an “isolated place” during which the ritual was to be performed at the six times of day and night while visualizing (*guan* 觀) the buddhas and contemplating (*siwei* 思惟) their merit. Then, “If the bodhisattva is able to completely purify these transgressions, at that time the buddhas will reveal their bodies for him/her.”<sup>44</sup> This revelation was not sought for the sake of the spectacle; instead, it was so that the practitioner could directly address the buddhas with the prayer to *yinian wo*, “recollect me.” The response to that prayer is the realization of the empty nature of mind/buddhas, as evoked in Lingyu’s verse, above: “I beseech the buddhas to spread the radiance of their compassion and shine it on suffering beings; make the *kleśas* accumulated all entirely disappear. One’s own nature, pure mind, from this reaches its ultimate, the undifferentiated absolute *dharmadhātu*, and attains perfection now.”

To provide an image for the continuity of this soteriology under Chan erasure, I would now like to revisit the most famous scene in Chan literature, the legendary battle of the verses in the *Platform Sūtra* alluded to above. Shenxiu offers up his understanding to the fifth patriarch Hongren 弘忍 (602–675) in the following verse:

The body is the Bodhi tree  
The mind is like a clear mirror  
At all times we must strive to polish it,  
And must not let the dust (*kleśa*) collect.

And the future sixth patriarch Huineng responds:

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<sup>44</sup> *Jueding pini jing*, T 325, 12: 38c19–39b1.

Bodhi originally has no tree,  
The mirror has no stand,  
Buddha-nature is always clear and pure;  
Where is there any dust? (Yampolsky 1967, 128–33)

In Lingyu's milieu, which is the dust that the Chan masters shake from their feet, it was not necessary to speak of "polishing" the mirror. In Dazhusheng cave as well as in the Chan hall, it was taught that the mind and its afflictions are like nothing at all, such that buddhas or dust may appear. Repentance was not for preventing the collection of dust, it was for activating the recollection of buddhas. *Yinian wo* originally has no "me" or *wo*, and *wunian* has no *wu* or "no"—where is there any difference?

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### Abbreviation

T = *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 太正新修大藏經 (*Taishō Era Revised Tripiṭaka*), Edited by Takakusu Junjiro 高楠順次郎. Tokyo: Daizō shuppan kai, 1922–1933.

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*Baolin zhuan* 寶林傳 (*Transmission of the Baolin [Temple]*). 801, by Zhiju 智炬. In *Zhongguo fojiao congshu: Chanzong bian* 中國佛教叢書：禪宗編 (*Compendium of Chinese Buddhism: Chan School*), 1.18: 507–659. (Beijing: Jianguo guji, 1993.)

*Chuan fabao ji* 傳法寶紀 (*Annals of the Transmission of the Dharma-Treasure*). Ca. 713, by Du Fei 杜朏. T 2838, 85; P 2634; P 3858; P 3559. See Yanagida (1971).

*Dabanniepan jing* 大般涅槃經 (*Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*). T 374 and 375, 12.

*Dafanguang fo huayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經 (*[Buddha]avatamsaka-sūtra*, *Flower Garland Scripture*). T 278, 9; T 279; T 293, 10.

*Diamond Sūtra*; see *Jin'gang banruopoluomi jing*.

*Fanwang jing* 梵網經 (*Brahmajāla-sūtra*; *Sūtra of Brahma's Net*). Apocryphon, early 5th c. T 1484, 24; trans. attributed to Kumārajīva.

*Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林 (*Jade Grove of the Dharma Garden*), by Daoshi 道世 (ca. 596–683). T 2122, 53.

*Foming jing* 佛名經 (*Sūtra of the Names of the Buddhas*). T 441, 14.

*Guan Yaowang Yaoshang er pusa jing* 觀藥王藥上二菩薩經 (*Sūtra on Visualizing the Two Bodhisattvas Bhaiṣajyarāja and Bhaiṣajyasamudgata*). Likely to be a Central Asian apocryphon. Trans. attributed to Kālayāśas 彊良耶舍 (383–442). T 1161, 20.

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*Jin'gang banruo poluomi jinglun* 金剛般若波羅蜜經論, T 1511, 25.

*Jin'gang banruopoluomi jing* 金剛般若波羅蜜經 (*Vajracchedikāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, *Diamond Sūtra*). T 235–239, 8.

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