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Struggling to Restore a Lost Identity: Hanshan Deqing's 憨山德清 (1546–1623) Reforms at Nanhua Temple 南華寺, 1600–1610

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Abstract: During the ten years from Wanli 28 to 38 (1600–1610), Hanshan Deqing, then an exiled leading Buddhist master, managed to launch large-scale reforms in Nanhua temple in an attempt to reinvigorate the ancestral temple of Chan Buddhism. Strategically significant though it was, this effort proved eventful and finally came to a tragic end, including the suicide of the temple's incumbent abbot. How deeply the process of the reforms and their significance can be understood hinges upon the extent to which two puzzles can be tackled. First, how could it have been possible for Deqing, as an exile, to initiate the reforms in such a significant temple in the first place? And how and why did Deqing's efforts evolve into such a life-and-death confrontation? Keeping these questions in mind, this article reveals how Deqing was able to mobilize resources for initial success by adjusting his strategies according to the situation; how his efforts were conditioned both by domestic situations on the local, regional, and national levels, respectively, and by international elements that characterized the dawn of the global age; and how the reform efforts failed halfway amid the escalating tensions between the new group led by Deqing and Nanhua's existing monks. This study highlights both the uniqueness of Buddhism in the often-overlooked Lingnan region—which, to a large part, determined the fate of Deqing's reform—and the vitality and fragility of the ongoing late-Ming Buddhist renewal.

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In the second month of Wanli 24 (1596), Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清 (1546–1623), a Buddhist master with national influence but then still on his way to his exile destination Leizhou 雷州, Guangdong, detoured to Nanhua temple 南華寺 in Shaozhou 韶州 (Present day Shaoguan 韶關, Guangdong). There, he paid respect to the mummy of Huineng 慧能 (638–713), the sixth patriarch and actual founder of Chan Buddhism. For Deqing, this visit was the moment when a long-awaited dream came true but, as suggested by his abrupt departure after taking only a single meal (Shi et al. 2016, 5:107), he was likely shocked by the painfully stunning decline of the monastery that he later described as follows:

For the benefit of convenience and security, the monks here in the monastery have developed the habit of living in country houses where, not unlike ordinary people, they plant crops and feed animals. Hundreds of rooms within the monastery are all locked. Nowhere can you find any traces left by human beings within it, except several monks taking care of public worship in the Ancestral Hall and a few other persons including the abbot. (本寺僧徒，向以便安莊居，種藝畜養，與俗無異。寺中百房，皆扃其戶，入門絕無人跡，惟祖殿侍奉香火數僧，及住持方丈數輩而已) (Shi et al. 2016, 6:136)

Given that Nanhua had been cherished by Chan monks as their ancestral temple (zuting 祖庭) for centuries, a serious identity crisis lurked in this much-unexpected scene. This

meeting marked the start of an eventful relationship between Deqing and Nanhua temple, which would last nearly thirty years until his death. Four years later, Deqing accepted an invitation by officials to return to Nanhua temple, where he launched a major reform geared to reinvigorate it. In Wanli 31 (1603), Deqing, being inadvertently implicated in a political event in Beijing, had to resume his military service as an exile in Leizhou, but he managed to resume the reform program two years later in the fall of Wanli 33 (1605). In Wanli 37 (1609), out of the blue, the abbot of the temple sued Deqing for misappropriating public funds. It took as long as two years for Deqing to restore his reputation, during which he almost died of illness. Eventually, the case ended tragically with the abbot's suicide. After that, exhausted and deeply frustrated, Deqing left Nanhua temple in a decisive move and the reform ceased to develop.

So far, scholars have paid much attention to this reform program that began promisingly but failed in tragedy after having triggered a horrifying crisis within Nanhua temple. Given the detailed accounts Deqing left about his efforts during the reforms, however, these studies amount to little more than a factual recounting of the events.¹ Unlike these accounts, this study focuses on two of the many puzzles that arise over the reforms: How could it have been possible for Deqing as an exile to initiate reforms at such a major and significant temple in the first place? And how and why did Deqing's efforts evolve into such a life-and-death confrontation between Deqing and the forces within the temple as represented by the abbot? To tackle those questions, this study has four parts that, thematically but in rough chronological order, deal with different aspects related to the reforms. It starts with locating the reform in a broader context by discussing the background of Deqing, regional features unique to Lingnan Buddhism, and the timing of the encounter between the master and Nanhua temple in the second half of the seventeenth century. The second section proceeds to explore how Deqing could secure support in Lingnan from a wide array of people with distinctly different backgrounds, including military officials, scholar-officials, local people, and eunuchs, support which proved crucial to the outcomes of his efforts at Nanhua temple. The third section takes a close look at the concrete measures that Deqing took over eight years in Nanhua temple in hopes of understanding how he tried to fix problems he perceived as most important but most worrying. In the last section, we shall reflect from the perspectives of both sides involved in the reforms to ponder why those efforts evolved into literal life-and-death combat. And finally, this study ends with a brief conclusion.

Overall, this study aims to provide a window through which we can see how Deqing was able to mobilize resources by adjusting his strategies according to the situation and how his efforts were conditioned not only by the domestic situation at the local, regional, and national levels, but also internationally in a way that is hard to detect but far from superficial. In a broader context, given that Deqing was one of the "Four Great late-Ming Buddhist masters", this study offers a case in often-overlooked Lingnan for us to see both the vitality of the ongoing late-Ming Buddhist renewal and the fragility inherent in it.²

1. An Encounter: A Lingnan Temple in Decline and a Jiangnan Master in Exile

Binding the second half of his life with Nanhua temple in such a deep and complicated way was very likely something that Deqing should not have expected. Despite the accidental beginning of their encounter, the process and results were, in a large part, conditioned by structural and context-dependent factors and elements. A true understanding of the two sides prior to their meeting would thus be helpful by situating the reform in a broader context.

Hanshan Deqing was a typical Buddhist master who was born and well-trained in the Jiangnan region, and the first half of his life was primarily driven and shaped by his mission to restore the Great Baoen monastery 大報恩寺 in Nanjing. In Jiajing 36 (1557), Deqing entered the Baoen monastery at the age of twelve and was soon singled out by Xilin Yongning 西林永寧 (1483–1565), then the abbot and a senior monastic official in Jiangnan, to train as a candidate for his successor. Notably, that training included Buddhist teach-

ings, Confucian classics, and literati skills (Fushan and Fuzheng 1990, 1:630–32, 635–37). Eight years later, before Yongning's death, Deqing was tasked by the latter with restoring the monastery. Originally built in the third century, the Baoen monastery remained to be a great imperially-sponsored monastery in the early Ming, but its glory waned rapidly after the 1420s following the moving of the imperial capital from Nanjing to Beijing. By the end of the Jiajing period (1522–1565) when Deqing entered the monastery, it was desperately struggling for survival, which was just part of the general failure of Buddhist institutions in Jiangnan (Zhang 2020, chap. 2; Chen 1995, pp. 35–102). Fully aware of the challenges of the restoration project which, according to his own estimate at a later time, cost more than 100,000 taels of silver (Fushan and Fuzheng 1990, 1:710), Deqing decided to go to Beijing to try his luck. Unlike Jiangnan where the sangha was mainly backed by local gentry (Brook 1993b, p. 8), Beijing Buddhism was supported primarily by eunuchs and the imperial family. In particular, during the early Wanli period, it was Empress Dowager Cisheng 慈聖 (1545–1614), the birth mother of Emperor Wanli (r. 1573–1620), who functioned as the coordinator of those pro-Buddhism forces (Zhang 2020, chap. 3). Keen to recognize that Cisheng offered his best chance of success, around the year of Wanli 9 (1582), Deqing strategically forced his way into the political arena on an occasion when Cisheng sent eunuch envoys to Mount Wutai to pray for the birth of Wanli's first son, who would become the crown prince. It happened that Deqing was then working with his life-long friend Miaofeng Fudeng 妙峰福登 (1540–1612) to hold the “Undiscriminating Great Assembly” (Skt. *Pañcavarsika*; *wuzhe fahui* 無遮法會) for their private causes. Deqing thus suggested incorporating their assembly into the one led by the inner court, claiming that it would enhance the latter's chance of success. In the wake of the birth of the crown prince, Deqing indeed established a direct line of communication to Cisheng (Zhang 2014), which became even closer as time passed. Benefiting from the relationship, Deqing rose rapidly from a promising young monk to a master with national influence. Around the eleventh month of 1594, his success in the secular world reached its peak: Cisheng became his disciple and asked Emperor Wanli to pay homage to his portrait hung in the palace (Fushan and Fuzheng 1990, 1:720–21). Meanwhile, it seemed as if accomplishing Deqing's intended mission was within his grasp.³

Unfortunately, in the end, Deqing's strategy drew him into court strife, which constituted the backdrop of his exile and would haunt the remainder of his life. In the second month of Wanli 23 (1595), Deqing was suddenly arrested and thrown into jail in Beijing. Earlier in Wanli 14 (1586), Deqing purchased the foundation of the Daoist Taiqing abbey 太清宮, which was then dilapidated, at Mount Laoshan 嶗山 in Shandong province, but three years later he was sued by the Daoist Geng Yilan 耿義蘭 (1509–1606) for stealing it. Deqing won the case on the county level with Geng sentenced to exile for four years. In early Wanli 23, however, Geng Yilan managed to submit the charge directly to the Wanli emperor, who then ordered the arrest of Deqing. Behind Deqing's arrest was the head-on confrontation between Cisheng and Wanli over the selection of the crown prince. Usually called the “Succession Issue” (*guoben zhizheng* 國本之爭), this confrontation led the inner and outer courts to split and, from Wanli 14 (1586) onwards, plagued the court for three decades in one way or another (Gu 1977, 67:1061–76; Carnes and Gardner 2005). Under such circumstances, Deqing's siding with Cisheng implied his rejection of Wanli. As the mother–son relationship reached its lowest point around Wanli 22 (1594) (Zhang 2020, pp. 60–66), a close connection with the Empress Dowager was no longer a blessing but a curse. To return to the legal case: the fact that the purchase became a fitting target of attack was because on the foundation, Deqing had built Haiyin temple 海印寺, which was in turn named and backed by Cisheng. Geng's charges included that Deqing falsely claimed himself to be a member of the royal family and that he hoarded provisions for a revolt, but these were clearly unfounded or else Deqing would have been sentenced to death. Despite that, the emperor called Deqing an evil monk “who harms the Way and brings disaster to common people” (害道殃民).⁴ The use of this highly charged language reflected more the emperor's anger at Cisheng, who was behind the scenes, rather than the actual facts, but

inevitably it increased pressure for the processing of the case. Eight months after being arrested, Deqing was sentenced to exile (Zhou and Du 2018). On the tenth day of the third month of Wanli 24 (7 April 1596), Deqing finally arrived in Leizhou where, after reporting to the garrison (*weisuo* 衛所), he transformed from a monk into a soldier in uniform. His connection with Nanhua temple thus began as well. But before going into that story, we need to better understand the uniqueness of the Lingnan region as it would significantly affect Deqing's interactions with the area in the following years in one way or another.

Geographically, Lingnan was isolated from central China but open to the ocean, and these mixed topographic features had a two-edged impact on both the self-identity of the people there and their cultural images in the eyes of other regions. Lingnan refers to a vast region loosely consisting of today's Guangdong, Guangxi, and Hainan provinces. In the north, it was divided from central China by the Five Ridges (*wuling* 五嶺), the biggest mountain range in south China that serves as the watershed between the Yangtze River and the Pearl River. In the south, it expanded until it reached the ocean, where rare materials and precious goods abound. For centuries in pre-modern times, separated effectively by those mountains, Lingnan remained inferior to central China in the economic and cultural sense and was generally despised by northern Chinese as remote, dangerous, and barbarian. A depiction of the region that first appeared in the early 2nd century, for example, was often cited in later generations: "the land is sweltering, and poisonous snakes and brutish beasts appear frequently on the road." (土地炎熱, 惡蟲猛獸, 不絕于路) (Sima 1956, 48:1559) It was not until the mid-Tang dynasty (618–907), following the building of the Meiguan Ancient Road 梅關古道 on the Dayu ridge (大庾嶺) by Zhang Jiuling 張九齡 (678–740), a native of Shaozhou who once served as the Chief Minister, that a turning point came in the history of Lingnan (Zhang 2022, chap. 5). "Following the completion of the road," it is said, "In the regions south of the Five Ridges, talented men have emerged, [the barrier to] the wealth and goods has been broken through, and the prestige and civilization of central China spread [southward], making increasing changes to the customs of [Lingnan] as a remote and secluded frontier region." (茲路既開, 然後五嶺以南之人才出矣, 財貨通矣, 中朝之聲教日被矣, 遐陬之風俗日變矣) (Qiu 1596) Nonetheless, for Lingnan, the remodeling of its image took a much longer time. Only starting in the sixteenth century did Lingnan forcefully rise to prominence in the cultural landscape of China, as evidenced by the appearance of Qiu Jun 丘濬 (1420–1495; *jinshi*, 1454), the grand secretary (*da xueshi* 大學士) who compiled the *Daxue yanyi bu* 大學衍義補 (a supplement to the *Daxue yanyi*) of 160 fascicles, as well as neo-Confucian scholars such as Chen Xianzhang 陳獻章 (1428–1500) and Zhan Ruoshui 湛若水 (1466–1560; *jinshi*, 1505) (Zhao 2017). Notably, following the popularization of Confucianism during this period, more and more powerful families emerged in local societies by attaching importance to worshipping ancestors and building family temples (Inoue 2003). This result, to be seen in Section 3, created a challenging situation Deqing would have to tackle in Nanhua temple.

While maintaining national influence in the Buddhist world of China, however, Nanhua temple was simultaneously regionally embedded in Lingnan, and this dual nature implies inherent tensions that profoundly impacted the history of the temple. The degeneration that shocked Deqing, as noted above, was of course part of the decline of Chinese Buddhism in general. Nonetheless, more specifically, Nanhua's case could be somehow traced back to the early Ming when monks there increasingly engaged in cultivating wild lands, which was further encouraged by local officials who were seeking for more sources of land taxes. Since the famous "pure regulations" (*qinggui* 清規) by Baizhang Huaihai 百丈懷海 (720–814), it had gradually become a tradition for monks within the Chan community to join in agricultural work with the intention of supporting themselves financially (Xie 2009). The ultimate purpose of self-maintenance, meanwhile, set an actual limit to the degree in which they were allowed to engage in agriculture. In Nanhua's case, however, monks simply ignored the limit, turning agriculture and other occupations like feeding domestic animals into opportunities to earn money. But the more time the monks spent on those secular affairs, the more they lost their identity as Buddhist monks. Meanwhile,

although Nanhua temple had been secluded for centuries, with the continuous inflow of farmer tenants, some villages had formed around the temple by the early sixteenth century. That concentration of people in turn attracted merchants to open hotels, butcher shops, brothels, a casino, etc., in front of Nanhua's main gate where a busy road ran. Surrounded by people with strong secular identities, the situation facing Nanhua temple became much more complicated and worsened, an issue that shall be discussed in more detail below. Moreover, profoundly but oft-ignored, Nanhua temple was affected by its long-lasting isolation from the more culturally advanced central China. Deqing once commented:

Caoxi (i.e., Nanhua temple) has led all the Chan monasteries under heaven, from which has originated the five branches [of Chan Buddhism], just as the Zhu and the Si rivers [serve as the origin of Confucianism]. However, located in the remote and less educated Lingnan region, the way to the monastery is full of ups and downs, which has frustrated scholars with lofty characters from approaching it. The monks here in the monastery have only limited knowledge. They have earned their living by cultivating the land, and no longer know anything about the ultimate matter [of awakening as promised by Chan Buddhism] as their customs have been established for a long time. (曹溪為天下禪林冠，一脈派五宗，源如洙泗。第僻處嶺外，道路間關，故高人上士足跡罕至；其徒見聞狹陋，以種田博飯，無復知有向上事，其習俗久矣) (Hanshan 1975–1989, 23:625c)

This comment was also applicable to Buddhism in Lingnan in general. Thus, though the monks there were not necessarily conscious of it, Nanhua temple was desperate for a fresh vision. In premodern times, as scholars have already noticed, itinerant monks (*xingjiao seng* 行腳僧), who traveled around for whatever reasons, played a significant role in circulating information among temples and facilitating the reorganization of specific monasteries or even of the entire Buddhist community to conform to certain modes (Wang 2013, p. 2023). In this sense, the presence of Deqing, a leading Buddhist master who was first trained in Jiangnan and then further refined in Beijing and Mount Wutai, then the Buddhist centers with national significances, made it possible to meet the need for Buddhism in Lingnan.

In addition to regional factors, timing would prove to be another significant variable for the meeting between Deqing and Nanhua temple as Lingnan, being a coastal region, was facing an unprecedented challenge engendered by a major reshuffling of Asian powers and the advent of the early global age. During the sixteenth century, the powers in north, east, and southeast Asia were experiencing significant restructuring, sparking a string of events that had remarkable consequences along the frontiers of the Ming empire. Among other factors, we should note the rise of Mongolian forces after regaining their momentum in the north, rampant incursions by Japanese pirates (*wokou* 倭寇) who frequently plundered southeastern and southern coastal regions of China, and the Korean War of Ming armies against the Japanese between 1592–1598 that significantly drained the financial and military resources of the Ming. South China felt these combined shockwaves in multiple ways, including the lost balance between Ming China and Annam (today's Vietnam) that would invite rebellions and the financially depleted Wanli emperor sending eunuchs to Lingnan in search of extra resources. We shall discuss these two things briefly later.

To complicate things further, Lingnan was increasingly, but mostly unconsciously, involved in the vast sixteenth-century maritime trade network.⁵ Following the large-scale influx into China of silver produced in Iwami 石見 in Japan, the Acapulco–Manila galleon route, which Spanish colonizers operated after occupying the Philippines, connected China with Latin America. Scholars have estimated that about one hundred and twenty-eight tons of silver were shipped from the New World to Manila each year in exchange for Chinese goods such as silk and porcelain.⁶ This trade brought immense profits to merchants from both Spanish and China, especially Fujian and Guangdong. Unfortunately, the ideologies and imaginaries of the emperor and court officials in the imperial capital were distinctively different from those of maritime merchants active on the South China Sea. Highly suspicious of maritime merchants, the Ming government imposed strict restrictions on them. Although it opened Yuegang 月港 port in Fujian for private trade starting

in the 1560s, two years before the formation of the well-known Dutch East India Company, the door was simply too narrow to meet the need. This development comes as no surprise given that the Ming government did not detect, let alone appreciate, the sea change that harbingered the advent of modern times. What was worse, in the wake of the 1548 destruction by Ming armies of Shuangyu port 雙嶼港 east of Zhejiang, then a center for smuggling, Chinese smugglers such as Wang Zhi 王直 (?–1559) who had moved to Japan started a large-scale armed merchant trade and thereby constituted a large portion of the “Japanese” pirates who repeatedly plundered China’s coastal regions.

All these factors worked together to increasingly change Lingnan into a new frontier with which local and regional officials had to confront. With their different responsibilities and concerns, those officials frequently responded in divergent and sometimes conflicting ways, but Deqing had to interact and deal with them as the precondition for his religious undertakings in Nanhua temple. Although he was an exile, as we shall see, Deqing’s time in Lingnan was significantly affected by these developments.

2. Mobilization: Military and Civilian Officials, Eunuchs, and Local People

While still active in north China as a new star, Deqing, together with Zibo Zhenke 紫柏真可 (1543–1603), a lifetime friend and another leading Chan master of the age, once planned to visit Nanhua temple to “dredge the source of Chan Buddhism” (疏禪源), which symbolized their determination to revitalize the tradition (Hanshan 1975–1989, 54:840b). Although their plan was ruined by his exile, Deqing’s unexpected presence in Lingnan for two decades provided a rare opportunity that could facilitate the communication of Buddhism on both sides of the Five Ridges, the most important of which was the reforms he carried out at Nanhua temple. Deqing once recalled how he was convinced by officials to take on the task after a long-term hesitation:

Before long, Mr. Chen, the General-Governor and left Minister of War, who felt so regretful for the decline of the mountain of great significance (i.e., Nanhua temple), intended to entrust me with it. But I dared not engage in that because I was well aware that I had incurred insults from the samgha and was serving my military service. Shortly afterwards, both Mr. Zhou Haimen (i.e., Zhou Rudeng 周汝登 [1547–1629; *jinshi*, 1577]) and Mr. Zhu Xingcun (i.e., Zhu Yibin 祝以黜 [1564–1632; *jinshi*, 1586]), both Intendant [of Nanshao circuit], strived to invite me [to the monastery], which decisively changed my mind in the end. (居無幾何，制臺左司馬陳公，深念名山寥落，欲以余託跡焉。余自知取辱法門，且在行間，安敢事事？既而觀察海門周公，惺存祝公，皆力致之，余始翻然) (Hanshan 1975–1989, 23:626a)

“Mr. Chen” refers to Chen Dake 陳大科 (1534–1601; *jinshi*, 1571), then the General-Governor of Guangdong and Guangxi (*lianguang zongdu* 兩廣總督). As Cisheng’s master, Deqing’s presence, symbolically at least, held unparalleled significance for Buddhist institutions in Lingnan. But, given that he was a convicted criminal, it was not a small matter for officials to entrust him with a major monastery with national influence. Instead of taking it for granted, therefore, the question must be raised: during the five years before he initiated the reform, how could he win patrons and, more importantly, how did he convince those patrons, especially those in power, that he was the right person, with the charisma and vision, to redefine the direction of Nanhua temple? How did he maintain their support over the eight years of reform and, with varying degrees, after that until his death?

The fact that Deqing was not viewed by many of his contemporaries as a criminal, but as a failed hero against the Wanli emperor, was the key for him to win full support from the very beginning. Deqing’s case was clearly political in nature, resulting from the crown prince issue that had thrown the imperial court into a state of political turmoil. Fortunately for Deqing, by 1595, the emperor’s misadministration had drawn strong condemnation from all walks of society, while Cisheng was widely believed to be the last rein on his conduct. Against this backdrop, Deqing was given a major spotlight after his arrest, and the wide support given to him was less because of the case itself or Deqing himself than because of a credibility contest between Cisheng and Wanli, a contest that Cisheng was

winning. While Deqing was suffering in jail, for example, he received secret consolation from a military official who, ironically, was the person ordered to carry out the corporal punishment (Hanshan 1975–1989, 16:574c). More noticeably, his ensuing exile to Leizhou, in some sense, was even turned into a route to glory.⁷ For example, he was seen off from Beijing by court officials in a way that applied only to their most beloved comrades. Then, he had the chance to travel first southward along the Grand Canal and then westward along the Yangtze River. Over the course of his journey, he met his mother for the last time and was warmly received by quite a few people, including Confucian-oriented scholar-officials and Buddhist monks alike, some his friends but some not.⁸

Following Deqing's exile, the Beijing-based networks extended further to Lingnan, as did the mechanism of politics working to encourage people to express solidarity with the master, which guaranteed the relatively warm and respectful treatment accorded to him in a totally unfamiliar region in the first place. Thousands of miles away from the imperial capital, Lingnan's people could receive Deqing without necessarily considering the emperor's stance. Upon Deqing's arrival in Guangzhou, for example, he as an exile was required to pay respect to Wang Hanchong 王漢沖 (d. u.), then the Regional Commander (*zongbing* 總兵). At the sight of him, however, Wang quickly descended the stairs and released the ropes binding him, saying that "you, o master, are a lofty person wandering beyond the world. Let alone the fact that you suffered this unexpected disaster only because of praying for the sake of the court. We all respect and admire you deep in mind. How can we treat you in the normal manner?" (公物外高人，況為朝廷祈福，致此奇禍，何罪之有？吾輩正中心感重，豈可以尋常世法相遇?) (Hanshan 1975–1989, 13:545c) The term *wubei* (all of us) is meaningful, indicating that there was a group of people who believed that Deqing had sacrificed himself for the state's interests. This helps explain why later, while in Leizhou, Wang Hanchong was so kind to arrange accommodation in an old temple rather than a barracks and, only four months later, transfer Deqing back to the city of Guangzhou. This was also the case with Chen Dake, who noticed the arrival of Deqing only due to a reminder from a Beijing friend. In addition to sending regards to Deqing, Chen arranged a permit for the master to use the imperial courier system. Later, Deqing visited Chen Dake in Duanzhou 端州, where the General-Governor was stationed, and impressed Chen deeply with a talk that lasted deep into the night. Subsequently, Chen often voluntarily introduced Deqing to his fellow officials, thereby effectively promoting Deqing's reputation and facilitating his reception in Lingnan. In retrospect, collectively, these deliberate arrangements made the exile largely a nominal one, enabling Deqing to enjoy a freedom unavailable to other exiles, and behind these favors was a loose alliance among people who shared a stance against Wanli. Nonetheless, before his officially sanctioned discharge from military service in Wanli 39 (1611),⁹ Deqing's status as a convicted monk remained an implicit or explicit hurdle on some occasions. A most striking case took place in Wanli 33 when Deqing was implicated in the so-called "evil pamphlet" case (*yaoshu an* 妖書案) that claimed the life of Zibo Zhenke (Zhang 1974, 226:5546–47; Yang 2018, chap. 2): Deqing was forced back to Leizhou, and the resulting two-year pause in the Nanhua reforms then underway had consequences, as we shall see below.

Before long, and more importantly, Deqing managed to renew and strengthen confidence in him as a leading Buddhist master among his patrons, followers, and fellow monks, especially those in Lingnan. Deqing repeatedly demonstrated an extraordinary ability to turn adverse circumstances into opportunities to improve his spiritual achievements. In a letter, he wrote:

I hear that the wonderful act of bodhisattva lies in the fact of testing the mind with perceptual objects. Once you can empty afflictions, it becomes unnecessary to seek for bodhi from elsewhere. And it is right here the mysterious gate (i.e., Buddhism) as long as you can see through affective disorders. (貧道聞菩薩妙行，妙在歷境驗心。煩惱空處，不用別求般若。諸塵透處，即此便是玄門) (Hanshan 1975–1989, 16:575a)

Afflictions could be constructive and educative in nature, and for Deqing, this was not just empty talk. Deqing “experienced all kinds of suffering that are hard to describe” (備歷苦事, 不可言) while in jail in Beijing (Hanshan 1975–1989, 2:471b). Nonetheless, he enjoyed preaching Buddhist teachings to prisoners and clerks there to such an extent that, ten months later when he left the prison for Leizhou, he looked back at the site of his imprisonment and said, “How great it is as a site to preach Buddhist teachings!” (好個道場) (Shen 2007, 27:693). Similarly, Deqing transcended the rigors associated with military service, as demonstrated by the following verse: “Only after changing monk’s robe with military uniforms have [I] started to believe that, according to the situation, wherever is the site of practicing Buddhism. Even if the scorching region is as hot as fire, it would find hard to melt down my mind that is as cold as snow.” (緇衣脫卻換戎裝, 始信隨緣是道場。縱使炎天如烈火, 難消冰雪冷心腸) (Hanshan 1975–1989, 49:803b). It was in this sense that later the Chongzhen emperor (r. 1628–1644) would rightly praise Deqing as “being exercised (*qianchui* 鉗錘) by the Son of Heaven”.

Let us take a closer look at the case of the *Lengqie biji* 楞伽筆記 (a commentary note to the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*). Deqing started composing the commentary, which he had been entrusted with by a layperson on his way to Leizhou, almost immediately after he arrived for fears that he could not survive in such a sweltering hot place.¹⁰ Over the course of writing, however, he came to recognize that his attachment to the Dharma was not necessarily praiseworthy. He explained this in a letter to Fudeng:

My mind of assuming [responsibility] was as [earnest] as holding nine tripods, whereas the illness of attachment to the dharma increased by seven times over the course. I thought that I would fulfill my commission and keep up with former sages but, in reality, it is not wise but crazy and foolish. Fortunately, I understood deep in my mind that this act was not correct and that it was just like crossing a river in a dream (i.e., not real). . . . In the spare time while carrying weapons [as a soldier], I concentrated on the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* to explore the Buddha’s mind-seal. I came to realize that previously I had fallen in the sphere of light and shadow (i.e., illusion), without obtaining the strength of authentic insight (*zhijian* 知見; Skt. *Jñāna-darśana*). [From this experience I have learnt] that Buddhas and gods have more than one expedient way to cultivate sentient beings that have an affinity to Buddhism and, whether positive or negative, their only purpose is to introduce them into the grand gate of pure liberation. Both the accumulated fires [of hell] and the hill of knives are nothing but the place to attain the truth of *nirvāṇa*. (其荷負之心, 實持九鼎。而法執之病, 益增七重。將謂不負所生, 敢追先哲, 此實狂愚, 非謂慧也。幸亦心知非正, 如夢渡河。 . . . 荷戈之暇, 惟對《楞伽》究佛祖心印。始知從前皆墮光影門頭, 非真知見力。是知諸佛神力調伏有緣眾生, 非止一種方便。若逆若順, 無非令入清涼大解脫門; 火聚刀山, 無非究竟寂滅道場地) (Hanshan 1975–1989, 13:547b)

The mission of restoring the Great Baoen monastery, which had dragged Deqing into court strife, belonged to the attachment to the Dharma. Fortunately, life in exile, especially repeated threats of death, powerfully freed Deqing from attachment and led him to face existential matters directly. This explains his later encapsulation of this experience of transformation as “entering the Dharma Realm because of the king’s law.” (因王法而入佛法)¹¹. In the first month of Wanli 26 (1598), shortly after the completion of the *Lengqie biji*, Deqing received a visit from Fan Yuheng 樊玉衡 (1549–1624; *jinshi*, 1583). Not only was Fan once the magistrate of Quanjiao 全椒 (today’s Quanjiao, Anhui province), Deqing’s hometown, but Fan was permanently exiled to Leizhou due to “the Succession Issue,” the same cause as Deqing. Fan asked, “What does the scenery in Leiyang 雷陽 (i.e., Leizhou) look like?” Deqing responded by showing Fan the manuscript of the *Lengqie biji* and said, “This is what the scenery of Leiyang looks like.” Completing this commentary symbolized Deqing’s pride that defied political persecution and that challenged the hardships associated with his exile. In this way, Deqing was attempting to encourage Fan, who was clearly anxious and discouraged at the time, to confront hardship with the spirit of transcendence. Deeply

moved, Fan then sponsored the printing of the *Lengqie biji* (Hanshan 1975–1989, 54:841b). In early 1599, Deqing thus circulated more than one hundred copies of the commentary among fellow monks and patrons, especially those in Jiangnan and Beijing. Well received, the commentary sparked further confidence in and respect for him.¹²

Notably, the fact that Deqing came from Jiangnan and, more importantly, that he was taken as a cultural elite who embodied Jiangnan culture served as a motivator for many people, especially those coming to Lingnan from other regions, to draw closer to him. China had shifted its cultural centers several times over the centuries. By the Ming dynasty, Lingnan was perceived by most Chinese people as remote, peripheral, and barbarian, while Jiangnan was regarded as mainstream, refined, and more advanced (Chen 2021, chap. 1). For people, especially for officials and the literati, many of whom came from Jiangnan, ending up in Lingnan was thus far from a blessing. For one thing, as Deqing himself observed, “Guangzhong (i.e., Lingnan) is distinctively different in customs from those in the regions north of the Five Ridges (i.e., central China).” (但廣中風俗迥異，與嶺北相背)¹³ In addition, non-Lingnan people would easily be frustrated by regional dialects that could prevent effective communication, ways of life that might look outlandish, and scorching weather that threatened to claim one’s life at any time. Amid anxiety and uncertainty that were easily sparked, therefore, the significance of a shared background was understandably highlighted, whether it be the same home districts or similar cultural trainings. In one case, for example, Deqing wrote in a poem to a friend: “More than three decades has passed since [I] left the imperial capital (i.e., Beijing), how could I as a guest expect to meet you in this sweltering and remote region?” (三十餘年別帝鄉，客星何意聚炎荒?) (Hanshan 1995–2000, 13:507) Reminiscing about old days in Beijing, in sharp contrast with the “sweltering and remote” surroundings, collapsed the gap of three decades and instantly drew the two closer.

Moreover, benefiting from the education he received from Xilin Yongning in early life, Deqing as a leading Buddhist figure was also versed in Confucian and Daoist classics, and this capability made him a magnet for the literati. In their first meeting, for example, Zhou Yingzhi 周應治 (1556–1621; *jinshi*, 1580) asked him how to understand the proposition regarding “to know by penetrating the way of day and night” (通乎晝夜之道而知). Promptly, Deqing responded that this quotation from the *Book of Changes* (*yijing* 易經) was to remind people to understand what does not belong to life and death. Zhou applauded his response (Hanshan 1975–1989, 54:840c). Behind this exchange of ideas was the “three-teachings-in-one” (*sanjiao heyi* 三教合一) (Yü 2021, pp. 4–6, 65–66; Brook 1993b, p. 31; Brook 1993a; Chu 2006), then the mainstream intellectual trend shared by both Buddhist master and Confucian scholar. After that, as a “heart-liked” comrade,¹⁴ Zhou Rudeng commissioned Deqing with the compilation of the *Caoxi tongzhi* 曹溪通志 (a complete gazetteer of Caoxi [i.e., Nanhua temple]). Not only did Deqing accept the task, but he reversely requested Zhou to write a preface several years later when the gazetteer was completed.

A drastic shift that occurred in Deqing’s attitudes towards the secular world was just in time to facilitate his taking root in Lingnan society. While in north China, Deqing spent most of his time improving his own spiritual achievements and directing his attention primarily to the inner court—especially Cisheng. Thus, his relationships with the secular world were quite limited, if not superficial. Exile, however, forced him out of his comfort zone into a real but much tougher world. Deqing confessed this shift in a letter to Xuelang Hong’en:

Blunt and stupid, I used to be infatuated with solitude and became growingly lonely and shallow. Although I kept concerned with the matter of life and death, the deep habit prevented me from awakening to non-existence and thus befriending with ancient people. This makes me shameful for failure to accomplish my intended goals . . . Since I received your instructions, my mind of benefiting others has gradually developed. Nonetheless, in self-reflections I find that I am short of enlightenment in terms of Chan and fail to make a deep study in terms of Buddhist doctrines. Besides, it is not easy to convince the superficial and shallow

students, who trust one's ears rather than one's eyes (i.e., relying on hearsay). My intention to change the customs gradually seems hard to be fulfilled quickly. (弟鈍根下劣，向耽枯寂，日沈孤陋，雖一念生死之心耿耿不昧，第習染深厚，不能頓契無生，上友古人。中心慚愧，有負初志。……弟自奉教以來，利他之心亦漸開發，惟時自忖，宗欠明悟，教未精研，且末學膚受，貴耳賤目，取信不易，移風易俗之懷，似難頓伸) (Hanshan 1975–1989, 13:549c)

Essentially, this shift in his behavior modes was the awakening to the spirit of Mahayana Buddhism, which requires both “perpetuating the Dharma” and “saving sentient beings” at the same time. When he arrived in Leizhou in the third month of Wanli 24, for example, Deqing was shocked by a hell-like scene. By this time, Leizhou had been suffering severe famines and droughts for three years. Many people died on street, with bodies lying unburied all around. This, together with the blazing heat, had caused pandemics to spread. As mentioned above, this situation spurred Deqing to start writing the *Lengqie biji* immediately after settling down for fears that he would not survive. Nonetheless, by the seventh month, once the situation had become even more horrifying and miserable, Deqing put aside his writing and, together with a Provincial Student (*juren* 舉人), mobilized the local people to bury several thousand corpses. Out of compassion, he also held a seven-day Buddhist service for the diseased. Then, a heavy rain followed that helped to alleviate the drought and the pandemic (Hanshan 1975–1989, 54:841a). It turned out that not only were his efforts appreciated by officials and ordinary people but, as Deqing noted, they served as an effective avenue of attracting local people to Buddhism:

At the time when I just arrived in Leiyang, I found that the people there worshiped ghosts and did not have a single Buddhist monk. I thought that it was *mleccha* (barbarian frontiers)¹⁵ where people no longer have the Buddha nature. That fall, in the wake of a pandemic that caused a huge loss of life, [I] picked up and buried several thousand dead bodies. I cultivated local people with Ullambana Dharma Service. Then they knew of the Three Jewels for the first time, and innumerable people were converted to Buddhism. Currently, they are all under the influence of Buddhism. It is a regret that I cannot stay here longer to preach Buddha's teachings. (貧道初至雷陽，見其俗尚鬼，絕無一僧，將謂蔑戾車地，無復佛性種子耳。即以是秋乘疫癘之餘，死傷之極，因拾骸骸數千頭瘞之，乃用盂蘭盆以開化之，是時始知三寶之名，頓轉邪心，皈向者無算。即今舉知佛化。弟恨不能久坐此中作佛事耳) (Hanshan 1995–2000, 15:623)

Evidently, a positive feedback loop formed accordingly. This case was not an exception; the same mechanism worked again in the following year when Deqing buried over ten thousand bodies in Guangzhou (Hanshan 1995–2000, 16:669).

In particular, Deqing's defense of regional interests amidst two critical crises won extraordinary credit for him in Lingnan society, which not only paved his path to Nanhua but helped him to retain support during the reforms. During the second half of the Wanli period, Lingnan was seriously troubled by eunuchs dispatched directly by the emperor to collect taxes and serve as Commissioner of Mines and Customs (*kuangguan taijian* 礦關太監). As a leading Buddhist master, it happened that Deqing had influence among eunuchs, both because Ming eunuchs as a group were well-known for their fascination with Buddhism and because he was the master of Cisheng, who had collaborated with eunuchs in many Buddhist projects in the first half of the Wanli period (Chen 2001; Zhang 2020, chap. 4). Thus, it became possible for Deqing to use his leverage to defend the interests of the Lingnan region when necessary. A case occurred in Wanli 28 (1600) when Li Feng 李鳳 (fl. 1605), then the eunuch responsible for collecting pearls in Lianzhou 廉州 and supervising tax collection in Guangzhou, was making trouble to General Wang Hanchong for being offended by the latter. On the day of the Dragon Boat Festival, a son of Dai Yao 戴耀 (1542–1628; *jinshi*, 1568), who had replaced Chen Dake as the General-Governor of Guangdong and Guangxi and was thus Wang's official superior, was returning home to Fujian by boat, and it happened that several *baicao* 白艚 boats (“civilian grain-transporting boats”) were

nearby.¹⁶ At the time, Guangzhou people, after having suffered famines for several years, were extremely sensitive to any outflows of grain. Li Feng thus spread a rumor that Wang Hanchong was bribing Dai's son by using the nearby boats to ship grain out to Fujian for profit. Enraged, several thousand people rapidly surrounded Wang's office and wrecked the son's ship with stone and bricks. A riot was about to erupt. Even worse, major officials in Guangzhou were all out at Duanzhou paying respect to Dai Yao as regulated. Amid the flare-up of tension, it was unwise for Wang Hanchong himself to meet the enraged people. He thus sent an official to call in Deqing as a mediator to dissolve the crisis. Although originally hesitant to act, Deqing rapidly recognized that what he could save was not only General Wang but also several thousand ordinary people and the city itself, for "Dai Yao will lead troops to suppress the rebellion if it brings about the death of General Wang or/and Dai's son." He wasted no time to go see Li Feng. Convinced, Li Feng agreed to stop the rumor but admitted that the situation was already out of his control. Thus, Deqing had no choice but risk his life to meet the angry mob. He asked them, "What you want is to eat rice at a lower price. But if you rebel today and are thus arrested or even executed, who among you could eat the cheap rice even it was here?" Stunned, those people gradually calmed down and dispersed. A major crisis was averted (*Hanshan* 1975–1989, 54:842a).

It is hard to estimate precisely how great the pressure was over the course of the events; shortly afterwards, Deqing suffered from a serious illness for two months and his hair and beard turned white (*Hanshan* 1995–2000, 16:660). Fortunately, his audacity and selflessness as demonstrated in settling the crisis were fully appreciated by the people—from high-ranking officials down to the commoners. Dai Yao promised to serve as a patron in return for Deqing's quelling the riot, as did Wang Hanchong. Prior to that, during a few months at the start of the winter of Wanli 27 (1599), Zhu Xingcun, then the Intendant of Nanshao circuit (*nanshao daotai* 南韶道台), had urged Deqing three times to reform Nanhua, but Deqing was hesitant to take up the task. And now, with the convergence of supports and patronage from different people, military and civilian, upper echelons and the lower class alike, Deqing felt the time was ripe. So, in the fall of Wanli 28, with happiness (*chengxing* 乘興) Deqing entered Nanhua temple (*Hanshan* 1975–1989, 54:842a).

In another critical case taking place after Deqing's entry into Nanhua, we can see how Deqing, through a similar mechanism that resembled a trade-off, transformed the credit he had newly accumulated into support to sustain his reforms. Li Jing 李敬 (fl. 1601), the Eunuch Commissioner of Mines and Customs dispatched by Emperor Wanli to Guangzhou, was noxious both for local society and for Dai Yao. For one thing, the thousands of boats then active at seas were seen as a threat to regional security by Dai Yao, who believed many of those boats belonged to pirates. It was within the jurisdiction of Dai Yao, the highest military official in Lingnan with responsibility for the security of the region,¹⁷ to decide how to handle those boats. But things became much more complicated when Li Jing used those pirates to collect pearls, and in turn refused to return boats, even disobeying the court's order. This conflict between maintaining security and doing business for profit came as no surprise, considering many of the pirates, as discussed earlier, were actually armed maritime merchants. Second, while opening mines at the emperor's order, eunuchs were notorious for blackmailing wealthy families—usually claiming that the latter's houses or ancestral graves were located upon a mineral vein, thus threatening to destroy them.¹⁸ Most powerful though he was, Dai Yao found no way to prevent Li Jing from doing that because behind the eunuch was the silver-thirsty Wanli emperor. During the Spring Festival of Wanli 29 when Deqing visited him in Duanzhou, therefore, Dai Yao turned to the Buddhist master for a solution. In response, Deqing visited Li Jing in Qingying 青鸚 on Dai Yao's behalf, during which time he established a personal relationship with the eunuch. The strategy began to work in the autumn when Li Jing paid a return visit to Nanhua temple (*Hanshan* 1975–1989, 50:811c), finding Deqing both charismatic and persuasive. Unable to resist Deqing's influence, not only did Li Jing donate three hundred taels of silver to the temple but, more importantly, promised Deqing to maintain regional

peace by keeping a tight rein on his errands. Afterwards, the eunuch kept his promise, ordering pearl-collecting boats to return by a set date and leaving the delivery of the mining to the hands of local officials rather than those of his own clerks. These measures liberated Lingnan society from many burdens and alleviated Dai Yao's pressure in terms of regional security. Deeply grateful, Dai wrote a letter to Deqing saying with respect, "From now on I have recognized how extraordinarily magical and extensive the Buddha's compassion is." (而今乃知佛祖慈悲之廣大也)¹⁹

In retrospect, on the part of Deqing, all these efforts were probably what he believed he had to do for a greater cause rather than things he felt easily or happily done. Soon after entering Nanhua, Deqing found that the temple was a minefield and discovered no way to push through even the first move aimed at purifying the temple: to clear away the commercial enterprises in front of Nanhua's main gate. After being thwarted for several months, he had to return to Dai Yao, who then sent clerks to dismantle all the shops in three days (Hanshan 1995–2000, 16:660). Deqing's visit to Dai in Duanzhou this time, therefore, was a gesture to express gratitude, as was the visit of Li Jing in Qingying on Dai's behalf.²⁰ Given that the Eunuch Commissioners of Mines and Customs were notorious and that it was exactly those eunuchs who caused the trouble under discussion, Deqing would not have been happy to socialize with them. In reality, however, not only did he condescend to visit Li Jing in the first place, but he also later composed two farewell poems when the eunuch returned to Beijing (Hanshan 1995–2000, 12:491). In addition, Deqing even wrote a piece commemorating a temple that Li rebuilt two years earlier in which he praised the eunuch for being "loyal when serving the emperor and kind when fostering the subordinate," and saying that "he was peaceful without making trouble, which was a great benefit to the people [in Lingnan]." (事上育下，以忠愛為心。安靜無擾，邦人受公之惠，亦已厚矣) (Hanshan 1975–1989, 23:627c) Deqing could not have been serious in this case. Notably, however, this was not an exception. Concerning Dai Yao and other military officials, Deqing also had poems extolling their outstanding merits in military exploits or even spiritual achievements.²¹ His actions, very likely, reflect less the hypocrisy that derived from external pressure than the newfound flexibility that resulted from Deqing's spiritual progress. More specifically, it embodied expedient means (Skt. *Upaya*), a strategy that Deqing had used with consciousness when just arriving in Lingnan.²²

3. Reform: Restructuring the Temple, Fostering New Blood, and Lawsuits

Despite those forces pushing him into the role, the decision to enter Nanhua temple to initiate the reform was essentially the result of Deqing's conscious choice, which reflects the priority he gave to Buddhism over the secular world. In a letter to a general, Deqing explained his decision by revealing a tension between "perpetuating the Dharma" and "salvaging sentient beings" that was inherent in his case:

"Both moved by what bosom friends have done to me and motivated by the desire to do good things to local people, I threw myself in the thick of battle that could smash everything. [Eventually], although I managed to remove major enemies for the people, I could survive only narrowly. At present, I have made utmost efforts, but things that are about to happen are incalculable. How could it be possible for me to spend my limited energy drifting on the limitless poisonous sea? Would any wise men be willing to do so? Last year, the local situation would have been in a terrible mess without my humble efforts. [So] this fall [local officials] wholeheartedly invited me to go there, which I have forcefully declined. I believe that I myself am of significance for Buddhism, and will thus pray to the Buddha so as to accomplish enduring achievements for posterity. This is much greater when compared with the former, how dare I not respect myself? At present, after experiencing the many twists and turns of events, I have finally realized my plan of hiding traces (i.e., living in seclusion). . . . Birds will not dislike high [mountains] and fish will not dislike deep [water]. Caoxi will also be where I should stay. As one who knows me well, what do you think about that?"

(貧道感知己之遇，且為地方作福，橫身於百折之鋒，而與生民除其害之大者，幸亦僅僅自免。今區區力已竭矣，而事方無涯，安能以有限之精神泛無涯之毒海，豈有智者所甘心耶？去歲非貧道在，則地方大有可畏者。今秋極欲邀貧道往，故力辭之耳。貧道自視此身為法門所繫，將徼佛祖之靈，託之以為萬世功德，是大有過於此者，敢不自愛？今多方委曲，始遂藏跡之計。況自今以望，故吾不遠，豈忍蒙不潔，又為淨土之污辱乎？鳥不厭高，魚不厭深，曹谿將為邱隅也。足下知我者，以為何如？) (Hanshan 1975–1989, 15:571a)

Evidently, Deqing had once again found a strategic mission for himself. From his entry at Nanhua to the spring of Wanli 37, Deqing took pains to redefine its vision and direction in such critical aspects as institutional organization, economy, and discipline. The core of his efforts consisted of improving Nanhua's general wellbeing and, ultimately, restoring its glory as the ancestral temple of Chan. A close look at the measures he took reveals his vision, his competence, and his response to what he perceived as problems within the temple.

Deqing's first move aimed to cut off connections between the temple and the vulgar world surrounding it, but he could not carry this through until Dai Yao's intervention, which suggests a lack of cooperation from major forces operating within the temple. Deqing was disgusted by the shops in front of the main gate, both because they made the site too vulgar to be sacred and because, as we will see, they were a major lure to perdition for the monks. He thus relocated the main gate directly onto Cao Creek and, with the two ends of the road blocked by walls, isolated the merchants from the main road and thus their customers. Not only limited to shop-owners or merchants, this move sent a clear signal of attack on the privileges some elite monks had enjoyed for decades. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the strategy did not work in the first few months until Dai Yao, in response to Deqing's request, dismantled all the shops by force. This interference from external forces might have potentially intensified Deqing's tension with the existing monks in Nanhua, but for the moment he was safe and powerful enough to carry out his reform precisely because of the backing of those external forces.

Deqing redesigned the use of space by Nanhua temple according to the traditional art of Chinese geomancy (*fengshui* 風水), perceiving it as a precondition for Nanhua to recover from decline. Deqing understood that the Buddha had prohibited Buddhists from getting involved in geomancy because "the earth, mountains, and rivers are merely fused and made by one's genuine mind." (大地山河唯一真心之所融結) Nonetheless, not unlike contemporary Chinese people, Deqing still embraced the art by claiming that "although what geomancers say is not completely trustworthy, some ultimate truth exists there." (雖形家之言，未必盡信，而至理存焉！)²³ In his thirties, Deqing already helped Miaofeng Fudeng choose a propitious site to bury his parents (Hanshan 1975–1989, 53:835a). As for Nanhua temple, Deqing was convinced by a famous geomancer who claimed that the temple "[was suffering from] the imbalance between the *yin* and *yang* forces. [The hill exerting the decisive influence] comes from the left but leaves on the right, so [the temple] flourished at the first place but fell into decline in the end." (陰陽不經故也。以其左來而右去，故始大而終小) (Hanshan 1975–1989, 21:613b) This echoed Chen Yaxian's 陳亞仙 (fl. 677) warning against any major changes to the topography of the site, which he donated to the sixth patriarch Huineng, on the grounds that its layout was a dragon full of vitality and a white elephant (生龍白象) (Hanshan 1975–1989, 50:808a). Deqing agreed with the observation, saying that the layout of the mountain was a white elephant that had four feet, six tusks, one trunk, and one mouth with the temple on the elephant's jowl.

In order to resolve the issue, Deqing first filled up the Dragon Pond 龍潭 in the elephant's mouth, believing that its efficacious force had already leaked out after being drained by Huineng in an attempt to build a hall. Deqing paid particular attention to the trunk, which he viewed as vital to the elephant's life. The trunk was previously completed, on which were the wooden pagoda housing Huineng's mummy, Chen Yaxian's ancestral tombs, and Xinju 信具 Hall which, housed Huineng's robe and alms bowl. During the Chenghua period (1465–1487), however, the wooden pagoda was replaced with a brick one which, unexpectedly, had since become dark and damp. In order to better protect

Huineng's mummy, Xijiu Hall was converted into the Ancestral Hall to house the mummy taken out from the pagoda. After all these changes, the brick pagoda that should have been sturdier than the wooden one was now left in the elephant's chest. Worse than that, behind Xijiu Hall was Chengsu Tower 程蘇閣, but a path leading to it cut the elephant trunk in two. To fix the problem, Deqing redesigned the road, letting it begin at the bank of the Cao Creek and then, through a corridor newly built on the right side of the temple, detour to the tower. Besides these issues, after a continual loss of its soil to various building projects, what had originally been a high hill behind Chengsu Tower had become too low to prevent north winds in winter. Deqing thus mobilized about one hundred monks to restore the height of the hill.

Deqing set a strategic direction for Nanhua temple to become financially healthy, and to that end, he institutionalized a strict management system. A deep crisis facing Nanhua temple was the loans it had borrowed, sometimes at an interest rate as high as 70% or even 80%, to cover budget deficits. Without a major change, the temple would have been doomed to bankruptcy. In theory, the annual land rent that Nanhua could collect, which was up to 400 taels of silver, was sufficient to maintain its operation. But when the ten households (*shifang* 十房) within the temple took turns to collect the rents, being beyond the control of the abbot, they pocketed the money themselves through connivance with the tenants, thereby leaving the temple's public accounts in deficit. In order to place the temple in a robust long-term financial position, Deqing institutionalized a strict management system, including establishing fixed posts to supervise Nanhua-owned assets, determining the temple's incomes and expenses, and setting quotas for its daily expenses. Also, Deqing chose ten capable and exemplary monks to act as supervisor-monks-in-chief (*dusi* 都寺) (Wang 2017, p. 63), each from one household, to form a kind of regulatory commission overseeing the running of the temple. Four of them were further entrusted with financial affairs after having taken vows in front of Huineng's mummy to work for the public interest. In addition, Deqing set the dates for land tenants to pay their rents and, more importantly, prohibited them from paying the money to any individual households. This system, it turned out, worked well, and Nanhua thus avoided a death spiral that fed on itself, at least temporarily. Its balance was soon in surplus, thereby establishing a sound economic foundation for future growth.

In order to shape the future of Nanhua temple according to the new features he envisioned, Deqing managed to help and improve monks in multiple ways. The first action he took, somewhat ironically, was to deal with the monks' debts. Some monks had borrowed money from what Deqing called "ruffians" (*liugun* 流棍) by using homesteads, mountains, or houses as collateral, and then found themselves stuck in endless trouble. To resolve the problems, Deqing first set different rules for the handling of those debts according to their nature, and then managed to liquidate verified debts in a relatively fair way (Hanshan 1975–1989, 50:810b). He also returned those pawned properties to their former monk-owners. Accordingly, those monks involved, no longer open to blackmail, finally settled down. In addition, Deqing tried to curb monks from serious violations of the precepts; to the astonishment of many, especially the literati from Jiangnan, not only did some monks in Nanhua temple kill domestic animals to earn money, but they also provided wine and meat to provincial and prefectural officials when the latter came to visit. Previously, officials such as Zhou Rudeng and Zhu Xingcun, both scholar-officials from Jiangnan, had repeatedly imposed bans on those practices but the orders did not take effect (Hanshan 1975–1989, 51:830b). So, Deqing reconfirmed the prohibition through a provincial official who came to visit Nanhua temple. Most importantly, Deqing endeavored to train better-quality monks through discipline and education. He pointed out how pernicious the long-existing practices in Nanhua temple were:

Buddhist monks have got used to following the customs. For children who leave their households, what they see is only the masters and elderlies cultivating the fields. Since those things are not different from what is done by secular people, they know nothing about what becoming a monk means. For those who collect their

disciples, they only want to use those disciples to cultivate the land and mention nothing related to leaving the world (i.e., Buddhism) even in a single sentence. This practice has been long established. (諸僧徒習俗成風。凡幼童出家，只見師長務農，不異俗人，竟不知出家為何業。而畜其徒者，只利其得力於田畝，而無一言及出世事，其來久矣) (Hanshan 1975–1989, 50:809b)

To counter this trend, Deqing categorized the monks into different groups and took corresponding measures according to their ages, backgrounds, and capabilities. Monks aged 40 and older, the weak, the crippled, and those perceived as stupid and incompetent, were allowed to return to secular life or continue their old way of farming. Those aged between 20 and 40, more than one hundred of them, with representatives from all households included, were selected to receive the precepts. And, once chosen, the monks were required to perform Buddhist services and practice meditation in the halls every day or else they would be punished. In this way, Nanhua restored its routine practices as a Chan temple. As for novice monks aged 8 to 20, they were all forced to remain in the temple to study. With the texts including Buddhist sutras, Confucian classics, and literary collections, what Deqing did in this regard was strongly reminiscent of the training he himself had received from Xilin Yongning, which had already proved extremely successful (Jiang 2006, pp. 72–80). Three years later, for novices who were perceived as competent, they would be ordained and sent to the Chan Hall for further study, including practicing meditation, reciting sutras, and so on (Hanshan 1995–2000, 20:833). In retrospect, this classification demonstrated Deqing's actual management competence in real life, but it also had the potential to divide the clerics and thus caused internal strife.

In line with his ambition and his self-identity as a Chan monk, Deqing's chief concern was to bring Nanhua temple into the mainstream of Chan. His first move was to rebuild and expand the Ancestral Hall devoted to Huineng. Despite Huineng's central role in the temple, the Ancestral Hall was small, low, dark, and surrounded by crowded residences, kitchens, and public functionaries' offices. Deqing discovered that the complex of Nanhua temple consisted of the west, middle, and east rows of buildings built in different times, and the middle row, where the hall was, was jammed with monks ignorant of the art of geomancy when they built their residences. A large-scale restructuring of the temple was needed. Deqing relocated the monks' residences on both sides of the Ancestral Hall to a hill west of Luohan Building 羅漢樓 he purchased and the Dragon Pond he filled in with donations he had collected. In addition, in the middle row, he dismantled such small buildings as Bai Hall 拜殿 and Zhutian Hall 諸天殿. Eventually, the area in front of the Ancestral Hall became quite spacious and empty. Deqing, then drawing on the model of the layout of a Confucian temple, built two side halls accompanying the Ancestral Hall to worship the founders of the five Chan branches. Moreover, fifteen more rooms were prepared around the hall to worship eminent Chan masters selected from the *Records of Lamp Transmission* (*chuandeng lu* 傳燈錄).

In addition, Deqing rebuilt the Chan Hall (*chantang* 禪堂) out of the conviction that "to a Chan temple the Chan Hall is just like a school to a country in the sense that they are where to foster and educate people." (叢林之有禪堂，如國家之有學校，乃養育材器之地) (Hanshan 1975–1989, 50:815a) The Chan Hall in Nanhua temple was quite chaotic upon Deqing's arrival with its foundation having seven residences for monks, two kitchens, and nearly ten toilets and pigpens. In order to evacuate a space to renovate the hall, Deqing first mobilized those monk-owners to relocate their houses to a place he had purchased and promised to defray part of the expenditures for rebuilding. Meanwhile, as a compromise, Deqing agreed that the Chan Hall would admit student monks only from within Nanhua temple rather than being open to the entire sangha as it was supposed to be. More than that, Deqing took actions to base the Chan Hall on a sound economic foundation. His major move was to redeem Zisun village 紫筍莊, an asset that was often tempting to powerful families. During the Hongzhi period (1488–1505), Nanhua lost the village to a powerful family, and took it back only because of a complaint filed by the then-abbot directly to the emperor. Around Wanli 20 (1592), Nanhua lost the village once again to the Jiang

江 family, who purchased the monastic lands and then encroached into Nanhua's territory by chopping down trees. Worried about the situation, Deqing requested assistance from Dai Yao, who ordered officials to investigate the boundaries on the spot and marked them with stones. To preclude potential dangers, Deqing finally purchased back the village with 200 taels of silver he collected and left it to the Chan Hall to strengthen its financial foundation. In addition, Deqing arranged an annual income of forty-four taels of silver for the hall, bought it hills for firewood, and gave it two houses he had exchanged with other monks. It was estimated that Deqing spent more than 1000 taels of silver on the Chan Hall.

For a temple as large as Nanhua, however, it would be naïve to assume that all the monks there had a unanimous attitude toward the reforms; instead, some of the greatest challenges came exactly from within the temple. Before Deqing's arrival, the monks in the temple had long been divided along the line of the firmly established households. Over the course of the reform, Deqing as a newcomer had to negotiate with those existing forces. In order to prepare the space for the Chan Hall, for example, he had to trade with monk-owners who "calculated inch by inch" (寸寸計之), and "compensated their expenditures at the ratio of ten to one" (以十易一) (Hanshan 1975–1989, 50:815a). All these struggles exhausted Deqing's budget and thus limited the scale of the new hall. In another case, despite his awareness of the importance of sojourning monks in facilitating communication and thus keeping the Chan community healthy, Deqing could do nothing but build a public hall called *Yixiu jue* 一宿覺 (Awakened overnight), outside the temple, to entertain those guest monks. The reason was simple: Nanhua, as a hereditary temple, did not welcome those monks into the temple to "waste" its money.²⁴

The tension seems to have intensified around Wanli 36 (1608) when Deqing started what might have been the last major project—rebuilding the Main Hall (*dadian* 大殿). Deqing planned to rebuild the hall but had no money. After learning of this, Dai Yao expressed his willingness to sponsor the project on his own. Deqing declined the proposal, and instead suggested that Dai lead a campaign to collect donations from as many people as possible. Dai agreed and distributed twelve appeal essays to regional and local officials, ranging from the General-Governor and Grand Coordinator (*xunfu* 巡撫) down to circuits (*dao* 道), prefectures (*fu* 府), and squads (*si* 司). Before long, the appeal received active responses from those officials, who each donated (or collected) one thousand taels of silver, and the budget was ready. At that point, notably, at Deqing's request, all donations were sent to the General-Governor's office without a coin left to the monks (無庸歸僧) (Hanshan 1975–1989, 54:843b). Deqing explained that it was for convenience, but very likely behind that unusual decision was the deficit of trust between him and the Nanhua monks. In early Wanli 32, when Deqing had just dismantled the old Ancestral Hall, he was implicated in the so-called "evil pamphlet" case in Beijing and thus forced back to Leizhou to resume military service (Hanshan 1975–1989, 54:842c). When he returned to Nanhua in the following seventh month with Dai Yao's assistance, Deqing was happy to see that two-thirds of the new Ancestral Hall project had been completed. But there was also a debt of more than 1000 taels of silver awaiting him. Although Deqing finally cleared the debts with donations from two eunuchs, he may have wondered what happened to the project in his absence (Hanshan 1975–1989, 54:842c–843a). Thus, a seed of doubt lurked in Deqing's arrangement of the funds collected for the Main Hall, which would further exacerbate his relationship with the Nanhua monks.

It did not take long for internal strife to ensue within the Nanhua temple, which occurred in two phases. In the fourth month of Wanli 37 (1609), Deqing escorted some mighty timbers back to Mengli 濛瀼 port along the dangerous Duan River 端江 and scheduled the start of the project on a propitious day. Suddenly, however, Deqing was sued by Wansong Yuanzu 萬松願祖 (?–1610), then the abbot, who alleged in the lawsuit that Deqing had embezzled eight thousand taels of silver from public funds and dismantled buildings of the temple. Deqing forcefully pushed back on the allegations of misconduct. Thanks to the strict financial system Deqing had established, Wu Anguo 吳安國 (1547–?; *jinshi*, 1577), then the Nanshao circuit governor, cleared Deqing's reputation. Instead, in

the investigation, Wu found evidence related to Yuanzu's own embezzlement. In doubt and fear, Yuanzu brought the lawsuit to the Provincial Surveillance Commission (*ancha shisi* 按察使司) on a higher level. In response, in the fifth month, Deqing took a boat to Guangzhou from Nanhua in an attempt to defend himself in court. The case was tabled, however, due to a vacancy in the position of Provincial Surveillance Commissioner (*ancha shi* 按察使), a situation that was due to Emperor Wanli's delinquency in duty—which was not uncommon at the time (Zhang 1985, 8:149). Deqing was required to wait for sentencing, but the situation became much worse than expected because it turned out that he would have to wait nearly two years. He missed Nanhua temple, as revealed that winter by a preface he wrote for two poems memorializing the plum flowers there:

“While in Caoxi, [I] sat there like in the fragrant world every time when plum flowers blossomed. This winter, having been implicated in the trouble made by evil men, I look at the mountains [i.e., Nanhua temple] that are physically very near but have no chance to enjoy the fragrance. [I thus] remember them with poems. (曹溪梅花每至盛開，如坐香積世界。今冬以魔作祟。牽次芙蓉江上，望山中咫尺，不得坐享香供，詩以憶之) (Hanshan 1975–1989, 49:804c)

What was even worse for Deqing, in a region as hot and humid as Guangzhou, being confined to a small boat for a long time could not go without consequences. Not only did Deqing use up his money, but he consumed his energy and became gravely ill. Learning of the urgent situation, fortunately, a friend invited Deqing to his governmental office and eventually saved him from the brink of death.

At the end of Wanli 38 (1610), the case finally came to a tragic end and, accordingly, Deqing's reform failed midway before the completion of the Main Hall. In the fall of that year, the case started moving forward after Mr. Wang, the newly appointed provincial surveillance commissioner, visited Deqing in his boat. The sentencing had a twist to it which, to some degree, reflected officials' stances on political rivalries rather than pure facts. In the first round, Jiang Shilun 蔣士綸 (*jinshi*, 1594), then the Prefectural Judge (*tuiguan* 推官) of Shaozhou prefecture, found Deqing guilty along with his disciples and those monks who had assisted him. Jiang sentenced that Deqing be deported and that the Chan Hall, Zisun village, and the lands and forests Deqing had purchased for the Chan Hall all be transferred to the abbot Yuanzu. The commissioner angrily overruled the sentence, blasting Jiang by pointing out that “Yuanzu has illegally sold Nanhua's foundation, while Deqing helped to reinvigorate the temple. This sentence is definitely unfair, considering it robs Deqing of the property he has newly purchased.” The full nature of the alleged fraud only came to light after Chen Guoji 陳國紀 (d. u.), then Vice Prefect (*tongzhi* 同知) of Shaozhou, was instead ordered to re-investigate the case on the spot. All the charges against Deqing proved unsustainable, and the abbot Yuanzu felt so embarrassed that he committed suicide. It is unclear why Jiang passed the sentence he did; behind the scenes, there was possibly corruption which, as we will see, was common among Nanhua monks and local officials.²⁵ No matter what happened, Deqing finally had his reputation cleared. Nonetheless, this lawsuit was a heavy blow to Deqing, who was already 66 years old. Exhausted and deeply disappointed, despite officials' repeated requests to bring the Main Hall project to completion, Deqing was determined to leave, claiming that “Buddhist monks decide when to act and when not to according to the chain of cause and effect. Now, my karmic connection [with the temple] is over.” (僧以因緣為進退，今緣盡矣) He entrusted a disciple with the Chan Hall, engraved on stone a detailed account of the happenings during the years, and then left (Hanshan 1975–1989, 50:816a). A farewell poem to the temple exposes the pain he felt at his moment of departure:

Since I came to Caoxi with a staff in hands, I have sat looking at the mountains [around] and started smiling. Now I am about to leave after saying goodbye to those peaks, all birds and the [Cao] Creek sound endlessly sad. (自為曹溪杖策來，坐看山色笑顏開。從今一別千峰去，鳥語溪聲不盡哀) (Hanshan 1975–1989, 49:805c)

4. Setbacks: Internal Strife, Inborn Fragility, and Eventual Despair

Deqing's reform efforts in Nanhua temple came to an abrupt end due to the charge by Yuanzu, whom Deqing later described in a highly charged term as an "evil man" (*mo* 魔). But why and how did things happen as they did? Fuzheng, one of Deqing's main disciples, once commented on the case as follows: "A couple of evil monks dared to start the revolt immediately after General-Governor Dai was dismissed from office. What kind of monks were they? Since General-Governor Dai took office and invited Patriarch Han[shan] to Caoxi, former monks had long lost their illegal profits as they were no longer allowed to take charge [of the temple]. Thus, they took advantage of the situation in which [Patriarch Han] had no friends in the censorate, and implicated him in the legal cases in an attempt to reverse the situation." (戴制府方罷，而不肖數僧，輒敢大發難端，此何僧乎？自戴督上臺延慈祖入曹溪，而舊僧不得主，久失侵漁之利，乘台憲知交乏人，構司理以翻局) (Fushan and Fuzheng 1990, 2:53–54) Fuzheng was right in pointing out the high relevance between the fluctuation of Deqing's reforms and the support he received from high-ranking officials. However, the morality of individual monks alone was not enough to explain the fragility inherent in the reform. The unleashed turmoil and acrimony arising between Deqing as a reformist and Nanhua monks deserves more attention.

Major events caused by changes in the political environment, both domestic and border-crossing, surely exposed Deqing to direct attack by robbing him of support from most powerful officials. In Wanli 38, a rebellion led by *the Macs*, a local force in Annam, erupted. In the eleventh month, as *the Macs* broke through the defenses and seized the city of Qinzhou 欽州 (today's Qinzhou), Guangxi, Dai Yao, as the highest official responsible for military affairs, was impeached and dismissed from office. Although the treatment was not necessarily fair because the defeat was only temporary, Dai refused to stage a comeback and left Lingnan forever. The rebellion, as mentioned before, resulted from the ongoing restructuring of powers in East and Southeast Asia, during which time, Ming China significantly lost its former influence. But this border-crossing event, no matter how far away it looked from Nanhua, struck a huge blow to Deqing. Due to the uniqueness of Lingnan as a remote frontier region, the support Deqing received, though not ultimately legalized, was mostly from officials with regional or even national influence, civil and military alike. Among them, Dai Yao, who served as an enthusiastic patron in a period of as long as twelve years, was of particular importance. As the most powerful figure in a region as vast as Lingnan, the General-Governor of Guangdong and Guangxi was replaced much more frequently than normal officials by the emperors who tended to see them as potential threats. During the Ming, therefore, as many as seventy-one officials took up the post, with an average term of only two years. The exceptional length of twelve years that Dai Yao held the post can be explained only by court strife that caused Wanli's indolence. Dai's promise to act as patron was the final push for Deqing to enter Nanhua; in the same vein, Dai's abrupt stepping down left Deqing vulnerable to attack.

Within the temple, institutionally, Deqing was never officially accepted basically due to a lack of "membership", which prevented him from dissolving the existing administrative structure and, instead, added an extra layer of complexity with his own involvement. During the Ming, Nanhua was by nature a hereditary temple (*zisun miao* 子孫廟), a type of temple in which, as a rule, a monk was acknowledged as its member monk only because he was tonsured there, and only a monk with membership was qualified to join to administer the temple and inherit its property. Over time, with some elite monks developing their own households or sub-lineages (*fang* 房), a temple of this sort could embrace several households and thus looked more like a confederation than a federation. The abbot, who was supposed to be the leader of the entire temple, was chosen only from the preceding abbot's Dharma heirs, sometimes on a rotating basis or by drawing lots.²⁶ In such an environment, a monk would easily find that it was his own household rather than the temple itself that he could ultimately rely on. Inevitably, therefore, there were always tensions between different households and between the public interest of the temple as a whole and the sectarian interest of a given household.²⁷ This was also the case with Nanhua temple

which, before Deqing's arrival, already had ten households that held real power.²⁸ With strong support from officials as powerful as Dai Yao, Deqing held an edge into the temple and was able to bring some changes to it. Nonetheless, the limitations binding Deqing as an external force were unambiguously there, preventing him from restructuring Nanhua temple from within. In this sense, it is meaningful that Deqing's first move was to renovate Wujin chapel 無盡菴, originally built in memory of Nun Wujinzang 無盡藏尼 (?–676), who was arguably Huineng's first patron and later disciple, and then turn the chapel into his headquarters to choreograph the reform. Given that Wujin chapel was independent of the temple complex, consciously or not, with this move, Deqing was claiming independence from the existing structure. With Deqing's participation, Nanhua temple hence had three kinds of forces—the abbot allegedly representing the general interest, the ten households with their own sectarian interests, and Deqing as a reformer. Vastly different in agendas, preferences, and strategies, Deqing was an invading force that threatened to shatter the existing order and structure. But if and to what extent he secured support from the ten households was a key variable for the process and results of his endeavor. Deqing was apparently in a dilemma.

Lacking full control over the temple, Deqing's conflicts with the existing forces inevitably intensified over time, and their eventual clash derived both from competition for benefits and from cultural conflict. Strongly driven by mission, Deqing, as one of the most influential and competent masters, with his presence in Lingnan, seems to have presented a rare opportunity for the two sides to collaborate for a greater cause.²⁹ In reality, however, with Nanhua's existing elite monks Deqing had few recorded interactions other than instructions he delivered on some formal occasions, with the exception that he was invited by a couple of monks, who followed Zhu Xingcun's order, into Nanhua temple, and that he composed a routine piece for the birthday of a former Nanhua abbot. This lack of effective communication was essentially decided by the nature of Nanhua as a hereditary temple and by the fact that what Deqing had done deviated from what Nanhua's elite monks had perceived as normal for centuries. With distinctively different visions and missions, which were in turn shaped by their cultural and regional backgrounds, the measures that Deqing took to improve Nanhua's financial health, especially those related to monastic lands, were exactly aimed at the illegal or at least unreasonable privileges those monks in power had enjoyed for decades.

For Deqing's decision to transfer Zisun village to the Chan Hall, for example, although Deqing purchased it back with his own money rather than public funds, the ten households took offense because they believed that the village should be divided equally among them. Deqing was right to say that their discontent reflected their narrowmindedness and short-sightedness as they did not share his stress on the central role of Chan Buddhism in Nanhua. On a deeper level, however, this opposition seems also to reflect that, even several years after Deqing's entry, the formerly privileged monks who saw reform as a threat were still left behind without clear assurances about how to guarantee their interests.³⁰ Viewed in that light, Deqing's efforts centered on the Chan Hall were not a friendly gesture intended to win their support but instead intended to inch toward victory by depending on new generations of monks. But this strategy, though steady, was too slow to produce enough fresh blood in a short period of time.³¹ Eventually, without due institutional support, Deqing would inevitably feel chilly when Dai Yao's removal from office tilted the balance of power in favor of the existing elite monks.

In addition to these institutionally inherent problems that were universal in the sangha of late imperial China, the fact that Deqing's reforms had the effect of spilling out of Nanhua and into local society, whose uniqueness in some significant respects derived from the Lingnan region as a whole, seems to have made a deadly lawsuit hard to avoid. The lawsuit was essentially a head-on confrontation after the tensions built up between the Deqing-led group and the privileged elite monks. By the early sixteenth century, Nanhua owned a large amount of land. Ironically, their property could be the source of big trouble rather than income. On many occasions, things became exacerbated due to the so-called

“system of permanent tenancy” (*yongdian zhi* 永佃制), which became popular in Lingnan primarily because of a unique three-tiered system of rights associated with lands, say, the ownership (所有權), the right of “land bottom” (*tiandi quan* 田底權), and the usufruct right or literally “the right of land surface” (*tianmian quan* 田面權).³² Under the stratification system, the “permanent tenants” (*yongdian hu* 永佃戶) were allowed to transfer their usufruct rights to other people, which was in essence the transferal or pawning of the usage right of land (Wang 2000, preface, p. 18). Importantly, however, despite the transferal, according to the registration book of the government, it was still the landowner who was responsible for paying the land tax, which was part of the rents they collected. Over this complicated process, enough space was left for manipulation and thus corruption. Back at Nanhua temple, the monks were split into camps according to their relations with tenant farmers and local powerful families. Mentioned above, it was not uncommon for the household, through collusion with tenant farmers, to pocket partial or entire rents that were supposed to go to the temple’s public funds. Also, some monks fell into traps set for them by powerful families and were thus forced to sell land to the latter privately. These transactions were illegal because they could not obtain official permission from the government but,³³ unfortunately for Nanhua, since ownership was not transferred to the buyer, the temple would still have to pay the land tax. As Nanhua found no way to clear up the assigned tax, sooner or later, the amassed deficit would force it to borrow. Following this, powerful families would swindle Nanhua of monastic assets and lands by filing lawsuits. Over the course of time, connivances were often seen between treacherous monks, local powerful families, and corrupt petty officials and clerks. An evil circle formed accordingly. Aware of the rife corruption, Chen Dake once acted in an attempt to clean up the mess, but was forced to cease before long. The reason was simple: the move, ironically, was easily manipulated by local powerful and corrupt officials as an opportunity to blackmail monks and drive away the insubordinate.

In Deqing’s case, given that investigations revealed that the abbot Yuanzu embezzled money from the public funds and sold Nanhua’s foundations privately, it seems safe to say that Yuanzu represented the privileged elite monks who had benefited greatly from those corruptions. Although we have no direct proof due to the meagerness of available material, we can still make an informed guess; Yuanzu and/or other corrupt monks in Nanhua—and those common people who lived outside the temple but who nevertheless benefited from the evil circle—were somehow linked through affinities deriving from families/lineages or home districts. This had long been an outstanding, if not totally unique, regional characteristic for Lingnan people.³⁴ No matter what happened, since the measures that Deqing took were exactly aimed to cut off the profit chain, it would be natural for the affected privileged monks, who sensed the uncertainty going forward, to fight back, and the collapse of the reform seemed inevitable sooner or later. In the wake of Dai Yao’s removal from his position, those affected groups of interest, within Nanhua and without, coalesced and took immediate action. Eventually, the inherently fragile reforms failed under their pressure, and the dream that Deqing had cherished for so many years to reinvigorate Nanhua and thus Chan Buddhism was destroyed.

In the broader context, Deqing’s reforms in Nanhua temple provide an outstanding case for the ongoing late-Ming Buddhist renewal, during which quite a few efforts were taken to revitalize Buddhism, but people could not agree on how to accomplish this goal. Deqing was once criticized by Yongjue Yuanxian 永覺元賢 (1578–1657) for his close tie to Cisheng. In sharp contrast, Yunqi Zhuhong 雲棲祿宏 (1535–1615), another leading and influential Buddhist master, was cited as an exemplary figure for concentrating his time and energy on Jiangnan society to establish Yunqi temple 雲棲寺 in Hangzhou as a model temple (Yongjue Yuanxian 1975–1989, 30:574b). In fact, unlike his reliance on Cisheng in the Baoben monastery case, voluntarily or not, Deqing clearly shifted his attention from the inner court to local/regional society in the Nanhua case. But Lingnan was vastly different from Jiangnan, and so was Deqing’s status as an exiled monk different from that of Zhuhong as a master deeply rooted in local society but always respected empire-wide

(Yü 2021; Eichman 2016). It would be interesting to know if Zhuhong, or Yuanxian himself, were in Deqing's shoes, what they would have done with Nanhua temple in particular and with Lingnan society in general.³⁵ Nonetheless, even in the Lingnan region, there were other options in terms of reform. Qingyun 慶雲寺 temple at Mount Dinghu 鼎湖, similarly located in Guangdong but in the west rather than in the north, was such a case. Deqing stressed the importance of a sound financial foundation for Nanhua temple, but an agreement set up by Qihe Daoqiu 棲壑道丘 (1586–1658), the founding monk of Qingyun temple, reads:

“Numerous though the Buddhist followers in the mountain are, they are completely prohibited from owning monastic lands lest they distract them from practicing Buddhism. [Instead], people should follow the Buddha's guidance as to collecting alms, and use it only to satisfy basic food. Those who disobey this agreement and upset the order of the samgha will not be allowed to join this monastery.” (山中法侶雖多，決不置立田產以妨道業。遵佛分衛，聊充粥飯耳。如不依此約，破壞僧倫，不與共住) (Shi et al. 2015, p. 29)

At the core of this article is an injunction to avoid the corruption potentially brought about by the owning of monastic lands. The term *juebu* 絕不 (absolutely not) reveals Daoqiu's resolution.³⁶ Given that Qihe Daoqiu once attended Deqing in Nanhua temple for three years and that Deqing lived in Qingyun temple for nearly one year after his failure in Nanhua, we may be curious to know if and to what extent this strategy was shaped by the lessons Deqing had just learned.

On the part of Deqing himself, this failure at reform was traumatic both because he had invested so much time and energy in the effort and because, more importantly, he had felt much pessimism or even despair for the future of the samgha. Sometimes Deqing felt temporary relief in the first one or two years after leaving Nanhua behind.³⁷ But as time passed, the temple was always there in his life, as revealed by his poems composed even one decade later:

Plum flowers on the bank of the Creek kept emitting fragrance, and how many times the fragrant fog there wet my clothes. In recent years, wherever I visit to look at flowers, [I feel] that it is similar to my sitting at the Dharma Hall in years gone by. (溪上梅花不斷香，幾回香霧溼衣裳。年來每到看花處，一似當時坐法堂) (Hanshan 1975–1989, 49:807b)

Deqing even anticipated another opportunity to resume the undertaking:

Year after year . . . [I] still hoped madly in restoring my earlier identity and fancied certain unexpected opportunities that would bring glory to Buddhism. All these secrets are hard to reveal, but I believe that you as my bosom friend would see them through. Luckily, an opportunity came up and I thus planned to enter the mountain waiting for that. Unexpectedly, however, the chief patron passed away, leaving everything to vanish into illusions. (年復一年 . . . 猶癡心思復故吾，且妄想意外之緣，為法門光。此難言處，想知己自能洞悉矣。幸已有機會，擬入山以待，不意大檀越賓天，則一切都歸夢幻矣)³⁸

The “chief patron” refers to Cisheng, who died in Wanli 42 (1614), but no detail about any plan is available. Eventually, driven by unforgettable passion and sentiments, after receiving repeated invitations, Deqing returned to Nanhua temple in the twelfth month of Tianqi 2 (1622) and died peacefully in the temple one year later. With his mummy finally being transferred from Mount Lu 廬山 in Jiangxi province to Nanhua—where he has been worshipped up to the present—he ironically became a ready source of income for monks he would perceive as vulgar.³⁹

After experiencing the tragic failures of his two major missions in the Great Baoen monastery and Nanhua temple respectively, Deqing was thoroughly disillusioned with the situation of Chan Buddhism in the last years of his life. Although acclaimed for his “will of toughness and resilience” (堅忍不拔之志) (Hanshan 1975–1989, 50:816a), Deqing

failed in his desperate mission to reinvigorate Chan Buddhism, as was symbolized by his failed reform effort in Nanhua. He became disillusioned, which, at least partly, was due to the fact that, after entering the later years of his life, Deqing was no longer as courageous and hopeful as he had been upon arriving in Lingnan. He confessed in a letter as follows:

Since I crossed over the [South] Ridge, I look back to the secular world only to find that things change all shapes and even disappear within a constant. Roughly speaking, the karma inherited from previous lives works relentlessly and pressingly, making people, whether be sages or ordinary men, hard to escape from the consequences predetermined by the karma. How great Master Zibo was! But he nonetheless had to repay this debt inherited from previous incarnations, let alone other people. Speaking of that, I feel sad and heart-broken. I dare to expose this [only] to [you] as a bosom friend of Buddhism. I only feel painful, and what else can I say about that!" (貧道度嶺以來，回首塵世，幻化遷訛，頃刻萬狀，大都夙業相迫，無論聖凡，難逃定業。若紫柏果何人斯，亦復了此夙負，況其他乎？言之酸鼻腐心。敢為法門知己者道，飲痛而已，更復何言！)⁴⁰

This letter reveals the despair he felt.⁴¹ Not limited to the Nanhua case, notably, this despair reflected his deep disappointment about the sangha as a whole, which was actually shared by other leading Buddhist masters of the age, including Zibo Zhenke and Yunqi Zhuhong (Zhang 2020, chap. 8).

5. Concluding Remarks

Deqing's reforms at Nanhua temple, in essence, were a struggle to restore the lost identity of the temple as the ancestral temple of Chan Buddhism, which constituted an integral but still somewhat independent part of the ongoing late-Ming Buddhist renewal. The fact that Deqing started a promising reform but finally buckled under pressure offers a perfect reflection of a polarized temple that mistrusted its leaders and was not ready to unite on a new path. "In order to understand the Buddha nature, you should observe the timing and the chain of cause and effect." (欲識佛性義，當觀時節因緣)⁴² This principle, which Deqing stressed frequently to appreciate the importance of timing and the contextual environment, may help us to better understand the ups and downs of Deqing's reform in Nanhua temple, as well as his general experiences in Lingnan.

The exile with which Deqing started his life in Lingnan was significant, both symbolically and in practice, and helped pave the path for him to Nanhua temple. For one thing, the political elements inherent in the exile forced people, within the sangha and without, both in Lingnan and beyond, to reevaluate Deqing and, paradoxically, encouraged them to move closer to him. For the second, and more importantly, the hardness that accompanied his exile greatly improved Deqing's spiritual achievements in an unexpected way, as capsulized by the phrase "entering the Dharma Realm because of the king's law." Eventually, a positive feedback loop formed to further promote Deqing's reputation and influence, thereby preparing him to be well-received in Lingnan.

Externally, the ups and downs Deqing experienced in Nanhua temple were affected, to varied degrees, by factors and elements related to Lingnan as a unique region in multiple ways, to the Wanli court that had been plagued by court strife, and, most unexpectedly, to the advent of the early global age that was beyond the sight of contemporary Chinese. Decided by the fact that for centuries Nanhua had been geographically and culturally isolated from central China while open to the ocean, and that Deqing was one of the few leading masters trained in Jiangnan and Beijing, the two Buddhist centers of the time, their encounter was nothing but a clash that was closely related to visions and directions. As far as court politics is concerned, not only did Deqing's standing with Cisheng positively contribute to his positive reception in Lingnan society in the first place but, negatively, it also interrupted his undertaking in Nanhua by implicating him in the "evil pamphlet event". Timing mattered as well, and the results could weaken or strengthen the impact politics had on Deqing's life and career. This was especially true with the support Deqing received from Dai Yao. The exceptional length of Dai's term as the General-Governor of

Guangdong and Guangxi—as long as twelve years—simply resulted from court strife that brought about Emperor Wanli’s delinquency, while his abrupt removing from office was, partly and unexpectedly, due to events that were restructuring the powers in East Asia and that harbingered the advent of early modern times. These elements worked together to bring onto the stage key figures that played crucial roles in Deqing’s experiences in Lingnan, including military officials, eunuchs, scholar-officials, and ordinary people. Eventually, these people, who would have otherwise known very little of each other, by virtue of their interactions with the now-further-spiritually-enhanced master in complicated networks, such as the one between the eunuchs and Dai Yao in which Deqing served as an interlocutor, transmitted the shockwaves to impact Deqing’s endeavors in Nanhua temple.

Within Nanhua temple, Deqing faced a fundamental trade-off that we may call the reformist’s dilemma in a hereditary temple: a group of elite monks that could collectively strengthen Deqing as the coordinator of the reform could also overthrow him. This dilemma emerged because, although Deqing had an edge in Nanhua given the strong backing from his powerful patrons or friends in the secular world, keeping him in power for longer required different social networks in which existing elite monks were embedded and their cooperation was required. Deqing failed to get the existing forces involved in the reform largely because of structural weaknesses inborn in the hereditary temple, especially the tension between the public interest of Nanhua temple as a whole and sectarian interests of those long-established households. Deqing’s failure in this regard reflects how entrenched and how polarized the forces within Nanhua were. In addition, it was also because Deqing’s presence in the temple did not resolve the inherent institutional problems but added one more layer of complexity and subtlety to them. Despite the announced flexibility as demonstrated by his learning of “the lion drilling his sons” (*shizi tiaoe* 獅子調兒), Deqing did not budge in the face of pressure from Nanhua’s monks. Without their cooperation, however, even if Deqing managed to seize the initiative in the first place, he still lacked the leeway to reform the temple institutionally. Eventually, no matter who won control, the temple would be effectively split down the middle and locked in an angry stalemate.

Against this backdrop, although the lawsuit that Yuanzu filed against Deqing was accidental, the failure of the reform caused directly by the lawsuit was actually inevitable. For the long-term benefit of Nanhua as the ancestral temple of Chan Buddhism, Deqing aimed at revoking what elite monks had conventionally taken as their own interest and cutting off their connivance with local powerful families (or the so-called ruffians) and corrupt local officials. But unfortunately, he was essentially an outsider of Nanhua, and never in the position of taking full control of the temple. As his conflicts with those elite monks intensified, his reform was doomed sooner or later. Finally, Dai Yao’s abrupt release from office made tensions surface and erupt in a deadly way. Meanwhile, the fact that conflicts within the sangha turned into a legal affair deserves particular attention, for it further deteriorated the already-weak autonomy of the Ming sangha by facilitating the infiltration of the state into Buddhist affairs. How to handle a legal case is a kind of cultural narrative.⁴³ Like many cases in traditional China including the one Geng Yilan had filed against him in Shandong, this lawsuit against Deqing was far from a pure civil case in the modern sense. Since the judicial system simply could not operate independently, its investigation and sentencing were all intervened by official or even royal forces. As demonstrated by the twists in the sentencing process, the results of Deqing’s case, at least to some extent, reflected negotiations of these forces behind the scenes.

In the broader context, Deqing’s stories with Nanhua temple cannot be fully understood unless we understand them as imbedded in stories of Lingnan society in the late Ming period, through which Deqing eventually obtained his identity as one of the three greatest Buddhist masters of the time. Furthermore, Deqing and the large-scale but eventually failed efforts he made in Nanhua demonstrated both the vitality and the high volatility of the late-Ming Buddhist renewal which, as demonstrated by Yunqi temple in Jiangnan and Qingyun temple similarly in Lingnan, could manifest themselves in very different forms.⁴⁴

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Notes

- ¹ For studies on Hanshan Deqing, see [Hsu \(1979\)](#); [Epstein \(2006\)](#); [Struve \(2012\)](#); [Shi \(1998\)](#); [Wang \(2010\)](#). For studies on Deqing's reform in Nanhua temple, see [Jiang \(2006, pp. 69–190\)](#); [Hasebe \(1979\)](#); [Long \(2009\)](#).
- ² For a survey of Buddhism in late Ming China, see [Yü \(1998\)](#), “Ming Buddhism”. In the past forty years, the late Ming Buddhist revival has attracted much scholarly attention. For most important studies in the field, see [Yü \(2021\)](#); [Brook \(1993a\)](#); [Zhang \(2020\)](#). Also see [Chen \(1995, 2011\)](#); [Shengyan \(1993\)](#); [Wu \(2008\)](#); [Wang \(2022\)](#).
- ³ In 1589, Deqing requested Cisheng to restore the monastery by saving expenditures on food in the palace, which Cisheng accepted. For a detailed discussion about the possibility of this proposal, see [Chen \(2011, pp. 129–32\)](#).
- ⁴ For Geng Yilan's plaint, see [Geng \(2022\)](#).
- ⁵ The sixteenth century saw the advent of the global age, and the 1570s was a critical moment for China to interact with the world. For studies on this great age, see, for example, [Blussé \(2008\)](#); [Brook \(2008\)](#); [Frank \(1998\)](#).
- ⁶ For the Manila galleon trade, which created the first global route network centered in South China Sea, see [Britannica \(2022\)](#) and [Han \(2013\)](#).
- ⁷ Pei-Yi [Wu \(1970, p. 81\)](#) has noticed that “Te-ch'ing's (i.e., Deqing's) punishment seems to have solidified his alliance with the leading Neo-Confucians of his day, and the journey south looked more like a triumphant march.”.
- ⁸ Wanli 23 and 24 entries of ([Fushan and Fuzheng 1990](#)).
- ⁹ Deqing was among those who should have been pardoned when Emperor Wanli announced a general amnesty in the eighth month of Wanli 34 (1606) following the birth of his first grandson, the future Taichang emperor (r. 1620). The list must have been imperially sanctioned through the Provincial Surveillance Commission (按察使司) of Guangdong before it could take effect, but it seemed that the process would not take long. So, in the third month of following year, thanks to the support of Dai Yao, then the General-Governor of Guangdong and Guangxi, Deqing was restored his status as a monk (*huiji* 回籍) and then placed in Nanhua temple. In reality, however, the necessary imperial sanction was much postponed because of a long-term vacancy of the Provincial Surveillance Commissioner of Guangdong. It was not until the third month of Wanli 39 (1611) when Deqing had left Nanhua temple after the failed reform attempt that he was released from the military registration (*kaiwu* 開伍) and thus officially free.
- ¹⁰ [Hanshan \(1975–1989, 15:565a\)](#). This impending threat was real. Ruguang 如廣 (?–1596), one of the two disciples who escorted Deqing from Nanjing to Leizhou, died of the pandemic shortly after their arrival at the destination. See [Hanshan \(1975–1989, 32:690a\)](#).
- ¹¹ [Hanshan \(1975–1989, 14:554a\)](#). Deqing repeatedly stressed how beneficial this disaster was for his religious achievements. See, for example, two letters in (*ibid.*, 14:554).
- ¹² For more letters Deqing sent to his friends regarding the *Lengqie biji*, see the 15th fascicle of [Hanshan \(1975–1989\)](#).
- ¹³ [Hanshan \(1995–2000, 15:607\)](#). This letter can also be found in [Hanshan \(1975–1989, 14:553b\)](#), but some sentences including the one quoted here are missing. The [Hanshan \(1995–2000\)](#) was first printed in Shunzhi 17 (1660) under the sponsorship of Geng Jimao 耿繼茂 (?–1671), Prince of Jingnan (靖南), who was one of the most powerful Chinese warlords in the early Qing dynasty. I am currently working on a paper to discuss this version which, when compared with [Hanshan \(1975–1989\)](#) compiled by Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582–1664; *jinshi*, 1610), seems to be richer and more original in contents.
- ¹⁴ For a poem Zhou Rudeng composed for Deqing, see [Nanhua \(2021, p. 919\)](#): 已覺情空盡，何當此日心。欣從龍窟遠，話別虎溪深。雨榻開蓮卷，風橈過寶林。共攜千里道，臨發更沈吟。
- ¹⁵ The word “mleccha” was used in Indian history starting in the late Vedic period to the start of Islamic invasions (ca. 1000 BCE–ca. 900 CE). It is essentially a combination of non-follower of Vedic philosophy and culture, non-speaker of Indic languages, barbarian, nomad, etc.
- ¹⁶ For the so-called *bailiang* 白糧 which, as extra fine grains on top of normal land taxes, were transported by *baicao* boats from five prefectures in Jiangnan to the imperial capital, See [Hu \(2012\)](#).
- ¹⁷ During the late Ming dynasty, the jurisdiction and power of Governor-general of Guangdong and Guangxi (*lianguang zongdu* 兩廣總督, literally Supreme Commander of Military Affairs and Director-general of Grain and Salt Supplies in Guangdong and Guangxi, and Grand Coordinator in Guangdong (總督兩廣軍務兼理糧餉帶管鹽法兼巡撫廣東地方) was not completely fixed. In addition to military affairs, it was possible for them to concurrently administer civilian affairs of one or two provinces or/and the

salt monopoly. They were allowed to appoint civilian officials inferior to magistrate (*zhixian* 知縣) and military officials lower than Assistant Regional Commander (*canjiang* 參將) directly. In addition, thanks to their right of evaluating the performance of such high-ranking officials as Prefects (*zhifu* 知府), Regional Commanders (*zongbing* 總兵), and Surveillance Commissioners (*ancha shi* 按察使), they had significant effects on the latter's career life as well.

For the rebellion caused by Li Jing's abuse of power in Xinghui 新會, Guangdong, see [Wen \(1986, 5:698\)](#).

[Hanshan \(1975–1989, 54:842b\)](#). For a revisit of the people called *kou* 寇, as seen in the riots and trades in China's southeast coastal regions during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see [Chen \(2019, 2001\)](#).

At the core of Deqing's relationship with Dai Yao was not a one-sided patronage but mutual support. In order to help Dai Yao to handle the rebellion, for example, it was said that Deqing once risked his life as Dai's envoy to persuade the rebels and the result was positive. See ([Fushan and Fuzheng 1990, 2:49–50](#)).

For example, see two poems Deqing composed for a General surnamed Du 杜 in [Hanshan \(1975–1989, 49:805b\)](#): 鐘鼓胡笳總道場，旌旗影裏坐焚香。思君力破羣魔壘，自許心空見法王。 Interestingly, Qian Qianyi removed most of this kind of poems when compiling the received version of the [Hanshan \(1975–1989\)](#).

For Deqing's conscious choice of this strategy by modelling on the way of a mother lion training baby lions (獅子調兒法) in an attempt to get along with local people, see ([Fushan and Fuzheng 1990, 2:7–8](#)).

[Hanshan \(1975–1989, 50:808b\)](#). Similarly, the art of Chinese geomancy was taken as a first step when Shang Kexi 尚可喜 (1604–1676) and Master Xuyun 虛雲 (1840?–1959) attempted to renovate Nanhua temple in the 1660s and in the 1930s, respectively. Interestingly, these two had distinctly different interpretations of the temple's layout when compared with Deqing. See [Mo and He \(2014, pp. 84, 177–79\)](#).

For regulations regarding public and private properties in Chinese Buddhist temples, see [He \(2010a, 2010b\)](#).

For another legal case related to Nanhua's monastic lands that took place a few years earlier, see [Liu \(2016\)](#).

During the period from Wanli 26 to 38 when Deqing had connections with Nanhua temple in one way or another, for example, Nanhua temple had as many as twelve generations of abbot. See [Nanhua \(2021, pp. 519–20\)](#).

For negative effects caused by sectarian interest on the public interest of Nanhua temple, for example, see an interesting epitaph composed in Shunzhi 17 (1660) in memory of the rebuilding of the abbot's residency (*fangzhang* 方丈) of Nanhua temple: “蓋曹溪自憨師中振，屢軒紺宇，踵事增華，至今十房禪院未改舊觀。獨方丈為眾共公之長，高賢之地，情好不系，其廢其興，功罪可諉，故視之漫不經心，宜其傾圯剝落，以至於斯也。” ([Mo and He 2014, p. 77](#)). For discussions on differences in the ways of running the hereditary temple and the public temple, see [Welch \(1967\)](#) and [Zhang \(2015\)](#).

Little is known about the ten households in Nanhua temple, but they probably appeared in the early or mid-Ming dynasty. It was in Hongzhi 14 (1501) that Guangxiao temple 光孝寺 in Guangzhou, a major monastery in which both Huineng and Deqing were involved in one way or another, instituted its own ten households. See [Gu et al. \(2015, p. 19\)](#).

Deqing was conscious of his rare status as an exiled monk in the entire history of Chinese Buddhism. See, for example, [Hanshan \(1975–1989, 47:786b\)](#).

For the land properties belonging to Nanhua temple and those belonging to the households, see, [Nanhua \(2021, pp. 115–19\)](#). Dangui Jinbao 澹歸金堡 (1614–1680) once commented on different attitudes of those people involved towards each other, which is revealing: 非常住與眾僧分彼此，蓋眾僧與常住分彼此也。 ([Nanhua 2021, p. 123](#))

For the effectiveness in Deqing's training, see, for example, a letter to Zhou Rudeng in [Hanshan \(1975–1989, 16:571c\)](#): 比雖入室者希，而知有者眾，歸依者日益漸佳。如菩提樹下，與曹溪諸僧，最難調伏。近來回心信向者，蓋已十之二三矣。

This system can be traced back to the Song dynasty and became popular both in Jiangnan and in such coastal regions as Fujian and Guangdong. For studies on this system, see [Zhang \(2017\)](#); [Long \(2018\)](#); [Cao and Liu \(2014\)](#).

It was mandatory for people to pay deed taxes when selling fields and/or houses or else they would be harshly punished. See [Jiang \(2012, pp. 79–80\)](#). For legal issues associated with monastic fields, see [Chai and Han \(2017\)](#).

Starting in the mid-Ming dynasty, there was a newly emerging movement that sought to enforce Confucian agendas in local society. For the rapid development of local lineages in south China after the sixteenth century, see [Szonyi \(2002\)](#); [Brook \(1989\)](#); [Ebrey \(1986\)](#).

Although Yunqi temple was acclaimed as an exemplar by contemporaries and later generations, Zhuhong himself was suspicious about how far it would go and how successful it would be.

For Daoqiu's explanation of the rationale behind this decision, see [Shi et al. \(2015, pp. 60–61\)](#). Michael [Walsh \(2009, p. 9\)](#) has pointed out that “one of the great ironies of monastic Buddhism was that renouncing materiality and the self through a series of metaphysical and bodily strategies resulted in the accumulation of material wealth in abundance and a communal identity forged through discipline and practice. Buddhist monks and nuns were often represented as being poor and socially withdrawn, but we know that reality in Asia was quite the opposite.”

See, for example, Deqing's preface to the twenty-eight poems he composed shortly after arriving in Mount Heng in Hunan province from Lingnan in [Hanshan \(1975–1989, 49:805c\)](#).

[Hanshan \(1995–2000, 16: 639\)](#). This letter is missing in [Hanshan \(1975–1989\)](#).

- 39 For the competition between Nanhua temple and Fayun temple 法雲寺 at Mount Lu for the right to house Deqing's body, which would later prove to be a mummy, see Jiang (2006, pp. 176–77).
- 40 Hanshan (1995–2000, 16: 671). Also see Hanshan (1975–1989, 16:572a).
- 41 Similarly, in a 1622 letter responding to Zhu Xingcun's invitation back to Nanhua temple, Deqing started it with the phrase “dream and illusion” (夢幻泡影) (Hanshan 1975–1989, 52:830c). In retrospect, Deqing's disillusion was not unfounded. In Wanli 47 (1619), fewer than ten years after his departure of Nanhua temple, for example, once again Nanhua was bullied by ruffians and its land rents were postponed. See Nanhua (2021, pp. 124–25).
- 42 See, for example, Hanshan (1975–1989, 15:568a, 22:624c).
- 43 Some anthropologists have come up with the extended-case method and situational analysis in which a lawsuit is understood by considering social relationships or social situations. See Barton (1967) and Gluckman (1955).
- 44 It is worth noting that by Kangxi 49 (1710), when more than seventy years had passed since the founding of Qingyun temple, it was still run smoothly in that way. See Shi et al. (2015, p. 24).

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