

## Article

# Hongzan's Maitreya Belief in the Context of Late Imperial Chinese Monastic Revival and Chan Decline

Xing Wang

History Faculty, Fudan University, Shanghai 200433, China; xingwang@fudan.edu.cn

**Abstract:** This paper shows that the early Qing Chinese Buddhist monk Zaisan Hongzan's belief in Maitreya and Tuṣita Heaven pure lands, as reflected in his collection of miracle tales and biographies, should be understood in a broader socio-religious context of Chan decline and monastic revival in late imperial China. It is important to notice that instead of advocating for the combination of Chan and Amitābha's Pure Land of Bliss practice, Hongzan proposed the most severe criticism of the Chinese Chan tradition since the Song dynasty. Through both his personal doctrinal writings and the narrative strategies applied in his Tuṣita Heaven miracle tales, Hongzan vividly displayed his concerns about literary Chan practice and argued for the pivotal and urgent need for Vinaya among monastic communities. Hongzan's personal anti-Chan sentiment and his intention to reestablish the study and practice of Buddhist Vinaya disciplines in a time of alleged "crisis" of Chinese Buddhism strongly influenced how he composed and transcribed eminent monks' biographies related to the cult of Maitreya and Tuṣita Heaven. A "hagiographic" reading of Hongzan's miracle tale collections is necessary to understand his religious discourse in this special historical stage in China.

**Keywords:** Zaisan Hongzan; *Doushuai guijing ji*; Maitreya; Tuṣita Heaven; Chan Buddhism; Qing dynasty Buddhism



**Citation:** Wang, Xing. 2022.

Hongzan's Maitreya Belief in the Context of Late Imperial Chinese Monastic Revival and Chan Decline. *Religions* 13: 890. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13100890>

Academic Editors: Jinhua Chen and Kai Sheng

Received: 1 September 2022

Accepted: 20 September 2022

Published: 22 September 2022

**Publisher's Note:** MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



**Copyright:** © 2022 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction

The tradition of pursuing ascendance to Bodhisattva Maitreya's (Mile pusa 彌勒菩薩) Tuṣita Heaven (*Doushuai tuo tian* 兜率陀天) has a long history in Chinese Buddhism. Originally, certain Theravada and Mahāyāna Buddhist texts depict Maitreya, probably a member of Buddha's monastic sangha community, as the future Buddha after Śākyamuni (or Siddhartha Gautama, the original Buddha and founder of Buddhism). It is believed that Maitreya will descend to the human realm of the Saḥā world (*Suopo shijie* 娑婆世界) to preach the teaching of Dharma when Śākyamuni's teaching completely diminishes. When this happens, the average lifespan of the people in this world will increase to more than eighty thousand years (Lancaster 2005, pp. 5618–19). In the Mahāyāna belief system, Maitreya is worshipped as a powerful deity like similar Bodhisattvas such as Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī. The early cult (in its broadest sense as an ensemble of collective religious worship) of Maitreya resulted in numerous iconographic traditions in India and Central Asia (Kim 1997, pp. 9–32; Granoff 2010). In the later development of the worship of Maitreya the inner pure realm of Tuṣita Heaven, where the "Buddha-to-be" Maitreya resides before his final enlightenment, gradually became a paradise-like "pure land" (*jingtu* 淨土) where believers would reincarnate. These believers would thus avoid the disastrous period of the decline of Dharma and wait for the "golden age" of humanity, during which Maitreya will descend and gain final enlightenment (Nattier 1988, pp. 23–47). South and Southeast Asian Maitreya cults never showed the tendency to treat Tuṣita Heaven as a place of rebirth after a believer's death, however; rather, this aspect of the Maitreya belief system was perhaps confined to Mahāyāna texts and traditions transmitted to the north (Jaini 1988, pp. 54–90). Matsumoto (Matsumoto 1911, pp. 2–9) suspected that the pure land belief of Tuṣita Heaven was only peripheral in the Maitreya cult before it arrived in China. He believed

that it was the Chinese Buddhists who established this pure land understanding of Tuṣita Heaven on a doctrinal level and developed complex practices based on this understanding. Two particular kinds of scriptures translated into Chinese during the Northern and Southern Dynasties period (220–589 CE) initiated the cult of Maitreya in China. The first kind, scriptures like the *Sūtra of Visual Contemplation of Ascendance to Maitreya's Tuṣita Heaven* (*Foshuo guan Mile pusa shangsheng doushuai tian jing* 佛說觀彌勒菩薩上生兜率天經) (T14, 418b–420c), promoted the idea of a paradise-like Tuṣita Heaven as a place for meritorious rebirth. On the other hand, scriptures of the second kind, like the *Sūtra of Maitreya's Descent to [the Human Realm] and Attainment of Buddhahood* (*Foshuo Mile xiasheng chengfo jing* 佛說彌勒下生成佛經) (T14, 423c–425c), accentuated Maitreya's role as the future Buddha during a golden age of humanity (Chen 1964, p. 405; Kitagawa 1981). One can say that early canonical literatures and sources from indigenous communities do not show a unanimous narrative of Maitreya; however, a strong focus on the pure land of Tuṣita Heaven is already present in these early works (Anderl 2016).

Maitreya worship in China can be understood as divided into two strands: a more orthodox one limited to the educated monastic and lay believers, and a more “popular” and trans-stratum one with conspicuous messianic and eschatological themes (Zürcher [1980] 2013b). The unorthodox strand's influence can be noted in many later Chinese religious “rebellions” and millenarian movements. Scholars have generally paid more attention to the unorthodox, millenarian aspect of the Chinese Maitreya cult (Overmyer 1976, pp. 225–26; Ownby 1999). Some may argue, however, that rather than representing an essentially unorthodox religious symbol the messianic image of Maitreya was only domesticated into the Chinese political cosmology of dynastic change. This argument holds that those who failed their politico-military campaign in the name of Maitreya were labelled “unorthodox” by the establishment (Hughes 2021, pp. 44–60).

Similarly, the religious practice of the orthodox and more monastic-oriented Maitreya cult—and, in particular, the belief of Tuṣita Heaven as a pure land for rebirth—drew interest from both monastic elites and lay believers. Lee (2010, pp. 139–202) argues that based on the visual representations of Tuṣita Heaven in Dunhuang murals, we can assume that the belief in rebirth in Tuṣita Heaven was particularly welcome by lay communities in medieval China. A strong emphasis on monastic practice and systematic doctrinal study can also be detected in some aspects of the medieval Chinese Maitreya cult. The eminent monk of the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420 CE), Daoan 道安 (312–385 CE), was one of the earliest recorded believers in Tuṣita Heaven in Chinese Buddhist historiography. He saw ascending to Tuṣita Heaven as a way to solve doubts about Buddha's teachings, and was famous for fervently advocating for monastic rules, professional dhyāna meditation, and the understanding of Mahāyāna wisdom (Zhang 2009). Many medieval Chinese and Korean monastic elites—including the master of Chinese Yogācāra, master Kuiji 窺基 (632–682 CE)—linked Tuṣita Heaven to Mahāyāna doctrines and practices. This made belief in the Tuṣita Heaven pure land a contested tradition against Amitābha's (*Ami tuofo* 阿彌陀佛) Western Pure Land of Bliss (Sukhavati; *Xifang jile shijie* 西方極樂世界) (Wang 2016, pp. 84–88; McBride 2016). In some scholars' views, however, the monastic Maitreya cult, especially monastic Tuṣita Heaven practice, suffered from gradual decline after the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE). According to these scholars, this decline was due to multiple political and religious changes; as a result, belief in Tuṣita Heaven was never as competitive as Amitābha's Pure Land belief among monastic communities (Hou 2014; Wang 1992).

Moreover, unlike Amitābha's Pure Land tradition, the Tuṣita Heaven cult in China lacked an exclusive “rebirth biography” collection (*wangsheng zhuan* 往生傳) until the early Qing dynasty (1636–1912 CE). Although stories of monastic figures' rebirth in Tuṣita Heaven are scattered throughout historical records from different periods, these stories were never collected and edited in the manner of a Tuṣita Heaven hagiography similar to the long and influential textual tradition of Sukhavati rebirth biographies. Only during the early Qing dynasty was a collection of Tuṣita Heaven rebirth miracle tales, *The Anthology of Exemplary Tales of Tuṣita Heaven Rebirth* (*Doushuai guijing ji* 兜率龜鏡集) (X88, pp. 50a–74a)<sup>1</sup>,

compiled. The *Anthology* was compiled by a monastic elite, Zaisan Hongzan 在慘弘贊 (1611–1686 CE), from Guangdong. One chapter of this text is exclusively dedicated to the stories of monastic figures who were believed to have successfully attained rebirth in Tuṣita Heaven and to accounts of their miraculous signs before death. This *Anthology* was unprecedented, and it also has had no succession in the history of Chinese Buddhism. Thus, it is the only Tuṣita Heaven rebirth hagiography written in Chinese.

At first glance, one may see this text as a *creatio ex nihilo*—a “creation out of nothing,” produced without reference to the extant religious and cultural tradition—and thus misfit to the broader religious landscape of late Ming (1368–1644 CE) and early Qing dynasty Buddhism. Before and after Hongzan, the cult of Tuṣita Heaven was seldom mentioned or advocated for by monastic and lay authorities. Why would Hongzan attempt to produce such a text? What is so special in his understanding of the Maitreya cult that he had to accentuate and establish it in an early Qing Buddhist context? In this article, I argue that the *Anthology* should not be regarded simply as an isolated creation of Hongzan. Instead, this text should be understood in the context of Hongzan’s “revisionist Chan” sentiment. It reflects Hongzan’s intention to restore Chinese Buddhist monasticism in late imperial China, in contrast to two competing Buddhist schools: the so-called “declining” Chan school and the all-encompassing, lay-oriented Amitābha’s Pure Land belief.

Shinohara (1988) was the first to argue that miraculous stories and biographies of eminent monks in China should not be treated simply as objective historical records or trivial hearsays. Rather, he showed that these works served as a platform for their editors to display their own intentions and religious beliefs, as well as political motives, via meticulous narrative instruments (Shinohara 1988, pp. 94–128). Kieschnick (1997, pp. 1–8) also believed that works like biographies of medieval Chinese eminent monks should be regarded as writers’, editors’, and compilers’ active constructions of ideal images of these eminent figures. Even the less systematic and elitist, more “event-oriented” early Chinese Buddhist miracle tales, as Campany (2012, pp. 17–30) points out, are narrations of memories and ideals instead of mere recordings of empirical facts. Chen (2007), in his study of the hagiographic narrative of the famous Tang Chinese Buddhist Huayan school patriarch Fazang 法藏 (643–712 CE), similarly concludes that

The biography-hagiography dilemma is determined by an intrinsic feature of discursive activity: any description implies a certain kind of prescription, no matter how subtle; and vice versa, any prescription cannot avoid taking on a certain degree of detail. (Chen 2007, p. 3)

This idea was also proposed by Jorgensen (2005, pp. 9–31) in his earlier investigation of the hagiographic construction of the Chan master Huineng 惠能 (638–713 CE). Similar literary and religious strategies can be seen in Hongzan’s *Anthology*. What is particularly interesting in Hongzan’s compilation in late imperial China of this miracle tale collection is the intentions and pursuits behind the work. In this paper I wish to explore how narratives of the stories in the *Anthology* carry certain prescriptive features and how these stories are used by Hongzan as reactions to the “crises” in late imperial Chinese Buddhism. Linking Hongzan’s personal writings to the formation and narrative strategy of the *Anthology*, I aim to show how Hongzan delineated an independent monastic “lineage” of the Maitreya cult to compete with Chan and Amitābha’s Pure Land traditions.

## 2. Disputes over Chan and the Pure Land in Late Imperial China

It is generally believed that the Southern Sect of Chinese Chan Buddhism established by the Tang patriarch Huineng was gradually divided into five different strands (*zong* 宗) in late Tang and early Song (Linji 臨濟, Caodong 曹洞, Fayan 法眼, Yunmen 雲門 and Weiyang 滄仰), and Linji and Caodong became the two most influential Chan traditions during the Song dynasty (960–1279 CE) as recorded in Song dynasty Chan historiographies (Dumoulin 1994, pp. 211–42). In Ming dynasty, Chan Buddhism received more and more negative comments from inside and outside Chinese Buddhist communities. The late Ming/early Qing Neo-Confucian literati Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (1610–1695 CE) once

commented that “before the Wanli period [1573–1620 CE], the wind of Chan was dying out” (*Wanli Yiqian, zongfeng shuaixi* 萬曆以前，宗風衰息) (Huang 1993, p. 513). The “decline” of Chan Buddhism in Ming and early Qing China had been repeatedly mentioned by late imperial Chan masters; some pointed to the intertwined relationship between Buddhist enlightenment and the practice of Chan meditation using texts and words as a reason for this decline (Wu 2008, pp. 33–45). The famous late Ming dynasty Caodong Chan master Zhanran Yuancheng 湛然圓澄 (1561–1626 CE) reprimanded Chan communities of his time in his well-known critical work *Lament of the Tradition* (*Kaigu lu* 慨古錄), as he believed that the “authentic” practice of Chan had been lost:

The ancient [Chan] masters respectfully held previous Chan patriarchs’ mind seals [印] [of wisdom]<sup>2</sup>, and flexibly and subtly utilized them. [They] used Buddha’s uppermost methods as the ultimate instruction for all sentient beings [to attain wisdom]. When their disciples did not contemplate sufficiently, [the ancient masters] encouraged their disciples to work hard [on understanding the mind seals] day and night, and to [practice incessantly] regardless of months and years, then [the disciples] could successfully be enlightened. Nowadays, Chan masters only talk about Chan according to their own lineage styles, and only speak of the critical commentaries [written on the Chan records]. [They] look like performers in a theatre. Although they wish to add on only half of a character [of their own to the commentaries], [they] fail in the end. Their disciples cannot discern right and wrong [in what these masters say]. They listen to [their masters’ lecture] once, and they claim that they have exhausted the teaching of Chan. If the teaching of Chan is that easy, [then] what were those ancient masters’ decades of study and contemplation for? Is it because people’s intelligence today is better than [that of] the ancient masters? Therefore, today those who talk about Chan are possessed by the devil Māra.<sup>3</sup>

古之為宗師者，高提祖印，活弄懸拈，用佛祖向上機關，作眾生最後開示。學者參叩不及處，勸其日夜提持，不記年月，然後悟入。今之宗師依本談禪，惟講評唱，大似戲場優人。雖本欲加半字不得，學者不審皂白，聽了一遍，已謂通宗。宗果如是易者，古人三二十年參學，竟為何事。豈今人之根，利於古人耶？由是而推，今之談宗者，是魔所持耳。(X65, 371c)

Yuancheng did not attribute the decline of Buddhism solely to the loss of an “authentic” Chan tradition in his writing. It is clear, however, that in his eyes “crises” from inside the Chan religious community played a major role in diminishing the monastic authority of Chan in addition to the treats posed by the sociopolitical climate. He is not alone in blaming Chan monks for abusing Chan literature and meditation. Other late Ming Caodong masters like Wuming Huijing 無明慧經 (1548–1618 CE) and Yongjue Yuanxian 永覺元賢 (1578–1657 CE) also strongly criticized the “degenerate” Chan communities of the period and the loss of “authentic” Chan practices and teachings (Guo 1982, pp. 119–61). The Linji 臨濟 (a Chan sect) Chan master Hanyue Fazang 漢月法藏 (1573–1635 CE) was another monastic elite who held a negative attitude towards the practice of Chan, lamenting on the loss of the true meaning of Linji and other Chan clans (X65, 106c).

These problems, as listed by Yuancheng, include the obsession with Chan texts and words, contempt for other Chinese Buddhist teachings and practices, and the neglect of Vinaya disciplines, a set of “discipline of Buddhist monastics and the associated literature that guides and regulates those who cultivate that discipline” (Hallisey 2007, p. 807). This led to a kind of “ludicrous Chan” (*kuangchan* 狂禪) that denied the efficacy of any gradual effort toward attaining enlightenment, holding that only “instantaneous epiphany” or “sudden enlightenment” (*dunwu* 頓悟) could lead to enlightenment (X65, 371c–374c; Jiang 2006, pp. 11–20). The strict, abusive use of Chan masters’ enlightening “public cases” (*gongan* or *kōan* 公案) and “critical phrases” (*huaou* 話頭) in Chan meditation had, according to several Chan masters during the Ming dynasty, partially caused problems that led to the decline of Chan and monasticism in China (Chen 2007, pp. 38–60). These literary tools were



traditionally short stories, encounter dialogues between masters and students or phrases used as a meditation tool in literary Chan practice. The cases consisted of recording sayings of Chan masters, which were typically not understood literally since a plethora of these sayings are nonsensical or illogical (Buswell 1991, pp. 321–80; McRae 2003, pp. 74–100). Rather, public cases and critical phrases used allusions, paradoxes, or wordplay to encourage contemplation. Students of Chan were encouraged to reflect on the enigmatic cases, or on a single critical word or phrase from the cases, to transcend mental duality and attain wisdom. Starting from the Song dynasty Linji tradition, this “literary Chan” (*wenzi chan* 文字禪), which focused on the enigmatic and ineffable meaning of prominent Chan patriarchs’ dialogues and words in Chan literature, transformed Chan into an exclusive, “anti-intellectual” practice that was at the same time highly performative and ritualistic. It seems that final enlightenment or “epiphany” became the only priority in this tradition (Schlütter 2008, pp. 107–16; Sharf 2007, pp. 205–43).

Dissatisfactions with the status quo of Chan grew rapidly, and this understanding gradually became unanimous among prominent monks during the late Ming dynasty. Prominent monastic masters without clear Chan lineage, such as Zibai Zhenke 紫柏真可 (1543–1603 CE) and Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清 (1546–1623 CE), also saw the late Ming period as a time when Chinese Chan Buddhism was in urgent need of reform. These masters attempted to transform and revive Chan in combination with Tiantai/Huayan, Yogācāra, and Pure Land of Bliss teachings, with a strong focus on monastic Vinaya disciplines (Cleary 1985, pp. 137–63; Fan 2001, pp. 223–72; Leong 1994, pp. 95–96). Although many masters offered their criticisms in order to stimulate reform and restore Chan, one consequence of their ruthless attacks was that Chan practice as a whole, and monastic Chan community in particular, became a target attracting more criticism. This vicious circle further sabotaged the very foundation of Chan practice since the Song dynasty: that is, the pursuit of perfect wisdom via understanding the ineffable meanings of Chan literature (Chen 2012, pp. 41–69). Admittedly, the monastic elites’ view of a declining Buddhism might be subjective, given that lay Buddhist movements, the synthesis between Buddhism and Confucianism, and the so-called “unorthodox” Buddhist sects prospered in contrast to the decline of Chan Buddhism (Araki 1979, pp. 11–12; ter Haar 2014, pp. 7–10). Yet these masters’ belief in a declining Chan tradition reflects their strong emphasis on monasticism, monastic authority, and the “authentic” Chan Buddhism of the past (Wu 2015, pp. 21–52).

Because of the long-lasting pessimism and debates in Chan Buddhist communities, as well as criticism from both inside and outside Buddhism, many prominent monastic figures began to seek a revival and transformation of Chan Buddhism from different directions. During the late Ming period, Yunqi Zhuhong 雲棲祿宏 was one of the pioneers who established Amitābha’s Pure Land tradition as a remedy for Chan. He saw rebirth in the Pure Land as the ultimate goal for Chan practitioners, writing:

Therefore [one] could know that although a Chan practitioner should constantly investigate into one’s original heart in one’s mind, it is better that [one] also make of vow of rebirth in the Pure Land of Bliss. What is the reason for this? [Because] although enlightenment could be attained via Chan meditation, [the enlightened one] could not stay in the realm of Eternal Light of Tranquility like Buddha. [One] also could not terminate Saṃsāra like an Arhat.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, after the death of one’s reincarnated body in this life, there must be a place of rebirth [in the next life]. Instead of being born as a human and learning from the enlightened masters, why not attain rebirth in the lotus [of Pure Land] and learn from Amitābha Buddha? Thus, not only does the *nianfo* [Buddha Name Invocation] not serve as an obstacle to Chan meditation, it is beneficial to Chan.

故知參禪人雖念念究自本心，而不妨發願，願命終時往生極樂。所以者何？參禪雖得個悟處，倘未能如諸佛住常寂光，又未能如阿羅漢不受後有。則盡此報身，必有生處。與其生人世而親近明師，孰若生蓮花而親近彌陀之為勝乎？然則念佛不惟不礙參禪，實有益於參禪也。(J 33, 51c)

According to Zhuhong, the Buddha Name Invocation (*nianfo* 念佛) practice is highly compatible with the practice of Chan. In *nianfo* practice, from the Pure Land tradition, practitioners repeat the name of Amitābha Buddha in pursuit of rebirth in the lotus of Pure Land of Bliss for non-regression on the Bodhisattva path. Araki (2001, pp. 191–200) points out that in Zhuhong’s conscious combination of Chan and Pure Land, he came to believe that Chan practices are of secondary importance compared to those of Pure Land, and that Chan practices should thus never be separated from Pure Land practice. Yü (1981, p. 69) argues that in Zhuhong’s time Chan was seen as almost “incurable” and that, for this reason, Zhuhong tried to replace traditional Chan meditation with *nianfo* practice.

Similarly, Zhuhong’s spiritual Dharma heir, Ouyi Zhixu 藕益智旭 (1599–1655), made the most extreme comments criticizing Chan of his day. He turned to Tiantai and Pure Land traditions for salvation, detaching himself from the Chan lineages of his time. Shi (2007, pp. 141–89) argues that Zhixu’s critical and “revisionist” sentiment may have been inherited from certain Caodong masters. Zhixu did not refute all Chan traditions and practices, but he clearly expressed his disappointment with the incorrigible (in his view) Chan community during the Ming dynasty. He intended to exclude this type of Chan from his synthesis of Buddhist doctrines; instead, he reinvented and advocated for a type of Chan meditation in light of the influential *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* (*Lengyan jing* 楞嚴經) (Zhang 1975, pp. 355–56). Considering the “authentic” Chan practices from the Tang and Song dynasties to have completely died out by the Ming period, Zhixu believed that Amitābha’s Pure Land *nianfo* practice combined all Chinese Buddhist traditions into one.<sup>5</sup> So, there was no need to recognize a Chan tradition independent from Pure Land. In this sense, Chan meditation is only a part of *nianfo* (J 36, 342a; Nakayama 1973; Xiao 2013). In the Qing period, the Pure Land monk Chewu Jixing 徹悟際醒 (1741–1810 CE) claimed that Pure Land *nianfo* was a better version of Chan than any other Chan meditations. This means that, for Jixing, there was no need to maintain an autonomous Chan tradition (X62, 333c–334a).

These criticisms of Chan in late imperial China and the endeavors to replace Chan with Pure Land Buddhism did not solve the alleged problem of declining monasticism, however. It is well known that the Chinese Pure Land doctrine does not particularly emphasize monasticism (Andrews 1993). On the contrary, Amitābha’s Pure Land of Bliss tradition is famous for its all-encompassing and “easy” aspects when compared to other Buddhist traditions. This doctrine holds that Amitābha receives sentient beings of all kinds of “capacities” and monastic identity, and that being enlightened is not necessary for the rebirth in the Pure Land of Bliss (Jones 2019, pp. 101–7). Accordingly, a Pure Land authority does not need to be a monastic member. In fact, Yunqi Zhuhong largely relied on the southern lay literati and female Buddhists in the construction of his Pure Land community (Eichman 2016, pp. 219–38). In Zhuhong’s compilation of rebirth biographies, he even compared accomplished lay female Pure Land practitioners to male monks and lamented the regression of monastic males, clearly elevating the position of laity in his Pure Land discourse (Wang 2021). That is to say, if the alleged decline of Chan is closely related to the decline of monasticism in late imperial Chinese Buddhism, the rise of Pure Land tradition as a solution does not guarantee the revival of monasticism. The rise of the double cultivations of Pure Land *nianfo* and Chan practices also attracted certain criticisms, since the combination of the two does not mean that the tension between the belief in a concrete Pure Land and the teaching of emptiness and mind-only wisdom is automatically dismantled (Jones 2019, pp. 143–66).

In addition to the issues of declining monasticism and tensions between Pure Land and Chan beliefs, other monastic masters’ attempts to revive and reform Chan from the inside also created new problems. As mentioned before, since the Song dynasty Chinese Chan practices had been dominated by the Linji tradition. This sect largely depends on the flexible use of Chan literatures. Alleged “crises” of late imperial Chinese Chan practice were believed to have been caused by exactly this kind of Chan meditation. As scholars have shown, Hanyue Fazang’s reforms on the practice of Linji Chan deepened the fissure within the Linji clan, and even caused the later Manchu ruler Yongzheng’s strong opposition to

Hanyue's lineage (Ma 2007; Wu 2008, pp. 163–82). This made the position of Chan in the early Qing period more sensitive than before. Caodong masters during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties tried to criticize the declining Linji clan and restore the old Song-style Caodong Chan. However, some prominent figures supported Pure Land beliefs as well; and, because of the long disagreement between the Caodong and Linji sects, Caodong masters usually denounced any contemporary use of Chan literature for meditation, finding any verbal interpretation of these literatures suspicious (Cai, pp. 146–269).

This left Chan religions leaders with an embarrassing dilemma. Apart from the Linji style of Chan, there seemed to be no predominant methods of practice that looked “purely” Chan. If this style of Chan is incorrigible and the solution is to replace Linji Chan with something that does not look typically Chan at all, how is talking about and teaching “authentic” Chan still possible? Moreover, since Chan Buddhism (in particular, the prominent Linji tradition) became the “culprit” in this discourse of decline and fall, should Chan become a part of monastic revival and the reform of Chinese Buddhism at all? Is Chan still relevant in general monastic practices of Vinaya disciplines, doctrinal study, and meditation? As we shall see, Hongzan's writings reflect a more extreme dimension of this revisionist sentiment to Chan that Chan as a performative act should be excluded from the narrative of monastic revival.

### 3. Hongzan's “Revisionist” Chan and Monastic Revival Sentiments

Zaisan Hongzan's biographic literatures are included in the *Records of Dinghu Mountain* (*Dinghu shan zhi* 鼎湖山志). This work was compiled by Chengjiu 成鷲 (1637–1722 CE), the remote Dharma heir of Hongzan. Qingyun Temple (*Qingyun si* 慶雲寺) in Dinghu Mountain was the main location where Hongzan resided and preached. According to the *Biography of Monk Zaisan* (*Zaisan heshang zhuan* 在慘和尚傳), Zaisan (birth name Zhu Ziren 朱子仁) was born in Guangdong during the late Ming dynasty to a Confucian literati family. After the death of his parents at an early age, he felt the emptiness of worldly life and started his religious pursuit as a Buddhist (Chengjiu 1717, juan 3, 2). He later founded the Hall of Qingyun (*Qingyun an* 慶雲庵) on Dinghu Mountain, which then developed into Qingyun Temple. Hongzan later met with the Caodong Chan master Qihe Daoqiu 棲壑道丘 (1586–1658 CE) in Guangzhou and was officially ordained by Qihe. Just before the fall of the Ming dynasty, Hongzan invited Qihe to become the abbot of Qingyun Temple. After Qihe's death during the early Qing dynasty, Hongzan became the second official abbot of Qingyun Temple.

As a prolific writer and Buddhist authority, Hongzan left 24 works. These included works on Buddhist teachings and about his personal experiences (Xian 2016, pp. 183–208). Interestingly, there is a discrepancy between Hongzan's biography and his own works. As Hongzan received his Dharma lineage from a Caodong master, his official identity should have been a Caodong monk. In his biography, it is recorded that during Qihe's period at Qingyun Temple Hongzan travelled to Zhejiang and Jiangsu area to study Chan with several Caodong patriarchs. This indicates that Hongzan was an industrious Caodong Chan disciple (Chengjiu 1717, juan 3, 4–5). His biography mentions nothing about Hongzan's other religious experiences. However, among his 24 works, only four of them look relevant to the study of Chan. Rather, the majority of his works are about the study of Vinaya disciplines and tantric rituals, despite his biography including nothing about his experience studying Vinaya and tantric Buddhism. This might be explained in terms of the tension between the formal Caodong Dharma lineage of Qingyun Temple and Hongzan's personal attitude towards Chan.

Chengjiu saw Hongzan as a member of Qingyun Temple's legitimate abbot line, the actual founder of Qingyun Temple and Chengjiu's own Dharma ancestor. In this sense, the *Records* is compiled to reflect the exploits and glory of Dinghu Mountain and Qingyun Temple as Chan “holy lands” in Guangdong, as well as the intactness of Chengjiu's own Chan lineage (Zhou 2009). This might be seen as Chengjiu's reaction to certain criticism of the loose Dharma inheritance system of Caodong and its legitimacy (Zhou 2009).

Although Hongzan's biography is originally written by one of his lay literati followers, Huo Zonghuang 霍宗瑄 (n.d.), the only version accessible today is the one edited by Chengjiu, in which nothing outside Hongzan's life as a Chan master is mentioned.

Despite Chengjiu's efforts to depict Hongzan as a Chan master, it is clear that during his life Hongzan did not put much effort into preaching Chan teachings. At least according to what is reflected in his writings, it seems that Hongzan spent most of his time working to reconstruct the study of Vinaya disciplines and spread tantric rituals. Hongzan's advocacy of Vinaya disciplines is a result of his concerns about the fall of monasticism—he believed when most of the monastic members did not obey Vinaya disciplines, the root of Buddhism is endangered. Hongzan once wrote:

What is the Canon of Monastic Disciplines [Prātimokṣa]? It is Buddhist monks' established standard, and the essence of [the path to] nirvana. If the rules are lost, then [one's] heart and mind are in disarray. If the essence is muddled, then the realm of full liberation is difficult to reach. Therefore, the Buddha had been inculcating [the importance of disciplines] from the beginning [of his teaching] in Mṛgā-dāva to the end [of his teaching] between the śāla trees to make [Buddha's disciples] treat Prātimokṣa as a teacher and see them in the same way [they see] Buddha. Buddhists today betrayed Buddha's final instructions and slandered Vinaya rules. How is that different from a rebellious son's fight against his compassionate father? [If one] practices [the Buddhist path] in contrast to [the disciplines], then even if [one] attains subtle enlightenment and dhyāna, it is in the end the conduct of the devil Māra.

夫戒本者何？乃比丘之規矧，涅槃之津要。規矧失則心慮無整，津要迷則彼岸難到。故如來首自鹿苑，終乎鶴樹，諄諄誨囑，俾依木叉為師，視同如佛。今人背遺囑，詆毗尼。何異逆子而抗慈父... 違此而修，縱得妙悟禪定現前，終是魔業。(X40, 192b)

Hongzan believed that during the Ming dynasty Vinaya was almost forgotten by monastic communities and that there were few fully ordained monks who did not violate Vinaya disciplines. He claimed that monks in his time were “falsely named bhikṣu [Buddhist monastics]” (*jiaming biqiu* 假名比丘) at most (X60, 703a). He even planned to travel to India to invite Buddhist practitioners there to import a full Vinaya system to China again in order to revive Chinese monastic Buddhism. Unbeknownst to him, Buddhism had almost died out in India at that time (X60, 703a). Moreover, the majority of Hongzan's works is dedicated to the study of translated Chinese monastic *Dharmagupta-Vinaya* (*sifen lü* 四分律) texts and relevant rules. In his *Precise Illustration of Dharmagupta-Vinaya* (*Sifen jieben rushi* 四分戒本如釋), he explicitly claimed that monastic communities obeying full Vinaya disciplines, especially monks, are the most noble according to Buddha's teachings, and all sacred Buddhist teachings and practices are generated by Vinaya:

Bhikṣu's Vinaya is utmost superior. [It] can be the benevolent protection and bless for human beings and celestial beings [who respect and make offering to Vinaya practitioners]. How could [one says] that [Vinaya] only [guarantees] an individual [practitioner's] own salvation from reincarnation? ... Vinaya is the essence of dhyāna meditation, and [non-dual] wisdom is the function of dhyāna meditation. If the essence is not set up, then the function will not work. Therefore, all the [Buddhist] sages and saints accomplished [their cultivation] via [the practice of] Vinaya, and the seven kinds of [Buddhist] communities<sup>6</sup> are established based on [different kinds of] Vinaya. This is why after the Southern Chan patriarch Huineng gained enlightenment, [he] still needed to ascend to the monastic ordination platform to receive full monastic Vinaya codes.<sup>7</sup> The [Huaya school master] Qingliang Chengguan was actually [the incarnation of] Bodhisattva Huayan, [and he still] strictly regulated himself with the Ten Precepts [based on Prañidhāna Bodhisattva Precepts].<sup>8</sup> Among all the patriarchs in history, is there [anyone] who liberated other people as a lay master? All Buddha from



the past, at present and in the future treated Vinaya [and Bodhisattva Precepts] as the primary rules [among Buddhist teachings]. Therefore, immediately after our Buddha Śākyamuni attained Buddhahood under the Bodhi tree, [he] made the vow of Bodhisattva Prātimokṣa with numerous Bodhisattvas.

比丘之戒極尊，能為人天而作良祐福田，豈但自出生死而已... 戒是定之體，慧乃定之用。苟體不立，用無從施。是故一切聖賢咸從戒成，七衆法子悉由戒立。故南宗得法之後，猶須登壇稟受。清涼國師，乃華嚴菩薩，自以十律嚴身。歷代祖師，何有白衣度人？三世如來，皆以戒為首約。故我釋尊初坐菩提樹下，即與諸菩薩結波羅提木叉。(X40, 193b)

Here Hongzan emphasized the absolute authority of monastic community and Vinaya. By saying that no accomplished Buddhist patriarch in history preached Buddha's teaching and taught their students as lay persons, he seemed to deny the possibility of becoming a Buddhist authority only by obeying lay disciplines. Interestingly, he also tried to reconcile Vinaya and Chinese Prañidhāna Bodhisattva Precepts (*pusa jie* 菩薩戒) in the context of monastic superiority. The last sentence in the quoted text actually refers to the establishment of Bodhisattva Precepts from a famous Chinese Buddhist canon *Brahmajāla Sūtra* (*Fanwang jing* 梵網經).<sup>9</sup> The famous Tang dynasty Huayan School master Chengguan's Bodhisattva Precepts vows are also regarded as an evidence of the superiority of monasticism and monastic codes. Both monastic Vinaya and Bodhisattva Precepts are treated as "Bhikṣu's Vinaya" (*biqiu zhi jie* 比丘之戒) here. In Hongzan's view, the *Brahmajāla Sūtra* Bodhisattva Precepts seem not to contrast the Vinaya system but homogeneous to *Dharmagupta-vinaya*. However, in the *Brahmajāla Sūtra*, the Buddha clearly stated that for those Bodhisattvas' who vowed to follow this Mahāyāna Precepts system on their Bodhisattva Path, they are forbidden to follow the so-called Hīnayāna Vinaya, and the most popular version of Vinaya in China the *Dharmagupta-Vinaya* is certainly a part of the so-called Hīnayāna Vinaya system.<sup>10</sup> In addition, the *Brahmajāla Sūtra* Precepts system and similar Bodhisattva Precepts in China are sometimes seen as "upgrading" laity and blurring the boundaries between the monastic and lay, since this kind of Mahāyāna Precepts, unlike monastic disciplines, is open to both monastic members and lay practitioners (Zürcher [1980] 2013a, p. 297). But Hongzan saw no contradiction between the two, and at the beginning of his annotation and explanation of *Dharmagupta-Vinaya*, he deliberately juxtaposed these two systems as homogeneous to support his argument on Buddhist monastic members' authority. Hongzan was indeed aware of the discrepancies between the two systems, and made his own apologetic comment to assimilate these two systems. In Hongzan's *Brief Annotation to the Bodhisattva Precepts in Brahmajāla Sūtra* (*Fanwang jing pusa jie lueshu* 梵網經菩薩戒略疏), he composed a long comment to the saying in the canon that Bodhisattvas should not obey Hīnayāna Vinaya; he argued that Buddha's saying only means that a Bodhisattva should not agree with Hīnayāna perspectives and beliefs when obeying those disciplines, but ought to hold on to the Mahāyāna beliefs and perspectives and treat the so-called Hīnayāna Vinaya as fundamental and preparatory path to Mahāyāna cultivation.<sup>11</sup> If someone is a monastic Bodhisattva, then one should never abandon and calumniate monastic Vinaya but see it as equal to Bodhisattva Precepts. In other words, Hongzan believed that monastic Vinaya is a "subset" of Bodhisattva Precepts as well as an inevitable "first lesson" for the Bodhisattva Path. As both could systems be called "disciplines" (*jie* 戒), it is impossible that the full Mahāyāna Precepts could be completed by a lay Buddhist without fulfilling the requirements of Vinaya. The particular case of Huineng mentioned in the quoted passage above manifests exactly this kind of logic of Hongzan: Huineng could not start his transmission of Chan teaching before becoming a monk, since without Vinaya and a proper monastic identity, Huineng could not commence his Bodhisattva enterprise.

Hongzan was apparently deeply concerned with the loss of Vinaya among monastic communities. The study of Vinaya disciplines was, for him, the foundation of monastic life and required for successful Buddhist practice. Wen Jinyu argues that based on Hongzan's well-known prose "Instructions on Chan and Vinaya" (*Shi chanlü* 示禪律), Hongzan aimed

at establishing a discourse in which Chan and Vinaya disciplines were inseparable from each other (Wen 2020). Wen's evidence is that, in this prose, Hongzan claimed that

Chan without Vinaya means that the subtle path is difficult to practice; Vinaya without Chan means that the ineffable [wisdom] cannot be revealed. [If] Chan denies Vinaya then the monastic and the lay are confused; [if] Vinaya denies Chan then who could transmit the Chan masters' lamp [of wisdom]?

禪無律，則妙行難操；律無禪，則玄微莫徹。禪非律，而僧俗渾淆；律非禪，祖燈誰續。(J 35, 481c)

It seems that, according to the quotation above, Hongzan wished to treat Chan and Vinaya as equal and indispensable to each other. However, if we continue to read his short prose, we can find that rather than advocating the combination of Chan and Vinaya "practices" as two equal practices, Hongzan explicitly expressed that the wisdom of Chan cannot be practiced at all. Later in "Instructions on Chan and Vinaya," Hongzan writes the "but the heart [of Chan] cannot be manifested, and ordinary sentient beings cannot see [it with dual mind], whereas the conduct [of Vinaya] can be seen by the eyes [of ordinary sentient beings], and [they will] revere [Buddha's teaching henceforth]" (然心無表示，人天靡睹。行可目觀，起生敬仰。)(J 35, 482a). Therefore, Hongzan concludes that Vinaya teaches all sentient beings how to become enlightened without explicitly verbalize enlightenment, which is exactly what Chan is about. In his view, since Chan is about the status of the mind and this status cannot be "manifested" (*biaoshi* 表示) by anything, the only way to attain wisdom is through the practice of Vinaya. This means that, to Hongzan, the only way to practice "authentic" Chan is to cultivate oneself in accordance with Vinaya disciplines. Thus, any exterior "manifestation" of Chan, namely Chan as a sectarian tradition, is highly problematic.

Admittedly, Hongzan did not completely abandon the practice of literary Chan. In the collection of his personal writings and dialogues *Reminiscent Manuscripts of a Wooden Man* (*Muren shenggao* 木人剩稿), however, we see that the majority of Hongzan's Chan communication occurred between him and his lay literati followers; the monastic community was obviously not his major Chan audience.<sup>12</sup> This is the only extant text of Hongzan's own Chan instruction to others, and we can assume that Hongzan's use of Chan literature for meditative instruction might have been a reaction to cater late Ming and early Qing literati Buddhists' passion for Chan literature and philosophy (Zhou 2009) rather than his own voluntary choice. Another saying of Hongzan shows a similar attitude

In my life [whenever I] received and instructed students, [I] only followed the instructions left by Master Yunqi Zhuhong and Master Wuyi Yuanlai, [Which means that I] usually used Vinaya to discipline my disciples, and [I did not let them] practice the flexible meditation of literary Chan. For the occasional and random guidance [on Chan teachings], [I] also [only followed] fixed interpretations and not my personal understanding.

...平生接待學人，一稟棲和尚與雲棲、博山遺教，多以戒律繩束後學，不事拈椎豎拂。間有隨機指點，亦本分鉗錘，不以自見也。(Chengjiu 1717, juan 3, 5)

Hongzan explicitly expressed that he did not favor the instruction of Chan, especially literary Chan; he preferred to use Vinaya disciplines to educate his disciples. Among his works, he also seemed to neglect the discipline and ritual system within the Chan tradition "Rules of Purity" (*qinggui* 清規) as the principal leading rules for Chan communities. Moreover, whenever he had to use Chan literature for instruction he only used stipulated interpretations of these texts and added absolutely none of his own understandings or interpretations to them. Hongzan even tried to create conflict between Chan and Vinaya communities, and to construct Chan practice in his time as an "enemy" of monastic disciplines. In his biography, one of his criticisms is recorded:

[I] painfully worry that Vinaya is [established] to bring life to wisdom, and [in this time when] the grand Dharma has declined and [become] rare, ludicrous and

blind people are everywhere. Followers of the devil Māra [practicing] blind Chan are blotting out the sky and covering the sun.

痛念戒律為生慧命，大法垂秘，狂瞽交織，盲禪魔民，彌天障日。(Chengjiu 1717, juan 3, 4)

In Hongzan's letter to Bhikṣu (or Monk) Zongfu 宗符, he wrote that he often saw Chan monks of his time ridicule and express contempt toward Vinaya disciplines (J 35, 492b). Hongzan criticized this behavior by pointing out that in the famous Chan legend of the origin of Chan, the Buddha did not entrust the "real teaching" of Chan to Mañjuśrī (Manshu shili 曼殊室利) but to Kasyapa (Jiashe 迦葉) because of Kasyapa's well-known ascetic practice and strict abidance by the Vinaya disciplines. Thus, even according to Chan legend Vinaya is the only way to achieve enlightenment.<sup>13</sup> In this sense, Hongzan claimed that Vinaya rather than any performative Chan practice is the provenance of Buddha's wisdom. Based on what we have mentioned above, we can see that in Hongzan's discourse he subtly demarcated two kinds of Chan: Chan as a status of ineffable wisdom, and Chan as a performative practice (especially literary Chan). Hongzan believed that Chan as a performative practice in his time had nothing to do with the ineffable wisdom of "authentic" Chan. Moreover, if Vinaya is the only path to wisdom and performative Chan is irrelevant, then Chan as a socio-religious as well as monastic entity is pointless.

Apart from the fact that most of his works are about Vinaya and tantrism, Hongzan's four works traditionally classified as Chan literature are problematic.<sup>14</sup> *Annotations on Master Weishan's Admonition Mottos* (*Weishan jingce ju shiji* 為山警策句釋記) does appear Chan-relevant based on its title, yet its content contains almost no Chan elements—only the Chan master Weishan Lingyou's 為山靈佑 admonitions and tips on monastic life and karmic retribution (X63, 232a–259b). Another work of Hongzan's, *A Concise Interpretation of the Perfect Enlightenment Sūtra* (*Yuanjue jing jinshi* 圓覺經近釋), is solely dedicated to the discussion of Huayan and Yogācāra doctrines and related meditation practice. Hongzan's interpretation particularly highlights the importance of gradual cultivation (*jianxiu* 漸修), in opposition to Chan's "instantaneous cultivation" (*dunjiao* 頓修).<sup>15</sup> In this work, Hongzan pointed out that contemplating on Chan literature and using the Linji Chan clan's "sentiment of doubt" (*yiqing* 疑情) to understand enlightened wisdom is nothing but a detour to Buddhahood. This is because, according to the *Perfect Enlightenment Sūtra's* tathāgatagarbha doctrine, all sentient beings are essentially Buddha and already possess full Buddha wisdom (X10, 521c). We can see that this *Interpretation* is at most an inclusive discussion of tathāgatagarbha and does not emphasize or promote Chan at all. Two of Hongzan's other ostensibly Chan works are exegeses of the *Heart Sūtra: Additional Understandings on the Heart Sūtra* (*Bore xinjing tianzu* 般若心經添足) (X26, 868b–875b) and *Comprehensive Meanings of the Heart Sūtra* (*Xinjing guanyi* 心經貫義) (X26, 876a–878b). Yet, again, neither of these works distinctly explains the *Heart Sūtra* from a Chan stance or mentions any Chan element. These two exegeses aim at elucidating the Mahāyāna concept of "emptiness" (*kong* 空) from a Chinese tathāgatagarbha perspective. Thus, it is obvious that the literary Chan tradition is almost absent even in Hongzan's four purportedly Chan works.

We can conclude that, in spite of the narrative of Hongzan as a Chan master in his biography and his recorded Caodong lineage, his works show that he went beyond many sectarian boundaries. In fact, the textual evidence suggests that Hongzan was not passionate about the Chan tradition and the literary Chan practice at all. We can even assume that, based on his scattered criticism of Chan practices in his time, Hongzan doubted the effectiveness and necessity of performative Chan practices. To him, Chan as a goal of ultimate enlightenment and Chan as a path of religious cultivation are two different notions; moreover, the latter is not the only or even "correct" path to the former.

At the same time, Hongzan argued that Vinaya discipline is the foundation of Buddhist practice and the only way to attain the full revival of Chinese Buddhist monasticism. Vinaya is, in short, the "correct" understanding of Chan as Buddha's ineffable wisdom. In

Hongzan's religious discourse, Vinaya is the practice of Chan; and, inevitably, monastic life is central to Chan cultivation. This means that Hongzan's "revisionist Chan" sentiment and discourse did not allow for a Chan religious life independent of strict Vinaya disciplines, nor an autonomous Chan tradition without the study of Vinaya. He strongly disagreed with certain Chan practices in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. Furthermore, if any verbal expression of Chan is "deviant"—as he believed was the case—this means that there should not be any form of Chan cultivation beyond monastic life. As we shall see, Hongzan's "revisionist Chan" and monastic revival sentiment strongly influenced how the *Anthology* and Hongzan's Maitreya belief were constructed.

#### 4. Constructing the Lineage of Maitreya Cult in Hongzan's Hagiographic Writing

In the preface of the *Anthology* written by Hongzan's disciple Kaijue 開覺, he mentioned that one day he asked his master Hongzan why there are multiple rebirth biographies of Amitābha's Pure Land, but no Tuṣita Heaven rebirth biography in spite of numerous scattered records of cases of successful rebirth (X88, 50a). Kaijue then invited Hongzan to write a biography solely dedicated to Tuṣita Heaven rebirth. Hongzan agreed to Kaijue's invitation, and said:

Your question is indeed [like] the effective remedy to cure a disease, and the merciful ferry to carry [all sentient beings] across the sea of affliction. The reason is that an ordinary person's one [troubling] thought could confound true [enlightenment] and delusively creep along unreal images. [Thus, a person will] wander between life and death and [there will] hardly be a day for [this person's] return [to true enlightenment]. [How could one] be liberated from the three worlds of reincarnation [trayo-dhātava] [when one] sinks and floats in [the sea of] six realms of karma? [How could one] be exempt from discursive life and death [when one] has not yet stepped into the stages of three worthies and ten sages?<sup>16</sup> Moreover, in this time of the end of Dharma, madcaps [*kuangwang* 狂妄] often take [their own] shade of the heart of consciousness as seeing the Buddha nature and enlightened by the way [of wisdom]. [They] mistakenly take fire between flints and crackles of lightening as the termination of life and death.<sup>17</sup> [These madcaps] indulge their minds and speak of empty [words], and [they] loudly claim the nonexistence of the karmic chain of cause and effect. [These madcaps] calumniated the Vinaya followers as obsessed with appearances and defamed those who study Buddhist doctrines as mindlessly repeating the obsolete books. [They] degraded those who were reborn in the Pure Land as of poor disposition and low intelligence. [These madcaps] never remember that Bodhisattva Aśvaghosa and Nāgārjuna wished to present themselves to Amitābha and Bodhisattva Asanga and Vasubandhu vowed to meet Maitreya. How could [these masters] be of poor disposition and low intelligence? [These madcaps] defamed the saints and arrogantly slandered the scriptures and Vinaya disciplines. Who could be their surrogate in their sins? Although [they] speak of "instantaneous enlightenment," their habitual delusion is not yet removed. Once [they] enter [other women's] wombs [and are reincarnated], their ignorance in [their] new life form cannot be avoided. [Examples of] the Chan masters Jie of Wuzu Temple, Qing of Caotang Temple, the Elder Xun and the Chief Monk Yan are important lessons.<sup>18</sup> [These madcaps'] consciousnesses and minds flutter, [but they] consider [themselves as] ancient saints' equals; [their] vexation is burning, [but they] claim that [they have] superseded the Buddha. [These madcaps] do not attain the anutpattika-dharma-ksānti of non-duality<sup>19</sup>, and consequently [they] will drift along [their] karma and mind. Amitābha and Maitreya are truly [our] grand mentors, [but these madcaps] abandoned them and do not [wish] to join them. [If] Avalokiteśvara, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, the Tiantai master Zhiyi 智顗, and Pure Land master Wengu 聞谷 are truly helpful friends, [then] why should [we] not befriend with them [in the Pure Land]?<sup>20</sup>



子之間也，誠為救病之良藥，渡苦海之慈舟。蓋以凡夫一念迷真，妄緣塵影，流浪生死，渺無返期。六趣升沉，三界奚出？未階三賢十聖，寧免分段生方？況茲末世，狂妄多以識心影子，為見性悟道，錯認石火電光，為了却生死。肆志空談，撥無因果。毀持戒者為執相，詆看教者為鑽故紙，貶往生者為小根下愚。不思馬鳴龍樹願覲彌陀，無著天親暫見彌勒。其為何根何愚哉？妄譏賢聖，輕謗經律，罪將誰代？雖云頓悟，習惑未除，一入他腹，隔陰之昏難免。五祖戒、青艸堂、遜長老、嚴首座，足為前鑒。識想紛飛，擬齊先哲，煩惱熾炎，言超佛祖。未證無生，終隨業識流轉。彌陀彌勒真大知識，捨而不參。觀音勢至天台淨慈，誠為良友，胡不親哉？(X88, 50a)

This is probably one of Hongzan's most straightforward and severe criticism on his contemporaneous Chan communities. The "madcaps" (*kuangwang* 狂妄) here apparently refers to Ming and Qing period Chan practitioners. He used four cases of Chan masters' failure to terminate the circle of reincarnation to demonstrate that the so-called "instantaneous enlightenment" of Chan teachings is not the ultimate liberation for ordinary people. Accordingly, Hongzan believed that only via successful rebirth in the pure land or Tuṣita Heaven could one continue the path to Buddhahood.

Although here Hongzan presented the Pure Land of Bliss and Tuṣita Heaven as equally extraordinary destination for Buddhists, when Kaijue asked him which land Hongzan preferred, he replied "The blue sky! The blue sky!" (*cangtian cangtian* 蒼天蒼天). Kaijue claimed that he did not grasp the true meaning of Hongzan's reply, and Hongzan refused to explain further. We can infer here that Hongzan is implying his preference of Tuṣita Heaven, since it is believed that Tuṣita Heaven is a pure land in the heaven realms of this world, i.e., in the sky. That is not to say that Hongzan disapproved of Amitābha's Pure Land. In many cases he praised the practice of *nianfo* and the importance of praying for rebirth in the Pure Land of Bliss.<sup>21</sup> In a text called "Admonition to the Monastic and Lay" (*Jingce zisu* 警策縑素), Hongzan stressed the inclusiveness and "easiness" of *nianfo* practice regardless of its practitioners' gender and identity (J35, 486b). This is a trait that many Pure Land of Bliss apologists used to promote the practice. Moreover, Hongzan mentioned several times that *nianfo* is also an effective way to replace Chan meditation, and that Chan and *nianfo* are essentially the same.<sup>22</sup> Yet, as we shall see, in the *Anthology* Hongzan intended to establish an alternative Pure Land belief exclusively for monastic communities in the absence of Chan.

The *Anthology* is divided into three Chapters. Chapter I is named "Resonating Transformations and Incarnations" (*Yinghua chuiji* 應化垂跡), and includes 25 stories connected to the cult of Maitreya or miracle tales of Maitreya statues. 17 stories of Chinese indigenous miracles are included in this chapter. Among the Chinese miracle stories, 15 are about Chinese monastic masters and two about lay Chinese figures. Chapter II is named "Ascending to the Inner Court [of Tuṣita Heaven]" (*Shangsheng neiyuan* 上升內院). This chapter has two sections and is altogether made up of 46 miracle tales Hongzan collected of rebirth in Tuṣita Heaven. Apart from six stories directly extracted from Buddhist scriptures and one story of Vasubandhu (an Indian Buddhist monk and founder of the Yogācāra school), in the remaining 39 stories of Chinese rebirth practitioners only two lay figures are recorded: the famous Tang poet and Maitreya believer Bai Juyi 白居易 (also Bo Juyi), and Hongzan's mother Lady Zou. Chapter III contains 11 ritualistic texts and spells of the Maitreya cult, which Hongzan collected from different translated scriptures and Chinese works for his readers to use in their religious cultivation. Compared to Zhuhong's Pure Land of Bliss biography, *Collection of Pure Land Rebirth* (*Wangsheng ji* 往生集), and the mid-Qing collection *Compendium of Pure Land Sages* (*Jingtu shengxian lu* 淨土聖賢錄) compiled by lay literati Buddhist Peng Shaoseng 彭紹升, Hongzan's *Anthology* clearly does not aim at lay audience. Hongzan's work focuses on stories of monastic masters. Both Pure Land of Bliss biography collections, by contrast, contain a significant number of stories of lay figures of both genders in separate chapters.<sup>23</sup> Zhuhong is particularly keen on praising exemplary lay Buddhists as equals to monastic figures (Wang 2021).

The first chapter of the *Anthology* can be seen as a hagiography for the construction of a legitimate Maitreya cult “lineage” as well as a history of the prominent figures in this belief system. In the preface to the *Anthology*, Hongzan wrote that with Maitreya’s miraculous power he could incarnate in numerous forms, and that many famous Buddhist masters, monastic and lay, are actually avatars of Maitreya (X88, 51a). Classifying important and legendary figures without a clear Chan background as unorthodox Chan practitioners is a literary tradition in Chan historiography/hagiography initially seen in *The Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp* (*Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄) during the Song dynasty.<sup>24</sup> Later, in another Song dynasty Chan history, *Compendium of the Five Lamps* (*Wudeng huiyuan* 五燈會元), a collection of the biographies of unorthodox Chan figures is named “Saints of Resonating Transformations” (*yinghua shengxian* 應化聖賢) (X80, 65b).

Huang (2016) argues that these kind of “peripheral” masters in Chan histories are, on the one hand, absorbed into Chan hagiography to enhance the legitimacy of Chan practice because of their fame and influences. On the other hand, they also represent the “transgressive” and iconoclastic characters of Chan outside the orthodox lineage (Huang 2016). As Huang points out, these figures’ unconventional, mysterious, and transgressive behaviors, especially their violation of Vinaya disciplines and the Chan-style poems they composed, are important literary symbols of Chan’s flexibility in Song texts. These unorthodox figures shared no Chan identity, but they are constructed in these works as patriarchs teaching Chan in a secretive manner. Hongzan obviously borrowed this literary category of “Saints of Resonating Transformations” in the first chapter of the *Anthology* since the cult of Maitreya in China does not have a continuous and accepted Dharma lineage. However, the transgressive style of the unorthodox Chan masters contradicts Hongzan’s intention of monastic revival and his argument that Chan was declining. Therefore, most of the Chinese figures of the Maitreya cult that Hongzan chose to include in this chapter had no connection with Chan tradition at all. In the stories of medieval Chinese monks Huilan 慧覽, Zhiyan 智嚴 (X88, 55a), Huashou 華手 (“Flower Hand”) (X88, 55b), and Zhenbiao 真表 (X88, 57c), Hongzan highlighted the themes of receiving Vinaya ordination from Maitreya and Maitreya’s wisdom to judge the effectiveness of a monk’s ordination and Vinaya practice. For example, he writes in regard to Huilan:

Huilan’s family name is Cheng, and he was from Jiuquan. Once he traveled to the Western Region and [he had the chance to] put Buddha’s alms bowl on his head [for reverent worship]. He received the gist of dhyāna meditation from monk Damo in the kingdom Kopen.<sup>25</sup> Damo once entered the dhyāna realm and ascended to Tuṣita Heaven. [He] received Bodhisattva Precepts ordination from Maitreya. Later he passed the way of the Precepts to Huilan. When [Huilan] returned to Khotan, he also transmitted the way of the Precepts to the monastic members there. After he returned to the eastern land [of southern China], Emperor Wen of Song asked [Huilan] to reside in the Dinglin Temple in Mount Zhong. [When] Emperor Xiaowu [of the Song] established the Zhongxing Temple [in the capital, he asked Huilan to move to Zhongxing Temple].<sup>26</sup> [The emperor] then ordered the dhyāna monks in the capital city to follow [Huilan] to receive the Precepts ordination.

覽姓成，酒泉人。曾遊西域，頂戴佛鉢。仍於罽賓，從達摩比丘，諮受禪要。達摩曾入定，往兜率天，從彌勒受菩薩戒，後以戒法授覽。還至于填國，復以戒法授彼方諸僧。乃歸東土，宋文帝請住鍾山定林寺。孝武帝起中興寺，復敕令京邑禪僧，皆隨踵受業。(X88, 55a)

This is a story Hongzan extracted from the well-known medieval Chinese text *Biographies of Eminent Monks* (*Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳) (T50, 399a). Hongzan tried to highlight Maitreya’s specific role in transmitting Bodhisattva Precepts in order to show that the Mahāyāna ordination and the effectiveness of a monastic member’s practice have their own “divine” legitimacy and supervision. This kind of narrative also implies that, although one may consider the cult of Maitreya to lack a clear and continuous lineage in China, Chinese Bod-

hisattva Precepts itself could have been traced to Maitreya. Considering Hongzan's view of the consistency between Bodhisattva Precepts and Vinaya in terms of monastic superiority mentioned above, it is evident here that this story reiterated the close connections between monastic communities, Bodhisattva Precepts as a part of monastic code, and Maitreya's role in maintaining the integrity of the two. It suggests that the monastic community is, moreover, continuously supervised and protected by Maitreya.

In the story of Bhikṣu "Flower Hand," when Emperor Wen of Wei hosted a Dharma-Assembly of Equal Almsgiving 無遮大會, the emperor asked the elder monks to prove that Chinese monastic members could receive effective ordination of Vinaya. The elders could not answer the question, and one monk asked the emperor to allow him to travel to India so he could consult an enlightened saint on this question. After this monk arrived at India, he encountered an Arhat, and, as the Arhat could not provide the answer, he ascended to Tuṣita Heaven to further consult Maitreya. Maitreya answered that both monks and nuns in China had received effective Vinaya ordination, and the proof is that a golden flower will enter the Arhat's hand and stay in full blossom. Maitreya asked this Arhat to travel to China to show Maitreya's answer and this vision to the monastic communities there. Before the Arhat arrived at China, there was a golden flower floating in the sky in front of the palace of Emperor Wen. The emperor asked the Imperial Historian (*taishi* 太史) the meaning of this vision, and the Historian replied that this is because the authentic teaching of the West is approaching the emperor. After a month, the Arhat arrived at the palace of Wei, and the original text ends with "therefore the blessing of Vinaya is passed down forever" (*gu jiefu yongchuan ye* 故戒福永傳也).<sup>27</sup> Hongzan's reiterations of this story and similar ones provide a specific picture of Buddhist Vinaya in China: a sacred religious landscape, in which this system of monastic codes are not simply "lifestyles" of monks and nuns in Buddha's time, but also a special lineage of Dharma teaching passed down from Maitreya, the "second" and future Buddha. We can hardly imagine that this narrative is not intentionally constructed by Hongzan as a religious apology of Vinaya discipline and an admonition to his monastic peers.

From the selection of stories and main figures pertaining to the cult of Maitreya we can see Hongzan's endeavor to exclude the practice of Chan in medieval China. However, there are two figures in Chan literature Hongzan could not avoid: Fu Xi 傅翕 (or the Grand Master Fu 傅大士, also known as the Grand Master of Benevolent Wisdom 善慧大士) and Monk Qici 契此和尚 (or the Cloth Sack Monk 布袋和尚). Both the *Jingde Record* (T51, 430a–431a, 434a–434b) and *Five Lamps* (X80, 66c–67b, 68a) contain biographies of these two figures and labeled them as both incarnations of Maitreya and unorthodox Chan masters. Fu Xi had been known in China as a famous lay Buddhist master in the Liang dynasty (502–557 CE) and was worshiped as Maitreya himself, descended to China to spread Buddha's teaching. Zhang Yong's (Zhang 2012, pp. 68–91) comprehensive study of the history of Fu Xi's biography and poems shows that texts about and by Fu Xi were edited and extended several times by the end of the Tang dynasty, and that when they were recorded in Song dynasty Chan histories these texts were drastically modified according to Chan doctrines at that time. In this way, an early medieval legendary lay Buddhist master and alleged Maitreya incarnation was established as a Chan icon during the Song period.

One of the most famous and problematic texts for Hongzan was Fu Xi's *Maxims of the Heart King* (*Xinwang ming* 心王銘). This poetic text was perhaps derived from one of Fu Xi's works as seen in Tang dynasty anthologies, but a more common version in Chan histories is one obviously influenced by Song dynasty Chan elements (Shiina 1968; Zhang 2012, p. 124). Fu Xi's biography in the *Jingde Record* also contains several other poems that later became popular literary Chan "public cases". Most of Fu Xi's stories and works in Song dynasty Chan literatures are extracted from the most comprehensive anthology of Fu Xi's teachings, called *The Collection of Master Shanhui's Sayings* (*Shanhui dashi yulu* 善慧大士語錄) (X69, 104a–130c), which was completed in the late Tang and early Song dynasties. Compilers of Chan literature were apparently highly selective when choosing information from this long collection (Zhang 2012, pp. 42–82). In both the *Jingde Record* and *Five Lamps*

Fu Xi's biographies are much shorter than they are in the *Collection*, and only poems and sayings resembling Chan teachings are included. This is despite the fact that the meaning of Chan 禪 (dhyāna) in Fu Xi's time and the time of the *Collection* is distinct from the later school of Chan (Hsiao 1995, pp. 177–85). For this reason, Fu Xi is often remembered in Chan texts as an unorthodox Chan master who already preached Chan teachings even before the southern school of Chan emerged.

This “anachronistic” situation is utterly reversed in Hongzan's biography of Fu Xi. As the first alleged incarnation of Maitreya in Chinese history, Fu Xi's biography was included as the first text in Chapter I of the *Anthology*, separate from other Chinese figures and even before Indian figures. Monk Qici is the second figure whose story is recorded, and then come Indian figures. This means that Hongzan completely betrayed the taxonomic tradition of Chan histories, which always put Indian figures before Chinese ones. It also means that, to Hongzan, the images of Fu Xi and Monk Qici share a higher importance than the Indian figures and serve special functions in his *Anthology*. Here in Hongzan's discourse of the Maitreya cult, without the need to accommodate the orthodox Chan historical narrative, Fu Xi should stand at the very beginning of the history of Maitreya incarnation and miracles—for he is the earliest recorded incarnation of Maitreya in both Indian and Chinese texts. Therefore, right after Hongzan's preface in which he introduced Maitreya himself in different Buddhist scriptures, Fu Xi appears as the first incarnation. This organization also implies that, in Hongzan's view, Fu Xi is fully qualified as the first “orthodox” master of the Maitreya cult, even before miracle tales in India, since this is the only figure in Chinese Buddhist historiography who directly preached Buddha's “orthodox” teaching as Maitreya in this world.

In Hongzan's biography, however, all Chan-style poems are removed from this first Maitreya incarnation's teachings, including *Maxims of the Heart King*. This means that the most significant aspect of Fu Xi in the literary Chan tradition, namely Fu Xi's Chan-style teachings, is absent in Hongzan's construction of Fu Xi's religious image. Moreover, biographies of Fu Xi in Chan literatures are not the only source Hongzan used to compose his own biography. Instead, Hongzan consulted the original texts in the *Collection* and selected texts missing in Chan biographies as the major works quoted in his version.

In particular, Hongzan's biography of the Grand Master of Benevolent Wisdom includes the vow Fu Xi made at the beginning of his fasting practice (X69, 107b; X88, 52a). But this vow in Hongzan's biography is not a single text directly taken out from the *Collection*; rather, it is a combination of Fu Xi's sayings during his fasting practice and his disciples' vows in response. Hongzan merged two texts into one and put it under Fu Xi's name. This vow mainly focuses on the merit of abstention and how the Bodhisattva's conduct of suffering for all sentient beings could lead to Buddhahood. This contrasts with the Chan-style understanding of the non-duality of one's heart as represented in poems like *Maxims of the Heart King*. As the only major work of Fu Xi quoted in Hongzan's version that did exist in other contemporaneous Chan biographies of the figure, this demonstrates Hongzan's major intention in constructing a “new” image of Fu Xi. Hongzan aimed to show that Fu Xi's teachings were not germane to Chan practices, but to Buddhist ascetic life.

In addition, two further details Hongzan added from the *Collection* that are absent in the biographies of Chan literatures are worth our attention. One is that master Fu Xi “transcribed more than one thousand scrolls of scriptures and Vinaya codes. [He] prayed that all sentient beings could break away from afflictions and attain liberation” (躬寫經律，千有餘卷。願諸衆生，離苦解脫。) (X69, 106b; X88, 52a). Hongzan specifically stressed here that Fu Xi copied Buddhist scripture and Vinaya texts, which hints that even an accomplished master like him—indeed, an incarnation of Maitreya himself—still held great respect for scriptural texts and Vinaya. The other added detail is that Fu Xi once said to his disciples:

If those who learn the way [of Buddha] do not encounter a teacher [who has attained] anutpattika-dharma-ksānti of non-duality, then they will eventually be



unable to gain the way. I am [the one who has] attained anutpattika-dharma-ksānti of non-duality in this life

學道若不值無生師，終不得道。我是現前得無生人。(X69, 105a; X88, 52a).

According to the Chinese translation of *Mahāprajñāpāramitā* (*Mohe bore boluomi jing* 摩訶般若波羅蜜經), anutpattika-dharma-ksānti of non-duality (*wusheng faren* 無生法忍) is a type of wisdom that only a “seventh stage” Bodhisattva could accomplish (T8, 259a). At this stage, the Bodhisattva has transcended all the realms of Arhat (Shi 2019). Here, by highlighting Fu Xi’s warning about the necessity of an accomplished teacher in the success of Buddhist cultivation, Hongzan seems to suggest that if one does not study the way of Buddha under a teacher like Master Fu Xi, then this person’s claim of enlightenment is dubious. We may assume that this short sentence Hongzan chose to add in Fu Xi’s biography served as a poignant criticism of the “madcaps” he referred to in the preface of the *Anthology* mentioned above. Also, as we have seen, in the preface Hongzan explicitly expressed that anutpattika-dharma-ksānti of non-duality is a fixed requirement of true termination of reincarnation for an enlightened Bodhisattva. This suggests that even true Chan enlightenment is not enough for a Buddhist to be absolved from reincarnation. In the biography, Hongzan reiterated his opinion through Fu Xi’s voice.

Similar narrative preference also appears in Hongzan’s biography of Monk Qici. Qici was an influential figure from the Song dynasty onward not only to Chan communities, but also to unorthodox and sectarian religions in China as the incarnation of Maitreya (Lin 1975). He was known for his iconic image: a laughing, chubby monk carrying a cloth sack. The earliest biography of Qici seen in elitist Chinese Buddhist text is the one included in *Biographies of Song Eminent Monks* (*Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳) (T50, 848b). In this biography, Qici is depicted as an eccentric wandering monk but no distinct Chan background or teaching is mentioned. The only poetic saying recorded here is “Maitreya, the veritable Maitreya, but people naturally do not recognize him” (彌勒真彌勒，時人皆不識。)<sup>28</sup> Later, in the *Jingde Record* biography, four literary Chan-style dialogues and two poems are added. One of the dialogues is

Monk Bailu asked [Qici]: What is [your] cloth sack? Qici then put down [his] cloth sack. [Monk Bailu] asked again: “Why did you put down the cloth sack?” Qici [then] put [it back on his shoulder] and left.

白鹿和尚問：如何是布袋？師便放下布袋。又問：如何是布袋下事？師負之而去。(T51, 434b)

In the *Five Lamps* biography, two more poems are included. The two new poems appear less mysterious; contrary to the typical Chan style, they are more oral and direct in preaching moral cultivation as well as tathāgatagarbha doctrine. In later Chan masters’ sayings and public cases, the “cloth sack” (*budai* 布袋) became an important symbol. For example, the cloth sack appeared more than 20 times in the famous founder of literary Chan Dahui Zonggao’s 大慧宗杲 discourse record. Moreover, Dahui Zonggao even composed a poem called “Monk Cloth Sack” (*Budai heshang* 布袋和尚) to explain the enigmatic Chan meanings in Qici’s words and behaviors (T47, 859a).

In Hongzan’s biography of Qici, two poems added in *Five Lamps* are kept, but all the Chan-style dialogues and one longer poem from the *Jingde Record* are omitted. Once more, we see Hongzan’s deliberate avoidance of any involvement with literary Chan practice when adapting these biographies. As the second publicly recognized Maitreya incarnation in orthodox Buddhist historiography in China, Qici is put next to Fu Xi in the *Anthology* not as a peripheral and unorthodox Chan teacher but as a legitimate patriarch in the cult of Maitreya.

## 5. Hongzan’s Miracle Tales of Ascending to Tuṣita Heaven

The second chapter of the *Anthology* has two parts. Both are dedicated to ascending miracle tales from historical records that Hongzan himself collected. As mentioned in the previous section, all the figures included in this chapter are monastic members apart

from the Tang poet Bai Juyi and Hongzan's own mother. Like in the first chapter, these ascending stories are frequently linked to monastic Vinaya practices and repentance of sin. Twenty-two ascending stories mention the element of Vinaya disciplines and repentance. In these stories, phrases like "holding the rules of Vinaya and never missing any [one of them]" (執持律範，曾無缺焉) (X88, 68b) or "obeying [all] the Vinaya codes without any violation" (戒律軌儀，有持不犯) (X88, 69a) link these representative monastic figures' strict Vinaya practice to their successful rebirth in Tuṣita Heaven. In two stories of Hongzan's disciples Shi Kaizhe 釋開哲 and Kailuo Qiuji 開樂求寂, the priority of Vinaya and proper monastic demeanor are more vividly exhibited than ever:

[Kaizhe] was never daunted by hard labors and affairs [in the temple]. [He always] served the master in absolute respect and discretion; [he always] practiced dhyāna meditation and chanted scriptures day and night. [Kaizhe's] literary talent and intellectual insight share the same quality of the mirror-like reflection on the water's surface. [His eyes] do not see with skewed sight, and inspect like a king elephant. [He] lies down like a lion. [He] does not easily speak, and [he] does not [expose] his teeth when laughing.

執勞服役，未嘗少憚。事師則必敬必慎，禪誦則夜以繼旦。稟識才藻，質同水鏡。目不邪觀，顧如象王，臥類師子。不易言，不齒笑。(X88, 70b)

[Qiuji] served the master kindly and discreetly, and [he] studied and practiced industriously. If [he] was admonished by the master, [he] never [showed] displeasure [on his face]. His daily dignified manner was like a bhikṣu [who] had practiced Pure Conduct [Brahmacaryā] for a long time.

事師淳謹，習學彌勤。倘被師責，迥無不悅之色。進止威儀，若久修梵行之比丘。(X88, 70c)

To Hongzan, these exemplary tributes to proper monk conduct provide examples of Vinaya discipline necessary for ascending to Tuṣita Heaven. Monastic virtues and Vinaya propriety do not merely transform a monastic member's mind, but also his or her exterior appearance and bodily traits.<sup>29</sup> This is accompanied by the miraculous physical signs of these figures' death scenes, which are regarded as tangible proof of their genuine cultivation and successful rebirth. For example, in Kaizhe's story, Hongzan wrote: "[After] the cremation [of his body], [his] teeth were like pristine snow, [and his] śarīra bone relics were of four colors" (荼毗，牙如珂雪，舍利四色).<sup>30</sup>

As Shinohara (Shinohara 2007, pp. 47–72) notices in his study of the miraculous death scenes of eminent monk biographies in medieval China, miraculous death scenes, especially pure lands rebirth scenes, can be seen as a collective literary creation by the main figure's monastic relatives out of their concerns or anxiety about an eminent monk's result of cultivation. Hongzan employed the same literary strategy to show his audience how merits and effects of Vinaya and Maitreya practices could be embodied in a monastic member's physical transformation and miraculous signs. This affirmation of the connection between Vinaya, the Maitreya cult, and somatic miracles again opposes the idea that active endeavors in Buddhist practice (in particular, rebirth pursuits) is merely a kind of "obsession". This idea had already been disputed in the medieval period (Shinohara 2007, pp. 47–72). Even in the story of the famous lay Buddhist and Tang dynasty poet Bao Juyi, Hongzan utilized Monk Weikuan's 惟寬 instruction to Bai to reiterate the importance of Vinaya:

Master [Weikuan] said: the supreme Bodhi wisdom is embodied as Vinaya, expressed as Dharma, and cultivated in the heart as Chan. Vinaya is dharma, and Dharma is not apart from Chan.

師曰：無上菩提者，被於身為律，說於口為法，行於心為禪。律即是法，法不離禪。(X88, 68c)

This quote is originally from the *Jingde Record*, but the second half of the original instruction dialogue contain a teaching of non-duality and inactiveness of Chan cultivation. This portion of the dialogue is deleted by Hongzan:

[Bai Juyi] asked again: “If [Vinaya, Dharma and Chan] have no differences, then how [does one] fix the heart?” Master [Weikuan] said: “The heart is essentially intact, why [do you] said that [it] needs to be fixed? Do not differentiate your mind no matter [whether it is] filthy or pure”.

[Bai Juyi] asked again: “If [one] does not [actively] fix [the mind] or [use] the mind, the how is this [Chan practice] different from being an ordinary sentient being?” Master [Weikuan] said: “Ordinary sentient beings are obsessed with the ignorances of duality [Avidyā] and Hīnayāna, and moving away from these two kinds of illness [of the mind] means genuine cultivation. Those who genuinely cultivate [the mind] should neither be assiduous nor indolent. Being assiduous is close to obsession, and being indolent means falling to ignorance. This is what is called the gist of mind [cultivation].

又問：既無分別何以修心？師云：心本無損傷，云何要修理？無論垢與淨，一切勿起念。又問：無修無念又何異凡夫耶？師曰：凡夫無明二乘執著，離此二病是曰真修。真修者不得勤不得忘。勤即近執著，忘即落無明，此為心要云爾。  
(T51, 255a)

Hongzan replaced this second half of Weikuan’s Chan instruction with depictions of Bai Juyi’s active and industrious practice of Tuṣṭita Heaven beliefs. If we read the original Chan instruction dialogue between Bai Juyi and Weikuan, Weikuan clearly did not try to stress the importance of Vinaya disciplines and strict Vinaya practice when he claimed that Vinaya and Chan are “homogeneous”. On the contrary, Weikuan defied industrious Vinaya practice and tried to elaborate on the Chan mediation of non-duality and inactiveness of the mind in order to defend Chan masters’ ostensibly unconventional lifestyles (Poceski 2018). Hongzan’s narrative completely reversed the original meaning of Weikuan’s words. By deleting the actual Chan part of Weikuan’s teaching and adding Bai Juyi’s industrious practice of Maitreya name chanting and Tuṣṭita Heaven visualization<sup>31</sup>, Hongzan seemed to indicate in this story that—as Vinaya, Dharma, and Chan are essentially the same—active practices like Maitreya name chanting and Tuṣṭita Heaven visualization are already Chan practices, not the opposite. Therefore, by presenting Chan elements as obsolete in this story, Hongzan attempted to twist Weikuan’s teaching in order to make the narrative of this story coherent with the overall link between Vinaya disciplines and active ascending practices established in the *Anthology*.

Monastic dhyāna meditation is also something Hongzan emphasized in the second chapter’s ascending stories. As mentioned above, dhyāna meditation was also translated as *chan* 禪 before the school of Chan gained prominence and essentially monopolized this term in later periods. Before the enigmatic and flexible Chan School emerged, as Eric Greene (Greene 2021, pp. 21–54) argues, dhyāna *chan* referred to a more normative, concrete, monastic and scriptural meditative technique. In the *Anthology*, the word 禪 predominantly refers to this kind of dhyāna meditation rather than the sectarian Chan practice. In this work, moreover, dhyāna meditation seems to be construed as a vital technique for ascending to Tuṣṭita Heaven. Hence, the meaning of *chan* as the Chan School is completely absent in the *Anthology*. It seems that, to Hongzan, the only legitimate “technique” of *chan* worth exhibiting is not the sectarian one that became almost iconoclastic in Ming and Qing dynasty but the one that predates the Chan School. Only this type of strict and miraculous meditative technique should be established as a valid method of monastic cultivation.

For example, in Hongzan’s transcription of the biography of the early Tang dynasty Tiantai Buddhist master Zhixi 智晞 (who was also the patriarch Zhiyi’s 智顗 disciple), Hongzan omitted the major part of the original story of Zhixi’s miraculous communication with local mountain gods, and extracted the less significant beginning and ending of his biography in the *Extended Biographies of Eminent Monks* (*Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳) (T50,

582a) to weave an image of a dhyāna virtuoso who successfully ascended to Tuṣita Heaven via strict meditation:

Zhixi of the Chen clan was originally from Yingchuan ... [Zhixi] first heard [the reputation] of Zhiyi and sincerely admired [Zhiyi] ... At the age of twenty he finally fulfilled his longtime wish [to meet with Zhiyi]. After [his] encounter [with Zhiyi], [Zhixi] determined [to follow Zhiyi] as [his] mentor. [Zhixi] was sufficiently equipped with Vinaya and monastic demeanors. [He] received secret teachings of dhyāna and further practiced the [meditation] of tranquil fixity [寂定]<sup>32</sup> industriously as if [his] head were burning and [he] needed rescue. [One day he] heard the loud echo of a bronze bell from the east mountain [that] shook the valley, and he said: “Alas! It is calling me!” Several days after the disappearance [of the echo], [Zhixi] said to his disciples: “My life is coming to the end”. In the night of the seventeenth day of the twelfth month in the first year of [the reign of Emperor] Zhenguan [627 CE], [Zhixi] sat up straight with legs crossed ... and told his disciples: “You and I encountered [each other] in the order of karma. Now it is time to say farewell and [there is] not a day that [we will] meet again. After saying [this], [Zhixi] remained silent without a word. After a while, his disciples [started] weeping. [Zhixi] opened his eyes again and admonished that: “Human beings [experience] life and death, and everything has its beginning and inevitably its termination. This is just a vision of this world, why [do you feel] sad about this? [You] can leave and stop disturbing me”. [Zhixi] also said: “I have practiced dhyāna for forty-nine years until today, and not [once] did my back touch a bed. I did not disappoint my patrons’ alms and I did not disappoint [people’s] incense offerings. If you wish to meet me [again], [you] should practice the way [of Buddha] diligently, and the power [of dhyāna] will not let people down”. His disciples consulted him and said: “[We] do not know where [our] monk will be reborn”. [Zhixi] replied: “My karma will retribute in Tuṣita Heaven. Its palaces are turquoise in color and located in the northwest in the sky” ... In the morning of the eighteenth day, he told his disciples: “You should be prepared for the fasting ritual as soon as possible, [since the end] of my life [is getting] very close”. At noon [Zhixi] sat in a cross-legged position upright and elegantly. [His] breath became weaker, as if [he] entered the realm of dhyāna and henceforth [he] would not return [to this world]. [He died] at the age of seventy-two. At that time [there was] music of strings and pipes from the sky, and all the gathered audience heard [that] it lasted for a long time before it receded. [Zhixi’s body] stayed in public for several days before it was moved into a stone shrine. [His] face and complexion looked full of joy. [His] hands and feet were supple just like [when he was] alive.

晞，姓陳氏，潁川人...伏聞智者...丹誠馳仰...年登二十，始獲從願。一得奉值，即定師資，律儀具足，稟受禪訣，加修寂定，如救頭然。聞東山銅鐘聲，大音震谷，便云：噫！喚吾也。未終數日，語弟子云：吾命無幾...貞觀元年十二月十七日夜，跏趺端坐...告弟子曰：吾將汝等，造次相值。今當永別，會遇靡期。言已，寂然無聲。良久，諸弟子哭泣，便開眼誡曰：人生有死，物始必終。世相如是，寧足可悲？可去，勿鬧亂吾也。又云：吾習禪以來，至於今日，四十九年，背不著牀。吾不負信施，不負香火。汝等欲得與吾相見，可自勤策行道，力不負人。弟子諮曰：未審和尚當生何所？答云：報在兜率，宮殿青色，居天西北...十八日朝，語諸弟子：汝等並早須齋，吾命須臾。至午，結跏趺座，端直儼然，氣息綿微，如入禪定，因而不返，春秋七十有二。時虛空中，有絃管聲，合眾皆聞，良久乃息。經停數日，方入石龕。顏色敷悅，手足柔軟，不異生平。(X88, 66a)

In Hongzan’s narrative, Zhixi’s lifelong devotion to dhyāna meditation apparently led directly to his successful rebirth. By omitting stories of other aspects of Zhixi’s miraculous conduct, it is as if Zhixi’s lifelong dhyāna practice only aimed at a “magical” death and rebirth in Tuṣita Heaven. More than 10 stories in the *Anthology* mention the practice of



dhyāna as an indispensable practice of eminent monastic figures in Chinese rebirth stories, and no Chan practice is present. The only Chan School figure included is the Song dynasty Yunmen clan patriarch Shanben 善本, but Hongzan did not mention any detail of Shanben's Chan teaching. Instead, Hongzan emphasized Shanben's study of the *Lotus Sūtra* (聽習毗尼妙法蓮華), practice of Vinaya, and miraculous dreams (X88, 69b). Since the sectarian meaning of Chan is absent in this collection, it is obvious that Hongzan intended to reinstate the so-called "original" meaning of *chan* as a highly monastic-oriented and concrete skill in the context of the Maitreya cult. This could also be read as an indirect criticism on the "declining" Chan School in Hongzan's discourse, and an implicit argument that this term should return to its older, more skillful and strict meaning.

Meanwhile, other details in Hongzan's ascending stories also imply that Hongzan held different attitudes toward Maitreya's Tuṣita Heaven and Amitābha's Pure Land of Bliss. Although we saw in the previous section that Hongzan praised Amitābha's Pure Land and the practice of *nianfo* as the easy way to gain wisdom and as inseparable from Chan, this is not the whole picture of his religious view on rebirth in pure lands. It seems that, to Hongzan, Tuṣita Heaven is superior to the Pure Land of Bliss in that Tuṣita Heaven is not open to sinful believers but only to virtuous practitioners. For this reason, the speed of cultivation in Tuṣita Heaven is much faster than in Amitābha's Pure Land of Bliss. In fact, which of the two pure lands is superior has been a long-lasting argument in the History of Chinese Buddhism (Wang 1992). As previously mentioned, translated scriptures of the Pure Land of Bliss, especially *The Sūtra of the Visualization of Amitāyus* (*Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra*; *Guan wuliang shou jing* 觀無量壽經), present the openness of the Pure Land of Bliss even to extremely sinful people as its advantage—in spite of the unspeakably long time before such a person actually attain enlightenment (T12, 345c). Authorities in the Ming period often stressed this low requirement of rebirth in the Pure Land of Bliss as evidence of the suitability of Pure Land belief in an era of the end of Dharma, while at the same time receiving criticisms of Pure Land beliefs as inferior and against the Buddhist dogma of emptiness (Jones 2019, pp. 103–7).

In his story of Bai Juyi's pure land practices Hongzan provides an intriguing detail of his own view on the two pure lands. He mentioned that although Bai Juyi was dedicated to Tuṣita Heaven, in his final years, after a severe illness, he changed his pursuit to the Pure Land of Bliss due to his physical suffering. This is evidenced by Bai's poetry.<sup>33</sup> Hongzan acrimoniously commented that:

Bai Juyi did not understand that filth and purity come from the heart, and inflictions and joy are [both] delusions. So, he raised the emotion of differentiation and did not concentrate on one aspiration. If [he had] comprehended [the dogma] of heart/mind only, then [he would have known that] the [Tuṣita] Heavenly Palace and the Pure Land of Bliss are both dream-like realms [created by the heart] and [they are] lands located in the same dimension.

易未達淨穢由心，苦樂皆妄，故起取捨之情，志願不一。若悟惟心，天宮淨土，並是化境，皆一同居之土。(X88, 68c)

Therefore, in Hongzan's view, Bai Juyi should not have differentiated between the pure lands and instead have only concentrated on one destination, since his suffering was the consequence of his own differentiating mind. This is obviously an apologetic reaction to Bai Juyi's change of practice in his late years in order to defend Tuṣita Heaven. Hongzan thus suggests that, ultimately, Tuṣita Heaven and the Pure Land of Bliss are the same and that there was therefore no need for Bai to change his pursuit.

Does this then mean that Hongzan tried to advocate for the equality of the two pure lands and that he genuinely believed that they are the same? Interestingly, in the 98 biographies of monastic figures in Zhuhong's *Biographies of Rebirth [in the Pure Land of Bliss]* (*Wangsheng ji* 往生集), there is no mention of these monastic members' Vinaya practice and, in fact, no positive comments about Tuṣita Heaven at all (T51, 127a–137c). Since Hongzan was significantly influenced by Zhuhong and had read his works, the narrative of Vinaya practice conspicuously contradicts with Zhuhong's omission of this

important aspect of monastic life. As mentioned before, Zhuhong's biographies targeted at both monastic and lay readers and to him, the all-encompassing character of the Pure Land of Bliss means that one could "easily" be reborn in this land even without obeying strict monastic regulations. This "easiness" of Pure Land of Bliss practice might have led to the omission of Vinaya practices in Zhuhong's storytelling strategies. However, in contrast to Zhuhong's narrative, Hongzan's connection between Tuṣita Heaven rebirth and monastic figures' Vinaya practices indicates that the standard for entering Tuṣita Heaven is apparently higher than the Pure Land of Bliss. Thus it is an "uneasy" pure land and more suitable for monastic members.

In another story, of Hongzan's female disciple the Nun Chengci 成慈尼, this expert of nun Vinaya whose "Vinaya virtue resembles ice and snow" (*jiede bingxue* 戒德冰雪) (X88, 70a), namely, whose Vinaya practice was clear and pure, heard that those who were reborn in the Pure Land of Bliss on the lowest level could not see Buddha for numerous eons. Upon hearing this, she concluded that based on the scriptures Tuṣita Heaven is a better choice since there are not different levels of rebirth in Maitreya's pure land. Chengci raised this question to Hongzan, and Hongzan confirmed what she said and bestowed one scroll of the *Sūtra of Visual Contemplation of Ascendance to Maitreya's Tuṣita Heaven* to her. Later, during her dhyāna meditation, Chengci saw a series of miraculous signs and foresaw her successful rebirth.

Chengci's detailed question in this story and Hongzan's positive confirmation subtly reveals Hongzan's own preference between the two pure lands, and indicates that he too believed Tuṣita Heaven to be a better choice than the Pure Land of Bliss. According to Chengci's logic, because there are no different levels of rebirth in Tuṣita Heaven—unlike in the Pure Land of Bliss—anyone who successfully ascends to Tuṣita Heaven should see Maitreya immediately. Therefore, the speed of cultivation in Tuṣita Heaven is considerably faster than in the Pure Land of Bliss. By presenting Chengci's question in detail, Hongzan consciously exhibits his own intention to establish the cult of Maitreya as a competitive belief with the Pure Land of Bliss. In this way, Hongzan aimed to address the decline of monasticism. If Chan was not a sensible choice for Buddhist practitioners of his time in general, and for monastic communities in particular, the revival of dhyāna meditation and Vinaya discipline was inevitable. Furthermore, because the all-encompassing Pure Land of Bliss tradition could not address the decline of Buddhist monasticism—insofar as the tradition deemphasized the importance of Vinaya disciplines—then belief in Maitreya's Tuṣita Heaven must serve as a new unifying dogma to prevent monastic communities from losing their distinctive identity and religious lifestyle.

## 6. Conclusions

Ritzinger ([Ritzinger 2017](#), pp. 145–46) points out that the Republican Chinese Buddhist master Taixu's 太虛 (1890–1947 CE) so-called "modernized" belief of Maitreya's Tuṣita Heaven should not simply be regarded as a reconciliation between Buddhist faith and the modern world; instead, Taixu tried to call back the "traditional" monastic rituals and religiosity in Chinese Buddhism. It is arguable whether this "tradition" ever existed in Chinese history, but Taixu is certainly not the first to turn to the cult of Maitreya for help when facing "crises" of Buddhism in China. In this article, we have seen how the early Qing dynasty Caodong Chan master Zaisan Hongzan's Maitreya and Tuṣita Heaven beliefs reflect his own Chan revisionist and monastic revival sentiment. Hongzan faced a time similar to Taixu, when numerous Chinese Buddhist elites lamented the fall of the most influential and predominant Buddhist school in China, the Chan School, and were concurrently deeply troubled by the alleged decline of monasticism. Certain monastic authorities introduced the double cultivation of Chan and Pure Land *nianfo* practice, but this "reinvented" means of meditation caused new problems and constantly sparked doubts and disagreements. Prominent late Ming dynasty figures within the Chan community also recognized the "declining" of this tradition, especially the literary Chan tradition from the

Song period, and endeavored to save Chan practices and communities. However, their actions only put Chan in a more precarious position by the time of the early Qing dynasty.

Some voices started to question the legitimacy and necessity of Chan both as a sectarian Buddhist faith and as a means of meditation. Caodong masters in the Ming period were the most radical internal Chan critics, criticizing the degeneration of literary Chan and trying to reinstate the ancient, “authentic” teaching of Chan. They were also interested in using Pure Land of Bliss practice as a supplementary instrument to reform Chan meditation. Zaisan Hongzan, the ordained Caodong monk from Guangdong, proposed the most severe criticism on Chan. He went beyond his contemporary Chan critics to question the fundamental validity of the edifice of Chan School. To Hongzan, Chan itself is not a specific form of teaching or dogma but a realm of non-duality, and Hongzan believed that the sectarian Chan tradition of his day could not lead to enlightenment only by playing with Chan words. In this way, Buddha’s teaching of Vinaya disciplines and gradual practice such as dhyāna meditation could lead to the attainment of Chan wisdom, rather than any concrete Chan words. Therefore, Hongzan believed that only by reviving monasticism and replacing the current dogmatic Chan teachings with Vinaya and gradual meditative practice could Chinese Buddhism be saved from annihilation. For this reason, Hongzan avoided any systematic teaching of Chan practices in his works and instead wrote primarily about Vinaya codes and tantric practices.

This sentiment also influenced his construction or “reinvention” of the Maitreya and Tuṣita Heaven cult. Hongzan’s *Anthology of Exemplary Tales of Tuṣita Heaven Rebirth*, as the only Maitreya pure land rebirth biography in traditional China, served as a platform for Hongzan to exhibit his own religious preferences and beliefs via hagiographic narratives of idealized monastic figures. Sectarian Chan elements are removed from the stories included in this collection, and the term *chan* exclusively refers to dhyāna meditation in Hongzan’s vocabulary. Moreover, famous unorthodox Chan patriarchs like Fu Xi and Qici are no longer labeled Chan teachers in Hongzan’s biographies. By linking successful ascent to Tuṣita Heaven and Maitreya’s miraculous power to eminent monastic figures’ Vinaya practices, Hongzan deliberately depicted a religious landscape of Tuṣita Heaven faith as most suitable for strict monastic practitioners in contrast to the Pure Land of Bliss tradition. This should also be seen as a motivation Hongzan provided to his peers to encourage the return of Buddhist monasticism. In this way, Hongzan’s Maitreya belief is nothing but a cogent reaction to his own observation of Chinese Buddhism in crisis.

**Funding:** This research was funded by the National Social Science Fund of China, grant number: 17ZDA233/19CZJ004.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

**Data Availability Statement:** Not applicable.

**Acknowledgments:** My editor Gina Lebkuecher has thoroughly read through this paper and edited it and I really appreciate her work in completing this paper.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Hereafter referred to as *Anthology*.

<sup>2</sup> This is an established metaphor in Chan literature to describe the “correct” and ineffable transmission of true wisdom from a master to a disciple, as if the transmission of wisdom and the verification of a disciple’s accomplishment are validated by a carved insignia. See Foulk (2007, p. 450).

<sup>3</sup> Māra is often depicted as an evil celestial being who disturbed Buddha’s meditation and vowed to destroy dharma. He is usually recognized as the archenemy of Buddhism. See Boyd (1971).

<sup>4</sup> Arhat, in Sanskrit the “Worthy One”, refers to those Buddhist saints who have terminated the afflictions of reincarnation and possibility of future rebirth and the highest level of sagehood in Hīnayāna tradition (Buswell and Lopez 2014, p. 62). Saṃsāra refers to the chain of rebirth in different realms or forms of life (Buswell and Lopez 2014, p. 758).

- 5 One of the most compelling case is his categorization of Buddhist practices of Five Schools (*wuzong* 五宗). Zhixu proposed that there are four distinct methods of meditation whose traits resemble four seasons, and Chan echoes with winter as a formless, tranquil and iconoclastic practice. But all practices that can be categorized according to this four seasons theory are inferior to and inseparable to Pure Land nianfo practice, since Pure Land nianfo practice is the most superior king of all Mahāyāna teachings (J36, 369c).
- 6 These include two kinds of fully ordained monastic communities (monks [bhikṣu] and nuns [bhikṣuṇī], two kinds of novice monastic communities (male novice monk [sāmaṇera] and female ones [śrāmaṇerikā]), one kind of senior female novice nun (śikṣamāṇā), and male lay Buddhist (upāsaka) and female lay Buddhist (upāsikā).
- 7 This refers to Huineng's full monastic ordination in the *Sixth Master's Platform Sutra* (*Liuzu tanjing* 六祖壇經) circulated in Ming and Qing. According to the text, Huineng could not preach Chan's teaching before he was fully ordained with full Vinaya. See T48, 349c08–350a2.
- 8 Chengguan's biography records that he made ten vows by himself immediately after he officially received Bodhisattva Precepts. See *Fajie zong wuzu lue ji* 法界宗五祖略記 (X77, 623a).
- 9 See T24, 997c. Elements of this canon are perhaps transformed from *Huayan jing* 華嚴經, and considered by Chinese authorities as a part of the special teachings Buddha made to high level Bodhisattvas immediately after his enlightenment before preaching to his human disciples. See Groner (1990, pp. 252–57).
- 10 “若佛子！心背大乘，常住經律言非佛說，而受持二乘聲聞、外道惡見、一切禁戒邪見經律者，犯輕垢罪。” (T24, 1005c)
- 11 “二乘…如來觀彼根劣，未堪授與大法，故暫示之小教。彼即厭苦斷集，欣滅修道，而證得人空偏理。獨出三界，無利人心，遂失本源心地正體。非惡見如何，若不知大乘常住之法，捨此心地大戒，而受持聲聞禁戒道法。亦不得圓滿具足…況復梵網八萬威儀，七眾並資，五道通被，豈容破戒，稱為佛乘？…如經所說，為策彼堅修行者，恐其棄大習小。復令一向習小法者，趣向大乘，非謂聲聞戒，可輕可忽。有慚有愧者，惟恐持之不逮。是以五天竺國，凡出家者，皆先學小，然後習大…不達如來秘密之意，纔聞此即捨彼，取捨乖方，妄符經旨，悖佛言教。自取累於長劫，若屑聲聞戒不受，則不應剃髮染衣，作沙門之相…苟欣其相，而棄其戒，冒入法門，與僧同事，羯磨布薩，名為賊住。罪與五逆同科，後永不得受具戒。” (X38, 724b)
- 12 In the section of *Answers to Questions in the Chamber* (*Shizhong dawaen* 室中答問), there are sixteen Chan dialogues and only five of the questioners are monks (J 35, 482a–483b). Among these five monk questioners, only one of them is registered with a specific name while others are only recorded as “a monk” (*seng* 僧). In contrast, all of the eleven lay literati questioners' names are recorded.
- 13 This story has been transmitted in Chan historiography since the Tang dynasty. See Adamek (2007, pp. 129–31) and Gregory (2019).
- 14 For this kind of traditional classification, see Zheng (2017).
- 15 See “頓漸修者，頓修即末後一輪，漸修即二十四輪也。唯除頓覺人者，謂不立階級及文字法相，如前所云居一切時不起妄念者，則一斷永斷一證永證，是上上根截法而過。或不藉此而修，或信根不具不肯隨順者亦不依此修。其餘三賢十聖一切修菩薩行者皆當依此法輪隨順勤修也，修而復加勤者勵之也。” (X10, 533c).
- 16 The “stage of three worthies and ten sages” (階三賢十聖) refers to the Arhat and Bodhisattva stages in the teachings of Tiantai Buddhism. See A. Charles Muller's translation of *Outline of the Tiantai Fourfold Teachings* (*Tiantai si jiaoyi* 天台四教儀) (T46, 773c–78c), <http://www.acmuller.net/kor-bud/sagyoui.html>.
- 17 Fire between flints and crackles of lightening refers to the mirage in afflicted minds.
- 18 As Kaijue noted in his annotations, this refers to famous stories of four well-known Chan masters in the Song dynasty who, despite their Chan cultivation, still fell into reincarnation and were born as ordinary people.
- 19 Anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti (wusheng faren 無生法忍) is a kind of wisdom that the “nonretrogression” stage Bodhisattva started to learn in Mahāyāna, in which Bodhisattvas begin to understand the deep meaning of emptiness and truly realize the unrealness of self and others, reincarnation and even nirvana, that “all dharmas . . . are originally and eternally ‘unproduced’ or ‘tranquil’” (Buswell and Lopez 2014, p. 55).
- 20 In Zhiyi's biography, it is recorded that at his death he claimed that he would be reborn in the Pure Land of Bliss (T50, 196a). The Ming Pure Land master Wengu's *nianfo* temple was named *Jingci an* 淨慈庵, an apparent reference to the Pure Land (淨土) (X61, 819b).
- 21 For example, see 斐然宋元戎初入法門求示修心法要 (J35, 478b), 警策緇素 (J35, 486b) and 與尹瀾柱銓部 (J35, 495c).
- 22 See the three articles mentioned above. This perhaps indicates Yunqi Zhuhong's influence. See 掃雲棲大師塔文 (J35, 505c) for Hongzan's intellectual and social liaison with Yunqi Zhuhong.
- 23 As there are more than half of the stories dedicated to lay practitioners in *Wangsheng ji* and more than a third dedicated to lay figures in *Jingtu shengxian lu*.
- 24 See 禪門達者雖不出世有名於時者 in *Jingde chuandeng lu* (T51, 429c).
- 25 This is not the Chan master Damo but a central Asian monk.
- 26 Hongzan perhaps missed a sentence from the original text. See T50, 399a.
- 27 The original story is seen in the Tang Buddhist encyclopedia *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林 (T53, 945a).
- 28 Here I consulted Chapin's translation of Qici's biography. See Chapin (1933).



- <sup>29</sup> In fact, Janet Gyatso has shown that the Vinaya codes are primarily concerned with bodily behaviors and acts prior to the status of the mind, and Hongzan's narrative here seems to stress this somatic dimension of Vinaya. See [Gyatso \(2005\)](#), pp. 271–90).
- <sup>30</sup> These kind of bone relics were usually understood as remains of Buddhist "saints" and a proof of their accomplishment. They were enshrined and venerated for their miraculous power, but very often this kind of veneration of bodily relics was limited to monastic figures. See [Ritzinger and Bingenheimer \(2006\)](#).
- <sup>31</sup> These two methods are established Maitreya devotional practices since medieval China aiming at ascent to Tuṣita Heaven, and they are very similar to Pure Land of Bliss practices. See [Sponberg \(1988\)](#), pp. 94–109).
- <sup>32</sup> Another name for Buddhist dhyāna meditation.
- <sup>33</sup> See Utsuo Shoshin's ([Utsuo 1950](#)) discussion of Bai Juyi's pure land beliefs.

## References

### Primary Sources

- Jiaxing zang* 嘉興藏. Taipei: Xin wenfeng 新文豐. 1987.
- Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經. Edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎, Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡辺海旭, et al. Tōkyō: Taishō shinshū daizōkyō kankō kai, 1924–1934.
- Wanzi xuzang jing* 卮續藏經. Taipei: Xinwen feng 新文豐, 1975.
- Chengjiu. 1717. Di er dai Zaisan heshang zhuan 第二代在 慘和尚傳. Guojia tushu guan cang Kangxi wushi liu nian keben 國家圖書館藏康熙五十六年刻本. *Dinghu shan zhi* 鼎湖山志, juan 3, pp. 1–7.
- Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲. 1993. Sanfeng Hanyue Zang chanshi taming 三峰漢月藏禪師塔銘. In *Huang Zongxi quanji* 黃宗羲全集. Volume 10. Edited by Wu Guang 吳光. Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe 浙江古籍出版社, p. 513.

### Secondary Sources

- Adamek, Wendi L. 2007. *The Mystique of Transmission: On an Early Chan History and Its Contexts*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Anderl, Christoph. 2016. Miscellaneous Informal Remarks on Narrative Structures in Chinese Maitreya Accounts. In *Sun Changwu Jiaoshou Bashi Huadan Jinian Wenji* 孫昌武教授八十華誕紀念文集. Edited by Jiayu Ning 寧稼雨 and Peifeng Zhang 張培鋒. Beijing: Baihua wenyi chubanshe 百花文藝出版社, pp. 113–43.
- Andrews, Allan A. 1993. Lay and Monastic Forms of Pure Land Devotionalism: Typology and History. *Numen* 40: 16–37. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Araki, Kengo 荒木見悟. 1979. *Bukkyo to Yomeigaku* 仏教と陽明学. Tokyo: Daisan Bunmeisha 第三文明社.
- Araki, Kengo 荒木見悟. 2001. *Jinshi Zhongguo fojiao de shuguang: Yunqi Zhuhong zhi yanjiu* 近世中國佛教的曙光：雲棲祿宏之研究. Translated by Zhou Xianbo 周賢博. Taipei: Huiming wenhua 慧明文化.
- Boyd, James W. 1971. Symbols of Evil in Buddhism. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 31: 63–75. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Buswell, Robert E., Jr. 1991. The "Short-cut" Approach of K'an-hua Meditation: The Evolution of a Practical Subitism in Chinese Ch'an Buddhism. In *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought*. Edited by Peter N. Gregory. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, pp. 321–80.
- Buswell, Robert E., Jr., and Donald S. Lopez. 2014. *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Cai, Rixin 蔡日新. *Nansong Yuanming Qingchu Caodong Chan* 南宋元明清初曹洞禪. Lanzhou: Gansu minzu chubanshe 甘肅民族出版社.
- Campany, Robert F. 2012. *Signs from the Unseen Realm: Buddhist Miracle Tales from Early Medieval China*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Chapin, Helen B. 1933. The Ch'an Master Pu-tai. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 53: 47–52. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Chen, Jinhua. 2007. *Philosopher, Practitioner, Politician: The Many Lives of Fazang*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 643–712.
- Chen, Kenneth. 1964. *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Chen, Yongge 陳永革. 2007. *Wanming Fojiang Sixiang Yanjiu* 晚明佛教思想研究. Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe 宗教文化出版社.
- Chen, Yongge 陳永革. 2012. *Jinshi Zhongguo fojiao sixiang shilun* 近世中國佛教思想史論. Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe 宗教文化出版社.
- Cleary, Jonathan Christopher. 1985. Zibo Zhenke: A Buddhist Leader in Late Ming China. Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA.
- Dumoulin, Heinrich. 1994. *Zen Buddhism: A History*. Volume 1: India and China. New York: Macmillan.
- Eichman, Jennifer. 2016. *A Late Sixteenth-Century Chinese Buddhist Fellowship: Spiritual Ambitions, Intellectual Debates, and Epistolary Connections*. Leiden: Brill.
- Fan, Jialing 范佳玲. 2001. *Zibai Dashi Shengping Jiqi Sixiang Yanjiu* 紫柏大生平及其思想研究. Taipei: Fagu wenhua 法鼓文化.
- Foulk, T. Griffith. 2007. The Spread of Chan (Zen) Buddhism. In *The Spread of Buddhism*. Handbook of Oriental Studies. Section 8 Uralic & Central Asian Studies. Edited by Ann Heirman and Stephan Peter Bumbacher. Leiden: Brill, pp. 433–56.
- Granoff, Phyllis. 2010. Maitreya and the "Yüpa": Some Gandharan Reliefs. *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 24: 115–28.
- Greene, Eric M. 2021. *Chan Before Chan: Meditation, Repentance, and Visionary Experience in Chinese Buddhism*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Gregory, Peter N. 2019. The Missing Link: Simha Bhikṣu and the Construction of an Indian Chan Lineage, with Special Attention to Zongmi. *Journal of Chinese Buddhist Studies* 32: 31–95.

- Groner, Paul. 1990. The *Fan-wang ching* and Monastic Discipline in Japanese Tendai: A Study of Annen's *Futsu Jubosatsukai Koshaku*. In *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*. Edited by Robert Buswell Jr. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, pp. 251–90.
- Guo, Peng 郭朋. 1982. *Mingqing Fojiao* 明清佛教. Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe 福建人民出版社.
- Gyatso, Janet. 2005. Sex. In *Critical Terms for the Study of Buddhism*. Edited by Donald S. Lopez Jr. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 271–90.
- Hou, Yinguo 侯印国. 2014. Luelun Mile jingtu xinyang zai Zhongguo de xingshuai 略论弥勒净土信仰在中国的兴衰. *Fayin* 法音 1: 21–30.
- Hallisey, Charles. 2007. Vinayas. In *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*. Edited by Damien Keown and Charles S. Prebish. London: Routledge, pp. 807–10.
- Hsiao, Bea-Hui. 1995. Two Images of Maitreya: Fu His and Pu Tai Ho-shang. Ph.D. thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, UK.
- Huang, Jingjia 黄敬家. 2016. Songdai chanmen wenxian zhongde sansheng jiqi youxi xingxiang de jingshen yuanyuan 宋代禅门文献中的散聖及其遊戲形象的精神淵源. *Donghua Hanxue* 東華漢學 23: 101–34.
- Hughes, April D. 2021. *Worldly Saviors and Imperial Authority in Medieval Chinese Buddhism*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Jaini, Padmanabh S. 1988. Stages in the Bodhisattva Career of the Tathagata Maitreya. In *Maitreya, the Future Buddha*. Edited by Alan Sponberg and Helen Hardacre. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 54–90.
- Jiang, Canteng 江燦騰. 2006. *Wangming Fojiao Gaige Shi* 晚明佛教改革史. Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe 廣西師範大學出版社.
- Jones, Charles B. 2019. *Chinese Pure Land Buddhism: Understanding a Tradition of Practice*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Jorgensen, John. 2005. *Inventing Hui-neng, the Sixth Patriarch Hagiography and Biography in Early Ch'an*. Leiden: Brill.
- Kieschnick, John. 1997. *The Eminent Monk: Buddhist Ideals in Medieval Chinese Hagiography*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Kim, Inchang. 1997. *The Future Buddha Maitreya: An Iconological Study*. New Delhi: D. K. Printworld.
- Kitagawa, Joseph M. 1981. The Career of Maitreya, with Special Reference to Japan. *History of Religions* 21: 107–25. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Lancaster, Lewis. 2005. Maitreya. In *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed. Volume 8. Edited by Lindsay Jones, Mircea Eliade and Charles J. Adams. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, pp. 5618–23.
- Lee, Songya S. 2010. *Surviving Niroana: Death of the Buddha in Chinese Visual Culture*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Leong, Markus. 1994. Hanshan Deqing (1546–1623) on Buddhist Ethics. Ph.D. thesis, California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, CA, USA.
- Lin, Chuanfang 林傳芳. 1975. Keiko igo no miroku shinkō ni tsuite 契此以後の弥勒信仰について. *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* 印度學佛教學研究 23: 327–32.
- Ma, Tianxiang 麻天祥. 2007. Yongzheng yu qingchu chanxue zhi xingshuai 雍正与清初禅学之兴衰. *Hubei Shehui Kexue* 湖北社会科学 9: 103–6.
- Matsumoto, Bunzaburō 松本文三郎. 1911. *Miroku jōdo ron* 弥勒淨土論. Tokyo: Heigo shuppansha 丙午出版社.
- McBride, Richard D., II. 2016. Shifting Contexts of Faith: The Cult of Maitreya in Middle and Late Silla. *The Eastern Buddhist* 47: 1–28.
- McRae, John R. 2003. *Seeing through Zen: Encounter, Transformation, and Genealogy in Chinese Chan Buddhism*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Nakayama, Shoko 中山正晃. 1973. Chikyoku no bukyō kan 智旭の仏教觀. *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 印度學佛教學研究 21: 792–95.
- Nattier, Jan. 1988. The Meanings of the Maitreya Myth: A Typological Analysis. In *Maitreya, the Future Buddha*. Edited by Alan Sponberg and Helen Hardacre. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 23–47.
- Overmyer, Daniel L. 1976. *Folk Buddhist Religion: Dissenting Sects in Late Traditional China*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Ownby, David. 1999. Chinese Millenarian Traditions: The Formative Age. *American Historical Review* 104: 1513–30. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Poceski, Mario. 2018. Bo Juyi's Memorial Inscription for Chan Teacher Weikuan. *Journal of Chinese Buddhist Studies* 31: 39–74.
- Ritzinger, Justin. 2017. *Anarchy in the Pure Land: Reinventing the Cult of Maitreya in Modern Chinese Buddhism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ritzinger, Justin, and Marcus Bingenheimer. 2006. Whole-body relics in Chinese Buddhism—Previous Research and Historical Overview. *The Indian International Journal of Buddhist Studies* 7: 37–94.
- Schlütter, Morten. 2008. *How Zen Became Zen: The Dispute over Enlightenment and the Formation of Chan Buddhism in Song-Dynasty China*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Sharf, Robert H. 2007. How to Think with Chan Gong'an. In *Thinking with Cases: Specialist Knowledge in Chinese Cultural History*. Edited by Charlotte Furth, Judith T. Zeitlin and Ping-chen Hsiung. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Shi, Houguan 釋厚觀. 2019. *Da zhidu lun wusheng faren zhi tanjiu* 《大智度論》無生法忍之探究. *Zhengguan* 正觀 90: 5–107.
- Shi, Jianye 釋見暉. 2007. *Mingmo Fojiao Fazhan Zhi Yanjiu: Yi Wanming Si Dashi Wei Zhongxin* 明末佛教發展之研究：以晚明四大師為中心. Taipei: Fagu wenhua 法鼓文化.
- Shiina, Kōkū 椎名宏雄. 1968. Fu daishi to shin ō mio 傳大士と『心王銘』. *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 印度學佛教學研究 16: 130–131.
- Shinohara, Koichi. 1988. Two Sources of Chinese Buddhist Biographies: Stupa Inscriptions and Miracle Tales. In *Monks and Magicians: Religious Biographies in Asia*. Edited by P. E. Granoff and Koichi Shinohara. Oakville: Mosaic Press, pp. 94–128.
- Shinohara, Koichi. 2007. Writing the Moment of Death: Chinese Biographies of Eminent Monks. In *Heroes and Saints: The Moment of Death in Cross-cultural Perspectives*. Edited by Phyllis Granoff and Koichi Shinohara. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publication, pp. 47–72.

- Sponberg, Alan. 1988. Wōnhyo on Maitreya Visualisation. In *Maitreya, the Future Buddha*. Edited by Alan Sponberg and Helen Hardacre. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 94–109.
- ter Haar, Barend. 2014. *Practicing Scripture: A Lay Buddhist Movement in Late Imperial China*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Utsuo, Shoshin 撫尾正信. 1950. Haku Kyo no bukyō shinkō ni tsui te 白居易の佛教信仰について. *Shi Nihon shigaku* 西日本史學 5: 22–41.
- Wang, Juan 汪娟. 1992. Tangdai Mile xinyang yu fojiao zhu zongpai de guanxi 唐代彌勒信仰與佛教諸宗派的關係. *Zhonghua Foxue Xuebao* 中華佛學學報 5: 193–231.
- Wang, Xuemei 王雪梅. 2016. *Mile Xinyang Yanjiu* 彌勒信仰研究. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe 上海古籍出版社.
- Wang, Xing. 2021. Rethinking Gender and Female Laity in Late Imperial Chinese Pure Land Buddhist Biographies. *Religions* 12: 705. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Wen, Jinyu 溫金玉. 2020. Hongzan Zaisan luxue sixiang yanjiu 弘贊在 慘律學思想研究. *Xinan Minzu Daxue Xuebao* 西南民族大學學報 7: 52–56.
- Wu, Jiang. 2008. *Enlightenment in Dispute: The Reinvention of Chan Buddhism in Seventeenth-Century China*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wu, Jiang. 2015. *Leaving for The Rising Sun: Chinese Zen Master Yinyuan and the Authenticity Crisis in Early Modern East Asia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Xian, Yuqing 冼玉清. 2016. *Guangdong Shidao Zhushu Kao* 廣東釋道著述考. Nanning: Guangxi shifan daxue chuban she 廣西師範大學出版社.
- Xiao, Airong 蕭愛蓉. 2013. Shechan guijing dui wanming fojiao de gexin yi: Yi Ouyi Zhixu wei hexin “攝禪歸淨”對晚明佛教的革新意義：以滿益智旭為核心. Paper presented at Di ershi si jie quanguo foxue lunwen lianhe fabiao hui 第二十四屆全國佛學論文聯合發表會, Kaohsiung, Taiwan, September 22.
- Yü, Chün-fang. 1981. *The Renewal of Buddhism in China: Zhuhong and the Late Ming Synthesis*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Zhang, Ping 張平. 2009. Daoan foxue sixiang jiqi Mile jingtu xinyang 道安佛學思想及其彌勒淨土信仰. *Xiandai Foxue* 現代佛學 4: 102–10.
- Zhang, Shengyan. 1975. *Meibatsu Chūkoku bukyō no kenkyū* 明末中国佛教の研究. Tokyo: Sankibō Busshōrin 山喜房叢書林.
- Zhang, Yong 張勇. 2012. *Fu Dashi Yanjiu* 傅大士研究. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chuban she 上海人民出版社.
- Zheng, Xingzhong 鄭興中. 2017. Zaisan Hongzan shengping yu zhuzuo shulüe 在 慘弘讚生平與著作述略. *Zhaoqing Xueyuan Xuebao* 肇慶學院學報 38: 47–50.
- Zhou, Jun 周軍. 2009. *Dinghu shan zhi yu mingqing zhiji lingnan chanzong* 《鼎湖山志》與明清之際嶺南禪宗. *Zhaoqing Xueyuan Xuebao* 肇慶學院學報 30: 36–39.
- Zürcher, Erik. 2013a. Buddhism and Education in Tang Times: The Buddhist Ideal of Moral Training. In *Buddhism in China: Collected Papers of Erik Zürcher*. Translated and Edited by Jonathan A. Silk. Leiden: Brill, pp. 295–338. First published 1980.
- Zürcher, Erik. 2013b. “Prince Moonlight” Messianism and Eschatology in Early Medieval Chinese Buddhism. In *Buddhism in China: Collected Papers of Erik Zürcher*. Translated and Edited by Jonathan A. Silk. Leiden: Brill, pp. 187–241. First published 1980.