

Feeding Ghosts: A Study of the *Yugie Yankou* Rite

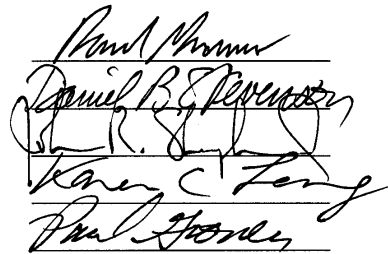
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ABSTRACT

In the year 1382, the founding-emperor of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) issued a decree through the Ministry of Rites formally recognizing a category of Buddhist ritual-specialists known as *jiao* 教 or *yuqie* monastics 瑜伽僧. This decree marks a significant shift in the history of Chinese Buddhism, occurring at a juncture in Chinese Buddhist history that saw an explosion in the production of liturgies meant for public performances and tailored to appeal to the laity. Chief among these rites is the *Yuqie yankou* 瑜伽焰口 (*Yoga-Rite of the Flaming-Mouth*). Inspired by translations of an Indian text in the seventh century, Chinese Buddhists have weaved together a historically and culturally diverse collection of liturgies, oral traditions, meditative techniques and operatic styles over a period of almost a millennium to produce this *Yuqie yankou* rite. Apart from its ancient Indian roots and unmistakable Chinese heritage, the *Yuqie yankou* also evinces Tibetan influences from the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries. This rite is one of the most colorful and complex Chinese Buddhist rites still performed today and it is regarded by Chinese Buddhists as an advanced “esoteric” rite. The stated aim of this rite is the liberation of hungry ghosts from their suffering by providing them physical and spiritual nourishment through the power of visualizations, spells and *mudrās*. Successful performance of the rite promises not only the liberation of these ghosts but also the increasing of the lifespan and merit of the sponsors.

Methodologically speaking, this dissertation weaves together the two hitherto discrete bodies of material and distinctive perspectives of history and anthropology. In reconstructing a history for the *Yuqie yankou* and its liturgical development, this dissertation also attends to the rite’s present-day lived and performed realities. While

issues such as the creation and negotiation of identity through ritual, the tensions between text and performance and between ritual fixity and creative adaptation are fore-grounded in the earlier chapters, issues like the production and dissemination of liturgical texts and ritual traditions, esotericization, construction and control of ritual power and liturgical hegemony and resistance dominate in the final two chapters of this dissertation.

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...ye dharmā hetu prabhavā hetuṃ teṣāṃ tathāgato hyavadat....

諸法從緣起，如來說是因

As Buddhist scriptures often remind us, all phenomena exist due to the coming together of causes and conditions. Likewise, this dissertation would not have been possible without the confluence of a collection of causes and conditions in which I was but one factor.

To my family – especially my parents – I owe the un-repayable debt of my very existence and my everything. Without their love, understanding, encouragement and support (even when they are probably still asking “you’re studying *what?*”), this would not have been possible. My grandmother – undoubtedly the *bodhisattva* who planted the seeds of this dissertation in me – has been a beacon all these years with her devotion, example and life. Adrian, Elaine, Mou-yu and Cindy have indulged me far beyond all reasonable expectations by bearing my family responsibilities in my absence from home. And to my family, I dedicate this dissertation.

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Among the words attributed to the Buddha are a few that purportedly praised the importance of spiritual friends (*kalyāna-mitra*) on the Path, insisting that they are not merely an element of the Path but the entirety of it. Likewise, my years as a graduate student have been a path sustained by many friends. Over the years, they have all offered me spiritual, emotional, intellectual and material support. At the risk of being guilty of ingratitude via the fault of omission, I want to especially thank Barbara Buhr, Janet Evergreen, Bill Gorvine, Yi-hsun Huang, Meritxell Martin i Pardo, Kirk Moore, Jeff Samuels, Dominick Scarangelo and Steven Weinberger for having assisted in my successful completion of this dissertation. Several other friends – Ajay Batra, Andrew and Susan S. Lee, Amanda and Peter Putnam and Jann Ronis – have been most generous with their friendship, patience, time and resources.

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INTRODUCTION:

The Yuqie yankou – Present and Past, Imagined and Performed

As a child growing up in Penang, Malaysia, I looked forward to the annual month-long celebration of the Ghost Festival (*Guijie* 鬼節) during the seventh lunar month of the Chinese calendar.¹ Although there was a certain heightened sense of supernatural danger during this time of the year, I do not actually remember being particularly afraid of the hungry ghosts that were supposed to be roaming the world of the living during that month. Of course there were stories of unlucky or careless neighbors, friends or friends of friends who experienced unpleasant and in some cases life-threatening encounters with these ghostly visitors. And there were admonitions from the adults “not to go swimming or go near cemeteries after sunset.” So there was a sense that the month was different, different in a dangerous way. Nonetheless, I have always looked forward to this annual festival as it is one of the most ritually-dense times of the year – from simple food-offerings set out on the curbside outside homes on selected dusks of the month by individual families, to the month-long Buddhist and Daoist services held in monasteries and nunneries by religious specialists, to the festive,

¹ The Ghost Festival is celebrated in Malaysia and especially in Penang for the entire seventh month of the Chinese lunar calendar – a month that usually fell in the months of August and September. Penang is one of the most heavily ethnic Chinese-populated states in Muslim-dominated Malaysia. In fact, since the incorporation of the modern state of Malaysia in 1957, Penang has always had an ethnic Chinese as the Chief Minister – the head of the executive branch of the state government. Penang is thus a thriving center of Chinese Malaysian culture and religion.

communally-sponsored offerings, complete with food of all kinds and a variety of public entertainment such as traditional Chinese-operas, musical performances and, in recent times, the screening of popular movies from Hong Kong and *karaoke* performances. It was literally impossible to go anywhere during the month-long festival without encountering the sights, sounds and smells of the festival. Of all the different aspects of the festival, what I was most excited about were the Buddhist rites performed annually at a nunnery that my family frequented.

I was particularly drawn to the final evening of the celebration of the Ghost Festival at Puti Cloister (*Puti yuan* 菩提院), which was always on the twenty-third day of the seventh month, when a group of Buddhist monks performed what was to a curious and impressionable young boy an exotic and dramatic rite. For the laity, and certainly for me, the “high point” of the rite was when kids and more than a few grown-ups pushed and jostled for the “blessed food” tossed by the monks into the crowd. This “high-point” took place towards the end of the rite, about four hours after it began. The events of the evening ended with an impressive bonfire of a gigantic papier-mâché lotus bearing the names of thousands of departed souls written on yellow placards along with hundreds of papier-mâché chests filled with ghost-money and clothing for the use of the departed souls in the afterworld.² Year after year, I had to persuade my parents to allow me to attend this rite, as it often fell on a night before a school day. It was usually my indulging but devout grandmother who facilitated my annual attendance of the rite, as she

² The use of a giant papier-mâché lotus is unique to Puti Cloister; as other places use life-sized papier-mâché boats. The choice of the lotus is grounded in the popular and textual knowledge that rebirth in the Pure Land is effected through magical lotuses that bloom in the ponds of the Pure Land.

would attend herself without fail. So, armed with a plastic-bag to collect “booty,” there I was every year, positioning myself in the most “strategic” place (where the most food would land!) in the shrine hall, patiently sitting through four and sometimes five hours of colorfully-garbed monks chanting, singing, playing percussive instruments and executing complex hand-gestures. The understanding that was impressed upon me by the adults was that this was a very special and powerful rite in which the celebrant used his magical power to transform and multiply a great abundance of food to feed the hungry ghosts believed to be wandering among the living during their annual month-long sojourn.

This explanation was quite believable to a young boy – everything about the rite was not at all like any other rite that I or anyone else in the audience had seen any monk or nun perform at other times of the year. Unlike in others, the monastics performed this rite by facing away from the central Buddha image(s) enshrined in the hall. Whereas Chinese monastics normally stood or knelt on the same level as the rest of the congregation, during this special night every year, the monks sat on a raised platform, placing them on almost the same level as the larger-than-life icons of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the shrine. Furthermore, the celebrant wore the same monastic garbs as the well-known Dizang Bodhisattva (*Dizang pusa* 地藏菩薩) – considered in Chinese Buddhism as the savior of souls in the realm of the dead – complete with red and yellow robes and the so-called Vairocana-crown (*Pilu mao* 毘盧帽). Children and adults alike were warned not to go too close to the raised platform since any sudden motions could result in the monks losing their concentration as they sought to transform and multiply food and drink for all the starving, pitiful and *dangerous* ghosts waiting to be fed. It

was rumored that if the celebrant failed to multiply enough food to feed the multitudes of ghosts gathered, he might even lose his life as the ravaging ghosts would resort to devouring him due to the absence of sufficient food! To prevent this, or so we were told, several self-appointed “security guards” usually posted themselves around the raised platform in case some careless person in the audience did anything that might disrupt the successful completion of the rite. This was my earliest and most lasting impression of the *Yuqie yankou* (瑜伽餓口).³

The Performed Yuqie yankou Rite

Yuqie yankou or literally the “*Yoga of Flaming-Mouth*” refers to a Chinese Buddhist rite of “feeding hungry ghosts” (*shi egui* 施餓鬼) that tradition considers to have originated in the Tang dynasty 唐 (618-907). Formally known as *Yuqie yankou shishi yi* (瑜伽餓口施食儀) or *Food-Bestowal Rite of the Yoga of Flaming-Mouth*, this rite was and continues to be especially performed in the context of death and other post-mortem rites within Chinese society. It is however, also not uncommon for this rite to be performed at the end of weeklong Buddha-recitation retreats (*foqi* 佛七) or repentance rites (*baichan* 拜懺,) and at the end of events that are not necessarily connected with post-mortem rites such as the dedication of a new monastic complex or during a gathering for the transmission of monastic vows. In fact, from conversation with monastics, I learnt that there are two types of *Yuqie yankou* rites – the *yang yankou* (

³ It is also often referred to as “*Fang yankou*” (放餓口) – “Liberating Flaming-Mouth.”

陽燄口) and the *yin yankou* (陰燄口).⁴ *Yin yankou* is primarily held for the benefit of the recently deceased and ancestors while *yang yankou* is held for the longevity and general blessings of the living (literally “the *yang*-realm,” *yangjian* 陽間). In fact, when we turn our attention to the architectural layout of certain Chinese monasteries, we see evidence of these two types of *Yuqie yankou* rites. For example, the physical layout of the hall at Guoqing Monastery (*Guoqing si* 國清寺) at the foot of Mount Tiantai primarily used for the performance of the *Yuqie yankou* attests to the existence of these two types of *Yuqie yankou* rites. To the left of the main *Yuqie* Altar, (*Yuqie tan* 瑜伽壇), is a Rebirth or Pure Land Altar (*Wangsheng tan* 往生壇 or *Jingtu tan* 淨土壇) with a print of the “Three Sages of the Western Land” (*Xifang sansheng* 西方三聖) installed.⁵ Whenever the *yin yankou* rite is performed, the names of the departed ones who are the direct recipient of the merit of the rite are written on yellow placards and placed on this altar. To the right of the main altar is a Lengthening-life Altar (*Yanshou tan* 筵壽壇) with an image of Medicine Buddha (*Yaoshi fo* 藥師佛) enshrined. When the *yang yankou* rite performed the names of living persons who should receive the merit of the rite are written on red placards and placed on this altar. Evidence of these two basic different types of *Yuqie yankou* rites also exists on the liturgical front – a *Yuqie yankou* liturgical-text originating from and apparently still used at Qingyun Monastery (*Qingyun si* 慶雲寺) at Mount Dinghu (*Dinghu shan* 鼎湖山) in the southern province of

⁴ This distinction is also reported in a short article on the *Yuqie yankou* rite in a multi-volume publication on Chinese Buddhism. See, *Zhongguo fojiao baike quanshu*, ed. Lai Yonghai (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chupan she, 2000), 6:230.

⁵ The iconography of the “Three Sages of the Western Land” with Amitābha in the center flanked by Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta to his left and right is popular among Chinese Buddhists.

Guangdong gives the different hymns and verses used for the *yin* and *yang yankou* rites respectively. The existence of *Yuqie yankou* rites classified as *yang*-type and *yin*-type plays directly into the *yin* (or *ming* 冥) and *yang* distinction so frequently encountered in popular Chinese religion. As we shall see later, this successful marrying of the highly specialized and “esoteric” milieu of Chinese Buddhism represented by the ritual-technology of the *Yuqie yankou* with the more diffused and popular aspect of Chinese religions is one of the most unique characteristics of the *Yuqie yankou* rite.

In most performances of the *Yuqie yankou* rite, it is the *yin yankou* for the benefit of beings of the realm of the dead (*youjie* 幽界) that is performed as most lay sponsors are unaware of the existence of the *yang yankou* and the benefits it is supposed to deliver. According to the mythic-history of this rite, the *Yuqie yankou* rite owes its origins to an incident that happened to Ānanda, the favorite disciple and cousin of the Buddha. At one time, Ānanda was alone in the forest practicing meditation when he was confronted with the sight of a hungry ghost with “fire burning in his mouth.” To Ānanda’s shock and horror, the ghost announced to Ānanda that Ānanda’s life would soon end and upon its expiration Ānanda will be reborn as a hungry ghost. According to the ghost, the only way Ānanda will be able to escape that terrifying destiny is to provide a large amount of food and drink to an infinite number of hungry ghosts. The merit accrued from such an act of generosity and compassion can then enable Ānanda to prolong his life and avoid any future rebirths in the realm of hungry ghosts. As in with other *sūtras*, this *sūtra* highlighting Ānanda’s plight has a happy ending. We are reassured by the narrative that in the end the Buddha kindly taught Ānanda a special method for magically multiplying a

limited amount of food and drink to fully satisfy the hunger of an infinite number of hungry ghosts. The *sūtra* ends by promoting this method of bestowing food to hungry ghosts as an efficacious and efficient way of promoting one's physical and spiritual health and extending one's lifespan just as Ānanda did.

This special but relatively simple method is what is then later developed into the *Yuqie yankou* rite – more accurately, the later *Yuqie yankou* ritual tradition anchors itself on this narrative and uses the elements found in this *sūtra*-narrative to construct the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy. As Daniel Stevenson and several other scholars have noted, although the *Yuqie yankou* (and other related rites such as the *Shuilu*) justify their existence with this story of Ānanda's plight and the Buddha's solution, the actual content of the *Yuqie yankou* and *Shuilu* liturgies consists of material and themes largely unrelated to the *sūtra*-narrative.⁶

The Historical and Contemporary Contexts of the Yuqie yankou

By the late imperial period, the *Yuqie yankou* rite had become so widespread in China that the founding-emperor of the Ming dynasty 明 (1368-1644) formally created a category of Buddhist monks known as “*yuqie* monks” (*yuqie seng* 瑜伽僧).⁷ They were also sometimes described colloquially and pejoratively as “*yingfu seng*” (應赴僧) or

⁶ See, Daniel L. Stevenson, “Text, Image, and Transformation in the History of the *Shuilu fahui*, the Buddhist Rite for Deliverance of Creatures of Water and Land” in *Cultural Intersections in Later Chinese Buddhism*, ed. Marsha S. Weidner (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), 42-43.

⁷ Alongside this category of *yuqie* monks, the emperor also created two other categories known as *chan* and *jiang* monks.

as Holmes Welch translates it – “monks on call.”⁸ These monks were expected to perform funerals, memorial services and other such rites when requested by the laity. Eventually, a great majority of monks and nuns functioned as ritual-specialists (of the Buddhist type) and offered their services to the laity who could hire these specialists to perform the *Yuqie yankou* and a host of other rites. To this day, the *Yuqie yankou* rite has remained important to the Chinese.

As popular as this rite is, present-day Chinese Buddhist monastics are nevertheless unable to meet fully the demand for its performance. The majority of Chinese Buddhist monastics outside of mainland China (except for a quickly-diminishing generation of elderly Chinese Buddhist monastics trained in pre- or early Communist China) are not trained to perform the *Yuqie yankou* rite. Due to the challenges of modernity and the emergence of a rationalizing or humanizing trend in modern Chinese Buddhism, little organized effort has been expended in the last few decades to train such specialists. At the same time, the performance of a session of the *Yuqie yankou* rite is almost expected at most major merit-making events in contemporary Chinese Buddhist monasteries – at events such as the week-long Buddha-recitation retreats or the ritual-recitation of *sūtras* (*songjing* 誦經), such as the *Huayan jing* 華嚴經 or *Lotus Sūtra*, or at repentance rituals such as the *Precious Repentance of Emperor Liang* (*Lianghuang baochan* 梁皇寶懺).⁹ These occasions typically involved the laity

⁸ Holmes Welch, *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism, 1900-1950*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 198.

⁹ Listed in the Taishō canon as *Compassionate Bodhimāṇḍa Repentance-Method* (*Cibei daochang chanfa* 慈悲道場懺法 in ten fascicles, T1909), the compilation of this repentance liturgy is attributed to a committee of monks created by Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty (r. 502-549).

functioning as both financial sponsors and participants. At the end of such special events, the spiritual merit accumulated is often transferred to ancestors of the participants and sponsors so that they gain respite from their sufferings in the other world or gain a better rebirth. It is considered ideal to perform a session of the *Yuqie yankou* rite as the grand finale for such events, as it is believed that esoteric rites such as the *Yuqie yankou* are more efficacious or powerful when their performance is preceded by intensive merit-generating exercises such as the repentance-rites or week-long Buddha-recitation retreats. Since most monasteries outside of mainland China lack the expertise necessary to hold a *Yuqie yankou* rite, many substitute it with the performance of the so-called *Great Mengshan* rite (*Da mengshan shishi yi* 大蒙山施施儀). This *Great Mengshan* is a fairly recent liturgical elaboration of a simpler *Mengshan* rite that is performed in the standard daily services in Chinese Buddhist monasteries since at least the early seventeenth century.¹⁰ The *Mengshan* rite in turn is a ghost-feeding rite closely related to the *Yuqie yankou*.

Despite the fact that most leaders of Chinese Buddhism in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and wherever Chinese Buddhist communities have established themselves are in one way or another influenced by the vision of a “reformed” Chinese Buddhism, or to use the term popularized by the Republican reformist-activist monk Taixu 太虛 (1890-1947) – “humanistic Buddhism” (*renjian fojiao* 人間佛教 or *rensheng fojiao* 人生佛教) – demand for the performances of rites such as the *Yuqie*

¹⁰ The *Great Mengshan* was compiled by the late Qing/Republican-period Tiantai monk, Guanyue Xingci 觀月興慈 (1881-1950) who added six prose sections to the basic *Mengshan* rite – each section being a short sermon (*kaishi* 開示). See, *Mengshan shishi niansong shuofa yi*, 4.

yankou is as strong today as ever. The ideological onslaughts that the reformists launched at such practices during the Republican period have created, however, a whole generation of Chinese Buddhist monastics that finds itself torn between calls for modernization, rationalization and reform on the one hand and the more orthodox, traditional confidence in the ultimate efficacy of such practices which have become inseparable from Chinese Buddhism. Like many who sided with the revivalists instead of the reformists in the Republican period, present day Chinese Buddhists are generally willing to accept in principle the efficaciousness of the *Yuqie yankou* and other such rites. They have little hesitation in sponsoring such rites, but they also quick to insist that such rites can only be effective and helpful if the monastics hired are sincere in their motivation and pure in their spiritual discipline. We shall consider the changes in Chinese Buddhism in the late Qing and Republican period, and in particular, in the attitudes towards ritual and ritual performance, in greater detail in *Chapter One*. At this point, the annual performance of the *Yuqie yankou* rite at Puti Cloister in Malaysia is a case worth considering.

The Yuqie yankou at Puti Cloister, Malaysia

Puti Cloister – the nunnery where I first became acquainted with the *Yuqie yankou*, and possibly where the seeds of this dissertation were first sown – is a community whose members are religious women known as “*zhaigu*” (齋姑, literally, “vegetarian aunts”). They are technically not Buddhist nuns since they have not received the precepts of a *śrāmaṇerikā*, a *śikṣamāṇā* or a *bhikṣuṇī*. Instead, they

occupy the ambiguous space between the statuses of formal Buddhist nuns on the one hand and pious lay women on the other. In practice, these women live a lifestyle indistinguishable from formal Buddhist nuns except that they do not shave their heads or wear the formal Chinese Buddhist monastic garbs. Furthermore, like formal nuns, they keep a vow of celibacy and are, as their name suggests, expected to be strict vegetarians.¹¹ Although most of the time they are accorded the same respect that one would show to a religious person who has withdrawn from active participation in maintaining and perpetuating family life, there are certain occasions where they are perceived as less able or less qualified to function as the experts.

This is especially obvious in the context of the performance of complex religious rites. Since the *Yuqie yankou* rite is considered an advanced Buddhist practice that only monks and even then, only monks of great virtue and skill, are qualified to perform (especially the celebrant who leads the performance), the *zhaigus* at Puti Cloister have to rely on an external group of monks to perform the annual *Yuqie yankou* rite at Puti Cloister. In fact, it is for this reason that the finale of the Ghost Festival is celebrated at Puti Cloister on the twenty-third day of the month-long festival instead of as usual on

¹¹ The religious community of “vegetarian aunts” has received some attention from Western scholars, especially those studying them in the context of women’s issues. See Marjorie Topley, “Marriage Resistance in Rural Kwantung”, in *Women in Chinese Society*, ed. Marjorie Wolf and Roxanne Witke (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 67-88. These “vegetarian aunts” live in communities known as “vegetarian halls” (*zhaitang* 齋堂) which are often neither strictly “Buddhist” nor “Daoist.” Some of these “vegetarian halls” appear to have been associated with sectarian groups such as the “Way of Former Heaven” (*Xiantian dao* 先天道). See Marjorie Topley, “The Great Way of Former Heaven: A Group of Chinese Secret Religious Sects,” in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. XXVI, part 2, 1963:362-392 and “The Emergence and Function of Chinese Religious Associations in Singapore,” in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. III, no. 3, (1961):289-314. Puti Cloister, however, was established in Penang as a self-consciously “Buddhist” establishment for the promotion of Buddhism. It was funded by some of the most prominent Chinese Malaysian businessmen and in its early days was the main center of Buddhist activities, as prominent Chinese Buddhist monks and nuns came from mainland China and Taiwan to teach Buddhism.

final day of the seventh lunar month. It is logistically impossible to invite any monk to officiate at Puti Cloister on the last day of the month-long festival because most monks have the responsibility of officiating at the rites in their own monasteries on the last day of the month.

It becomes doubly difficult when not many monks are considered qualified to perform such an august rite as the *Yuqie yankou*. If the celebrant and his assistants lack the qualifications both in terms of their personal spiritual virtues and their training in the correct performance of this rite, it is believed that the consequences can be severe to both the performers and the sponsors of the rite. There is an abundance of stories of the supposed occurrences of bad-dreams, omens, accidents, illnesses and natural disasters due to so-called imperfect or flawed performances of the *Yuqie yankou* rite. A long-time friend in Hong Kong related to me an incident that illustrates this point well. While on pilgrimage to Mount Putuo (*Putuo shan* 普陀山) – the sacred island of Guanyin – my friend and her friends were persuaded to sponsor a *Yuqie yankou* rite at one of the main monasteries at Mount Putuo.¹² My friend explained to me that she had to be “persuaded” because she did not think that the young monks who were supposed to perform the rite were up to the task. Her doubts on the monks’ abilities were “confirmed” the morning after the rite when one of her friends who had co-sponsored the rite reported having nightmares of “ghosts running around her room the entire night,

¹² The sponsorship of rites and especially complex and involved rites like the *Yuqie yankou* has become a common activity among overseas Chinese who visit pilgrimage sites in China. This trans-national sponsorship has become a major source of income for monasteries and monastics in China as well as a ritual network that ties Chinese Buddhists in and outside of China together in ways very similar to the case of Daoism highlighted by Kenneth Dean’s work. See Kenneth Dean’s *Lord of Three in One* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

begging to be fed.” My friend pointed out that her friend was “new to Buddhism in general and the rite in particular and was unaware of (my informant’s) reservations about the monks.”

The suitability of the performers of *Yuqie yankou* rites is an issue of importance to many Chinese Buddhists. According to a nun I spoke to in Taiwan, “when it comes to the *Yuqie yankou* rite, it is best that the celebrant is an old monk.” She reasoned that since monks who are spiritually and professionally unqualified to perform this rite will suffer from a shortened lifespan (the opposite effect of a successfully performed *Yuqie yankou* rite, i.e. an increase in longevity), an old monk who is still alive and has been performing the rite all his life is obviously the most qualified candidate. In fact, a commonly repeated phrase among my informants in Malaysia, Hong Kong and Taiwan is “lengthy *Vajra*, short *Yankou*” (*chang jingang duan yankou* 長金剛短嚙口). While the performance of the ritual-recitation of the *Vajra* or *Diamond Sūtra* confers longevity, the imperfect performance of the *Yuqie yankou* cuts shorts the lifespan of the celebrant.¹³ Thus, the old age of a celebrant of the *Yuqie yankou* is the best, unmistakable sign of his qualification.

In the case of the *Yuqie yankou* performed annually at Puti Cloister, the Elder Master Jingliang 淨涼長老, abbot of a small local monastery, acts as the celebrant. Jingliang is one of the most senior Chinese Buddhist monks in Penang. In fact, among

¹³ The nuns I spoke to at Guangyun Monastery 光雲寺 in Kaohsiung, Taiwan in the summer of 2001 all insisted that this adage “lengthy *Vajra*, short *Yankou*” should be interpreted more specifically as imperfect or wrong performances of the *Yuqie yankou* rite that leads to a shortened lifespan and not just the mere performance of it as the mythology of the rite itself makes clear that it is a means for lengthening one’s lifespan. As I will show later, there are yet other competing interpretations to this adage.

the Chinese Buddhist community in Penang, Jingliang is generally considered the only senior monk fully trained and qualified to serve as the celebrant of a *Yuqie yankou* rite. When I once asked about the rarity of *Yuqie yankou* performances in Penang, he explained to me that aside from him, there are two other senior monks in Malaysia who are trained to perform the *Yuqie yankou*. Since Jingliang is not known to perform the rite at any other place or occasion except at his own Huayan Monastery (*Huayan si* 華嚴寺) and at Puti Cloister, other Buddhist institutions in Penang have to invite monks from Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and, most recently, mainland China whenever they wish to perform one. In fact, the celebrant and his two main assistants (who acted as cantor and assistant cantor) at the last *Yuqie yankou* rite I attended in Penang were monks invited from Singapore. Qualified monastics are hard to come by not only in Southeast Asia but also in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Even in the city of Tainan (台南) – the cultural center of Taiwan – there are apparently not many monks deemed fully-trained to perform the *Yuqie yankou* rite as celebrants. In the summer of 2001, I attended a *Yuqie yankou* at Guangde Monastery (*Guangde si* 廣德寺) – the main activity center of Shi Jingxin 釋淨心, the president at the time of the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China (*Zhonghua fojiao hui* 中華佛教會), Taiwan.¹⁴ That particular *Yuqie yankou* was held at the end of a seven-day ritual-repentance retreat in which participants performed the *Precious Repentance of Emperor Liang*. As Jingxin himself was serving as the Chan-master at a meditation-retreat elsewhere at that time, the monastery had to fly a

¹⁴ For a study of the history of modern Taiwanese Buddhism and the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China, see Charles B. Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan: Religion and State 1660-1990*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999).

monk in from Taipei to serve as the celebrant of the rite. Although there were surely a few other monks in the Tainan area who could perform the rite, the fact that the monastery had to invite a monk from Taipei suggests the general scarcity of fully-trained celebrants of the *Yuqie yankou* rite among present-day Chinese Buddhists.

The situation is radically different, however, in China. That same summer, I visited several major centers of Buddhism in southeastern China – Tiantai (天台), Ningbo (寧波), Mount Jiuhua (*Jiuhua shan* 九華山) and Mount Putuo – where I witnessed many performances of the *Yuqie yankou* rite. At Mount Putuo, I witnessed three separate performances of the rite on the same evening at Puji Monastery (*Puji si* 普濟寺).¹⁵ A total of fifteen monks acted as celebrants (three in the first, five in the second and seven in the third performance), assisted by more than fifty other monks. There is clearly no shortage of monks who can and will perform the rite in mainland China. Interestingly, all the monks whom I saw performing the rite in China were ranged in age from mid-twenties to late-forties. According to informants in China, the *Yuqie yankou* rite is currently one of the most popular/lucrative rites sponsored by the laity in China as well as by overseas ethnic Chinese on pilgrimage there.¹⁶ As such, the *Yuqie yankou* rite is a major source of income for monastics and monasteries in China.

¹⁵ That evening was also the evening of the anniversary of Miaoshan's/Guanyin's enlightenment day. This accounted for the unusually large number of pilgrims at Mount Putuo.

¹⁶ The *Yuqie yankou* rites that I witnessed at Mount Tiantai and Mount Jiuhua, Anhui were sponsored by wealthy Chinese nationals from the thriving cosmopolitan class of new China. Two out of the three rites at Puji Monastery that evening were sponsored by Chinese nationals as well. Chinese monasteries have seen a marked increase in the patronage of rites and re-construction projects by the emerging Chinese middle-class of new China.

Controlling the Present, Negotiating the Future

Ambivalence towards monks who would perform this rite is, however, clear and prevalent. Although the laity in general is open to the sponsorship of rites such as the *Yuqie yankou* due to its reputed power to benefit both the living and dead, they can be quite selective and critical of monks – especially young monks – who readily perform the rite for the right price. In the eyes of the Chinese Buddhist community in Penang, for example, Jingliang's rule of not performing the rite more than a couple of times a year highlights his virtue and guarantees the efficacy of the *Yuqie yankou* rites performed by him. My Hong Kong friend's story of her friend's nightmare similarly points to the ambivalence and suspicion held by the laity towards young monks who perform the part of the celebrant in the rite.

Not all quarters of the Chinese Buddhist community however, are necessarily uncomfortable with the idea or practice of young monks performing the rite. After all, as one young abbot (who asked to remain anonymous) pointed out, if younger monks do not perform this rite now, how are there going to be older monks who can perform this rite later? Thus, this young abbot in Penang has actually invited monks from China to Malaysia to conduct “crash-courses” for any and all interested Chinese Buddhist monastics.¹⁷ The concern that the younger generation of monastics might not know how to perform this rite was evident in the most recent *Yuqie yankou* rite I attended in which Jingliang officiated as the celebrant. During that particular performance at Puti Cloister,

¹⁷ The training sessions were only open to monastics and no lay person was considered a qualified trainee. So far, I have not heard reports of any of the monastics who attended these intensive training sessions performing the rite in the capacity of a celebrant.

he had his disciple and two of his grand-disciples present to serve as assisting-monks, singing in the choral sections of the rite and playing the different percussive instruments.¹⁸ The disciples and grand-disciples were clearly watching their master and grand-master with intent eyes throughout the whole five hours of the rite. Noticing that I was recording the rite with a video recorder, Jingliang later requested that I make a copy of the recording for him so that, in his words, “these two grand-disciples can watch it as they learn how to be the celebrant of the rite.”

The popularity of the *Yuqie yankou* rite is ironically also the cause of the inability of Buddhist monastics to maintain a tight monopoly over its performance. Welch, writing in the 1960's, reports that there was a group of lay Buddhists in Hong Kong, “a Tantric devotees club whose members ‘released the burning mouths’ with a lay celebrant presiding, dressed in a red patriarch’s robe and wearing a Ti-tsang hat...” and further commented that this phenomenon was becoming fairly common in Beijing due to a scarcity of monks.¹⁹ When I was in Taiwan in the summer of 2001, the monastics I met were at first very reluctant to discuss the *Yuqie yankou* rite with me as they were concerned that I had ambitions of performing the rite as a layman. They spoke disapprovingly of the phenomena of “the white-robe (i.e. non-monastic) ascending the seat” (*baiyi shangzuo* 白衣上坐) – referring to non-monastic Buddhists taking the traditional monastic role of religious teachers and ritual-specialists – and were especially harsh on lay persons who performed the *Yuqie yankou* rite. It was only when I assured

¹⁸ I later learnt from Jingliang that his disciple and grand-disciples who were at the *Yuqie yankou* performance I recorded were visiting from mainland China. In recent years Jingliang has been returning to his original monastery in Fujian to teach the monks there rituals such as the *Yuqie yankou*.

¹⁹ Welch, *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism*, 385.

the monastics that my interests in the rite were for academic purposes that they felt comfortable discussing it with me.

Competition and challenge came not only from non-monastic performers of the *Yuqie yankou* but also from an older but formidable rival – the Daoists. Although this rite developed mostly in the Buddhist context, its performance has been by no means limited to Buddhists. Daoist priests routinely perform the rite – sometimes using the very same liturgical texts used by Buddhists and in other cases employing their own texts, clearly modeled on Buddhist texts.²⁰ The Daoist appropriation and adaptation of the *Yuqie yankou* rite attests to its popularity and malleability. Although the Daoist tradition itself has an extremely rich history in the production and performance of post-mortem rites aimed at benefiting the dead and protecting those still alive – rites that are significantly less “Buddhist” in content and form – they have nonetheless appropriated the *Yuqie yankou* for their own use.²¹ Even non-orthodox, nominally

²⁰ There are two Daoist liturgical-texts in Ōfuchi Ninji’s *Chūgokujin no shūkyō girei* that are Daoist adaptations of the *Yuqie yankou*. The *Lingbao pudu keyi* (靈寶普度科儀) used by Daoists in Taiwan is relatively more Daoist in orientation while the *Mengshan shishi* (蒙山施食) used by the San’nai Daoists (三奶) of Hong Kong is fairly similar to the *Yuqie yankou* text used by the majority of Chinese Buddhists today. See Ōfuchi Ninji, *Chūgokujin no shūkyō girei* (Tokyo: Fukutake Shoten, 1983), 391-403, 799-813. Both Duane Pang and Judith Boltz have also published articles on the Daoist *pudu* rites. Pang’s article is on a modern performance of the Daoist *pudu* rite among the Chinese American community in Hawaii while Boltz’s article is an analysis of the *Lingbao pudu keyi* from both a liturgical as well as musical approach. See, Duane Pang, “The *P’u-Tu* Ritual,” in *Buddhist and Taoist Studies I*, ed. Michael Saso and David Chappell (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1977), 95-122 and Judith M. Boltz, “Singing to the Spirits of the Dead: A Daoist Rite of Salvation,” in *Harmony and Counterpoint*, ed. Bell Yung, Evelyn S. Rawski and Rubie S. Watson (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 177-225.

²¹ Peter Nickerson’s dissertation on early Chinese mortuary and exorcistic practices is one of the most detailed and careful studies on these highly bureaucratized rites and how they were appropriated and practiced by early Daoists. See Peter Nickerson, “Taoism, Death and Bureaucracy in Early Medieval China” (Ph.D. diss., University of Berkeley, 1996). Nickerson has also published an “Introduction” and translation of one of these early Daoist texts on post-mortem rites entitled, “The Great Petition for Sepulchral Plaints” in Stephen R. Bokenkamp’s *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 230-74. Other Daoist post-mortem rites, such those based on the *liandu* rites, are also clearly Daoist in origin as they are originally “inner-alchemy” practices meant for individual refinement of the spirit and attainment of personal immortality. See Judith M. Boltz’s translation of one such *liandu*-based text in “Opening the Gates of Purgatory: A Twelfth Century Technique for the

Daoist sectarian movements have apparently appropriated the Buddhist *Yuqie yankou* rite to produce their own versions of it for the consumption of the larger ritual market.²²

Textual and Ethnographical Research

This dissertation is written with an approach that combines both textual and ethnographical research. Since most of my formal training as a student of religion is anchored on a textual-historical approach, I am naturally more comfortable working with texts and the historical issues behind and within texts. At the same time, my engagement of the *Yuqie yankou* rite has been and continues to be on a personal and experiential level. My introduction to the rite occurred in childhood – it is first and foremost a lived event, an experience that has always been part of my personal narrative, both my text and my context. I did not meet the rite for the first time as “other peoples’” rite or as an object of inquiry, much less a potential dissertation topic. It was only after years of graduate school that I began to abstract the *Yuqie yankou* in a way that is necessary for it to become an object of academic inquiry. Furthermore, as I will argue in the next chapter, I believe that in writing about a rite such as the *Yuqie yankou*, it is very necessary to consider both its historical development and its present performative dimension. As such, my research and methodology has taken this dual-approach.

Salvation of Lost Souls,” in *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R.A. Stein*, vol. 2, *Mélanges chinoises et bouddhiques*, no. 21 (1988): 488-510.

²² For example, Kenneth Dean’s study of the Sanyijiao (三一教) or “Three in One” sect mentions *pudu* texts attributed to Chen Zhongyu, the “second transmitter” of the Sanyijiao sect. Dean also gives a short description of “the heart method for the Liturgy of the Universal Distribution of Nourishment to the Hungry Ghosts” which closely resembles the structure and content of the Buddhist *Yuqie yankou* rite. See Dean, *Lord of the Three in One*, 215.

In terms of the textual-historical research, most of the texts that I have used in this dissertation are Chinese Buddhist texts that are readily available in the different versions of the Chinese Buddhist canon. These include the *Taishō shinshū daizō kyō* 大正新修大藏經,²³ *Wanzi xuzang jing* 卅字續藏經,²⁴ *Zhonghua dazang jing* 中華大藏經,²⁵ *Dunhuang baozang* 敦煌寶藏,²⁶ and *Fangshan shijing* 房山石經²⁷. Since many of the later *Yuqie yankou* liturgies are not included in these canons, I have consulted various different individual editions of these liturgies often printed by monasteries or organizations without the usual bibliographic details that we are familiar with. As such, most of my references for specific parts of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy that is most commonly used in contemporary performances cite Kamata Shigeo's edition of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy found in his *Chūgoku no Bukkyō girei* 中国の仏教儀礼.²⁸ Likewise, for the Daoist liturgical texts, I mostly rely on the liturgies collected in Ōfuchi Ninji's *Chūgokujin no Shūkyō girei* 中国人の宗教儀礼.²⁹ Several supplemental works such as the collected works of monks in the Late Imperial period as well as monastic gazetteers have also proven to be useful. In particular, my research has included the use of *Lianchi dashi quanji* 蓮池大師全集 (“The Complete Collected Works of Zhuhong”)³⁰ and the 120-volume, collected gazetteers, *Zhongguo fosi zhi congkan* 中國

²³ *Taishō shinshū daizō kyō*, ed. Takakusu Junjirō, Watanabe Kaigyoku and Ono Gemyō (1924-1932; reprint, Taipei: Xinwenfeng chupan, 1973).

²⁴ *Wanzi xuzang jing* (1902-1912; reprint, Taipei: Xinwenfeng chupan, 1977).

²⁵ *Zhonghua dazang jing* (Taipei: Xiuding zhonghua dazang jing hui, 1962-1974).

²⁶ *Dunhuang baozang*, ed. Huang quanwu (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chupan, 1981-1986).

²⁷ *Fangshan shijing*, ed. Zhongguo fojiao xiehui (Beijing: Huaxia chupanshe, 2000).

²⁸ Kamata Shigeo, *Chūgoku no Bukkyō girei* (Tokyo: Daizō Shuppan, 1986).

²⁹ Ōfuchi, *Chūgokujin no Shūkyō girei*.

³⁰ *Lianchi dashi quanji* (Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Education Foundation, n.d.). This edition of the collected works of Zhuhong includes *Yunqi fahui* 雲棲法彙 and other works not included in

佛寺誌叢刊³¹. Apart from help I received from Western-trained scholars in the United States in unraveling some of the more difficult parts of my textual research, I was fortunate enough to also obtain assistance in this regard from Professor Li Kwok Fu of Chilin Buddhist Institute, Hong Kong and Professor Shi Daoyu of Fujen University, Taiwan.

The formal fieldwork for this dissertation was carried out over two main periods, the first for fourteen months from January 1999 to March 2000 and the second was for three months in the summer of 2001. The first part of my fieldwork was conducted primarily in Penang, Malaysia. An island measuring roughly 113 square miles, Penang is one of twelve states in Malaysia and geographically located off the northwestern coast of the Malaysian peninsular. Georgetown, which lies at the heart of the island, is the second largest city in Malaysia and also has the largest concentration of ethnic Chinese Malaysians. The island has about half a million residents most of whom are ethnic Chinese, Malays and Indians.

As indicated earlier in this chapter, my earliest encounter and experience of the *Yuqie yankou* rite was at Puti Cloister. Year after year, I tried my best to attend the rite at Puti Cloister. Naturally, when I returned to Malaysia to study the *Yuqie yankou*, I focused on the *Yuqie yankou* at Puti Cloister. In my fourteen months in Penang, I also attended performances of the *Yuqie yankou* and other related ghost-feeding rites at other monasteries and temples such as Miaoxiang Grove (*Miaoxiang lin* 妙香林), Hongfu

the *Yunqi fahui*. The edition that I am using is organized into eight volumes and unfortunately has no bibliographic information included beyond the publishers.

³¹ *Zhongguo foshi ji congkan*, ed. Liu Yongming (Yangzhou: Jiangsu guangling gujike yinshe, 1996).

Monastery (*Hongfu si* 洪福寺), Zhulin Monastery (*Zhulin si* 竹林寺) and Tongshan Hall (*Tongshan tang* 同善堂). Although I grew up in Penang and was familiar with the ritual-calendar of the monasteries there, spending the fourteen months with a focused set of questions, questions that I never asked before, greatly widened my understanding of the *Yuqie yankou* rite and allowed me to see things in a new light. The second part of my fieldwork was conducted in Hong Kong, Taiwan and China. For three months in the summer of 2001, I traveled to different places in the region to attend performances of the *Yuqie yankou* rite – at Mount Jiuhua in Anhui province, Mount Putuo and Mount Tiantai in Zhejiang province, and at a couple of monasteries in southern Taiwan – and to collect information and insights on the rite from performers, sponsors and spectators. Especially in Taiwan, I was also able to interview and informally speak to many monastics at several monasteries. Among the monasteries are: Foguang Monastery (*Foguang shan* 佛光山) and Guangyun Monastery in Kaohsiung and Guangde Monastery and Chaofeng Monastery (*Chaofeng shan* 超峰山) in Tainan.

At most of the performances I attended, I made either video or audio recordings of the proceedings. In performances where it was not possible for me to make any recordings, I took careful written and mental notes – paying close attention to the different performers, the variations in ritual-traditions and styles, the audiences, the ritual-objects utilized and the layout of the ritual-spaces. Whenever possible, I also photographed representative gestures, other ritual-acts, musical instruments and other ritual accoutrements. I also collected different editions of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy at

these performances. Although most of the editions have identical contents, there were two liturgies that turned out to be variant texts – one entitled “*Tianji yankou*” 天機燄口 and the other a shorter *Yuqie yankou* liturgy used at a couple of monasteries in southern China.³² Conversations that I had with several of the celebrants have helped clarified some of the more difficult points in the liturgy and also facilitated my understanding of how these celebrants saw the rite, their roles in it and their hopes for the future of this rite. In particular, the elderly Jingliang in Penang and Shi Xinding 釋心定, the current abbot of Foguang Shan Buddhist Order, Taiwan have been extremely erudite in their understanding of the rite and generous with their time and patience.

While at Guoqing Monastery on Mount Tiantai, I co-sponsored a session of the *Yuqie yankou* rite and as a result played the role of the chief sponsor since the other co-sponsors preferred to remain only as participant-observers. As the chief sponsor, I was guided by the “guest master” monk (*zhike shi* 知客師) throughout the rite – standing, kneeling, making prostrations and offering incense at different points in the rite – thus becoming part of the performance and not merely a spectator. At that performance, the spectators formed a diverse group: there were my fellow Western-trained academics,³³ our Chinese van driver from Hangzhou city, several resident monks who sauntered in and out – probably because word got around that some “foreigners” were sponsoring a

³² I will discuss these two variant texts in *Chapter Five*.

³³ Cindy Benton-Groner, Paul Groner and Daniel Stevenson were my fellow travelers during this part of my research in China. They were also the co-sponsors of the rite although the rite was technically performed for the benefit of the “Successive Generations of Ancestors of the Li (Lye) Family” (*Limen tangshang lidai zuxian* 黎門堂上歷代祖先 – the words written on the placard placed in the Rebirth Altar for this performance).

ghost-feeding rite – and a few curious and probably amused local Chinese tourists/pilgrims who were staying at Guoqing Monastery’s guest house that evening.

Slightly less than a year later, I found myself once again at another *Yuqie yankou* rite with an equally mixed and unusual group of performers, sponsors and spectators at the Newcomb Hall Ballroom at the University of Virginia. The celebrant at this rite was the abbot of Hsi Lai Monastery (*Xilai si* 西來寺), California, Shi Huichuan 釋慧傳 who was assisted by eight nuns from the Foguang Shan Buddhist Order who served as the cantor, assistant cantor, chorus and instrumentalists. A few other nuns – including the abbesses of Toronto Foguang Temple and Boston Foguang Buddhist Center – also assisted with the performance by serving as the “guest master” and interpreter.³⁴ These monastics of the Foguang Shan Buddhist Order were originally from Taiwan but had most recently come from different branch monasteries and centers of the order in North America. A group of about a hundred lay supporters of the order also traveled from North Carolina, Washington D.C. and New York to participate in the performance as sponsors of the rite. This worked out well since the University had no intention of sending its officials to play the part of the traditional lay sponsors of the rite! Instead of fulfilling the role of the traditional sponsors, members of the University of Virginia community – students, staff, faculty and visitors – as well as the Charlottesville community were happy to be the spectators. Like many spectators in a more conventional or traditional context, some of the spectators at the University of Virginia

³⁴ Shi Yifa 釋依法, abbess of the Boston Fo Guang Buddhist Center was the interpreter while Shi Yongku 釋永固, abbess of the Toronto Fo Guang Shan Temple was the “guest master” who guided the lay sponsors throughout the rite.

performance sat through the whole performance, others walked in and out, some were bored and distracted while others were enraptured by sounds, sights and smells. For this event, I prepared a Powerpoint presentation translating and explaining the contents of the liturgy as the rite progressed. In preparing for this translation, I did a very careful reading of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy and clarified many difficult parts in the liturgy by consulting a couple of extant commentaries on the liturgy. This in turn shaped my presentation in *Chapter Three* of this dissertation.

Layout of Dissertation and Chapter Synopses

The main corpus of this dissertation reflects the dual approach of textual-historical and ethnographical-contemporary inquiries that I have adopted for the purposes of researching and writing this dissertation. As such, the five substantive chapters in this dissertation can be divided into two halves. *Chapter One* and *Chapter Two* are primarily chapters conceived and presented in the ethnographical-contemporary mode while *Chapter Four* and *Chapter Five* deal mostly with the textual-historical issues surrounding the *Yuqie yankou* rite. *Chapter Three* is the chapter which at first glance is anchored on contemporary performances of the rite but actually straddles and hopefully bridges the two different but complementing approaches. The following are synopses of the chapters:

Chapter One: Theory and Practice, Impressions and Realities seeks to accomplish two major tasks. First, after a general discussion of the study of ritual and its paucity in the study of Chinese Buddhism, I will review extant scholarship on the

Yuqie yankou. The relative scarcity of extensive literature on this important rite and its liturgical texts has provided me the luxury of treating each of the articles being reviewed with a breadth and depth that would not otherwise be feasible or desirable. The advantage of being able to focus on relevant previous scholarship to the extent that I have done in *Chapter One* cannot be overstated as what we have available so far on the *Yuqie yankou* rite are either i) flawed in their basic understanding of the rite or ii) oversimplified in their presentation of the complexities that surround the rite and the body of texts related to the rite. This dissertation aims to redress this state of affairs. The second part of this chapter explores “Western impressions and Asian realities” in relation to the *Yuqie yankou*. That the *Yuqie yankou* rite has been “invisible” and understudied has to do with certain dynamics and attitudes in religion *and* the study of religion in the not too distant past of both Asia and the West. By offering a discussion of the different presentations, representations and misrepresentations of the *Yuqie yankou* from the late 1800’s to early 1900’s and further linking these views and attitudes towards the rite from that period back to the fourteenth century, I hope to re-construct a social-historical context for the *Yuqie yankou*. This re-constructed context will in turn facilitate a better understanding of the biases towards the performance and study of the rite discussed earlier in the first part of this chapter.

Chapter Two: Material Yuqie yankou – Its Cast, Vocals, Instrumentation and Production focuses on the material aspects of the rite. By “material” I am including aspects such as the different parts for the performers of the rite (i.e. the cast), their ritual costume, the range and modes of vocal delivery, the percussive ensemble, the ritual

accouterments, and the food and other material offerings that are found in performances of the *Yuqie yankou*. While it is impossible for us to not pay close attention to the liturgical texts for this rite as most Chinese Buddhist rites are highly textualized, I will show in *Chapter Two* that it is equally important and fruitful to attend to the material aspects of the rite. The liturgies and ritual prompt-texts themselves do not and cannot tell us everything about the *Yuqie yankou*. Furthermore, unlike the liturgies or ritual manuals for rites such as the *Shuilu* (another related but much more complex and lengthy Chinese Buddhist rite) or even the Daoist ghost-feeding rites, the *Yuqie yankou* texts do not contain much information on the material aspects of the rite. Whereas the related *Shuilu* rite comes with a whole chapter of very detailed and precise instructions on such things as how to arrange the various temporary altars, the dozens of documents and placards to be prepared, the minimum number of performers required, etc., the *Yuqie yankou* texts are surprisingly sparse in this area. When the rite is actually performed, we find that these material and thus non-liturgical details are considered by both performers and sponsors to be just as important, if not more so than the contents of the liturgy itself. Ironically, I will also demonstrate in *Chapter Two* that despite the lack of written instructions on the material aspects of the rite, all performances of the rite that I have attended (and a rare late eighteenth century account of the material aspects of the rite reported by a Japanese author writing on Chinese customs in the late Qing period) share a remarkable degree of uniformity. This uniformity is striking considering the geographic expanse and temporal distance that exist among the performances that I have focused on.

Additionally, the special focus on the musical dimension in this chapter reflects my own experience of the rite and what I see as one of the most distinguishing characteristics of the *Yuqie yankou*. Other scholars have also noted this aspect of the rite, rightfully identifying it as the rite with a musical complexity and richness that is unmatched by any other Chinese Buddhist rite.³⁵ In many ways, my discussion on the musical qualities of the *Yuqie yankou* in *Chapter Two* is influenced by Judith M. Boltz's treatment of the musical aspects of the Daoist Lingbao ghost-feeding rite.³⁶ Boltz's analysis of the *Lingbao Liturgy for Universal Salvation* has been acclaimed as "a model for similar studies of other Daoist rituals and prepares future researchers for the field study of this particular ritual in its proper and, in particular, its musical context."³⁷ Although the *Yuqie yankou* rite is a Buddhist rather than a Daoist rite, the similarities that underlie the *Lingbao Liturgy for Universal Salvation* and the *Yuqie yankou* renders Boltz's approach particularly appropriate for my own analysis of both the "performative elements as well as the text"³⁸ of the *Yuqie yankou* rite.

Chapter Three: The Yuqie yankou Liturgy in Performance is a descriptive analysis of the *Yuqie yankou* rite based on a close reading of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy used today – the *Yuqie yankou shishi yaoji* 瑜伽餒口施食要集 redacted by Deji Ding'an 德基定庵 (1546-1623) in 1693 – and the video and audio recordings, notes and photographs that I have on twelve different performances of the rite held in Malaysia,

³⁵ See, Pi-yen Chen, "Morning and Evening Service: The Practice of Ritual, Music, and Doctrine in the Chinese Buddhist Monastic Community," (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1999), 65-66.

³⁶ Judith M. Boltz, "Singing to the Spirits of the Dead: A Daoist Ritual of Salvation," 177-225.

³⁷ Bell Yung, "Introduction" in *Harmony and Counterpoint*, ed. Bell Yung, Evelyn S. Rawski and Rubie S. Watson (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 10.

³⁸ Ibid..

Taiwan, China and the United States.³⁹ My presentation and analysis of the liturgy is further strengthened by consulting two extant commentaries on the liturgy – a commentary by Yunqi Zhuhong 雲棲株宏 (1535-1615)⁴⁰ and a much later commentary by the Republican period lay-disciple, Yanji 演濟 (d.u.).⁴¹ Yanji’s commentary mostly relies on Zhuhong’s but it also covers those parts of the liturgy added in Dingan’s *Huashan Yankou* liturgy. This chapter describes and analyzes the entire rite sequentially, from the preliminary rites that are not often indicated in the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy, to the main rite and the closing rites that are also not usually included in the actual liturgical-text itself. Although this chapter is a descriptive analysis anchored on the liturgy and its commentaries, I also include other important details such as the gestures, movements, positioning of bodies in space, oral and percussive delivery patterns and styles and performer-audience interactions throughout the chapter. In doing so, I hope to provide my readers with a “thick description” of the rite that includes both its liturgical and ritual dimensions.

In *Chapter Four: The Origins of Buddhist Ghost-Feeding Rites in Tang and Song China*, I present part of the results of my textual-historical research on the *Yuqie yankou* by re-constructing a textual history of the rite that begins in the Tang dynasty and eventually leading up to the early Qing 清 (1644-1911) (in *Chapter Five*). Aside from

³⁹ Of the twelve performances that I have video, audio recordings on or notes of, I was present at eight – two at Puti Cloister, one each at Miaoxiang Monastery (Penang), Guoqing Monastery (Mount Tiantai), a monastery at Mount Jiuhua, Foguang Shan Monastery (Kaohsiung), Guangde Monastery (Tainan) and The University of Virginia. The other performances were recorded at Jile Monastery 極樂寺 (Penang), Zhulin Chan Monastery (Hong Kong), Taipei Foguang Shan Temple and Beizhuang Fuyuan 北莊福圓 (Taiwan).

⁴⁰ *Xiushu Yuqie jiyao shishi tanyi zhu* 修設瑜伽集要施食壇儀註, XZJ104.830-888.

⁴¹ Yanji, *Yankou shishi yaoji xiangzhu* (n.p. Fojiao chupan she yinhang, n.d.).

providing a detailed history of the development of Buddhist ghost-feeding rites, one of the main arguments that I forward in this chapter is the importance of not assuming that non-Chinese Buddhist texts were immediately accepted, read, circulated and/or performed by the Chinese once they were translated. This has been a common but unfounded assumption seems to underlie certain scholars' understanding of the development of ghost-feeding rites in China. Thus, in this chapter, I begin with a discussion of the translations of two different Indian recensions of the basic ghost-feeding *sūtra* by Śikṣānanda (652-710) and Amoghavajra (705-774) respectively in the earlier and later parts of the eighth century. Śikṣānanda translated the *Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on the Dhāraṇī-spell that Saved the Burning-Face Hungry Ghost* (*Foshuo jiu mianran egui tuoluoni shenzhou jing* 佛說救面燃餓鬼陀羅尼神咒經, henceforth *Burning-Face Sūtra*)⁴² between the years 700-704 while Amoghavajra translated the *Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on the Dhāraṇī that Rescued the Flaming-Mouth Hungry Ghost* (*Foshuo jiuba yankou egui tuoluoni jing* 佛說救拔燄口餓鬼陀羅尼經, henceforth *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*)⁴³ between the years 757-770. In this discussion, I will re-construct and re-imagine if and how these translations might have been received by their Chinese audience in light of what we know about Tang Chinese religious attitudes and practices.

Chapter Four also highlights the problems and issues surrounding the emergence of a liturgical and ritual tradition based on the translations of the basic ghost-feeding *sūtra* – i.e. the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*. I first identify the production of

⁴² T1314.21:465c-466b.

⁴³ T1313:21.464b-465b.

the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food and Water to All Hungry Ghosts* (*Shizhu egui yinshi ji shuifa* 施諸餓鬼飲食及水法, henceforth *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*)⁴⁴ as the earliest extant example of an attempt to turn the ritual elements contained in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* into a practice anchored on a written liturgy. This first ghost-feeding liturgy contains ritual and liturgical material that goes beyond the rite first described and prescribed in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*. Following this, I will also show in my analysis of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* the way in which the core elements of the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* are embedded into a more complex rite where the main motifs include not only that of food and feeding but also of conversion and transformation through the transmission of Buddhist precepts. The motif of conversion – once introduced or wedded with the ghost-feeding rite – will endure into present day ghost-feeding rites. After all, merely feeding ghosts and temporarily satisfying their hunger does not really address the problems that ghosts present and represent – the problems of alienation from and dis-connectedness with the known, the recognized, the controlled and thus the socialized.

In looking at yet another early ghost-feeding liturgy – *Sūtra of the Flaming-Mouth Liturgy, the Collected Essentials of the Yoga of the Dhāraṇī that Saved Ānanda* (*Yuqie jiyao anan tuoluoni yankou yigui jing* 瑜伽集要阿難陀羅尼焰口儀軌經, henceforth *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*)⁴⁵ – I examine the esotericizing trend that the ghost-feeding rites underwent in the late Tang period. I will show that the rite

⁴⁴ T1315:21.466c-468b.

⁴⁵ T1318:21.468c-472b.

represented by the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* fully situates itself within the larger rubric of “esoteric teachings” – a posturing that is merely suggested or hinted in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* but fully realized in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*. This section of my discussion will include extensive examples of the strategies (in the form of ritual-forms, liturgical patterns, taboos and restrictions) used by the author(s) of the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* to fully integrate its ghost-feeding rite into the larger body of esoteric rites and teachings popularized and associated with esoteric savants in East Asia such as Śubhākarasiṃha (637-735), Vajrabodhi (671?-741) and Amoghavajra (705-774).

Finally, I end *Chapter Four* with a discussion of an alternative ghost-feeding tradition that I will argue developed among monks of the Tiantai lineage, especially in the Song dynasty. Unlike ghost-feeding texts like the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* and the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*, the Song Tiantai ghost-feeding texts are much more conservative in their transformation of the ritual elements contained in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* into a ritual-program for feeding ghosts. These Song Tiantai ghost-feeding rites exhibit no self-awareness or self-promotion of their “esoteric” nature in the way that the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* (to some extant) and the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* do. Furthermore, unlike the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* and the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*, the ghost-feeding rites promoted by Song Tiantai clerics are relatively short and simple and meant for the use of both monastics and laity. As such, I will argue that Tiantai ghost-feeding rites were produced in the Song by Tiantai clerics such as Ciyun Zunshi 慈雲遵式 (964-1032)

separate from the esoteric-influenced ghost-feeding rites of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* and the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* which became influential in Japan (especially the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*) and later gave rise to the *Yuqie yankou* rite itself. I will also propose that we consider the Song Tiantai ghost-feeding rites as the prototype of the later *Shuili* and *Mengshan* ghost-feeding rites.

Chapter Five: Post-Song Ghost-Feeding Rites and the Production and Dissemination of Yuqie yankou in Late Imperial China is divided into two parts. In the first part, I will continue from the Song period where we left off in Chapter Four, and move into a period in Chinese history where several different Chinese and non-Chinese dynasties overlapped in their control of China. From one perspective, this period was a period of confusion, change and instability. After more than five hundred years of indigenous Chinese rule, China was once again threatened by the encroaching expansions of frontier tribes that eventually established dynastic rule over parts and in the case of the Yuan 元 (1280-1368) and Qing, the whole of China. It was also during this period that China absorbed a diversity of influences and interests brought along by these non-Chinese, frontier tribes into China proper. Particularly, my research on the development of ghost-feeding rites in Chinese Buddhism has identified various influences and sources introduced during this period, elements that eventually gave the *Yuqie yankou* rite the unique characteristics that it bears today.

In the first part of this chapter, I will treat the contributions and effects of the Liao 遼 (907-1124), Jin 金 (1115-1234), Xixia 西夏 (983-1227) and Yuan rule of China on the development of ghost-feeding rites in a chronological manner. Some of these

non-Chinese dynasties actually produced ghost-feeding liturgies that are still extant today. In other cases, these dynasties are also relevant to my research as important textual-sources, ideas and motifs that are later included in the *Yuqie yankou* appeared during these dynasties' control of China.

In the second part of *Chapter Five* I will finally focus on the period in which the *Yuqie yankou* rose to a prominence and popularity unseen before since the creation of the first Buddhist ghost-feeding rite in China during the Tang. Late Imperial China – i.e. the Ming and Qing dynasties – is arguably the most exciting period in terms of the development of the *Yuqie yankou* rite. It was during this period that the *Yuqie yankou* became identified as one of the most important rites among a large repertoire of Chinese Buddhist rites practiced in the Late Imperial period. Furthermore, the performance of this and other related rites also appears to be the most common context in which the monastic and lay segments of Chinese society came together. My discussion of the *Yuqie yankou* in this period will focus on the liturgies produced by Yunqi Zhuhong, Sanfeng Fazang 三峰法藏 (1573-1635), Juche Jixian 巨徹寂暹 (d.u.)⁴⁶ and Deji Ding'an. I will also attempt to identify and discuss the complexes and forces that led to Baohua Monastery's (*Baohua shan* 寶華山) successful standardization of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy, a standardization that has lasted to the present day. My discussion of the dissemination and standardization of Baohua Monastery's version of the *Yuqie yankou*

⁴⁶ Juche Jixian lived in the mid seventeenth century and edited a *Yuqie yankou* liturgy in 1675. In this liturgy, Zhiquan 智銓 (1609-1669), apparently prolific author, is listed as one of the "certifiers" of the edition. See, XZJ104.938b.

rite and liturgy will also include a section on the resistance and opposition against Baohua Monastery's ritual and liturgical hegemony.

CHAPTER ONE:

Theory and Practice, Impressions and Realities

There is, indeed, art and solemn earnestness in this ceremony, but it escapes into black magic and animistic exorcism.

-- Karl Ludvig Reichelt, *Truth and Tradition in Chinese Buddhism*

To date, the attention that the *Yuqie yankou* rite has received from modern scholars has been minimal. Of course, the very fact that this is a rite has probably rendered it almost “invisible” to modern scholars even though it is one of the more colorful and important Chinese Buddhist rites practiced today. Compared to the study of doctrine or history, the study of Buddhist ritual is particularly sparse. Living Buddhist traditions, when noticed at all, were often dismissed as “corrupt” or “superstitious,” quite uncharacteristic of the “rational” and “scientific” Buddha and Buddhism constructed by earlier “Orientalist” scholars. Asian Buddhists themselves actively participated in the presentation of Buddhism as a philosophy or doctrine free from what they and the Orientalist scholars considered corruptions and superstitions. In particular, Buddhists in Asia who lived under the rule of British colonials and/or amidst largely Protestant missionaries from the West began to creatively re-interpret and re-cast their religion so that it appeared to be a “philosophy” (hence “more rational, scientific”)

instead of a “religion” (with the negative connotations of superstition and primitivity).¹

While we have many volumes of studies of Chinese Buddhist doctrine and history and they have greatly contributed to our understanding and appreciation of Chinese Buddhism, it is rare to this day to find serious studies of Chinese Buddhist ritual and liturgy.²

In fact, the emphasis on doctrine is admittedly neither a modern nor a particularly “Western” phenomenon. In the Chinese Buddhist context, there has always been a section of the religious elite who privilege the study and mastery of doctrine over that of ritual praxis. This native, but highly elitist nonetheless, privileging of doctrine over ritual or practice has affected not only religious communities but modern scholars of religion as well. This conjunction of doctrinal focus found in both the traditional scholarly and modern international academics is further reinforced by the rhetoric of reform and rationality adopted by many modern Chinese Buddhist movements. When

¹ Studies of the effect of “protestantism” on Buddhism in Sri Lanka by Gananath Obeyesekere, Kitsiri Malagoda and Richard Gombrich are among the first to focus on the transformation of Buddhism in traditional Buddhist cultures due to their encounter with the West in the modern period. Also, since the publication of Edward Said’s thought-provoking *Orientalism*, Western Buddhist scholars have taken a much more reflective approach to the way they conduct their scholarship. For example, articles in *Curators of the Buddha* explore the complex dynamics and tensions between Western academic inquiries on Buddhism and the self-understanding of Buddhists in Asia. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Knopf Publishing Group, 1979) and *Curators of the Buddha*, ed. Donald Lopez (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995).

² Daniel B. Stevenson is one of the few Sino-Buddhologists who is actually researching and writing on Chinese Buddhist ritual and liturgical traditions. For example, see his translation of the classic Tiantai ritual text, *Mo-ho chih kuan* in Neal Donner and Daniel B. Stevenson, *The Great Calming and Contemplation: A Study and Annotated Translation of the First Chapter of Chih-i’s Mo-ho chih-kuan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993) and his discussion of the 10th century Tiantai liturgist Zunshi in his article “Protocols of Power: T’zu-yun Tsun-shih (964-1023) and T’ien-t’ai Lay Buddhist Ritual in the Sung” in Peter N. Gregory and Daniel A. Getz, Jr., ed., *Buddhism in the Sung* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 340-408. Kuo Li-ying’s *Confession et contrition dans le bouddhisme chinois du Ve au Xe siècle* (Paris: École Française d’Extrême Orient), 1994 is another valuable contribution to the emerging focus on Chinese Buddhist ritual and liturgy. There is also a study of the use of the Chinese Buddhist breviary published in 1994. See, Marcus Günzel, *Die Morgen und Abendliturgie der chinesischen Buddhisten* (Göttingen: Seminar für Indologie und Buddhismuskunde, 1994). At a conference at Washington and Lee University, Lexington VA, in April 2000, Frank L. Reynolds directed my attention to yet another study on the Chinese Buddhist breviary – a dissertation from the Department of Music at the University of Chicago. See, Pi-yen Chen, “Morning and Evening Service: the Practice of Ritual, Music, and Doctrine in the Chinese Buddhist Monastic Community.”

we actually look at what it is that identifies religious people as *religious*, however, ritual performance is undeniably one of the most obvious indicators of *being* religious. Along with a concern for orthodoxy, the quest for orthopraxy has always occupied the time and energy of both the religious elite and religious communities throughout history. What people did as religious practice cannot be artificially separated from what people believed or thought. Neither can we continue to see action/ritual as secondary to the acting out of thought/myth. As the Christian theologian, Theodore W. Jennings Jr. writes,

...ritual forms are also basic to theological reflection. This is especially the case if one acknowledges the unity of theology and ethics (as in the theology of Karl Barth) or of theory and praxis (as in liberation theology). Ritual is above all a pattern of action, and the more theology concerns itself with action (praxis, ethics) the more carefully it will have to attend to the patterns of action displayed in ritual.³

Due to our own historically constructed blindfolds, we have only very recently begun to appreciate the importance of attempting to accurately discern the role of ritual practice in the history of religions. Ronald L. Grimes, who spearheaded the recent ritual studies movement, notes that although ritual and ritual-exegesis have always been practiced, studied and reflected on by those who practice ritual – from the third century B.C.E. Confucian philosopher Xunzi to emerging anthropologists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – only in the mid-1970's did we witness the “emergence of an interdisciplinary discussion of ritual that no longer confined it to either participating ritualists or observing anthropologists.”⁴

³ Theodore W. Jennings Jr., “On Ritual Knowledge,” *Journal of Religion* 62, no. 2 (1982): 111.

⁴ Ronald L. Grimes, “Introduction” in *Readings in Ritual Studies*, ed. Ronald L. Grimes (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1996), xiv.

In her “Introduction” to *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, Catherine Bell notes that there is now an increasing number of anthropologists, sociologists, historians of religion, sociobiologists, philosophers and intellectual historians who have turned to ritual as a “window on the cultural dynamics by which people make and remake their worlds.”⁵ Although interest in ritual has increased tremendously in recent years – leading to the acceptance of ritual studies as a valid category of academic discourse – the study of ritual within the field of Buddhist Studies is still relatively new and uncharted. As Buddhism was and continues to be a major force in the daily lives of a significant population of the world, I see my dissertation as an endeavor to open yet another window into the lives of Chinese Buddhists, both past and present. Much of earlier modern studies on ritual have been anthropological in nature that while important and insightful has unfortunately neglected the study of ritual as a historical phenomenon. Tracing how specific rituals developed dynamically over time in conjunction with communal and intellectual forms gives us a depth in understanding that purely synchronic inquiries cannot yield. Likewise, I believe that an investigation of the *Yuqie yankou* rite that treats not only its historical roots and branches but also pays attention to its performed dimension can greatly expand our understanding and appreciation of ritual.

Literature Review: Contemporary Scholarly Treatments of the Yuqie yankou Rite

In spite of the popularity of the *Yuqie yankou*, not much has been written about it in either Western or Asian languages. Thus far, only three journal articles on the rite have been published in English with another handful published in Japanese and more recently

⁵ Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3.

Chinese. In this section, I will give a summary of each of these articles. Aside from providing my readers a better sense of what has been done thus far, I will also highlight some problems and issues that have emerged from my reading of these previous works and how I will attempt to address and redress these issues in my dissertation.

To date, Charles D. Orzech has probably published the most on the *Yuqie yankou* and his articles have gone a long way in alerting the academic community to this topic. Aside from two journal articles (that I will be discussing in this chapter), Orzech has also translated the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* in an edited volume on Chinese religions.⁶ In “Seeing Chen-yen Buddhism: Traditional Scholarship and the Vajrayāna in China,” the earliest of the three English-language articles, Orzech offers an analysis of one of the earliest extant liturgies of the *Yuqie yankou* rite in the Chinese Buddhist canon today. However, this article is not exclusively focused on the *Yuqie yankou* rite, and is more an attempt “to begin the process of the reclamation of the Chen-yen tradition as a distinctively Chinese form of Vajrayāna.”⁷ In this article, Orzech points out that the study of “esoteric Buddhism” in Chinese Buddhism has been unfortunately and unfairly neglected by modern scholars due to what Orzech refers to as the “twin blinders of Shingon and Neo-Confucian orthodoxy” and “late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Western views of China, in which Confucianism represented

⁶ Charles D. Orzech, “Saving the Burning-Mouth Hungry Ghost” in *Religions of China in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 278-283. A fourth article on the *Yuqie yankou* rite has been very recently published by Charles Orzech in a volume on Daoist identity. See, Charles D. Orzech, “Fang Yankou and Pudu, Translation, Metaphor, and Religious Identity” in *Daoist Identity: History, Lineage and Ritual*, ed. Livia Kohn and Harold D. Roth (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 213-310. Although Professor Orzech has kindly sent me a copy of the article before it was published, I unfortunately have not included this article under my literature review.

⁷ Charles D. Orzech, “Seeing Chen-yen Buddhism: Traditional Scholarship and the Vajrayāna in China,” *History of Religions* 29, (1989): 87-114.

enlightened ethical rationalism and Buddhism and Taoism represented the magical and superstitious religion of the masses.”⁸ Consequently, in an effort to “reclaim” the history, significance and contributions of esoteric Buddhism in China, Orzech found it necessary to first “examine some of the biases which have rendered Chen-yen invisible” and to offer his view of “Vajrayāna cosmology and practice.” To “illustrate common misperceptions about Chen-yen and to establish the true nature and persistence of the tradition,” Orzech offers the *Yuqie yankou* rite and “the unusual ninefold Vajradhātu mandala” as “two of the most prominent facets of Vajrayāna in China.”⁹

Since I am primarily interested in Orzech’s treatment of the *Yuqie yankou* rite, I will restrict my observations and comments to his treatment of this particular rite. According to Orzech, although “the rites for hungry ghosts constitute the single most visible manifestation of the Vajrayāna in China,” it has hardly been given any serious attention by contemporary scholars. Perhaps because the Ghost Festival is the most well-known and well-studied ghost-related subject in Sinology, in this article, Orzech discusses the *Yuqie yankou* in the context of the Ghost Festival. In doing so, Orzech might have obscured rather than illuminate the history and role of the rite in the history of Chinese religions. Although the *Yuqie yankou* can be performed during this festival (as can be seen in the case of Puti Cloister) and is in fact a favorite rite during the month-long festival, I will argue that it is important that we approach this rite as a free-standing rite that has a role and significance that is not limited to the Ghost Festival. In contrast to Orzech, my dissertation will show that the *Yuqie yankou* can be and is

⁸ Ibid., 94.

⁹ Ibid., 88.

actually performed at any time of the year for “inauspicious” occasions such as funerals and post-funerary memorials as well as “auspicious” occasions such as merit-making assemblies (*gongde hui* 功德會) and temple or monastery dedications. Hence, to limit our study of the *Yuqie yankou* rite to the Ghost Festival or to a funerary context is to unnecessarily privilege one context of this rite at the expense of the others in which it is also performed.

Furthermore, in trying to emphasize the importance of rites for hungry ghosts such as the *Yuqie yankou* in China, Orzech might have overstated or at least misplaced the importance of the *Yuqie yankou*. Having situated this rite in the context of the Ghost Festival, Orzech writes: “The folk celebration at whose heart is the Vajrayāna rite for the salvation of suffering beings is a prominent and colorful part of traditional Chinese life.”¹⁰ Although the *Yuqie yankou* rite was and is indeed “prominent and colorful,” it would be a stretch to claim that it is “at the heart” of “the folk celebration” of the Ghost Festival – be it in medieval China, Late Imperial China or even today. Although it is undeniable that the *Yuqie yankou* and/or other esoteric rites can often be found in the celebrations of the Ghost Festival, these rites did not form the exclusive body of rites sitting at the core of the Ghost Festival. The *Yuqie yankou*, as we will see, was only one among a rich ritual repertoire that the ritual clientele could choose from. Furthermore, although the *Yuqie yankou* became a much valorized rite, especially starting from the Ming period, its popularity existed in tension with its highly specialized nature thus

¹⁰ Ibid., 102.

complicating the claim that it formed “the heart” of the “folk celebration” of the Ghost Festival.

Furthermore, as Stephen Teiser has exhaustively demonstrated in *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China*, the Ghost Festival was essentially built on a different set of textual, mythical and cultural foundations from the *Yuqie yankou*. Instead of providing evidence of the use and importance of esoteric ghost-feeding rites such as the *Yuqie yankou* to the Ghost Festival “from the mid-T’ang period onward,” Orzech faults Teiser for not dealing “with the central ritual texts of the Ghost Festival from the mid-T’ang period onward.”¹¹ How is it that Orzech is so convinced that the *Yuqie yankou* or its prototypes were the “central ritual texts of the Ghost Festival”? The answer to this question will explain one of the issues that I have with Orzech’s treatment of the history and development of Chinese Buddhist ghost-feeding rites. I believe that the problem lies in the fact that Orzech builds his argument based on the assumption that a text must surely have been used or turned into a liturgy and performed as a rite in China simply because it was translated into Chinese. In fact, the results of my research which I will present in *Chapter Four* clearly show that evidence on the receptivity of ghost-feeding texts when they were first translated in the Tang is surprisingly scant, almost non-existent. *Chapter Four* will further demonstrate that traces of ghost-feeding rites and specifically rites such as the *Yuqie yankou* did not begin to turn up in historical sources until the late Tang at the earliest. Furthermore, as I will demonstrate in *Chapter Four* and *Chapter Five*, the *Yuqie yankou* rite as we know it today only began to assume

¹¹ Ibid.

its core-structure in the Yuan dynasty. Thus, contrary to Orzech's optimistic opinion, the significance of the ghost-feeding rites was minimal as a practically performed system for most of the Tang period even if a textual tradition in translation existed for centuries before then; hence Teiser's silence on this rite.

Aside from assuming a prominence and importance of ghost-feeding rites as soon as such texts were translated into Chinese in the Tang, Orzech suggests that, "the rites for the salvation of hungry ghosts which are performed to this day are classic Vajrayāna rites."¹² According to this article, what qualifies as "Vajrayāna" or what is distinctive about "Vajrayāna" is two-fold. Firstly, Vajrayāna is a system that aims at the attainment of a "dual goal" – the "dual goal" of simultaneously attaining the "supramundane goal of Enlightenment" and the "mundane goal" of worldly attainments such as the ability to "help the state avoid disasters, to keep the stars on their regular courses, and to insure that the wind and rain are timely."¹³ This "dual goal" is in turn related to the doctrine of "Two Truths" and the Mahāyāna understanding of the identity of samsara and nirvana. Secondly, "an examination of Vajrayāna ritual... usually reveals marked recursiveness – the adept is first saved, then initiates others, who then save and ritually initiate yet others – in a process that wraps around itself in a 'strange loop.'"¹⁴ It is here where Orzech seems to have strayed into the realm of creative speculation. As we will see below, he

¹² Ibid., 104.

¹³ Ibid., 97.

¹⁴ Ibid., 99.

will use this theory of the “recursive” nature of Vajrayāna rituals to try to unpack the *Yuqie yankou* rite.¹⁵

The liturgy that Orzech outlines and interprets in his first article on the *Yuqie yankou* is the *Food-Bestowal Rite of the Collected-Essentials of Yoga of Flaming-Mouth* (*Yuqie jiyao yankou shishi yi* 瑜伽集要餤口施食儀, henceforth *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*)¹⁶ – a text probably composed in the Yuan dynasty but based in part on older material found in other related ritual texts such as the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* and the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*.¹⁷ In the context of esoteric Buddhism, what distinguishes this *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* from earlier related liturgical-texts such as the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* and the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* is the presence of a meditation aimed at self-identification with an enlightened being (in this case, with Guanyin).¹⁸ Although Orzech gives a brief summary of this meditation, he appears to have taken for granted this extremely important development in the history of the *Yuqie yankou* rite. All other rites inspired by the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* prior to the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* do not have any elements of meditation or ritual practices involving

¹⁵ Orzech’s fascination with the “recursive nature” of esoteric Buddhism is very evident in his, *Politics and Transcendent Wisdom, The Scripture for Humane Kings in the Creation of Chinese Buddhism*, which is permeated with this theory. John McRae has, however, pointed out the limits of such a theory in our attempts to gain a better understanding of Chinese Buddhism. See, John McRae’s review of *Politics and Transcendent Wisdom* in *Journal of Chinese Religions* 27, no. 1, (1999): 113-122.

¹⁶ T1320:21.473b-484a.

¹⁷ Osabe dates the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* anywhere from late Tang to Ming. See Osabe, *Tōdai mikkyōshi zakki*, 154-155. Zhou Shujia argues that the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* originated in the Yuan. See, Zhou Shujia, “Yankou” in *Zhongguo fojiao* (Shanghai: Dongfang zhupan zhongxin, 1980), 2:397-399.

¹⁸ More commonly known as “deity yoga.”

self-identification with an enlightened being.¹⁹ This Yuan-period *Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* is thus significant since this development marks a significant esoterization milestone in the history of ghost-feeding rites. Orzech failure to address the significance of this development is probably due to his theory of the “recursive” nature of *all* Vajrayāna rites where self-identification with deities is apparently a given. He must have assumed that the self-identification in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* has always been present in all earlier ghost-feeding liturgies. In consequence, even when the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* is the first instance of the inclusion of self-identification with a deity in a ghost-feeding rite, Orzech’s own blinders ironically led to his inability to “see Chen-yen” in his article “Seeing Chen-yen Buddhism.”

Orzech’s first article on the *Yuqie yankou* is further complicated by a certain understanding of “Tantric” or esoteric Buddhism for the type of esoteric material that he is treating. Equating the term “ambrosia” or “sweet dew” with “*bodhicitta*” is an example of how Orzech’s pre-conceptions of esoteric Buddhism in China further obscure rather than illuminate his discussion of the complex history and significance of esoteric Buddhism in China. Taking this a step further, in a footnote for *amṛta*, Orzech writes:

Like the notion of *siddhi*, “sweet dew” or *bodhicitta* is at once the “idea of enlightenment” (its usual English translation) and the tantric semen. Its abstract and concrete meanings are perhaps best encompassed by the translation ‘essence of enlightenment’”

Orzech’s gloss on *amṛta* or *ganlu* in the context of the *Yuqie yankou* rite is consonant with the central argument of his article – that the goal of esoteric Buddhism is the

¹⁹ Richard Payne also noted that the *Shingon segaki* rites similarly lack this element of self-identification with deities. See, Richard K. Payne, “Shingon Services for the Dead” in *Religions of Japan in Practice*, ed. George J. Tanabe, Jr., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 159-165.

simultaneous attainment of both worldly and world-transcending attainments (and thus also *ganlu* can both be semen and the mind that aspires for enlightenment), what Orzech refers to as the “interlocking pursuit of two kinds of *siddhi*.”²⁰ Although ambrosia or *amṛta* is associated in other Tantric texts with *bodhicitta* or the “mind of enlightenment,” I have yet to uncover any evidence in the *Yuqie yankou* ritual-tradition that makes this identification. A further example of how Orzech’s theories on esoteric Buddhism in China ultimately caused him to misread the text and tradition is in the section where Orzech once again overlays his theory of the “recursiveness” and “strange-loop” on the *Yuqie yankou* rite presented in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*. In an instance of creative reading of the liturgy, Orzech reports that in a particular section, the assembly of beings that has been invited to the rite performs the *mudrās* and intones the spells to feed other hungry ghosts and beings. He writes:

First the adept and then the suffering beings are purged of their *kleśa*, after which they achieve the arousal of *bodhi*, the initiation into the *mandala*, and enlightenment. The two kinds of *siddhi* and their attainment are intertwined, a fact underscored by the once-suffering beings, who, acting as bodhisattvas, proceed to lead other beings through the rite. The universe becomes filled with the suffering who become saviors who make offerings to those who saved them, and so on.²¹

As a result, rather than achieving the goal of “seeing Chen-yen Buddhism” beyond the “twin blinders of Shingon and Neo-Confucianism,” Orzech ends up replacing the twin blinders with new blinders.

²⁰ Ibid., 109.

²¹ Ibid.

Furthermore, unlike Orzech, I do not find the use of the rubric “Vajrayāna” or “Tantric” to be particularly useful in trying to understand the *Yuqie yankou*. In most cases, the use of these terms does more to obscure and confuse than to illuminate and clarify. Furthermore, as Robert Sharf has argued recently, the whole idea of the existence of an “Esoteric Buddhism” in China is highly problematic.²² In many ways, my research will further add to Sharf’s argument. Instead of “Vajrayāna” or “Tantric,” the rubrics or categories that concerned those who wrote and commented on the *Yuqie yankou* are rubrics such as “exoteric” and “esoteric.” I will show how the *Yuqie yankou* material negotiates issues of “exoteric” and “esoteric” over time and how the rite eventually identified itself as the “simultaneous practice of the exoteric-esoteric” (*xianmi shuangxiu* 顯密雙修).

The second article by Orzech on the *Yuqie yankou* rite appeared in 1994 in *The Esoteric Buddhist Tradition*, a volume of articles edited by Henrik H. Sorensen.²³ In “Esoteric Buddhism and the Shishi in China,” Orzech surveys the history of Chinese Buddhist ghost-feeding rites in China by starting with the familiar story of Ānanda’s encounter with the “Burning-mouth *preta*-king” as presented in the *Flaming-Mouth/Burning-Face Sūtra*. Just as he presented the ritual-sequence of the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* in his earlier article, in this one he provides an outline of the ritual-sequence found in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* – a late-Tang ghost-feeding liturgical text that served as one of the basic sources for later

²² See Robert Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), 263-278.

²³ Charles D. Orzech, “Esoteric Buddhism and *Shishi* in China” in *The Esoteric Buddhist Tradition*, ed. Henrik H. Sorensen (Copenhagen: The Seminar for Buddhist Studies, 1994), 51-72.

ghost-feeding liturgical texts. Orzech's summary is very helpful in identifying the main ritual-acts recommended by the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*, presenting the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* as consisting of eight parts – the recitation of a spell for the assembling of all ghosts, a spell for opening the hells and throats of the hungry ghosts, a *dhāraṇī* to empower the offerings (the *dhāraṇī* first given in the *Flaming-Mouth/Burning-Face Sūtra*), the “Dharma of Ambrosia Spell,” “Vairocana’s One-syllable Water-wheel Spell,” spells of the Five Tathāgatas, “Bodhisattva-discipline Spell” and finally “Dismissal Spell.”²⁴

After sketching out this summary, Orzech notes that the form of this rite seems “highly abbreviated” and offers the speculation that the gaps were probably filled by oral instruction. Based on his understanding that “the central element in Vajrayāna ritual is identification, the generation of the adept in the body of the divinity,”²⁵ Orzech points out that in fact, the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* lacks the element of “identification,” a fact that he appeared to have overlooked in his earlier article.

In this article, Orzech re-visits the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*, of which he had given a summary in his earlier article. Aside from giving a much more detailed list of the ritual-acts presented in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*, Orzech also gives a few historical details related to the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*. He

²⁴ Ibid., 54-55.

²⁵ Ibid., 55. Note Richard Payne’s remarks on the lack of identification in *Shingon segaki* rites in his introduction to the *segaki* text he translated: “An examination of An Abbreviated Ritual for Feeding the Hungry Ghosts..., reveals that there is no identification between the practitioner and some chief deity. This is particularly surprising since ritual identification, that is, the practitioner’s visualization of him/herself as identical with the deity evoked (*kaji*), is the defining characteristic of Esoteric Buddhist rituals.” Payne goes on to note, erroneously, that the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*, the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* and the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*, all lack this element of ritual identification with a chief deity. Although he is correct in his characterization of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* and the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*, as Orzech’s article shows, the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* does have a practice of ritual identification (with Guanyin) embedded in it. See, Payne, 161.

points out that although the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* has been attributed to Amoghavajra, it was probably a much later work that appeared only in the Yuan.²⁶ He discusses several other possible scenarios surrounding the composition of the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* in the Yuan but also points out the problems with these theories. Among the scenarios he suggests is the arrival of new Vajrayāna missionaries at the Song court and “monks not part of the Vajrayāna transmission” developing the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* by “consulting and adapting widely available Vajrayāna textual models.”²⁷ Orzech also alerts us to an important direction often overlooked or ignored by many – Daoism. He suggests that “there may have been significant influence from Daoist rites for suffering souls.”²⁸ Indeed, as I will show in this dissertation, it is crucial to consider the *Yuqie yankou* rite within the larger context of Chinese religion and as such the Daoist context cannot be dismissed or ignored.

The last section of Orzech’s “Esoteric Buddhism and the Shishi in China” is focused on the later *Yuqie yankou* texts: texts composed in the Ming and Qing periods. He gives a brief but helpful chronology of the different *Yuqie yankou* texts that appeared in the Ming down to the Qing – all of which “have their core in the Yuan dynasty *Shishi yi*” (the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*).²⁹ Orzech’s discussion of the textual history of the different *Yuqie yankou* texts sets the context for his discussion of an issue raised in the beginning of the last section of his article. While arguing that there is

²⁶ Orzech reports Zhou Shujia’s theory that the transcribing of certain spells in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* suggests that it was produced under the direct influence of Tibetan Tantrism of the type favored by the Yuan court.

²⁷ Ibid., 56-57.

²⁸ Ibid., 57.

²⁹ Ibid., 62-63.

“strong evidence” that the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* “represents an oral tradition,” rather than the product of textual research by innovating monastics in the Yuan, Orzech characterizes the Ming and Qing *Yuqie yankou* texts as texts produced “in the absence of oral transmission.” He writes,

I think it can be demonstrated that while the *Shishi yi* may well be based on some sort of oral tradition, later manuals are founded solely on knowledge which was, at best, extracted through careful reading of esoteric texts preserved in the Buddhist canon. In other words, from the Ming dynasty onwards, the *shishi* rites were re-invented from textual models and traditions of monastic practice.³⁰

To advance his argument, Orzech directs our attention to Yunqi Zhuhong’s *Yuqie yankou* text – *Food-Bestowal Altar-Rite of the Practice of the Collected-Essentials of Yoga* (*Xiuxi yuqie jiyao shishi tanyi* 修習瑜伽集要施食壇儀), as it became the authoritative text for later versions of the *Yuqie yankou* texts. According to Orzech’s assessment, “Zhuhong does not significantly modify the order of the Yuan ritual text.”³¹ Even though Orzech admits that Zhuhong’s version of the rite includes specific details such as ritual procedure, the execution of different *mudrās* and visualizations not present in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*, Orzech considers “none of these” as sufficient “evidence for an oral transmission.”³² Instead, it appears to Orzech that Zhuhong was a “very learned and astute reader of esoteric scriptures and to have used his knowledge to deduce a reasonable set of procedures for his students.”³³ Orzech quotes from Zhuhong’s “Preface” to his version of the *Yuqie yankou* rite to show that even

³⁰ Ibid., 61.

³¹ Ibid., 63.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

Zhuhong himself attributed his version of the text to a textual rather than oral lineage.

In short, Orzech concludes that,

From the Ming onward it is clear that the oral tradition of the *shishi* type of ritual found in Indian and Tibetan Vajrayāna had been lost and replaced by indigenous reworkings of Tang and Yuan rites based on textual comparison. Buddhist monks read the ritual texts for performing the *shishi* and supplemented them as best they could with materials and understanding gleaned from other esoteric texts preserved in the canon, and with liturgical elaborations garnered from ritual traditions of particular monastic institutions.³⁴

The subtext to Orzech's discussion of the lack of "oral transmission" in the Ming and Qing period *Yuqie yankou* texts is a subtle suggestion of the lack of authenticity and continuity in these traditions, as "oral transmission" is often understood as one of the hallmarks of esoteric or Tantric/Vajrayāna Buddhism.

Another article on the *Yuqie yankou* rite was written by Shih Heng-ching and appeared in the Spring 1990 volume of the journal, *Dialogue & Alliance*.³⁵ Entitled "The *Yu-chia Yen-k'ou* Ritual in the Chinese Buddhist Tradition," it gives a brief introduction to the *Yuqie yankou* rite followed by a section on "The Origin of *Yu-chia Yen-k'ou*" and a third and longest section focused on a description of the *Yuqie yankou* rite itself. Taking her cue from the chapter on "Benefiting Sentient Beings" in *Authentic Lineage of the Buddhism* (*Shimen zhengtong* 釋門正統) – a thirteenth century text composed by the Tiantai scholar Zongjian 宗鑑 (fl. 1237) based on much older

³⁴ Ibid., 65.

³⁵ Shih Heng-ching, "The *Yu-chia Yen-k'ou* in the Chinese Buddhist Tradition," *Dialogue & Alliance* 4, no. 1 (1990), 105-117. *Dialogue & Alliance* is published by "The Inter-Religious Federation for World Peace," which is affiliated with Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church.

material³⁶ – Heng-ching traces the origins of the *Yuqie yankou* rite and other practices centered on “feeding hungry ghosts” (*shi egui* 施餓鬼) to four main scriptural sources.³⁷

These sources in turn gave rise to three types of rites for the “ritual feeding and delivering hungry ghosts.” Heng-ching identifies them as the annual festival known as the *Yulanpen* (盂蘭盆), the *Shuilu* that can be performed any time and finally the *Yuqie yankou* itself.³⁸ It should be pointed out that the three rites given by Heng-ching are not exhaustive. Apart from these three, there is a fourth tradition which is the *Mengshan* rite which became included in the daily ritual-program of many Chinese Buddhist monasteries since the late Ming. Furthermore, there are several other short rites also aimed at “feeding hungry ghosts.”³⁹

Following that brief and traditional account of the origins of the *Yuqie yankou* rite, Heng-ching proceeds to describe the ritual sequence involved in the rite. This description actually forms the main body of this article. Heng-ching gives a straight run-through of the rite, translating and quoting sections from the liturgical-text that she considered important and illuminating. She lists the different spells and *mudrās* that are used in this rite and provides her readers with illustrations of the *mudrās*; illustrations that are usually included in *Yuqie yankou* liturgical-texts. While giving a fairly accurate

³⁶ Teiser notes that Zongjian’s *Shimen zhengtong* is based on an earlier work with a similar title but authored by Wu Keqi (1142-1214). See, Stephen Teiser, *The Scripture of the Ten Kings* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 63, fn. 2.

³⁷ The four sources are: *Nirvāṇa sūtra* (*Niepan jing* 涅槃經, T374 and T375), *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*, *Vinaya* and *Yulanpen jing* (*Yulanpen jing* 盂蘭盆經).

³⁸ In the article, Heng-ching did not note that although *Shimen zhengtong* credits the origin of the *Shuilu* to Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty, this was a legend born of pious-fiction rather than a historical fact. See Dan Stevenson’s “Text, Image, and Transformation in the History of the *Shuilu*, the Buddhist Rite for Deliverance of Creatures of water and Land,” in *Cultural Intersections in Later Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), 30-70.

³⁹ The liturgical prompt-text known as *Eulogy Book of the Chan School* (*Chanmeng zanben* 禪門讚本) contains several of these rites.

account of the ritual sequence of the rite, Heng-ching provides minimal commentary. For example, the article fails to note the extremely important identification of the celebrant with Guanyin throughout the rite. However, considering the intended readers of Heng-ching's article – an article published in a journal with a stated goal of the promotion of “dialogue and alliance” among people of different religious, cultural and national backgrounds – one should perhaps be surprised that the article was even published in that particular journal given the amount of ritual details the article provided.

Another important element in the *Yuqie yankou* not highlighted in this or any of the articles I have reviewed so far is the musical aspects of this rite. I will demonstrate in *Chapter Two* and *Chapter Three* that one of the most appealing features of the *Yuqie yankou* rite is the musical and operatic quality so apparent in the rite. As I will argue in *Chapter Five*, the transformation of early ghost-feeding rites that are more monastic and individualistic in structure, content and execution into the present public, operatic and communal *Yuqie yankou* rite is in fact one of the main turning points in the history of the *Yuqie yankou* rite. In *Chapter Two*, we will see how the performers of this rite utilize a wide range of deliverance styles – chanting, singing, silent recitation, lamenting – along with an ensemble of percussive instruments such as the wooden-fish, hand-chime, cymbals, great-drum, hand-bells and gongs to transform the liturgy into rite, the book into performance.

Aside from these three articles in English, there is a small collection of writings on the *Yuqie yankou* rite in Japanese and Chinese. One of the earliest modern Japanese treatments on this subject is to be found in the works of Yoshioka Yoshitoyo 吉岡義豊.

In his *Dōkyō to Bukkyō* 道教と仏教 (*Daoism and Buddhism*) first published in 1959, Yoshioka devotes two chapters to the subject of ghost-feeding rites in China.⁴⁰ The first chapter consists of three parts. The first part discusses the issue of the related but distinct subjects of the Zhongyuan Festival (*Zhongyuan jie* 中元節), the Yulanpen Festival and what Yoshioka refers to as “feeding hungry-ghosts” (*segaki* 施餓鬼) rites. Much of the material and issues covered by Yoshioka in this part of the chapter have since been dealt with in depth by Teiser in his *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China*.⁴¹ The second part consists of passages from two distinctive texts that Yoshioka considers representative of the Chinese conception of “earth-prisons” since this belief underlies the Chinese (both Buddhist and Daoist) understanding and practice of ghost-feeding rites.⁴² Both are fairly late narrative texts that among other things demonstrate the highly bureaucratic nature of the Chinese conception of the afterworld on the one hand and the salvific powers of Daoist and Buddhist cultic practices respectively in aiding in escaping the tortures of the earth-prisons.⁴³ My analysis of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy in *Chapter Three* will further provide evidence that confirms but also further nuance Yoshioka’s findings.

In the third part of this chapter, Yoshioka presents a historical survey of “feeding hungry ghosts thought” in both Buddhism and Daoism from the first century C.E. down to the Ming dynasty. According to Yoshioka, although both the Yulanpen Festival and

⁴⁰ Yoshioka Yoshitoyo, *Dōkyō to Bukkyō*, vol. 1, (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankokai, 1976), 369-432.

⁴¹ Stephen Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

⁴² The two texts he quotes from are the Daoist *Taishang jiuzhen miaojie jinlu duming bazui miao jing* (太上九真妙界金籙度命拔罪妙經) and the Buddhist *Yinguo lu tushuo* (因果錄圖說).

⁴³ Yoshioka, 377-391.

ghost-feeding rites have different origins and goals, they have become very closely associated. Yoshioka also identifies several little-known *sūtras* in which he found references to the idea of ghost-feeding.⁴⁴ According to Yoshioka, the translation of *Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on Yulanpen* (*Foshuo yulanpen jing* 佛說盂蘭盆經)⁴⁵ by Zhu Fahu 竺法護 (ca. 265-313) started the process of cross-fertilization between the lore and cultic practices of the indigenous Chinese Zhongyuan Festival and the then newly imported Indian Yulanpen Festival.⁴⁶ Later, the practice of ghost-feeding was further grafted on to this newly evolving multifaceted and multivalent Zhongyuan/Yulanpen Festival. Yoshioka also considers the liturgical projects of Lu Xiuqing 陸修靜 (406-477) to be especially relevant to the development of ghost-feeding rites in Daoism.⁴⁷

Yoshioka next discusses an oft-repeated legend that ties Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty with ghost-feeding rites. In particular, he discusses the problems surrounding the popular attribution of previously mentioned *Precious Repentance of Emperor Liang* to the emperor – a penance-rite that the emperor supposedly commissioned to relieve the sufferings of the spirit of his deceased empress. After a relatively detailed analysis of

⁴⁴ Among the texts Yoshioka identifies are *Sūtra on Distinguishing (Phenomena) Produced by Good and Evil* (*Fenbie shan'e suoqi jing* 分別善惡所起經, T729), *Sūtra on the Five Good Retributions Obtained from Bestowing Food* (*Shishi huo wu fubao jing* 施食獲五福報經, T132a), *Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on Miscellaneous Store* (*Foshuo zazang jing* 佛說雜藏經, T745), *Sūtra on the Retribution of Hungry Ghosts* (*Egui baoying jing* 餓鬼報應經, T746) and *Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on Protecting Purity* (*Foshuo hujing jing* 佛說護淨經, T747).

⁴⁵ T685.

⁴⁶ See Teiser's *The Ghost Festival* for an in depth study of the origins of the Yulanpen Festival in China. Although not central to his thesis, one of the issues discussed in the beginning of the study is the geographical/cultural origins of "translated" *sūtras* bearing the words "Yulanpen" in their titles. Although the "translation" or composition of T685 and its dating remains a point of debate, Teiser points out that the earliest reference to the celebration of the Yulanpen Festival is in the year 561 C.E. See Teiser, 48.

⁴⁷ Yoshioka, 391. In particular, Yoshioka considers Lu's *Jiuyou zhaiyi* (九幽齋儀), *Jiekao zhaiyi* (解考齋儀), *Tutan zhaiyi* (塗炭齋儀) and *Sanyuan zhaiyi* (三元齋儀) as especially significant to the Daoist development of ghost-feeding rites..

the contents of the *Precious Repentance of Emperor Liang* and a Daoist penance-rite known as the *Taishang cibe daochang xiaozai jiuyou chan* (太上慈悲道場消災九幽懺)⁴⁸, Yoshioka returns to his historical survey by turning his attention to the mid-Tang period. According to Yoshioka, it was during this period that the “feeding the hungry ghosts rituals of the esoteric teachings” were introduced to the Chinese through the translations of texts by Śikṣānanda (652-710) and Amoghavajra. Yoshioka, like many of his Japanese fellow scholars, believes that although the “esoteric teachings” were at one time established as an independent tradition in China, this independent entity had effectively disappeared by the end of Tang. However, Yoshioka believed that rather than merely disappearing, the “esoteric teachings” were absorbed into the other forms of Buddhism in China so that post-Tang Chinese Buddhism is characterized by the intermingling of Chan, Pure Land and esoteric teachings and practices.⁴⁹

To illustrate his point, Yoshioka lists nine of the hundred and eight practices that Yongming Yanshou 永明延壽 (904-975) performed on a daily basis:⁵⁰ reciting the name of Dizang for the liberation of beings from the three lower paths of rebirth, reciting the name of the seven Buddhas (from the ghost-feeding rites), bestowing food and drink to all ghosts and spirits inhabiting water, land and air, transmitting the Three Refuges to the “nine types of ghosts and spirits,” bestowing the Samaya-precepts to all ghosts and spirits and officials of the nether world, and reciting the “Breaking the Earth-prisons

⁴⁸ Yoshioka, 392-99.

⁴⁹ Yoshioka, 400 and 369.

⁵⁰ This list is found in *Record of the Personal Practices of the Meditation Master Zhijue* (*Zhijue chanshi zixing lu* 智覺禪師自行錄) which purportedly records Yanshou’s “daily practices.”

Spell.”⁵¹ As I will demonstrate in *Chapter Three*, all these ritual-practices are in fact different elements in the *Yuqie yankou* rite. For evidence of the absorption of “esoteric teachings” by Chinese Buddhist lineages the Song period, Yoshioka mentions Ciyun Zunshi 慈雲遵式 (964-1032) and Zongxiao 宗曉 (ca. 1204) since these two Buddhist clerics authored texts devoted to the ghost-feeding rites.⁵² On the Daoist side, Yoshioka notes that the voluminous liturgical-text, *Wushang huanglu dazhai licheng yi* (無上黃籙大齋立成儀) in fifty-seven fascicles contains material focused on bestowing food to hungry ghosts. Finally, Yoshioka discusses Ming period Daoist ghost-feeding liturgical texts and provides a listing of the contents of a Ming period Daoist ghost-feeding rite, the *Daming licheng xuanjiao zaijiao yi* (大明立成玄教齋醮儀) and the contents of a comparable Buddhist rite – the *Tiandi mingyang shuilu yiwen* (天地冥陽水陸儀文). Yoshioka ends the chapter with a valuable list of Daoist ghost-feeding liturgical-texts.⁵³

The second chapter of Yoshioka’s treatment of ghost-feeding rites in China consists largely of lists of ghost-feeding texts: texts in the Taishō canon (ten entries listed – T1313 (the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*), T1314 (the *Burning-Face Sūtra*), T1315 (the *Method of Bestowing-Food*), T1316, T1317, T1318 (the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*), T1319, T1320 (the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*), T1321, and T1290), titles of texts listed in nineteen catalogues (six Chinese and thirteen Japanese catalogues dating from 730 C.E. to 1863), five texts in the *Xuzang jing* (續藏經) canon, and twelve other texts (mostly from the late Qing and early Republican periods) that are in Yoshioka’s

⁵¹ Yoshioka, 400.

⁵² The ghost-feeding texts associated with these two Tiantai clerics will be discussed in *Chapter Four*.

⁵³ Yoshioka, 403-409.

private collection. The final part of this chapter is a discussion of the ghost-feeding rites in Ciyun Zunshi's and Zongxiao works.⁵⁴

Although Yoshioka's treatment of the history and development of ghost-feeding rites in China is the most extensive of all Japanese (and perhaps even Western) writings on this subject, it is still a very general and basic treatment of the subject. In other ways, Yoshioka's discussion can also be characterized as too narrow – as seen in his handling of the issue of the separate origins and goals of the Zhongyuan Festival, Yulanpen Festival and ghost-feeding rites. His arguments for clearly distinguishing the uniqueness of each of these cultic-practices are well-taken and necessary to understand if one were to properly understand and situate the role and significance of ghost-feeding rites in China. Although he gives us a very good general sketch of the historical development of Buddhist and Daoist ghost-feeding rites in China, he does not, however, actually explain what ghost-feeding rites are in China. If one did not know what these rites were in the first place or if one was only acquainted with the Japanese versions of these rites, reading the two chapters by Yoshioka practically tells one nothing about the nature, function and significance of these ghost-feeding rites in China. However, to be fair, Yoshioka can hardly be faulted for failing in this regard. It was neither his intention to present to his readers with a detailed analysis of the content and form of these rites, nor was his interest in the performance of the rites itself but rather in what he refers to as the reception or development of the thought of feeding hungry ghosts (施餓鬼思想の受容). Furthermore, in Yoshioka and many Japanese scholars' world, not unlike the

⁵⁴ Ibid., 412-431.

world of Western scholars until recently, it is the “thought” (*shisho* 思想) of whatever the subject it may be that is of any real significance – be it a ritual tradition or a doctrinal system.⁵⁵ Furthermore, the bibliographic details that Yoshioka has gathered together in these two chapters have been extremely useful to my research, serving both as a reliable resource as well as the point of departure.

Significantly shorter than Yoshioka’s survey of the reception and development of ghost-feeding rites in China is Zhou Shujia’s article on “*Yankou*,” published along with his article on the Yulanpen Festival and Li Ziqing’s article on the “*Shuilu* Rite” in the second volume of the multi-volume publication *Zhongguo fojiao* (中國佛教, *Chinese Buddhism*); a publication authored and edited by modern Chinese scholars of Buddhism. I have already mentioned Zhou’s article, as Orzech quoted Zhou in one of his articles on the *Yuqie yankou* rite that I discussed above. Zhou’s article gives a very brief introduction to the history of the *Yuqie yankou* rite tracing it to the translations by Śikṣānanda and Amoghavajra in the Tang, the Song Tiantai appropriation of ghost-feeding rites as evidenced in Zunshi’s *Golden Garden Record* (*Jinyuan ji* 金園集). In Zhou’s judgment, these Song Tiantai ghost-feeding rites are “not rites of the esoteric teachings” (*fei mijiao yigui* 非密教儀軌). He further considers the *Shuilu* rite as one of the ghost-feeding rites developed primarily by Song Tiantai monastics.⁵⁶ The most significant suggestion that Zhou presents in this article is the Yuan origins of the

⁵⁵ For example, in Yoshioka’s *Dōkyō to Bukkyō*, we find “Laozi’s Transformations thought” 老子變化思想 (2), “the Six Dynasties Daoist thought” 六朝道教思想(88), “the Chinese people’s daily-life thought” 中國人日常思想(249), “Nether-world thought” 幽界思想(377) and “Buddhism’s Earth-prisons thought” 佛教地獄思想 (377). Recently, the most hotly debated “thought” among Japanese Buddhist scholars is, of course, the “original enlightenment thought” 本覺思想.

⁵⁶ Zhou, 398.

Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra – the ghost-feeding liturgical text that I will argue as the template for the important *Yuqie yankou* liturgical text edited by Zhuhong in 1606. As we will see in *Chapter Five*, Zhuhong’s edition of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy becomes the basic source for all later *Yuqie yankou* texts. According to Zhou, the transliteration system of the Sanskrit spells into Chinese in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* places the origins of the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* to the Yuan period.⁵⁷ In the final paragraph of the article, Zhou brings our attention to the proliferation of *Yuqie yankou* liturgical texts in the Ming.⁵⁸ The Qing dynasty saw further elaborations on the liturgy, all by abbots of Baohua Monastery (*Baohua shan* 寶華山).⁵⁹ Much of what Zhou has written in this short article has subsequently been quoted in other shorter articles or entries in Chinese on the *Yuqie yankou*.⁶⁰

Western Impressions, Asian Realities

In no other religion do masses for the dead play so large a part as in Buddhism....
The ingenious technique and deeply religious foundation of these masses were not

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Although Zhou does not tell his readers, his claim of the proliferation of *Yuqie yankou* texts in the Ming is probably based on Zhuhong’s preface to his 1606 edition of the *Yuqie yankou* text. See, Zhuhong, XZJ104.795a. Among these texts are *Food-Bestowal Altar-Rite of the Practice of the Collected-Essentials of Yoga* (*Xiuxi yuqie jiyao shishi tanyi* 修習瑜伽集要施食壇儀) by the Chan monk Tianji 天機 (sixteenth-century), *Correct-Method of the Food-Bestowal Altar-Rite of the Practice of the Collected-Essentials of Yoga* (*Xiuxi yuqie jiyao shishi tanyi yingmen* 修習瑜伽集要施食壇儀應門) in two fascicles by Tiantai Lingcao 天台靈操 (d.u.) and *Food-Bestowal Altar-Rite of the Practice of the Collected-Essentials of Yoga* (*Xiuxi yuqie jiyao shishi tanyi*, 修設瑜伽集要施食壇儀) by Zhuhong. Lingcao’s text is no longer extant. According to Zhou, Tianji’s text was the text that Zhuhong re-edited by eliminating what Zhuhong considered as unnecessary sections. Although Tianji’s original text is probably no longer extant, I chanced upon a modern copy of a *Yuqie yankou* text that identifies itself as “*Tianji Yankou*” while visiting Guoqing Monastery at Tiantai and at several other monasteries in southeastern China. There is no bibliographic or publishing information in this modern copy of the so-called *Tianji Yankou*. Although there is no way at the present to ascertain if this text is actually Tianji’s text, a preliminary analysis of the text shows that it is almost identical to the *Yuqie yankou* text that is used in contemporary performances of the rite.

⁵⁹ Zhou, 399.

⁶⁰ For example, the entry for “Yankou” in the *Foguang Dictionary* is basically reproduces Zhou’s article. See *Foguang Dictionary*, 5065c-5067b.

immediately brought to perfection. On the contrary, centuries went by before the system was fully developed, and this fuller development seems to have had some connection with the influence of the Nestorian Church.⁶¹

With statesman-like understanding, Amogha quickly saw that it was important to outshine the Nestorians, if possible, in the arrangements for the masses for the dead. When one examines more closely the ritual which he issued, there can be no doubt that he and his helpers copied the rituals of the Nestorian Church in many places.⁶²

In a book published in 1928, Karl Ludvig Reichelt (1877-1952) – a Lutheran missionary who spent almost half a century in China – devotes almost fifty-pages to the subject of “masses for the dead” in Chinese Buddhism. This book, *Truth and Tradition in Chinese Buddhism: A Study of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism*, is based on a series of lectures that Reichelt first gave in the spring of 1921. These lectures were eventually compiled and published first in Norwegian and subsequently (due to requests from “The Committee on Work among Buddhists” appointed by the National Christian Council of China) translated and published in English. Clearly different in tone and approach from earlier Christian missionaries who came to the Far East from the sixteenth century on, Reichelt’s presentation of Chinese Buddhism is hailed in the “Preface” to his book as “the work of neither the partisan adversary nor the partisan advocate....”⁶³ Reichelt’s book is indeed remarkable in several ways. It attempts to present Chinese Buddhism in a sympathetic light even with those aspects that “at first sight seems hopelessly

⁶¹ Karl Ludvig Reichelt, *Truth and Tradition in Chinese Buddhism: A Study of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism* (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, Ltd., 1928), 77.

⁶² Ibid., 90.

⁶³ Ibid., vii. The “Preface” to the book was written by Logan Herbert Roots (1870-?), an Episcopal missionary in China. At the time of writing the “Preface” to Reichelt’s book he was apparently the Chairman of the House of Bishops of the Chinese Episcopal Church, a position he held from 1926–1931. See, *The Methodist Archives Biographical Index*, <http://rylibweb.man.ac.uk/data1/dg/methodist/bio/bior.html>.

superstitious and corrupt.”⁶⁴ In this book, Reichelt begins by giving a historical survey of Buddhism in China in the first two chapters followed by a lengthy synopsis of the popular sixteenth century novel *Journey to the West* and next discusses the Pure Land School in China. *Truth and Tradition in Chinese Buddhism* is also invaluable as an ethnographic record of a range of subjects such as Buddhist ritual, pantheon, literature, monastic system and other cultic-practices such as pilgrimage in early twentieth century China. Specifically, in the fourth chapter, Reichelt introduces to his readers what he refers to as “masses for the dead” that he witnessed in China.

While characterizing the “masses for the dead” as centrally important to Chinese Buddhism – so large a role, according to Reichelt, that one can find a comparable situation “in no other religion” – Reichelt still found it necessary to attribute the full development of the “masses for the dead” in Chinese Buddhism to an influence from the West (i.e. Nestorian Christianity). As preposterous as this might sound to us in the present day, Reichelt was apparently not alone in holding this belief. In fact, he was probably inspired by the work of Saeki Yoshino, an early twentieth century Japanese scholar who worked on Nestorian materials in China.⁶⁵ It was not at all that uncommon for scholars of Reichelt’s generation to look for “origins” of Indian or Chinese religion, philosophy or any form of “high culture” in places *other* than India or China and in fact preferably in the West or the Near East.⁶⁶ Hence, in Reichelt’s presentation of the

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ See Saeki Yoshino, *The Nestorian Monument in China* (London: S.P.C.K, 1916).

⁶⁶ This tendency was especially prevalent in studies of Indian history, religion and philosophy. In the case of Buddhism, the rise of Mahāyāna has been attributed to influences from early Christianity, Amitabha devotion as ultimately Persian in its origins and the Japanese Pure Land figure, Shinran as simply teaching the “Lutheran heresy” in Buddhist-garbs.

“masses for the dead” in China, he theorizes that Amoghavajra probably created his own version of “masses for the dead” as a result of a supposed need to compete with Nestorian Christians in Tang China. More importantly, in participating in this competition for patronage, Amoghavajra and his disciples ended up borrowing significantly from their purported Nestorian rivals. For the purposes of my study, what is more interesting than the claim that Nestorian Christians played an important role in Chinese history and in particular influenced the development of Chinese Buddhism is Reichelt’s attribution of the creation of the Chinese Buddhist “masses for the dead” to Amoghavajra himself.⁶⁷ Reichelt’s informants and the texts that he consulted no doubt shaped his understanding of Amoghavajra’s supposed pivotal role in “masses for the dead”. As my study will demonstrate, this theory is, however, overly simplistic, naively uncritical and in the final analysis, simply erroneous.

Under the category of “masses for the dead,” Reichelt includes several forms of Chinese Buddhist rites all of which can be collectively referred to as “food bestowal rites” (*shishi yi* 施食儀) if we were to use an emic term. In *Truth and Tradition in Chinese Buddhism*, Reichelt provides us with descriptions of “The Feast for the Wandering Souls” (which he equates with the Yulanpen Festival or Ghost Festival), the *Shuilu* or as Reichelt translates it “masses for the souls on sea and land” and finally the *Yuqie yankou* which he translates as a “ceremony of redemption” (*pudu* 普度). Noting

⁶⁷ Saeki, the source of Reichelt’s theory of the importance of Nestorian Christianity in China, wrote: “The true heaven never ceases to work. Weak and imperceptible as the Nestorian heaven was, it gradually but sure permeated the whole tone of Chinese literature during the T’ang and Sung Dynasties. And when all China was divided between Confucianists and Taoists on the one side and Buddhists on the other, the Nestorians turned the scale in favor of Chinese Ancestor-worship, and thus contributed to create what is known to-day as ‘Chinese Buddhism’.” Saeki, 158.

that it is with the *Yuqie yankou* rite that the “mystic mantras” reached “their climax in China” and that “The technique and theory of this system has not yet been thoroughly investigated by any sinologue,” Reichelt describes for his readers the *Yuqie yankou* rite by highlighting what he considered most noteworthy about the rite – the rich use of musical instruments, the impressive costume of the celebrant (describing the Vairocana-crown worn by the celebrant as “resembling a halo round his head”⁶⁸), the range and effects of oral delivery in this rite (the singing, lamenting, reciting and chanting) the emotions expressed in the faces of the performers (that range from the “solemn and impressive” to the “grim and iron-hard expression” to “paleness of fright,” to that of “great repose and the light of great pity”), and the hand and finger movements “of this strange service.”⁶⁹ Apparently disturbed but at the same time impressed or touched in a certain manner by what he witnessed, Reichelt wrote:

There is something hypnotic about the whole affair and one has a peculiarly unpleasant sensation as the performance proceeds, for in a remarkable way the practiced monks bring out the various torments and terrors of hell through these movements of the hands: one sees the bound, the savage, the tortured; the glimmering tongues of fire and ice-cold showers of rain, the brutal scorn and dull self-abandonment of the lost souls.⁷⁰

At the end of his description of the *Yuqie yankou*, Reichelt gives his evaluation of the *Yuqie yankou* – an evaluation that was held not only by a possibly biased western, Protestant missionary living in China in the early twentieth century, but, as we will see later, also by certain prominent and particularly vocal segments of the Chinese Buddhist community. Reichelt wrote:

⁶⁸ Reichelt, 103.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 103-105.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 104.

There is, indeed, art and solemn earnestness in this ceremony, but it escapes into black magic and animistic exorcism. It is therefore quite natural that the more spiritual monks and the profound thinkers within the Buddhist society keep out of it, but for the many who have sunk so low as to take the whole business more or less as a means of making a living, this ceremony for “filling the hungry mouths” is a splendid source of income.⁷¹

Other Western scholars active at a time contemporaneous to Reichelt’s time present very similar assessments of the *Yuqie yankou*. For example, J. Prip-Møller who published an important work on modern Chinese monasteries,⁷² and clearly influenced by Reichelt, remarks in a lecture published in 1931 that, “To the more spiritually-minded monks, masses like these, full as they are of superstition and exorcism, are an abhorrence, but for the monasteries and temples they provide a splendid source of income, which they cannot afford to do without.”⁷³ Also, in one of R. F. Fitch’s travel journals published in 1929, he commented on such rites as the *Yuqie yankou*, arguing that, “Intelligent priests will most seriously attack this practice in private conversation, but one has not heard of any who had the courage of their conviction so as to break the practice.”⁷⁴ Such harsh assessments or judgments of the *Yuqie yankou* rite (and many other rites performed at the behest of lay-patrons) reflect more than just the cultural prejudices held by these early Western scholars of Sinology. Within the Chinese Buddhist community, the attitude towards post-mortem rites and more specifically towards the *performance* of such rites as

⁷¹ Ibid., 105.

⁷² J. Prip-Møller, *Chinese Buddhist Monasteries* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1967)

⁷³ J. Prip-Møller, *About Buddhist Temples* (Beijing: North China Union Language School, ca. 1931), 29; cited by Holmes Welch in *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism 1900-1950* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 197. Prip-Møller was actually acquainted with Reichelt as sometime around 1930 Reichelt requested Prip-Møller to design the Tao Feng Shan Christian Center buildings that Reichelt built in Hong Kong to further his evangelical activities. See the *Asian Christian Art Association* website: <http://www.asianchristianart.org/news/article5c.html>.

⁷⁴ Robert F. Fitch, *Pootoo Itineraries: Describing the Chief Places of Interest with a Special Trip to Lo-chia shan* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh Ltd., 1929), 43.

a means of generating income and wealth for the monastic community has been equally critical. It is not uncommon to read in the writings of both the reformist and conservative monks of the Republican period criticisms of what Holmes Welch refers to as “the commercialization of rites.”⁷⁵

In the sequel to *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism* – still the most detailed source on modern Chinese Buddhist monastic life – *The Buddhist Revival in China*, Welch relates a conversation between him and a disciple of the reformist monk Taixu on the subject of Chinese Buddhist post-mortem rites. The monk, while willing to accept that these rites *can* be considered expressions of Confucian/normative values such as filial-piety and also the possibility of these rites in achieving their purported goal (i.e. the liberation of beings from suffering in the earth-prisons and as hungry ghosts), was nonetheless adamant on the point that these rituals are by and large foreign to the orthodox Buddhist tradition – “When you write about this,” he tells Welch, “you must make it clear that these things are old Chinese customs, but do not belong to Buddhist thought.”⁷⁶ Taixu himself, in one of his many essays detailing his master-plan(s) for reorganizing and reforming the Chinese Buddhist monastic system, divided what he envisioned as the new and ideal Chinese Buddhist monastic community into three groups consisting of ten thousand scholar monks, twenty-five thousand service monks (teaching Buddhism, running hospitals, orphanages etc.) and a thousand practice monks (focusing on intensive practices such as Chan meditation or *nianfo* 念佛). In this scheme, clearly absent are those monks whose main vocation was the performance of rites requested by

⁷⁵ Welch, 199-202.

⁷⁶ Holmes Welch, *The Buddhist Revival in China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 209.

the laity.⁷⁷ As Buddhist reformists in the nineteenth century, Taixu and his disciples were intent on “modernizing” Chinese Buddhism in response to the challenges of modernity. It is no wonder then that they were especially critical of the performance of elaborate post-mortem rites and those monastics who specialized in the performance of these rites. At the same time, conservative monks who opposed Taixu’s calls for “reform” within Chinese Buddhism were equally vocal in their opposition to the commercialization of post-mortem rites. Welch tells us that, according to the monastic rules of Gaomin Monastery (*Gaomin si* 高旻寺) – an active and prominent public-monastery near Yangzhou (揚州) – no requests for “Buddhist services” (*foshi* 佛事) major or minor will be entertained by its monastic community. Laiguo 來果, (d. 1953), the then abbot of Gaomin Monastery who instituted the rule against accepting any requests for the performance of “Buddhist services” was a Chan monk highly esteemed by the larger Chinese Buddhist community. Furthermore, from at least the late imperial China period right up to the Republican period, Gaomin Monastery was heralded as a paragon of rigorous monastic and Chan training.

Within this spectrum of attitudes towards the *Yuqie yankou* and similar rites yet another position can be found among the monks trained at Jinshan Monastery (*Jinshan si* 金山寺). Jinshan Monastery situated near Nanjing (南京), in Jiangsu province (江蘇), was another highly regarded institution in the Chinese Buddhist world. Like Gaomin

⁷⁷ Welch, *Buddhist Revival*, 52. It has been pointed out that Welch’s views on Taixu were unfairly prejudiced by the monks whom Welch interviewed – monks who resented Taixu’s efforts to “modernize Buddhism.” For a different and more recent view of Taixu and the impact of his views on modern Chinese Buddhist movements, see Don Alvin Pittman, *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism: Taixu’s Reforms* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2001).

Monastery, it was famous for its monastic discipline and Chan training. But unlike Gaomin Monastery, rites such as the *Yuqie yankou* and *Shuilu* were performed at Jinshan Monastery on a regular basis. Clearly as a direct response to the criticisms of the “commercialization of rites,” however, Welch’s informants pointed out that *Yuqie yankou* and *Shuilu* rites performed at Jinshan Monastery were entirely based on the spirit of volunteerism. The monks who officiated did not receive any financial compensation and those who “sponsored” the rites were not required to pay the monastery any compensation at all. Welch recalls an interview he conducted with the abbot of Jinshan Monastery in the 1960’s where the abbot basically dismissed the reformist attitudes represented by Taixu as totally foreign to the traditions of Jinshan Monastery. To the abbot, Jinshan Monastery was a proud but deserving bastion of conservatism and hence orthodoxy in Chinese Buddhism. Furthermore, according to the traditional account of the beginnings of the *Shuilu*, Jinshan Monastery was the venue of the first *Shuilu* rite ever celebrated. Although this account is historically impossible, its currency goes back to at least Song times and as such confers upon Jinshan Monastery a prominence within Chinese Buddhism that in particular highlighted its ritual tradition. Rather than questioning the importance and effectiveness of rites such as *Yuqie yankou* and *Shuilu* because many monastics were misusing and abusing these rites, monasteries such as Jinshan continued to teach and perform these rites but were careful to divorce them from any and all monetary exchanges.

Jinshan Monastery was not alone in its attitude to the performance of *Yuqie yankou*, *Shuilu* and other such rites. Another major and prominent Chinese monastery is

Baohua Monastery.⁷⁸ From the seventeenth century on, Baohua Monastery was famous for its ordination platform (*jietan* 戒壇) that attracted monastic candidates from all over China during its annual ordination ceremony. The following words of Chenhua, a young Chinese monk who received his complete monastic vows at Baohua Monastery during the Republican period, succinctly articulate Baohua Monastery's attitude towards rites such as the *Yuqie yankou*:

Originally, sūtras were the recorded words of the Buddha, and requiems were devised in accordance with the teachings of virtuous men of long ago. For a monk to chant sūtras, conduct requiems or “release the ravenous ghosts” after a person's death, if done properly and honestly, is a “door of expediency” [*fang-pien fa-men*] which benefits himself and others: there is nothing to be said against it. The sad thing is that some people view this beneficial door of expediency as a business deal. Because of this, the result of performing funeral services is that others are not benefited and harm is done to oneself and the Buddhist religion.⁷⁹

Chenhua himself was forced by circumstances to become “a monk who worked funerals” when he resided for a duration of six months at Dongyue Temple (*Dongyue miao* 東嶽廟) in Nanjing. In the chapter “Staying at Tung-yueh (Dongyue) Temple,” he indicts the corruption that he witnessed among the monks whom he worked with in Nanjing. Consider the following incident related by Chenhua in his autobiography: A certain monk who was one of the two “group leaders” at Dongyue Temple was apparently once “a serious monk” but he eventually fell victim to the wealth that he accumulated as a

⁷⁸ Baohua Monastery, also known as Longchang Monastery (*Longchang si* 隆昌寺), was another major monastic institution in late Imperial China. It is most famous for its “ordination platform” and is considered the leading authority in matters related to the Vinaya.

⁷⁹ Chen-hua, *In Search of the Dharma: Memoirs of a Modern Chinese Buddhist Pilgrim*, trans. Denis C. Mair and edited by Chun-fang Yu (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 80.

result of his success at working at funerals. With the wealth he accumulated, he was soon started smoking opium and drinking liquor; living, as Chenhua remembers,

... so carelessly that, in the end, he had no trousers to wear. I remember once in the seventh month of the lunar calendar, when we went to the foot of Chiu-hua Mountain to conduct rites for universal salvation [*p'u-tu yen-k'ou*]. With the naked lower half of his body covered only by his gown and robe, he went onto the dais. We had chanted to the part that says: "The Six-syllable King of Mantras, its powers are immeasurable. The pure and clean assembly here, with different mouths together proclaim (this mantra)." Just then he called out softly to the man beating time on the wooden fish: "Friend, I've pissed on myself."⁸⁰

Given that the commercialized performance of rites was being attacked by the most vocal voices of the Chinese Buddhist community then (the ideological assaults coming from both the modern reformists and the conservative revivalists) it is no surprise then that Reichelt writing in the 1920's gave such an unflattering assessment of the *Yuqie yankou* rite and those who performed it, judging that the "more spiritual monks and profound thinkers of Buddhism" generally distanced themselves from such rites which have degenerated into a "means of making a living" at best and "black magic and animistic exorcism" at worst.⁸¹ Even if much of what we read now regarding the quality of these monks was no doubt heavily prejudiced by the elitist views of the reformists and revivalists monks in the Republican period and by the often partial reports of Westerners who were mostly missionaries in Asia (or in one way or another connected with missionaries), many of these monks were probably guilty of much of the criticisms and allegations. Historically, however, Buddhist monks and nuns have played an important role in the ritual lives of the Chinese. This is especially true in the case of funerary rites.

⁸⁰ Adapted from Chenhua, 86. I have made adjustments to Denis Mair's translation for the section of the *Yuqie Yankou* liturgy referred to by Chenhua in this incident.

⁸¹ Reichelt, 105.

Stephen Teiser's study of the Ghost Festival in medieval China further attests to the popularity of Buddhist and Buddhist-inspired rites and festivals celebrated by all strata of Chinese society.⁸² Hostile evidence can also be seen coming from Confucian and later Neo-Confucian objectors of Buddhism. Some of the criticisms that have been launched against Buddhism and Buddhist practices are on the extravagant and "un-Chinese" (i.e. un-Confucian) funeral and mourning rites performed by Buddhist monastics for the laity.⁸³ This Confucian assault on the popular performance of Buddhist funerals and memorial services suggests the prevalence and power of these ritual practices among Chinese in the Late Imperial period.

The Ming dynasty is highly significant to the history of the *Yuqie yankou* rite for two reasons. First, as I will demonstrate in *Chapter Five*, liturgies for the performance of the *Yuqie yankou* flourished in the Ming, with Zhuhong's liturgy becoming the basis of all later *Yuqie yankou* liturgical-texts. Second, it was in the Ming that the ritual-function of Buddhist monastics became fully formalized and institutionalized by the government. In 1382, the founding-emperor of the Ming dynasty, the Hongwu emperor, issued a decree through the Ministry of Rites classifying all members of the Buddhist monastic community in China into the three categories of *chan* (禪), *jiang* (講) and *jiao* (教).

On the twenty-first day of the fifth month (in the fifteenth year of Hongwu), the Ministry of Rites decreed that with regards to Buddhist monasteries, they have been divided into three types for successive generations. They are the *chan*, *jiang* and *jiao*. *Chan* does not establish names and words but has the definite seeing of nature as its fundamental doctrine. *Jiang* focuses on understanding the excellent meanings of the various sutras. *Jiao* performs the Buddhas' methods

⁸² Stephen F. Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

⁸³ Evelyn S. Rawski, "A Historian's Approach," in *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*, eds. James L. Watson and Evelyn S. Rawski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 30.

of benefiting and aiding (beings) by eliminating the (negative) karma created in the present and purifying the errors of the dead created in the past. In this way they teach people of the world.⁸⁴

In many ways, the Hongwu emperor's decree was based on an official policy that had its precedent in earlier dynasties. The practice of governmental designation of select public monasteries as *chan*, *jiao* or *lu* (律) monasteries (often at the recommendation of powerful officials or influential clerics) apparently started early in the Song and persisted through the Yuan. For example, in 1020 Lower Tianzhu Monastery (*Xiatianzhu si* 下天竺寺) at Hangzhou (杭州) was declared a *jiao* monastery dedicated to the study, practice and propagation of the Tiantai tradition.⁸⁵ This event was by no means the first of its kind as by that time different Chan lineages have succeeded in having several influential public monasteries designated as *chan* monasteries. For example, Tiantong Monastery (*Tiantong si* 天童寺) and Ayuwang Monastery (*Ayuwang si* 阿育王寺) were officially designated Chan institutions in 1007 and 1008 respectively. Research thus far shows that the earliest record of according public monasteries with sectarian identities involved a Chan designation.⁸⁶ In fact, it was in direct response to the appearances of state-designated *chan* monasteries that Tiantai revivalist clerics in the early Song campaigned for the designation of Tiantai *jiao* public monasteries. Although partisan

⁸⁴ *Shishi qigu lue xuji* (釋氏稽古略續集), T2038:49.932a. Yu Chun-fang has also translated (more liberally) this same section: "Meditating (*ch'an*) monks do not establish words but aim at seeing their own nature. The expositing (*chiang*) monks concentrate on understanding scripture. The teaching (*chiao*) monks teach people of the world by performing Buddhist rituals that benefit and save all, destroy all kinds of present karma created by deeds and thought, and cleanse away the evil influences accumulated by the past karma of the dead." For Yu's translation, see, *The Cambridge History of China – the Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644*, ed. Denis Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote (New York: Cambridge University Press), 906.

⁸⁵ Dan Stevenson, "Protocols of Power" in *Buddhism in the Sung*, ed. Peter N. Gregory and Daniel A. Getz Jr., (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 349.

⁸⁶ T. Griffith Foulk, "Myth, Ritual, and Monastic Practice" in *Religion and Society in Tang and Sung China*, ed. Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Peter N. Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 165-166.

monks from the Chan and Tiantai traditions in the Song often campaigned vigorously to have public monasteries designated as either *chan* or *jiao* institutions, these monasteries did not however, differ much from one another in terms of their respective facilities, administrative structure, monastic rules and regulations and general ritual calendar. To designate an institution as a *chan* monastery principally meant that the abbacy of that monastery had to be filled by monks of the Chan lineage. Similarly, at *jiao* monasteries, the abbacies were restricted to monks of the Tiantai lineage. It should be pointed out that the so-called *lu* monasteries during the Northern Song did not apply to public monasteries but was rather a designation used (in contrast to the emerging Chan and Tiantai public monasteries) to refer to both public and private monasteries without any particular sectarian designation. It was not until the thirteenth century that several public monasteries were designated as *lu* monasteries and their abbacies restricted to monks of the Nanshan Vinaya lineage (*Nanshan luzong* 南山律宗).⁸⁷ Although sectarian identities and differences were major factors in the politics of the designation of public monasteries as *chan*, *jiao* or *lu* monasteries, the designated monasteries did not necessarily serve as independent, institutional centers for the creation or perpetuation of Chinese Buddhist sectarian lineages.

Although in issuing the 1382 decree the Hongwu emperor was merely continuing a tradition that was already in existence in the Song, the decree does reflect some significant changes that had taken place in Chinese Buddhism since the first use of the categories for the designation of certain select public monasteries. Firstly, instead of

⁸⁷ Foulk, 166.

being used only to designate certain large, influential and public monasteries, the Hongwu emperor's categories of *chan*, *jiang* and *jiao* were used not only as institutional identification. More significantly, the Hongwu decree suggests that all members of the Chinese Buddhist *sangha* should theoretically be classified into these three categories. Furthermore, only two of the original three categories introduced in the Song were kept in this decree. The original categories of *chan* and *jiao* were maintained although *jiao* was renamed as *jiang*. The category of *lu* was however, dropped and in its place was a newly created category that appropriated the old designation *jiao*. This new category going by the term *jiao* referred to what was more commonly known as the *yuqie* category. As defined in the decree, the *jiao* or *yuqie* monks were Buddhist ritual specialists who served the needs of the laity by praying for their well being as well as officiating at funerals and other post-mortem rites. By calling them *jiao* (literally, “teaching”) monks, the Hongwu emperor envisioned these monks as guides and teachers of morality through their ritual performances and the interaction between the monastic and the laity occasioned by these ritual performances. *Jiao/yuqie* monks are much more connected to and involved with the laity whereas *chan* and *jiang* monks are theoretically focused on either their own practices or the training of fellow monastics in the areas of meditation (*chan*) and exposition of Buddhist doctrines (*jiang*).

It should be noted that although the Hongwu decree dropped the older designation of *lu* and replaced it with a new category, the change might have been more a change of names rather than a shift in the actually demographics of Chinese Buddhist monasticism in late imperial China. For instance, the textual history of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy

clearly shows that monks from Baohua Monastery played a major role in the editing, codification and standardization of the liturgy. Baohua Monastery received the favors of the emperors (especially in the Qing) and became an important Vinaya center after Jiguang Sanmei 寂光三昧 (1580-1645) petitioned the emperor to declare the main monastic institution at Baohua Monastery, a *lu* monastery.⁸⁸ Receiving one's vows from the ordination platform at Baohua Monastery carried a prestige that was more highly prized than ordination at other monasteries. When we look at what takes place at Baohua Monastery aside from ordination ceremonies, we find that the main curriculum at Baohua Monastery consists of:

...study of liturgy and ritual. This included, for example, the pronunciation of the Chinese characters used to transliterate Sanskrit names and incantations and the magical gestures employed to “release the burning mouths”... Every element of the largest of the mortuary rites (the *shui-lu fa-hui*) had to be mastered in full. Another subject was the ritual of ordination....⁸⁹

Thus, it appears that most of what *lu* monasteries were teaching was less focused on the interpretation and observance of the *prātimokṣa* rules or any doctrinal subjects that might be culled from the corpus of Vinaya texts found in the Chinese Buddhist canon but instead, monks in these monasteries apparently spent their time learning liturgy and ritual. Hence, when the Hongwu decree replaced the older designation of *lu* with

⁸⁸ The *Mount Baohua Gazetteer* (*Baohua shanzhi*, 寶華山志) compiled in the Qing period considers Jiguang Sanmei as the first abbot of Baohua Monastery (literally, “the first generation patriarch” (*diyidai zushi* 第一代祖師) although an earlier monastery was built at the same site in the Ming Wanli 萬曆 period (1573-1619) by Fuzheng Miaofeng (福登妙峰). See, the *Mount Baohua Gazetteer* in *Zhongguo fosi zhiye kan* (Yangzhou: Jiangsu guangling gujike yinshe, 1996), 53:163-168; 172-174. J. Prip-Møller’s *Chinese Buddhist Monasteries* is mainly focused on Baohua Monastery (also known as Huiju Monastery 慧居寺). Chapter four of this monumental work discusses the history of Baohua Monastery based on the *Mount Baohua Gazetteer* and inscriptions found at Baohua Monastery. It also contains translations of inscriptions found on twelve tablets. See, Prip-Møller, *Chinese Buddhist Monasteries*, 196-271.

⁸⁹ Welch, *Buddhist Revival*, 105.

jiaoluyuqie, what it did was perhaps simply renaming or rectifying the name of an already pre-existing group of monks – i.e. the *lu* monks of the Song period.

However, other scholars have correctly pointed out that the Hongwu emperor's categories in all likelihood did not match up with the historical realities of his times. These scholars argued that although according to the Hongwu decree the performance of rites such as the *Yuqie yankou* was the provenance of these so-called *jiaoluyuqie* monks, other monks who were classified as *chan* or *jiang* monks were also performing these rites. Many monasteries designated or identified as *chan* or *jiang* had “*shuilu* halls” (*shuilu tang* 水陸堂) where the *Shuilu* and other related rites such as the *Yuqie yankou* were performed.⁹⁰ This has led some to conclude that perhaps the Hongwu decree was more ideological than actual; certainly more prescriptive than descriptive. On the other hand, Hanshan Deqing's 憨山德清 (1546-1623), writings in late Ming, seems to suggest that the Hongwu emperor's attempts to create a distinctive class of Chinese Buddhist ritual-specialists were not entirely only in principle or merely on paper, lacking in any actual correlation with practice or the day-to-day lived experience. We read Deqing writing:

The founder of the Ming Dynasty, the Hung-wu Emperor, instituted the three divisions of *ch'an*, *chiang*, and *yü-chia* for the ordination of Buddhist monks. To become a monk of the *ch'an* or *chiang*, one must pass the test on the three scriptures: the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*, *Diamond Sūtra*, and *Fo-tsu*. To become a monk of *yü-chia*, one must pass the test on the rules concerning the feeding and deliverance of flaming-mouth hungry-ghosts. One can become a monk only if one can pass one of the two tests. Today, in Nanking, the T'ien-chieh monastery

⁹⁰ Daniel L. Stevenson's recent article on the *Shuilu* notes the existence of “*shuilu* halls” in such public *chan* monasteries as Lingyin Monastery and Tiantong Monastery. *Shuilu*-halls also existed in public *lu* monasteries such as Lingzhi Monastery and Upper Tianzhu Monastery, a *jiao*/Tiantai public monastery. See, Stevenson, “Text, Image, and Transformation in the History of the *Shuilu fahui*,” 64, n. 42.

belongs to *ch'an*, the Pao-en belongs to *chiang*, and the Neng-jen belongs to the *yü-chia*. This is in accordance with the national constitution.⁹¹

And so, if we trust Deqing's report, there were indeed monasteries that were designated as *jiao/yuqie* and whose monks were expected to be learned and seasoned in "the rules concerning the feeding and deliverance of flaming-mouth hungry-ghosts." One could speculate that with the official designation of such a group as the *jiao/yuqie*, spelling out explicitly that membership in this group is anchored on the mastery of the *Yuqie yankou* rite, late imperial Chinese Buddhism witnessed an increase in monastics who specialized in the performance of Buddhist rites for the laity. This increase eventually resulted in the existence of a large population of Chinese Buddhist monastics whose sole vocation and occupation was the performance of rites – funerary rites in particular – in exchange for financial remuneration. It did not take long for this to escalate into a commercial enterprise complete with its own market-pricing of rites and fierce business competition among different groups and monasteries. Thus, although the Hongwu emperor had envisioned the *jiao/yuqie* monks serving as guides and exemplars to the laity through their close association with the laity via ritual-performance, the "creation" or formalization of this category unfortunately led to the "commercialization of rites" and the blatant ignoring of monastic discipline both of which were roundly condemned by reformists and revivalists in the Republican period.

What kind of practices did these so-called *jiao/yuqie* monks engage in when they were called to "benefit and aid (beings) by eliminating the (negative) karma created in the

⁹¹ Sung-pen Hsu, *A Buddhist Leader in Ming China* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979), 142.

present and purify the errors of the dead created in the past”? “*Yuqie*” is the Chinese transliteration for the Sanskrit term “*yoga*” – a term that in East Asia generally refers to a body of Buddhist beliefs and practices more popularly known as the “esoteric teachings” (*mijiao* 密教). *Yuqie* by the late Ming signified a collection of beliefs and practices that were derived from a variety of sources and traditions not necessarily limited to the esoteric teachings. Although at one point in their early days the esoteric teachings in China had a lineage of practitioners who identified themselves as followers of the “esoteric teachings,” by late Tang, this relatively continuous and distinct lineage of masters and students had effectively disappeared from the religious landscape of China. However, the disappearance of such a lineage did not signify the demise of the teachings and practices used and promoted by this group of Buddhists. Instead, some of these teachings and practices continued to thrive in China. In particular, the Tiantai tradition developed a variety of these teachings and practices based on the esoteric texts but without necessarily claiming a continuous oral tradition stretching back to India and to the mythic past imagined in these esoteric texts. For instance, when we turn our attention to some of Zhiyi’s 智顗 (538-597) liturgical-texts, they are essentially manuals for the performance of meditation retreats based on the recitation of spells and *dhāraṇīs*. Zhiyi did not claim any special oral transmission from masters of the esoteric teachings and nor did he seem too concerned with the issue. In Zhiyi’s system of tenet-classification, there is no self-conscious designation of “esoteric teachings” as a category of Buddhist teachings separate from the “exoteric.”⁹² We should also note here

⁹² In the Tiantai tenet-classification system known as the “five periods and eight teachings,” (*wushi bajiao*

that Zhiyi in fact pre-dated the introduction of a systematic tradition of the esoteric teachings (the so-called Zhenyan [Jap. Shingon] 真言 tradition) by such figures as Śubhākarasimha, Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra in the eighth century. Consequently, even before a systematic “esoteric tradition” came into existence in China, the Tiantai tradition had already developed a particular understanding and appreciation of esoteric teachings. As such, when this systematic “esoteric tradition” ceased being an independent lineage in China, much of its teachings and practices were further absorbed by Tiantai (which was by then very familiar and comfortable with elements of the esoteric kind) and by monks from other traditions.⁹³ Song dynasty Tiantai revivalists such as Ciyun Zunshi and Siming Zhili 四明知禮 (960-1028) both appropriated texts and

五時八教) there is a type of “teaching” identified as “secret” (*mi* 密). This refers to a category of the Buddha’s teachings that is designated on the basis of the method in which these teachings were given. Thus the “secret teachings” refer to the manner in which the Buddha taught these teachings: the Buddha was able to give teachings on several different levels to listeners with different spiritual and intellectual capacities at one same occasion without his listeners’ awareness of one another’s different capacities, understanding and even presence. This understanding of the “secret teachings” is very different from the category of “esoteric teachings” although the same Chinese characters (*mijiao* 密教) are used. It should also be pointed out that Sekiguchi Shindai has convincingly demonstrated that, in fact, the “five periods and eight teachings” tenet-classification system attributed to Zhiyi was first brought together by Zhanran 湛然 (711-782) based on systematizing the various elements found in different contexts scattered throughout Zhiyi’s writings. See David Chappell’s “Introduction to the *T’ien-t’ai ssu-chiao-i*.” *The Eastern Buddhist* 9, 1 (1976): 72-78, for an English summary of Sekiguchi’s arguments.

⁹³ The idea of an “esoteric tradition” as having an “independent lineage” in China – i.e. a lineage of masters and students who exclusively practiced and taught the “esoteric teachings” is in itself wrought with problems. For example, one of the foremost interpreters of the “esoteric teachings” in China was Yixing 一行 (683-727) who is remembered as the compiler and editor of *The Commentary on the Mahāvairocana sūtra* (*Darī jing shu*, 大日經疏, T1796) based on the lectures of Śubhākarasimha (637-735). Although primarily recognized as Śubhākarasimha’s chief disciple, Yixing had also studied at Mount Tiantai with Hengjing 恆景 (634-712), a master of the Tiantai lineage who combined Tiantai study and practice of “cessation and contemplation” (*zhiguan* 止觀) with Vinaya studies of the Nanshan Vinaya lineage. Hengjing was also master to Jianzhen/Ganjin 鑑真 (688-763) – the monk credited with introducing the Buddhist monastic lineage to Japan. Yixing himself studied both the Nanshan Vinaya and Chan as well and he did not hesitate to include Tiantai, Chan and Nanshan Vinaya teachings in the commentary on the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* he edited. Among prominent Chan monks who were also actively involved in the practice and transmission of the “esoteric teachings” were members of the Northern Chan lineage of Shenxiu 神秀 (600-706). It should be pointed out that in their own time, the Northern Chan lineage of Shenxiu was the most prominent and influential Chan lineage. For a concise but thought-provoking discussion on the issue of a lineage or school of “esoteric Buddhism” in medieval China, see Sharf’s appendix on “Esoteric Buddhism” in China in his recent *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism*, 263-278 where he calls into question the very existence of a “Tantric” or “Esoteric” Buddhism in medieval China.

traditions of the “esoteric” type and composed liturgical-texts based on them. Meanwhile, during the Yuan dynasty, Tibetan Buddhism – a form of Buddhism centered on the esoteric teachings – became the religion of choice of many of its rulers. Although Tibetan Buddhism’s influence in China was mostly limited to the ruling non-Chinese elites from the Yuan dynasty on – with the Tibetan and Chinese clerics living and functioning together but separately – it nonetheless had significant impact on Chinese Buddhism. This impact left behind a legacy in Chinese Buddhism in the focus and belief in the efficacy of spells and *dhāraṇīs* for achieving both worldly and otherworldly aims. Consequently, by the early Ming, the rubric of *yuqie* encompassed a broad range of beliefs and practices that included elements from the Tiantai, the so-called “Zhenyan” 真言 of the Tang period and later Tibetan Buddhist traditions.

CHAPTER TWO:

Material Yuqie yankou – Its Cast, Vocals, Instrumentation and Production

Buddhism is a performing art

-- Stephen Beyer, *The Cult of Tārā*

One of the most striking features of the *Yuqie yankou* rite is the elaborate setting in which this rite is normally staged and performed. The material aspects of this rite are some of the most specialized but yet aesthetically rich and accessible examples of Chinese religion in practice. For example, whereas most other Chinese Buddhist rites do not require any special structures apart from the permanent altars in front of the main icons of Buddhas and bodhisattvas enshrined in each monastery, nunnery, temple or chapel, the *Yuqie yankou* rite requires the construction of several temporary, make-shift altars. Although temporary, these altars are often very carefully constructed and in many cases exquisitely decorated with icons and/or paintings of divinities, golden-thread embroidered banners, pennants, table skirts and coverings. In addition, food-offerings – an obviously important but ironically invisible element in the liturgy of the rite itself – are often painstakingly and artistically prepared and arranged by scores of residents and helpers of the monastery, days ahead of the performance. The *Yuqie yankou* rite thus serves as an occasion for the conspicuous display of wealth and abundance by the monastery, its patrons and the larger community. Therefore, if we study the rite by

focusing exclusively on the written liturgy and its historical development (i.e. the text and its various historical contexts) but leave out the material aspects of the rite, we will still be dislocating the text from one of its most obvious contexts.

The wealth of resonances that can be found between theatre and ritual performances is a subject that hardly needs any exhaustive arguments to defend. Of the many different rites still performed with a certain degree of regularity among Chinese Buddhists, the confluence of theatre and ritual can be best witnessed in the *Yuqie yankou* rite. The *Yuqie yankou*, as noted above, requires the construction of several temporary structures. And as I will demonstrate in this chapter, the floor-plan for this rite actually mirrors the layout one finds in traditional Chinese operas. Furthermore, compared to most other Buddhist ritual-traditions (Chinese and otherwise), the *Yuqie yankou* rite utilizes one of the widest range of vocal and instrumental music, complete with the solo deliveries, antiphonal and choral singing, reading and response between performers and spectators, execution of *mudrās* or ritual hand-gestures, and the playing of percussive (and in some cases string and wind) instruments. Indeed, one could literally call this rite a “dramatization” of the Buddhist conversion and salvation of ghosts and spirits.

In short, in studying Chinese Buddhist rites, and in particular, the *Yuqie yankou*, we cannot ignore the larger ritual-field that these rites exist in. As such, other rites such as those of the various Daoist traditions and popular, local practices of no particular sectarian identity have to be taken into account. This is especially true in the case of ghost-feeding rites where many of the Daoist liturgies used are either inspired by or

directly appropriated from the Buddhist versions. Therefore, in this chapter I will include Daoist parallels and differences when appropriate and fruitful.

The Cast and Costume of the Yuqie yankou

Unlike the *Lingbao Liturgy for Universal Salvation* (*Lingbao pudu* 靈寶普度) discussed by Judith M. Boltz, the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy does not specifically identify the different singing roles of the monastic performers of the rite.¹ However, three roles can be clearly discerned from observing the performance of the rite itself. The most important role in the performance of the *Yuqie yankou* rite is the so-called “Vajra Supreme-Master” (*jingang shangshi* 金剛上師) – the celebrant officiating at the rite. As mentioned in the last chapter, the role of the celebrant is one that many of my informants felt should only be filled by a monk who is both spiritually qualified and ritually skilled. As such, *Yuqie yankou* rites performed by old and respected monks tended to attract the most sponsors. At the same time, age and experience are not the only determinants of the selection or casting for the role of the celebrant. Since the training that is required for the part of the celebrant begins early in a trainee’s years as a monk, a candidate is often selected on the basis of his “good looks and beautiful voices.”²

¹ Boltz, “Singing to the Spirits of the Dead: A Daoist Ritual of Salvation,” 177-225. As explained in my “Introduction,” the structure and approach of this chapter is inspired by Boltz’s excellent article on the Daoist *Lingbao Liturgy of Universal Salvation*.

² These criterions were the most frequent responses I received from informants interviewed over the years. The Republican-period monk, Chenhua wrote about one of the popular celebrants whom he knew from his years “working the funerals” at Dongyue Temple: “He was clever and handsome. (I still have a small snapshot of him.) He had a good voice too. He was well versed in all the tricks of the funeral trade that were popular then in Nanking.... Because of his excellent qualifications, he began working funerals for Tung-yüeh at fifteen. At seventeen he took his place on the group leader’s “throne.”” See, Chen-hua, 86.

From the perspective of the liturgy, the celebrant is clearly the most important person in the whole rite as he is the person affecting the salvific results of the rite. In that capacity, the celebrant serves as the chief vocalist delivering esoteric spells, pronouncements and other “performative utterances,” carrying out the visualizations specified and executing the accompanying *mudrās* and ritual-acts. The celebrant is distinguished from the rest of the performers not only in terms of where he is physically positioned throughout the rite but also in the type of robes that he wears for the occasion. The celebrant attires himself with the most formal set of robes of a fully ordained monk in the Chinese Buddhist tradition which consists of a bright-yellow flowing robe with butterfly-wing sleeves (known as *haiqing* 海清) and a bright red *kaṣaya*-robe embroidered with golden rectangular designs draped over his left shoulder and under his right hand. This *kaṣaya*-robe known as the “great robe” (*dayi* 大衣) or “red-robe” (*hongyi* 紅衣) is the formal robe whose equivalent is the upper-robe of the standard set of “three-robes” in the Indian Buddhist tradition. However, since Chinese Buddhists consider these three-robes more as ritual-vestments than as practical day-to-day garments, they rarely own a complete set of the three-robes. It is only in ritual-contexts that one will find Chinese Buddhist monastics donning the upper or outer *kaṣaya*-robe. Furthermore, in Chinese Buddhist practice, this red-robe is rarely used by most monastics – especially younger monks and nuns (regardless of the nun’s seniority³). Instead, most

³ In recent years, several charismatic Taiwanese nuns have publicly worn the red *kaṣaya*-robe to the consternation of certain segments of the Chinese Buddhist community. These nuns respond by demanding their critics to produce any “canonical” rules prohibiting fully-ordained nuns from wearing what is essentially the upper-robe of the ideal “three robes” that each monastic regardless of male or female was required to wear by the Vinaya rules whose institution is attributed to the historical Buddha.

monastics substitute the red *kaṣaya*-robe with a yellow *kaṣaya*-robe or more commonly a brown *kaṣaya*-robe both of which are referred to more generally as the “precepts-robe” (*jieyi* 戒衣).⁴ At *Yuqie yankou* performances, the assisting monastics usually wear a black or brown *haiqing* (and very rarely yellow), with or without an upper yellow or brown *kaṣaya*-robe.⁵

Finally, the most distinctive and impressive difference about the celebrant is the crown that he puts on after he ascends to the main altar (fig. 1). This crown, known as the Vairocana-crown (*Pilu mao*), consists of two pieces – a red, round diadem embroidered with designs of dragons and flowers and with a *vajra*-shaped top and two long strips of silk embroidered with the Chinese or sometimes Siddham characters for the spell OM MANI PADME HŪM hanging on both sides of the diadem and a separate panel of five leaves embroidered with the images of five Buddhas representing the Buddhas of the Five Directions (fig. 2). When used by Daoists, this crown is identified as the crown of the Five Sovereigns (*Wudi* 五帝)⁶ or of the Five Venerables (*Wulao* 五老)⁷ and has images of the Five Sovereigns embroidered on the five leaves instead of the Five Buddhas.

In the eyes of spectators, this crown is Dizang’s crown as most of the icons of Dizang starting from the Late Imperial period of Chinese history are depicted wearing this crown (fig. 3). Earlier iconographical depictions of Dizang, however, do not

⁴ The “precepts-robe” are further divided into the “five strips robe” (*wuyi* 五衣), “seven strips robe” (*chiyi* 七衣) and “twenty-five strips robe” (*ershiwu yi* 二十五衣).

⁵ For a fuller discussion of the types of robes worn by Chinese monastics, see Prip-Møller, *Chinese Buddhist Monasteries*, 374-376 and Welch, *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism*, 113-115.

⁶ Boltz, 194.

⁷ Pang, 108.

include this crown. In these earlier representations which mostly clustered around the Buddhist caves of Longmen, Dunhuang and in the Sichuan areas, Dizang is depicted as a monk carrying a *khakkara* (monk's staff) and wearing a hood of sorts wrapped over his head (fig. 4). Although the earliest depictions of Dizang are in the usual princely-form that most bodhisattvas are depicted in Mahāyāna iconography, Dizang's monastic-form quickly became the standard form. It is however, unclear when the iconography of Dizang assimilated the crown that is referred to in the *Yuqie yankou* rite as the Vairocana-crown. Some scholars have suggested that this might have occurred with the gradual development of the figure of Dizang from that of a monk to that of a sovereign – and in particular the sovereign of the underworld with complete freedom to liberate the suffering beings there.⁸ It should however be pointed out that the Vairocana-crown that is often seen in latter depictions of Dizang is not really the crown of a sovereign or king. Instead, the crown is, as its name indicates, a crown associated with the Buddha Vairocana. According to the *Foguang Dictionary*, it is named the Vairocana-crown probably because of the presence of the image of Vairocana on the crown (in the central leaf of the five leaves embroidered with the five Buddhas).⁹

Although the origins of this crown are unclear and we do not know when it came into common use in China, it is clear that it was known to Zhuhong and is mentioned in Zhuhong's 1606 *Yuqie yankou* liturgy. In fact, Zhuhong's commentary on the significance of this crown might suggest some interesting points for our consideration.

⁸ Dizang began to be addressed as "Sovereign Dizang" (*Dizang wang* 地藏王) in the eighth-ninth centuries, apparently in conjunction with the association between Dizang and the cult of Ten Kings of Purgatory. See, Zhiru Ng, "The Formation and Development of the Dizang Cult in Medieval China," (Ph.D. diss., University of Arizona, 2000), 204-205.

⁹ *Foguang Dictionary*, 3858.

Zhuhong's discussion on this crown can be found in the section where he explains the reason why the celebrant of this rite has to visualize himself as Guanyin. Briefly, Zhuhong explains that just as Guanyin is able to “enter the ocean of birth and death to teach and transform sentient beings” due to great and expansive spiritual powers that come from the constant empowerment received from the Five Buddhas on the “Five Buddhas crown (*Wufo guan* 五佛冠) on top of (Guanyin's) head,” the celebrant who wears the “Five Buddhas crown” will also be able to benefit all sentient beings.¹⁰ The main point to note here is that Zhuhong refers to this crown as the “Five Buddhas crown” rather than the “Vairocana-crown.” Although the “Five Buddhas crown” is known in esoteric Buddhist textual sources dating back to the Tang, evidence of its actual use by human subjects are sparse.¹¹ Its use is also unknown in Japanese esoteric traditions of either Shingon or Tendai. The only lineage in Japan that apparently still uses this crown is the Ōbaku Zen 黃檗禪 tradition in its ghost-feeding rite. The ghost-feeding rite of the Ōbaku Zen is in fact a version of the *Yuqie yankou* rite that was brought to Japan by the Chinese monks who arrived in Japan in 1654 to eventually establish Manpukuji 萬福寺 – the first Ōbaku Zen monastery in Japan. On the other hand, the actual ritual use of the “Five Buddhas crown” is well attested in Tibet (see fig. 5). For example, in the Kālachakra empowerment rite, are two initiations known as the “Crown Initiation” and “Silk Ribbon Initiation.” During the empowerment, the initiates are given a Five Buddhas crown to be placed on their heads, marking their receiving of the “Crown

¹⁰ XZJ104.837a.

¹¹ For examples, see T868:18.280b, T1119:20.509a, T973:19.376a, 378c and T980:19.410c.

Initiation” from the Five Buddhas. They are also given “silk ribbons that are long adornments hanging from the crown” during the “Silk Ribbon Initiation.”¹² The Metropolitan Museum of Art has in its collection a late fourteenth to early fifteenth century Five Buddhas crown and a single panel from a similar crown dating from the late eleventh to early twelfth century (see fig. 6).¹³ Several other such crowns are also kept in the Newark Museum Collection, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the State Hermitage Museum at St. Petersburg.¹⁴

Since the earliest actual use of the Five Buddhas crown in a Chinese Buddhist ritual-context is in Zhuhong’s 1606 *Yuqie yankou* liturgy, it is likely that Chinese Buddhists were influenced by the Tibetan use of the crown. Although the influence of Tibetan Buddhism on Chinese Buddhism was minimal during the Yuan period, by the Ming we see Chinese Buddhists adopting a much more open attitude to Tibetan Buddhism. This was probably due in part to the Ming emperors’ (who were Chinese, unlike the Yuan rulers) interests and patronage of Tibetan Buddhism. We will further explore this development of the *Yuqie yankou* rite in the Ming period in *Chapter Five*.

As mentioned earlier, the celebrant is further set apart from the rest of the performers by his execution of a complex set of *mudrās* and visualizations throughout the rite. The different recensions of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy from the earliest extant text down to the text most commonly used today contain special instructions in smaller print detailing the content of the visualizations and the corresponding *mudrās* at each step of

¹² Tenzin Gyatso, *The Kālachakra Tantra: Rite of Initiation for the Stage of Generation*, ed. and trans. Jeffrey Hopkins (London: Wisdom Publications, 1985), 110-111.

¹³ Steven M. Kossak and Jane Casey Singer, *Sacred Visions: Early Paintings from Central Tibet* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998), 72.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 73.

the rite (see fig. 7). It is clear from the text that the visualizations and *mudrās* detailed are reserved for the celebrant and not any of the other performers. Thus, the work of feeding hungry ghosts and delivering them from suffering is primarily accomplished by the celebrant. The other performers are merely there to assist the celebrant by providing the visual and aural effects through their presence and the vocal and percussive music they produce.

Aside from the celebrant, there are two other monastics who play major parts in the performance. They are identified as the *weina* (維那) who serves as the chief cantor and the *yuezhong* (悅眾) who functions as the assisting cantor. The *weina* and the *yuezhong* usually sit to the left and right of the celebrant respectively. In most cases, there are at least three other monastics in attendance. In most performances of the *Yuqie yankou* rite that I have attended in South-east Asia, Taiwan and mainland China, there were at least seven monastics participating in any single performance. According to Ōfuchi Ninji 大淵忍爾, however, the *Yuqie yankou* rite can be performed by as few as three monastics – a celebrant assisted by a chief cantor and an assistant cantor – and as many as nine.¹⁵ Although most performances have one celebrant officiating, the *Yuqie yankou* rite can also be held with three, five, seven or nine celebrants – the number of celebrants is always kept in odd rather than even numbers in accordance with the general principles of Chinese numerology where odd numbers are associated with *yang* (and thus ascendant and auspicious) while even numbers are *yin* (decay and darkness). When the

¹⁵ Ōfuchi Ninji, *Chūgokujin no shūkyō girei*, 15. In a performance held at the University of Virginia in March 2002, nine monastics were in attendance – the abbot of Hsi Lai Monastery (*Xilai si* 西來寺), Los Angeles, Shi Huichuan (釋慧傳) presided as the celebrant and eight nuns of the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Order served as assistants.

Yuqie yankou is performed as part of a larger ritual-occasion such as the *Shuilu* rite, there is usually a minimum of five celebrants at the *Yuqie yankou* rite. As mentioned in the last chapter, I witnessed three different but simultaneous performances of the *Yuqie yankou* rite at Puji Monastery during a visit to Mount Putuo on one of Miaoshan 妙善/Guanyin's anniversary-days, where there were three celebrants in one, five in another and seven in the third. The most common and affordable *Yuqie yankou* performances has only one celebrant.

While the celebrant, chief cantor and assistant cantor have very specific singing roles in the rite, other monastics participate in the rite by singing the chorus and playing various percussive instruments. Thus, in contrast to the *Lingbao Liturgy of Universal Salvation* analyzed by Boltz which appears to have clearly designated the different vocal roles for each of the performers, all the *Yuqie yankou* liturgical-texts that I have examined lacked such specificity. Details of this sort, while not explicitly stated in the *Yuqie yankou* liturgical-texts themselves, were probably passed on orally from teachers to students. In the course of my research on this rite, I have noted a surprisingly high level of uniformity in many aspects of the performance of the rite by Chinese Buddhist monastics. This level of uniformity is remarkable considering that my field-research on this rite has spanned several different countries and contexts. The process of standardization of this rite in the Late Imperial period of Chinese history will be examined in *Chapter Five*.

Aside from the above roles, there is usually one monastic who helps the celebrant at different parts of the rite by having the different ritual-objects at the celebrant's

disposal at the appropriate points in the rite, keeping the incense and candles burning in the various altars, and removing offerings or documents from the Yuqie Altar to be scattered or burned outside. This monastic is sometimes referred to as the “incense and lamp master” (*xiangdeng shi* 香燈師). When sponsors of the rite are unfamiliar with the rite which is usually the case, they are usually guided by yet another monastic who is known as the “guest master” (*zhike shi* 知客師). Although the position of a guest-master is traditionally an important position in a monastery, serving as the monastic responsible for entertaining and taking care of important guests such as government officials, lay patrons, visiting senior monks and clerical officials, in the ritual context, the guest-master is the monastic assigned to guide the lay sponsors through the whole rite – signaling to them when to stand, kneel, sit, prostrate or offer incense.¹⁶

A final group of persons directly involved in the performance of the rite are the sponsors of the rite. These are usually lay sponsors although monastics themselves sometimes become sponsors of the *Yuqie yankou* rite especially if the rite is performed for the benefit of their departed monastic teachers or fellow monastics or for their own parents and other close family members. One of the performances that I attended in Malaysia was in fact sponsored by the abbot of the monastery for the benefit of an elderly nun who had passed away at the monastery forty-nine days prior to the performance. Although the performance of this rite assumes a fairly advanced degree of training and expertise among participating monastics, this rite also has a very clear and public, performative role for its sponsors. Referred to in the *Yuqie yankou* liturgical text as the

¹⁶ See Yifa, *The Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 162, for the classic description of the position of guest-masters in twelfth century Chan monasteries.

“master of the feast” (*zhaizhu* 齋主) or simply, “donor” (*shizhu* 施主), the chief sponsor is expected *and* privileged to play an active part throughout the entire performance of the rite while others present in the audience – be they monastic or lay – have no real direct connections with or bearing upon the rite.¹⁷ Likewise, it should be noted here that the only other Chinese Buddhist rite that I know of that has a specific role for the lay chief-sponsor(s) choreographed into its performance is the *Shuilu* which is a rite that shares with the *Yuqie yankou* many similarities in terms of their textual sources, ritual-structure, goals and aims.

Percussive and Vocal Music in the Yuqie yankou

Rather than having a special ensemble of musicians as evidenced in the Daoist case, the monastics participating in the performance of the *Yuqie yankou* rite are responsible for playing the various percussive instruments. Although Ōfuchi’s research suggests that the *Yuqie yankou* rite was sometimes performed with the use of only three percussive instruments (in very rare cases where only three monastics are performing the rite – a celebrant, a chief cantor and an assistant cantor), in most performances of the rite there are at least seven different percussive instruments in the ensemble. Throughout the rite, the celebrant of the rite manipulates a pair of *vajra* handbells (*jingang ling* 金剛鈴) while the chief cantor is responsible for keeping the general tempo of the performance with the hitting of the “wooden-fish” (*muyu* 木魚). The wooden-fish is a

¹⁷ When a group sponsors the rite rather than an individual, the person(s) who has contributed the most to the sponsorship will get the honor of representing the entire group.

hallowed-out woodblock formed in a round shape that is supposed to resemble a fish with an exaggerated head and a disproportionate tail. The wood used is often of a relatively soft wood,¹⁸ camphor wood being a popular choice. These wooden-fish can vary in their sizes from four inches in diameter to as large as two to three feet in diameter (fig. 8). In *Yuqie yankou* performances, the smaller rather than the larger wooden-fish are used. When hit, the wooden-fish produces a sound that is mellower in tone than another instrument known as a “*mubang*” (木梆) that is sometimes but very rarely used in *Yuqie yankou* rites.¹⁹ A *mubang* is basically a solid block of hardwood trapezoidal in shape. It produces a sharp and crisp sound when hit. Just as in the case of his Daoist counterpart, the chief cantor plays the role of an overall conductor in the *Yuqie yankou* rite by using the wooden-fish to cue the other vocalists and instrumentalists in the performance.

Second in importance to the wooden-fish is the drum and bell set or *zhong'gu* (鐘鼓) or *ling'gu* (零鼓) that is usually handled by a senior monastic or at least one who is musically experienced and familiar with the *Yuqie yankou* rite. I have personally witnessed two performances of the *Yuqie yankou* rite where the elderly abbots of the monasteries in which the rites were performed were the instrumentalists for the drum and bell. As Boltz observed in the case of the *Lingbao Rite for Universal Salvation*, the chief cantor and the instrumentalist responsible for the drum and bell have to work in close collaboration throughout the rite to ensure coordination of the many facets of the

¹⁸ Bell Yung, *Cantonese Opera: Performance as Creative Process* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 24.

¹⁹ This instrument is however used in the *Shuilu* rites and in at least one *Yuqie yankou* rite performed in Hong Kong that I have an audio recording of.

rite.²⁰ There are many parts in the *Yuqie yankou* rite where the celebrant in fact receives his cue from the instrumentalist playing the drum and bell. At the same time, the instrumentalist playing the drum and bell also has to pay close attention to the celebrant as he needs to improvise the length of his drumming based on the length of time the celebrant takes to accomplish the different segments of the ritual activities laid out in the text. Hence, the performance of the *Yuqie yankou* rite is very much like any musical ensemble where its successful performance is highly dependent on the ability of its performers yielding, asserting and adjusting within a larger context that is technically highly organized or choreographed.

Returning to the drum and bell set, the drum used is barrel-shaped, about two feet in diameter and two and a half feet high. It is suspended on a wooden frame with its leather surface facing upwards. A bronze bell usually four to five inches in diameter and about six to eight inches in height is also hung on the same wood frame as the drum. While the drum is hit with a foot-long striker made of softwood that the instrumentalist grasp in his or her right hand, with the left hand, the bell is hit with a striker similar in length but with a small hammer-like ending made from any hardwood. The intended effect is to have a relatively more resonant but deeper sound from the drum and a sharper and higher pitch sound from the bell. While the bell is only hit by a striker with a small hammer-like end, the drum is frequently played with both the strikers. Using strikers with two different endings produces two alternating and contrasting drum sounds with higher and lower pitches.

²⁰ Boltz, "Singing to the Spirits," 185.

As for the assistant cantor, he usually is responsible for the playing of a small hand-chime known as a “*yinqing*” (引磬) (fig. 9). This hand-chime is a miniature version of a larger instrument referred to as “*daqing*” (大磬) (fig. 10). The *daqing* is a metal gong shaped to look like a Buddhist monastic’s begging-bowl. Thanks to the entrepreneurship of some Nepali-Tibetan businessmen, in recent years these gongs have been sold to unsuspecting but exotica-hungry tourists in Nepal, consumers in the West and on-line shoppers on the Internet as “Tibetan singing-bowls.”²¹ The traditional *daqing* can vary in size from four inches in diameter to two to three feet in diameter. It is usually struck with a padded wooden striker. The *yinqing* that is used in the *Yuqie yankou* rite is a miniature version of the *daqing*. Shaped like a *daqing*, it is mounted at the end of a wooden handle and is usually about an inch or an inch and a half in diameter. Its striker is a long and cylindrical-shaped metal. While the sound produced by a *daqing* is deep and mellow, the *yinqing* produces a sharp sound similar to that of chimes. In some cases, instead of playing a *yinqing*, the assistant cantor plays a *dangzi* (鐺子), which is a small unknobbed gong about six inches in diameter. This small gong is attached to a wooden handle much like the *yinqing* and is hit by a striker similar to the one used for striking the bell in the drum and bell set mentioned earlier. The *dangzi* produces sounds that are smoother in tone but louder in volume than a *yinqing*; but softer in volume and less resonating than the bell in the bell and drum set. If the assistant cantor is playing the *dangzi*, one of the assisting monastics will play the *yinqing* instead.

²¹ These so-called “Tibetan singing-bowls” do not figure at all in traditional Tibetan Buddhist ritual performances. Neither are they used in a secular context in Tibetan music.

In several performances of the *Yuqie yankou* rite I have witnessed, more than one *yinqing* is used.

Another percussive instrument that is used is a type of cymbals known as *hezi* or *jiazi* (鈸子). These cymbals are small – about eight inches in diameter. Although in most of the *Yuqie yankou* rite performances that I have witnessed only this type of cymbals are played, a larger set of cymbals known as the *dabo* (大鈸) is apparently used in the ensemble of the so-called *Cantonese Yankou* still performed in Hong Kong. This monastery, Zhulin Chan Monastery (*Zhulin chansi* 竹林禪寺) in New Territories, Hong Kong identifies itself as following the ritual-traditions of Qingyun Monastery (*Qingyun si* 慶雲寺) at Dinghu Monastery (*Dinghu shan* 鼎湖山), Guangdong province.²² These larger cymbals produce a loud and clashing sound that a Chinese audience would normally associate with traditional Chinese operas. In the context of the *Yuqie yankou* rite, they are usually used at the beginning and end of certain set formulaic patterns of sound played during the course of a performance. From my experience, it appears that these large cymbals are absent from *Yuqie yankou* rites that are performed in the more common and well-known Mount Gu and Sound of Ocean-Waves ritual-traditions prevalent among modern day Chinese Buddhists in China proper as well as in ethnic Chinese communities around the world.

While Daoist rites employ a wider range of musical instruments – including wind and string instruments – the musical instruments used in Buddhist rites and in particular,

²² Bell Yung notes that in Cantonese opera two types of *dabo* are used – the *wendabo* (文大鈸) or “large civil cymbals” is used for quiet scenes while the *wudabo* (武打鈸) or “large military cymbals” is used for battle scenes. Although I have not been able to verify this, from listening to an audio recording of a *Yuqie yankou* rite performed in the Cantonese-tradition, it appears that it is the *wudabo* that is used.

the *Yuqie yankou* rite are restricted to percussive instruments. These instruments do not actually produce any melodic sounds such as the reed and flute pipes (such as *dizi* 笛子) or bowed or plucked lutes (such as *erhu* 二胡 or *pipa* 琵琶) used in Daoist rites.²³ As Bell Yung observed, “Daoist rituals in many parts of China share a large repertoire of instrumental music with secular performance situations.”²⁴ Buddhist rites on the other hand are more easily distinguished from secular performances due to an apparent reluctance to include melodic instruments into their repertoire of ritual sounds. Within the different traditions of the performance of *Yuqie yankou* rite one can nonetheless see a spectrum of attitudes towards the use of percussive instruments that might in turn place the performance of the rite closer to or further away from popular, secular, traditional music found in Chinese operas. For example, as pointed out above, the Cantonese *Yuqie yankou* actually includes the *dabo* in its ritual ensemble whereas the Sound of Ocean-waves tradition leaves the *dabo* out. In a *Yuqie yankou* rite performed according to the Mount Gu tradition that I observed in Malaysia, a percussive instrument known as the *danda* (單打, literally, “single stroke gong”) was also used. The *danda* is a standard instrument used in Chinese opera and a Chinese audience familiar with Chinese opera easily recognizes its sound as normally belonging to secular performances.²⁵

²³ In a recently released video documentary on the Pure Land beliefs and practices observed at Mount Emei in western China – *Land of Ultimate Bliss* – a short segment featuring the performance of a *Yuqie yankou* evidences the use of a string instrument. Given that most my research on the *Yuqie yankou* performances are limited the geographic and cultural area of eastern China, it is likely that variations involving the use of string or even wind instruments exist among Buddhist communities in western China.

²⁴ Bell Yung, “The Nature of Chinese Ritual Sound,” in *Harmony and Counterpoint*, ed. Bell Yung, Evelyn S. Rawski and Rubie S. Watson (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 15.

²⁵ For a more complete description of the different types of musical instruments used in traditional Chinese opera, see Bell Yung, *Cantonese Opera, Performance as Creative Process* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 23-31.

Although we should be prudent in making rigid distinctions between secular theatrical performances and religious ritual performances, we can still understand the general hesitation on the part of Chinese Buddhists to fully incorporate secular music sound into its ritual performance. In hesitating, they are adopting a position that we can interpret as a subtle but efficacious strategy for self-definition and self-representation within a larger cultural and religious context.²⁶ Whereas traditional attempts at articulating difference, distinctiveness and the power that derives from difference have been carefully and continuously examined in modern research on Buddhism and Chinese religions by focusing on the development of doctrine and elitist-praxis such as intensive meditation or ascetic practices and behavior, until now, we have yet to pay enough attention to how this is accomplished via popular ritual practices and performances. Although the Chinese Buddhist hesitation in fully incorporating secular music sounds into its ritual ensemble might be partly due to basic Buddhist attitudes towards music and the emotions that ensue from or presupposes music (hence the rule prohibiting monastics from dancing, singing or even viewing or listening to such entertainments), we can also understand their reluctance as a conscious decision rooted in their understanding of this reluctance as a very effective means of defining themselves against their “others.” Therefore, in hesitating in the use of melodic instruments, Chinese Buddhists can differentiate and distinguish themselves from Daoists – those “others” whom Chinese Buddhists have from time to time cooperated with the Confucian-literati in accusing and

²⁶ The work of cultural anthropologists such as Victor Turner has unequivocally demonstrated the interweavings between ritual and theatre. The continuities and even blurring of categories between secular theatrical traditions and religious ritual traditions in China are particularly strong.

characterizing as practitioners of “debased, heterodox, and excessive or licentious” cults. It is interesting to note that in recent years, Chinese Buddhists have begun to appropriate melodic instruments but in a ritually peripheral manner as can be seen in the active production and sales of traditional Buddhist chants set to New Age “muzak” that combines traditional Chinese and Indian musical instruments with modern synthesizers. These recordings are “ritually peripheral” in that they are not normally used in formal ritual occasions. But there is already evidence of the use of modern musical instruments and technology encroaching into formal Chinese Buddhist rites. In a casual conversation with an abbot in Malaysia during my fieldwork in 1999, I was told that a troupe of monks from China performed a *Yuqie yankou* rite at the abbot’s temple that included the use of a music keyboard at his deceased teacher’s forty-ninth day ritual performances!

Apart from the pair of *vajra* handbells (which will be discussed below), the celebrant of the *Yuqie yankou* has at his disposal a ritual accoutrement that can be considered a percussive instrument. This is the *fachi* (法尺). The *fachi* is usually a small rectangular block of wood about three to four inches in length, an inch and a half in width and half an inch thick (fig. 11). It functions as a piece of percussive instrument when used as part of certain set formulaic patterns of sound played during the course of the rite and when used to produce “sound markers” signaling the end of different sub-sections of the rite. At other times in the rite, the celebrant uses the *fachi* in the same way as a judge uses a gavel. It is thus a sign of the celebrant’s legal authority in the spiritual realm. The celebrant hits the *fachi* on the surface of the table at certain

clearly marked points in the liturgy; especially at the beginning of passages where the celebrant is making authoritative pronouncements (“performative utterances” such as the summoning of the presence of ghosts and the pardoning of the crimes of the ghosts) or during the section of the rite when vows and precepts are conferred on the ghosts and spirits summoned to the rite. At other times, the *fachi* is held in the right-hand and used by the celebrant to trace invisible characters in the air or on the surface of the table. The *fachi* as a symbol of the authority of the celebrant simultaneously highlights the difference between the celebrant and the rest of the performers as well as establishes a hierarchy not only between them but also between the celebrant and the beneficiaries of the rite – the ghosts and spirits summoned to the rite. That the use of the *fachi*, also found in a secular context in the hands of local magistrates and judges when they preside over legal hearings, is a fact not lost to the human audience watching the performance of a *Yuqie yankou* rite.

The omnipresence and significance of the language and image of bureaucracy in Chinese religions has been pointed out in many other studies of Chinese religions and need not be repeated here except to note that this aspect of Chinese religions is clearly present in the *Yuqie yankou* rite. We might be tempted here to use this case to marvel at the power and persistence of the language of imperial bureaucracy in Chinese religions by pointing out how the celebrant of the *Yuqie yankou*, even though functioning in this rite as Guanyin, the quintessential embodiment of compassion and benevolence,

nevertheless also plays the role of a judge or a magistrate.²⁷ As an “esoteric rite,” however, the *Yuqie yankou* ideologically resonates with the trope of royalty and kingliness that one finds in esoteric Buddhism.²⁸ What we are also witnessing here is the confluence of the politicization of esoteric Buddhism that began in India with the Chinese Confucian emphasis on imperial bureaucracy. Thus, to move from the image of Guanyin as a mother or nurturer to that of a judge or an official is a radical jump but if we remember that the Guanyin in the *Yuqie yankou* is an esoteric Guanyin rather than an exoteric Guanyin, then the transformation becomes less startling. This Guanyin is the sovereign Guanyin, the lord or center of esoteric Buddhist *maṇḍalas* and he is also the judge and arbiter of the deeds of sentient beings, presiding over a bureaucracy of the realm of the dead.

The other percussive instrument used by the celebrant – the pair of *vajra* handbells – is highly significant in the ritual context of the *Yuqie yankou* (fig. 12). As the *vajra* handbells are usually identified with esoteric rites, their presence in a rite classified by Chinese Buddhists as belonging to the “esoteric” or “yoga” division of the Buddha’s teachings is fitting.²⁹ According to the liturgy, the sound of the *vajra* handbells “arouses and moves the ten directions” and “terrifies and awakens the malicious minds of maras.”³⁰ In Zhuhong’s commentary on the *Yuqie yankou*, he explains that the *vajra* handbell “manifests the ‘great self’” (*dawo* 大我). Lest one

²⁷ Find the references for the article on how female deities in Chinese religions are different from the bureaucratic male deities.

²⁸ Ron Davidson has most recently argued for the centrality of the metaphor of kingship in the development of esoteric Buddhism in medieval India. See, Ronald M. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

²⁹ Vajra handbells are otherwise not used in other Chinese Buddhist rites – including the *Shuilu*.

³⁰ Kamata, 833a.

mistakes this “great self” as the “self” understood by ordinary sentient beings, Zhuhong points us to the *Nirvana sūtra*’s definition of “self” as one of the four attributes of the Dharmakāya³¹ – the “true, permanent, quiescent and extinguished self” (*zhenchang jimie zi wo* 真常寂滅之我). Because this “self” – which is the Buddha-nature – is “empty,” it is capable of functioning. A *vajra* handbell is able to produce sounds precisely because of the empty or hollow space in the middle.³² Although the celebrant of the *Yuqie yankou* rite uses a pair of *vajra* handbells, in Japanese *mikkyō* and Tibetan *vajrayāna* rites, when *vajra* handbells are used they are only used singly. Some celebrants of the *Yuqie yankou* also use only one instead of two *vajra* handbells. A careful reading of Zhuhong’s commentary on the liturgy suggests that for Zhuhong, only one *vajra* handbell is used and it is to be held in the left hand.³³ Although the liturgy and the doctrinal significance of the *vajra* handbell calls for the use of only one *vajra* handbell, in actual practice these days, frequently two are used. This is another instance where the seeming fixity of a rite is in reality fluid and flexible enough for change and adaptation as necessary.

Two different types of music can be identified when we analyze the *Yuqie yankou* rite in the context of Chinese ritual sound – percussive music, which I have briefly discussed above, and vocal music. As Bell Yung pointed out, vocal music in Chinese ritual can “range from the minimally stylized modes of speaking indistinguishable from

³¹ The other three attributes being “permanent, blissful and pure.”

³² XZJ104.841a.

³³ Ibid.

everyday speech to singing that is identical to, say, that on an operatic or concert stage.”³⁴ Once again, when compared to the Lingbao Daoist *Liturgy for Universal Salvation*, the *Yuqie yankou* rite is less explicit with the different oral modes that should be used for delivering the text of the liturgy. Neither does it clearly identify who should deliver which parts of the text. Despite the lack of notation on the texts themselves, however, there is a general uniformity in the vocal roles of the different performers of the rite regardless of whether the rite is performed in Taiwan, Hong Kong, mainland China, Southeast Asia or the United States. It would appear that the different vocal roles and modes of delivery are taught to apprentices in the course of their training via participation in the rite whenever it is performed. It is however, not entirely impossible to distinguish several different modes of oral delivery of text by the performers of the *Yuqie yankou* rite by simply combining a careful reading of the text and watching performances of the rite.

From reading the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy, modes of oral delivery such as *modao* 默禱 (praying silently), *monian* 默念 (reciting silently) *chang* 唱 (singing), *song* 誦 (chanting), *yun* 云 (saying), *chen* 稱 (calling) and *bai* 白 (expressing) can be identified. Obviously, these terms are not mutually exclusive and it is very hard to try to distinguish them clearly. But these terms do demonstrate how the different modes of oral delivery in the *Yuqie yankou* rite can range from a minimally stylized mode of speaking (*yun*), which if found in other contexts we would probably not refer to as “vocal music,” to modes of delivery that we would have little difficulty recognizing as vocal music (i.e. modes of delivery such as *song* and *chang*). Of all these modes of oral

³⁴ Yung, “The Nature of Chinese Ritual Sound,” 15.

delivery, *modao* is the only deliverance mode reserved solely for the celebrant.³⁵ The entire performance consists of a balance of solo and group deliverances. Solo deliverances are mostly performed by the celebrant and also by the chief and assistant cantors when they are engaging in antiphonal exchanges. While the celebrant will join in most of the group deliverances, there are sections in the liturgy where he does not sing along. This occurs especially when the celebrant is engaged in some special ritual act by himself while the group is busy singing or chanting.

Thus far, I have identified three different traditions of the performances of the *Yuqie yankou*. These are the so-called Sound of Ocean-Waves tradition (*Haichao yin pai* 海潮音派) which forms the majority, the Mount Gu tradition (*Gushan pai* 鼓山派) preferred by a dwindling minority of monastics of the Fujian dialect group, and the rarely encountered Cantonese tradition (*Guangdong pai* 廣東派) that seems to have maintained a continuous performance-tradition to this day despite the ever encroaching influence of the Sound of Ocean-Waves tradition. While the Sound of Ocean-Waves and Mount Gu traditions only differ from one another in the dialect and certain musical tunes they each use, the Cantonese tradition uses a completely different liturgy for the rite.³⁶ Apart from these three performance traditions, I have also come across references to other performance traditions such as those who perform the *Yuqie yankou* according to the “Tianning Monastery tune” (*Tianning si qiang* 天寧寺腔) and those who perform it

³⁵ There is only one short section at the beginning of the liturgy where the celebrant is to use this mode to deliver the following prayer: “I (insert Dharma-name), of meager virtues and wisdom, pray that the Buddhas be kind and do not cease from being compassionate. Assist and protect us so that we dwell within the ocean-like assembly of Buddhas to perform the Buddhas’ activities.”

³⁶ I will discuss this interesting divergence in *Chapter Five*.

according to the “Mount Wutai tune” (*Wutaishan qiang* 五臺山腔).³⁷ Other sources speak of the “Zhe(jiang) lineage” (*Zhepai* 浙派)³⁸ and “Guangdong lineage” (*Guangdong pai* 廣東派).³⁹ I suspect that as more extensive research is done on the various regional and local manifestation and expression of Buddhism in China, we will uncover more of these regional monastic musical styles.

The Production Cost and Politics of the Yuqie yankou

Most of the contemporary performances of the *Yuqie yankou* rite are held at monasteries or temples. It is rare for *Yuqie yankou* performances to be held at private homes although this is not unknown and appears to have been more common from its inception up until the Republican period. Similarly, most of the *Yuqie yankou* performances celebrated today are usually sponsored by a group of devotees rather than by a single family or individual. In recent years, however, monasteries in China have been catering more to single families or individuals as the demand for the performance of the rite has increased with the rise of the middle-class in China as well as a greater influx of overseas Chinese visiting famous pilgrimage places in China.⁴⁰ Overseas Chinese pilgrims are generally keen to sponsor the performance of rites in China as the cost of such performances in China is a mere fraction of what it would normally cost back in

³⁷ Shi Shengkai, *Zhongguo hanchuan fojiao liyi* (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chupanshe, 2001), 77.

³⁸ Chen Pi-yen, 183.

³⁹ Professor Li Kwok Fu brought to my attention this particular style of Chinese Buddhist chanting centered at Qingyun Monastery in Guangdong province.

⁴⁰ Although most of the sponsors of these rites were once mostly overseas Chinese, sponsorship of rites by local Chinese citizens are increasingly rapidly. At a monastery on Mount Tiantai, I witnessed a week-long *Shuilu* rite involving at least forty monks, sponsored by a single local Chinese family from the Nanjing area. Similarly, at Mount Jiuhua, Mount Putuo, and Nanjing I saw the performance of rites such as the *Yuqie yankou* sponsored by local Chinese individuals and families.

their home countries. A single session of the *Yuqie yankou* performed in the summer of 2001 at Guoqing Monastery at Mount Tiantai by one celebrant and six assisting monastics cost RMB. 1500 (roughly US\$200). This included a fee for the monastery, expenses for the food-offerings, incense, candles and ritual-documents as well as individual cash-offerings to the monks – from the celebrant to the assisting monks, to the attending monks, the monk who wrote the ritual-documents and the monk who prepared the food-offerings. At the *Yuqie yankou* performed annually at Puti Cloister in Penang, Malaysia, the cash-offerings to the celebrant and assisting monks alone cost RM. 4500 (roughly US\$1100). Prices in Hong Kong and Taiwan are significantly higher. As demand increases, so has the supply-end of the equation. Thus, the ritual market in China is saturated with many young monastics willing and ready to perform the *Yuqie yankou* rite.

The income that monasteries bring in from the performances of the *Yuqie yankou* rite forms an important percentage of the annual income of monasteries. This is especially evident in the large, public monasteries where hundreds of monks resided. Holmes Welch's *Practice of Chinese Buddhism* contains some valuable statistics on the annual income and expenditure of several famous monasteries in southwestern China and points to the importance of the performance of the *Yuqie yankou* in subsidizing monastic income. While the majority of the income of most of these public monasteries was derived from land-rents, some of these monasteries also clearly depended on the income from the performance of rites. In the case of Tianning Monastery, a monastery with an estimate of eight hundred monks in residence during the Republican period, the income

derived from the performance of rites such as the *Yuqie yankou* amounted to 1/6 of its annual income. The importance of this source of income to Tianning Monastery's annual budget can best be seen when we consider the situation the monastery found itself in during the Japanese occupation of China. When rents ceased to meet the basic needs of the monastery due to the social and political unrest of the Japanese occupation, a former abbot of Tianning Monastery went to Shanghai and leased a building in the French concession and set up a branch temple of the Tianning Monastery which he named Zhuangyan Monastery (*Zhuangyan si* 莊嚴寺). The main activity at Zhuangyan Monastery was the performance of *Yuqie yankou*, repentance, *sūtra*-recitation rites for the wealthy Changzhou 常州 (where Tianning Monastery stands) families that moved to Shanghai during that period.⁴¹ In fact, Tianning Monastery's ritual tradition is recognized in the Republican period as one of the strongest and most representative southern Buddhist ritual-traditions, a reputation it has maintained to this day. Its tradition of Buddhist vocal music has an influence that went well beyond the religious context and is recognized even in secular circles.⁴²

Furthermore, the economics of the *Yuqie yankou* rite in contemporary China translate to more than just a case of open-market competition among Chinese Buddhist monastic communities within and without China. More than that, the sponsorship and performance of the *Yuqie yankou* and other such rites works as a field for overseas Chinese, local Chinese of different social and economic backgrounds (especially the

⁴¹ Welch, *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism*, 233-239

⁴² Stephen Jones, *Folk Music of China: Living Instrumental Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 27.

emerging middle-class) and Chinese monastics to negotiate power, identity, and culture. This field is extremely versatile and flexible but yet influential and far-reaching. It is in fact, to borrow Kenneth Dean's words (in his study of the "Three in One" cult in modern China) a, "transregional, transnational organizational network" that is often times more "capable of mobilizing more human and capital resources" than even local governments.⁴³ Buddhism, though considered from time to time as a "foreign" religion in China, has proven to be, among other things, an extremely useful and pliable factor in China's dealings and status on a regional and international level. Holmes Welch's *Buddhism Under Mao* presents a detailed study of how even Mao and his generation of Communist Chinese leaders recognized the currency that Buddhism promised in China's relations with its neighbors. This particular factor clearly protected Buddhism during the infamous Cultural Revolution in ways that did not apply to indigenous Daoism as it lacked any regional or international significance.⁴⁴ In today's China, Buddhism similarly has this power as China's neighbors are still mostly Buddhist, even if only nominally so. Furthermore, Buddhism also serves as an important network in the web of connections between China and ethnic Chinese communities in Asia and the West – communities that are often educationally, socially and economically strong in their respective home countries. In concrete terms this translates to a continuous and ever-growing flow of resources into China via Buddhist networks of pilgrimage, ritual-sponsorship and the reconstruction and expansion of monasteries and sacred sites. In less concrete terms (but possibly more wide-ranging in effect), Buddhism is one of the

⁴³ Kenneth Dean, *Lord of the Three in One* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 224.

⁴⁴ Holmes Welch, *Buddhism Under Mao* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972).

several channels of keeping ethnic Chinese communities around the world tied to China and its economic, and thus, political, well being.

Ritual Setting, Staging, Accoutrements and Timing of the Yuqie yankou

In contemporary performances of the *Yuqie yankou* rite, the monastery is the most common venue. Some monasteries in China even have specific halls designated as “Yankou halls” (*yankou tang*, 齋口堂); much like the “Shuilu halls” (*shuilu tang* 水陸堂) of monasteries of the Song and Ming periods. At Chinese Buddhist monasteries outside of China proper, it is more common for *Yuqie yankou* rites to be held at the main shrine hall of the monastery. This might be related to the infrequency of such performances and the lack of space at such monasteries or temples outside of China. Although most performances these days are done at monasteries, available records indicate that in earlier periods, *Yuqie yankou* performances were also held at homes of lay patrons. As evident in the Republican-period monk, Chenhua’s biography that I quoted from in *Chapter One*, many monks who “worked the funerals” were hired by lay patrons to perform the *Yuqie yankou* and other post-mortem rites at the homes of these customers. In the volume on Chinese Buddhism in the series *Ajia Bukkyō shi* (*History of Asian Buddhism*), Makita Tairyō provides a “price-list” for different rites offered by a Chinese monastery in the Qing period and for each of the rites offered, patrons had the option of holding the performances at the monastery or at private residences.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Makita Tairyō, *Ajia Bukkyō shi: Chugoku hen* (Tokyo: Kōsei shuppansha, 1976), 135.

In contemporary performances of the *Yuqie yankou*, at least two altars (*tan* 壇) are used. More commonly, however, three altars are arranged. The main altar where the rite takes place is aptly referred to as the Yuqie Altar. This altar is set up so that it faces the main entrance of the hall where the *Yuqie yankou* is performed. The whole altar is elevated on a stage.⁴⁶ While almost all other rites in Chinese Buddhism are performed with the officiating monastics and lay patrons facing the main altar, in the *Yuqie yankou* rite, the officiating monastics actually perform the rite while seated on the altar itself. In particular, the celebrant is seated on a higher seat, in the central position of the altar. Placed directly in front of the celebrant is a *maṇḍala*-plate (*mandaluo pan* 曼荼羅盤); also known as *maṇḍala dharma*-platform (*mandaluo fatai* 曼荼羅法台) – an upside down metal plate roughly six to eight inches in diameter and an inch and a half in height – upon which is placed a five-pointed *vajra* with a pair of miniature pestles “jeweled-pestles” (*baocuo* 寶錯), each about five inches in length (fig 13 and 14). He is also provided with a small vase known as the “ambrosial vase” (*ganlu ping* 甘露瓶) that detaches into two parts – the top part is a vase while the lower, a miniature bowl shaped like a monastic’s begging bowl (fig. 15). Two small bowls of rice-grains mixed with flower petals and an incense holder shaped like a Chinese dragon are also placed on the celebrant’s table (fig. 16). Several platters of food-offering such as steamed buns, sweets, peanuts, cookies, flower-petals and coins can also be found at the celebrant’s table. Finally, a pair of steamed bread known as “Buddha’s hands” (*foshou* 佛手)

⁴⁶ Most performances of the rite use stages that are raised around six inches to a foot. There are also some (for example, the rite performed at Puti Cloister) that are raised four to five feet high.

shaped in the form of a *mudrā* with the tip of the thumb resting on the nail of the little finger also form part of the ritual accoutrements used by the celebrant. Finally, a statue of Guanyin is placed on the table in front of the celebrant, with its back facing the celebrant. In front of this statue are the usual of incense, a pair of candles and offerings of fruits and flowers. Other seats and tables are arranged to the left and right of this main table for the assisting monastics and their texts and percussion instruments.

The other altar is the Mianran Altar (*Mianran tan* 面燃壇) that is usually a makeshift altar set up in the space directly outside of the hall where the *Yuqie yankou* is being performed. This altar is named after the hungry ghost in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* except that Mianran or “Burning-face” is now no longer just some lowly, miserable, hungry ghost. As we will see in later chapters, the hungry ghost in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* undergoes a gradual transformation from being a hungry ghost in search of sustenance, to a “ghost-king” (*guiwang* 鬼王), to the “Great Shi” (*dashi* 大士, a Chinese translation of the Sanskrit *mahāsattva*) to finally being a wrathful aspect of Guanyin himself. The Mianran Altar is normally constructed opposite from but facing the Yuqie Altar. In some recent performances, this whole area with the Yuqie Altar on one end and the Mianran Altar on the other, with a rectangular space between them is sectioned-off with ropes. Several different explanations are given. One that I have heard, clearly a practical and obvious reason, is the need to discourage the lay patrons who attend this rite from rushing forward scrambling for the food-offerings that are tossed into that space towards the end of the

rite.⁴⁷ By sectioning-off this space, it will also ensure that no one will step on the food tossed thus making the clean-up a much harder task. Another different but related explanation is that since the primary beneficiaries of the *Yuqie yankou* rite are the hungry ghosts and other beings from the realm of the dead (*youjie* 幽界), the space in between the two altars should be left undisturbed so that these entities will not be annoyed or provoked into causing harmful acts of the supernatural-kind upon the living.

Structurally, the Mianran Altar consists of two levels – a higher level where a paper placard or a wooden tablet with the name of Mianran written on it is enshrined and a lower level where offerings to Mianran are placed.⁴⁸ Sometimes a painting of Mianran is used and when the *Yuqie yankou* is performed in the context of a larger rite such as the *Shuilu* or the Ghost Festival, a papier-mâché Mianran is used. These papier-mâché Mianrans are usually at least ten to twelve feet in height and not infrequently close to twenty feet (see fig. 17). In front of Mianran is another placard or tablet for “the myriad spirits of the Three Realms” (*sanjie wanling* 三界萬靈).⁴⁹ It is often understood that this altar is the venue where spirits who are without relations – the so-called “orphaned-souls” (*guhun* 孤魂) – receive the food-offerings. Whereas one’s ancestors and other related spirits are mostly considered to be friendly and benevolent spirits, these orphaned-spirits are usually regarded with suspicion and treated with extreme caution – if not with fear. Thus, many informants whom I have interviewed in

⁴⁷ The significance of this practice – i.e. of the lay patrons scrambling and often times pushing and shoving one another for a share of the food that are technically tossed out for the consumption of hungry ghosts – will be explored later in this paper.

⁴⁸ Usually written as “The Lotus-seat of the Great Being and Bodhisattva Mianran Who Breaks Open the Iron Enclosure-mountain (of the Earth-prisons)” (*Tieweishan kai mianran dashi pusa lianzuo* 鐵圍山開面燃大士菩薩蓮坐).

⁴⁹ I have chosen to translate “wan” (萬) as “myriad” instead of its literal meaning of “ten thousand.”

different performances of the *Yuqie yankou* rite explained to me that the main reason why Mianran is enshrined at this particular altar where the orphaned-spirits are fed is so that Mianran can keep them in order and under control. Mianran, when depicted either in painting or as a papier-mâché icon, is a large, built, but stout and ferocious deity attired in the uniform of an ancient Chinese general with three eyes, four fangs, a lolling tongue and a face with flames blazing (hence Mianran/Burning-Face). Placing this altar outside of the main hall where the *Yuqie yankou* rite is performed further emphasizes the “otherness” and the “unrelatedness” of the orphaned-spirits that are euphemistically (but ironically) referred to as “the good brethren” (*hao xiongdi* 好兄弟). As Arthur Wolf pointed out, these orphaned-spirits of the supernatural world are analogized by the Chinese with the homeless, beggars and social-outcasts of their society. As one does not invite such undesirable and dangerous characters into one’s home for meals but nonetheless need to offer these unsavory characters something in order to keep them from causing troubles or harm to oneself and one’s family, one similarly offers food to the orphaned-spirits to keep them from causing harm to oneself and one’s relatives who are now in the other world.⁵⁰ Thus, these orphaned-spirits are fed on these occasions but they are not invited into the ritual space proper – the main Yuqie Altar. This attitude towards the orphaned-spirits/hungry ghosts is also operative in Daoist contexts. Duane Pang explains,

Since the hungry souls or the *preta* represent the alienated and the outcast, their altar cannot be included as a part of the pure area, that is, the temple purified by Taoist ritual. But since they are to be reintegrated into the community, or sent

⁵⁰ Arthur P. Wolf, “Gods, Ghosts and Ancestors” in *Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society*, ed. Arthur P. Wolf (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), 131-82.

off to the heavens, or at least fed in the communal banquet, a special altar must be set up which connects the ritually outcast souls with the spiritually pure ritual area. This altar is usually set up directly in front of the temple in the plaza, under the open skies.⁵¹

Perhaps not too surprisingly, the arrangement of the ritual-space – with the Yuqie Altar on one end and the Mianran Altar on another, thus forming a rectangular space – resembles the spatial orientation that one finds in popular, temple festivals. At many Chinese temple festivals that celebrate the feast days of various god and deities, performances of Chinese opera form an indispensable element in the celebration. At these occasions, temporary bamboo stages are built in front of the temples hosting the festivals. Some temples even have permanent theatre stages within the temple complex. Whether temporary or permanent, “the back walls of temple and theatre respectively mark out the two shorter sides of a rectangular space of which the longer sides are the boundaries of the auditorium....”⁵² When the local topography does not permit the building of a temporary opera stage that directly faces the temple, a makeshift temple facing the theatre stage is sometimes built and icons of the gods and goddesses of the temple are moved from the permanent temple and installed at the temporary temple for the duration of the festival. Performances of traditional Chinese operas at temple festivals are first and foremost for the entertainment of the gods. The human audience that comes together at these festival-performances is almost incidental and always dispensable.⁵³ As Barbara E. Ward observed, this spatial orientation not only reflects

⁵¹ Pang, 102.

⁵² Barbara E. Ward, “Not Merely Players: Drama, Art and Ritual in Traditional China,” *Man*, New Series 14, issue 1 (1979): 25.

⁵³ Many have noted that at these festivals, the opera performances are frequently held at times where the human audience is almost non-existent – in the middle of the day when it is simply impossible for anyone

the fact of the gods as the primary audience of the theatre performances, but also resonates with traditional Chinese geomantic symbolism that ultimately grounds itself on Chinese understandings of the relationship between the macrocosm and microcosm, between the individual and society and between the human and the universe. Therefore, Ward, in relation to her discussion on the relationship between ritual and theatre in China, suggests:

It is not, perhaps, too fanciful to regard the whole rectangular space enclosed by the arms of the temple on the one hand and the stage on the other as a kind of ritual precinct, temporarily marked out for the duration of the festival, in which the south-facing gods and the north-facing actors are flanked by the Yang and Yin influences of east and west respectively and the audience sits, as it were, in the centre, like China itself, the Middle Kingdom, in the centre of the cosmos under Heaven.⁵⁴

The layout or stage setting of *Yuqie yankou* performances is obviously identical to the physical layout of many temple festivals. Just as the professional actors perform on the theatre stage on the northern end of the “ritual precinct” of temple festivals, the monastic performers of the *Yuqie yankou* sit on one end of the rectangular ritual-space acting out their drama of feeding and liberating ghosts of all kinds. Likewise, just as the gods at temple festivals sit on the southern end of the “ritual precinct” enjoying the entertainment offered to them, the multitudes of ghosts sit under the watchful eyes of Mianran waiting to be fed and liberated. This resonance between theatre and ritual, between Chinese operatic performances and Buddhist ghost-feeding rites is more than a mere coincidence. The layout of Daoist ritual spaces are even more explicitly linked to

to sit under the scorching sun to watch the performance or at two or three in the morning when most have gone to sleep.

⁵⁴ Ward, 28.

such geomantic symbolism. The spatial layout of the Buddhist *Yuqie yankou* rite was clearly influenced and informed by indigenous Chinese principles; geomantic and spatial principles that were well in place by the time Buddhism was introduced into China.

Aside from these two altars, there is usually a third altar that is placed either within the same hall as where the main Yuqie Altar is set up or in a separate hall. As pointed out earlier, at monasteries where they have a special *Yuqie yankou* hall with a permanent Yuqie Altar, there is usually also another altar set to a side. This is the Rebirth Altar described earlier. At this altar, either a single Amitabha or Amitabha with his two attendant bodhisattvas Guanyin and Dashizhi 大勢至 are enshrined. The Rebirth Altar is also where placards with the names of the departed ancestors of the sponsors of the *Yuqie yankou* rite are enshrined for the duration of the rite. The place of prominence on this altar is usually reserved for the several placards written with the names of the deceased most closely related to the monastery where the rite is performed or in the case of performances of the rite sponsored by single families or individual, the names of those to whom the sponsors are dedicating the rite to. Kamata Shigeo 鎌田茂雄 gives an example of the names written on five main placards on a Rebirth Altar at a *Yuqie yankou* rite held at Fuhai Chan Cloister (*Fuhai chanyuan* 福海禪院) in Singapore in the 1970's. In the central position: "The Lotus-seat of the Founder of this Cloister, of the Fiftieth Generation of the Caodong Lineage, the Venerable Preceptor, Hongzong Jinhui" (*Benyuan kaishan caodong zong diwushi si hongzong jinhui laoheshang lianzuo* 本院開山曹洞宗第五十世上弘下宗今會老和尚蓮坐). To the right of this placard are

two other placards: “The Lotus-seat of All the Male and Female Orphaned-souls that are Without Offerings, the Masters of the Frozen-forest⁵⁵” (*Hanlin huizhu nannu wusi guhun deng lianzuo* 寒林會主男女無祀孤魂眾等蓮坐) and “The Lotus-seat of the Successive Generations of Deceased Ancestors of the General Public Residing in this Country, those of the Different Surnames and Families” (*Guozhu dazhong gexing menzhong lidai xiaobi zongqing lianzuo* 國住大眾各性門中歷代孝妣宗親蓮座). To the left of the central placard are yet another two placards: “The Lotus-seat of the Heroic-souls of the Brave-soldiers of the Navy, Army and Air-force Who Perished in War” (*Hailukong zun wangjiangshi yinghun lianzuo* 海陸空軍亡狀士英魂蓮坐) and “The Lotus-seat of the Enlightened-spirits of the Various Levels, those who are Deceased and Later Transformed, the Masters of the Merit Hall of this Cloister” (*Benyuan gongde tangzhu xianwang houhua zhuwei juejing lianzuo* 本院功德堂主先亡後化諸位覺靈蓮座).⁵⁶ In performances of the *Yuqie yankou* that I have observed in South-east Asia, Taiwan and China, it is clear that participants considered the main occupants of the Mianran Altar to be the host of unrelated (*wuyuan* 無緣), anonymous, orphaned-souls (*guhun*) that are lacking in descendents to take care of and to take “ownership” (they are referred to as “without owner” [*wuchu* 無主]) of them whereas the main occupants of the Rebirth Altar are always ancestors or departed friends but rarely the unknown or unrecognized dead. Although I have not heard anyone – be it the monastic performers or the lay sponsors – associating this distinction with the need to clearly distinguish

⁵⁵ Buddhists deliberately created a pun by using the character “frozen” 寒 instead of the “correct” character 翰 to refer to the famous Confucian Hanlin Academy. See Weller, 194, n.19.

⁵⁶ Kamata Shigeo, *Chūgoku no Bukkyō girei* (Tokyo: Daizo Shuppansha, 1986), 215-16.

between the categories between ghosts and ancestors, the spatial demarcation witnessed here strongly suggests that this issue is at play. Ghosts, by definition, are the unknown, the dispossessed and the unrelated, and hence not to be indiscriminately invited into the home/temple whereas ancestors are family and thus to be treated accordingly.

Particularly at this Rebirth Altar and the Mianran Altar, all varieties of vegetarian food-offerings in large quantities are laid out on rows of tables. This is especially true in the case of a publicly sponsored *Yuqie yankou* rite. These offerings can sometimes take up as many as ten to twenty large tables. The food-offerings consist of all types of fruits in season, mock meat such as pork, poultry and seafood cooked in as many ways as one could imagine, row after row of bowls filled with rice, tea, water, rice-gruel, sweets, cakes, breads, bags of uncooked grains such as rice, beans and other dry, uncooked, bulk-food are placed on these tables. Chopsticks and spoons are also arranged in rows on the tables. As this rite is primarily aimed at feeding the multitudes of hungry-ghosts, it is only befitting that as much food as possible be prepared for this occasion.

The absence of meat, poultry or any animal products in the *Yuqie yankou* rite identifies it as a Buddhist and rather than a Daoist ghost-feeding rite. Daoist ghost-feeding rites, as discussed by Duane Pang and Robert Weller, usually include the offering of non-vegetarian food to the ghosts. As Pang pointed out, it is the practice at Daoist ghost-offering *pudu* rites to slaughter a pig and a goat and offer them raw to the hungry ghosts invited. In Taiwan, the slaughtering of pigs as offerings at *pudu* rites even turned into competitions where local communities and individuals competed with

each other to raise and slaughter the fattest pigs.⁵⁷ The meat of the animals is apparently first offered raw as the ghostly recipients of the fete are “the alienated dead.” Only after the *pudu* rite as been completed is the meat cooked and once again offered to the ghosts who have now made the transition from the guilty, alienated and dangerous to the pardoned, reintegrated and harmless. However, Pang also noted that under the influence of Buddhism, Daoist *pudu* rites in Honolulu have changed “the quantity and style of meat offerings.”⁵⁸ Weller’s study suggests another reason for the change in food-offerings in Daoist and popular ghost-offering rites performed during the annual Ghost Festival in Taiwan. Since the beginning of the rule of the Nationalist government in Taiwan, it had consistently attempted to curtail what it considered “the excessiveness and waste” generated in the annual celebration. Government campaigns were launched year after year to discourage the massive spending associated with the *pudu* rites. Instead of ritual sacrifices, the government encouraged the re-channeling of resources to local re-construction and charities. Local community leaders who felt a need to toe the official, government line, attempted (with minimal success) to discourage extravagance. In a typical case, the local community leaders of the village of Sanxia tried to convince the community that for the *pudu* rite of 1978, only one set of meat offerings is to be prepared and all members of the community should only bring fruits. But as Weller reported, strong objections were raised instantly and in the end “The topic was dropped and, in fact, everyone brought meat as usual.”⁵⁹

⁵⁷ See Robert Weller, *Unities and Diversities in Chinese Religion* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987).

⁵⁸ Pang, 103 and 120.

⁵⁹ Weller, 57.

I should clarify that my discussion of the ritual setting of the *Yuqie yankou* has thus far been limited to contemporary performances of the rite. This is not due to an oversight or a reluctance to re-construct a setting based on historical textual sources. Although several different recensions of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy are extant – beginning with the probably Yuan-period *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* to the *Huashan yankou* liturgy most commonly used today – none of them contain any significant instructions on the different altars, spatial details and layout and arrangement of food-offerings for the rite. This is in contrast to the *Shuilu* where extensive notes on the set-up of the different altars, the necessary ritual paraphernalia and formal documents are all provided. One possible explanation for the difference is that the *Shuilu* – which takes seven days to perform and up to seven separate ritual sites – is a significantly much larger undertaking compared to the *Yuqie yankou* and thus the need for clear notes and details is greater. Although a search among Chinese historical sources for descriptions of the ritual-setting for the *Yuqie yankou* has yielded little, a surprisingly detailed description can be found in a Japanese source published in 1799 by Nakagawa Tadahide 中川忠英 (1753-1830). Based on extensive interviews conducted with Chinese merchants who lived and traded in Nagasaki in the late eighteenth century, Nakagawa was able to re-construct many details of the life and social customs of the Chinese people, especially of the then Jiangnan and Zhejiang provinces.

In this six-volume work which Nakagawa aptly titled *An Account of Ordinary Life in Qing China* 清俗紀聞 (*Shinzoku kibun*), a description of the *Yuqie yankou* rite together with a set of line-drawings of the ritual-setting and accoutrements can be found.

Although the description and drawing for the Yuqie Altar is remarkably similar to the set-up still used today at performances of the rite (see fig. 18), the Mianran Altar or what is here referred to as “Pilu Altar” (*Pilu tan* 毘盧壇) is significantly more elaborate than the Mianran Altars used in present-day performances. The Pilu Altar consists of two tiers and flanked by several other smaller structures. Like the present-day Mianran Altar, the Pilu Altar is a temporary, makeshift altar built to face the Yuqie Altar, with each altar placed at each end of a rectangular ritual-space. On the top tier of the Pilu Altar are seven placards bearing the names of “the seven Buddhas.” These seven Buddhas are however, not the seven Buddhas invoked in the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy.⁶⁰ Instead, the list given in *Shinzoku kibun* consists of: Śākyamuni, Guanyin, Amitābha, Dizang, Ānanda, Yinhun 弓魂,⁶¹ and the generic “all Buddhas of the ten directions.”⁶² Although these are not the seven Buddhas invoked in the liturgy, these seven divinities are invoked and invited at different junctures of the rite.

On the lower tier of the Pilu Altar are six other placards bearing the generic, referents for local and guardian deities without any specific names or identities explicitly addressed. Rather, they are recognized by their group or corporate identities that are hybridizations of Indian Buddhist and indigenous Chinese spirit-taxonomies: the gods of the Heavenly Office, the spirits of the Earth Office, Yama-officials of the Underworld

⁶⁰ They are respectively: Baosheng, Libuwei, Guangboshen, Miaoseshen, Duobao, Amituo and Shijian guangda weide zizai guangming. See, Kamata, 857b-859a.

⁶¹ Yinhun (“Guiding Souls”) appears to be a variant name of an earlier figure known as Yinlu (“Guiding on the Road”), a bodhisattva-figure whose origins are, as demonstrated by Ng, related to the development of the underworld theme of Dizang in China. See discussion later in pp. 186-187.

⁶² Nakagawa Tadahide, *Shinzoku kibun* (1799; Taipei: Dali zhupanshe, 1982), 13:18.

Office⁶³, dragon-kings of the Water Office, Dharma-protectors of the monasteries, and city-gods (*chenghuang* 城隍) and local earth-deities (*dizhu* 地主). In front of these placards is a placard for Mianran – identified here as “Jiaomian the Great *Shi*” 焦面大士. Placards bearing the names of the Six Realms are placed on both sides of the main Pilu Altar with the placards arranged facing each other. On a separate table right in front of the main Pilu Altar is placard with dedicated to “all the male and female orphaned-souls of the water and land” (*Shuilu yiqie nannu guhun deng* 水陸一切男女孤魂等). On the four corners of this whole area are four other small tables with placards bearing the names of the four continents of traditional Buddhist cosmology – Pūrvavideha, Jambudvīpa, Aparagodānīya, and Uttarakuru. Like contemporary performances of the rite, an abundance of offerings are placed at the Pilu Altar – offerings of flowers, incense, lamps, and food-offerings of all varieties. *Shinzoku kibun* also records the offering of “mountains” – papier-mâché structures measuring about nine feet high. Each of these structures are shaped like mountains and at the top of each is a pennant that identifies each of them as mountains of gold, silver, copper and clothes. These mountains are burnt at the end of the rite alongside the placards bearing the names of guests invited to the rite (see fig. 13). We can thus see, from the description here in the *Shinzoku kibun*, that performances of the *Yuqie yankou* in eighteenth century southeastern China had a much more elaborate staging than most of the performances we find today. In many ways, the picture painted in the *Shinzoku kibun* is reminiscent of the staging we still find

⁶³ Literally, “Yin Office” (*yinfu* 陰府).

in Daoist performances of the *pudu* and especially *jiao* 醮 rites.⁶⁴ It is therefore not a coincidence that anthropologists studying Chinese religion have often observed that most non-expert, ordinary, lay patrons of these rites are not always cognizant of the differences between the Daoist and Buddhist ghost-feeding rites. Even when they exhibited awareness of the differences, it rarely led to a discussion and much less debate on the relative efficacy and validity of these two ghost-feeding traditions. Furthermore, as suggested by Pang, even the significantly more elaborate Daoist staging and performance of the *pudu* has been simplified and changed in response to the growing influence of the Buddhist renewal movement among Chinese communities. It is possible that the relative simplicity of today's *Yuqie yankou* staging is the result of the protestant-trend in late Qing and Republican period Chinese Buddhism that I discussed earlier in *Chapter One*.

As for the time of the day for the performance of the *Yuqie yankou*, according to a “Preface” written by Deqi Ding'an of Baohua Monastery to the 1693 edition of the Baohua Monastery's *Yuqie yankou* text – *Yuqie yankou shishi yaoji* 瑜伽餓口施食要集

⁶⁴ *Jiao* rites are communal rites of renewal performed by Daoist priests and usually take from several days to a week to complete. Larger *jiao* rites are performed in cycles of twelve years while smaller *jiao* rites occur more frequently. Whether large or small, each *jiao* rite includes the performance of a *pudu* rite of ghost-feeding. In many ways, the Buddhist equivalent of the *jiao* rite is the *Shuilu* (where the *Yuqie yankou* is similarly performed as part of the larger ritual repertoire offered in the *Shuilu*). For studies on the *jiao*, see Michael Saso, *Taoism and the Rite of Cosmic Renewal* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1972) and John Lagerwey, *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History* (New York: Macmillan, 1987). Several other scholars have more recently addressed the *jiao* rites in a variety of ways to illuminate the nature of Chinese religion: Stephen Feuchtwang, *The Imperial Metaphor: Popular Religion in China* (London: Routledge, 1992), Kenneth Dean, *Taoist Ritual and Popular Cults in Southeast China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) and Robert Hymes, *Way and Byway: Taoism, Local Religion, and Models of Divinity in Sung and Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

– the rite should only be performed between seven to eleven o’clock in the evening.⁶⁵ If the rite is performed outside of this window of four hours, “the ghosts and spirits will not be able to receive the food.” As early as the seventh century, we have Daoshi 道世, (d. 683) quoting the *Piluo sanmei jing* 毘羅三昧經 in his hundred and twenty fascicle encyclopedia on Buddhism – *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林 – explaining that there are four different eating times – daybreak is when the gods eat, noon when it is a time “in accordance with the Dharma” when Buddhas, bodhisattvas and members of the monastic order eat, sunset when animals eat and nightfall when ghosts eat.⁶⁶ Hence, Ding’an’s comment partially reflects this generally accepted characterization of the appropriate eating times for the different groups of beings.⁶⁷ At least in contemporary practice, this time limit does not necessarily mean that the *Yuqie yankou* rite cannot begin anytime before seven in the evening but that when the performance reaches the section of the rite where the hungry ghosts and other spirits are fed, it should be during those four hours between seven and eleven p.m. Hence, most of the *Yuqie yankou* performances that I have attended started sometime around five to six p.m. and ended around nine or ten p.m. A monastic of Taiwan-based Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Order explained that most *Yuqie yankou* performances by Fo Guang Shan monastics begin at three in the afternoon and end at about seven in the evening. At the Fo Guang Shan performance of the rite at the University of Virginia on March 30, 2002, the rite actually started at ten in the morning

⁶⁵ Ding’an specifies the *xu* 序 (7-9 pm) and *hai* 亥 (9-11 pm) hours – the eleventh and twelfth of the Twelve Branches system.

⁶⁶ T2122:53.611c-612a.

⁶⁷ This division of the different eating times continues to bear upon contemporary ritual practices beyond the *Yuqie yankou*. When the “Offering to the Gods” (*Gong zhutian* 供諸天) rite based on the *Jingguangming jing* (*Suvarnaprabhāsa sūtra*) is performed these days, it normally begins at the early hours of the day – in most cases as early as three in the morning.

and ended at around four in the afternoon. A scheduling conflict for the venue of the performance necessitated an uncharacteristically early commencement of the rite.

Daoist *pudu* rites are also generally held in the evenings although Ōfuchi reports that in the 1970's many *pudu* rites in Taiwan were celebrated in the daytime as it was more convenient for the general public participating at the rites.⁶⁸ Boltz notes that like the Buddhist tradition, Lingbao Daoist ritual-traditions originating from Mount Tiantai in the Song period stipulate that *pudu* rites should only be carried out in the night. Aside from whatever doctrinal or ritual significance that each of the respective traditions might provide, both the Buddhist and Daoist preference for the night performance of the *Yuqie yankou/pudu* rites reflects and reinforces a general Chinese belief that rites performed for the benefit of ghosts and spirits should be performed after sunset when *yin* rather than *yang* is ascendant and dominant.

These variations and adaptations clearly show that even though the texts specify so-called appropriate times for the performance of the rite, the performed rite (rather than the textual rite) is reasonably pliable and adaptive to the contingencies that come with each and all ritual-events. As I will further demonstrate in the next chapter on the *Yuqie yankou* liturgical text and its performed rite, the fixity of liturgical texts is always mitigated by the contingencies of ritual performances. It is thus imperative that those of us who study liturgy and liturgical traditions not lose sight of the constant negotiation between fixity and fluidity that exists between texts and praxis.

⁶⁸ Ōfuchi, 391.

CHAPTER THREE:

The Liturgy of the Yuqie yankou in Performance

What the book was, the performance
has become....

-- Richard Schechner, *The Future
of Ritual*

Writing in the late seventeenth century, both Sanfeng Fazang and Juche Jixian complained in the postscripts of their respective recensions of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy that there were simply too many different liturgies of the *Yuqie yankou* in circulation.¹ Jixian appeared to be particularly critical of the existing liturgies. He characterizes them to be “extremely new, and strange” and even outright “fabricated” (*duzhuan* 杜撰).² The proliferation of *Yuqie yankou* liturgies led to a saying apparently current during Jixian’s times: “Seven traditions of *yankou* and eight traditions of *chan*” (*qijia yankou bajia chan* 七家齋口八家懺).⁴ Some clerics sought to correct the situation by redacting existing liturgies while others tried to fix the problem by adding to extant liturgies. Most of these attempts redacted existing *Yuqie yankou* liturgies along the

¹ XZJ104.934b, 984b.

² XZJ104.984b.

³ “*Chan*” or “confessionals” refers to confessional rites that have become a popular Buddhist practice in which both monastics and laity participate in or they can also be commissioned – like the *Yuqie yankou* – by the laity for the benefit of individuals both alive and deceased.

⁴ XZJ104.984b.

same lines as Jixian himself: they chose a main liturgy and re-edited and re-arranged it by removing parts that they considered “excessively long” and adding sections derived from other *Yuqie yankou* liturgies.⁵ As we shall see in *Chapter Five*, one particular recension of the *Yuqie yankou* eventually emerged as the standard or normative text, effectively replacing all other recensions of the liturgy. This is the recension completed in 1693 by Deji Ding’an, the third abbot of the Baohua Monastery in Jiangsu province, southwestern China. This recension, aptly referred to as the *Huashan Yankou* (short for *Baohua shan*), is universally used in present-day performances of the *Yuqie yankou*. In addition to the main text in the liturgy, the current text includes important “footnotes” added to the liturgy by Shengxing Zongzheng, the fifteenth abbot of Baohua Monastery who lived sometime in the mid-nineteenth century. It is this recension of the *Huashan Yankou* text that I will be providing a descriptive analysis of in this chapter.

As I indicated in the *Introduction*, although this chapter is centered on a “text,” I will move beyond the text by weaving together this “text” with its different contexts. These contexts are historical and contemporary, doctrinal and practical, material and emotional, musical and gastronomical, and spatial and temporal. In doing so, I hope to show the usefulness of engaging in careful readings of liturgies combined with ethnographic evidence. Only by taking this approach will we be able to identify and appreciate the many dimensions and layers that are embedded and sedimented in the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy.

⁵ Zhuhong, for example, complained that most *Yuqie yankou* liturgies available to him were excessively long and ran the risk of losing the original intent or meaning of the rite. See, XZJ104.795a.

A Descriptive Analysis of the Yuqie yankou Rite and Liturgy

OPENING

In present day performances of the *Yuqie yankou* rite, the opening is marked by the offering of incense accompanied by the singing of a “eulogy” (*zan* 讚). Although most editions of the modern-day text of the *Yuqie yankou* rite specifies *Incense from the Censer Eulogy* (*Luxiang zan* 爐香讚) as the opening piece to be sung at this point, most contemporary performances of the *Yuqie yankou* rite begins with the singing of a longer eulogy entitled *True Fragrance of Precepts and Meditation Eulogy* (*Jieding zhenxiang zan* 戒定真香讚).⁶ Based on Ōfuchi’s observation and my own fieldwork, it appears that those who perform the *Yuqie yankou* according to the Sound of Ocean-waves tradition tended to use the *True Fragrance Eulogy* rather than the *Censer Eulogy*. Both these praises are commonly used as the opening praise offered many Chinese Buddhist rites performed today. In most cases, the *Censer Eulogy* is offered while *True Fragrance Eulogy* is often reserved for special occasions.⁷ For example, while the *Censer Eulogy* is sung at the meal-offering rite (*Shang’gong* 上供) held daily no later than eleven in the morning, *True Fragrance Eulogy* is sung at the same rite but only on the full moon and new-moon days as well as on the anniversary-days of the various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Interestingly, when the *Censer Eulogy* is used to open a

⁶ The *Lingbao Liturgy for Universal Salvation* opens with a remarkably similar eulogy which Ōfuchi identifies as “Incense Verse” (*Xiangjie* 香偈). Thus, instead of “All the Buddhas manifest their complete bodies,” the *Lingbao Liturgy* has “The Benevolent Honored Ones manifest their complete bodies.” Ōfuchi, 391b.

⁷ On some rare occasions, another eulogy related to incense-offering – *The Precious Ding Eulogy* (*Baoding zan*, 寶鼎讚) is sung.

session of the *Yuqie yankou* rite, it is often sung in a melody that significantly differs from how it is normally sung. This use of a different melody is clearly not arbitrary. Rather, it can be interpreted as a conscious move to emphasize the difference between the *Yuqie yankou* rite and rites that are ordinarily performed by Chinese Buddhists. Melody thus functions as a subtle but efficacious device for accenting differences and highlighting distinctiveness when circumstances do not permit the de-stabilizing of the text of the liturgy itself.

Whether it is the *Censer Eulogy* or the *True Fragrance Eulogy*, the opening sequence is performed at the main altar for the *Yuqie yankou* rite. This altar – as pointed out in *Chapter Two* – is set up so that it faces the main entrance into the hall or room where the *Yuqie yankou* is performed. While almost all other rites in Chinese Buddhism are performed with the officiating monastics and lay patrons facing the main altar, in the *Yuqie yankou* rite, the officiating monastics perform the rite while seated on the altar itself while the patrons face the monastics. The celebrant, in fact, becomes the center of the altar itself. The only other public rite where the officiating monastic sits with his or her back facing the main Buddha image in the shrine-hall is when a monastic delivers a Dharma lecture to an audience or when performing a refuge-taking (*guiyi* 皈依) or transmission of precepts ceremony (*quanjie* 傳戒).⁸ Clearly, at these two other occasions, the presiding monastics are acting as representatives of the Buddha. As such,

⁸ The only transmission of precepts ceremonies that the general Chinese Buddhist lay public is allowed to participate in or even witness are the transmission of the five lay precepts and the Bodhisattva precepts from the *Fanwang jing* (梵網經). Unlike the practice in current-day Theravada, the transmission of precepts ceremonies for the monastic precepts is closed to the laity. Even novice monks and nuns are not allowed at the ceremony for transmitting the *bhikṣu* or *bhikṣuṇī* precepts – unless of course, they are those who are seeking ordination.

to physically occupy the position of the Buddha, in these contexts, does not violate general Chinese rules of propriety. Likewise, in the *Yuqie yankou* rite, the celebrant is acting with the authority of the Buddha. We could argue that more than being just a representative of the Buddha, the rite works on the principle of the ritual-transformation of the celebrant from the state of an ordinary being into that of the Buddhist divinity, Guanyin. This extraordinary transformation of the celebrant is communicated to the audience by the spatial positioning of the celebrant in the rite as well as the special robes and crown worn by the celebrant during the rite. Throughout the rite, as bodies occupy, move and interact in the ritual space, hierarchy, status and significance is performed, viewed and negotiated by participants who are sometimes actors, sometimes audience and frequently both.

At the offering of incense (accompanied by the singing of the incense-offering eulogy) marking the commencement of the rite, the performers of the rite and the lay patrons are all standing below the raised *Yuqie* Altar, facing it. The assisting monastics form two vertical lines in front of the altar facing each other thus creating an empty central aisle in the space directly in front of the altar. In this central aisle stands the celebrant, facing the altar; clad in his bright ceremonial yellow robes with a red *kaṣaya*-robe. Aside from the celebrant, the only other person(s) standing in the central aisle facing the *Yuqie* Altar is the chief lay-sponsor(s) of the rite. The sponsor is usually positioned directly behind the celebrant. During the singing of the eulogy to the accompaniment of percussive instruments played by the assisting monastics, the celebrant, followed by the chief lay-sponsor(s), approaches the *Yuqie* Altar to offer sticks

of incense. They then return to their initial positions to make three prostrations when the cadence “Homage to the Bodhisattva-mahāsattvas of the Incense-cloud Canopy” (南無香雲蓋菩薩摩訶薩) is sung thrice at the end of the eulogy. Once again, the positioning of bodies in this ritual space and specifically that of the sponsor, to cite Xunzi – one of China’s most articulate and earliest ritual theorist – “distinguishes that which is different.”⁹ In normative Buddhist discourse, the sponsor, usually lay, is hierarchically secondary to the monastic performers. But in this rite, the sponsor assumes a privileged position. As established by the spatial positioning, the sponsor is likened/equal to the celebrant but distinguished from the others, including the monastics present at the rite as performers. During the performance of this rite, whereas the celebrant and sponsor are central, the others are peripheral. But throughout the rite, a different order of hierarchy is also assumed – a normative Buddhist hierarchy that distinguishes the laity from the monastic by valorizing the monastic as one of the “Three Jewels” of the faith.

After this initial incense offering at the main Yuqie Altar, the whole group begins to sing the cadence “Homage to Amita Buddha” (南無阿彌陀佛) while making its way to the Mianran Altar set up in the space directly outside of the room or hall where the rite is being performed. Once the entire group has reached the outer Mianran Altar, they begin chanting a verse of homage thrice – “Homage to the Great Burning-Face Bodhisattva-mahāsattva!” (南無面燃大士菩薩摩訶薩) – while the celebrant, followed by the chief lay-sponsor(s), offers incense to Mianran (“Burning-face”) whose real

⁹ “Music embodies an unchanging harmony, while rites represent unalterable reason. Music unites that which is the same; rites distinguish that which is different; and through the combination of rites and music the human heart is governed.” See, *Hsün Tzu: Basic Writings*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 117.

identity is Guanyin. This is then followed by the recitation of either the *Heart Sūtra* once or the recitation of the *Efficacious Spell of Guanyin* (*Guanyin ling'gan zhenyan* 觀音靈感真言)¹⁰ for three or seven times followed by the *Rebirth Spell* (*Wangsheng zhou* 往生咒), the *Transformation of Food Spell* (*Bianshi zhenyan* 變食真言¹¹), the *Ambrosia Spell* (*Ganlu zhenyan* 甘露真言) and the *Universal Offering Spell* (*Pu gongyang zhou* 普供養咒). A four-line “transference of merit” (*huixiang* 回向) verse is then sung followed once again by the cadence “Homage to Amita Buddha” as the group now processes to the Rebirth Altar.¹²

At the Rebirth Altar, yellow placards bearing the names of the ancestors or the main beneficiaries intended by the lay-sponsors are arranged either directly in front of the main image of Amita Buddha or to the left and right of the image. These placards serve as the equivalent of the more permanent ancestral tablets that are used to represent the spirits of departed relatives in a traditional ancestral shrine. On rare occasions when the *Yuqie yankou* rite is a *yang yankou* rather than a *yin yankou*, there is no Rebirth Altar. Its place is a Lengthening-Life Altar where the names of living persons are written on red

¹⁰ This *dhāraṇī* that begins with the famous “Six-syllable Spell” OM MANI PADME HŪM is an otherwise obscure *dhāraṇī* with unclear textual origins. It is however, one of the ten “minor *dhāraṇīs*” recited at the morning service ritual performed at Chinese monasteries.

¹¹ The spell given in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*.

¹² The *Lingbao Liturgy* equivalent of this section is performed at an exterior altar, similar to the Mianran Altar, but is a papier-mâché structure representing Mount Putuo, the reputed sacred dwelling of Guanyin. Several deities are invoked here. Among them are: Guanyin Buddha-ancestor (*Guanyin fozu* 觀音佛祖), Shancai 善才 (originally Sudhāna of the *Huayan jing*), Niangniang 娘娘, Immortal Maitreya (*Mile xian* 彌勒仙), Weituo 韋陀 (originally Skandha of the *Jinguangming jing*), Mulian, Monkey (hero of the Ming-dynasty novel *Journey to the West*), the Eighteen Honored Ones 十八尊者 (the Eighteen Arhats), Four Heavenly Kings 四大金剛, Five Hundred Arhats, Jiaomian Ghost King (*Jiaomian guiwang* 焦面鬼王, variant name of Mianran), the Virgin-boy Yinhun (*Yinhun tongzi* 引魂童子), local deities, male and female orphaned-souls who have spirits (*youling* 有靈) but without worshippers and all those in the Six Realms and four types of birth. Ōfuchi, 392a. That “Buddhist” deities are honored in the external altar while the properly “Daoist” pantheon are invoked and invited into the inner altar is probably not a coincidence or without significance. For an interesting discussion on this arrangement, see Hymes’ *Way and Byway*, 232-234.

placards – red being the generally accepted “lucky” or “auspicious” color in the Chinese context – so that these persons will receive the blessings and merits generated by the performance of the rite. The belief that the performance of a *Yuqie yankou* rite can confer a longer lifespan on its performers and sponsors is based on the story of Ānanda’s encounter with a hungry ghost as presented in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*. According to that story, Ānanda was able to avert an early death and rebirth into the realm of hungry ghosts by relying on a special method taught to him by the Buddha to magically multiply food to satisfy a multitude of ghosts. By the merit and power of that act, Ānanda was able to extend his lifespan.¹³ Although *yang yankou* rites are rarely performed, they are not totally unknown. As mentioned in *Chapter Two*, aside from the more commonly seen Rebirth Altar set up to the left of the Yuqie Altar, there is a Lengthening-Life Altar to the right of the main Yuqie Altar at Guoqing Monastery, at the foot of Mount Tiantai, China.

In the case of a *yin yankou* rite, the *Smaller Amitābha Sūtra* is often recited after incense is offered at the Rebirth Altar by both the celebrant and the patron of the rite. The same set of three *dhāraṇīs* as those recited at the Mianran Altar (beginning with the *Rebirth Spell*) is recited next, followed with yet another short transference of merit verse. It should be noted here that while the celebrant makes full prostrations at the Yuqie Altar, at this Rebirth Altar, he refrains from making any prostrations. Instead, only the lay sponsors offer prostrations at the beginning and the end of the brief service at this altar. Because the primary objects of veneration enshrined at this altar are understood to be the

¹³ This origin-myth will be dealt with in greater detail in the next chapter on the textual history of the *Yuqie yankou* rite.

spirits of the ancestors of the lay sponsors, it would therefore be ritually inappropriate for the celebrant or any of the monastics to perform any prostrations as normative Buddhist hierarchy identifies monastics as the third member of the “Three Jewels.” Aside from normative Buddhist hierarchy at play here, Chinese sense of propriety is also operative. At several occasions where I attended performances of the *Yuqie yankou* rite, I was similarly told (but for different reasons) by participants that it was not necessary for me to offer any prostrations at the Rebirth Altar since the names that are written on the yellow placards on the Rebirth Altar are not that of *my* ancestors. This follows the often pointed-out Chinese view that “one’s ancestors are other peoples’ ghosts.” Consequently, it was inappropriate for me to prostrate to others’ ancestors. One cannot help but notice the so-called Confucian discourse on ritual-propriety to be fully operative in this Buddhist context although I suspect that none of the people who advised me of the inappropriateness of offering prostrations to other peoples’ ancestors would articulate the reasons in terms of “Confucian-propriety” *per se*.

Having consecrated, or literally, “opened the light” (*kaiguang* 開光) of the two secondary altars, the group now returns to the primary *Yuqie* Altar, the stage for the performance of the *Yuqie yankou*. Once again, all the assisting monastics stand in two opposite lines facing each other in front of the *Yuqie* Altar while only the celebrant and the chief lay-sponsor(s) stand in the center of the aisle, facing the *Yuqie* Altar directly. This arrangement of the different bodies occupying the ritual space both follows and establishes an ordering of the relative positions and status of the performers and patrons of the rite. The heightened status of the celebrant and the lay patron(s) is clearly marked

off from the ordinary assisting monastics and others who might happen to be in the audience. Lest any in the audience makes the mistake of assuming that the celebrant and the lay patron are important in the same ways or of equal status, the celebrant and his assistants will soon enter the stage proper by “ascending the platform” (*dengtan* 登壇) where the rite will be performed. The lay patron and other people (if there are any) remain below the stage throughout the rite, forming the audience – an audience who turn into performers at different junctures in the rite. As in secular operatic performances, the audience will come and go, some obviously paying full and undivided attention to the performance, others chatting with friends and neighbors, some dozing off to the chants and recitations, and yet others who sometimes sing along when a familiar aria or chant is recognized. At different junctures in the performance of the *Yuqie yankou*, the line between performers and audience blurs, the demarcation between the stage and the floor dissolves, if only temporarily but always significantly. During these instances, the lay patron is called upon to enter the performance and be an actor, a performer in the drama of “universal salvation” (*pudu*), acting as both the generous sponsor of the rite as well as a proxy for the ghostly beneficiaries of the rite.

According to Shengxing’s footnotes, the chief cantor now begins the next section of the rite by leading in the singing of yet another eulogy known as the *Pure Water from a Willow-Twig Eulogy* (*Yangzi jingshui zan* 楊枝淨水讚). Normally, this eulogy is sung in the context of a simple “purification by sprinkling” rite (*sajing* 灑淨) for securing and purifying any space making it a suitable locus for ritual-activity. The reference to a “willow-twig” can be traced to the popular iconography of Guanyin where

he/she is depicted as holding a willow-twigg in his/her right hand, using it as a sprinkler to alleviate the fires of suffering of sentient beings with the ambrosia from a vase held by Guanyin in his/her left hand. This purification rite is normally performed at the beginning of retreats such as Amitābha Recitation retreats, ritual-repentance retreats or before special celebrations of the anniversaries of the Buddhas or bodhisattvas or at consecration rites. However, in the present context, the full purification rite is not performed. Instead, only the opening eulogy is sung.¹⁴ This is because the *Yuqie yankou* rite itself has a much more elaborate procedure for purifying its ritual-space and securing it for the performance of the rite. Thus, immediately after three prostrations toward the altar have been completed by both the celebrant and lay-sponsor(s) at the end of the singing of the eulogy, the celebrant walks towards the Yuqie Altar to ascend it while the rest of the assembly chants “Homage to Rocana Buddha on the Thousand-Petalled Lotus Dais!” (南無千華臺上盧舍那佛) continuously until the celebrant has ascended the altar.¹⁵

This cadence in homage of Rocana Buddha merits a few comments. Although “Rocana” is often considered as a mere abbreviation of “Vairocana,” the different lineages in East Asia appear to regard Rocana Buddha as the Sambhogakāya Buddha (with Vairocana as the Dharmakāya and Śākyamuni as the Nirmāṇakāya). It should be pointed out that the name “Rocana” is not found in any of the major *sūtras* in East Asia

¹⁴ In the usual “purification by sprinkling” rite, the singing of the *Pure Water from a Willow-Twig Eulogy* is followed by the recitation of the *Great Compassionate Mantra* as the celebrant walks around the ritual-space, sprinkling water from a small vase with a willow-twigg or a small stalk of flower, purifying the space.

¹⁵ I have noted that in the Mount Gu tradition of performing the *Yuqie yankou* rite, the celebrant is the last to ascend the Yuqie Altar. He waits for all the assisting monastics to take their respective places on the altar before he finally ascends it himself.

as this name is only used in the exegetical and commentarial material authored by Chinese Buddhist monks. While Vairocana appears in several popular *sūtras*, the Rocana/Vairocana referred to here – the “Rocana Buddha on the Thousand-Petalled Lotus Dias” – most probably refers specifically to the Vairocana Buddha of the *Fanwang jing*. In the first fascicle of the *Fanwang jing*, Vairocana Buddha is described as dwelling in “the Ocean of the Lotus-Flower Treasury-Dias World” (*lianhua taizang shijie hai* 蓮華臺藏世界海), where the lotus has a thousand petals – every petal is a world-system inhabited by a manifestation of Śākyamuni in each.

The appearance of this cadence in homage of Rocana/Vairocana Buddha in the *Huashan Yuqie yankou* liturgy is no coincidence. Although the cadence can be interpreted as an exclamation in honor of an important divinity, the invocation of Rocana/Vairocana Buddha in the *Huashan* liturgy is an example of the sedimented layers of regional and institutional history that can be discovered when careful readings of liturgical texts are done. To begin with, we should note that pre-Baohua *Yuqie yankou* liturgies do not have this verse of homage. The singing of this cadence of “Rocana Buddha on the Thousand-Petalled Lotus Dias” first appears in the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy redacted by Deji Ding’an who was an abbot of Baohua Monastery. As it turns out, the abbots of Baohua Monastery often identify themselves as “so-and-so of the Thousand-Petalled Lotus”¹⁶ in many of their writings. “Thousand-Petalled Lotus” was also the name of a chapel built at Baohua Monastery by its first abbot, Jiguang Sanmei.

¹⁶ For example, “The Third Generation (Abbot) Ding’an of Thousand-Petalled Lotus” (*qianhua sanshi ding’an* 千華三世定庵). See the Baohua Monastery Gazetteer in *Zhongguo foshi zhi congkan*, ed. by Bai Huawen and Liu Yongming (Yangzhou: Yangzhou guangling shu she, 2001), 53:65.

Hence, in due time, the Vinaya lineage at Baohua Monastery became known as the “Thousand-Petalled Lotus Lineage” (*Qianhua pai* 千華派) of the Nanshan Vinaya tradition.¹⁷

Furthermore, the study and teaching of the *Fanwang jing* (where Vairocana/Rocana Buddha is the teacher) formed a major part of the monastic curriculum at Baohua Monastery since it was a Nanshan Vinaya center. In fact, the Buddha image enshrined in the main hall of Baohua Monastery is the Vairocana Buddha described in the *Fanwang jing*, with many smaller images of Śākyamuni at the tips of the light rays radiating from the central Vairocana Buddha.¹⁸ Thus, the cadence “Homage to Rocana Buddha on the Thousand-petalled Lotus Dais!” was an addition introduced and promoted by monks of the Baohua Monastery tradition to give the liturgy an institutional identity, staking an even stronger claim on its monopoly on the rite.

After the celebrant has ascended to the raised-platform of the Yuqie Altar, the other monastics similarly move to their respective places at the altar, arranged to the left and right of the celebrant, facing outwards towards the Mianran Altar. They have now become part of the Yuqie Altar. And it is from this position – spatially and ritually – that the celebrant, with assistance from the other monastics, will carry out the drama of “liberating the flaming-mouths” (*fang yankou* 放燄口).

The Two Classes of Guests

¹⁷ *Foguang Dictionary*, 741b.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 741c-742a.

According to a Republican period commentary on the *Yuqie yankou* rite composed by a layman who wrote with the pen-name of Yanji 演濟 (d.u.), the rite can be broadly divided into two main sections.¹⁹ Although this commentary is admittedly a very recent work, it is not hard to distinguish the two main sections. The first section is devoted to “respectfully offering” (*jinggong* 敬供) to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas while the second is focused on “compassionately bestowing” (*beishi* 悲施) food and liberation to the suffering beings of the world and in particular to hungry ghosts. The first section is also known as the “upper section” (*shangpian* 上篇) while the second is referred to as the “lower section” (*xiapian* 下篇). Although the terms “upper” and “lower” are commonly used to simply denote, for example, the first and second chapters of a two-chapter text, in the context of this rite, the terms “upper” and “lower” are significant as they indicate to us a basic distinction that is made in Buddhism between enlightened beings on the one hand and ordinary sentient beings on the other. This is a hierarchy that is clearly maintained throughout the *Yuqie yankou* rite although at a certain point towards the end of the rite the distinction is temporarily suspended but only to be re-established again at the very end of the rite.²⁰ Whereas the beings in the “upper section” are enlightened and hence worthy of our “respectful offerings,” the beings

¹⁹ Yanji, *Yankou shishi yaoji xiangzhu* 餓口施食要集詳註. The author acknowledges Zhuhong’s commentary of the *Yuqie* text as the basis of this Republican period commentary. Although Yanji basically summarizes Zhuhong and renders Zhuhong’s words into a more colloquial style, there are sections in this commentary that are not in Zhuhong as the root text that Zhuhong was commenting on is different from the root-text that Yanji’s commentary treats. Yanji’s text appears to be an edition of the *Baohua Yuqie yankou* text edited by Shengxing Zhongjieng. I will treat the development of these different versions of the *Yuqie yankou* text in *Chapter Five*.

²⁰ This is similarly witnessed in the *Shuilu* rite.

delegated to the “lower section” are primarily hungry ghosts and all other unenlightened beings sinking and drowning in the turbulence of samsara.

The division we see here in the *Yuqie yankou* rite is reminiscent of a very similar division that one finds in the *Shuilu* – a rite, as pointed out in *Chapter One*, closely related to the *Yuqie yankou* rite. During a seven-day *Shuilu*, all beings of the Ten Dharma Realms are invited to attend and receive the bountiful offerings prepared for the feast. The Ten Dharma Realms include both enlightened and non-enlightened beings. In a descending order, they are the realms of the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, *pratyeka*-buddhas, *arhats*, gods, *asuras*, humans, animals, hungry-ghost and hell-beings. The first four realms are referred to as the “upper hall” (*shangtang* 上堂) and the remainder six are referred to as the “lower hall” (*xiatang* 下堂). The *Shuilu* rite similarly invokes the story of Ānanda’s encounter with the hungry ghost as the first in a series of contributing influences or causal-conditions (*yinyuan* 因緣) that led to the creation of the *Shuilu* rite.²¹ Once again, we see the resonances between the *Yuqie yankou* and the *Shuilu*.

The Internal Structure of the Huashan Yankou Liturgy

This first section of the *Yuqie yankou* rite can be further divided into seven sub-sections. As divided by Yanji, the seven sub-sections of the section on “respectfully offering” are:

- a) Ascending the seat (*shengzuo* 昇坐)

²¹ See the *Shuilu* liturgy, XZJ129.542a.

- b) Entering *samadhi* (*ruding* 入定)
- c) Purification (*sajing* 灑淨)
- d) Taking refuge (*guiyi* 歸依)
- e) Visualizing the *daochang* (*daochang guan* 道場觀)
- f) Presenting the *maṇḍala* (*xian mandaluo* 獻曼荼羅)
- g) Universal offering (*pu gongyang* 普供養)²²

The second major section of the rite can be divided into six sub-sections:

- a) Entering *samādhi* (*ruding* 入定)
- b) Inviting and summoning (*zhaoqing* 召請)
- c) Exoteric food bestowal (*xian shishi* 顯施食)
- d) Eliminating impediments (*miezhang* 滅障)
- e) Esoteric food bestowal (*mi shishi* 密施食)
- f) Transference of merit (*huixiang* 回向)²³

The length of each of these sections varies, with some sections significantly longer than others. Different ritual-sequences are further embedded within each of these sub-sections. For the rest of this chapter, I will give a summary for each of these sub-sections, pointing out significant ritual activities, important issues and some of my own observations based on the fieldwork that I have conducted on contemporary performances of the *Yuqie yankou* rite. As indicated earlier, the description and analysis that I will be doing in this chapter will follow the liturgy that is most commonly used today – the *Huashan Yankou* liturgy that was first published in 1693.²⁴

1a) ASCENDING THE SEAT

²² Yanji, 3.

²³ Ibid., 4.

²⁴ The *Huashan Yuqie yankou* liturgy that originated at Baohua Monastery near Nanjing, China is the liturgy used today at most *Yuqie yankou* performances. In *Chapter Five*, I will discuss the historical process of the spread and eventual dominance of the *Huashan Yuqie yankou* liturgy all over China. For easy reference, I will be citing the *Huashan Yuqie yankou* liturgy reprinted in Kamata Shigeo's *Chugoku no Bukkyō girei*.

After the celebrant has ascended the Yuqie Altar but before he sits down, he performs a symbolic cleansing by wiping his face with a wet towel. The act of purifying oneself of both physical and spiritual dirt is more strongly emphasized in esoteric rites than other general, non-esoteric types of rites. After wiping his face, the celebrant puts on the Vairocana-crown. At this point, the Vairocana-crown is without the five pointed-leaves bearing the images of the Buddhas of the Five Directions (*Wufang fo* 五方佛). These five pointed-leaves will not be fastened until the next sub-section of the rite. During this whole time, the assisting monastics are singing the cadence “Homage to Rocana Buddha on the Thousand-Petalled Lotus Dais!” to the accompaniment of all the percussive instruments. Once the celebrant has put on the Vairocana-crown and is ready to move on to the next part of the rite he gives a signal to the other monastics by picking up the *fachi* and hitting it on the surface of the table. Receiving this cue, the other monastics repeat for the last time the cadence before halting the playing of the percussive instruments. The monastic playing the *zhong’gu* then begins a formulaic pattern that consists of a set of rolling drum beats (known as a “standard” [*pai* or *paizi*]) punctuated with an occasional hitting of the bell. This solo lasts for a few minutes before the celebrant gives the next cue by hitting the *fachi* again.

Although Yanji identifies this sub-section as “Ascending the seat,” the main ritual-activity here has the celebrant delivering a passage in prose that accompanies the ritual act of offering incense. The actual “Ascending the seat” does not occur until the end of this sub-section. In the passage that is delivered here by the celebrant in the

bai-style of oral delivery, the celebrant expounds the inner significance of the incense offered:

This one stick of incense is neither descended from the heavens nor produced from the earth. Existing before the two meanings (*liangyi* 兩儀) are distinguished, its source fills the Three Realms. After the moment when the One Breath (*yiqi* 一氣) has divided, its twigs and leaves pervade the ten directions completely. It surpasses the glory of the sun and moon and exceeds the beauty of the mountains and rivers. (This incense) is precepts, is meditation, is wisdom. It is not wood, not fire, not smoke. Gathering it in, it is contained within a dust mote. Spreading it around, it completely fills the entire Dharma-realm. Burning in the censer, it is specially offered to the constantly-abiding Three Jewels (*changzhu sanbao* 常住三寶), the myriad numinous spirits (*wanling* 萬靈) pervading all lands and seas, generations of patriarchs, assembly of all sages, the different types of beings (equal to the) sands of the rivers, both the enlightened and the worldly, the dark and the manifest. Fully relying on this True Incense (*zhenxiang* 真香), (I) universally and equally offer to all.²⁵

In this context, the significance of the “one stick of incense” is explained by Zhuhong as the Dharmakāya (*fashen* 法身) or Dharma-essence (*fati* 法體), which is also described as the “incense of the heart” (*xinxiang* 心香).²⁶ As it is the Dharmakāya, the undivided and uncompounded, neither heaven nor earth produced it. This “incense” precedes the separation/devolution of reality into heaven and earth.²⁷ In Zhuhong’s commentary he elaborates on the “One Breath” in the liturgy and by explaining that it refers to the Great Ultimate (*taiji* 太極) or Great Ultimate. Zhuhong writes, “The meaning of the Great Ultimate dividing is none other than the One Breath dividing into *yin* and *yang*. The light and clear becomes Heaven and the heavy and turbid becomes Earth.” Furthermore, from these two – Heaven and Earth, the ten thousand things are produced.

²⁵ Kamata, 829a-b. The *Lingbao Liturgy* has a shorter corresponding section consisting of eight, five-character lines, Ōfuchi, 392b.

²⁶ XZJ104.834a.

²⁷ XZJ104.832b.

Clearly, indigenous, Chinese, non-Buddhist cosmology underlies this section of the liturgy. Although Zhuhong himself, in other contexts, was quite concerned about preserving the integrity of Buddhism and advocating its superiority over Daoism and Confucianism, his decision to include these explicitly “Daoist” or “non-Buddhist” language in his recension of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy reflects the perceived power of the liturgy. Rather than excising the “Daoist” language of the liturgy, Zhuhong kept it. It is only in his auto-commentary on the liturgy that he gives the “inner meaning” of the seemingly Daoist terminology. Furthermore, we should also understand the presence of Daoist terminology in the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy as a form of hybridization that permeated Chinese religions especially by the Late Imperial period. This hybridization²⁸ is the result of a long and complex process of development in Chinese religious history where originally distinct traditions interacted, competed, borrowed, cooperated and transformed each other. Thus, terminology such as “Heaven and Earth,” “One Breath” can be found in the Buddhist *Yuqie yankou* rite while Sanskrit or pseudo-Sanskrit spells can be found in Lingbao Daoist liturgies.

Lest he is accused of espousing non-Buddhist views, Zhuhong further explains in his auto-commentary to the liturgy that this explanation of the “One Breath” is given from the perspective of the “outer teachings” (*waijiao* 外教, i.e. Confucianism and Daoism) and is therefore not exhaustive and not definitive. Therefore, Zhuhong explains, in order to apprehend the perfect meaning of this “One Breath,” one has to rely on the “inner teachings” (*neijiao* 內教, i.e. Buddhism). Accordingly to Zhuhong, this

²⁸ I prefer to use the term “hybridization” over the more common term “syncretism.”

“One Breath” is most perfectly expounded in *The Awakening of Faith*.²⁹ This “One Breath” is none other than the *tathāgatagarbha* (i.e. Buddha-nature) that has both the “non-arising and non-ceasing” (*bu shengmie* 不生滅) as well as the “arising and ceasing” (*shengmie* 生滅) aspects; “neither non-dual nor dual.” In this case, Zhuhong also identified this “One Breath” with the eighth consciousness, the *alaya-vijñāna*.³⁰

In the context of our present liturgy, this “One Breath” is the Dharmakāya-incense. This Dharmakāya-incense is further identified with the classic three-fold training of precepts (Chi. *jie* 戒, Skt. *śīla*), meditation (Chi. *ding* 定, Skt. *samādhi*) and wisdom (Chi. *hui* 慧, Skt. *prajñā*). Zhuhong further explains that in the context of the Dharmakāya as one’s self-nature (*zixing* 自性), the purity of the self-nature is precepts, the self-nature free from vexations is meditation and that the self-nature is free from ignorance is none other than wisdom. In this way, the three trainings are perfected within the Dharmakāya-incense and to offer this Dharmakāya-incense is equivalent to the training in precepts, meditation and wisdom.³¹ Thus, Zhuhong seems to suggest that only those who adhere to the “inner teachings,” fellow Buddhists who are considered “insiders” and thus within the family, have access to the true meaning of the liturgy whereas the “outsiders” can only grasp at the words.

²⁹ T1666 and T1667. For an English translation of T1666, see *The Awakening of Faith*, trans. Yoshito S. Hakeda (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967).

³⁰ XZJ104. 833a.

³¹ XZJ104.834a. In Zhongfeng Mingpen’s food-bestowal liturgy known as “Opening the Gates of Ambrosia” (*Kai ganlu men*, 開甘露門), he similarly refers to the incense offered as “precept-incense, meditation-incense and wisdom-incense.” See, Zhongfeng Mingpen, *The Pure Rules of Huanzhu Monastery* (*Huanzhu an qing’gui*, 幻住庵清規), XZJ111.1005b.

After delivering this passage solo and without the accompaniment of any musical instrument, the celebrant and his assistants begin an antiphonal singing of a quatrain extolling the Buddha's physical virtues and the four immeasurable minds of benevolence, compassion, joy and equanimity.³² They sing this to the accompaniment of the full ensemble. This sub-section concludes with three repetitions of the cadence "Homage to the Bodhisattva-mahāsattvas Ascending the Precious-seat" (南無登寶座菩薩摩訶薩) as the celebrant and his assistants finally take their seats at the Yuqie Altar.³³

1b) ENTERING SAMĀDHI

According to Zhuhong, once the celebrant has ascended to his seat and put on the crown, he should "enter into the fundamental, root *samādhi*" (*ru genben ding*, 入根本定). Zhuhong identifies this *samādhi* as the generation of the "pride of (being) Guanyin" (*Guanyin man* 觀音慢).³⁴ However, in the Ding'an *Yuqie yankou* liturgy, the generation of the "pride of (being) Guanyin" does not occur until the beginning of the next sub-section. Instead, Ding'an inserts a new section to the liturgy – a section on the demarcation of the ritual-space (*jiejie* 結界) by the celebrant as the chorus sings a hymn praising the Five Buddhas derived from classic esoteric sources.³⁵

³² Kamata, 829b. In this verse, the Buddha's face is compared to a pure and full moon emitting light equivalent to a thousand suns shining. This perfect light then pervades the ten directions causing the virtues of benevolence, compassion, joy and equanimity to be perfected.

³³ In the *Lingbao Liturgy*, the cadence: "Ascend the precious throne, the Heavenly Honored One, Taiyi who Rescues from Suffering" (*deng baozuo taiyi jiuku tianzun* 登寶座太乙救苦天尊) is repeated, Ōfuchi 393a.

³⁴ XZJ101.835b.

³⁵ Identical hymn in *Lingbao Liturgy*, Ōfuchi, 393a

Once seated, the celebrant begins empowering himself by first blessing the five-pointed leaves of the Vairocana-crown that he now places on the table in front of him. On each of the five leaves of the Vairocana-crown is embroidered the figure of a Buddha. The five Buddha figures on the crown represent the Buddhas of the Five Directions commonly encountered in the esoteric teachings. Zhuhong assures his readers that the Five Buddhas are continuously pouring out golden light from the Vairocana-crown that the celebrant has put on. He elaborates that not only are the Five Buddhas present in the crown but the entire *maṇḍala* of the Thirty-seven Deities (*sanshiqi zun* 三十七尊) described in the *Vajrasekhara-sūtra* – one of the major textual sources of the esoteric tradition in the Tang period – is installed in the crown and these deities are conferring their blessings and powers on the celebrant. This is the only instance where an explicit association is being made between the *Yuqie yankou* rite and the Vajrasekhara-cycle of esoteric teachings.³⁶

As the other monastic performers intone a quatrain extolling the great awesome powers of the Five Buddhas and the investment of those powers and blessings into the Vairocana-crown, the celebrant dips his right ring-finger into the ambrosia bowl and flicks some of the water on each of the five leaves while also tracing a HŪṂ syllable in Siddham-style over each of the five embroidered Buddha figures. After empowering the five Buddha figures, the celebrant fastens the leaves on to the Vairocana-crown that he is already wearing. According to the instructions given in the present version of the text, the celebrant should now form the *mudrā* of Zhunti Bodhisattva (*Zhunti pusa* 準提

³⁶ The connection between the *Yuqie yankou* and the Vajrasekhara-cycle of esoteric teachings will be considered in *Chapter Four*.

菩薩) while the other performers are reciting the “Zhunti Spell.” The celebrant should imagine the *mudrā* placed above his crown although in actuality he should hold his hands at his heart-level. As the “Zhunti Spell” is chanted thrice, he is to visualize the Five Buddhas sitting on his crown pouring forth blessings. The celebrant and his assistants then rise from their seats as they exclaim “Vairocana Tathāgata, Vairocana Tathāgata – the Great Illuminating Treasury!” (*Pilu rulai pilu rulai da guangming zang* 毘盧如來, 毘盧如來, 大廣明藏) to welcome Vairocana Buddha into the ritual-space.³⁷ As they do this, the patron of the rite is instructed to make three prostrations below the stage, facing outwards towards the open space to receive Vairocana Buddha into the ritual-space. The final part in this sub-section is the singing of a hymn that describes the Five Buddhas, giving their respective names – Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, Amoghasiddhi and Vairocana, the directions of their respective Buddha-worlds – east, south, west, north and central, the colors of each of their bodies – blue, red, white, black and yellow, and the different *mudrās* that they hold in their hands – *vajra*, wish-fulfilling jewel, lotus, crossed-*vajra*,³⁸ and thousand-spoke wheel. What is unique with this hymn is the embedding of Sanskrit syllables HŪṂ HŪṂ OM MAṆI HŪṂ, OM ĀḤ HŪṂ, and OM MAṆI HŪṂ in between the Chinese verses of the hymn. For example:

Akṣobhya Buddha of the eastern world OM MAṆI HŪṂ, body blue in color OM ĀḤ HŪṂ, emitting brilliant light HŪṂ HŪṂ OM MAṆI HŪṂ, holding the *vajra* OM MAṆI HŪṂ – the assembly with the utmost-mind OM ĀḤ HŪṂ offers praises and prostrations HŪṂ HŪṂ OM MAṆI HŪṂ.³⁹

³⁷ Kamata, 830a.

³⁸ Literally it is “crossed/intersecting wheels” (*lunxiang jiao*, 輪相交) but normally identified with two crossed *vajras*.

³⁹ Kamata, 830b-831a.

The embedding of Sanskrit spells or syllables into Chinese prose or verse is a practice rather uncommon in earlier esoteric material. It is unattested in the esoteric texts of the Tang and in later Japanese traditions that trace their origins back to Tang esotericism. Once again, this is another example of ritual hybridization in the *Yuqie yankou* as the practice of combining Sanskrit spells and syllables with non-Sanskrit sentences or verses is quite common in Tibetan Buddhist esoteric traditions.⁴⁰ It is not uncommon to find Tibetan words or names inserted in certain Sanskrit spells used by Tibetan Buddhists. It should be noted that this particular section of the text is absent from Zhuhong's (1606), Sanfeng Fazang's (1626) and Jixian's (1675) versions and only turns up in Ding'an's (1693) edition of the *Yuqie yankou* text. Since Ding'an's dates fall under a period when Tibetan Buddhism – its clerics and rituals – were greatly favored by the ruling Manchus of the Qing dynasty, it is very likely that the inclusion of this (and other) section(s) of the *Yuqie yankou* text was in response to the popularity of Tibetan Buddhism at that time. Apart from this or any doctrinal reasons there might have been to have Sanskrit spells embedded within Chinese chants, it certainly contributed to the exoticness and extraordinariness of the ritual being performed – not unlike the Lingbao Daoist inclusion of Sanskrit and pseudo-Sanskrit spells into their own liturgies under comparable situations and for similar effects.

According to Shengxing, while the hymn is being sung, the celebrant should visualize a Sanskrit syllable HŪM in the center of the “Great Illuminating Treasury” (*da guangming zang* 大光明藏). The “Great Illuminating Treasury” is explained as the

⁴⁰ See Stephen Beyer, *The Cult of Tara, Magic and Ritual in Tibet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

all-pervading emptiness and great illumination which is the essence of Vairocana. By placing this HŪṂ in the center of this all-pervading emptiness, the five directions are thus determined and the ritual space is thus demarcated.⁴¹ HŪṂ, according to Shengxing, is “the source of the ten thousand phenomena.” The Five Buddhas and their retinues are then established in the five directions (fixed by the placing of the HŪṂ) thus rendering the ritual space suitable and secured.⁴² This sub-section closes with the singing of the six “Offering Spells” in sinified Sanskrit – offerings of flowers, incense, light, (sandalwood) paste, food and music.

1c) PURIFICATION

The third sub-section, “Purification” begins with the celebrant declaring that,

The One-Mind is in deep stillness
 The entire body is completely the Sovereign of Great Compassion (*Dabei wang*
 大悲王)
 The three karmas are mutually responsive.
 Discarding one’s body, it completely turns into the syllable HRĪḤ.”⁴³

According to Shengxing, this is where the actual meditation of generating the “pride of (being) Guanyin” (*Guanyin man*) begins. The “pride of Guanyin” is a peculiar phrase in the context of East Asian Buddhism. It is, as far as I can tell, the only instance in the Chinese canon (in the Taishō version recently digitized in Taiwan) where the word “pride” (*man* 慢) is used in a positive context. “Pride” is always considered one of the afflictive emotions that have to be eradicated or purified before one can be freed from

⁴¹ Literally, “securing the boundaries” (*jiejie*, 結界).

⁴² Kamata, 830a-b.

⁴³ Ibid., 831a-b.

suffering and attain liberation. In the present context, “pride” is apparently valorized and something to be cultivated; albeit a *different* type of pride. According to Zhuhong, the “pride” is of a different order from ordinary pride. In this instance, this pride is identical with the famous declaration made by the Siddhārtha immediately after he was born. According to the legend of the Buddha, the infant Siddhārtha took seven steps right after he was born and boldly declared, “Above in the heaven and beneath it, I alone am the Honored One.”⁴⁴ It is this type of pride that the celebrant should generate. To generate this “pride of Guanyin,” one is instructed to imagine oneself as:

... replete with the thirty-two bodily marks and eighty good characteristics (of a Buddha), with perfect light radiating from the crown, golden in color, sitting on a great lotus flower, wearing a Five Buddhas crown with the Five Buddhas continuously emitting light, conferring empowerment. With their awesome spiritual blessing causing the spiritual powers to be great and pervasive, (one) enters the oceans of birth and death to teach and transform sentient beings.⁴⁵

Although absent in the East Asian canon – and even in Japan where esoteric Buddhism developed into a sectarian institution (Shingon) – the use of the word “pride” in a positive context, and as the mind that practitioners of esoteric teachings should generate is a common feature of the esoteric or Tantric practice of “self-generation” (Tib. *bdag bskyed*) in Tibetan Buddhism. During the meditation practice of visualizing oneself as an enlightened being, one should generate “divine pride” (Tib. *lha'i ngar rgyal*). For example, in the *Great Exposition of Secret Mantra* (*sNgags-rim chen-mo*, Toh5281), the famous Tsong kha pa (1357-1419), founder of the dGe-lugs order of Tibetan Buddhism, has the following quote from the *Vajrapani Initiation Tantra* (*Lag-na*

⁴⁴ XZJ104.836a.

⁴⁵ XZJ104.837a.

rdo-rje dbang-bskur ba 'i-rgyud chen-mo, Toh496), explaining the function and benefit of “divine pride”:

When a practitioner of Bodhisattva deeds engaging in the Secret Mantra approach causes himself to have the form of his own deity and with a mind free from doubt generates the pride [of being a deity] and whether going, standing or sitting is always immovable [in this clear appearance and the pride of a deity] though moving about, O Shantimati, he is endowed with the ethics of a great Bodhisattva who is practicing the Bodhisattva deeds of the Secret Mantra approach.⁴⁶

The earliest instance of the phrase “pride of Guanyin” appearing in the *Yuqie yankou* rite is in the Yuan dynasty *Yuqie yankou* liturgy, the *Collected Essentials of the Yoga of Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* (*Yuqie jiyao yankou shishi yi* 瑜伽焰口施食儀).⁴⁷ As the Yuan dynasty marks the beginning of the presence and influence of Tibetan Buddhism and its clerics in China, it is very likely that the “pride of Guanyin” in the *Yuqie yankou* rite is the result of the ritual hybridization between Tibetan and Chinese Buddhist traditions.

While the celebrant meditates on transforming himself into the form of Guanyin and maintaining the “pride of Guanyin,” the cantor and assistant cantor engage in an antiphonal delivery of a passage explicating the non-dual nature of cause and effect as grounded in one’s own Mind. The passage further expounds on how the two activities of “benefiting self and others” are accomplished through universally feeding all those in hunger “in the interval of a moment.” Immediately after they finish delivering the passage, the celebrant responds by clearly and loudly declaring, “This indeed is the Path!” followed immediately with the hitting of his *fachi* (pallet symbolizing his

⁴⁶ See, *Deity Yoga*, trans. Jeffrey Hopkins (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1987), 59.

⁴⁷ The *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* (T1320). I will treat the history and development of the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* in greater length in *Chapter Five*.

authority) on the table. This is followed by the cantor and the rest of the chorus rendering a quatrain (antiphonally) espousing the classic Huayan vision of interpenetration and interfusion – “Each and every dust-mote in all places is completely and perfectly fused, the myriad differences and separations are penetrated all at once....”⁴⁸

“Purification” commences with the recitation of two spells – one to purify the ten fingers (referred to as the “Ten Perfections” [*shidu* 十度]) of the celebrant and another to “subdue the *māra*-demons” (*fumo* 伏魔). After reciting these two spells, the celebrant delivers two quatrains extolling the wisdom, eloquence and various other powers of Guanyin and requests Guanyin to turn his attention towards humanity (*renjian* 人間) by manifesting himself. Shengxing explains that these two quatrains supplicate Guanyin to emerge from his *samādhi* so that he can empower the “water with eight qualities”⁴⁹ and transform it into ambrosia.⁵⁰ Just as they rose up from their seats to receive Vairocana in the earlier sub-section “Entering *samādhi*,” they now rise from their seats as they exclaim “Guanyin Bodhisattva! Guanyin Bodhisattva! The Gates of Ambrosia are open!”⁵¹ Once again, the chief lay sponsor, rises from the audience and enters the rite as performer by making three prostrations facing the entrance to the hall to receive Guanyin.

⁴⁸ *Chenchen chacha jin yuanrong, wanbie qiancha yiguan tong* 塵塵刹刹盡圓融，萬別千差一貫通

⁴⁹ Although one comes across the reference to water endowed with the eight qualities in many *sūtras*, the reference in the *Smaller Amitabha Sūtra* characterizing the water in the lotus-ponds in the Pure Lands as endowed with the eight qualities probably resonates best with a Chinese Buddhist audience. The eight qualities are: limpid, cool, sweet-tasting, light, soft, placid, healthy and thirst-quenching. See, *The Land of Bliss*, trans. Luis Gomez (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996), 146.

⁵⁰ Kamata, 831b.

⁵¹ *Guanyin pusa, Guanyin pusa, ganlu men kai* 觀音菩薩，觀音菩薩，甘露門開 Kamata, 832a.

The celebrant again delivers another quatrain, this time praising the qualities of the purified water/ambrosia. Placing the ambrosia bowl filled with water in his left hand and his fore and middle fingers of his right hand resting on the rim of the bowl, the celebrant continues with a passage (in prose) that describes the power of the water in detail. He then pronounces: “There is a spell in the teachings that should (now) be recited diligently.” The rest of the monastics respond with the cantor leading them in the recitation of the “Dhāraṇī of Great Compassion” (*Dabei zhou* 大悲咒).⁵² The tempo of the recitation is controlled by the sound of the wooden-fish handled by the cantor. After the recitation, six different spells are chanted. In the Mount Gu tradition, the celebrant himself chants each of the spell thrice whereas the deliverance style for the spells in the Sound of Ocean-waves tradition is slightly more orchestrated. For example, the cantor in the Sound of Ocean-waves tradition actually introduces each of the spells to be chanted by first announcing the title of the spell. The celebrant then chants the spell once, followed by the cantor chanting it once and finally the assistant cantor repeats the spell for the third time. The six spells chanted here are the spells of “Purifying the Dharma-realm” (*Jing fajie zhenyan* 淨法界真言), “Mark of Purity” (*Dianjing zhenyan* 點淨真言),⁵³ “Empowering Flower-grains” (*Jiachi huami zhenyan* 加持花米真言), “Empowering Bell” (*Jiachi ling zhenyan* 加持領真言), “Empowering Vajra” (*Jiachi chu zhenyan* 加持杵真言), and “Three Syllable” (*Sanzi zhenyan* 三字真

⁵² *Lingbao Liturgy* uses three short pseudo-Sanskrit spells for this section, Ōfuchi, 393b.

⁵³ “Mark of Purity” or “Marking Purity,” originally refers to the monastic practice of marking or staining any new robes or sitting-cloth with mud, soot or ashes so that attachment and pride do not arise when the new robes or sitting-cloth is used. Eventually, this practice was regarded as also a means of purification. See *Foguang Dictionary*, 6545.

言). After purifying and empowering both the ritual-space and the various ritual implements, the entire group sings a hymn consisting of four quatrains. This hymn eulogizes the awesome and majestic powers of the *vajra* handbell and *vajra*, their ability to “destroy and smash heretical and bewitching” ghosts and ghouls, causing all *māra*-demons to turn away from their old ways and ultimately banishing all inner and outer negativity by merely “snapping one’s fingers.”⁵⁴ This hymn is sung to the accompaniment of all the percussive instruments and for the first time in this rite, the celebrant uses the pair of *vajra* handbells. This sub-section comes to an end with the recitation of the “Twelve Causes and Conditions Spell” (*Shi’er yinyuan zhou* 十二因緣咒).

1d) TAKING REFUGE

In the fourth sub-section, the ritual of “Taking refuge” is performed. The ritual of “Taking refuge” at this juncture is distinguished from another section on “Taking refuge” in the second half of the rite where the ghosts are given refuge in the Three Jewels. Here, it is the celebrant and the performers and lay-sponsors taking refuge in the Three Jewels. Placing some empowered rice-grains in his left palm, the celebrant declares on behalf of the others, “I and all sentient beings of the Dharma-realm, from now until the attainment of enlightenment, vow to take refuge in the *Vajra* Superior Master (*jingang shangshi* 金剛上師) and the Three Jewels.” The cantor once again

⁵⁴ Kamata, 833a-b.

introduces the spells to be chanted next by intoning the title of the spells – spells of “The Superior Master and Three Jewels” (*Shangshi sanbao zhenyan* 上師三寶真言). The celebrant then intones the spells: NAMAḤ GURUBHYAH, NAMAḤ BUDDHAYA, NAMAḤ DHARMAYA, NAMAḤ SANGHAYA. The cantor then repeats these spells, followed by the assistant cantor. This is followed by the intoning of three other spells in the same manner – the spells of “The Perfect Superior Master” (*Zheng shangshi* 正上師), “The Perfect Three Jewels” (*Zheng sanbao* 正三寶) and “Three Syllables.” The rice-grains held in the left palm of the celebrant are now tossed into the air as offerings to the *Vajra* Superior Master and Three Jewels. Shengxing’s notes explain that when the empowered rice-grains are scattered in the air, the celebrant should visualize the “precious grains pervading space, completely turning into offerings of flowers and incense.” Reflecting a “Mind-Only” understanding, one is reminded that both the objects of refuge (the Superior Master and Three Jewels) and the subjects taking refuge are products of “the self-nature of one’s own Mind” as the performers formally take refuge in the Superior Master and Three Jewels.⁵⁵ While the celebrant meditates on this “self-nature of one’s own Mind,” the other monastics express it by singing a hymn in two quatrains titled “The Self-Nature *Gāthā*” (*Zixin jie* 自性偈):

The self-nature of skilful-means, the non-decaying essence
Is adamant and non-decaying, the courageous mind
It is the most supreme, without comparison and beyond all forms
Causing what is performed here to be successful.

The self-nature of supreme wisdom, the subtle and deep nature
Reveals and teaches the sound of the highest Dharma-wheel

⁵⁵ Ibid., 833b-834a.

Manifesting bodies of skilful-means from the Unborn⁵⁶
 May what is performed here be successful.

This is immediately followed by another hymn – “The Purifying Earth *Gāthā*” (*Jingdi jie* 淨地偈) that describes and extols the virtues of the transformed world of the ritual-space. Stock phrases often found in *sūtras* describing the qualities of the various Buddha-lands are generously used in this hymn. These two hymns are sung antiphonally, mostly with the cantor leading and sometimes with the celebrant leading. After singing this hymn, the entire group sings the “Music Spell” (*Yinyue zhou* 音樂咒).

At this point in the rite, the celebrant recounts the origin-myth of the rite (*yuanqi wen* 緣起文). With his hands placed in the meditation posture, right palm resting on left, the celebrant begins by describing the ritual-setting in highly idealized terms reminiscent of classic descriptions of pure lands – the altar as constructed with rare and wondrous, heavenly flowers, incense smoke turning into five-colored clouds, candles that outshine the constellations in the entire night sky, and the sounds of the rite resounding as heavenly music expressing the “songs of the Unborn” (*wusheng zi qu* 無生之曲). Furthermore, all the enlightened beings and the worthy sages are invited and are now present here at this rite. The liturgy explains that all this is due to the great kindness and compassion of the Buddha who taught the method of benefiting sentient beings in response to Ānanda’s encounter with a hungry-ghost named “Burning-face.”

⁵⁶ The text that is most commonly used today appears to have introduced a mistake or variant reading here by substituting “from the Unborn” (*yi wusheng* 以無生) with “in this life” (*yi jinsheng* 以今生). All existing earlier versions of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgical-texts that have this “Self-Nature *Gāthā*” – Zhuhong’s version published in 1606, Fazang’s in 1626 and Jixian’s in 1675 – use “from the Unborn” instead of “in this life.” The liturgical-text used by the so-called Cantonese tradition – the *Yuqie yankou shishi keyi* 瑜伽餓口施食科儀 – also has it as “from the Unborn.”

The entire story found in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* is then recounted. After narrating this story, Ānanda is formally received into the ritual-space in the same manner as how both Vairocana Buddha and Guanyin were received in earlier sub-sections of this rite.⁵⁷

At the performance of a *Yuqie yankou* rite I attended in Tainan City, Taiwan, the celebrant temporarily departed from the text and gave a short explanation on several points related to the *Yuqie yankou* rite in the vernacular Fujian/Taiwanese dialect. According to the celebrant, the insertion of such commentaries in the vernacular is an element of Buddhist rites that many have forgotten but should be encouraged so that the lay audience gathered at such rites can benefit more directly from their attendance and better appreciate the rite being performed.⁵⁸ This celebrant's departure from the scripted liturgy to offer impromptu instruction and guidance to the laity should remind us of the Hongwu emperor's characterization of the *jiao/yuqie* monks as those who "by performing rituals."⁵⁹ Also, one of my Taiwanese informants, Professor Shi Daoyu, pointed out that the practice of inserting impromptu expositions in a highly choreographed rite is related to the category of monastics in the "Biographies of Eminent

⁵⁷ Kamata, 834b-835b.

⁵⁸ After explaining the benefits of the performance of the *Yuqie yankou* rite, the celebrant at the *Yuqie yankou* rite at Guangde Monastery addressed a belief that those who acted as celebrants of the *Yuqie yankou* rite will inevitable suffer from a shortened life. He dismissed this belief as superstitious and wrong view based on a misinterpretation of a oft-repeated phrase that can be translated as "long Vajra, short Yankou" (*chang jingang duan yankou* 長金剛短餓口). This phrase is apparently (mis)interpreted as referring to how recitation of the Vajra/Diamond Sūtra (*Jingang jing* 金剛經) increases one's lifespan while performance of the (*Yuqie*) *yankou* rite shortens one's lifespan. Instead, according to this celebrant, the phrase refers entirely to the *Yuqie yankou* rite. "Long Vajra" refers to the first section of the rite where it is the "Vajra-section" of the rite. In this section, the liturgy should be chanted slowly and carefully – hence "long" – as one is basically making offerings to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas and accumulating merit. "Short Yankou" is the second section which should be performed quickly – hence "short" – as the hungry ghosts invited to this rite should be fed without any procrastination. This celebrant's interpretation of the popular phrase is a good example of the arguments, counterarguments that often accompany ritual acts and events; an ongoing heterologue of contending voices and views.

⁵⁹ See *Chapter One*, p. 73.

Monks” (*Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳) known as “liturgists” (*changdao* 唱導) who used ritualized recitation and chanting of the *sūtras* to instruct others in the Buddhist teachings. Similarly, at the *Yuqie yankou* performance held at the University of Virginia in March, 2002, the celebrant similarly gave an unscripted lecture on the significance and psychology of the rite. These impromptu insertions into what is an otherwise highly scripted rite, also show the possibility of flexibility in rituals. While ritual fixity articulated in terms of tradition is highly valorized, change and variation are nonetheless introduced.

After receiving Ānanda, the virtues of taking refuge in the Three Jewels are expounded by the celebrant, comparing the practice of taking refuge to the “numinous pill” (*lingdan* 靈丹) capable of healing hundreds of different types of diseases.⁶⁰ The Three Jewels are the candle and the lamp in the darkness of the deep night; they are also the safe sea-route in the turbulence of the ocean of suffering and the cooling moisture of rain in the midst of the flames of the burning house (of *samsara*).⁶¹ At the end of this solo delivery by the celebrant, the chorus sings a hymn in praise of the Three Jewels. Once again, the Sanskrit syllables OM ĀḤ HŪM are inserted in different parts of the hymn. Yanji explains that the syllables are placed in the hymn to “empower the sounds” (*jiachi shengyin* 加持聲音), causing them to transform into “great and expansive praises.” He cites the famous chapter of “The Conduct of Samantabhadra” (*Puxian xing yuan pin* 普賢行願品) in the *Huayan jing* where the bodhisattva

⁶⁰ The “Numinous Pill” is an explicitly Daoist reference alluding to the Daoist practices of inner/outer alchemy.

⁶¹ This world compared to a “burning house” is a well-known metaphor used in a famous parable in the *Lotus Sūtra*.

Samantabhadra or Puxian, explains his method of making infinite offerings and praises to the Buddhas by visualizing infinite worlds within worlds within uncountable dust-motes existing in innumerable worlds. Likewise, the syllables OM ĀḤ HŪṂ can empower and transform the words and phrases of the hymn in praise of the Three Jewels.⁶²

1e) VISUALIZING THE DAOCHANG

A further set of spells is chanted at the beginning of the fifth sub-section on “Visualizing the *daochang* (*bodhimaṇḍa*).” (*Daochang guan* 道場觀). With each of these spells, the celebrant forms a different *mudrā*. The four spells and their corresponding *mudrās* are, “Banishing *Māra*-Demons” (*Qianmo yin* 遣魔印), “Subduing *Māra*-Demons” (*Fumo yin* 伏魔印), “Wheel of Flames” (*Huolun yin* 火輪印) and “True Emptiness” (*Zhenkong yin* 真空印). Different *mudrās* and corresponding visualizations are prescribed for each of the spells. For example, for “True Emptiness,” Shengxing provides the following instructions:

When chanting this spell, (hold) the eight fingers interlaced facing inwards and the two thumbs held upright and perpendicular. One should imagine (*xiang* 想) that above the heart-moon disk (*xinyue lun* 心月論) is a golden OM syllable. This is called the “adorning all Buddha lands.”⁶³

After “banishing” and “subduing” the *māra* -demons, a “wheel of flames” is caused to appear magically, encircling the entire ritual-space, keeping it free from obstruction and obstacles caused by *māra*-demons. Shengxing’s notes do not explain

⁶² Yanji, 55.

⁶³ Kamata, 837a.

the significance of or context for these spells but focus instead on how to form each of the *mudrās* the corresponding visualizations. For an exegesis on the significance of these spells and *mudrās*, we can turn to Yanji's commentary. According to Yanji, the first three spells in this sub-section fulfill the three degrees of banishing the *māra*-demons.⁶⁴ Yanji identifies the *māra*-demons dealt with here as the *māra* s of the area/place (*jingjie mo* 境界魔), heavenly *māras* (*tianmo* 天魔), *māras* of sleep (*shuimo* 睡魔), *māras* of sickness (*pingmo* 病魔), death *māras* (*shimo* 死魔) and *māras* of vexations (*fan'nao mo* 煩惱魔). Having dealt with the *māra*-demons, the celebrant next intones the "True Emptiness Spell" (*Zhenkong zhou* 真空咒) to dissolve that ritual-space into emptiness, thus creating an empty, open space. From within this empty space, the celebrant visualizes sets of the Sanskrit syllables BHRŪṂ, ĀḤ and HŪṂ appearing which in turn transform into offerings of drinking water, bath water, flowers, incense, light, sandalwood paste, food and music. The chorus, playing all the percussive instruments, sings the spells of the "drinking and bath waters" and the "six offerings" while the celebrant forms the different *mudrās* corresponding to the offerings. Interestingly, this section which is entirely in Sanskrit can also be found in the *Lingbao Daoist Rite of Universal Salvation* discussed by Boltz.⁶⁵ The presence of such Indic elements in Daoist liturgies speaks to the perceived power or mystique of Sanskrit or

⁶⁴ In Tibetan commentaries of such a ritual sequence, the first set of spell and *mudrā* is said to drive away or banish all obstructing Mara-demons from the ritual-space. If there are some obstinate Mara-demons who still remain in the ritual-space, they are then forcefully subdued or subjugated. Finally, after the ritual-space has been thoroughly cleared of such demonic influences and obstacles, a circle ("wheel") of fire is placed at the perimeter of the ritual-space to prevent any possible future incursions during the course of the rite by other Mara-demons. See, Beyer, 262-64.

⁶⁵ Boltz, 203. The Lingbao Daoist rite omits the first spell which is the "drinking and bath waters" spell.

“Brahman-language” in the general milieu of Chinese liturgy. This offering section is finally completed with the singing of the “Music Spell.”

Upon completion of the “Music Spell,” they chant a quatrain praising the “Six Syllable Spell” (*Liuzi daming zhou* 六字大明咒) of Guanyin:

The Six Syllable King of Spells
Its powers are immeasurable
The pure and clean assembly here
With different mouths together proclaim (this spell).⁶⁶

This is immediately followed by the chanting of the “Six Syllable Spell” – OM MANI PADME HŪṂ – for an unspecified (but usually a hundred and eight) number of repetitions. While the Sound of Ocean-waves tradition chants this spell aloud with the accompaniment of the percussive instruments, the Mount Gu tradition does not use any instruments here but instead repeats this spell in the *monian* (silent recitation) oral delivery style. This sub-section comes to an end with the celebrant and the other monastics singing a quatrain of transference of merit (of reciting the “Six Syllable Spell”) antiphonally. Shengxing’s notes instruct the performers to insert a single recitation of OM MANI PADME HŪṂ after each line of the quatrain. Again we see an attempt to “bless” or “empower” (heighten?) the Chinese words with exotic Sanskrit syllables.⁶⁷ Not surprisingly, this insertion of the “Six Syllable Spell” after each line of the transference of merit verse is commonly found in “Six Syllable Spell” liturgies used in Tibetan Buddhism. Once again, we see the influence of Tibetan liturgical-forms on the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy.

⁶⁶ Kamata, 838b.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

1f) PRESENTING THE MAṆḌALA

Removing the five-pointed *vajra* and the pair of miniature pestles from the *maṇḍala*-plate, the celebrant prepares the *maṇḍala* -plate for the next sub-section on “Presenting the *maṇḍala*.” In this sub-section, an ideal universe based on Indian Buddhist cosmology found in Abhidharma texts such as the *Abhidharmakośa*, is “created” by the celebrant by the power of his visualizations, the spells recited and the corresponding ritual-acts and presented as an offering to the Superior Master, the Three Jewels and all other enlightened beings at the end of this sub-section. Thus, the *maṇḍala* in this context does not refer to the ideal universes of individual Buddhas and their retinues that are often found depicted in paintings and sometimes in three-dimensional structures.⁶⁸ The process of generating this *maṇḍala* is accomplished on the basis of the *maṇḍala* -plate placed in front of the celebrant. As the spell of “Purifying the Ground” is recited thrice, the celebrant dips his right ring finger into the ambrosia bowl and puts a drop of water into the center of the *maṇḍala* -plate. This is repeated thrice to correspond with the three recitations of the spell. Next, as the spell of “Securing the Boundary” is recited thrice, the celebrant uses the same finger to draw a circle on the rim of the *maṇḍala*-plate, thus establishing the boundaries of this universe.

⁶⁸ This practice of offering the entire universe along with other precious offerings in the form of a *maṇḍala* is otherwise unknown in East Asian Buddhist traditions (including Japanese esoteric traditions). It is however, a very common and widespread practice among Tibetan Buddhist traditions. The most common forms of *maṇḍala*-offerings in the Tibetan traditions are the seven-heaps and thirty-seven heaps *maṇḍala*-offerings. Apparently, there are also Tibetan *maṇḍala*-offerings that consist of twenty-three and twenty-five heaps. The *maṇḍala*-offering in this rite which consists of twenty-six heaps is most closely related to the twenty-five heaps as its contents are identical to the system of the twenty-five heaps plus an extra heap to represent the “Minor Mount Sumeru” (the part of the mountain that is submerged underwater). See Thubten Zopa in *Gaden Lha Gyama, The Hundreds of Deities of the Land of Joy* (Kathmandu: Kopan Monastery, 1996), 98.

The celebrant next empowers the rice-grains that he will be using to establish the rest of the ideal universe on the *maṇḍala*-plate. He next draws another outer circle on the *maṇḍala*-plate with the same finger as before and visualizes the “Circle of Wheel Mountains” (*Lunwei shan* 輪圍山) forming on the outer periphery of the universe being constructed. Another smaller circle is drawn on the *maṇḍala*-plate as the celebrant visualizes the “Iron Circle Mountains” (*Tiewei shan* 鐵圍山) forming. Next, the celebrant silently recites a spell to “empower the two mountain ranges,” picking up some rice-grains and scattering them on the periphery of the *maṇḍala*-plate in a clockwise direction. The celebrant then uses his right ring finger to trace the syllable HŪṂ in the center of the *maṇḍala*-plate. Rather than considering this ritual as “make-believe” or merely representational, Shengxing’s notes argue that,

A properly established space is not like (an ordinary world) created by deluded thoughts. Instead, this is a *vajra*-world (*jingang shijie* 金剛世界) thoroughly constructed through the power and function of the syllable HŪṂ. It is visualized and formed from within the self-nature, each and every (feature) manifesting on the *maṇḍala*-plate.⁶⁹

Thus, from this perspective, the world created on the *maṇḍala*-plate is more real than the world that we are in right now. This appears to be based on the argument that since our present world is ontologically deluded and mistaken, it can have no ultimate reality. On the other hand, the world created on the *maṇḍala*-plate is a “*vajra*-world” – an adamant, indestructible world – created from the syllable HŪṂ which has the self-nature as its ontological basis. In this case, it appears that Shengxing’s understanding of ritual is not so much that it transforms the world from what it is to what

⁶⁹ Kamata., 839a.

it ought to be but that ritual takes us from an ontologically mistaken world to an ontologically valid world.

After fixing the HŪM on the center of the *maṇḍala*-plate, a quatrain is then recited to describe the general qualities of this ontologically valid universe – the four continents surrounding Mount Sumeru on its four sides, the palaces of the gods at the summit and the realm of orphaned-ghosts at the base. At this point, the assisting monastics begin playing the percussive instruments as they sing in unison the twenty-six spells for each aspect of this ideal universe manifesting on the *maṇḍala*-plate – the great Mount Sumeru, the minor Mount Sumeru, the four great continents and the eight smaller sub-continents, the sun and moon – as well as prized objects of offerings such as the Seven Royal Gifts (the precious elephant, minister, horse, queen, general, wheel etc.), the precious canopy of jewels (*zhongbao gai* 眾寶傘) and the victory banner (*zunsheng zhuang* 尊勝幢).⁷⁰ As the chorus sings these spells, the celebrant places rice-grains on different places on the *maṇḍala*-plate, visualizing the corresponding features appearing at the points where he puts the rice-grains. Several other offering spells and verses are chanted after the entire ideal universe has been created by the celebrant. The universe on the *maṇḍala*-plate is finally presented to the Superior Master and the Three Jewels with the recitation of a “*Maṇḍala* (offering) Spell” (*Mandaluo zhou* 曼荼羅咒) followed by the “Music Spell” once again.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Ibid., 839a-840a.

⁷¹ Ibid., 841a.

This section on “Presenting the *maṇḍala*” first appears in the *Yuqie yankou* rite in Zhuhong’s influential 1606 recension of the liturgy. It is not found in the Yuan period *Yuqie yankou* liturgy *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* and certainly not in earlier ghost-feeding rites such as the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*, the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* or the Song Tiantai ghost-feeding rites. Furthermore, the ritual offering of an idealized universe – a *maṇḍala* – to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas is not attested to in main esoteric texts and traditions associated with Tang dynasty esoteric masters such as Amoghavajra. None of the Japanese esoteric lineages have a practice resembling the offering of *maṇḍala* found in this sub-section of the *Yuqie yankou* rite. A quick search of the electronic version of the Taishō canon yields no results on such a practice. On the other hand, the offering of *maṇḍala* is a very common practice in Tibetan Buddhism. It is a very pervasive and visible practice performed in a variety of contexts – as a symbolic “payment” to spiritual teachers when requesting them for teachings or esoteric empowerments and instructions (Skt. *gurudikṣa*), an offering to deities in the context of larger ritual-programs, and as one of the four (or five) preliminary practices (Tib. *sngon-gro*) often performed prior to a student’s engagement in advanced, complex esoteric practices.⁷² As Stephan Beyer puts it:

The *maṇḍala* offering is nothing less than the presentation to the deity of the entire world, visualized in front of the practitioner as a golden realm with Mount Meru and all its continents, a cosmogram filled with “all the entire wealth and glory of men and gods.” It is perhaps the highest expression of ritualized devotion: its primary function from its Indian inception has been as a presentation to one’s personal guru, serving as a symbol of the complete

⁷² The *maṇḍala*-offering (Tib. *mandal-bul*) is considered “the best of all methods” for “the two accumulations of merit and wisdom.” See, Patrul Rinpoche, *Words of My Perfect Teacher*, trans. Padmakara Translation Group, ed. Kerry Brown and Sima Sharma (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994), 283-284.

subordination to him of all one is or has; it is held to be the only “fee” worthy enough to be given to a Master....⁷³

Although not found in the Tang period esoteric-teachings, the practice of offering the *maṇḍala* is a very common rite in Tibetan Buddhism and apparently popularized in late Indian Buddhism. Beyer provides an extensive list of texts on *maṇḍala* offering attributed to Indian Buddhist masters.⁷⁴ It is likely then, that the appearance of the “Presenting the *maṇḍala*” sequence in Zhuhong’s recension of the *Yuqie yankou* and continued presence in our present text, occurred under the influence of Tibetan Buddhism which steadily increased in China from the Yuan period on.

Although the practice of *maṇḍala* offering in Tibetan Buddhism mostly involve an offering consisting of either thirty-seven or seven “heaps” or “piles” (Tib. *tsom bu*) rice-grains placed on a *maṇḍala*-plate similar to the one used in our rite, there are actually other versions of the offering involving nine, twenty-three and twenty-five heaps.⁷⁵ The tradition of the thirty-seven heaps *maṇḍala* is said to be created by the Sa-skya hierarch, ‘Phags-pa.⁷⁶ ‘Phags-pa’s style of offering *maṇḍalas* of thirty-seven heaps probably did not immediately replace the older traditions but more likely very gradually gained popularity. In our present liturgy, the *maṇḍala* constructed and offered has twenty-six heaps – one heap more than the twenty-five heaps apparently used by Tibetan Buddhists before ‘Phags-pa’s thirty-seven heaps gained universal acceptance in Tibet. In analyzing the two different versions – the twenty-five and twenty-six – it appears that our liturgy’s extra heap is derived from separating the heap of Mount Meru into two,

⁷³ Stephan Beyer, *The Cult of Tārā* (1973, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 168.

⁷⁴ Beyer, 488, n. 222.

⁷⁵ F. D. Lessing, “Miscellaneous Lamaist Notes, I” *Central Asiatic Journal* II, 1 (1956): 60.

⁷⁶ Patrul Rinpoche, 286. ‘Phags-pa was also the “imperial preceptor” to the Yuan emperor, Qubilai Khan.

representing the part of Mount Meru that is above the ocean (called “Great Mount Meru” in our liturgy) and the part that is submerged (called “Small Mount Meru”).⁷⁷ It is tempting to speculate here that perhaps when Zhuhong redacted the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy, the tradition of *maṇḍalas* with twenty-five/twenty-six heaps was more current and thus adopted by Zhuhong. We should note that the Ming emperors patronized clerics and hierarchs of the bKa-brgyud lineages of Tibetan Buddhism and these bKa-brgyud lineages were probably not using ‘Phags-pa’s system due to sectarian rivalry. We will return to this Tibetan connection in our discussion of the *Yuqie yankou* in the Late Imperial period in *Chapter Five*.

Also included within this sub-section is a sequence of ritual-acts that begins with the creation of an excellent and wonderful palace via the manipulation of visualization, spell and *mudrā*. The celebrant creates a *mudrā* with his fingers while silently reciting the “Great Wheel Gnosis Sovereign Spell” (*Dalun mingwang zhou* 大輪明王咒, Skt. *Mahācakravidyārāja*) seven times. As he recites, he is supposed to visualize a golden syllable BHRŪṂ appearing which then turns into an excellent palace which he will later invite the Superior Master and Three Jewels to inhabit. After completing the creation of the palace, he now administers the Refuge and Bodhisattva vows to all those assembled at the rite – the living and the dead. Hitting the *fachi* on the table he calls attention to his authority and pronounces:

All those assembled (here) – generate the expansive and great mind! Take refuge in the *Vajra* Superior Master, the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. I now

⁷⁷ Kamata, 839a.

generate the mind that does not seek for me the blessings and rewards of the god and human realms, or the attainments of the *śrāvakas* or *pratyekas*, of the various stages of the bodhisattvas. But by solely relying on the highest vehicle, (I) generate the *Bodhi*-mind – vowing that I will attain the complete and perfect *Bodhi*-mind together with sentient beings of the Dharma-realm.⁷⁸

After generating the proper motivation – the mind that seeks to free all beings from suffering by working for the simultaneous attainment of enlightenment of both self and others – the celebrant leads the assembly in once again inviting the various enlightened beings and guardian gods to appear at the ritual space out of compassion for all sentient beings. Holding a “handheld censer” (*shoulu* 手爐) with sticks of incense burning, the celebrant rises from his seat and together with the other performers sings a quatrain imploring the Three Jewels to appear at the Dharma-assembly. The Three Jewels and guardian gods are then formally invited:

(We) respectfully invite the Three Jewels – inviting with flowers and incense, receiving with flowers and incense. Homage! Single-mindedly and respectfully (we) invite all Buddhas, Dharma and Sangha, the esoteric Vajra-deities, Dharma-guarding spirit-kings, gods and dragons of the Eight Division, Brahman immortals and all assemblies of the sagely. Please do not forsake your fundamental vow of caring for sentient beings. On this night, at this time, condescend upon this Dharma-assembly! (We) invite with flowers and incense, (we) receive with flowers and incense.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Kamata, 841b-842a.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 842a.

Three deities are individually invoked with the celebrant and his assistants exclaiming their names – Śākyamuni, Amitābha and Guanyin.⁸⁰ Here, and in other junctures in earlier sub-sections, we see how bodies in ritual space physically perform the spiritual hierarchy that underlies this *Yuqie yankou* rite (the division of the liturgy into the “upper” and “lower” section, of the invisible guests of the rite into “enlightened” and “worldly”). When higher or superior guests such as the Three Jewels, *Vajra*-deities and Dharma-guarding deities are invited or addressed, the performers and audience do not remain seated. Instead, they are standing in attendance; with the celebrant and chief lay-sponsor respectfully holding offerings of flowers and incense for the spiritually superior guests. The spiritual hierarchy is thus made manifest in the ritual space for all to view and to respond accordingly.

Having invited the superior guests, the celebrant performs the rite of “manifesting the altar through *mudrās*” (*yinxian tanyi* 印現壇儀).⁸¹ Shengxing’s notes instruct the celebrant to visualize a white HRĪḤ syllable above the mind in the form of a moon disc while reciting the spell. This light radiates into the sky to invite the “wisdom-Guanyin” (*zhi Guanyin* 智觀音) to enter the ritual-space.⁸² After the wisdom-Guanyin has entered, light radiates from him, inviting the Three Jewels and the exoteric and esoteric

⁸⁰ It is worth noting that these three figures are usually invoked as a group in several *shishi* texts used in the Korean Buddhist tradition.

⁸¹ This rite is common in Japanese *mikkyō* – reference Sharf in his icon volume and check Payne’s *Feeding the Gods*.

⁸² I have chosen to translate “*zhi Guanyin*” as “wisdom-Guanyin” rather than understanding it as a particular form of Guanyin as this wisdom-Guanyin clearly refers to the *jñānasattva* found in esoteric Buddhist meditations. According the Guhyasamāja tantra, any standard visualization practice should consist of four parts – i) generation of the *samayasattva* (i.e. visualizing oneself as a divinity), ii) blessing the sense-bases (*āyatana*), iii) invitation of the *jñānasattva* and its merging with the *samayasattva* (i.e. inviting the actual divinity to come and merge inseparably with oneself as *samayasattva*) and iv) sealing the mergence through self-empowerment. See, Yael Bentor, *Consecration of Images and Stūpas in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1996), 1-4.

protecting spirits to assembly together at the ritual-space. Following this, the whole assembly recites the “Thirty-five Buddhas Confession”.⁸³ Zhuhong does not offer any clear explanations for the significance of reciting the names of these Buddhas except that “they immediately appear from the Buddha lands of the ten directions to speak the Dharma and liberate sentient beings.”⁸⁴ In contemporary performances of the rite, a shorter list of the names of six Buddhas is often chanted instead of the “Thirty-five Buddhas Confession.”⁸⁵ This sub-section finally draws to a close with the singing of a “transference of merit” quatrain to the accompaniment of the whole ensemble of percussive instruments.

1g) UNIVERSAL OFFERING

The final sub-section of the first half of the rite is known as “Universal Offering” and it begins with the silent recitation (*monian* 默念) of the *Heart Sūtra*. None of the available commentaries actually illuminate the rationale behind the recitation of the *Heart Sūtra* at this point in the rite. The commentaries merely state that the *Heart Sūtra* contains the essence of all the other *sūtras*. Zhuhong makes no attempt to explain how

⁸³ The recitation of the “The Thirty-five Buddhas Confession” is a Mahāyāna-type of confessional practice that originated very early in the Mahāyāna period. Several Chinese translations of this liturgy were done and there is at least one text in the Taishō with this title – *Foshuo sanshiwu foming lichan wen* 佛說三十五佛名禮懺文 – translated by Amoghavajra (T326). The version used in *Yuqie yankou* liturgies is slightly different (longer,) from Amoghavajra’s translation. See, the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* (T1320). A similar liturgy (with the same list of thirty-five Buddhas but again with a slightly shorter prose and verse section following the names) also appears in Zhisheng’s *Collection of Repentance Rites in Various Sūtras* (*Ji zhujing lichen yi*, 集諸經禮懺儀), T464. Zhisheng’s version is apparently culled from 佛說決定毗尼經, T325:12.38c-39a.

⁸⁴ XZJ101.857b.

⁸⁵ Those invoked in this shorter list are “the pure and clear Dharmabody Vairocana Buddha, the perfect and complete Reward-body Rocana Buddha, the limitless Transformation-body Śākyamuni Buddha, to be born in the future Maitreya Buddha, the World of Ultimate Bliss Amitābha Buddha, and all Buddhas of the ten directions and three periods of time.”

the recitation of the *Heart Sūtra* at this juncture in the rite fits into the overall structure of the *Yuqie yankou* rite. The silent-recitation of the *sūtra* ends with the celebrant intoning aloud the spell that comes at the end of the *sūtra*; the spell: GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASANGATE BODHI SVĀHĀ.

The next part consists of a hymn in sixty-five four-character lines. According to Zhuhong, this hymn is the “actual expression of the basic intent of the rite of food-bestowal” (*zhengxu shishi benyi* 正敘施食本意).⁸⁶ In his commentary, he divides this hymn into four main sections. In the first section consisting of six lines, the attention of the “sages and worthies”⁸⁷ are implored and invoked. In their presence, the assembly announces that with great benevolence and compassion and by relying on the Buddhas’ spiritual powers, it will now invite and summon the various beings within samsara – in particular those beings in the three lower realms such as the inhabitants of the earth-prisons, the hungry ghosts, the judges and officials of the earth-prisons and the realm of the dead, those who have recently died and those who have died in the distant past, and other spirits and ghosts – to the rite. This second section consists of eighteen lines. In the next seven lines, the assembly appeals to the compassion of the sages and worthies and pray that they shine their great awesome light on the assembly so that the aspirations of the assembly can be completely fulfilled. In the final section of the hymn comprising of thirty-four lines, the actual goals of the *Yuqie yankou* rite are expressed. Thus, by relying on the power of the Buddhas, the aforementioned beings are able to

⁸⁶XZJ101.858a-b.

⁸⁷ “...all Buddhas, wisdom Bodhisattvas, Vajra-gods and various divine officials.” Kamata, 843a.

arrive at the rite and receive “the excellent and wonderful Dharma-flavor of the pure ambrosia of the Buddhas.”⁸⁸

The performers are all standing when they begin the singing of this hymn; with the celebrant holding the handheld censer with his hands as a welcome offering to the beings being invoked. As they begin singing the final section of this hymn, the performers return to their seats. Their postures – standing in reverence, followed by sitting – reflect the basic hierarchy that runs through this whole rite. As the first three sections of this hymn are invocations and prayers addressed to the hierarchically superior category of beings, ritual etiquette requires them to be standing in attendance. The monastic performers return to their seated position as they sing the final section of the hymn:

May the judges and officials of the earth-prisons and the realm of the dead, immeasurable hungry ghosts, parents of many previous lifetimes, both distant and recent ancestors, *brahman*-seers, all enemies whom we owe lives and wealth to, all the different varieties and types of ghosts and spirits, each with their retinues by relying on the Tathāgatas’ power definitely arrive here at this time....⁸⁹

Clearly, as they are no longer addressing the enlightened ones, it is only befitting of them as components of one of the Three Jewels to be positioned in accordance with their status vis-à-vis the ordinary beings of samsara. Once again, we see how bodies within ritual space inscribe the spiritual hierarchy assumed by the liturgy. A second level of hierarchy is also made explicit here as only the monastic performers switch from the standing position to seating at this point. The lay sponsors and audience, on the other hand, are required to remain standing.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 843a-b.

⁸⁹ Kamata, 843a-b.

After singing this hymn expressing the intent and goals of the rite, two quatrains are chanted to invite “those worthy of offerings” to receive the “six offerings.” The celebrant is to visualize the six offerings as the rest of the performers sing the corresponding verses describing the visualization:

From the HŪṂ syllable, Flower-goddesses surge forth, with one face and four arms. Their upper two hands are holding wonderful flowers and their bottom two hands are holding crossed-*vajras*. OM ĀḤ HŪṂ OM MANI HŪṂ HRĪḤ.⁹⁰ These Flower-goddesses offer wonderful flowers to the Buddhas. May the Buddhas be compassionate and receive this offering.⁹¹

These words are repeated for another five times, each time inserting a new offering into the relevant parts. The five other offerings, in sequence, are: incense, lamps, (sandalwood) paste, fruits and music. We should note that this section first appeared in Ding'an's edition and is absent in Zhuhong's. Shengxing later provides us with a more detailed visualization and commentary. He explains that the celebrant should first visualize a HRĪḤ syllable that emanates six, identical HŪṂ syllables. These six HŪṂ syllables transform into the six offering-goddesses who are referred to as “female Buddhas” (literally “Buddha-mothers,” *fomu* 佛母). Drawing upon a standard esoteric Buddhist exegetical strategy of identifying/matching of deities with specific qualities or virtues of the Buddhas, Shengxing associates each of these six “Buddha-mothers” with the classic Six Perfections of generosity, morality, forbearance, vigor, meditative-concentration and wisdom. Once again, he explains that the three syllables

⁹⁰ In the *Yuqie yankou* performed by Fo Guang Shan monastics, they have amended this part of the text to OM MANI PADME HŪṂ instead of OM MANI HŪṂ HRĪḤ.

⁹¹ Kamata, 844a.

OM ĀḤ HŪṂ inserted in this hymn serve to empower the offerings so that they multiply and pervade lands equal to the atoms of dust.⁹²

Yanji's Republican-period commentary provides yet even more details on the visualizations involved. According to him, each of the offering goddesses should be visualized in a different color. Furthermore, each of them also has an inner significance or true identity. Thus, the flower-goddess is light red and in essence is the Perfection of Generosity. The incense-goddess is yellow, the Perfection of Discipline, while the lamp-goddess is fire red, the Perfection of Patience. The (sandalwood) paste-offering is white in color, and is the Perfection of Effort while the fruit-goddess is reddish yellow in color, the Perfection of Concentration. Finally, the sixth offering, the music-goddess is blue-green in color, the Perfection of Wisdom.⁹³ The presenting of the six-offerings is completed with the recitation of an offering spell which can be re-constructed as OM SARVA TATHĀGATA PUṢPE DHŪPE ĀLOKE GANDHE NAIVEDYA ŚABDA PŪJA MEGHA SAMUDRA SPHARANA SAMAYE HŪṂ. The singing reaches a crescendo with the repeating of the cadence "Homage to the Universally Offering Bodhisattva-Māhasattvas!" thrice (南無普供養菩薩摩訶薩).

Before this final sub-section of the first half of the rite is over, a few other spells and verses are chanted. A quatrain identified by Yanji's commentary as "Offering with the Mind *Gāthā*" (*Yunxin gongyang jie* 運心供養偈) is chanted.⁹⁴ This quatrain equates the present offering to Samantabhadra's method of making offerings to all

⁹² Ibid..

⁹³ Yanji, 97.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 98.

Buddhas everywhere by multiplying himself and the offerings infinitely by the power of his mind.⁹⁵ A corresponding “Offering with the Mind Spell” is then chanted seven times.⁹⁶ The “Subduing Māra-demons *Gāthā*” and its corresponding spell⁹⁷ are recited next followed by the “Transforming into Emptiness *Gāthā*” and its corresponding spell.⁹⁸ The last quatrain and spell chanted here is the “Presenting Food *Gāthā*” (*Fengshi jie 奉施偈*) and spell.⁹⁹ During this whole sequence of chanting a quatrain followed by a spell, the celebrant performs the corresponding *mudrās* and visualizations.¹⁰⁰ The first half of the *Yuqie yankou* rite comes to a completion with the singing of a hymn of offering and dedication. The “patron-oriented” character of this rite becomes more explicit here as the last four lines of this hymn specifically pray for the welfare of the sponsors of the rite:

May (the Buddhas) compassionately accept (the offering) and be delighted
Dismiss and remove demonic hindrances, gather blessings and bestow peace
May the prayers of this evening’s donors be fulfilled
To the ends of future, (may they) be auspicious uninterruptedly!

Almost two thirds of the entire four to six hour-session is spent in this first half section of the rite.

2a) *ENTERING SAMĀDHI*

⁹⁵ Kamata, 844b. This quatrain is taken from the *Huayan jing* under the chapter on Samantabhadra Bodhisattva’s conduct.

⁹⁶ NAMAḤ SARVA TATHĀGATEBHYO VIŚVA-MUKHEBHYA OM SARVATHĀ KHAM UDGATE HEMAM ĠAGANA-KHAM SVĀHĀ.

⁹⁷ OM VAJRA YAKṢA HŪM.

⁹⁸ OM SVABHAVA-ŚUDDĀH SARVA-DHARMĀH SVABHAVA-ŚUDDHO’ HAM.

⁹⁹ OM ĀKĀRO-MUKHAM SARVA-DHARMĀNAM ĀDHYĀNUTPANNŪTA OM ĀḤ HŪM PHAT SVĀHĀ.

¹⁰⁰ Kamata, 844b-845b.

After “respectfully offering” to the enlightened beings such as the Buddhas, bodhisattvas and other protector-deities, the second half of the rite aimed at “compassionately bestowing” food and sustenance to the beings of the lower realms begins with the sub-section identified by Yanji as “Entering *samādhi*.” “Entering *samādhi*” refers to the celebrant’s meditation of himself as the main deity of this rite, i.e. Guanyin. Although there is a sub-section with this same title in the first half of the rite, the meditation in that earlier “Entering *samādhi*” contains only a brief and simple generation of the celebrant as Guanyin. In this present sub-section, since the celebrant has to rely on his ability to transform himself into Guanyin to be able to truly feed the hungry ghosts and other beings of the lower realms, the meditation sequence is much more detailed. Before the celebrant identifies himself with Guanyin, he first chants four quatrains together with the chorus, offering praises and homage to the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha and Guanyin. The lines are delivered antiphonally with the celebrant alone singing one part and the cantor alternating with the assistant cantor in leading the chorus in singing the other part. For example, the cantor announces the title of the *mudrā* and spell of the “*Samādhi* of Guanyin” (*Guanyin ding* 觀音定) by singing it. The celebrant then sings the spell OM VAJRA DHARMA HRĪḤ once, followed by the cantor singing it once again and the assistant cantor completes the sequence by singing the spell the third time.

Yanji’s notes clarify that the celebrant should not form the *mudrā* at this point as he has yet to enter the “*Samādhi* of Guanyin.” The entire group then sings a hymn consisting of thirty-six seven-character lines which begins with the first four lines paying

homage to the Three Jewels, generating the Bodhi-mind and beseeching the compassion of Guanyin to assist the celebrant's attainment of Guanyin's subtle and wondrous body. The next four lines describe the stages which the celebrant should proceed in to transform himself into Guanyin – he first meditates on “a perfect and complete, unsullied moon” with a seed-syllable radiating light which then turns into a lotus flower. Shengxing's notes indicate that this is where the celebrant should form the *mudrā* of the “*Samādhi* of Guanyin.” Zhuhong's commentary elaborates that this perfect and complete, unsullied moon is none other than the innately perfect and complete Self-nature. From this pure state, a seed-syllable should be visualized as a golden-colored HRĪḤ which is the wisdom that the Great Compassionate Bodhisattva (Guanyin) uses to attain the True Principle and benefit sentient beings.¹⁰¹

The rest of the visualization is described in the remaining lines of the hymn. Within the lotus flower, one appears as a Guanyin bearing a lotus in one's left hand and holding a *mudrā* in the right. The lotus has eight petals and on each petal is a Buddha seated in deep meditation, facing Guanyin. Their bodies are golden in color and rays of dazzling brilliant light radiate from their crowns. Finally the light transforms all being into Guanyins, liberating them from the affliction of suffering. One then empowers one's four places by touching the four places with the *mudrā* of “*Samādhi* of Guanyin.” Shengxing's notes explain that one “seals one's heart, forehead, throat and crown with the *mudrā*.” Where the *mudrā* touches, a HRĪḤ syllable appears.¹⁰² One's body is now identical to Guanyin's. Finally, the last four lines is a “dedication of merit”

¹⁰¹ XZJ101.863b.

¹⁰² Kamata, 847a.

quatrain dedicating the merit of visualizing one's body as Guanyin to sentient beings' seeing of Amitābha and fulfillment of Samantabhadra's vows. With this, the loud singing and cacophony of percussive music comes to an abrupt stop as the group immediately launches into a rapid recitation of the so-called "Breaking the Earth-prisons *Gāthā*" from the *Huayan jing* that appears in many of the food-bestowal liturgical-texts.

2b) INVITING AND SUMMONING

If one wishes to completely know
 All Buddhas of the Three Times
 One should contemplate the nature of the Dharma-realm:
 Everything is created by mind only.¹⁰³

The rapid recitation of this famous verse from the *Huayan jing* is done accompanied by the hitting of the wooden-fish. This recitation marks the beginning of a new sub-section of the *Yuqie yankou* rite, a sub-section that Yanji identifies as primarily focused on "Inviting and summoning." After giving a standard exegesis of the doctrinal significance of the verse, Zhuhong goes on to relate a miraculous tale recorded in *A Collection of Numinous (Events) (Zuanling ji 纂靈記)* that illustrates the use and power of this verse in an extremely practical and attractive manner.¹⁰⁴ There was a certain

¹⁰³ This verse appears in two slightly different versions in the two different translations of the *Huayan jing*. In the earlier translation by Buddhahadra, T278, it reads, "If one seeks to know, all Buddhas of the Three Times, one should contemplate thus: The mind creates all Buddhas" (T278:9.465c). The version given here in our liturgy comes from Śikṣānanda's translation, T279.

¹⁰⁴ *Zuanling ji* is sometimes considered a variant title for the eighth century collection of miraculous tales related to the *Huayan jing* composed by Fazang 法藏(643-712) – *Huayan jing zhuanji* 華嚴經傳記 (T2073). Zhiru Ng's dissertation on the formation and development of the Dizang cult in medieval China suggests that this particular miraculous tale first appeared in Fazang's *Huayan jing zhuanji* and it is also "the earliest extant documentation of Dizang's role in the netherworld." See, Zhiru Ng, "The Formation and Development of the Dizang Cult in Medieval China" (Ph.D. diss., University of Arizona, 2000), 226-27. It should also be noted that Fazang's quotes Buddhahadra's translation of the verse instead of Śikṣānanda's.

Wang Ming'gan 王明幹 from “the capital city” who neither practiced the keeping of precepts nor engaged in the accumulation of merits when he was alive. When he died of a sudden illness, he found himself led by two persons to the gates of the earth-prisons. Fortunately, he was mindful of Dizang Bodhisattva at that moment and as a result saw a monk who taught him to recite the verse “If one wishes to completely know....” The monk then explained to Wang that the mere recitation of the verse results in the breaking through of the sufferings of the earth-prisons. As soon as Wang recited the verse, he was brought into the presence of the king of the earth-prisons, presumably King Yama. The king of the netherworld interrogated Wang on the virtuous actions that he had performed in his life to which Wang replied, “only the upholding of one verse” and proceeded to recite it. The king immediately pardoned and released Wang. According to the story, when Wang recited the verse in the presence of King Yama, wherever the sound of his recitation reached, all the suffering beings there were liberated. Zhuhong assures us that the power of this verse can destroy not only the earth-prisons but can also instantaneously penetrate the Ten Dharma Realms, leading to the attainment of the One Dharma of True Emptiness.¹⁰⁵

The use of this particular verse from the *Huayan jing* in the context of earth-prisons or hells is well attested in not only Chinese sources but in other cultural areas of East Asian Buddhism. In Korean Buddhism, this verse (followed by the same spell discussed in the next paragraph – the “Spell of Breaking the Earth-prisons”) is

¹⁰⁵ XZJ101.868a.

chanted every morning in the “Morning Bell Chant” of Sōn monasteries and nunneries.¹⁰⁶ It can also be found in Korean Buddhist food-bestowal (Kor. *sisik*) rites as a magic-formula recited to “shatter the earth-prisons” so that the inmates within can be released from their confinement to attend the food-bestowal.¹⁰⁷ Its use can similarly be found in Japan among Zen practices. Bernard Faure, for example, discusses Dainichi Nōnin’s 大日能忍 (the founder of Darumashū) re-telling of the story of Wang and his sojourn in hell to highlight the power of the verse from the *Huayan jing*. Faure noted that in this story, the power of the verse lies in “its use as mantra rather than its doctrinal content....”¹⁰⁸ It is also clear from Zhuhong’s telling of the story of Wang that it was the power of the words of the verse that released Wang from the fate of being imprisoned in the earth-prisons rather than any insight or understanding on Wang’s part on the truth of “Everything is created by mind only.” In this present context however, it is the celebrant as Guanyin who pronounces the words of the verse, thus adding further to the magical power of the utterance.

Following this verse is the chanting of the “Spell for Breaking the Earth-prisons” (*Po diyu zhou* 破地獄咒). This spell is delivered in the same manner as the earlier spells where the cantor begins by chanting the name of the spell and *mudrā*, followed by the celebrant chanting the spell once and the cantor and assistant cantor chanting the spell once each. The *mudrā* that the celebrant forms consists of two fists facing inwards held in front of the celebrant. The two forefingers are extended so that they are pointing

¹⁰⁶ See Robert Buswell, *The Zen Monastic Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 230.

¹⁰⁷ For an example of such rites, see *Sōngmun ūibōm* 施門儀範 (*The Ritual Codex of Buddhism*) edited by An Chin-ho (Seoul: Pōmyōn sa, 2000), 432-65.

¹⁰⁸ Bernard Faure, *The Rhetoric of Immediacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 182.

upwards and touching each other while the two little fingers are also extended but hooked together. The celebrant should visualize himself in the form of a red Guanyin, holding the *mudrā* just described. Above the *mudrā*, the celebrant should visualize HRĪḤ syllables in three places, radiating light just as the rays of the sun at sunrise. These rays of light reach to the deepest earth-prisons and completely destroy them, freeing the suffering beings in the earth-prisons. At each repetition of the spell, the celebrant pulls his two locking little fingers apart. This is usually accompanied by the loud clashing and ringing of the cymbals and *vajra* handbells. After the third repetition, the percussion ensemble reaches a cacophony, announcing and celebrating the destruction of the earth-prisons. In some monasteries, the large monastic drum and bell is sounded at this time. Even though the majority of the lay audience is not likely to be aware of the significance of most of the ritual-acts in this rite, most recognize that the rite has reached a critical juncture.¹⁰⁹

As Dizang is believed to constantly roam through the earth-prisons liberating suffering beings, he is the first to be invited in this sub-section of the rite.¹¹⁰ Thus, according to Zhuhong's commentary, since Dizang is the "teacher of the Dark Realm" (*youjie jiaozhu* 幽界教主) the invitation here is appropriate. Furthermore, explains Zhuhong, since "the Three Realms are completely a prison of birth and death" (*yi shengsi yu* 一死生獄) Dizang appears in all places within the Three Realms to liberate inmates

¹⁰⁹ Kamata, 847b.

¹¹⁰ Although Dizang's association with the earth-prisons seemed tangential in the earliest literature, myths and rituals focused on Dizang, his role as the savior of the damned souls in the earth-prisons was clearly in place by the second half of the tenth century. See, Ng, 269-271.

and thus he is “constantly in prison, teaching and transforming sentient beings.”¹¹¹ Dizang’s sudden rupture into this rite can also be explained by the connection we have noted earlier between the magical verse from the *Huayan jing* and Dizang. As Ng demonstrated in her study on Dizang, this miraculous tale involving Dizang, the magical verse and a certain Mr. Wang’s release from the earth-prisons, is the earliest extant evidence of Dizang’s emergent role “as the personage most responsible for the salvation of the dead, especially those reborn in the subterranean realm.”¹¹² The connection between Dizang and the magical verse from the *Huayan jing* which apparently first appeared in the early eighth century surprisingly re-emerges intact, in our relatively much later *Yuqie yankou* liturgy; albeit in a liturgical context.¹¹³

Led by the celebrant holding the handheld censer, once again the performers once again rise from their seats and remain standing to invite and receive Dizang.¹¹⁴ The chief lay-sponsors are now directed to face the entrance to the hall and make three prostrations receiving and welcoming Dizang as he arrives at the ritual site from within the depths of the earth-prisons whose gates have just been thrown open. After inviting Dizang, the celebrant invites a bodhisattva by the name of “Sovereign Who Leads Souls Bodhisattva” (*Yinhun wang pusa* 引魂王菩薩) whose function here is to “lead orphaned-souls to the *daochang*” (道場 Skt. *bodhimaṇḍa*, ritual-space). This bodhisattva is said to dwell “on the road of the desolate realm” (*youjie lushang* 幽界路

¹¹¹ XZJ104.869a.

¹¹² Ng, 269.

¹¹³ The earliest extant documentation of the use of this verse in the *Yuqie yankou* rite is in Zhuhong’s 1606 recension of the liturgy. Zhuhong’s recension is based on earlier versions of the liturgy which he faulted for being excessively lengthy.

¹¹⁴ Kamata, 848a.

上) holding a pennant or banner guiding sentient beings to return to the Land of Ultimate Bliss.¹¹⁵ This “Sovereign Who Leads Souls Bodhisattva” is probably a variant name for “Sovereign Who Leads the Way Bodhisattva” (*Yinlu wang pusa* 引路王菩薩). It has generally been observed that this bodhisattva cannot be attested in any Buddhist scripture and probably came into existence in China sometime during the ninth and tenth centuries. During this period, Chinese conceptions of the afterlife, as superbly demonstrated in Stephen Teiser’s studies on the growth of purgatory and *The Scripture of Ten Kings* in medieval China, underwent many significant changes, developments that have become the normative Chinese understanding of the afterlife. Although lacking any textual basis, Sovereign Who Leads Souls Bodhisattva has a very distinctive iconography, appearing rather frequently at Dunhuang.¹¹⁶ This bodhisattva is often depicted in a feminized form, holding a pennant (as described in our present liturgy), standing on clouds and often with his/her face turned backwards looking at a smaller figure(s), presumably the soul(s) that he/she is supposed to be leading through “the road of the other world” (*youjie lu* 幽界路) to the Pure Lands. Furthermore, as Zhiru Ng noted in her study of the development of Dizang,

Once again, the chief lay-sponsors make three full prostrations and the monastic performers on the raised platform makes three half-bows. Returning to a seated position, they next summon the ghosts and other ghostly beings to the rite. Rather than continuing with the scripted liturgy, the celebrant first reads a specially prepared

¹¹⁵ This bodhisattva appears in many of the *sisik* 施食 and *suryuk* 水陸 texts of Korea as an important figure in guiding the dead towards a better rebirth or even to the pure lands of the many Buddhas who exist.

¹¹⁶ See Ng Zhiru, 201.

document announcing the place, date and purpose of the rite and the names of the sponsors and beneficiaries (i.e. usually the names of the sponsors' ancestors) of the rite. When a large group sponsors this rite, which is how most of these rites are funded these days in Taiwan, Hong Kong and immigrant Chinese communities around the world, hundreds or even thousands of names are read out at this juncture. In these scenarios, other monastics also participate in reading the names of the beneficiaries of the rite. Each of the monastics reads from a list of names written on a sheet of yellow paper while holding a stick of burning incense. When the sponsors of the rite hear the names of their departed relatives (or whomever they are sponsoring the rite for) being read, they make three prostrations towards the celebrant on behalf of the departed relatives.

In this and many other places in the rite, we see a very conscious effort within the rite to convey emotion and elicit response from the audience. The rite goes beyond assuming an invisible, supernatural audience but actually acknowledges a visible, human audience that plays is not only the financially-privileged sponsor (and hence “employers” of the monastic performers, at least for the duration of the rite) but also at the same time disinterested spectators who from time to time enter the rite as performers. Even as performers, the sponsors of the rite are sometimes subjects in the acting/performing and at other times as objects acted upon. For example, when they make prostrations towards the celebrant as they hear the names of their ancestors being read out, they are acting as proxies for their ancestors who have come to the rite after being summoned by the celebrant.

After all the names have been read, the performers return to the liturgy proper and chant the formal text for summoning the different types of beings to the rite. First to be summoned to the rite is the orphaned-souls of the emperors, kings, dukes and all members of the various royal families. This is followed by the summoning of the orphaned-souls of fallen warriors, officers and generals in battles and other brave soldiers who have died. Next the orphaned-souls of the civil officials, ministers and other non-military officials of the past are summoned. The next group to be summoned is the orphaned-souls of the scholars and members of the Confucian literati. Other groups summoned to the rite are orphaned-souls of monks and nuns, virtuous lay Buddhists, Daoist practitioners, merchants and traders, soldiers who died in battles, pregnant women killed, or those who died in childbirth, courtesans, those who died due to water, fire and other accidents, and finally the beings of the Six Realms and the ten types of orphaned-souls.¹¹⁷ The heirarchization of beings invited and summoned to this rite reflects the social hierarchy operative in Late Imperial China – with emperors, kings and the royalty at the top, followed by the martial officials, then the civil, Confucian officials and scholars, and followed then by Buddhist (and Daoist) clergy and others. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the categories of dead given here are not at all focused on the abject dead. Instead, most of the souls summoned to this rite belong to the socially recognized and related – they are for the most part not the unknown and

¹¹⁷ This list is derived from the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*.

dangerous types of dead. This further complicates assertions that the *Yuqie yankou* rite is aimed at pacifying or neutralizing the unknown and thus dangerous dead.¹¹⁸

In terms of the oral delivery style, this entire section – with thirteen different groups of orphaned-souls – is sung very slowly and antiphonally between the celebrant and the cantor and assistant cantor. In many ways, the invitation here is sung as a lament resembling the laments found in Chinese funerals. In these laments mostly performed by women either solo or antiphonally, the fate of the deceased is lamented, often with a very strong suggestion that the performers are not only singing of the woes of the deceased but of their own as well. Some of these laments are expressedly more functional, helping the deceased in her difficult journey in the otherworld.¹¹⁹ When we pay attention to the language used in this section of the liturgy, we detect a shift from the more formal and ceremonial style of earlier sections to a more colloquial but accessible and evocative use of language. For example,

Wholeheartedly I summon and invite, itinerant wayfarers trading in the north and south. Scheming for wealth, they travel for tens of thousands of miles and accumulate goods and thousands of gold (pieces) for trading. In the contingencies of severe winds, one's body fattens inside fish stomachs.¹²⁰ In the journeys difficult to prepare for, one's life is lost to the dangers of goat intestines.¹²¹ Alas! (*wuhu* 嗚呼) Stagnant spirits (*zhipo* 紙魄) follow dark clouds to the north; temporary souls (*kehun* 客魂)¹²² chase remote waters in

¹¹⁸ I have to thank John Shepherd for pointing out the conundrum suggested by the categories of dead summoned in this part of the rite.

¹¹⁹ Elizabeth L. Johnson, "Funeral Laments of Hakka Women" in *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*, ed. James L. Watson and Evelyn Rawski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 13-60.

¹²⁰ There is a double *entendre* intended here – the corpse getting bloated inside presumably gigantic fish's stomach and the body turning into fish food, fattening up fish.

¹²¹ Zhuhong's commentary glosses "goat intestines" (*yangchang* 羊腸) as a metaphor for the "dangers of high roads and mountain paths." The association works on the idea that there are "nine twists" in goat intestines. See XZJ104.871a.

¹²² One wonders if this term "*kehun*" (literally "guest souls") is the result of a scribal error as the better known term "*guhun*" (orphaned-souls) is often paired with "*zhipo*." When I checked the liturgies by

the east. The class of travelers to other places – this group of orphaned-souls, may you rely on the powers of the Three Jewels and depend on the secret, esoteric words, on this night at this time, come and attend this Dharma-assembly to receive this unobstructed ambrosial Dharma-food! ¹²³

The mode and content of deliverance for this section plainly attempts to evoke in the audience sadness coupled with compassion for the numerous orphaned-souls described in the words of the liturgy.¹²⁴ And perhaps like the funeral laments, also becomes an occasion for the participants to reflect on the futilities that they are engaged in in their ordinary everyday lives.

2c) EXOTERIC BESTOWAL OF FOOD

After these orphaned-souls have been summoned to the rite, the celebrant hits the *fachi* again and addresses them:

All you ghosts and spirits who have been summoned here above! With the utmost mind, put your palms together and prostrate with your head bowed down. Do not talk, laugh or be clamorous. Cut off the coarse mind and boldness.¹²⁵ Be dignified in your demeanor. Be orderly. Cease all motions and be settled. Listen to me, the Vajra Superior Teacher (*jingang shangshi* 金剛上師) making clear one by one (the procedure) for confessing and repenting on behalf of the sentient beings of the land and water.¹²⁶

The deliberate framing of this ritual-act to resemble a judicial proceeding in a traditional Chinese magistrate (*yamen* 衙門) is easily recognized by the laity either participating in or just simply watching the proceedings. The bureaucratic or judicial nature of Chinese

Zhuhong, Fazang and Jixian, however, it is the term “*kehun*” that is used as well. See, XZJ104.812a (Zhuhong), XZJ104.915b (Fazang) and ZXJ104.964b (Jixian).

¹²³ Kamata, 851a.

¹²⁴ I have witnessed several cases where lay participants of this rite were clearly moved to tears by the words and deliverance of this section of the rite.

¹²⁵ Boldness in the negative sense – courage to commit crimes, to break the law etc.

¹²⁶ Kamata, 852a-b.

religions hardly needs to be repeated here. This bureaucratic motif is, as suggested in Valerie Hansen's study of the changing of pantheon in Song China¹²⁷ and explicitly discussed in Robert Hymes' recent work, not the only operative motif in Chinese religions. Hymes has shown from studying religious and popular sources in the Song that the bureaucratic model existed alongside several other models of the supernatural world; models that are sometimes more feudal and other times personal. More interestingly, Hymes' analysis of Hongmai's (1123-1202) *Record of the Listener* 夷堅志, a collection of occult anecdotes, has found that, "Bureaucratic motifs – supernatural beings as officials, multiple levels of hierarchy, formal mediation between one level and another, written orders and records – are universally present in only one context: stories of the underworld."¹²⁸ In the Buddhist context, where models of divinity of the bureaucratic type are extremely rare, it is interesting that when these bureaucratic gods and motifs do appear, they appear in rites such as the *Yuqie yankou*. As remarked earlier, although the persona of the celebrant is that of Guanyin, a deity who is normally considered a mother-goddess figure in China, in the *Yuqie yankou* rite, Guanyin assumes the role of a bureaucrat – issuing commands, judgments, amnesties and pardons.

Returning now to the rite, the celebrant's warning and advice to the spirits gathered marks the beginning of the sub-section which Yanji identifies as the "Exoteric Bestowal of Food."¹²⁹ The "exoteric" giving of food to the suffering beings summoned to the rite precedes the "esoteric" bestowal which is in a later sub-section of the *Yuqie*

¹²⁷ Valerie Hansen, *Changing Gods in Medieval China, 1127-1276* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

¹²⁸ Robert Hymes, *Way and Byway: Taoism, Local Religion and Models of Divinity in Sung and Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 196.

¹²⁹ Yanji, 132,

yankou rite. Having authoritatively admonished the summoned orphaned-souls the right decorum and deportment to adopt at this rite, the orphaned-souls are then instructed to take refuge in the Buddhas and never retreat from the mind of the Path but to instead receive the Dharma-seal so that they can eventually attain Perfect Enlightenment. They are then assured that “in the pure and clear state, each of you can ascend the lotus lake within the world of Ultimate Bliss and from there attain the Other Shore.”¹³⁰ The celebrant-transformed-into-Guanyin then instructs and leads all gathered at the ritual-space in a hymn in praise of Guanyin. The hymn is delivered with the full ensemble and the entire chorus singing along. As the hymn is sung, the celebrant begins to bless the platters of food-offering placed in front of him by dipping his right ring finger into the water in the ambrosia bowl and flicking drops of water on to the food as well as tracing syllables above the food. The hymn ends with a supplication to Guanyin – “May you attend this evening’s Dharma-assembly and lead the departed souls back to the Heavenly Palace.”¹³¹

Without pausing and using the same melody as the hymn to Guanyin, the celebrant and chorus sing “Receiving Food” (*shoushi jie* 受施偈). This section is probably the most “entertaining” part of the rite for any observers who might be present. The spectators – both children and adult – appear to take on the role of the orphaned-souls and hungry ghosts when they compete with each other collecting the food that the celebrant now scatters into the space directly in front of the Yuqie Altar. In

¹³⁰ Kamata, 852b.

¹³¹ Ibid., 852b. Perhaps recognizing that the term “Heavenly Palace” (*tiangong* 天宮) resonates better with Daoist rather than Buddhist sensibilities, Yanji’s commentary changed the term to “Lotus Palace” (*liangong* 蓮宮). See Yanji, 132.

some recent performances, monastics have advised against this practice of collecting the food tossed. They explain that since the food is meant for the spirits and ghosts summoned to the rite, human spectators should not interfere with the partaking of the food by the intended guests of this rite. Some even suggest that such interference can upset the supernatural guests who might in turn cause harm to the human beings disrupting the feast being hosted for them. Those who disapprove of the practice of having the spectators fight for the food tossed probably saw that practice as too violent an incursion into ritual space – a corruption of ritual boundaries that are clearly related to social boundaries as well.

But when the spectators in the audience are asked why these offerings are coveted, most informants tell me that consuming these blessed offerings brings good luck, good health, longevity, obedience and filiality (in the case of children) and other such general blessings. Informants also associate specific blessings with a couple of the offerings: the copper coins can act as protection amulets against evil spirits and ghosts and if unmarried women eat the small steamed buns while “standing behind a temple door, they will surely find good husbands very soon.” None of my informants were able to give any explanation for the “rationale” behind this belief but they almost always say, “That’s what we were told by our elders.”¹³² The audience, in competing for the food, recognizes the apotropaic qualities of the food offered by the celebrant to ghosts – a recognition that some monastic performers and emerging lay Buddhist elites probably

¹³² Some of the informants were able to give an explanation for the belief that the copper coins offered protection. Possession of one of those coins blessed during a *Yugie yankou* rite signals to all ghostly beings that one is a “friend” who has either directly or indirectly participated in a rite that benefited them.

considers as a “mis-recognition.” These competing interpretations points to the flexibility and elasticity of rituals. They also represent an on-going ideological debate in the history of ghost-feeding rites, a debate that is centered on the proper recipients or beneficiaries of such rites. On the one end of the debate are those who consider it important to limit the scope of ghost-feeding rites to ghosts (i.e. *not* ancestors). For those on this end of the debate, the performance of ghost-feeding rites for ancestors (and having the lay sponsors perform the part of ghosts scrounging for the food tossed at them by the celebrant) represents too dangerous a manifestation of blurred categories, both in sociological as well as spiritual terms. On the other end of this debate are those who see no urgency or need to demarcate such concrete boundaries between categories of beings. I will discuss this issue in greater detail in *Chapter Four*.

As the celebrant begins to toss the food-offering into the space in front of him, the cantor takes over as the lead vocalist. In the *Yuqie yankou* text hailing from Baohua Monastery – the standard recension used today by the majority of performances of the rite – there are two different versions of the “Receiving Food” hymn. The main version is identical to the one in Zhuhong’s recension while the other version that is printed in smaller script in the form of “headnotes” is a shorter hymn describing first the mythic origins of this rite followed by the distribution of food to “the ten types of orphaned-souls and ghosts” and all beings of each of the six realms of existence:

The celebration of this feast arose due to the Ānanda’s causes and conditions and Guanyin who rescues from suffering manifesting as the Burning-face Ghost. The power of the merit of reciting the Buddhas’ (names) and declaring and spreading the secret, esoteric (words) quickly aids the orphaned-souls to come receive the ambrosial-flavor!

Within the city of those who have wrongfully died, the sighing winds of sadness blow. In front of the gates of ghosts, the cries of the suffering move the earth. Although having owners, they are without reliance – the ten types of orphaned-souls and ghosts, all equally on this evening, come receive the ambrosial-flavor!¹³³

According to Ding'an's notes, the shorter hymn is used only by Baohua Monastery. However, other monasteries and traditions have apparently started to use this hymn for the sake of brevity. At the performance I attended at Guoqing Monastery at Tiantai, the monks used this shorter hymn instead of the more standard but longer hymn.¹³⁴ Whereas the shorter hymn uses a more standard "Buddhist" categorization of types of sentient beings, the standard hymn is focused more on the different classes of human beings who have died and turned into different types of the dead known to most Chinese. It would appear that clerics of Baohua Monastery were attempting to bring the liturgical text closer to normative Buddhist categories of the supernatural. That a very clear social-spiritual hierarchy is maintained in the longer hymn is neither ambiguous nor mistakable:

Emperors and rulers in their respected positions, princes and kings by kinship and merit, those who are of "jade leaves and gold branches" (*yuye jinzhi* 玉葉金枝) honored prime ministers, empresses, imperial concubines of recent generations and earlier dynasties – the dream having ended and flowers fallen apart (*mengduan huasan* 夢斷華胥 – come receive the ambrosial flavor!

Statesmen and ministers of the dynasties, reforming and recovering from the perils of the ages both far and wide, governing and transforming the common citizens who have not complied with loyalty and conscientiousness – those who have lost favor (of the rulers) and brooding over sorrows, banished from office

¹³³ Kamata, 853a.

¹³⁴ I also have a recording of a *Yugie yankou* rite performed by Shi Daquan (釋大詮) – a well-respected elderly monk in Taiwan where the shorter hymn was used.

and exiled to the frontier lands, wandering souls longing after their nation (*lianguo youhun* 戀國游魂) – come receive the ambrosial flavor!

Military generals, officers and soldiers, leading and commanding the armed forces, consolidating and setting (the troops) in array to engage in battles, (battle) drums and gongs clamoring heaven and earth, battling in the north and conquering in the south – those defeated and destroyed in the battlefields, losing their lives for their country – come receive the ambrosial flavor!

Learning from the ancients and thoroughly studying the classics, scholars (in robes) richly embroidered with gold and silver, brighter than the shimmering snow – bitterly enduring the cold by the window-sill, missing the opportunity of one's lifetime as one's name is not in the golden list (of successful candidates), grieving dead souls (*yuyu youhun* 鬱鬱幽魂) – come receive the ambrosial flavor!

Severing (worldly) love and departing from emotions, quickly entering into the “Gateway of Emptiness”¹³⁵, seeking teachers to confirm one's Path, solely for transcending birth and death – summers come and winters pass, but failed to awaken to (the truth of) impermanence in the end, reversing the shining and returning the light (*fanzhao huiguang* 返照回光)¹³⁶, come receive the ambrosial-flavor!

Feather-robed and yellow-capped, quickly cultivating perfection, refining medicine, preparing pills¹³⁷, preserving one's essence by returning to the Original Breath (*yuanqi* 元氣), diligently practicing and toiling with diligence – anticipating the attainment of the level of immortals, souls who do not yearn for forms, come receive the ambrosial-flavor!

Filial sons and virtuous grandsons, resolute in righteousness, courage, loyalty and goodness, chaste daughters, virtuous wife, regarding death as returning home, they fight for their chastity without caring for their lives – leaving behind their heroic spirit (*yingqi* 英氣) for thousands of generations, restless souls (*geng'geng linghun* 耿耿靈魂), come receive the ambrosial-flavor!

Daoist and Buddhist nuns, their bodies dwelling in the golden earth, emptying all affinities for marriage, not defiled by human affairs – but because they have yet to realize the Unconditioned, they wander aimlessly in the sphere of birth and death,

¹³⁵ Entering the “Gateway of Emptiness” (*kongmen*, 空門) refers not necessarily to the mastery of the teachings of emptiness in Buddhism but more generally to the adoption of the monastic lifestyle.

¹³⁶ Although this phrase is often understood as the process of reversing our focus from the external to the internal, to contemplate the mind instead of the manifest world, in this context it is a euphemism for death.

¹³⁷ Literally “smelting pills” (*liandan*, 煉丹).

pure and clear dead souls (*qingjing youhun* 清淨幽魂), come receive the ambrosial-flavor!

Specialists in geography, astronomy, healing, medicine and *yinyang* teachings, diviners, soothsayers, physiognomists, astrologers, reporting good fortune, discussing evil omens – unable to avoid impermanence, abandon the false and return to the True, come receive the ambrosial-flavor!

Shopkeepers and traders, various types of contriving, skills and abilities, seeking wealth and benefit through trading, turning from one's well and leaving one's village, dying at other places, traveling in dreams from afar, come receive the ambrosial-flavor!

Breaking laws and experiencing punishments, forever confined and detained in prisons, creditors and enemies who seek to take lives and covet others' wealth, those who died of noxious illnesses and natural disasters, cold and starvation, quickly leave the Yellow Springs (*huangquan* 黃泉) and come receive the ambrosial-flavor!

Trampled by horses, wounded by carriages, bodies broken by falling walls, killed by ghosts, struck by thunder, cutting one's own throat, hanging oneself, strangled, burnt by fire, drowned by water, bitten by tigers, wounded by snakes, the nine unlucky orphaned-souls (*jiuheng guhun* 九橫孤魂), come receive the ambrosial-flavor!

Drinking blood, eating fur, born in faraway and barbaric lands, toiling due to debts, maidservants, concubines, slaves, servants, mutes, the blind, the deaf, in tears and without reliance or parents, wronged souls who are suffering (*shouku yuanhun* 受苦冤魂), come receive the ambrosial-flavor!

Unfilial and disobedient to parents, cursing and insulting Heaven and Earth, slandering the Buddhas and causing a schism in the Sangha, destroying statues and burning *sūtra*-verses, sinking deep in heretical views, receiving suffering retributions without limit, wild-souls with the ten evil deeds (*shi'er kuanghun* 十惡狂魂), come receive the ambrosial-flavor!

The Gates of the Great Bestowal are open! Pulling-up the orphaned-souls, ancestors who have departed, (those of the) five surnames,¹³⁸ enemies, those undergoing the eight sufferings and in the three lower realms, they are all equally

¹³⁸ According to Zhuhong, the “five surnames” (*wuxing*, 五姓) refers to all surnames and clans. See XZJ101.872a.

liberated, relying on the radiance of the Buddhas, come receive the ambrosial-flavor!

As this “exoteric bestowal” verses are completed, so has the celebrant stopped tossing the food offering into the audience. The audience – in performances where there is a large audience and where the audience is encouraged or at least allowed to gather up the offerings as they fall on the ground – begins to settle down at this point after clamoring and jostling with one another competing to get as much of the blessed-food as possible. Although this juncture of the performance is usually very lively and sometimes almost ironic as one makes that easy association between the supposed beneficiaries of the rite (i.e. the hungry ghosts) and the audience of young and old, wealthy and poor, pushing and shoving for a handful of offerings tossed from the raised altar, there is yet another common but radically different response. In the midst of this almost playful mood, it is not uncommon to find some in the audience who are touched to the point of tears and open sobbing by the description of the types of orphaned-souls being fed. In fact, the language used in the verses of the different types of orphaned-souls is intentionally accessible as well as emotionally affective. The author(s) of the liturgy was clearly aware of the power and appropriateness of using non-specialist, non-literary language at this and other sections of the *Yuqie yankou*. It is this liberal mix of both highly technical and esoteric Buddhist elements and largely colloquial, highly popular and indigenous Chinese elements that gives the *Yuqie yankou* its distinctiveness and elasticity.

2d) ELIMINATING IMPEDIMENTS

This and the next sub-section, identified by Yanji as “Eliminating impediments” and “Esoteric bestowal,” are essentially based on the ritual-structure of the liturgical-text *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*. These two sections are structured and built upon the sequence of spells found in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*. Whereas the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* liturgy contains only spells, our present liturgy has wedded corresponding verse sections to each of the spells. Thus, the next ritual-act – that of summoning and inviting the hungry ghosts – begins with a quatrain announcing that the celebrant will “summon and invite all sentient beings in the nether world” and all hungry ghosts “through the spiritual power of the greatly compassionate Buddhas.”¹³⁹ The celebrant makes the “Summoning and Inviting Hungry Ghosts” *mudrā* as the cantor announces the *mudrā* being formed. The corresponding spell is then recited once by each of the three main vocalists (the celebrant, cantor and assistant cantor). According to Zhuhong, in the esoteric method of summoning, one first recites a verse (the quatrain), which is then followed by a *mudrā* and a spell.¹⁴⁰ Although this *mudrā* and spell is known as the “Summoning and Inviting Hungry Ghosts” *mudrā* and spell, Zhuhong’s commentary actually indicates that all beings in the Six Realms are summoned. Zhuhong instructs the celebrant to visualize the guests:

...coming into the *bodhimāṇḍa* (ritual-space), and circumambulating the Buddha (i.e. the Yuqie Altar) thrice, making prostrations and exiting. The exterior of the ritual-space is divided into four gates. The assembly from the earth-prisons is positioned (in the space) between the eastern and southern gates. The assembly of hungry ghosts is positioned (in the space) between the southern gate and the southwestern corner. From the southwestern corner to the western gate is the assembly of animals. From the western gate to the northwestern corner is the

¹³⁹ Kamata, 855a.

¹⁴⁰ XZJ101.872a.

assembly of human beings. From the northwestern corner to the northern gate is the assembly of *asuras* and from the northern gate to the eastern gate is the assembly of gods.¹⁴¹

Although the *Yuqie yankou* is based on a *sūtra* that purports to teach a special method to alleviate the sufferings of hungry ghosts, and although both performers and sponsors generally understand this rite as primarily fulfilling that task, Zhuhong is actually claiming a much larger scope or significance for this rite. Instead of merely feeding and liberating hungry ghosts who are only one of six types of sentient beings in the traditional Buddhist understanding of existence, Zhuhong sees this rite as accomplishing the nourishment and ultimate liberation of all sentient beings of the Six Realms without exception. We can thus consider this as part of Zhuhong's efforts to extend the scope and significance of the *Yuqie yankou* rite. It also reflects a more normative Buddhist understanding of categories of beings – that the only real boundary between beings is between those who are enlightened and those who are not. Among those who are not, it matters little if they are gods, ghosts or ancestors as they are all in need of spiritual nourishment.

In this way, the *Yuqie yankou* resembles the *Shuilu*. Although the term “*Shuilu*” suggests that it was initially a rite performed for the benefit of those spirits dwelling in the water and on land, when we actually look at the liturgy, all beings inhabiting the Six Realms as well as the enlightened beings such as Buddhas, bodhisattvas, *pratyeka-buddhas* and *arhats* are invited to the feast. Zhuhong himself was clearly a

¹⁴¹ XZJ101.872b.

promoter of both these rites as he edited liturgies for both, and it is his editions of these two liturgies that became the templates for later elaborations.¹⁴²

Following the summoning of the guests is a prose section that Zhuhong explains as the “bestowal of fearlessness” – one of the three types of giving (*dāna*) in classical Buddhist doctrine:

The summoning and inviting is now completed. (The guests) are gathered together like clouds. With a commiserating mind, praise and comfort them, thus causing them to be happy and joyful and to long for the Dharma. “All you children of the Buddhas who have come here, because you have created supreme conditions (in the past), hence you are now at this excellent assembly. Do not be sad or fearful. Single-mindedly long for the Dharma. In this moment, your bodies will be moistened by the precepts, quickly causing you to be liberated from the destinies of suffering!”¹⁴³

A quatrain is next chanted; declaring, “The summoning of all the offenses into the *vajra* palms” of the celebrant. This particular ritual-act seeks to magically eradicate the offenses of the beings invited to the feast. As the cantor announces the name of the *mudrā* being formed, the celebrant makes the “Summoning Offenses *Mudrā*” (*Zhaozui yin* 召罪印). To explicate the visualization that affects the magical destruction of past karmic offenses, Zhuhong quotes a certain *Hooking Offenses Sūtra* (*Gouzui jing* 勾罪經)

The *Hooking Offenses Sūtra* says, “Above the heart-moon of your own body as Guanzizai Bodhisattva, visualize the white-colored HRIḤ syllable emanating fiery light that are like hooks, entering into others’ bodies. Verbally recite the spell and hook together the three evil karmas of all sentient beings. These offenses are black in color and like smog they come together. Entering into my palms, they transform into the appearance of ghosts....”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Compared to the additions in later *Yuqie yankou* liturgies, the later elaborations on Zhuhong’s *Shuilu* liturgy are minuscule.

¹⁴³ Kamata, 855a.

¹⁴⁴ XZJ101.872b

This same *sūtra* also specifies that the form of Guanyin visualized has four faces and eight arms. The frontal face is blue, the right face is yellow, left face is green and the back face is red. Two of his hands are formed into the “Destroying Offenses *Mudrā*” (*Cuizui yin* 摧罪印) while the remaining hands hold a *vajra*-scepter (expressing the destruction of phenomena of all sentient beings), an arrow (representing the piercing through of all suffering-vexations, a sword (which is the ability to cut off all arrogance and pride), a hook (that can hook out all those who are lost in deep abysses, a bow (that liberates when it unleashes wisdom-power), and a silk lasso (which gathers together all those who should be transformed).¹⁴⁵ This *Hooking Offenses Sūtra* that Zhuhong quotes from does not exist in any of the existing editions of the Chinese Buddhist canon. Was Zhuhong perhaps quoting from an extra-canonical text? Or was he relying on oral traditions of attribution? Or is this text only available in Tibetan? In any case, Zhuhong also claims that the visualization of hooking karmic offenses into the practitioner’s palms and subsequently destroying the offenses with the recitation of a spell and the clapping one one’s hands can also be found in *The Vajraśekhara Yoga Recitation Rite* (*Jingangding yuqie niansong yi* 金剛頂雨瑜伽念誦儀).¹⁴⁶

After chanting a quatrain that compares the present destruction of karmic offenses with the complete incineration of the universe at the end of a Buddhist cosmic-cycle, the spell is recited thrice. At the third recitation, the celebrant claps his hands as he

¹⁴⁵ XZJ101.872a.

¹⁴⁶ There is no title in the Taishō canon that corresponds exactly with the text that Zhuhong attributes the method of hooking in karmic offenses and destroying them. There are however, methods similar to the one described here in a couple of texts that have titles close to the title that Zhuhong cited. See, *Jingangding yuqiezhong luechu niansong jing* 金剛頂瑜伽中略出念誦經, T250b and *Jingangding lianhuabuxin niansong yigui* 金剛頂蓮華部心念誦儀軌, T301b (the spell for summoning offenses in this *sūtra* is similar to the spell used in the *Yuqie yankou* text but transliterated differently).

imagines the “mountain of offenses” is completely incinerated and dispersed.¹⁴⁷ The next ritual-act accomplishes what is normally considered impossible in normative Buddhist exegesis on karma and karmic retribution – the destruction of “fixed karma” (*dingye* 定業). All karmas can be divided into two categories – fixed karma (Skt. *vinīścita-karman*) and non-fixed karma. Whereas non-fixed karmas can be changed or altered before they ripen, fixed karma, and in this case, negative fixed karma will definitely come into fruition.¹⁴⁸ The quatrain chanted here actually expresses this apparent “contradiction”:

Fixed karma cannot be changed
 (But) with the blessing-power of *samādhi*
 All beginningless obstacles and hindrances
 Are completely destroyed.¹⁴⁹

The idea of the destruction of fixed karma can be doctrinally placed within the context of the Mahāyāna doctrine of emptiness. Since all phenomena are lacking in any self-nature or inherent existence, the ontological fixity of fixed karma cannot be ultimately established. Thus, although all karmas can be generally divided into the categories of “fixed” and “non-fixed,” ultimately speaking they are all non-fixed and empty. With this ontological non-fixity of fixed karma, one can then conceive of an esoteric technique/technology that ritually changes and destroys such fixed, and specifically fixed negative karma.

¹⁴⁷ Kamata, 855b-856a.

¹⁴⁸ Although the *Abhidharmakośa* asserts these two categories of karmas, the *Mahāvibhāṣā-śāstra* (in fascicle 114 of the *Dapiposha lun* 大毘婆沙論) appears to take the position that all karmas can be altered. This position can be considered as a precursor to the later Mahāyāna position that all karmas can be changed since “all *dharma*s are empty.”

¹⁴⁹ Kamata, 856a.

After the destruction of fixed karma, the celebrant performs a repentance-ritual on behalf of the guests gathered at the feast. Again a matching quatrain and spell is chanted as the celebrant performs the appropriate *mudrā* and visualization. Whereas the earlier sections are aimed at destroying past karmic offenses, this repentance-ritual has the added element of making a commitment to never again commit any karmic offenses in the future.¹⁵⁰ Finally, the last two ritual-acts in this sub-section are the bestowing of ambrosia to quench the fires tormenting the ghosts (by reciting the “Ambrosia Spell”) and the opening of the constricted throats of the hungry ghosts. The recitations, visualizations and gestures for these two ritual-acts have the same spell-*mudrā*-verse sequence as the other ritual-acts in this sub-section. Throughout this whole section, the only percussive instrument heard is the wooden-fish that the cantor uses to keep the relatively fast tempo of the recitation.

2e) ESOTERIC BESTOWAL

Under this sub-section are a series of ritual-acts that can be classified into three parts. The first part consists of the recitation of the names of the Seven Buddhas in Chinese and in sinicized Sanskrit and the respective benefits that corresponds to the hearing of the names of each of the Buddhas. For example, the first Buddha and the corresponding benefit:

Namo Baosheng (Precious Victory) Thus-Come-One. NAMO BHAGAVATE PRABHŪTA-RATNĀYA TATHĀGATĀYA. All you children of the Buddhas!

¹⁵⁰ XZJ101.874a.

Those who hear the name of Baosheng Thus-Come-One – all the fires of their karmic vexations will be completely destroyed.¹⁵¹

The second part is essentially a taking refuge and transmission of precepts rite embedded within the larger *Yuqie yankou* rite. This part begins with the administering of the Three Refuges to the beneficiaries of the rite, the generation of the Bodhi-mind, followed by the transmission of the Samaya-precepts. The ritual-act of taking refuge begins with all the performers reciting the following formula:

(We) Take refuge in the Buddhas, the most-honored among the two-legged.
 (We) Take refuge in the Dharma, the most-honored free from desires. (We)
 Take refuge in the Sangha, the most-honored among all assemblies. Having
 taken refuge in the Buddhas, one will not fall into the earth-prisons. Having
 taken refuge in the Dharma, one will not fall into (the realm of) hungry-ghosts.
 Having taken refuge in the Sangha, one will not fall into (the realm of) animals.
 All children of the Buddhas have taken refuge in the Buddhas, the Dharma and in
 the Sangha!¹⁵²

They next recite a quatrain and a spell as the celebrant forms the “Three Jewels *Mudrā*” and visualizes the “ghosts and spirits of the Six Realms taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.”¹⁵³ Having taken refuge, the generation of the Bodhi-mind is performed next by reciting several quatrains and a spell. Although Zhuhong identifies three of the quatrains in this part as the “generation of (Bodhi-)mind verses from the *Liqu liu buoluomi jing* (理趣六波羅蜜經¹⁵⁴),” these verses cannot actually be found in the version of the *sūtra* in the Taishō.¹⁵⁵ The final ritual-act in this part of the rite is the

¹⁵¹ Kamata, 857b.

¹⁵² Ibid., 859b.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 860a.

¹⁵⁴ The *Adhyardhaṇatikā prajñāpāramitā sūtra*.

¹⁵⁵ Zhuhong, *Xiushe yuqie jiyao shishi tanyi zhu*, XZJ101.876b-877a. The version of the *sūtra* in the Taishō is T261 – the *Tasheng liqu liu buoluomiduo jing*, 大乘理趣六波羅蜜多經.

transmission of the Samaya-precepts which begins with the recitation of the following quatrain:

All of you receiving the Buddhas' precepts
Will immediately attain the level of all Buddhas
On the level equal to Great Enlightenment
Truly you are all children of the Buddhas.

Although the category of “Samaya-precepts” is usually associated with esoteric teachings and was probably the case in earlier food-bestowal liturgical texts (such as the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food, Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* and the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*), Zhuhong's commentary on does not focus on a specifically esoteric interpretation of the Samaya-precepts. Or to put it in another way, Zhuhong does not try to distinguish these Samaya-precepts from the other precepts found in non-esoteric *sūtra*s such as the *Fanwang jing*. Shenxing's notes for this section of the rite provide the celebrant with the visualization for the conferral/reception of the Samaya-precepts:

At the first recitation of the spell, visualize the profound and good Dharma of Precepts in the ten directions completely shake and move in response to the voice of the celebrant.¹⁵⁶ At the second recitation of the spell, visualize the profound and good Dharma of Precepts gather together in midst of the sky through the power of the mind. At the third recitation of the spell, visualize this profound and good Dharma of Precepts flow into the ocean of the eight consciousnesses of the children of the Buddhas through their crowns; forever serving as the seeds of Buddhahood.¹⁵⁷

The third part of this sub-section is the actual bestowal of ambrosia-food to the guests who have been purified of their past karmic offenses and also administered the Three Refuges, generated the Bodhi-mind and received the Samaya-precepts. Implicit in this

¹⁵⁶ Literally “*jiemo*” (羯磨, Skt. *karmadana*). The *jiemo* is the master of ceremonies in conventional ordination rites.

¹⁵⁷ Kamata, 861a.

is the idea that the guests are not fit or ready to receive the food until they have been initiated into the Buddhist way and made their pledge to the observation of Buddhist norms and ethics. All the invited guests – whether conceived of in the classical Buddhist categories of beings of the Six Realms or in the indigenous, local, Chinese classifications of the spirit world such as *gui* (鬼), *shen* (神), *guhun* (孤魂), *mei* (魅), and *wangliang* (魍魎). To transform and multiply the ambrosia-food, a modified form of the *dhāraṇī* first given in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* is recited thrice. This *dhāraṇī* is given the same title as the *dhāraṇī* in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* – “The Immeasurable Awesome Virtues, Self-existent, Brilliant, Tathāgata *Dhāraṇī*” but instead of NAMAḤ SARVA TATHĀGATĀVALOKITE OM SAMBHARA SAMBHARA HŪṂ, the *dhāraṇī* here is given as OM SARVA TATHĀGATĀVALOKITE VAṂ BHARA BHARA SAMBHARA SAMBHARA HŪṂ. More on this change will be discussed in *Chapter Four*. The recitation of this alternate version of the original *dhāraṇī* is accompanied by a visualization that involves the manifesting of an abundance of food and drink from the top of a white short A-syllable standing on a red lotus. By reciting this *dhāraṇī*, Zhuhong assures us, immeasurable Dharma-food filling up the space in ten directions can be produced: “One morsel of food becomes immeasurable food – great as Mount Sumeru, equal in measure to the Dharma Realm.”¹⁵⁸ Before these magically transformed foods can be offered to the ghostly guests and others, they have to be further “melted into a Single Flavor” (*rongcheng yiwei* 融成一味) through the recitation of the “Milk Ocean Spell” (*Ruhai*

¹⁵⁸ XZJ101.879b.

zhenyan 乳海真言). Although none of the commentators point this out explicitly, the transformation of the foods into a “Single Flavor” parallels the bestowal of teachings of “Single Flavor” that is heard in different ways by beings of different spiritual capacities and faculties.

Shengxing’s notes offer an explanation on the relation ship between the spells.

According to Shengxing:

People these days mostly bestow food but don’t know how to use water (bestowal). Thus food and drink are not equally bestowed – this meaning becomes lost. The prior *mudrā* and spell bestow food, relieving hunger. The latter *mudrā* and spell bestow water, quenching thirst.¹⁵⁹

This is followed by the recitation of the “Ghosts Obstructed from the Bestowal Spell” (*Zhangshi gui zhou* 障施鬼咒) to enable “those ghosts with extremely heavy karmic obstructions” who are still incapable of receiving the bestowal to finally be nourished by it. As the performers recite the spell thrice, the celebrant forms the corresponding *mudrā* and visualizes ambrosia flowing from the visualized white A-syllable falling on to the crowns of those ghosts “obstructed from the bestowal” extinguishing their karmic fires (*yehuo* 業火). Each time the spell is recited, the celebrant snaps his fingers. At the conclusion of the third recitation, the celebrant should silently recite the spell OM ĀḤ HRĪḤ HŪḤ either twenty-one or forty-nine times. During this time, an attendant monastic is to take the water-filled ambrosia-bowl from the celebrant and empty out its contents outside of the ritual-space, facing east. Shengxing’s notes add that the water can be emptied in front of the Mianran Altar, or sprinkled in the four directions, into

¹⁵⁹ Kamata, 861b.

flowing spring or pond waters or on the surface of any stone. He cautions against pouring the water near or under peach, willow or pomegranate trees as ghosts are believed to fear these trees.¹⁶⁰ This advice is first given in an earlier ghost-feeding liturgy – the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*.¹⁶¹

To complete this part of the “Esoteric bestowal” sub-section of the rite, a quatrain is chanted followed by the recitation of the “Universal Offering Spell” (*Pu gongyang zhenyan* 普供養真言). Shengxing’s instructions tell us that this spell should be recited “in unison” instead of the way the earlier spells were recited by the celebrant, cantor and assistant cantor singly and in a hierarchical order. The celebrant should also visualize multitudes of offerings for the Three Jewels and sentient beings of the Six Realms equally without making any distinctions between the “sagely” (*sheng* 聖) and the “ordinary” (*fan* 凡). Zhuhong’s commentary further elaborates on this theme:

Question: We have already respectfully offered food to the Three Jewels at the beginning (of this rite), why are we making this offering here again?

Answer: (In the offerings) we have performed earlier, the “ordinary” and the “sagely” were still divided. Thus, the Three Jewels were first respectfully offered and then later the assembly of ghosts was bestowed (with offerings). Now, this (division) is dissolved and offerings are made equally and evenly. The mind, Buddhas and sentient beings, all three are without any difference. The sagely and ordinary are of one essence, the noble and base should be regarded thus. This is why (there is now) this “universal offering.”¹⁶²

One similarly finds this emphasis on the equality of both the sagely and ordinary at the end of the *Shuilu* rite. On the morning of the final day of the *Shuilu* rite, the divide between the sagely and the ordinary beings which has been consistently and clearly

¹⁶⁰ Kamata, 862a.

¹⁶¹ See translation in *Appendix 2*.

¹⁶² XZJ101.881a-b.

maintained throughout the rite (dividing them into the “upper hall” and “lower hall”) is dissolved with the performance of the “Completion Offering” (*yuanman gong* 圓滿供) where both the sagely and ordinary beings are presented offerings at the same time.¹⁶³ Thus, the *Yuqie yankou* and *Shuilu*, both food-bestowal rites, are based on the simultaneous affirmation and negation of basic Buddhist hierarchy of the sagely (*ārya*) and ordinary (*prthagjana*), of the world-transcending (*lokūttara*) and worldly (*laukika*), of *samsara* and *nirvana*.

2f) TRANSFERENCE OF MERIT

The final sub-section – “Transference of merit” – begins with the recitation of a prose section by the entire group of performers. The prose here is addressed to the guests of the rite, admonishing them not to constantly crave after ordinary food obtained through the trading of livestock and alcohol and food filled with the stench of blood, flesh and the pungent plants as these foods are in reality nothing but poison that harms and increases suffering in the end. Instead of these foods, they should rely on the Dharma-food that has been bestowed at this rite. Eating this Dharma-food leads to the generation of the Bodhi-mind and ultimately to the attainment of Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings. The prose then invites everyone at the rite to transfer all the merits gained from the performance of this food-bestowal rite to “the unexcelled Bodhi;” ending with the exclamation “May we quickly attain Buddhahood! May we quickly attain Buddhahood!” as the celebrant hits the *fachi* on the table twice. By doing this, the

¹⁶³ Prior to this “Completion Offering,” the sagely and ordinary are presented offerings separately with the sagely receiving their offerings in the morning and the ordinary beings in the afternoon.

celebrant is indicating that the exclamation “May we quickly attain Buddhahood!” is a command issued with the spiritual authority that he holds rather than a mere wish or prayer.

The assembly next recites the “Zunsheng Spell” to the tempo set by the hitting of the wooden-fish. In general, when spells and sūtras are recited, they are recited accompanied by the hitting of a wooden-fish. In Zhuhong’s edition of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy (and Ding’an’s edition which is the text used today), two different versions of the “Zunsheng Spell” are given. The first “Zunsheng Spell” given is taken from the *Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on the Buddha-uṣṇīṣavijayā Dhāraṇī* (*Foshuo foding zunsheng toluoni jing* 佛說佛頂尊勝陀羅尼經) which was translated by Yijing 義淨 (635-713).¹⁶⁴ This sūtra in several slightly different recensions was translated at least five times by the Tang dynasty.¹⁶⁵ The “Zunsheng Spell,” which is the main spell in this sūtra received special attention from both Śubhākarasiṃha and Amoghavajra as they both translated (compiled?) liturgical-texts centered on this spell.¹⁶⁶ According to Zhuhong, the second “Zunsheng Spell” is taken from a sūtra that the Ming dynasty Empress Xu 徐 (1362-1407), consort of the Yongle 永樂 (r. 1403-24) emperor, received in a dream.¹⁶⁷ This particular version of the “Zunsheng Spell” is different from Yijing’s version of the “Zunsheng Spell” (i.e. not just a different transliteration system but a different spell altogether). This version of the “Zunsheng Spell” most closely

¹⁶⁴ T971.

¹⁶⁵ T967–T971.

¹⁶⁶ T972 and T973.

¹⁶⁷ XZJ101.882b.

resembles the Song dynasty version transliterated by Fatian 法天 (d.1001), in T974A.¹⁶⁸

This version is also given in the earliest extant version of the *Yugie yankou* texts – the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* (T1320). It is to be noted that this version of the “Zunsheng Spell” and its T974A and the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* cognates is almost identical with the spell used by most Tibetan Buddhists.¹⁶⁹ As this spell is recited, the celebrant holds in his hands the rice-grains that were empowered at the beginning of the rite and also those used for constructing the *maṇḍala* during the first half of the rite so that the group recitation of the “Zunsheng Spell” can “empower the rice-grains.” When the recitation is completed, the attendant monastic takes the rice-grains from the celebrant and just as he scattered the ambrosia-water earlier, he likewise scatters the rice-grains “visualizing brilliant, wisdom pennants arise from the places where the rice-grains fall. The brilliance (of the pennants) rouses all the ghosts and spirits into quickly taking rebirth in the World of Ultimate Bliss; attaining the highest type of rebirth there.”¹⁷⁰

The next section consists of a hymn in eight parts even though it is referred to as “The Six Destinies *Gātha*.” Each part begins with the phrase “by these virtuous benefits” (*chensi shanli* 承斯善利), referring to the virtuous benefits of the food-bestowal, followed by a description of the transformation of the sufferings peculiar

¹⁶⁸ Fatian, originally a Nālandā monk of Central Indian origins, arrived in Song China in the year 973 and subsequently translated forty-six texts in seventy-one fascicles. He was a contemporary of other Song period Indian translators such as Dānapāla (*Shihu* 施護) and Tianxizai 天奚災 and together with them translated many new esoteric texts that the emperor imported back from India. Many of these esoteric texts were unknown to the earlier esoteric tradition introduced by Vajrabodhi, Amoghavajra and others. Fatian’s biography can be found in the third fascicle of *The Song Biographies of Eminent Monks* (*Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳, T2061).

¹⁶⁹ I beg to differ with Orzech’s opinion that this second “Zunsheng Spell” “differs little” from the Tang dynasty version of the spell. See Orzech, “Esoteric Buddhism and the *Shishi* in China,” 72.

¹⁷⁰ Kamata, 865b.

to each of the “Six Destinies” (of rebirth) into states of happiness and bliss. For example, the first part describes the transformation of the earth-prisons or hell realms:

By these virtuous benefits, the mountains of knives and trees of swords completely transform into wish-fulfilling trees. The balls of fires and iron pellets turn into lotus flowers and jewels. It is auspicious! The beings suffering in the earth-prisons are liberated from the earth-prisons and will attain Perfect Enlightenment.¹⁷¹

In succession, the sufferings of four other realms are transformed – the realm of hungry ghosts, animals, human beings and demi-gods. Zhuhong’s commentary explains that the virtuous benefits from the food-bestowal also affect a transformation in the realm of gods even though suffering is not obvious there. “By the virtuous benefits,” the gods will renounce their seeming happiness and instead generate the Bodhi-mind and work towards the attainment of Perfect Enlightenment. Aside from transforming the six realms and leading the beings in these realms towards the attainment of Perfect Enlightenment, the “virtuous benefits” of the food-bestowal also affect transformations among *pratyeka-buddhas*, *arhats* and beginner bodhisattvas, causing them to attain “Complete and Perfect Enlightenment.”¹⁷² Performance wise, this hymn is sung by everyone with the full accompaniment of the percussive instruments.

Aspiration-prayers (*Fayuan wen* 發願文) are made next in the form of three quatrains sung to with the same melody and accompanying percussive music as the section before. This liturgy that is used in performances of the *Yuqie yankou* rites is at least twice the length of Zhuhong’s *Yuqie yankou* text which, as pointed out earlier, was the basic text that all later *Yuqie yankou* texts were based on. Until this point in the text,

¹⁷¹ Kamata, 866a.

¹⁷² Ibid., 866b.

whatever exists in Zhuhong’s recension also exists in the text used today. Here, however, our modern text actually leaves out twelve quatrains of “aspiration-prayers” that are in Zhuhong’s text. The text used today takes only the first, second and fifteenth quatrain in Zhuhong’s basic text:

Throughout this lifetime and until Enlightenment is attained,
 May there be no inner or outer obstacles, difficulties, evil conditions and others.
 Continuously meeting the most excellent “good and knowing ones”;¹⁷³
 May the virtuous deeds performed quickly be accomplished! The Supreme
 Three Jewels (*zuishang sanbao* 最上三寶)!

When this life comes to an end, the nature of consciousness unconfused,
 May I be born in front of the Tathāgata of the Western Pure Land.
 Relying on the Dharma-Light of this Wisdom-Sun, listen, contemplate and
 cultivate.
 Cutting off confusion, attaining the True, regard sentient beings with compassion!
 The Supreme Three Jewels!

Those who can transfer and bestow, transfer and bestow, transfer and bestow
 well,
 All the various virtues and merits, all that has been obtained.
 They are like illusory transformations, illusorily transforming as if in a dream
 state
 The essence of the “Three Spheres” (*sanlun* 三輪) is empty; the essence being
 empty is completely clear and pure! The Supreme Three Jewels!¹⁷⁴

Zhuhong’s commentary does not go into detail to explain the quatrains. Instead, the commentary selects certain phrases or terms and gives a brief explanation for each. Among them, is an explanation for the “Three Spheres.” According to Zhuhong, the “Three Spheres” refer to “the giver, gift and receiver.”¹⁷⁵ This is identical with acting by “not abiding anywhere” – one of the main teachings presented in the *Diamond Sūtra*.

¹⁷³ “Good and knowing ones” (*shanzhishi* 善知識) is a translation of *kalyāṇamitra* (“good friend”).

¹⁷⁴ Kamata, 867a.

¹⁷⁵ XZJ101.884b.

Also sung with the same melody and percussive music is the “Auspicious Verses” as a form of benediction. The verses invoke the blessings of the Superior Master, Three Jewels and Dharma-protectors so that all times of the day and night are filled with auspiciousness (*jixiang* 吉祥). These verses are followed by a quatrain that is often recited at the end of rites performed in contemporary Chinese Buddhism:

May these virtues and merits,
Be universally shared by all.
(May) I and sentient beings,
Together attain the Buddha-path.¹⁷⁶

One final *mudrā* is formed by the celebrant as the “Send-Off Spell” OM VAJRA MOKŚA MUḤ, is recited by the celebrant and his two assistants, one after another. The *mudrā* consists of the hands forming two fists with both of the fore-fingers extended, with their tips hooked together. After each recitation of the spell, the celebrant pulls his two hands apart, separating the two fore-fingers. This gesture clearly communicates the release or dispersal that this ritual-act is supposed to affect. Performance of this ritual-act enables all the guests invited to the rite to depart. Accordingly then, Buddhas, bodhisattvas and other enlightened beings return to their respective pure lands while the unenlightened beings of the Six Realms are released or liberated from their respective states of ignorance and suffering.

Hitting the *fachi* on the table, the celebrant delivers a prose section in the *bai* mode of oral delivery – deliberate and clear. According to Zhuhong’s commentary, the gist of this section is an exposition on how sentient beings give rise to delusions or the false from the True. Because sentient beings are swirling and sinking in the different

¹⁷⁶ Kamata, 867b.

states of existence, out of great compassion the Buddhas use their wisdom as a boat to rescue beings from their delusions and transport them to the other shore of liberation.¹⁷⁷

This prose section also includes a dedication of merit to “the thirty-six divisions of immeasurable and unlimited hungry ghosts equal to the sands of Ganges River, led by the Great Being Mianran.”¹⁷⁸ This prose section ends with the exclamation “Whether this-worldly or world-transcending, may all that is desired be fulfilled! May all that is desired be fulfilled!” (*shi chushi jian, suiyuan suocheng, suiyuan suocheng* 世出世間隨願所成 隨願所成).¹⁷⁹ Zhuhong’s commentary indicates that the celebrant should remove the Vairocana-crown at this point.¹⁸⁰ Variations exist – Fazang’s liturgy has its celebrant remove the crown right after the completion of the “Send-Off Spell” above while Shengxing’s notes instruct that the crown should only be removed after the recitation of the “Vajrasattva Hundred-Syllable Spell.”¹⁸¹ Not surprisingly, in the performances that I have attended, different celebrants remove the crown at different junctures.

All performers and participants then begin reciting the “Vajrasattva Hundred-Syllable Spell” (*Jingang saduo baizi zhou* 金剛薩埵百字咒) thrice

¹⁷⁷ XZJ101.885a.

¹⁷⁸ Zhuhong discusses the different types of hungry ghosts based on several different scriptural sources. In one, he delineates three grades of hungry ghosts divided into nine ranks. The three grades are the “hungry ghosts without wealth, hungry ghosts with some wealth and hungry ghosts with great wealth.” He also quotes non-Buddhist sources for the different types of supernatural beings. For example, according to the Confucian, Zheng Xuanzi (鄭玄子), “The essence-energy (*jingqi* 精氣) of sages (*sheng* 聖) are known as ‘spirits’ (*shen* 神) and the essence-energy of the worthies (*xian* 賢) are known as ‘ghosts’ (*gui* 鬼).” Zhuhong also quotes a certain Shizi (尸子): “Heavenly-spirits are “souls” (*ling* 靈), earth-spirits are “*zhi*” (祇) and human-spirits are “ghosts” (*gui*).” See, XZJ101.885a-b.

¹⁷⁹ Kamata, 868b.

¹⁸⁰ XZJ104.887a.

¹⁸¹ XZJ104.932a; Kamata, 869a.

accompanied by the tempo of the wooden-fish.¹⁸² According to Shengxing's notes, this spell fulfills one's prayers and generates immeasurable merits. If there were hand-gestures incorrectly performed or if the visualizations were done inattentively – all such mistakes will be amended and purified by the power of the recitation of the “Vajrasattva Hundred-Syllable Spell.” The recitation of the spell should be completed with repeating the single syllable *Ā* twenty-one times. In repeating the syllable, the celebrant is provided with a meditation with a mainly discursive rather than visual content. Zhuhong writes: “Therefore, the visualizers and visualized, each and every ritual-act, are thoroughly unobtainable.”¹⁸³

After the recitation of three quatrains, the celebrant delivers the final pronouncement:

All you children of the Buddhas, the assembly is over. Rest, rest, rest (休休休)! Do not commit offenses again; creating resentment and enmity. The fishing-rod is already in the hands of Yama. Do not be caught in the hook again like in the past. Right now, the food-bestowal is complete and perfect. The merits are thoroughly magnificent.

You orphaned-souls and children of the Buddhas, to which place do you go to rest your bodies and establish your lives?

“YI!”

All places become the Lotus Treasury World!
By according with the teachings, what place isn't Vairocana?¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² In *Chapter Five*, I will discuss further the problems surrounding the origins of this spell and its significance to the development of the *Yuqie yankou* rite.

¹⁸³ XZJ104.887a.

¹⁸⁴ Kamata, 869b.

Although not found in Zhuhong's text, this section was part of Sanfeng Fazang's *Yuqie yankou* liturgy published in 1626.¹⁸⁵ Ding'an subsequently included this section into the liturgy he codified in 1693 based on Zhuhong's text. Of particular interest is the second part of this section with the exclamation "YI." "YI" is one of three exclamations in the so-called "Three Word Chan" (*Sanzi chan* 三字禪) of the Yunmen Chan 雲門禪 tradition. The Chan master Yunmen Wenyan 雲門文偃 (864-949) was famous for using three exclamations in "encounter-dialogue" situations. "YI" was used by Yunmen to indicate that "explanations with words are inadequate."¹⁸⁶ In this section of the liturgy, we see an example of how an element from the "encounter-dialogues" or "public-cases" (*gong'an* 公案) is used in a ritual manner by using Yunmen's famous "YI" in a liturgical context. Thus, when the celebrant asks the rhetorical question of which place should one go to find rest, he himself answers with Yunmen's "YI" is a sign of the profundity and inexpressibility of the answer. But in case the "YI" was too impenetrable, the celebrant delivers a couplet, perhaps as a display of skilful-means, declaring that there is no place which is not the Lotus Treasury World of Vairocana. Considering Sanfeng Fazang's Chan-background, it is likely that this *gong'an*-like section of the liturgy was added by him.

Jixian's 1675 *Yuqie yankou* liturgy similarly has this section but instead of the couplet that we have here in our text, Jixian gives a quatrain that is focused on the Pure Land of Amitābha, announcing that the lotus ponds of the Pure Land are not separate

¹⁸⁵ XZJ104.

¹⁸⁶ *Foguang Dictionary*, 548b.

from the place where we find ourselves in presently and the Pure Land is right before our eyes.¹⁸⁷ Perhaps as a present-day compromise to Jixian's emphasis on the Pure Land of Amitābha and Ding'an's focus on the Lotus Treasury World of Vairocana, after the celebrant exclaims "YI!" and hits the *fachi*, participants respond with "the Western World of Ultimate Bliss!" (*xifang jile shijie* 西方極樂世界) before the celebrant delivers the couplet "All places become the Lotus Treasury World...." Once again, we see the fluidity that texts become when performed.

As the celebrant and the other performers rise from their seats, the lay sponsors are instructed to make three prostrations towards the Yuqie Altar. At the same time, a hymn dedicating the merits of this performance is sung by the performers along with the playing of the percussive instruments. They sing:

The merits of food-bestowal has been victoriously accomplished
Boundless triumphant blessings are entirely dedicated
May all sentient beings who are sunken and drowning
Swiftly go to the Land of Buddha of Limitless Light
All Buddhas of the Ten Directions and Three Times
All bodhisattvas and mahāsattvas
Mahāprajñāpāmitā!¹⁸⁸

FINALE

The entire cast of ritual performers then descends from the Yuqie Altar and processes to the front of the Mianran Altar, followed by the lay sponsors. As they walk towards the exterior altar, the cadence "Homage to Amita Buddha" is sung. At the Mianran Altar, the placards bearing the names of the beneficiaries of the rite are removed together with

¹⁸⁷ See, XZJ104.983a.

¹⁸⁸ Kamata, 869b-870a.

the placard with the name of Mianran and together with the monastic and lay participants walk to an open space where the placards are then set of fire. As if to emphasize the transitory nature of all things, the *Heart Sūtra* is recited as the fire burns: “Form is emptiness, emptiness is form. Form is no other than emptiness....”

In performances where larger-than-life, papier-mâché images of Mianran are used, spectacular bonfires are witnessed. In recent years, Buddhist organizations have generally avoided using such images as it has been criticized by reformists as a needless waste of resources since these images often cost quite a bit. Likewise, whereas mock paper-money used to be burnt as offerings to ancestors and ghosts, in recent years, this custom has seen a dramatic decline. Once again, this has to do with the reformists who insist that these are superstitious observances at best and un-Buddhist at worst.

After the placards have been set on fire, the monastics and laity return to the Yuqie Altar. Together facing the Yuqie Altar, both monastic and lay participants sing a general hymn of dedication of merit and a dedicatory hymn of taking refuge in the Three Jewels accompanied with the full percussive ensemble. As they finish the last prayers, the food offered at the Mianran Altar is quickly distributed to all those who participated in the rite, thus bestowing food to all – unseen and seen, ancestors and ghosts, known and unknown, friends and strangers.

Conclusion

In giving this admittedly detailed and lengthy descriptive analysis of the *Yuqie yankou* rite based on the *Huashan Yankou* liturgy – the most commonly used *Yuqie yankou* text today – I hope to convey a sense of the complexity and richness of the

liturgical text as well as the performative aspects of the rite. Whenever appropriate, I have tried to include material from commentaries on the liturgy to highlight the textual practices and strategies that have been used in Chinese Buddhist exegeses that have liturgies as their main object. My presentation of the rite has also tried to convey the performative qualities of the rite – the modes of oral delivery, the use of percussive instruments, the gestures and physical placements and the interaction between performers and audience. I have also deliberately called attention to the parts of the rite where we are alerted to the fact that in studying ritual traditions that are highly textualized (such as the case of Chinese religions) we need to be constantly cognizant of the difference between the rite as liturgy and the rite as performance. Finally, I hope that by presenting my descriptive analysis of the *Yuqie yankou* in this way, I have demonstrated the fruitfulness and importance of studying Chinese Buddhist rites through a textual-ethnographical approach.

While this and the last chapter has been synchronic in their approach, in the next two chapters, we shift into a diachronic mode. In *Chapter Four* and *Chapter Five*, I will re-construct the historical development of the *Yuqie yankou* rite. This exercise will begin with a careful study of the the initial translations of the basic *sūtra* (that inspired most of the Buddhist ghost-feeding rites that subsequently developed in China) in the Tang dynasty, to the creation of liturgies and liturgical traditions, and to the dynamics and tensions among these sometimes complementing and sometimes competing traditions. I will then discuss the appearance of the *Yuqie yankou* in the Yuan, its rise to popularity throughout the Ming and finally to the hegemonic success of the *Huashan Yankou* liturgy

and its attendant Baohua Monastery *Yuqie yankou* tradition from the Qing to the present day.

CHAPTER FOUR:

The Origins of Chinese Buddhist Ghost-Feeding Rites in the Tang and Song Dynasties

This (rite) originated with the Enlightened Sovereign (*juewang* 覺王) when he resided in the world and benefited living beings with the Dharma. If there were no causes and conditions (*yinyuan* 因緣), there would be no examples set for posterity.¹ Hence, accordingly, when the Venerable Ānanda was practicing meditation in the forest, he encountered a ghost-king (*guiwang* 鬼王) in the middle of the night. (The ghost-king's) mouth was spouting fire and from the hair on his head smoke was rising. His physical appearance was ugly and repulsive and (when he moved) the joints on his limbs, they sounded like a broken vehicle. The fire of hunger was continuously burning (in him) and his throat was skinny as a needle. Seeing this grotesque sight, Ānanda asked (the ghost-king) for his name. (The ghost-king) responded, "Burning-face (*Mianran* 面燃). And within three days, you will fall into an existence like mine!" Hearing those words, Ānanda was horrified. Ānanda returned to the Great, Enlightened, Compassionate and Honored-One and related to him what had happened and implored for a method that will deliver him from his plight. The Buddha then gave a skilful-method that contained great and profound benefits that can increase one's lifespan through intoning "the true-discourse of Awesome Virtues" (*weide zi zhenquan* 威德之真詮), thus causing hungry-ghosts to be full by bestowing the ambrosial Dharma-food (*ganlu zi fashi* 甘露之法食) to them.²

Read aloud by the celebrant soon after the opening sequence of each *Yuqie yankou* performance according to Deji Ding'an's liturgy, this narrative serves as an indispensable part of the rite as it guarantees the rite's efficacy by tracing its origins to

¹ *Yinyuan* is literally "causes and conditions" and it usually refers to the Buddhist notion of causality where each phenomenon is said to arise and disintegrate due to the coming together and dispersal of a unique set of cause(s) and condition(s). In this case, *yinyuan* carries not only a sense of causality but also that of precedence. Hence, this whole sentence can be rendered as, "If there was no precedence, there would be no example set for posterity."

² Kamata, 835.

the Buddha, “the Enlightened Sovereign.” As we shall discuss later in this chapter, in its original form, this narrative exists as the core of an Indian Buddhist *sūtra* that was translated into China in the Tang dynasty – first in the early eighth century by Śikṣānanda and later by Amoghavajra in the late eighth century.³ Most Chinese Buddhist ghost-feeding and related rites – the *Yuqie yankou* and *Shuilu* in particular – present this story as their founding myth and consider the spell connected with this story an important element in the elaborate rituals and liturgies that developed around this story. In this and the next chapter, I will focus on the development of ghost-feeding rites in China, anchoring my analysis on the creation of a liturgies and liturgical traditions that finally led to the *Yuqie yankou* rite and its liturgical traditions.

Although certain scholars who have analyzed the development of ghost-feeding rites have ascribed an early Tang beginning for the practice of these rites, we will see in this chapter why this view is problematic. In fact, I will demonstrate that it is only in the late Tang period that we begin to see traces of the practice of ghost-feeding rites inspired by the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*. In investigating the process of the production and perpetuation of ghost-feeding liturgies I will also focus on the different liturgical traditions that resulted from the rise in interest in ghost-feeding rites during the late Tang and early Song. In particular, two traditions can be discerned. One tradition that eventually led to the emergence of the *Yuqie yankou* rite in the Yuan represents a

³ Originally a Khotanese monk, Śikṣānanda is most known for his translations of the *Avatamsaka sūtra* and *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra* under the patronage of Empress Wu 武后 (r. 690-705). Although there is an earlier translation of the *Avatamsaka sūtra* in sixty fascicles by Buddhahadra (359-429), Śikṣānanda’s eighty-fascicle translation eventually became more popular. Aside from being more literal than Buddhahadra’s translation, Śikṣānanda’s translation was based on an Indian text that contained material that is absent from Buddhahadra’s original. Even though most of his translations were on non-esoteric texts, the *Burning-Face Sūtra* was one of several translations of esoteric texts attributed to Śikṣānanda.

tradition of ghost-feeding rites that actively progressed towards the direction of further esotericizing the practice. This included attempts to place the practice of ghost-feeding within relatively more systematized and organized forms of esoteric Buddhist traditions such as those introduced and promoted by figures such as Amoghavajra, Śubhakarasiṃha and their Chinese disciples. The other tradition of ghost-feeding rites that developed is represented by the Song Tiantai ghost-feeding rites that curiously resisted from further esotericizing the rites. The results of these two divergent developments can perhaps be seen in contemporary attitudes towards the performance of two different ghost-feeding rites. Whereas most mainstream Chinese Buddhist monastics (and laity) would make provisions for devout laypeople to practice the *Mengshan* rite (which I will argue in this chapter, to represent a development of the ghost-feeding rites that minimized its esoteric elements), the same monastics insist that laypeople should not act as performers of the *Yuqie yankou*.

Translations of the Two Recensions in Chinese

Although the contents of both translations are fairly similar, enough differences exist between the two for us to believe that Śikṣānanda and Amoghavajra were translating from different recensions of a growing narrative text.⁴ From extant catalogues compiled in the Tang, we know that Śikṣānanda translated the *Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on the Dhāraṇī-spell that Saved the Burning-Face Hungry Ghost (Foshuo*

⁴ The existence of variant Chinese translations of Indian Buddhist texts – especially texts of the Mahāyāna type – makes the Chinese translations an invaluable source in the study of the textual history and textual practices of medieval Indian Buddhism. The various Chinese translations of a given Indian *sūtra* usually show a gradual expansion of the text over a period of time.

jiu mianran egui tuoluoni shenzhou jing 佛說救面燃餓鬼陀羅尼神咒經, i.e. the *Burning-Face Sūtra*) between the years 700-704⁵ while Amoghavajra translated the *Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on the Dhāraṇī that Rescued the Flaming-Mouth Hungry Ghost* (*Foshuo jiuba yankou egui tuoluoni jing* 佛說救拔餓口餓鬼陀羅尼經, i.e. the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*) between the years 757-770. The existence of two different Tibetan translations of this *sūtra* – *Yi-dvags kha-nas me-'bar ba-la skyabs mdzad-pa zhes-bya-ba'i gzungs*⁶ and *Yi-dvags-mo kha 'bar-ma dbugs-dbyung-ba'i gtor-ma'i cho-ga*⁷ further strengthen the likelihood that there were at least two different Indian recensions of the *sūtra* and that both recensions were circulated widely enough for them to be translated into Chinese and Tibetan.⁸ Tōh647, which corresponds to Śikṣānanda's *Burning-Face Sūtra*, is listed in the Dankarma catalogue⁹ while Tōh646, which appears to correspond to Amoghavajra's recension of the *sūtra*, is not listed in the Dankarma

⁵ The *Xugujin yijing tuji* 續古今譯經圖紀 completed in the year 730 by Zhisheng, states that Śikṣānanda translated this *sūtra* between the years 700-704. See T2152:55.369b.

⁶ Tōh646. This text, which appears to correspond to Amoghavajra's recension of the *sūtra*, is not listed in the Dankarma catalogue (the earliest extant catalogue of the *bKa' gyur*) that was completed in early ninth century but a Dunhuang manuscript of this text has been discovered (TL349).

⁷ Tōh647. This text, which corresponds to Śikṣānanda's version, is listed in the Dankarma catalogue.

⁸ It is of course also very possible that the two extant Tibetan translations were translated from Chinese instead of directly from Sanskrit. Unfortunately, none of the catalogues of the *bKa' gyur* identify the translators of the two texts. It should, however, be noted that the title of Tōh647 specifically identifies the hungry ghost at the center of this *sūtra* as female (Tib. *yi-dvags-mo*). None of the Chinese translations identify the gender of the hungry ghost although later Chinese traditions referred to this hungry ghost as a "ghost-king;" thus assigning a specific gender to the ghost. Can this be used to further solidify my speculation that the Tibetan translations were done based on Sanskrit originals and not via Chinese? The re-constructed Sanskrit of the Tibetan *yi-dvags-mo* is frequently given as *preta jvalamukhi*. It is interesting to note that there is a popular Hindu mother-goddess worshipped in northern India who is known as Jvalamukhi. Her sacred site is in present-day Himachal Pradesh, about twenty miles south of Kangra and bounded by the snowy mountains of Tibet to the north-east and Jammu-Kashmir to the north-west. At this temple, Jvalamukhi is said to be physically present in the form of the natural gas flames that emerge from the fissures in a rock in the temple. Kathleen M. Erndl's *Victory to the Mother, The Hindu Goddess of Northwest India in Myth, Ritual and Symbol* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) has a chapter on the goddess Jvalamukhi. It does not appear that there are any relations between the Hindu Jvalamukhi and the female hungry-ghost known as "Burning Mouth" in the Tibetan versions of the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* and the *Burning-Face Sūtra*.

⁹ The Dankarma is the earliest extant catalogue of the *bKa' gyur*. It was compiled in the early ninth century.

catalogue. We should, however, note that a Dunhuang manuscript of this text has been discovered (TL349). In short, we can safely assume that the narrative and the *sūtra* did originate in India though it is completely unclear what kind of ritual practice might or might not have been present in India in association with this *sūtra*. Among the post-mortem rites in Indian Buddhism that is known to us, there is no evidence of any knowledge of this *sūtra* or its central narrative and ritual prescription.

Although all the different liturgies of the *Yuqie yankou* anchor the rite on this one basic *sūtra* (in two translations) and consistently narrate the story of Ānanda's nocturnal encounter with a ghost-king known as "Burning-face" or "Flaming-mouth," the main elements of the *sūtra* form a minor part of the *Yuqie yankou* rite itself. Its short narrative basically serves as the origin-myth for the *Yuqie yankou* while the two liturgical elements (the chanting of the spell and names of the Buddhas while offering rice-grains and drops of water) in this *sūtra* became standard indices in later Chinese Buddhist ghost-feeding rites.¹⁰

Of the two different translations, later ghost-feeding liturgies mostly relied on Amoghavajra's *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*; which clearly overshadowed Śikṣānanda's earlier translation. This was largely due to the fact that the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* has not only all the elements found in the *Burning-Face Sūtra* but also includes some other previously unknown material that was probably added to the earlier recension before it was later brought to China by Amoghavajra and translated.¹¹ The reputation of Amoghavajra as

¹⁰ To see better the continuities and dis-continuities between these two texts, I have included the translations of the *Burning-Face Sūtra* and the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* in parallel columns in *Appendix 1*.

¹¹ The tenth century Song Tiantai cleric Zunshi evaluates the relative merits of both translations in an essay known as "*Shishi fa*" in his *Golden Garden Record*. See, XZJ101.236b-238a.

an adept of esoteric teachings also conferred prestige and increased the ritual-currency of the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*. Merely being a lengthier translation, however, did not necessarily give the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* an automatic advantage in China. As an example, we can cite the case of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa sūtra*. The *Suvarṇaprabhāsa sūtra* was translated at least five times in China, with Dharmakṣema's (385-433) version as the earliest and shortest (in eighteen chapters)¹² and Yijing's 義淨(635-713) as the latest and longest (in thirty-one chapters)¹³. Whereas Yijing's version became the most widely used in Japan, Dharmakṣema's version remained the most important in China even though it was the shortest of the five translations. The popularity of Dharmakṣema's shorter translation of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa sūtra* in China was primarily due to the attention that this particular translation received from Zhiyi and Jizang 吉藏 (549-623) who both composed exegetical and liturgical texts based on Dharmakṣema's translation.¹⁴ In the same way, one could consider the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*'s popularity over the *Burning-Face Sūtra* as owing more to the importance or fame of its translator, Amoghavajra's as a master of esoteric teachings rather than the length of the text *per se*.

When one compares the two different translations, it is obvious that the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* and the *Burning-Face Sūtra* share many identical phrases and

¹² *Jingguangming jing* 金光明經, T663:16.335a-359a.

¹³ *Jingguangming zuisheng wang jing* 金光明最勝王經, T665:16.403a-456c.

¹⁴ Two commentaries on the *Jingguangming jing* are attributed to Zhiyi – the *Jingguang ming jing xuanyi* (金光明經玄義, T1783:39.1a-12a) and *Jingguangming jing wenju* (金光明經文句, T1785:39.46b-83a). Jizang is credited with the commentary *Jingguangming jing shu* (金光明經疏, T1787:39.160a-174b). Dan Stevenson pointed out to me that although Zhiyi's commentary is on Dharmakṣema's translation, when the Song Tiantai cleric Zunshi elaborated on one of Zhiyi's short liturgy on the *Jingguangming jing*, he incorporated material from Yijing's longer translation.

sentences. I suspect that when Amoghavajra and his translation team worked on the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*, they had a copy of Śikṣānanda's translation to consult. This explains the identical phrases and sentences found in the two different translations. In many instances, the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* improves on or clarifies the grammatically ambiguous parts found in the *Burning-Face Sūtra*. For example, whereas the *Burning-Face Sūtra* identifies the primary beneficiaries of the food-bestowal as hungry-ghosts, *brahmans* and seers, the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* understands them to be hungry-ghosts and *brahman*-seers instead of *brahmans and seers*.¹⁵ The *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* also makes an adjustment to the *dhāraṇī* by adding an “OM” to it; thus rendering the *dhāraṇī* into a more standard form since most mantras and *dhāraṇīs* begin with the syllable OM (or NAMAḤ/NAMO). The most significant difference between the *Burning-Face Sūtra* and the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* is in the addition of an entire section in the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* on the invocation of the names of four Buddhas and the enumeration of benefits that can be accrued from invoking their names. Whereas the liturgical focus of the earlier *Burning-Face Sūtra* is on a single *dhāraṇī* – the *dhāraṇī* known as “Awesome Virtues” – empowering the food that is to be bestowed, the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* adds the invocation of the names of four Buddhas after the recitation of the main *dhāraṇī*.

Incidentally, the two Tibetan translations of this *sūtra* also appear to have the same differences noted between the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* and the *Burning-Face Sūtra*.

The *Yi-dvags kha-nas me-'bar ba-la skyabs mdzad-pa zhes-bya-ba'i gzungs* (Tōh646)

¹⁵ This and other differences are discussed in one of Zunshi's tracts on ghost-feeding rites recorded in his *Golden Garden Record* which I will discuss later in this chapter.

appears to correspond with Amoghavajra's translation as it too has the section on the invocation of the names of the four Buddhas.¹⁶ Like the *Burning-Face Sūtra*, the translation of *Yi-dvags-mo kha 'bar-ma dbugs-dbyung-ba'i gtor-ma'i cho-ga* (Tōh647) that predated the translation of *Yi-dvags kha-nas me-'bar ba-la skyabs mdzad-pa zhes-bya-ba'i gzungs* also does not have the added section on the four Buddhas. Later Chinese and Tibetan traditions apparently relied mostly on the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* and Tōh646 respectively as most of the Chinese and Tibetan rites that contain the use of the main *dhāraṇī* do include the invocation of the names of the four Buddhas.¹⁷

The earliest mention of Śikṣānanda's *Burning-Face Sūtra* can be found in the Tang period catalogue of canonical texts, the *Kaiyuan (Period) Catalogue of Buddhist Teachings*, (*Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄, henceforth *Kaiyuan Catalogue*) completed in the year 730 by Zhisheng 智昇 (ca. 669-740). According to the *Kaiyuan Catalogue*, Śikṣānanda translated a total of nineteen texts into Chinese and among these is the *Burning-Face Sūtra*.¹⁸ Śikṣānanda's translation is also listed in Zhisheng's other catalogue from the same period – the *Continuation to the Chart of Sūtras Translated in the Past and Present* (*Xu gujin yijing tu* 續古今譯經圖).¹⁹

¹⁶ Although this translation is not listed in the Dankarma catalogue (the earliest surviving official catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist canon), a manuscript of this text has been identified among the Dunhuang documents.

¹⁷ The Chinese tradition will soon add a fifth Buddha to the list and eventually in the *Yuqie yankou* and *Mengshan* rites the names of seven Buddhas are invoked.

¹⁸ T2154:55.566a.

¹⁹ T2154:55.369c.

It is also in the same *Kaiyuan Catalogue* that we find the earliest reference to Amoghavajra's *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*.²⁰ Another reference dating to about the same period is Yuanzhao's record of Amoghavajra's activities in China – the *Daizong chao zengsi kong dabianzheng guangzhisanzang heshang biao zhiji* (代宗朝贈司空大辨正廣智三藏和上表制集).²¹ Furthermore, in his *Catalogue of Received Items* (*Shōrai mokuroku* 請來目錄) completed in 806, we find that among the texts that Kūkai 空海 (774-835) brought back from China was a text entitled *Sūtra on the Dhāraṇī for Bestowing (Food) on the Flaming-Mouth Hungry Ghost* (*Shi yankou egui tuoluoni jing* 施餓口餓鬼陀羅尼經) in one fascicle.²² This title similarly turns up in the catalogues of several other Japanese monks who traveled to China in search of Buddhist traditions and texts in the Chinese medieval period.²³ The evidence from these catalogues suggests that Amoghavajra's *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* very quickly overshadowed Śikṣānanda's translation as these catalogues mostly recorded entries for Amoghavajra's translation but not Śikṣānanda's.²⁴

As mentioned earlier, although later ghost-feeding rites such as the *Yuqie yankou* (and the *Shuilu* and *Mengshan* rites) refer to Ānanda's encounter with the hungry-ghost as the origins of these rites, the ritual elements first introduced in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* were adopted and adapted rather liberally in these

²⁰ According to this source, Amoghavajra's translation was formally admitted into the official canon in 784 C.E. See T21.54:700a.

²¹ T2120:52.839a.

²² T2161:55.1061a.

²³ For a detailed list, see Yoshioka Yoshitoyo, *Dokyō to Bukkyō* (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankokai, 1983), 413-18.

²⁴ In Annen's *Sho ajari shingon mikkyō burui soroku* 諸阿闍梨真言密教部類總錄, one can find an entry for *Jiumianran egui tuoluoni shenzhou jing* 救面然餓鬼陀羅尼神呪經, which appears to be Śikṣānanda's translation of the *sūtra*. See, T2176:55.

later ghost-feeding rites.²⁵ For instance, in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*, an earlier prototype of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy, even the *dhāraṇī* given in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* has been altered (lengthened).²⁶ Furthermore, instead of invoking the names of four Buddhas, the list in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* has grown to seven Buddhas. My analysis of the ritual framing of the *Yuqie yankou* rite in *Chapter Three* clearly shows that the *dhāraṇī* (in its extended form) and the invocation of the Buddhas' names are not placed in the most crucial or at what we would consider significant junctures of the rite. Instead, they are given as merely two elements in a lengthy and complex ritual program. It should, however, be pointed out that even though the ritual program offered by the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* is not as central in the *Yuqie yankou* as we might expect it to be, the narrative on Ānanda's encounter with the hungry ghost is repeated or alluded to throughout its performance.

To recapitulate, the contents of the *Burning-Face Sūtra* and the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* suggest that these two texts are translations of two different recensions of a yet unstable Indian Buddhist *sūtra* that was already in existence no later than the seventh century. Centered on the narrative of Ānanda's encounter with a hungry ghost, the main focus of this *sūtra* is on a special *dhāraṇī* used for empowering, transforming and

²⁵ The symbolic capital of this *sūtra* narrative (the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* and the *Burning-Face Sūtra*) can be seen in the case of the supposed relationship between the *Shuilu* rite and the *sūtra* on Ānanda's encounter with the ghost. Even though the *Shuilu* tradition claims to have originated in China during the time of Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty (r. 502-549), it nonetheless claims that the monks commissioned by Emperor Wu to arrange the liturgy of the *Shuilu* rite created the liturgy based on the *sūtra* on Ānanda's encounter with the ghost! As one thirteenth century Buddhist cleric-historian pointed out, this is simply impossible given that the earliest Chinese translation of the *sūtra* was not completed until early eighth century.

²⁶ In all the post- *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* *Yuqie yankou* liturgical texts, it is this modified *dhāraṇī* that is used instead of the one given in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*. See T1318:21.471b.

multiplying of drink and food for the purposes of feeding hungry ghosts.²⁷ This offering of sustenance to infinite hungry ghosts will in turn result in an increase in the lifespan, good health and influence of the donor. According to this *sūtra*, the beneficiaries of the transformed food and drink will not only quench their thirst and satisfy their hunger but “will completely discard their ghost-bodies and be reborn in the heavens.”²⁸ It is worth noting that there is no mention of rebirth in the pure lands in either of the recensions of the *sūtra*. The promise of rebirth in pure lands (instead of merely being reborn in the heavens), will however, turn up fairly quickly in a later ghost-feeding text – the liturgical text known as *The Method of Bestowing Drink and Food and Water to all Hungry Ghosts* (*Shi zhu egui yinshi yi shui fa*, the *Bestowing Drink and Food*). Finally, when the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* was translated, it has an added section on invoking the names of four Buddhas – an important element that hints at the emergence of the rubric of the four and then later five Buddhas (and their corresponding “families” [Skt. *kūla*]) in later esoteric Indian Buddhist texts.

As pointed out earlier, the attraction of the *sūtra* does not simply lie in the proposal of a new and powerful technology to transform and multiply food for ghosts but in more concrete terms offers the performers an opportunity to improve their lot in life. Hence, the *sūtra* promises that “Their lifespans will be extended and lengthened, their physical prowess will increase and their virtuous roots perfected.”²⁹ Furthermore, these donors will not be harmed by any evil ghosts or spirits and will gain “perpetual victory

²⁷ The *sūtra* also recommends the use of the *dhāraṇī* for empowering food and drink meant as offerings to *brahman*-seers and Buddhas. Later Chinese Buddhist traditions identify these “*brahman*-seers” as a category of ghosts.

²⁸ See translation of the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* in Appendix 1.

²⁹ Ibid.

over sworn enemies.”³⁰ The *sūtra* makes claims on not only guaranteeing longevity for its followers but also protection from any and all harm – both seen and unseen, human and ghostly. According to the *sūtra*-narrative, Ānanda performed this rite according to the Buddha’s instructions and was able to “protect his own life” and avoided the threat of rebirth into the realm of the hungry ghosts. As most Buddhist traditions (on the basis of other sources related to Ānanda) believe that Ānanda later attained the state of an *arhat* and lived to a ripe old age of a hundred and twenty years, when Chinese Buddhists read the translations of this *sūtra* they must have felt that Buddhism too has a technique for promoting longevity. The search for longevity and even physical immortality has a long and complex history in China before and after the arrival of Buddhism. This *sūtra*’s claims to providing a means to lengthen one’s lifespan, albeit not physical immortality must have resonated with the Chinese fascination with the quest for physical immortality often associated with Daoist adepts and their alchemical practices. This promise of longevity through the performance of a rite involving physical food and spiritual nourishment must have resonated with indigenous Chinese interests in the prolongation of life and even the achievement of immortality through various alchemical and ritual processes.

Ānanda and Mulian, Spells and Sangha

The appearance of a ghost-feeding *sūtra* associated with Ānanda has been regarded by some as evidence of a form of competition and contestation with earlier

³⁰ See translation of the *Burning-Face Sūtra* in *Appendix I*.

related *sūtras* where a different disciple of the historical Buddha figures prominently – i.e. Mahāmaudgalyāyana (Chi. Mulian 目蓮).³¹ The tale of “Mulian saving his mother,” which became the Buddhist source for the celebration of the Yulanpen (Ghost) Festival, is a story focused on the sins of a mother and the filiality of a son. It is also a narrative about the collective power of the Buddhist monastic community – a power that, in some of the *Yulanpen sūtras*, surpasses that of the gods of the world and even that of the Buddhas. According to the basic narrative (which quickly grew into a lengthy drama with several plots, sub-plots and alternative narratives), when Mulian discovered that his recently deceased mother was reborn as a hungry ghost, he attempted to rescue his mother by exercising the supernormal powers he was famed for.³² Mulian is traditionally recognized as the disciple of the historical Buddha foremost in his mastery of the supernormal powers. Unfortunately, despite his efforts to help his mother, nothing was accomplished. After exhausting all his powers, Mulian finally sought the Buddha for a solution, much like Ānanda in our story. Like our story, the Buddha had a solution. Accordingly, the Buddha explained to Mulian that his mother’s sins are so heavy that none of Mulian’s supernatural powers can affect a change in the fruition of his mother’s past evil deeds. Mulian need not worry however, as there is still a way to help his mother. His mother can be delivered from her rebirth as a hungry ghost through the merit power gained by making offerings to the Buddhist monastic community at the end of their annual rains-retreat. According to the *Yulanpen jing*, this day fell on the

³¹ Orzech, “Saving the Burning-Mouth Hungry Ghost,” 279.

³² Mulian was traditionally recognized as the foremost in supernormal powers among the historical Buddha’s disciples.

full-moon day of the seventh lunar month. The basic *sūtra* tells us that in reliance upon this advice, Mulian was finally able to deliver his mother from the realm of the hungry ghosts.

As pointed out by Teiser in his superb study of the Ghost Festival in medieval China, apart from this story, Mulian appears to have an even earlier association with hungry ghosts. An early *sūtra* entitled, *Sūtra of One Hundred Selected Legends* (*Zhuanchi baiyuan jing* 撰集百緣經, T200) has several stories with the theme of Mulian's encounters with hungry ghosts.³³ Other *sūtras* involving Mulian and hungry ghosts include *Sūtra on Ghosts Enquiring Mulian* (*Guiwen mulian jing* 鬼問目蓮經) and *Sūtra on the Retributions of Hungry Ghosts* (*Egui baoying jing* 餓鬼報應經).³⁴ Furthermore, as Teiser's study has shown, Mulian also evolved into a shamanic-figure in China where his journeys into the different realms of existence were elaborated and expanded in many extra-canonical sources popular since the medieval period in Chinese history. Thus, by the time the *sūtra* containing the story of Ānanda's encounter of the hungry ghost appeared in China, there was already a strong and popular ritual tradition associating Mulian – the filial son, monk and shaman – with hungry ghosts. This might actually explain the invisibility of the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* and its narrative and ritual-program in Tang sources as the complex of Mulian and hungry ghosts dominated the religious and more specifically post-mortem ritual program of medieval China. It was not until the late Tang (at the earliest) and in the Song that ghost-feeding

³³ This *sūtra* was translated into Chinese in the early third century.

³⁴ The translation of *The Sūtra on Ghosts Enquiring Mulian* (T734) is attributed to An Shigao (ca. 148-170) while *The Sūtra on the Retributions of Hungry Ghosts* (T746), whose translator is unknown, was translated into Chinese sometime in the fourth century.

traditions centered on the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* began to emerge as an alternative to the Mulian-complex in the Chinese post-mortem ritual-market.

In comparison to the complex surrounding Mulian, our narrative, with Ānanda as the protagonist, represents a different ghost-feeding motif that anchors its power and efficacy neither in the collective power of the monastic community (as it is in the case of the canonical “Mulian saving his mother” sources) nor in the individual power of the shamanic figure of Mulian as elaborated in the folk tradition. Rather, in Ānanda’s story, it is the power of spells and ritual that is promoted – a power that polemically stated, can be appropriated by anyone, be it lay or monastic. This point – that the ghost-feeding rite of the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* can be performed by both lay and monastic – will later become a point of emphasis in the Tiantai cleric, Ciyun Zunshi’s 慈雲遵式 (964-1032) efforts in the Song period to replace local, non-Buddhist, ritual-traditions for making offerings to gods, spirits and ghosts with the specifically Buddhist ghost-feeding rite derived from the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*. This new ritual-technology that not only feeds and satisfies ghosts but also increases the lifespan and blessings of the performer offers the possibility of by-passing the middle (meddling?)-persons (i.e. the monastic *sangha*) and of overcoming the inaccessible feat of shamanic-flight represented by Mulian. If an essential component of the Mulian-complex was an emphasis of the special role and power of the monastic *sangha*, can we interpret the rise of the Ānanda-complex in late Tang as a shift in Chinese society’s attitudes to the Buddhist monastic community? Perhaps the “mystique” or “exoticness” of Buddhist monastics ironically began to gradually disappear as the Buddhist *sangha* became increasingly

accepted/tolerated as part of the Chinese religious and social landscape? On the other hand, when clerics such as Zunshi made provisions for the laity to perform a simplified ghost-feeding rite (instead of non-Buddhist blood sacrifices to appease the dead and other spirits), were they necessarily subverting the centrality of monastic authority or were they in fact very skillfully enhancing clerical authority by bringing its norms into the ritual lives of the general public?³⁵ At this point, we can only conjecture. It should, however, be pointed out that the ritual-technology offered by our text does not replace or supplant the legend of “Mulian saving his mother” or the Ghost Festival associated with it. Instead, it became incorporated into the Ghost Festival, becoming an important component in the repertoire of rites offered by ritual specialists during the Ghost Festival.

***The Broader Ritual Field – A Consideration of Tibetan Ritualizations of the
Flaming-Mouth Sūtra/Tōh646***

Although the *sūtra*-narrative in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* contains the structure of a simple rite, it still lacks the elements necessary for it to function as a liturgical text (Skt. *vidhi*, Chi. *yigui* 儀軌) and as I mentioned earlier, we have no evidence of the use of this *sūtra* in India (or Central Asia) even though the *sūtra* clearly did not originate in China. To transform the ritual contents of the *sūtra* into a ritual program, a liturgical text needed to be composed. Although we do not have any surviving Chinese texts from the eighth or ninth century that appear to be liturgical texts based on the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*, there are related Buddhist traditions

³⁵ I have to thank Dan Stevenson for suggesting to me that I consider this alternate scenario.

we can turn to to help us imagine how the ritual-elements in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* might have been used liturgically. To do this, I will momentarily turn my attention to Tibetan Buddhism to provide us with some parameters for imagining how the contents of the *sūtra*-narrative of the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* can be translated into a liturgical text and put into practice. I have chosen the Tibetan tradition for three reasons. First, the only other Buddhist canon apart from the Chinese/East Asian canon that has the equivalents of the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* is the Tibetan canon, and Tibetan Buddhism also has a continuous and living tradition of performing rites based on the contents of this *sūtra*. Second, as I will shortly demonstrate, the Tibetan production of a rite based on the ritual-elements found in the *sūtra* represents one of the most basic and conservative transformations. The two-step rite described in the *sūtra* (repetition of the *dhāraṇī* followed by the invocation of the names of the four Buddhas) is the whole body of the Tibetan rite based on this *sūtra*.³⁶ And third, as I have pointed out in the *Introduction* and will discuss in more depth in *Chapter Five*, Tibetan Buddhist traditions became an important source in the later elaboration and development of the themes and techniques of the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*.

So, let us now consider the Tibetan transformation and utilization of the rite presented in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* or more accurately in Tōh647/Tōh646. In many Tibetan rituals still performed today, one can find a short rite

³⁶ Later in this chapter, we will see that this type of conservative transformation of the narrative text of the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* to a liturgical text also occurred within Chinese Buddhism among certain Tiantai and Chan followers.

that is clearly based on the contents of Tōh647/Tōh646. This rite is often used to empower and multiply a type of food-offerings (Skt. *bali*, Tib. *gtor-ma*) given to hungry-ghosts and other spirits such as local deities and obstructing spirits. This short rite typically commences with the recitation of the *dhāraṇī* “NAMAḤ SARVA TATHĀGATĀVALOKITE OM SAMBHARA SAMBHARA HŪṀ” – the *dhāraṇī* taught in the ghost-feeding *sūtra* – three or seven times, accompanied with the forming of a *mudrā* that usually ends with the snapping of the fingers. After the recitation of the *dhāraṇī*, the names of the four Buddhas (translated into Tibetan) are recited. This is sometimes followed by the recitation of several verses extolling the multiplied or magnified qualities of the offerings, the intended recipient of the offerings and the expected results of the making of the offerings. As an example of this rite, we can refer to a liturgical text composed by a contemporary of the eighth Dalai Lama (1758-1804). In this text – “*The Stream of Nectar*” *Long-life Practice* – under the section “Torma Offering to Local Gods” is a sub-section where the *dhāraṇī* is recited “three or seven times,” followed by the recitation of the names of the four Buddhas and an accompanying prayer in verse form:

This ocean-like *torma* of nectar, undefiled and having the five desired qualities,
I offer to the Deities of the Country and the Local Gods.
Take it and don’t be angry or upset.
Be a good host and give support as good friends.
By the power of my own meditation and the blessings of the Tathāgatas
And the power of the Dharmadhātu,
May all the purposes in my mind be fulfilled spontaneously.³⁷

³⁷ *Transformation into the Exalted State, Spiritual Exercises of the Tibetan Tantric Tradition*, trans. Carol Savvas and Lodro Tulku (Rikon-Zurich: Tibet Institute, 1987), 39.

Finally, the offering – usually in the form of a small sculpted dough ornamented with butter and sprinkled with some water and a few grains of uncooked rice – is then taken out and placed on a surface that is clean and traffic-free. This rite takes no more than a few minutes to complete but is often embedded within longer and more complex rituals that can last from a few hours to a few days – rituals such as an extended solitary or communal deity-yoga meditation retreat, tantric empowerments (Skt. *abhiṣeka*, Tib. *dbang*) and tantric feasts (Skt. *gaṇacakra*, Tib. *tshogs- 'khor*). It appears that when this rite is performed in the Tibetan context, it functioned primarily as a form of apotropaic rite – the removal of harm and disturbance and the ensuring of protection via ritual-bribery.

What we have here in the Tibetan case is a very literal and conservative approach to the transformation of the contents of the ghost-feeding *sūtra* into a rite. This rite only involves the recitation of the *dhāraṇī*, accompanied by the snapping of fingers and the invocation of the names of the four Buddhas – just as the *sūtra*-narrative in the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*/Tōh646 describes the rite. The use of the drops of water and grains of uncooked rice is consistent with the stipulations provided in the *sūtra*. As we shall see, in contrast to this conservative approach, there are several other ghost-feeding liturgical texts in the Chinese canon where the *dhāraṇī* and names of the Buddhas are only two elements included into more complex and multi-layered ghost-feeding rites. Chinese ghost-feeding liturgies similar to those found in the Tibetan tradition can however be found in the writings of the Tiantai tradition in the Song period. We will focus on the Song Tiantai corpus of ghost-feeding texts later in this chapter.

Finally, we should note a Tibetan source from the twelfth century that alerts us to the fact that although the Tibetans have generally created fairly conservative liturgies out of the contents of Toh646, they were apparently also using liturgies that troubled some of the more conformist/purist clerics who insisted that these other liturgies departed from the ritual sequence provided in the original *sūtra*. For example, in *sDom pa gsum gyi rab tu dbye ba* (*A Clear Differentiation of the Three Codes*), the famous Tibetan polymath, Sa-skya Paṇḍita Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan (1181-1251) criticizes what he considered as a procedural-error in the way some Tibetans performed the rite derived from the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*/Tōh647. Sa-skya Paṇḍita writes:

Furthermore, there are numerous mistaken practices
here in the midst of the snowy mountains of Tibet.
I have witnessed practices in which the names of the four Tathāgatas
were recited in prologue to the “Burning mouth” oblation.

This, too, does not agree with the *sūtras*.
In the *sūtra* the recitation of the four names
follows the recitation of the *mantra*.³⁸

It is in instances of this sort that one wonders if there is a greater connection between the ritual traditions of China and Tibet than scholars have noticed. The procedural-error that Sa-skya Paṇḍita witnessed among his contemporaries' performance of the “Burning-mouth oblation” is an “error” that is all too common in the *Yuqie yankou* liturgies. While other earlier Chinese ghost-feeding liturgies such as the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*, the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* and the liturgies by Song Tiantai clerics kept the procedural order (i.e. the recitation of the ghost-feeding spell

³⁸ See, Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyaltsen, *A Clear Differentiation of the Three Codes*, trans. Jared Douglas Rhoton (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 124.

preceding the recitation of the names of the Buddhas), it is in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* which originated in the Yuan period that we first witness a change to that order. Considering the dates for Sa-skya Paṇḍita – 1181-1251 – it is very likely that Sa-skya Paṇḍita's complaints and the development we see in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* represented a particular trend in the ritualization of the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* /Tōh646 that gained currency in both China and Tibet. We should also note that both Sa-skya Paṇḍita and his nephew, 'Phags-pa were closely connected with the Yuan court.

The Beginnings of a Tradition – the Creation of a Ghost-Feeding Liturgy

Aside from the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*, several other ghost-feeding texts in the Taishō edition of the Chinese canon such as the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*, the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* and the *Yuqie jiyao yankou shishi qijiao anantuo yuanyou* (瑜伽集要餤口施食起教阿難陀緣由)³⁹ are described as translations by Amoghavajra. Since Amoghavajra is an extremely important figure in the historical process of the translation and dissemination of esoteric Buddhist texts and practices in China we have to approach such traditional attributions cautiously. Amoghavajra's case is further complicated by the major role he assumed in Japan where several Japanese Buddhist sects claim spiritual descent from him. What I will attempt to demonstrate next is that regardless of the attribution of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* – whether it was actually composed by Amoghavajra or by his spiritual descendents, its

³⁹ T1319:21.472b-473b.

significance lies in its being the earliest liturgical text in the corpus of ghost-feeding texts. I will first present the evidence supporting my claims on the origins of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*.

To uncover the historical origins of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*, we have to begin by searching for its traces in Chinese and Japanese catalogues of Buddhist texts published post-Amoghavajra. Although the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* is listed in the *Kaiyuan Catalogue* (published in 730), as translated by Amoghavajra, there is no mention of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* in that catalogue. The *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* is similarly absent in a slightly later catalogue also compiled by Yuanzhao 圓照 (d.u.). Yuanzhao's *Zhenyuan (Period) Catalogue of the Newly Designated and Translated Teachings*, (*Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu* 貞元新定釋教目錄, T2157) completed in the year 800, also has no entries for the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* although it does record the existence of both the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* and the *Burning-Face Sūtra*. Furthermore, the same Yuanzhao's detailed record of Amoghavajra's activities in China, *Daizong chao zengsi kong dabianzheng guangzhi sanzang heshang biao zhiji* (代宗朝贈司空大辨正廣智三藏和上表制集, T2120) attributes the translation of a total of seventy-seven texts in one hundred and one fascicles to Amoghavajra, and of all the ghost-feeding texts that later traditions associate with Amoghavajra, only the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* is included in this list of seventy-seven texts.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ T2120:52.839a.

What we have considered so far shows that the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* is unknown to the earliest official records that we have that are related to Amoghavajra and his activities in China. This striking absence does serve as a strong reason for questioning the traditional attribution of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* to Amoghavajra. But if we expand our search to the larger East Asian context, the investigation becomes more complicated as we quickly run into other evidences that seem to link the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* to Amoghavajra. Kūkai's *Catalogue of Received Items* – a catalogue that he presented to the Japanese emperor in 806 recording in detail all the texts and artifacts that he brought back from China – lists a text by the title of *Rite of Bestowing Food and Drink to All Hungry Ghosts* (*Shizhu egui yinshi yigui*, 施諸餓鬼飲食儀軌). Kūkai in fact noted that this and twelve other texts that he brought back to Japan (out of a total of 216 texts) were not yet listed in the *Zhenyuan Catalogue*.⁴¹ This meant that there were texts that, though already in circulation in China when Kūkai was there, were yet to receive any official recognition and thus lacked canon status. A point worth noting about this text is that the title of this text indicates that it is a liturgical text (*yigui*, 儀軌) and not a narrative text like either the *Burning-Face Sūtra* or the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*. Could this *Rite of Bestowing Food and Drink to All Hungry Ghosts* be a variant title for the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*, (*Drink and Water to All Hungry Ghosts*, *Shizhu egui yinshi ji shuifa* 施諸餓鬼飲食及水法)? Or is Kūkai's *Rite of Bestowing Food and Drink to All Hungry Ghosts* different from the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*, as

⁴¹ T2157:55.1062b.

suggested in Annen's 安然 (841-915) *Complete Records of the Esoteric Mantra Class of Texts of the Various Ācāryas* (*Sho ajari shingon mikkyō burui soroku* 諸阿闍梨真言密教部類總錄, T2176) where he lists Kūkai's text *and the Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* separately?⁴²

Furthermore, Ennin 圓仁 (794-864), who arrived in China in 838 apparently returned to Japan in 847 with a text bearing a title identical to that of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*. Ennin's catalogue –*Record of Newly Acquired Sacred Teachings from Tang (China)* (*Nittō shingu shōgyō mokuroku* 入唐新求聖教目錄, T2167) – makes the fascinating claim that *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food and Water to All Hungry Ghosts* (i.e. the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*) is one of Amoghavajra's "oral instructions" (*bukong sanzang koujue* 不空三藏口決).⁴³ This claim is repeated in a Dunhuang manuscript of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*; once again referring to itself as the "oral instructions of the 'Translator of Great and Broad wisdom'" (i.e. Amoghavajra) (*daguangzhi sanzang koujue* 大廣智三藏口決).⁴⁴ The existence of this Dunhuang manuscript is also highly significant as it is the only solid reference to the existence of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* in China. Furthermore, could it be that because the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* was considered Amoghavajra's "oral instructions" that it was not listed in the official Chinese catalogues such as the *Kaiyuan* and *Zhenyuan* catalogues which, strictly speaking, are catalogues of *translated* works? At this point, we can only conjecture.

⁴² T2176:55.p.?

⁴³ T2167:55.1080c.

⁴⁴ Stein 2685.

Based on the discussion so far, it is however, safe for us to assign a late eighth century to mid ninth century dating to the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* even though there are strong evidences suggesting an earlier date for it; ultimately attributing the authorship of the text to Amoghavajra himself. Regardless of whether Amoghavajra was the translator/compiler of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* or not, the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* is the earliest extant example of a liturgical text inspired by the contents of the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*. As the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* represents the earliest example of the transformation of the narrative-text of the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* into liturgical use, I will highlight some of the significant liturgical developments found in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*.

The Appearance of a Second Dhāraṇī in Ghost-Feeding Texts

What immediately confronts us when we look at the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* is its length. Rather than being a liturgy for a rite that consists of only one *dhāraṇī* and a brief invocation of the names of four Buddhas, the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* weaves around the main *dhāraṇī* and the names of the Buddhas an array of other spells, recitations and *mudrās* such as the opening hymn in verse form,⁴⁵ six new spells, the name of an additional Buddha (inserted in the original group of four)⁴⁶ and specific instructions on visualizations and other related ritual-acts. Among these

⁴⁵ This hymn endures into the present day *Yugie yankou* liturgy. See Kamata, 843a-843b.

⁴⁶ The first Buddha listed in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* in Chinese is “Baosheng” even though the Sanskrit transliteration still remains “Prabhūtaratna” which translates well into the Chinese “Duobao” which is how it appears in the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*. See discussion below on this confusion of names.

additional spells in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* is a spell that is referred to as the “Ambrosial Dharma-Flavor Spell” (*Ganlu fawei zhenyan* 甘露法味真言).⁴⁷ This spell is identical to the spell found in *The Dhāraṇī of the Ambrosia Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha* (*Foshuo ganlu jing tuoluoni zhou* 佛說甘露經陀羅尼呪, T1316) although the spell in T1316 is transliterated differently.⁴⁸ T1316 (with only sixty-eight characters in length) appears to be someone’s personal notes on the “Ambrosia Dhāraṇī” rather than an independent, full-fledged *sūtra*. The Korean, Yuan and Ming editions of the Chinese canon all identify Śikṣānanda as the translator of T1316 although the Song canon lacks any attribution.⁴⁹ According to the *Zhenyuan Catalogue* Śikṣānanda’s *Burning-Face Sūtra* has a “Bestowing Water Spell” (*shishui zhou* 施水呪) appended to it.⁵⁰ In a later discussion of this issue, the Song Tiantai cleric Zunshi similarly mentions that there was “a *Ambrosia Sūtra* (*Ganlu jing*) in a small fascicle” (*you ganlu jing ji yi xiaojuan* 有甘露經及一小卷) translated and appended to the *Burning-Face Sūtra* by Śikṣānanda but according to Zunshi it should not be used as its translator is unknown even though it is appended to the *Burning-Face Sūtra*.⁵¹ When Zongxiao 宗曉 (1151-1214) compiled his *Survey of Food-Bestowal Rites* (*Shishi tonglan* 施食通覽) in 1204, he includes the *Ambrosia Sūtra*.⁵² The spell as given by Zongxiao’s text is identical with that of T1316

⁴⁷ See translation in Appendix 2.

⁴⁸ T1316:21.48b.

⁴⁹ T1316 is numbered K474b in the Korean canon. The original woodblock for K474b was carved in 1242. See Lewis R. Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 161-62. For the Yuan and Ming attribution to Śikṣānanda as the translator of T1316, see T1316:21.468, n. 17.

⁵⁰ T2157:55.936c.

⁵¹ See Zunshi’s *Shishi fa* in XZJ101.237a.

⁵² XZJ101.419b.

and it was also transliterated into Chinese using the same characters as those used in T1316, unlike the transliteration used for the “Ambrosia Dhāraṇī” in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*.⁵³

It should be pointed out that there is also another text in the Taishō canon that bears a cognate title – *The Ambrosia Dhāraṇī Sūtra* (*Ganlu tuoluoni zhou*, 甘露陀羅尼, T1317). T1317, however, gives a different and longer spell than the “Ambrosia Dhāraṇī” contained in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*. Based on an analysis of the respective spells, it is obvious that the “Ambrosia Dhāraṇī” in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* and T1316 is connected with Surūpāya Buddha (one of the four Buddhas of the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*) while the spell in T1317 is essentially an Amitābha-related spell.⁵⁴ As the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* as the earliest surviving liturgy inspired by the contents of the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*, it also becomes the first instance of the wedding together of the main *dhāraṇī* of the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* with the “Ambrosia Dhāraṇī” of T1316.⁵⁵ This pairing of the two spells has proven to be a lasting union as most of the later liturgical texts in Chinese Buddhism that use the main *dhāraṇī* of the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* also includes the “Ambrosia Dhāraṇī” of T1316.⁵⁶

⁵³ The *Ambrosia Sūtra* in Zongxiao’s collection of ghost-feeding texts is longer than T1316 as it includes a verse section consisting of six, five-character lines. See, XZJ104.419b.

⁵⁴ The spell in T1316 begins with “NAMAḤ SURŪPĀYA TATHĀGATĀYA” whereas the spell in T1317 begins with the salutation “NAMAḤ BHĀGAVATE AMITĀBHAYA TATHĀGATĀYA.” T1317 is apparently not found in the Song, Yuan and Ming canons but is in the Korean canon. The version in the Taishō canon is taken from the Korean canon. See, T1317:21.468c, n. 22.

⁵⁵ Although the Taishō canon includes several liturgical texts that have both the main *dhāraṇī* of the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* with the “Ambrosia Dhāraṇī” of T1316, the dating of these texts cannot be verified even though they purport to be works contemporaneous with the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*. The texts I am referring to are: *Yanluowang gongxing fa cidi* 閻羅王供行法次第 (T1290) and *Shi bafangtian yize* 施八方天儀則 (T1294)

⁵⁶ See later sections of this chapter.

The Case of the Buddhas in the Method of Bestowing Drink and Food

In the original list of Buddhas in the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*, the names of the four Buddhas are given as Duobao 多寶 (Skt. Prabūtaratna), Miaoseshen 妙色身 (Skt. Surūpāya), Guangboshen 廣博身 (Skt. Vipulagātra) and Libuwei 離哺喂 (Skt. Abhayamkara). Other than Duobao/Prabūtaratna who figures prominently in the *Lotus Sūtra*, the other three Buddhas are not attested to in other sources. In any case, in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*, we see two changes made to this list. The first involves the substituting of the Chinese translation for Prabūtaratna from “Duobao” (“Abundant Jewels”) to “Baosheng” 寶勝 (“Jewel Victory”).⁵⁷ Interestingly, the Dunhuang manuscript of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* retains the original translation of “Duobao.”⁵⁸ The second discernable change the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* is the addition of the name of Ganluwang 甘露王, (Skt. Amṛtarāja) into the list; occupying the third position in this new group of five Buddhas. Ganluwang or Amṛtarāja is no newcomer in the Mahāyāna pantheon as it is considered one of the variant names for Amitābha. So, why was Amitābha enlisted into the ranks of the Buddhas in the ghost-feeding rites? One possible explanation lies in the title of the “Ambrosia Dhāraṇī” itself. Although the “Ambrosia/Ganlu Dhāraṇī” in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* is related to Miaoseshen/Surūpāya Buddha rather than

⁵⁷ The *Foguang Dictionary* gives Baosheng as an alternate name for the same Buddha known as Duobao. Unfortunately, it does not give us the source of this identification.

⁵⁸ Another divergence between the Taishō version of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* and the Dunhuang manuscript is the presence and absence respectively of the transliteration for the Sanskrit homages to the five Buddhas. See T1315:21.467c-468a and DH 22.266.

Amitābha, there is sufficient reason for us to surmise that a confusion or even conscious blurring of the names of the spells and Buddhas led to the addition of Ganluwang/Amṛtarāja to the ranks of the other four Buddhas. Since the “Ambrosia/Ganlu Dhāraṇī” is one of the main spells in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*, why not add the name of Ganluwang/ Amṛtarāja to the original list of four Buddhas connected with the other main spell in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*? The addition of a fifth Buddha to the earlier list of four could have also occurred under the pressure of a need to conform to the system of the Five Buddhas current then in the main esoteric traditions associated with Śubhākarasiṃha, Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra.⁵⁹

There is in fact evidence to support this speculation. As noted earlier, Kūkai reportedly brought back to Japan a related liturgical text with the title *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food and Water to All Hungry Ghosts*. Although this text itself does not survive, Kūkai’s notes on “the rite of bestowing (food) to hungry ghosts” preserved in his *Secret Treasury Records* (*Hizō-ki* 祕藏記) clearly shows an attempt to overlay the system of the Five Buddhas on to the list of five Buddhas in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*. According to Kūkai, Baosheng is in reality Ratnasambhava of the southern direction, Miaoseshen is Akṣobhya of the eastern direction, Ganluwang is Amitāyus of the western direction, Guangboshen is Vairocana of the central direction and

⁵⁹ Tiantai clerics in the Song who composed or promoted liturgies of bestowing-food to hungry ghosts follow the original list of four Buddhas given in the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*. Since they did not see themselves as belonging to the lineage of the Tang Tantric *ācāryas* such as Subhakarasiṃha, Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra they probably saw no need to expand the original list of four Buddhas into five to accord with the esoteric Five Buddhas system articulated in the *Vajraśekhara sūtra*. See, Zunshi’s “*Shishi fashi*” in *Shishi tonglan*, XZJ101.429-430.

Libuwei is Śākyamuni of the northern direction. He further identifies the Five Wisdoms with the five Buddhas of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* and gives a brief exegesis on how the different Buddha-bodies are related to these five Buddhas. In fact, if one did not already know anything about the rite of bestowing food to hungry ghosts, reading Kūkai's notes on this rite in *Secret Treasury Records* would leave one with the impression that the five Buddhas are at the center of the whole rite as the notes only discuss this matter to the exclusion of anything else such as the spells or ritual acts that constitute the rite.⁶⁰ Kūkai's mapping of the five Buddhas of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* with the mainstream esoteric system of the Five Buddhas might be related to his efforts of constructing a new "esoteric Buddhist discourse" that not only asserts the superiority of the "esoteric teachings" but also demonstrates how the wisdom of the esoteric teachings is in fact hidden in the heart of all non-esoteric (or "exoteric") teachings and doctrines.⁶¹

*An Analysis of the Ritual Structure of the Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*⁶²

Although the rite articulated in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* is significantly longer and more complex than the rite described in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*, it is arguably relatively simple compared to later ghost-feeding rites such as the *Yuqie yankou*. However, the *Method of Bestowing Drink*

⁶⁰ See *Hizō-ki* in *Shingonshū zensho* (真言宗全書), vol. 9, 21. In the Tibetan traditions where they apparently did not introduce a fifth Buddha into the original four we also witness an attempt to relate the four obscure Buddhas in the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* /Tōh646 with deities more familiar to Tibetans Buddhists. Hence, Prabūtaratna is identified with Śākyamuni, Surūpāya with Mañjuśrī, Vipulagātra with Avalokiteśvara and Abhayamkara with Vajrapani.

⁶¹ See Ryuichi Abe's recent arguments on this issue in Ryuichi Abe, *The Weaving of Mantra, Kūkai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhist Discourse* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

⁶² See Appendix 2 for a translation of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*.

and Food can be considered the main source and template for many later ghost-feeding rites such as those in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* and the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*. It was also the prototype of similar rites exported to and developed in Japan.⁶³ Structurally, the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* can be divided into several sections based on its main ritual acts. The first section consists of an opening invocation inviting the hungry ghosts and other ghosts and spirits (such as local earth and mountain deities) to come to the place where the rite is being performed. This prayer also expresses the objectives of the rite such as: satisfying the hunger of the ghosts and spirits and causing them to gain rebirth in the heavens and pure lands, leading eventually to complete enlightenment, and protection for and fulfillment of wishes of the performer/donor. The liturgy then instructs the performer to recite a spell to invite and summon all ghosts to the ritual space. This is followed by the recitation of another spell that “Opens the Gates of the Earth-Prisons and Opens the Throats (of the Hungry Ghosts)” (*Kai diyumen ji yanhōu zhou* 開地獄門及咽喉呪). The second section of this rite is centered on the recitation of the two spells already mentioned – the main *dhāraṇī*-spell of the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* and the “Ambrosia Dhāraṇī” of T1316. A third spell identified as the “Single-Character Heart, Water-Wheel Contemplation Spell” (*Yizi xinsui lunguan zhenyan* 一字心水輪觀真言) is also recited

⁶³ I have to thank Daniel Stevenson for bringing to my attention the following references for the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*-inspired ghost-feeding rites developed in Japan: Kakuzen’s (1143-1217) *Kakuzensho* 覺禪鈔 (in *Dainihon Bukkyō zensho*, vol. 50:2034-2050), Shōnen’s *Gyōrinsho* 行林抄 published in 1154 (T2409:76.490c-493a), Shōcho’s *Asabasho* 阿娑縛抄 published between 1242-1281 (*Dainihon Bukkyō zensho*, vol. 40:2338b-2344a) and Ryōson’s *Byakuhōshō* 白法抄 (*Taishō Zuzō*, vol.7:276c-281b).

here. This section, which is the actual ghost-feeding part of the rite, is completed with the invocation of the names of the five Buddhas.

The next section consists of only one spell but it can be considered a separate section, as it is actually a very brief transmission of precepts or vows to the hungry ghosts and other ghostly entities invited to the rite. The precepts transmitted here are identified as the “Samaya-precepts” (*Sanmeiye jie* 三昧耶戒) which confer upon the recipients the qualification to “listen to the deep esoteric Dharma.”⁶⁴ The administering of Refuge and precepts (lay and bodhisattva precepts) to the departed, ghosts and spirits has its precedents but in this case it is instead the transmission of the esoteric “*samaya*-precepts” to the ghosts gathered that is at stake. In later ghost-feeding rites such as the *Shuilu*, *Mengshan* and the *Yuqie yankou*, the transmission of refuge, bodhisattva and *samaya*-precepts to the host of guests invited to the rite constitutes one of the main elements in respective ritual program. However, in the present liturgy, only the esoteric *samaya*-precepts are conferred upon the ghostly ordainees. The *samaya*-precepts are conferred here by the mere pronouncement of the “Bodhisattva *Samaya*-precepts Dhāraṇī” (*Pusa sanmeiye jie tuoluoni* 菩薩三昧耶戒陀羅尼) thrice. After the guests have been bestowed both “physical” nourishment in the form of the transformed food and drink and spiritual nourishment in the form of the *Samaya*-precepts that rendered them “qualified them to listen to the deep esoteric Dharma,” they are finally sent off in the closing section of the rite. Again, what we are witnessing here is another example of the “esotericization” that the ghost-feeding rite in its early history in China.

⁶⁴ T1315:21.468a..

This basic ritual structure and content of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* became the template for many of the later Shingon and Tendai elaborations on ghost-feeding rites in Japan.⁶⁵ For example, the Shingon master Kakuzen's 覺禪 (1143-1217) *Documents of Kakuzen* (*Kakuzen-sho* 覺禪抄) contains a ghost-feeding liturgy that closely resembles the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*. This liturgical text, *Ritual Procedure of Bestowing(-Food) to All Hungry Ghosts* (*Seshogaki shidai* 施諸餓鬼次第), basically reproduces the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* with only a few minor adjustments that included the addition of preliminary and closing sections. The preliminary section in Kakuzen's liturgy consists of standard Shingon ritual sequences of purification and demarcation of ritual space, self-protection for the practitioner and the sending-off and receiving of carriages that the supernatural guests will arrive in. The closing section of Kakuzen's adaptation of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* includes the recitation of the *Heart Sūtra* and other spells such as the "Brilliant Light Spell" (*Guangming zhenyan* 光明真言) and "Zunsheng Dhāraṇī" (*Zunsheng tuoluoni* 尊勝陀羅尼). An interesting addition to the main body of this liturgy is the "Generating the Bodhi-mind Spell" (*Fa putixin zhenyan* 發菩提心真言) immediately following the invocation of the names of the five Buddhas but preceding the section on the transmission of the Samaya-precepts.⁶⁶ This is an example of an attempt by Kakuzen to more fully develop the section on the transmission of precepts in the

⁶⁵ The food-bestowal rites of the different Zen traditions in Japan owe their origins more to later Chinese food-bestowal rites than to this early the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* tradition.

⁶⁶ *Dainihon Bukkyō Zensho* 大日本佛教全書, v. 50, 2040-44.

Method of Bestowing Drink and Food. The Shingon tradition appears to have maintained to this day this basic structure and content for its ghost-feeding rites.⁶⁷

In the case of Chinese Buddhism, the development of ghost-feeding rites takes several different avenues leading to the production of at least three different but closely related traditions – the *Shuilu*, *Mengshan* and *Yuqie yankou*. Whereas the *Shuilu* probably developed independent of or perhaps even in competition with the ritual tradition represented by the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*, the *Yuqie yankou* clearly owes its core-character to the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*. If we try to conceptualize these two separate developments within the rubric of the esoteric Buddhism, the *Yuqie yankou* development represents a move towards esotericizing the ghost-feeding rite whereas the *Shuilu* marks a move away from any further esotericizing of the rite. The *Mengshan* rite can in turn be placed somewhere mid-point between the two ends of the *Shuilu* and *Yuqie yankou*.⁶⁸

Seeds of the Yuqie yankou Ritual Tradition – Sūtra of the Flaming-Mouth Liturgy, the Collected Essentials of the Yoga of the Dhāraṇī that Saved Ānanda (Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra)

Although I have argued that the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* is the earliest prototype for later *Yuqie yankou* liturgical texts, I have to add that the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* is still lacking in some of the more important ritual elements that came to characterize the later *Yuqie yankou* rites. I will give a close reading and detailed analysis of these elements in *Chapter Five*. But at this point, the significance of

⁶⁷ The contemporary Shingon food-bestowal liturgy translated by Richard Payne is almost identical to Kakuzen's liturgy. See Payne, 162-65.

⁶⁸ The case of the *Mengshan* rite will be treated in *Chapter Five*.

the term “*yuqie*” 瑜伽 in the compound-title of “*Yuqie yankou*” 瑜伽餓口 needs to be explored. It is perhaps not an exaggeration to state that the ghost-feeding rite first taught in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* and later elaborated in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* and the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* underwent an important transformation when it started to be referred to as a *yuqie* rite. “*Yuqie*” (or *yoga*) is used in the Chinese canon in the context of two radically different and unrelated corpuses of texts – the non-esoteric, exegetical texts of the Yogācāra tradition and a wide range of texts of the esoteric type.⁶⁹ Among esoteric texts with “*yuqie*” in their titles, we can further divide them into two distinctive groups. The first and numerically larger group consists of texts from the *Vajraśekhara* (*Jingangding* 金剛頂) cycle of teachings and practices while the second group consists of texts not directly related to the *Vajraśekhara*.⁷⁰ In the context of the ghost-feeding texts that I am investigating for this study, none of the earliest texts – the *Burning-Face Sūtra*, the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*, the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*, T1316 and T1317 (and also the Japanese ghost-feeding texts from this early period) have the word *yuqie* either in their titles or contents. Thus, we can safely surmise that even after a ritual tradition has formed around the narrative texts of the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* (i.e. the production of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*); ghost-feeding rites have yet to be associated with the term *yuqie*. With the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*, suddenly have

⁶⁹ There are four Yogācāra texts in the Taishō edition of the canon (excluding the titles listed in vol. 85): T1579 – *The Yogasiddhi Treatise* (*Yuqie shidi lun*, 瑜伽師地論), T1580 – *The Commentary on the Yogasiddhi Treatise* (*Yuqie shidi lunshi*, 瑜伽師地論釋), T1828 – *Record of the Yogasiddhi Treatise* (*Yuqie lun ji*, 瑜伽論記) and T1829 – *A Brief Compilation of the Yogasiddhi Treatise* (*Yuqie shidi lun lue* 瑜伽師地論略纂) that have the word *yuqie* in their titles.

⁷⁰ There are thirty-four texts that belong to the *Vajraśekhara* corpus and twenty-one in the non-*Vajraśekhara* group.

the term “*yuqie*” attached to a ghost-feeding liturgy. Although the association of ghost-feeding rites with the term *yuqie* can be considered evidence that there were some efforts to incorporate ghost-feeding rites into the main esoteric traditions derived from the *Vajraśekhara* cycle of *sūtras* and thus grant the ghost-feeding rites both a larger and more prestigious ritual context, available *Yuqie yankou* texts do not make this connection. Instead, in the commentaries that are available, the term *yuqie* is consistently glossed over as the practice of the “mutual correspondence of the three actions.”⁷¹ This understanding of *yuqie* as referring to rituals based on the “mutual correspondence of the three actions” is the most commonly held understanding found in the *Yuqie yankou* texts from the seventeenth century on. At the same time, we also cannot ignore the fact that the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* was produced long before the seventeenth century. Was there perhaps some connections being drawn then between ghost-feeding rites and the *Vajraśekhara* traditions during the earlier life of these rites? To answer this question, it is important that we now consider the historical and ritual dimensions of the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*.

An Analysis of Origins and Contents of the Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra

As mentioned earlier, the translation of the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* is traditionally attributed to Amoghavajra. This attribution is however, problematic, and has been challenged by modern scholars. The edition of the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy*

⁷¹ The “three actions” are the mental, verbal and physical actions. See, Zhuhong’s preface to his *Yuqie jiyao shishi yigui* 瑜伽集要施食儀軌, XZJ104.795. There is, however, a Qing dynasty text that explicitly locates the *Yuqie yankou* within the larger *Vajraśekhara* corpus and tradition. See *Yuqie yankou zhuji cuan yao yigui* 瑜伽餵口註集纂要儀軌 in XZJ104.935a.

Sūtra in the Taishō canon comes from the *Qisha* 磧砂 canon completed in the year 1321.⁷² According to the footnotes in the Taishō entry for the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*, it cannot, however, be found in the Korean and other Song and Yuan canons.⁷³ In his study of Tang dynasty esoteric Buddhist traditions, Osabe Kazuo 長部和雄 argues that the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* cannot be attributed to Amoghavajra. In particular, Osabe considers the presence of what he considered Confucian and Daoist elements in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* to be indicative of the late origins of the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*. For Osabe, the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* might have even been composed as late as the Ming.⁷⁴ His speculation on the Ming origins of the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* is largely based on the presence of what he considered the Confucian and Daoist elements in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*. According to Osabe's understanding of the development of Chinese Buddhism, it was not until the late imperial period of Chinese history that Chinese Buddhism became entrenched and possibly "mixed" with Confucian and Daoist elements, thus losing the "purity" that it purportedly had in the Sui and especially Tang eras. Since Osabe's publication of *Todai mikkyō shi zakko* (唐代密教史雜考) in 1971 where he assigned the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* to possibly as late as the Ming period, a text identical to the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* has been found among the famous Fangshan stone-carved *sūtras*

⁷² *Ershiwu zhong zangjing mulu tuizhao kaoshi*, ed. Cai Yunchen (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chupan, 1983), 151. For brief discussions of the history of the *Qisha* canon and its contents, see *Foguang Dictionary*, 1006c-1007b and *Ershiwu*, 487-493.

⁷³ T1318:21.468, n22.

⁷⁴ Osabe Kazuo, *Tōdai mikkyō zakko* (Kobe: Kobe Shoka Daigaku Gakujutsu Kenkyukai, 1971), 155-56.

(*Fangshan shijing* 房山石經).⁷⁵ Although the stone-carvings at Fangshan began in the seventh century and continued down to the Ming dynasty, the majority of the carvings were actually done in the Tang, Jin and Liao dynasties. The Fangshan version of the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* was in fact discovered in the section of the stone-carvings completed in Jin dynasty 金 (1115-1234).⁷⁶ Hence, we can be certain that although the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* is absent in the Korean, Song and Yuan canons it was already in circulation as early as the twelfth century as evidenced by the Jin-period carving of the text and the inclusion of the text in the *Qisha* canon completed in 1321.

Structurally speaking, the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* is a text that consists of a narrative section followed by a liturgical section. Unlike the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*, the liturgical section in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* is much more developed and complex and can actually be used as a ritual manual. The first half of the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* consists of the same narrative of the origins of ghost-feeding rites (i.e. Ānanda's encounter with Flaming-mouth) coupled with some important new material not found in earlier ghost-feeding texts such as the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* and the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*. This new material includes the framing of the practice of ghost-feeding within standard Mahāyāna rhetoric of universal liberation of all sentient beings, the insistence now that the performers of ghost-feeding rites have to be properly initiated into esoteric practice by a qualified *ācārya* and the instructions for the construction of a special altar or

⁷⁵ The catalogue for the entire collection of texts at Fangshan was not published until 1981.

⁷⁶ See *Fangshan shijing*, v. 27, 487-492.

platform (known as the “Samaya-platform” [*Sanmeiye tan* 三昧耶壇]) for the performance of the ghost-feeding rite.⁷⁷ A careful reading of the narrative part of the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* shows that it follows closely the narrative given in the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* – there are in fact enough identical phrases between the two texts to conclude that the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* was composed based on the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*. On the other hand, there is at least one instance in the narrative section where the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* differs from the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*. Although seemingly minor, the difference here alerts us to a shift in the understanding of the identity of the hungry ghost Flaming-mouth. Whereas there is nothing in the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* to suggest that Flaming-mouth might be more than a hungry-ghost seeking Ānanda’s assistance, the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* has Ānanda addressing Flaming-mouth as “Great *Shi*” (*dashi* 大士), a term often used in reference to bodhisattvas.⁷⁸ The addressing of Flaming-mouth as a bodhisattva in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* is the earliest hint of the transformation of Flaming-mouth from being a mere hungry ghost in distress to being a manifestation of the compassionate Guanyin in later *Yuqie yankou* texts. In fact, the epithet “Great *Shi*” eventually becomes an epithet exclusively used for Guanyin.⁷⁹ It is unclear how Flaming-mouth eventually becomes identified with Guanyin but the *Kāraṇḍavyūha sūtra* translated into Chinese in 983 contains the motif of Guanyin emptying the hell and hungry ghost realms.⁸⁰ Interestingly, in the fourteenth century *Bardo thos grol*, the so-called “Tibetan Book of

⁷⁷ T1318:21.468c-470a.

⁷⁸ “*Dashi*” is often used to translate “*mahāsattva*.”

⁷⁹ Private communication with Dan Stevenson.

⁸⁰ T1050:20.48b.

the Dead,” the Buddha who appears in the realm of hungry ghosts is actually identified as Jvalamukha.⁸¹ He is one of the six Buddhas whom Avalokiteśvara is believed to manifest in the Six Realms to aid the beings in each of these realms.⁸² Once again, we find a Tibetan connection with the *Yuqie yankou*, in this case, in the gradual transformation of Flaming-mouth from a mere hungry-ghost, to a “ghost-king,” to a “Great *Shi*” and finally to being Guanyin.⁸³

While most of the ghost-feeding texts up until the production of the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* only indirectly placed themselves in the category of the esoteric teachings, the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* is the first ghost-feeding text to explicitly situate itself in the mainstream esoteric traditions in East Asia, traditions anchored on the *Mahāvairocana sūtra* and *Vajraśekhara sūtra*. Unlike shorter and simpler esoteric texts such as the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*, the more developed esoteric texts such as the *Mahāvairocana*, *Vajraśekhara* and *Susiddhi* set forth (or become sources for the production of) systems of Buddhist practice that operate within larger and more complex doctrinal and ritual spheres. One of the most important rites within these standard esoteric traditions is the conferment of empowerment or *abhiṣeka* (*guanding* 灌頂) by a qualified esoteric master (*ācārya*) on students of these

⁸¹ Karma gling pa, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, trans. Robert Thurman (New York: Bantam Books, 1994), 142.

⁸² The idea of Guanyin appearing in the six realms to liberate beings is, however, known in China since the translation of the *Qing guanshiyin pusa xiaofu duhai tuoluoni zhou jing* (請觀世音菩薩消伏毒害陀羅尼呪經, T1043:20.34b-37c) in the fourth century C.E. Several lists of the six Guanyins are known in East Asia (one found in the *Mohe zhiguan* by Zhiyi and another used by the Shingon sect in Japan) but none of them includes a Jvalamukha.

⁸³ The history of the gradual transformation of Burning-face from a mere hungry ghost to being a manifestation of Guanyin needs further investigation as Burning-face has become about the only “wrathful” form of Guanyin that survives to this day in the religious imagination of Chinese Buddhists. Even in the most recent publication on Guanyin – Yu Chun-fang’s encyclopedic study of Guanyin – Burning-face as a wrathful form of Guanyin is merely mentioned in passing, without any hint of the complexity of this transformation. See, Yu, *Kuan-yin*, 325.

esoteric traditions thus authorizing the acolytes to practice the esoteric teachings and eventually to teach them to others. The *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*, in an attempt to link itself to the larger esoteric systems, asserts that those who practice the ghost-feeding rites inspired by the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* should be properly initiated into the esoteric teachings by a qualified esoteric master through the conferment of an empowerment. Thus we read in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*:

The Buddha told Ānanda, “If one desires to receive and uphold this Method of Bestowing Drink and Food, one should rely on the method of the *acārya* of the Subtle and Deep Samādhi of Yoga. Those who are happy to practice (this method) should learn from the *acārya* of Yoga (*yuqie aduli* 瑜伽阿闍梨), the generation of the unsurpassed, great Bodhi-mind, receive the Samaya-precepts and enter the Great Maṇḍala to receive empowerment (*ru manduoluo de guanding* 入大曼拏羅得灌頂).”⁸⁴

What this passage indicates is an attempt by the author(s) of the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* to place itself within the mainstream esoteric tradition by insisting that only those who have been initiated into the esoteric teachings by a qualified teacher should practice the ghost-feeding rite. It further warns of the negative consequences of not adhering to its stipulations: calamities and misfortunes will visit upon an offender and the rite will fail to produce any good. As mentioned earlier, ghost-feeding rites that pre-date *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* do not explicitly situate themselves in the rubric of the esoteric teachings. Neither do they insist that their performers be among the ranks of those properly initiated through admittance into an esoteric *maṇḍala*. In fact, there is evidence that ghost-feeding rites that were brought to Japan (and the rites that subsequently developed there) were considered by some as “non-esoteric,” albeit not to

⁸⁴ T1318:21.469b.

be performed by beginners.⁸⁵ Similarly, in Song Tiantai practice, ordinary clerics and even laity were encouraged to perform ghost-feeding rites without any emphasis on the importance of esoteric empowerment as the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* would have it.⁸⁶ The *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*'s new stance might also mean that it was composed by an advocate of the esoteric teachings and presumably someone who has received *abhiṣeka* into the esoteric practices and can in turn initiate others.

After giving instructions on the construction of an altar where the ghost-feeding rite should be performed – a so-called Samaya-platform installed with icons of the deities Foding 佛頂 (“Buddha’s Protuberance”) in the north-eastern side of the altar, Dabei 大悲 (“Great Compassion”) in the south-eastern side, Suiqiu 隨求 (“As-Wished-For”) on the south-western side and Zunsheng 尊勝 (“Honored Victory”) on the north-western side – and providing details on the preparation of various types of offerings such as scented-water, flowers, lamps, sandalwood paste, various types of food, and music, the liturgical section of the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* begins.⁸⁷ Following Zhou Shujia’s analysis, the liturgy in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* can be divided into the following sections (based on the individual spells recited): 1) “Breaking the Earth-prisons Spell,” 2) “Summoning the Hungry Ghosts Spell,” 3) “Summoning Offenses Spell,” 4) “Eradicating Offenses Spell,” 5) “Fixed-Karma Spell,” 6) “Repentance Spell,” 7) “Bestowing Ambrosia Spell,” 8) “Opening Throats Spell,” 9)

⁸⁵ This point is mentioned in the *Asabasho* compiled by the Tendai cleric Shocho between the years 1242 and 1281. I am indebted to Dan Stevenson for alerting me to this source. See, *Dainihon Bukkyō zensho*, v. 40, 2336.

⁸⁶ Dan Stevenson, “Protocols of Power,” 366.

⁸⁷ T1318:21.469c-470a.

names of Seven Tathāgatas, 10) “Generating Bodhi-mind Spell,” 11) Samaya-Precepts Spell, 12) “Bestowing Food Spell,” 13) “Milk-Ocean Spell,” 14) “Universal-Offering Spell” and 15) “Send-Off Spell.”⁸⁸ It should be noted that the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* is composed of not only a sequence of spells (as in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*) but also has sections in verse and prose forms addressed directly to the hungry ghosts and other ghostly guests invited to the rite. This shift towards an increase in the verse and prose sections in ghost-feeding rites continued through to the last recension of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy edited by Shengxing in the Qing. In Shengxing’s recension of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy (which is used to this day), the verse and prose sections take up almost eighty percent of the entire liturgy. The increase in the verse and prose sections are important to the evolution of the ghost-feeding rites from being a minor, simple and private rite to being one of the most public, complex, rich and colorful rite that Chinese Buddhism has to offer.

A comparison between the lists of spells in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* and the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* immediately reveals an obvious increase in spells. Whereas the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* has nine spells, the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* has a total of fifteen. Only three spells overlap between the two texts – the “Ambrosia Dhāraṇī,” the “Single-Character/Milk Ocean Spell” and the “Send-Off Spell.” What is perhaps most ironic here is the fact that the main ghost-feeding *dhāraṇī* used in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* is different from the *dhāraṇī* given in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* (which is taken directly from

⁸⁸ Zhou Shujia, “Yankou” in *Zhongguo fojiao* 2, ed. Zhongguo fojian xuehui (Beijing: Zhihshi chupanshe, 1981), 398-98.

the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*). Instead, the food-bestowal *dhāraṇī* in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* is given as: OM SARVA TATHĀGATĀVALOKITE VAṂ BHARA BHARA SAMBHARA SAMBHARA HŪṂ. Neither the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* nor later liturgies that adopt this variant spell explains the origins of this variant spell. Later commentaries on the *Yuqie yankou* liturgies that use this new variant spell instead of the spell originally found in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* are similarly silent about this change. Was there perhaps another source that came from India later on to affect this change? Unfortunately, at this stage of my research I have not been able to locate any evidence of such a source. It is however, interesting to me, that this variant spell does appear in at least one Tibetan source. In PT350, an “abridged manual of liturgy”⁸⁹ found in Dunhuang, there is a description of a rite of offering *gtor-ma* which involves the recitation of the following spell: NAMAḤ SARVATATHĀGATĀNAMAḤ AVALOKITA VILOKITA BHARA BHARA SAM BHARA BAM BHARA HŪṂ.⁹⁰ Unfortunately, PT350 does not provide the source of this spell. But as we have noted earlier, the spell in the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*/Tōh646, is commonly used for the empowering of *gtor-ma* that are to be offered to ghosts and local spirits. This variant spell in PT350 is apparently also used for empowering *gtor-ma* offerings but in the context of *stūpa* worship.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Cristina Anna Scherrer-Schaub, “Some Dhāraṇī Written on Paper Functioning as Dharmakāya Relics, A Tentative Approach to PT350” in Per Kvaerne, ed., *Tibetan Studies, Proceedings of the Sixth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*, (Oslo: The Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, 1994), 719.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 713. The Sanskrit spell given here was reconstructed by Scherrer-Schaub based on the Tibetan transcription found in PT350 which is given as: na.ma.sa.rba.ta.thā.ga.tā.nan/ a.pa.li/ki.ta/bi.lo.ki.ta/ bha ra.bha ra/ sam.bha ra.bam. bha ra. hūm//. Ibid., 711.

⁹¹ Ibid., 714.

We should note that the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* not only adds new spells to the rite and expand the older ritual structure of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*, but it also re-arranges the sequence of the rite to perhaps conform to a certain “ritual logic” operative in this new rite. The following is a parallel listing of the ritual acts and their ordering in the two separate liturgies:

<u><i>The Method of Bestowing Drink and Food</i></u>	<u><i>The Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra</i></u>
1) Universally Gathering	1) Breaking the Earth-Prisons (cf. 2)
2) Opening the Gates of the Earth-Prisons and Throats (cf. 8)	2) Summoning the Hungry Ghosts (cf. 1)
	3) Summoning Offenses
	4) Eradicating Offenses
	5) Purifying (Fixed) Karma
	6) Repentance
3) Bestowing Food (cf. 12)	7) Bestowing Ambrosia
4) Bestowing Ambrosia	8) Opening Throats (cf. 2)
5) Single-Character (cf. 14)	9) Names of Seven Buddhas
6) Names of Five Buddhas	10) Taking Refuge
	11) Generating Bodhi-Mind
7) Samaya-Precepts	12) Samaya-Precepts
	13) Bestowing Food (cf. 3)
	14) Single-Character (cf. 5)
	15) Universal Offering
8) Send-Off	16) Send-Off

In my earlier analysis of the rite of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*, I identified four main sections in the rite – i) the summoning and gathering of the beneficiaries of the food-bestowal, ii) the actual food-bestowal, iii) the transmission of the Samaya-Precepts and finally, iv) the send-off. The *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* retains these four sections while adding a new section to the rite – the section on the ritual

summoning and eradication of negative karma. Furthermore, although the four sections in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* are retained in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*, the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* does not simply replicate the relevant sections in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* but instead rearranges the sequence and expands on the structure of each section with the exception of the last). Also, as pointed out earlier, the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* includes some new prose and verse sections to the rite as well. Like the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*, the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* begins with a verse section but unlike the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*, the opening in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* is very clear that this opening invocation is addressed to the enlightened beings and not to the ghostly beneficiaries of the rite. Accordingly, after one has constructed the Samaya-platform for the rite and prepared the adornments and offerings, one is instructed to proceed to the external of the Samaya-platform, make three prostrations and face the eastern direction. Then, kneeling in the “Indian-way”⁹² and holding a censer, one should recite the following “Announcement and Invitation”:

Announcing to all Buddhas
 Of the ten directions
 To all wisdom-bodhisattvas
 Vajra-deities and gods
 And the immeasurable sages and worthies
 Those of the various karmic paths⁹³
 Now, I and all in this assembly
 Due to the great compassion (of the Buddhas)
 And taking advantage of the spiritual power of the Buddhas
 Will summon and invite all hungry ghosts

⁹² *Hugui* 胡跪, T.1318:21.470a. The “Indian way” of kneeling involves the left leg bent with foot on the ground while the right knee is on the ground.

⁹³ *Yedao* 業道, *ibid.* In this context, it seems to refer to the practice of both the ten virtuous karmas and the ten non-virtuous karmas.

Of the ten directions
 Pervading throughout the realm of empty-space
 Those from the three lower realms and the earth-prisons
 Dwelling in the midst of various evil destinies
 In famished places for a long time
 Yamas and various officials
 Officials of the other world and the purgatories
 Judges of the karmic paths
 Brahman seers
 And those who have died – both long time ago and recently
 Wild and fierce spirits
 Various gods (inhabiting) empty space
 And all their retinues
 Different types of ghosts and spirits
 May all Buddhas
 Wisdom-bodhisattvas
Vajra-deities and gods
 The innumerable sages and worthies
 And those of the various karmic paths
 Bestow their awesome light
 Compassionately increase their protection and bear us in mind
 May the officials of the other world and purgatories
 Judges of the karmic paths
 Innumerable hungry-ghosts
 Fathers and mothers of many past lives
 Those who recently died and those who died long time ago
 Brahman-seers
 All those oppressed ones –
 Lacking in wealth and lifespan
 All the different classes
 Of ghosts and spirits
 And their respective retinues
 In the ten directions
 To the limit of the realm of empty-space
 Rely on the power of the Tathāgatas
 To receive the profound Dharma-flavor
 Of the pure and clear ambrosia
 (And thus be) complete with drink and food
 Which nourish the field of the body,
 And blessings, virtue, knowledge and wisdom.
 Generate the Bodhi-mind
 And forever depart from heterodox practices.
 Respecting and taking refuge in the Three Jewels

And practice great benevolence and compassion
 Benefit sentient beings
 And seek the Unsurpassed Bodhi
 Not undergoing (future) rebirths in
 The various evil destinies and fruits
 Continuously be born in virtuous families
 And be distanced from the dreadful
 Body, speech and mind – continuously pure and clear
 Attaining the Unsurpassed Bodhi.

Having completed three recitations of this prayer, the performer visualizes offerings of incense, flowers, lamps, and sandalwood paste offered to the enlightened beings and prays that they compassionately arrive at the ritual space and give blessings. Once again, the performer makes three prostrations and then “lead the sagely hosts into the altar-platform (*tan* 壇).” After entering the ritual space, the performer again makes a series of offerings and prostrations to the enlightened beings and confesses his or her past negative deeds as a means of purification. Only after these preliminaries have been successfully completed can the rite begin. Whereas the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* begins with the “Universal Gathering Spell” followed by the “Opening the Gates of the Earth-Prisons and Throats Spell,” the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* re-arranges the spells so that “Breaking the Earth-Prisons Spell” is recited first, followed by “Summoning the Hungry Ghosts Spell.” This almost seems like a more logical sequence to adopt – to first break open the earth-prisons where the ghosts are detained and then to invite or summon them to the ritual space. We can conjecture that the composer(s) of the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* also recognized this argument and therefore reversed the earlier sequence found in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*. This re-arrangement of ritual sequences alerts us to the instability of liturgies and

rituals. Although liturgical traditions often present and re-present themselves as vestiges of an unchanging, fixed past, in actual practice liturgies are often contested fields of discourse. Perhaps the very unstable and constantly-shifting nature of liturgies and ritual-traditions is that which necessitates the self-representation of ritual-traditions and liturgies as unchanging and unchangeable traditions to be faithfully and carefully protected and preserved.

The next section in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* is a previously unknown section (in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*). This section consists of four different spells accompanied by four corresponding *mudrās*. The first spell is the “Summoning Offenses Spell” (*Zhaozui zhenyan* 召罪真言) which is recited to ritually gather together all the karmic-offenses of the beneficiaries so that they can be eradicated or destroyed with the next set of spell and *mudrā* that follows – the “Eradicating Offenses” (*Cuizui zhenyan* 摧罪真言). After ordinary negative karma has been destroyed, another set of spell and *mudrā* (the “Fixed-Karma *Mudrā*” [*Dingye yin* 定業印] and “Purifying-Karma Spell” [*Jingye zhenyan* 淨業真言]) is employed to destroy “fixed” or “inalterable” type of karma.⁹⁴ However, this ritual act in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* unambiguously declares that with the correct esoteric technique involving spells and *mudrās*, anything is possible! Finally, the “Repentance Spell” (*Chanhui zhenyan* 懺悔真言) is recited to completely purify the negative karma of all the beings gathered at the ritual space. This section concludes with the following quatrain:

⁹⁴ T1318:21.470b.

The offenses that have accumulated over hundreds of *kalpas*
 In one thought they are overturned and swept away
 Like fire burning dried grass
 Destroying completely without any remainder.⁹⁵

Following the repentance is the recitation of the “Ambrosia Dhāraṇī” accompanied with a *mudrā* that includes the snapping of the left thumb and fore-finger after each of the seven recitations of the *dhāraṇī*. During this recitation, the performer is to visualize ambrosia flowing out from a VAM syllable hovering above his two middle-fingers. This ambrosia cools and purifies all the hungry ghosts and other ghosts and spirits.⁹⁶ The transliteration for the “Ambrosia Dhāraṇī” in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*⁹⁷ is different from the one used in earlier related texts such as the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*, T1316 and also from later texts such as the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* and *Yuqie yankou, Mengshan* and *Shuilu* texts. The transliteration used for this *dhāraṇī* appears to combine the transliterations used in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* and T1316. The next set of spell, *mudrā* and visualization aims at “opening the throats” of hungry ghosts so that they can receive the food that will be offered to them later in the rite. Although the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* appears to have a corresponding section for opening the throats of the ghosts, referring to it as “Opening the Gates of the Earth-Prisons and Throats” (*Kai diyumen ji yanhou zhou* 開地獄門及咽喉呪), the spell here in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* is different from that given in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*.

⁹⁵ T1318:21.470c.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

The next section in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* is yet another new development in the history of ghost-feeding rites. As I have pointed out earlier in this chapter, the earliest ghost-feeding text, i.e. the *Burning-Face Sūtra*, contains only one spell to be recited. When the *sūtra* was translated again about half a century later, other spells containing the names of the four Buddhas were added. Thereafter, in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* the spell of a fifth Buddha appeared. Finally, in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*, the list of Buddhas and their spells expand to seven. These seven Buddhas and their spells is the result of more than just a simple addition of two new Buddhas to the five already found in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*. Whereas the original list of four in the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* are Duobao, Miaoseshen, Guangboshen and Libuwei and the five in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* are Baosheng, Miaoseshen, Ganluwang, Guangboshen and Libuwei, the seven in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* are Baosheng, Libuwei, Guangboshen, Miaoseshen, Duobao, Amituo and Shijian guangda weide zizai guangming 世間廣大威德自在光明.

⁹⁸ If Baosheng is simply an alternative translation for Duobao – as the substitution of Duobao with Baosheng in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* seems to suggest, the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*'s list of seven Buddhas is apparently ignorant of this identity or inter-changeability as its list of seven Buddhas includes both Baosheng and Duobao. Thus, if we resist from viewing the inclusion of both Baosheng and Duobao in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* as a scribal mistake due to carelessness or ignorance,

⁹⁸ T1318:21.471a. This particular list of seven Buddhas unique to the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* and subsequently preserved in all later *Yuqie yankou* liturgies is also found in Japan in Shōcho's collection of ritual-manuals, *Asabasho* under the entry for "Meidō ku" 冥道供. In this rite, the seven Buddhas listed in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* are rendered homage, along with a host of bodhisattvas and other deities. See *Asabasho* (*Dainihon Bukkyō zensho*, vol. 40:2282a-b).

we then have to accept that the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* considers Baosheng and Duobao as two separate Buddhas. In fact, in the later *Yuqie yankou* liturgical texts, these two names are clearly treated as names of two separate Buddhas. Thus, once this precedent was set in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*, it was replicated in the later *Yuqie yankou* texts such as the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* and in the liturgy performed today. Both liturgies give the transliteration of the Sanskrit originals of Baosheng as “Luodan’na danluoye” 囉怛訥怛囉耶 (Skt. *ratnatraya*) and of Duobao as “Bohuluo dan’na ye” 波虎囉怛納耶 (Skt. *prabhūratnaya*). Furthermore, instead of Ganluwang, the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* lists Amituo.⁹⁹ This is relatively less problematic as both Ganluwang and Amituo are generally considered cognates of each other. Finally, the last Buddha added to the list of names of Buddhas recited in ghost-feeding texts is Shijian guangda weide zizai guangming. According to the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*, this is the Buddha from whom Śākyamuni, while still a bodhisattva in one of his previous lifetimes, first heard of the rite of multiplying food and drink through the utterance of a special spell.¹⁰⁰

Conversion of Ghosts through the Transmission of Precepts

While the transmission of precepts in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* consists of the recitation of a single spell which results in the conferment of the so-called “Samaya-precepts,” the parallel section in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* is a much

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ T1313:21.464c, T1314:21.466a.

more well-developed ritual sequence that reflects a more sophisticated understanding of the relationship of the “Samaya-precepts” to the other precepts or vows in Buddhism. In general, “Samaya-precepts” are only mentioned in the esoteric teachings. They are also known as the “Esoteric Samaya-precepts” (*Pimi sanmeiye jie* 秘密三昧耶戒), “Buddha-nature Samaya-precepts” (*Foxing sanmeiye jie* 佛性三昧耶戒), “Esoteric-precepts” (*Pimi jie* 秘密戒) and “Three-worlds Without Obscurations Wisdom-precepts” (*Sanjie wuzhang'ai zhi jie* 三界無障礙智戒). The “innately present pure Bodhi-mind” (*benyou zi jing putixin* 本有之淨菩提心) is the essence of the Samaya-precepts while the “immeasurable, tens of thousands of virtues of the Dharma-realm” (*fajie wuliang wande* 法界無量功德) form the practices contained within these precepts.¹⁰¹

As taught in the non-liturgical part of the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*, these Samaya-precepts should be received prior to one’s admission into the esoteric *maṇḍala* and initiation into esoteric practices.¹⁰² This is consonant with the normative view of Tang dynasty esoteric savants such as Śubhākarasiṃha, Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra and those who claim spiritual descent from them. According to these teachers and their traditions, the Samaya-precepts are only conferred on students who have taken refuge in the Three Jewels and generated the Mahāyāna altruistic motivation, i.e. the Bodhi-mind. The *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* similarly asserts this. Consequently, unlike the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* which simply transmits the Samaya-precepts to the

¹⁰¹ *Foguang Dictionary*, 583a.

¹⁰² T1318:21.469b.

hungry ghosts immediately after being fed the ambrosial-food, the liturgy in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* first administers the Three Refuges to the ghosts, followed by generation of the Bodhi-mind on behalf of the ghosts and finally the transmission of the Samaya-precepts to them.¹⁰³ It is also worth pointing out again that unlike the earlier the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*, the section on the transmission of precepts in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* comes after the section on the ritual confession of offenses resulting in the eradication and purification of negative karma.¹⁰⁴ This ritual-sequence conforms to that found in normative transmission of precepts rites such as when lay Buddhists receive the five lay precepts or when monastic candidates receive their monastic precepts. The *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* can be seen as an example of a re-working and re-editing of an earlier rite under the hands of a liturgist intent on fitting the rite within a larger and more developed esoteric liturgical context.

After administering the precepts to the ghostly guests – thus transforming these ghosts from their miserable and pitiful and at the same time dangerous and uncontrolled state into the state of “true sons of the Buddhas, miraculously born of the Dharma” (*shi zhenfozi congfa huasheng* 是真佛子從法化生) – the feast can begin.¹⁰⁵ The theme of controlling and transforming followed by feeding and nourishing is common to other Chinese Buddhist rites such as the *Shuilu* and *Mengshan*. This same theme also appears to underlie the *Offering to All Gods* (*Gongzhutian* 供諸天) rite (developed and promoted by Tiantai monks inspired by the *Jinguangming jing/Suvarnaprabhāsa sūtra/Golden*

¹⁰³ T1318:21.471b.

¹⁰⁴ T1318: 21.470b-c.

¹⁰⁵ T1318:21.471b.

Light) normally held for the presentation of offerings to gods and spirits ranging from Indian deities such as Śrī, Bhūdevī, Śakra, Skanda and Sarasvatī – all re-contextualized as deities who have pledged to protect the Buddhist religion and its followers – to local, indigenous Chinese gods and spirits. Stevenson writes:

...the Golden Light liturgy – even when performed as an offering to the gods (*kung-t'ien*) – is not purely a rite of offering per se. The emphasis is on confession and the renewal of oaths of allegiance to and before the Three Jewels, with the presentation of food as a ceremonial pretext for sealing the bond.... Hence the rite devolves not simply as a Buddhist surrogate for feasts of celebration for the community gods but as a combined ceremony of conversion and cosmic renewal, in which indigenous gods and human community alike are pledged anew to the Buddhist dharma.¹⁰⁶

Thus, the feast and banquet – whether offered to hungry ghosts and orphaned-souls or to higher gods and spirits – is always a “pretext.” To be fed or nourished by the Buddhas’ ambrosial-food, one has to first relinquish one’s present state through confession, conversion and commitment. Whether god, ghost or ancestor, Indian or Chinese, one has to leave behind such identities and be re-positioned within a Buddhist universe. As Stevenson noted, embedded within these rites is the Buddhist hegemonic enterprise of conversion and control through re-ordering and re-positioning based on Buddhist principles. We will take a closer look later in this chapter at this hegemonic enterprise within the context of the Tiantai ghost-feeding rites in the Song.

In order to feed all the ghosts turned “sons of the Buddhas,” the ordinary, finite food offerings prepared for the rite has to be magically multiplied and magnified into a vast quantity of the best flavors in existence. As in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and*

¹⁰⁶ Daniel L. Stevenson, “Protocols of Power: Tz’u-yün Tsun-shih (964-1032) and Tien-t’ai Lay Buddhist Ritual in the Sung” in *Buddhism in the Sung*, ed. Peter N. Gregory and Daniel A. Getz, Jr. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 377-8. This same theme seems to underlie the Daoist *jiao* rites.

Food, this is done by reciting the food-bestowal spell so that food piled up as high “as Mount Sumeru and equal in measure to the Dharma-realm” is produced.¹⁰⁷ But as noted earlier, the spell given in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* is different from that in either the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* or the *Burning-Face Sūtra*. Instead of “NAMAḤ SARVA TATHĀGATĀVALOKITE OM SAMBHARA SAMBHARA HŪṂ” the spell has now turned into “Oó SARVA TATHĀGATĀVALOKITE VAM BHARA BHARA SAMBHARA SAMBHARA HŪṂ.”¹⁰⁸ This variant spell, turning up for the first time, will endure into later *Yuqie yankou* liturgical-texts such as the Yuan period *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*, Zhuhong’s influential text in the Ming and all later Ming and Qing *Yuqie yankou* texts based on Zhuhong’s 1606 recension.¹⁰⁹ It is worth pointing out that the original spell given in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* is, however, preserved in the *Shuilu*, *Mengshan* and other minor ghost-feeding texts and practices in China. It is also the version used in the ghost-feeding texts and traditions of Korea and Japan. Although *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* is effectively the first time a variant food-bestowal spell surfaced, the compiler/composer of *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* makes no comment or justification for it. Furthermore, as pointed out earlier, among those who composed commentaries on the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy, neither Zhuhong nor the much later Yanji appear to notice or care to point out the difference between the food-bestowal spell they were reciting and the spell given in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*.

¹⁰⁷ T1318:21.471b.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ XZJ104.820b, XZJ104.925b, XZJ104.974b, and Kamata, 861b.

The food-bestowal spell is followed by three spells – the “Single-Character Spell” (already included in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*), a “Universal Offering Spell” (*Pu gongyang zhou* 普供養咒) and the final “Vajra Liberation Spell” (*Jingang jietuo zhenyan* 金剛解脫真言), [identified as “Liberation Spell,” *Jietuo zhenyan* 解脫真言 in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*].¹¹⁰ The “Universal Offering Spell” – makes its debut appearance in ghost-feeding rites and it becomes one of three spells that can be found in many ghost-feeding rites (the other two spells are the spell from the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* itself and the “Ambrosia Dhāraṇī.” With the recitation of the “Send-Off Spell,” the liturgical section in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* is complete. The *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* then reverts back to the narrative-text that frames the liturgical-text just presented and analyzed. Predictably, at the conclusion of the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*, the Buddha praises the benefits and merits of the ghost-feeding rite and exhorts Ānanda to promote this rite for the benefit of all beings.¹¹¹

Tiantai Ghost-Feeding Texts – An Alternative Tradition

Apart from the liturgical texts that we have been discussing thus far, there is yet a different corpus of ghost-feeding texts that developed concurrently with the texts we have examined. While we do not know the exact identity of the authors/compiler of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* and the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* (even

¹¹⁰ T1318:21.471b-472a.

¹¹¹ T1318:21.472b.

though I believe they probably belong to Amoghavajra's lineage), this other corpus of ghost-feeding texts was generated by the Tiantai community in the Song. I have argued in *Chapter One* that the advent of esoteric teachings and practices in China preceded the arrival of the so-called "patriarchs" of the esoteric teachings such as Śubhākarasimha, Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra. In particular, Zhiyi and his Tiantai successors were no strangers to esoteric texts and practices. Not surprisingly, a whole body of ghost-feeding texts was produced by Tiantai monks in the Song dynasty. What is surprising though is the absence of any pre-Song Tiantai ghost-feeding liturgies. Two collections of Song Tiantai ghost-feeding texts are extant – *Golden Garden Record* (*Jinyuan ji* 金園記) by Ciyun Zunshi and *Survey of Food-Bestowal Rites* by Zongxiao. To date, Daniel L. Stevenson has discussed some of these texts in relation to Zunshi's larger liturgical program.¹¹² Since Zunshi preceded Zongxiao by over a hundred years, in the next section I will first discuss Zunshi and his ghost-feeding texts.

Since Stevenson has published an article on Zunshi – his life and times and his ritual-program – I will briefly summarize Stevenson's study of Zunshi's life as an understanding of Zunshi's life and at times is essential to our appreciation of his ritual and literary contributions and in particular his role in the development of Tiantai ghost-feeding rites. Zunshi, along with Siming Zhili 四明知禮 (960-1028) is remembered as one of the most important figures in the revival of the Tiantai tradition in the Song. The infamous Huichang 會昌 persecution (842-845) of Buddhism and the chaos at the end of the Tang dealt a severe blow to Buddhism in general and in particular

¹¹² Stevenson, "Protocols of Power," 340-408.

to the Tiantai lineage. Many Tiantai texts were lost in the wars and turmoil of the age. But thanks to the sponsorship of Qian Hongchu 錢弘俶, (r.947-978), the fifth king of the Wuyue kingdom 吳越 (907-978) (covering the whole modern province of Zhejiang 浙江, south-western Jiangsu 江蘇 and north-eastern Fujian 福建), many important Tiantai texts were re-imported back to China from Silla (Korea).¹¹³ This retrieval of texts from Silla, together with the unification of China by the Song, probably provided Tiantai monks such as Zunshi and Zhili with the necessary conditions for reviving Tiantai after a period of decline.

Although Zunshi's career as a teacher covered a broad range of activities from teaching Tiantai doctrine – producing exegetical and commentarial works, seeking governmental sanction of a “Tiantai canon” and the creation of public monasteries exclusively dedicated to the teachings and practices of Tiantai, and editing and composing liturgical-texts – Zunshi's campaign against the practice of offering blood-sacrifices to local deities (especially in the Hangzhou area) is probably most significant to our present interests in Zunshi. As Stevenson observed, the honorific name “Cloud of Loving-kindness” (Ciyun) was conferred on Zunshi by the Song emperor Zhenzong 真宗, (r. 998-1022) “in part to commemorate his moral rectification of the Hang-chou (Hangzhou) populace, especially his campaigns against blood sacrifice and the taking of life.”¹¹⁴ Throughout Zunshi's career, he preached against blood sacrifices practiced by the local populace – sacrifices of meat and wine offered to gods, ghosts and

¹¹³ Huang Yi-hsun, “A Study of Yongming Yanshou's *The Profound Pivot of the Contemplation of Mind*” (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 2001), 31-2.

¹¹⁴ Stevenson, “Protocols of Power,” 341.

ancestors. Instead of such bloody rites, Zunshi promoted orthodox Buddhist rites such as the *Offering to all Gods* rite based on the *Jinguangming jing* for pleasing gods and spirits and ghost-feeding rites for the salvation and appeasement of ancestors and ghosts.¹¹⁵ He also vigorously promoted the practice of ritual-confessions thus earning him the epithet “Confessional Master” (*chanzhu* 懺主). It was within this context, that Zunshi composed all his ghost-feeding texts. Instead of engaging in the offering of sacrificed animals and alcohol, often in large quantities, people were urged by Zunshi to perform the ghost-feeding liturgies he composed. Let us now take a closer look at Zunshi’s ghost-feeding texts.

Zunshi’s *Golden Garden Record* is divided into three fascicles. Each fascicle consists of several tracts on a variety of topics related to ghost-feeding. The second fascicle contains four tracts on the subject of food-bestowal or ghost-feeding –*Rectifying the Term “Food-Bestowal”* (*Shishi zhengming* 施食正名), *Food-Bestowal Practice* (*Shishi fa* 施食法), *Food-Bestowal Liturgy* (*Shishi wen* 施食文) and *The Food-Bestowal Visualizations* (*Shishi guanxiang* 施食觀想).¹¹⁶ A fifth food-bestowal, *Food-Bestowal Rite* (*Shishi fashi* 施食法式), purportedly also authored by Zunshi is preserved in Zongxiao’s *Survey of Food-Bestowal Rites*.¹¹⁷ Finally, also in *Survey of Food-Bestowal Rites* is *Preface to the Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on the Dhāraṇī that Rescued the Flaming-Mouth Hungry Ghost* (*Foshuo jiuba yankou tuoluoni jing xu* 佛說救拔餓口陀

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 350-357.

¹¹⁶ XZJ101.231a

¹¹⁷ XZJ101.429b-430a.

羅尼經序) – a preface to Amoghavajra’s *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* written by Zunshi.¹¹⁸

As Stevenson suggested, we can appreciate Zunshi’s tracts not only as a response to genuine religious needs but also as “a site for sorting out points of ideological ambiguity between Buddhism and local religion.”¹¹⁹ Furthermore, a careful reading of Zunshi’s tracts – especially *Rectifying the Term “Food-Bestowal”* – opens for us a window into the larger cultural and ritual context of ghost-feeding rites in the early Song. As such, Zunshi’s tracts are extremely important to any inquiry on the history and development of ghost-feeding rites because unlike texts such as the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*, the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* and the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*, Zunshi’s food-bestowal tracts contain invaluable, direct references to the society and times in which they were written in and for.

Zunshi’s *Rectifying the Term “Food-Bestowal”* begins by explaining that the food-bestowal *sūtra* exists in two Chinese translations and has been referred to with three names – *Saving Burning-Face*, *Rescuing Flaming-Mouth* and *Bestowing Food to Hungry Ghosts*.¹²⁰ We learn that by Zunshi’s time, many monasteries in the Wuyue area have separate chapels identified as “*Shuilu* halls” and these were venues where food-bestowal rites were performed. These chapels were alternately also referred to as “*Jieshi*” (解食, “food of liberation”) and “*Mingdao*” (冥道, “netherworld paths”) halls.¹²¹ True to his mission of “rectifying the term ‘food-bestowal’,” Zunshi quickly dismisses the popular interpretation of the term of “*Shuilu*” as “bestowing to the orphaned and dependent-less

¹¹⁸ XZJ101.420a-b.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 363-364.

¹²⁰ XZJ101.236a.

¹²¹ Ibid.

(lit. “ownerless” [*wuzhu* 無主]) souls in the water (*shui* 水) and land (*lu* 陸).” Instead, he argues that the term “*shuilu*” should be properly understood as referring to the recommendation in the *Burning-Face Sūtra* and the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* that food-offerings for the various seers/immortals (*xian* 仙) should be placed in flowing water (*shui* 水) while food for ghosts should be placed on clean ground (*lu* 陸).¹²² Clearly, Zunshi is trying to control popular interpretations of these ghost-feeding rites by engaging in a Confucian-like concern for “rectifying names” (*zhengming* 正名).

Interestingly, although both the *Burning-Face Sūtra* and the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* provide the above explanation of the two different modes of conveying empowered food-offerings to the different beneficiaries, the term “*shuilu*” is absent from both translations. Neither is the term used in the liturgical texts of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*, the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* or the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*. Is it possible that Zunshi’s gloss over the term “*shuilu*” was an overlay that he chose to place on an already existing, general and non Buddhist-specific term? As Stevenson has demonstrated, Zunshi was very concerned with the intersection between canonical Buddhism and local Chinese practices and the negotiations that emerged from that interaction. Being a highly educated Buddhist cleric and a revivalist (not unlike the Republican period Buddhist revivalists I briefly discussed in *Chapter One*), Zunshi was concerned with correcting what he considered as lapses and errors in interpretation and praxis. In the context of ghost-feeding rites, Zunshi was troubled by, in Stevenson’s words, “... the failure to clarify the true ideological underpinnings and soteriological

¹²² XZJ101.236a-b.

thrust of these rites – a problem that... stems from resonances with local rites for the dead.”¹²³ Thus, it is not hard to imagine that Zunshi found it expedient to “*buddhacize*” the term “*shuilu*” so that the rites carrying this name can be rectified as properly Buddhist. In *Rectifying the Term “Food-Bestowal,”* Zunshi similarly gives a distinctively Buddhist gloss over the terms “*Jieshi*” and “*Mingdao*” that were apparently used interchangeably with the term “*Shuilu*.”¹²⁴

While *Rectifying the Term “Food-Bestowal”* is primarily concerned with “correcting” or “rectifying” the term “*shishi*” – more specifically, anchoring the term back on what Zunshi considered as canonical and orthodox Buddhism – the first part of *Food-Bestowal Practice* focuses on the rite itself by discussing and resolving the differences between the *Burning-Face Sūtra* and the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* and between these and other Buddhist sources. For example, he points out that Amoghavajra’s translation uses “*brahman-seers*” instead of translating the term as “*brahman* and seers” as in Śikṣānanda’s translation. Zunshi prefers Amoghavajra’s translation over Śikṣānanda’s, reasoning that Śikṣānanda’s translation necessarily leads to the premise of “*brahmans*” and “seers” – both being human beings are fed alongside with hungry ghosts. This position is untenable, explains Zunshi, as the collective feeding of human beings and ghosts violates the rules of propriety.¹²⁵ Implicit in this argument is of

¹²³ Stevenson, “Protocols of Power,” 364.

¹²⁴ XZJ101.236b

¹²⁵ In my translation of the *Burning-Face Sūtra* and the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*, I have translated “*poluomen xian*” (婆羅門仙) as “*brahman-seers*” (or *brahmans* and seers in the case of the *Burning-Face Sūtra*) as I believe that the Sanskrit original is *brahman-aeṣi*.

course Zunshi's understanding of *brahman*-seers as non-humans.¹²⁶ In fact, the term “*brahman*-seers” is sometimes considered synonymous with “semi-divine *brahman*s” (*bantian poluomen* 半天婆羅門) who are considered a category of ghosts.¹²⁷ Other issues discussed here are the apparent disagreement between the two translations on the number of recitations of the “Food-Bestowal Dhāraṇī” that should be repeated for the purpose of making offerings to different categories of recipients, the discrepancies between the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*'s liberal attitude to the time for the performance of the rite (“every morning or at any other time”) and the *Piluo sanmei jing*'s prescription of the four different eating times for different groups of beings, the lack of the section on the recitation of the names of the four Buddhas in the *Burning-Face Sūtra* and the supposed existence of a “small fascicle of the *Ambrosia Sūtra* (*Ganlu jing* 甘露經),” appended to Śikṣānanda's the *Burning-Face Sūtra* (Zunshi also noted the absence of such an appendix in the version of the *Burning-Face Sūtra* available to him).¹²⁸

After resolving all these issues, Zunshi explains what he considered as the correct method or rite for bestowing food to ghosts. The rite described here is short, simple and easy to perform: Having obtained a clean bowl, fill it with clean water, some food and drink. With the fingers of the right hand pressed on the bowl (and presumably the left hand holding the bowl), recite the “Food-Bestowal Dhāraṇī” seven times. After the

¹²⁶ The fourth fascicle of *Shimen zhengtong* appears to consider “*brahman*-seers” as a type of ghost. See Zongqian, *Shimen zhengtong*, XZJ130.401b.

¹²⁷ See *Foguang Dictionary*, 4464b. In *The Liturgy of the Ritual of Offering to Yāma* (*Yanluo wang gongxing fa cidi* 餓羅王供行法次第) attributed by Japanese sources to Amoghavajra but assigned a Five Dynasties/early Song date by Stevenson, we read: “... the assemblies of five hundred hungry ghosts, semi-divine *brahman*s and other hungry ghosts.” See T1290:21.376a.

¹²⁸ XZJ101.237a. The significance of the existence of such a text appended to the *Burning-Face Sūtra* has been discussed earlier in this chapter.

recitation, snap one's fingers seven times and finally empty out the contents of the bowl on a clean spot. Zunshi assures the performer that when this rite is completed, innumerable ghosts in the four directions will each receive forty-nine bushels of food and drink that will completely satiate their hunger and lead to their future rebirths in the heavens.¹²⁹ Both these results are promised in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*. The final section of *Food-Bestowal Practice* consists of words of encouragement to practitioners of this rite, centering on the reassurance that the ghost-feeding rite is “truly the technique for lengthening life.”¹³⁰ Zunshi's reminder that Buddhist ghost-feeding rites lead to longevity is interesting as most other ghost-feeding texts seem to have forgotten the original reason for Ānanda's need for the rite. Perhaps Zunshi's audience too has forgotten the original benefit of the rite.

Food-Bestowal Practice is probably an outline of Zunshi's earliest version of the food-bestowal rite, a prompt-text of sorts. As such, it contains only the “bare bones” of the rite, following closely the sequence and elements first prescribed in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*.¹³¹ The rite described in *Food-Bestowal Practice* is, however, not the only ghost-feeding liturgy that Zunshi compiled/used. There are at least two other ghost-feeding liturgies authored by Zunshi that have survived: *Food-Bestowal Liturgy* preserved in *Golden Garden Record* and the *Food-Bestowal Rite* recorded in Zongxiao's *Survey of Food-Bestowal Rites*. *Food-Bestowal Liturgy*

¹²⁹ XZJ101.237a-b.

¹³⁰ XZJ101.237b.

¹³¹ Note the absence of the recitation of the name of the four Buddhas as prescribed in the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*. Although *Shishi fa* shows that Zunshi generally preferred Amoghavajra's *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* over Śikṣānanda's the *Burning-Face Sūtra*, when it came time for Zunshi to ritualize the text, he chose not to include the section on the recitation of the names of the four Buddhas.

generally follows the same ritual-sequence of *Food-Bestowal Practice*, with a few additions at the beginning and end, thus transforming the rather sparse rite in *Food-Bestowal Practice* into a more “complete” rite.

Food-Bestowal Liturgy begins with an exhortation to first “give rise to the mind of benevolence and compassion” followed by the recitation of “the names of the Three Jewels and the Great Compassionate Guanshiyin Bodhisattva” thrice to “destroy the obscurations of the hungry ghosts.”¹³² These additions at the beginning of the rite place it closer to normative Chinese Mahāyāna rites by beginning with the generation of the Bodhi-mind and paying homage to the Three Jewels and other selected divinities. Aside from these additions, this liturgy adds a prayer to the rite after the “Food-Bestowal Dhāraṇī” has been recited. The following is a translation of the prayer:

I, the *sramana* so-and-so, have now recited the “The Immeasurable Awesome Virtues, Self-existent, Brilliant, Victorious and Profound Power *Dhāraṇī*,” empowering the food and drink for universally bestowing to the assembly of hungry ghosts.¹³³ May Burning-face Ghost King, the Great, Powerful and Victorious *Shi*’s (*Mianran guiwang daquan shengshi* 面燃鬼王 大權勝士) mind be perfumed by benevolence and goodness to universally gather hungry ghosts immeasurable and limitless as the measure of sands of Ganges River and come to my place to receive the unimpeded, unhindered, clean and pure Dharma-food that I have bestowed. As said in the *sūtra*, each of them will receive forty-nine measures of food, each the size of bushels used in Magadha. Each of them will be satisfied without any deficiencies; immediately and completely eradicating and destroying the starving and thirsting, miserable bodies of lengthy *kalpas*. Their minds will give rise to joy and generate the Bodhi-mind and in accordance with the time, immediately obtaining the Samadhi of Blissful Mind (*lexin sanmei* 樂心三昧). (They will) quickly discard the ghost-bodies and be born in the Buddhas’ pure lands, swiftly perfecting the All-knowing Wisdom (*zhongzhi*, 種智), widely liberating sentient beings.¹³⁴ The merits of my bestowing of food, in the words of the World-Honored One, “is the same as

¹³² XZJ101.238a.

¹³³ The title of this *dhāraṇī* is the same as the title given in the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*.

¹³⁴ 種智 is an abbreviation for 一切種智. See *Foguang Dictionary*, 5871.

(the merit) of making offerings to Buddhas (equal in measure) to the immeasurable sand-grains of hundreds of thousands of *asaṃkhyeyas* Ganges rivers” – equal and no different. May these blessings be transferred to the Dharma-realm, adorning Bodhi. May I, together with (all) sentient beings attain the Perfection of Generosity, be separated from all births and deaths, hunger and thirst, swiftly obtaining the ultimate Bodhi and *nirvana* – the two unsurpassed fruits. I now bestow on sentient beings the limitless Dharma-food.¹³⁵

In terms of the development of ghost-feeding rites in China, the most significant element in this prayer is the reference to “Burning-face.” We first encountered Burning-face in Śikṣānanda’s translation, the *Burning-Face Sūtra*. Zunshi’s reference here to Burning-face is, however, Burning-face’s first appearance outside the context of the narrative of the origins of the ghost-feeding rite. Up until this point, Burning-face has no liturgical significance in any of the ghost-feeding rites. He neither figures in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* nor in *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*. Burning-face’s debut here in Zunshi’s *Food-Bestowal Practice* is an important moment because he soon becomes a standard figure in later ghost-feeding liturgies – particularly in the Yuan period *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* and the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy of Zhuhong and other liturgies based on Zhuhong’s recension.

In *Food-Bestowal Liturgy*, Burning-face is praised as the “Great, Powerful and Victorious *Shi*.” *Shi* in secular usage referred to both civil and military officials, ministers, warriors, scholars and other learned persons. In Chinese Buddhist usage, *shi* 士 is often used in the compound “*dashi*” (“Great *Shi*” 大士) to translate the Sanskrit “*mahāsattva*” – an epithet for advanced bodhisattvas. Here, Burning-face is no longer a mere hungry ghost who chanced upon Ānanda and precipitated the first performance of

¹³⁵ XZJ101.238a-b.

ghost-feeding rites. More than that, he is now a “ghost king” (*guiwang* 鬼王) and also a *mahāsattva*, a bodhisattva on the brink of Buddhahood. Although Burning-face has now secured a central position in the performance of ghost-feeding rites, there is no suggestion, direct or implied, that his “true identity” is Guanyin – an identity that is explicitly maintained in later *Yuqie yankou* liturgies. In the present liturgy by Zunshi, the identity between Guanyin and Burning-face is only very subtly suggested as Guanyin is invoked at the beginning of the liturgy and Burning-face is invoked to gather all the hungry ghosts under his benevolence and goodness and transport them to the ritual-space where the ghost-feeding rite is being performed.¹³⁶ As in the rite described in *Food-Bestowal Practice*, noticeably absent in *Food-Bestowal Liturgy* is the recitation of the names of the four Buddhas. This absence is addressed in a food-bestowal text attributed to Zunshi and preserved in the *Survey of Food-Bestowal Rites*.

Like the *Food-Bestowal Liturgy*, the *Food-Bestowal Rite* begins with the invocation of the Three Jewels and Guanyin. Unlike the *Food-Bestowal Liturgy*, the *Food-Bestowal Rite* gives the full invocation formulae: “Homage to the Buddhas of the Ten Directions, Homage to the Dharma of the Ten Directions, Homage to the Sangha of the Ten Directions, Homage to the Great Compassionate Guanshiyin Bodhisattva.”¹³⁷ This is followed by two, seven-character quatrains that are still in use today in the

¹³⁶ One could, on the other hand, argue that the invocation of Guanyin’s name in *Shishi fa* has more to do with the supposed role that Guanyin played in the origins of the food-bestowal rite according to the *Burning-Face Sūtra* and the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* than with any intentions to identify Guanyin with Mianran.

¹³⁷ XZJ101.429a.

Mengshan rite celebrated every evening in all Chinese Buddhist monasteries and nunneries.¹³⁸

The pure drink and food empowered by the spiritual spell
 Are universally bestowed to the assembly of spirits and ghosts (equal to the)
 sands of rivers
 May all be filled and satisfied and their miserly-minds discarded
 And immediately be liberated from the nether realms and be born in the fortunate
 paths
 Take refuge in the Three Jewels and learn Bodhi
 Ultimately attaining the Unsurpassed Enlightenment
 The merits are boundless, exhausting the future
 (May) all sentient beings share in the Dharma-food.¹³⁹

The “Food-Bestowal Dhāraṇī” and the names of the four Buddhas are then recited – seven repetitions of the former and three of the latter. Two five-character quatrains are recited at the end. Again, these two quatrains are still used today in the *Mengshan* rite:

All you, assembly of ghosts and spirits,
 I now bestow this offering.
 This food pervading the ten directions
 Is offered to all the spirits and ghosts¹⁴⁰
 May these merits
 Pervade and reach all
 May I and all sentient beings
 Completely and together attain the Buddha-Way.¹⁴¹

Thus far, it is safe to assert that all three versions of Zunshi’s ghost-feeding liturgies were largely composed or compiled by Zunshi based on the contents of the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*. All three liturgies are closely based on either the

¹³⁸ A variant of the first quatrain is also used in contemporary performances of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy, Kamata, 862b-863a. Although I have argued that the Song Tiantai food-bestowal liturgies represent a separate and different development from that represented by the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*, the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*, the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* and the Ming/Qing *Yuqie yankou* texts, the presence of this quatrain in both traditions cautions us from imagining totally separate developments, independent and ignorant of each other.

¹³⁹ XZJ101.429b.

¹⁴⁰ The last character in this line is given as “共” or “together” in the text. This is probably a scribal error as it makes more sense if it is “供” or “offer.”

¹⁴¹ XZJ101.430a.

Burning-Face Sūtra (as in *Food-Bestowal Practice* and *Food-Bestowal Liturgy* where the recitation of the names of the four Buddhas mentioned in the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* is absent) or the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* (as in *Food-Bestowal Rite*). Zunshi made some minor additions to the ritual-sequence given in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* such as the exhortation to “give rise to the mind of benevolence and compassion,” the invocation of the names of the Three Jewels and Guanyin and prayers in both prose and verse form inviting the ghosts to gather, expressing the intent, purpose and benefits of the rite, and dedicating the virtue and merit accrued from the performance of the ghost-feeding rite.

Of special significance here is that none of the Song Tiantai ghost-feeding texts betray any knowledge of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*. Neither is there anything in Zunshi’s writings to indicate any knowledge of the existence of the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*. If these two liturgies were available to Zunshi, he must have chosen not to rely on them in composing his ghost-feeding liturgies. It is also likely that the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* and the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* (and many other Buddhist texts) were lost in the sea of the political turbulence and social mayhem of the late Tang and the Five Dynasties period so that Zunshi living in the early Song had no recourse to these texts. Indeed, as pointed out earlier, even texts central to the Tiantai lineage were lost and had to be imported back from Korea by the king of Wuyue.

Moreover, the speculation that the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* and the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* were unavailable or unknown to Zunshi and his fellow

Tiantai monks can be the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* strengthened when we turn our attention to the *Survey of Food-Bestowal Rites* compiled by Zongxiao in 1204. The *Survey of Food-Bestowal Rites* puts together thirty-three texts of varying lengths devoted to the topic of food-bestowal. Aside from the two different translations by Śikṣānanda and Amoghavajra, Zongxiao includes a text entitled the *Dhāraṇī-Spell Spoken by the Buddha for Bestowing Ambrosial Water* (*Foshuo shi ganlu shui tuoluoni zhou* 佛說施甘露水陀羅尼咒) and excerpts of sections from three larger *sūtras*, excerpts that discuss the different ways of feeding ghosts.¹⁴² Aside from these texts and excerpts that purport to be “the Buddha’s words,” there are tracts written by early Chinese monks. The *Survey of Food-Bestowal Rites* includes two verses by Zhiyi’s teacher, Nanyue Huisi 南嶽惠思 (515-577) that appear to be verses chanted before meals, a tract by Zhiyi – the *Method of Visualizing Food of the Mind* (*Guan xinshi fa* 觀心食法) and another by Zhiyuan 智圓 (976-1022)¹⁴³, known as the *Record on Offering Food to Sentient Beings* (*Chusheng tuji* 出生圖紀).¹⁴⁴

Of all the different authors represented in *Survey of Food-Bestowal Rites*, Zunshi stands out as having written the most of the ghost-feeding texts in the collection by

¹⁴² The excerpts are on i) the conversion of the *yakṣa* Āṭavaka in the sixteenth fascicle of the *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra*, ii) the conversion of mother-ghost Hariti and her children in the thirtieth fascicle of the *Mulasarvastivāda-vinaya* and iii) the injunction in the *Jeweled Clouds Sūtra* [*Baoyun jing* 寶雲經] for monks to reserve a portion of their daily food for offering to hungry ghosts. See XZJ.101.417a.

¹⁴³ Zhiyuan is best remembered as one of the masters of the so-called “Off-Mountain” (*shanwai* 山外) faction of Tiantai in the Song. See Chi-wah Chan’s “Chih-li (960-1028) and the Crisis of T’ien-t’ai Buddhism in the Early Sung” in *Buddhism in the Sung*, Peter N. Gregory and Daniel A. Getz, Jr., eds. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press), 409-441 for a discussion of the “Off-Mountain versus Mountain” debates and Zhiyuan’s role in the exchange. It is interesting to note here that although masters of the “Off-Mountain” faction eventually lost out in the debate on Tiantai doctrinal orthodoxy and was side-lined in later Tiantai histories, in *Survey of Food-Bestowal Rites* is preserved one of the few surviving writings of Zhiyuan.

¹⁴⁴ See XZJ101.426a for Zhiyuan’s explanation of “*chusheng*” (出生) as derived from “*chu zhongsheng shi*” (出衆生食). *Chusheng* is usually understood as the bestowal of food to sentient beings.

Zongxiao. Zunshi's texts make up six out of the twenty-two texts composed by a total of thirteen authors. Of the six tracts attributed to Zunshi, we have already discussed five – the sixth text is *Verses for Resolving Doubts about Replacing Blood Sacrifices with Vegetarian Feasts* (*Kaiqi xiuzhai jueyi song* 開祭修齋決疑頌). This text is somewhat related to ghost-feeding rites but was primarily written “to forestall lapses of faith in persons who had recently given up blood sacrifices for rites of vegetarian feast (*zhai* 齋).”¹⁴⁵ This particular tract is divided into ten parts, each part dealing with a particular issue related to the central concern of persuading its audience to renounce blood sacrifices in favor of orthodox Buddhist practices. Specifically, the final part of this tract refers to the practice of bestowing food to ghosts using the ritual-technique taught in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*. As with the other parts of this tract, Zunshi poses a question at the beginning of this part: “If we do not perform the blood sacrifices, how are those in our family and retinue who have died and have been reborn as ghosts going to receive any food or drink?”¹⁴⁶ In response to this query, Zunshi succinctly rehearses the method and benefits of the ghost-feeding of the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*. At the end, Zunshi assures his audience that “this bestowing of Dharma-food does not only enable one's ancestors and retinue to receive food-offerings but can also universally cause all hungry ghosts to become full and

¹⁴⁵ Stevenson, “Protocols of Power,” 353.

¹⁴⁶ XZJ101.435b.

satisfied....”¹⁴⁷ As such, Zunshi implores all persons, “whether monastic or lay, male or female to exhaustively practice this method.”¹⁴⁸

In Zunshi’s mind, this ghost-feeding rite should be performed by both monastics and lay Buddhists as it is an extremely efficacious, beneficial and accessible rite. The rite, as discussed in Zunshi in his other tracts such as the *Food-Bestowal Practice*, the *Food-Bestowal Liturgy*, the *Food-Bestowal Visualizations* and the *Food-Bestowal Rite*, is indeed a very accessible rite requiring very little training or time to perform. In contrast, the ghost-feeding rite as elaborated in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* and the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* is significantly much more complex and elaborate. Conspicuously absent from the ghost-feeding rites of Zunshi is the use of *mudrās*. Whereas each of the spells and visualization-sequences in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* and the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* is provided with a corresponding *mudrā*, the only ritual-act in Zunshi’s ghost-feeding rites that can be remotely considered the execution of a *mudrā* is the snapping of one’s fingers (a ritual-act prescribed in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*). Otherwise, Zunshi’s texts contain no *mudrās*. When we turn our attention to the *Shuilu* rite, it is clear that the *Shuilu* also does not involve the execution of any *mudrās*. Throughout the entire *Shuilu* liturgy (whose performance spans over a period of at least five days), although hundreds of spells and visualization-sequences are carried out, not a single *mudrā* is to be seen.¹⁴⁹ This shared absence between Zunshi’s ghost-feeding rites and the *Shuilu* rite strongly suggests that

¹⁴⁷ XZJ101.436a.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ See Zhuhong’s recension of the *Shuilu* liturgy, the *Fajie shengfan ahuilu shenghui xiuzhai yigui* 法界聖凡水陸勝會修齋儀軌, XZJ129.527-604. s

they probably developed independent from the ghost-feeding rites exemplified by the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*, the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* and their textual descendents such as the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* of the Yuan period and the many *Yuqie yankou* liturgies produced in the Ming and Qing periods.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that the *Burning-Face Sūtra* and *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* are Chinese translations of a short, but evolving text of non-Chinese origins, most likely Indian. At the core of this unstable Indian text are a narrative and a description of a very simple rite consisting of the recitation of the names of four Buddhas and a spell for the magical multiplication of offerings for hungry ghosts. This act of charity is said to confer longevity and other blessings on the performer(s) of the rite. Unfortunately, we do not have any evidence on the Indian front of the existence of this *sūtra* or the currency of the rite prescribed in this *sūtra*. But we do, however, have translations of this *sūtra* in Tibet and evidence of the use of the rite in Tibetan religion to this day. In any case, after being rendered into Chinese, twice, liturgies and possibly practice traditions began to develop around the mythic narrative and ritual technique found in the *sūtra*. These liturgies eventually developed into ritual programs that offered rites for dealing with the dead and dangerous, general post-mortem rites, rites for the normative Buddhist practice of charity and kindness to less fortunate beings and substitute-rites for blood sacrifices practiced at local shrines and temples of popular deities and deified spirits across China. One of the more interesting points regarding

this development is the two different directions that these ghost-feeding liturgies took in terms of their respective willingness to further move towards esotericization. While liturgies such as the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* and the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* were clearly produced within the context of the emerging systematic esoteric tradition in China in the Tang (clustering around figures such as Amoghavajra) the other development of the ghost-feeding rites was led by Song Tiantai figures such as Zunshi with his production of liturgies and tracts on ghost-feeding based on the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*. These Tiantai ghost-feeding materials betray no knowledge of, and much less, interest in texts and practices such as the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* and the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*. In the next chapter, I will look at developments after the Song that continued the esoteric trajectory that resulted in the formation of the *Yuqie yankou* rites which are the subject of my thesis and whose vitality has continued into the present.

CHAPTER FIVE:

Post-Song Ghost-Feeding Rites and the Production and Dissemination of Yuqie yankou in Late Imperial China

In this chapter, I will focus on the development of ghost-feeding liturgies in the post-Song and Late Imperial period. As my discussion is based on a re-construction of events determined by surviving ghost-feeding liturgies scattered throughout this whole time period, some parts of my discussion will seem more substantial and robust while others will appear to be bare and dis-embodied. Continuing from the last chapter, this chapter will progress chronologically beginning with discussions of the state of Buddhism during several non-Chinese dynasties that controlled different parts of China during the Song (the Khitan Liao, Jurchen Jin and Tangut Xixia). My discussion will focus on the textual or liturgical developments that occurred during this period that might be the sources of some of the elements found in the later *Yuqie yankou* liturgies.

Following this, I will re-construct the “birth” of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy by identifying the composition of the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* in the Yuan period as the prototype of Ming dynasty *Yuqie yankou* texts. I will show that the

Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite marks the emergence of a distinctive *Yuqie yankou* rite that can be distinguished from the other ghost-feeding rites and liturgies inspired by the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*. This section will also include a discussion of the social and historical context of the Yuan and explore how this context might have contributed to the production of the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*.

After the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*, my sources fall into a period of silence and invisibility until the late Ming. There are no extant ghost-feeding liturgies that we can date to the early and mid Ming although late Ming *Yuqie yankou* liturgies all claim that they were redactions, expansions or recensions of *Yuqie yankou* texts used in the earlier part of the Ming.¹ The situation radically improves when we come to the late Ming and early Qing period. Several *Yuqie yankou* liturgies from this period are still extant. In this part of the chapter, I will discuss Zhuhong's extremely influential redaction of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy which he completed in 1606. I will also look at several other liturgies that were published not long after Zhuhong's. Aside from focusing on these texts, their contents and contexts, I will also discuss Deji Ding'an's *Yuqie yankou* liturgy, popularly known as the "*Huashan yankou*" 華山齋口), paying particular attention to the success of the liturgy in rapidly

¹ Dan Stevenson has suggested recently that texts from the Chosŏn period in Korea might be a valuable resource for filling in some of the gaps we find in the textual history of the *Yuqie yankou* in China.

replacing all other competing liturgies to eventually standardize performances of the *Yuqie yankou* all across China. The case of one alternative tradition – the *Cantonese Yankou* originating from Mount Dinghu – that apparently survived the encroaching influence of the *Huashan Yankou* will also be considered.

The Appearance of the Exoteric-Esoteric Rubric in Liao Dynasty Texts

Although the Yuan and Qing dynasties are the only two non-Chinese dynasties that managed to establish dynastic rule over the whole of China, several other groups of non-Chinese peoples were able to gain control over large parts of China and ruled over them for periods of time during the Song and in the early years of the Yuan. Among the earliest are the Khitans whose original homeland was in the northern borders of China. The Khitans, who were originally a tribe inhabiting the northeastern steppe lands of China established the Liao 遼 (907-1124) dynasty in 907. By 947, the Khitans had successfully conquered northern China, exploiting to their benefit the political turmoil and unrest that ensued following the fall of Tang in 907. The Liao lasted until 1124 when the Jurchens ended their rule of northern China. The demise of Liao did not translate to the end of the Khitans as a general of the Liao led his forces westward to conquer new territories.²

² Dennis Twitchett and Klaus-Peter Tietze, “The Liao” in *The Cambridge History of China, Alien Regimes and Border States*, vol. 6, ed. Denis Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 151.

Under the Liao, Buddhism was introduced to the northern steppe lands, in areas that are now identified as Mongolia and Manchuria. The ruling house of the Liao quickly became patrons of Buddhism in their private lives and even in public policies. Through the patronage of the Liao court, monasteries were built, monastic communities flourished, and an edition of the Chinese Buddhist canon was published in the years between 1031 and 1064. Without discounting their personal devotion to Buddhism, the act of publishing a Chinese Buddhist canon also had political overtones that were obvious to the neighbors of the new Liao nation – Koreans to their northeast, Song China to their south and the Tangut state of Xixia 西夏 (983-1227) to their southwest. The printing and distributing of Buddhist canons was an important element in the art of nation-making and foreign-relations among many ruling dynasties in China. Thus, as an indication of their interests in northeastern expansion and as a gesture of state sovereignty, the Liao court sent a copy of their newly published Chinese Buddhist canon to Korea.³

Although the “roots of Liao Buddhism were entirely Chinese,”⁴ it was a Buddhism that appeared to have a significant emphasis on the esoteric teachings.

³ The Liao’s publication of the Chinese Buddhist canon was preceded by the Song’s publication of their first (out of five) Chinese Buddhist canons in 983. Over in Korea, work to publish the first Korean edition of the Chinese Buddhist canon (based on the first Song edition) had started in 1011 (not completed until after the Liao canon has been published). On the southwestern front, the Xixia first requested a copy of the Song canon in 1031 – a request that was not granted till 1035. Soon after that, a Tangut script was developed and work on translating the entire Song canon into Tangut began.

⁴ Kenneth Chen, *Buddhism in China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 411.

Two of the most representative monks of Buddhism of the Liao period are Jueyuan 覺苑 (d.u.) and Daochen 道蘊 (b. 1065) who both authored texts on the esoteric teachings. Jueyuan is best remembered for his composition of a sub-commentary of Yixing's *Dari jing yishi* (大日經義釋)⁵ on the *Dari jing* (*Mahāvairocana sūtra*), - the *Dari jing yishi yanmi chao* (大日經義釋演密鈔)⁶ a task that he completed in 1077. For the purposes of my present study, it is a short text that he composed later – the *Collected Essentials on Attaining Buddhahood through the Perfect Penetration of the Exoteric and Esoteric* (*Xianmi yuantong chengfo xinyao ji* 顯密圓通成佛心要集 T1955) – that is most significant.

A distinctive characteristic shared by both Jueyuan and Daochen is their division of all the Buddhas' teachings into the two categories of “exoteric” (*xian* 顯) and “esoteric” (*mi* 密) and their familiarity with the *Huayan jing* and the Huayan doctrinal system.⁷ For example, in his sub-commentary, Jueyuan utilizes Jingliang Chengguan's 清涼澄觀 (738-839) “classification of tenet” (*panjiao*, 判教) system that arranges the Buddha's teachings into five categories; with the Perfect Teaching

⁵ *Zhonghua dazang jing*, ser. 3, n. 277.

⁶ *Zhonghua dazang jing*, ser. 3, n. 278.

⁷ Robert Sharf, in his recent *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism*, refers to Daochen's *Collected Essentials on Attaining Buddhahood through the Perfect Penetration of the Exoteric and Esoteric* as the earliest example of the articulation of the division of “exoteric” and “esoteric” in China. He acknowledges Robert Gimello for this reference. Robert Gimello also touched on this issue at a lecture he gave at University of Virginia in Fall 2002. One can also find this rubric of “exoteric-esoteric” used by Jueyuan in his *Dari jing yishi yanmi chao* which was apparently composed prior to Daochen's *Collected Essentials on Attaining Buddhahood through the Perfect Penetration of the Exoteric and Esoteric*. At the same time, Daochen does appear to have been known as an advocate of this rubric as he was referred to as the “Dharma Master of the Perfect Penetration of the Exoteric and Esoteric” (*Xianmi yuantong fashi* 顯密圓通法師) in *Records on Disputing the Spurious* (*Bianwei lu* 辯偽錄) published in 1291. See, T2116:52.780a.

(*yuanjiao* 圓教) as the highest.⁸ After defining the Perfect Teaching as the teaching that “illuminate (the reality of) one stage is all stages and all stages one,”⁹ Jueyuan places the *Dari jing* (Mahāvairocana sūtra) in this category of the Perfect Teaching. He further clarified that the difference between the *Dari jing* and the *Huayan jing* lies not in their respective understanding of reality (which they are, in Jueyuan’s estimation, identical) but in the issue of “exoteric” and “esoteric.” Whereas the *Huayan jing* is exoteric Perfect Teaching, the *Dari jing* is esoteric Perfect Teaching.¹⁰ In the preface to Jueyuan’s sub-commentary written by Zhao Xiaoyan 趙孝嚴 “under imperial orders,” this division of exoteric-esoteric is again clearly articulated:

Great indeed! In the teachings of the Tathāgata, there is the exoteric and there is the esoteric. That which is referred to as exoteric is the Five Natures¹¹ (*wuxing*, 五性) and Three Vehicles. And that which is referred to as esoteric is the Secret Treasury of the Dhāraṇīs.¹²

⁸ This classification system was first developed by Xianshou Fazang 賢首法藏 (643-712) and later modified by Chengguan. The five, in order of profundity are: Lesser Vehicle Teachings (*xiaocheng jiao* 小乘教), Elementary Teachings (*shijiao* 始教), Advanced Teachings (*zhongjiao* 終教), Sudden Teachings (*dunjiao* 頓教) and Perfect Teachings. For a clear discussion of the practice of “classification of tenets” and specifically in the Huayan school, see the second part of Peter N. Gregory’s *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 93-167.

⁹ *Zhonghua dazang jing*, ser. 3, vol. 43, 23318b. Lu Jianfu in *Zhongguo mijiao shi* identified this phrase as Chengguan’s definition of the Perfect Teachings in the second fascicle of his *Dafang guangfo huayan jing shu*. See, Lu Jianfu, *Zhongguo mijiao shi* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1995), 480.

¹⁰ *Zhonghua dazang jing*, ser. 3, vol. 43, 23319a.

¹¹ The Five Natures refer to the Yogācāra/Faxiang understanding of sentient beings as divided into five groups based on their capacity to attain liberation. The phrase “Five Natures and Three Vehicles” (*wuxing sancheng*, 五性三乘) is usually identified as a central tenet of the Faxiang school although it is unlikely that Zhao had only the Faxiang in mind when he identified the exoteric as “the Five Natures and Three Vehicles.”

¹² *Zhonghua dazang jing*, ser. 3, vol. 43, 23315a.

It is clear from these quotes that by Jueyuan's time, the rubric of exoteric-esoteric has become common knowledge among scholars. This is further confirmed in Daochen's *Collected Essentials on Attaining Buddhahood through the Perfect Penetration of the Exoteric and Esoteric*.

At the heart of Daochen's *Collected Essentials on Attaining Buddhahood* is the issue of the differences between the Buddha's exoteric and esoteric teachings and the intersection between the two.¹³ Like Jueyuan, Daochen divides the Buddha's teachings into the two division of exoteric and esoteric. The exoteric teachings consist of "the *sūtras*, *vinyas* and treatises of the various vehicles" (*zhucheng jing lun* 諸乘經律論) while the esoteric teachings are "the *dhāraṇīs* in all the various works" (*zhubu tuoluoni* 諸部陀羅尼).¹⁴ Accordingly then, Daochen divides his text into four sections: the heart-essentials of the exoteric teachings, the heart-essentials of the esoteric teachings, the exoteric and esoteric discussed together. In the first section on the heart-essentials of the exoteric teachings, Daochen similarly adopts the Huayan "classification of tenet" system of the Five Teachings. As indicated by the title of the text, Daochen's emphasis is not necessarily on the supremacy of the esoteric Perfect Teaching (as it appears to be in Jueyuan's discussion of the exoteric

¹³ Robert Gimello and others seem to have overlooked Jueyuan's sub-commentary and mis-identified Daochen's *Collected Essentials on Attaining Buddhahood through the Perfect Penetration of the Exoteric and Esoteric* as the earliest example in China of the use of the rubric of exoteric-esoteric.

¹⁴ T1955:46.989c.

and esoteric Perfect Teaching). Although he does at times praise the superior methods found in the esoteric teachings,¹⁵ he generally argues for an approach that unifies both the exoteric and esoteric teachings. In the third section of *Collected Essentials on Attaining Buddhahood*, Daochen consistently uses the phrase “combined practice of the exoteric and esoteric” (*xianmi shuangxiu*, 顯密雙修) and praises it as the best path to the attainment of Buddhahood and suited for those with the highest faculties (*shangshang gen*, 上上根).¹⁶ According to Daochen, “those with the highest faculties should engage in the combined practice of the exoteric and esoteric. As for those with middling and lesser faculties, they can choose to practice a single method according to their preference, be it the exoteric or esoteric.”¹⁷

Daochen’s discussion of the differences between the exoteric and esoteric and the combined practice of both does not occur only on the doctrinal level. He details what he considered the practical aspects of the “heart-essentials” of both the exoteric and esoteric. For the exoteric, since the *Huayan jing* is the only exoteric *sūtra* that can be considered the Perfect Teaching, the practices of the exoteric Perfect Teaching is

¹⁵ For example, in the section on the heart-essentials of the esoteric teachings, Daoyuan compares the exoteric teachings to an ill-stricken person receiving a medical prescription where he has to put together the different ingredients in the prescription, paying careful attention to the exact proportions and measurements and understanding the nature of each of the ingredients individually and how they work when taken collectively. On the other hand, the esoteric teachings are like someone receiving a pre-concocted medicine. Even though he or she does not know the proportions and measurements of each of the individual ingredients in the medicine and neither does this person know the nature and medical properties of each of the ingredients, all this person has to do is to ingest this medicine to recover from the illness. See T1955:46.993c.

¹⁶ T1955:46.999a.

¹⁷ Ibid.

naturally grounded on the *Huayan jing*. In particular, the contemplations and ritual-practices based on “The Chapter on the Conduct and Vows of Samantabhadra” (*Puxian xingyuan pin* 普賢行願品) and the system of the Four Dharma-realms as developed by the Huayan patriarchs receive special attention from Daochen.¹⁸

As for the practice of the esoteric Perfect Teaching, Daochen favored the “Zhunti Spell.” According to Daochen, “although within the esoteric works there are the varieties of the Five Divisions, the single spell of Zhunti is the most efficacious and the most excellent. It is the mother of all Buddhas and the life of all bodhisattvas.”¹⁹ The meditation-rite that Daochen promotes in his text involves the use of five spells of which two of them are the “Zhunti Spell” and the “Six Syllable Spell.” It should be noted here that the *locus-classicus* for the combined use of the “Zhunti Spell” and the “Six Syllable Spell” in a single rite is in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha sūtra* (*Dacheng zhuangyan baowang jing* 大乘莊嚴寶王經).²⁰ This *sūtra* was translated in the year 983 by Tianxizai 天息災 (d. 1000).²¹ In fact, the translation

¹⁸ Daochen delineates five contemplations: the contemplation of all phenomena as a dream or illusion (*zhufa ru menghuan guan* 諸法如夢幻觀) which is based on the Dharma-realm of Phenomena (*shi fajie* 事法界), the contemplation of the unique characteristic of True Suchness (*zhenru juexiang guan* 真如絕相觀) which is based on the Dharma-realm of Principle (*li fajie* 理法界), the contemplation of the non-obstruction of phenomena and principle (*lishi wuai guan* 三事理無礙觀) which is based on the Dharma-realm of the Non-obstruction of Phenomena and Principle (*lishi wuai guan* 理事無礙觀), the contemplation of the inexhaustible Net of Indra (*diwang wujin guan* 帝網無盡觀) which is based on the Dharma-realm of Non-obstruction of All Phenomena (*shishi wuai guan* 事事無礙觀) and a fifth contemplation which Daochen identifies as the contemplation of the Dharma-realm without obstructions (*wu zhangai fajie guan* 無障礙法界觀) which he explains as the contemplation of the complete Dharma-realm that is done by relying on the first four Dharma-realms (*dang si fajie suoyi zong fajie guan* 當四法界所依宗總法界觀). See, T1955:46.993b.

¹⁹ T1956:46.1004b.

²⁰ T1050:20.62c-63a.

²¹ Tianxizai was an Indian monk who translated newly imported texts – with the esoteric texts forming the bulk of the translations – in the Song under the patronage of the Song emperor Taizong 太宗 (r.

of the *Kāraṇḍavyūha sūtra* in 983 is the earliest textual evidence of the existence of the “Six Syllable Spell” (OM MAṆI PADME HŪṂ) in China. We should note that both the “Zhunti Spell” and the “Six Syllable Spell” are used in the *Yuqie yankou* rite.²² That we find these two spells also used together in Daochen’s text is suggestive of a connection or a common milieu shared between Daochen’s text and the later *Yuqie yankou* tradition. Furthermore, the *Yuqie yankou* is one of a few Chinese Buddhist rites that identifies itself as the “combined practice of the exoteric and esoteric” This rubric of the “combined practice of the exoteric and esoteric” is first seen in China in Jueyuan and Daochen’s texts.

Also of interest to our discussion is a text appended to Daochen’s *Collected Essentials on Attaining Buddhahood*. This short text known as *Rite of Offering to the Buddhas and Benefiting Living Beings* (*Gongfo lisheng yi*, 供佛利生儀) was originally circulated independent of *Collected Essentials on Attaining Buddhahood* as the “Preface” to *Collected Essentials on Attaining Buddhahood* makes no reference to mention *Rite of Offering to the Buddhas and Benefiting Living Beings*. However, a colophon for *Collected Essentials on Attaining Buddhahood* written by Daochen’s disciple, Xingjia 性嘉 (d.u.) indicates that *Rite of Offering to the Buddhas and*

976-997). Most of the texts translated by Tianxizai were esoteric texts that emerged in the later history of esoteric Buddhism in India. For a record of Tianxizai’s activities in China, see the following sections *The Comprehensive History of the Buddhas and Patriarchs*, T2035:49.398a-402a, 452a.

²² While the “Six Syllable Spell” appears in Zhuhong’s *Yuqie yankou* liturgy published in 1606, the “Zhunti Spell” did not become part of the liturgy until Ding’an’s *Huashan* edition published in 1693.

Benefiting Living Beings was appended to *Collected Essentials on Attaining Buddhahood* very early on. According to Xingjia, *Rite of Offering to the Buddhas and Benefiting Living Beings* “contains the secret method of making offerings to the Buddhas and Sangha, the profound means of aiding seers (*ṛṣīs*) and ghosts, the spiritual technique to deliver the souls of the dead, the sacred means to benefit the cherished living ones.”²³ Immediately, one recognizes that the beneficiaries of this rite are identical with the range of beneficiaries listed in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*.

In *Rite of Offering to the Buddhas and Benefiting Living Beings*, one begins with the spell for “Paying Homage” (*puli* 普禮) followed by “Purifying the Dharma-realm.” After these two spells have been recited, our ghost-feeding spell or identified here with its formal title “The Immeasurable Awesome Virtues, Self-existent, Brilliant, Power Victorious Over Vileness, Transforming Food Spell” (*Wuliang weide zizai guangming shenglieli bianshi zhenyan* 無量威德自在光明勝劣力變食真言) is recited. As first explained in the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*, one can recite this spell to transform ordinary food-offerings into offerings suitable for the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, or for the gods and seers, or for hungry ghosts. For offering to the Buddhas, the spell should be recited twenty-one times,

²³ T1955:46.1006b.

for the gods, fourteen times. If the offering is for hungry ghosts, then one should fill a vessel with some food, drink and clean water and hold the vessel while the spell is recited seven times, followed by the snapping of one's fingers seven times and the recitation of the names of the four Tathāgatas. If one also wishes to offer ambrosia to the hungry ghosts, then the "Ambrosia Spell" should be recited seven times. As we have seen in the last chapter, the ritual-acts given here in Daochen's *Rite of Offering to the Buddhas and Benefiting Living Beings* were clearly directly derived from the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*. *Rite of Offering to the Buddhas and Benefiting Living Beings* also adds that if one desires to rescue suffering beings trapped in the earth-prisons, the "Breaking the Earth-Prisons Spell" should be recited. Again, as we have seen, this spell can also be found in later ghost-feeding liturgies such as the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* and the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*.²⁴

This brief discussion of Jueyuan and Daochen's texts allow us to clarify the following points: First, the Liao period is probably the first instance that we see the rubric of "exoteric-esoteric" (*xianmi* 顯密) being articulated and used in China. Furthermore, Daochen's understanding of the rubric goes beyond the division of the Buddha's teachings into these two categories but in fact recommends the combined

²⁴ See Appendix 2 for my translation of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*.

practice of these two as the path of “those with the highest faculties.” Although many ghost-feeding liturgies either presented themselves as “esoteric” in nature (such as the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* and the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*) or were oblivious of the “esoteric” label (such as the Tiantai food-bestowal rites of Zunshi), the later *Yuqie yankou* liturgies see themselves as liturgies for a rite that combines the exoteric with the esoteric. Therefore, one could say that in considering themselves as belonging to the rubric of the “combined practice of the exoteric and esoteric,” these later *Yuqie yankou* liturgies are placing themselves in a Chinese Buddhist ritual milieu that first appeared in the Liao period.

The natural question that arises at this point is where this rubric of exoteric-esoteric originated from and when did it become operative in the Chinese Buddhist milieu? Unfortunately, our sources are too scant to answer these questions at this point. Judging from the use of this rubric by several figures from the Liao period (i.e. Jueyuan, the author of the “Preface” to Jueyuan’s sub-commentary and Daochen) we could surmise that this rubric has become a distinctive part in the body of shared-knowledge by Liao times. If we are intent on locating a particular source or person responsible for the introduction of this rubric, perhaps “the translator Mani

from western India (residing) in the Great Liao”²⁵ from whom Jueyuan received instruction on the esoteric teachings had a hand in forming this rubric?

The second point we can make from this discussion is that some of the main spells in food-bestowal rites are to be found among these Liao period texts. It is clear then that these spells and their use were known not only to Buddhists in southern China living under the Song dynasty but also by those in the north under the Liao in the north. Although the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* already mentions the use of its spell to empower offerings meant for Buddhas and bodhisattvas, Daochen’s *Rite of Offering to the Buddhas and Benefiting Living Beings* is probably the oldest example of the actual use of the spell for such a purpose. There are no earlier evidences of the actual use of the spell for the purpose of empowering offerings for the Buddhas even though liturgies such as the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* and the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* were composed around the use of this spell for empowering food-offerings meant for ghosts and spirits.

Ghost-Feeding Related Traditions and Texts in the Jin Dynasty

Among the subjects of the Khitan Liao rulers were a tribe of Tungusic origins that populated the area that we now know as Manchuria.²⁶ This tribe – known as

²⁵ XZJ37.2a.

Jurchens – eventually rose up against their Liao overlords in 1115. Recognizing that the Song was equally determined to be rid of the Liao threat to their north, the Jurchens signed an agreement with the Song to bring about the end of Liao dominance in the north.²⁷ In 1122, the Jurchens finally sacked the Liao capitol, forcing the Liao emperor to flee to Xixia in search of asylum.²⁸ Before long, after gaining steady control of northern China, Manchuria and Mongolia, the Jurchens turned their attention to the Song. Once collaborators in bringing the downfall of the Liao, the Jurchens and Song now found themselves facing each other wrestling for the control of all China. After many confrontations, the Jurchens finally captured the Song capital of Kaifeng 開封 in 1126 and established the Jin 金 (1115-1234) dynasty that lasted until 1234 when the Mongols replaced the Jin.

Just like the Liao, the Jin was a strong supporter of Buddhism. Following the example of many earlier non-Chinese dynasties, Jin rulers felt a closer affinity with Buddhism than with either Confucianism or Daoism. But as the Jin rulers' sought to stabilize and legitimize in their role as emperor to both Chinese and non-Chinese subjects, they could no longer ignore the political symbolics and discourse of their Chinese subjects – i.e. Confucianism. Thus, we see in the lives of the Jin rulers a

²⁶ Herbert Franke, "The Chin Dynasty" in *The Cambridge History of China, Alien Regimes and Border States*, vol. 6, ed. Denis Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 217.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 224.

²⁸ Ruth Dunnell, *The Great State of White and High: Buddhism and State Formation in Eleventh Century Xia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996), xxiv.

constant struggle to maintain a balance between their personal devotion to Buddhism and their public role as “Son of Heaven” ruling over the country with the legitimizing power of Confucian orthodoxy. Jin records show that the Jurchen rulers supported Buddhism throughout their rule. Many monasteries flourished under the Jin; particularly those designated as “Lu” (Vinaya) monasteries. Chan monasteries were also established in areas previously under the rule of the Song. The Jin period also saw the publication and distribution of a Chinese Buddhist canon. But unlike the Liao, the Jin canon was published in 1173 by private citizens instead of the government. The private sponsoring of such a monumental task suggests a very strong grassroots support for Buddhism and the rising economy of China under the Jin. The financial burdens of publishing and distributing a new version of the Buddhist canon must have been bourn by a surplus in production and wealth among Jin subjects. Although the government did not sponsor its own version of the canon, it continued to sponsor the carving of Buddhist scriptures at Fangshan – a project that had started many centuries back in the Sui.

As noted in *Chapter Four*, among the stone-carvings of Fangshan that survive to this day is the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*.²⁹ As I have demonstrated in the last chapter, the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* signifies an important juncture in the

²⁹ The Fangshan version of the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* is identical to the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* found in the Taishō canon. The Taishō version comes from the Korean canon.

development of the *Yuqie yankou* rite. Apart from the inclusion of new ritual-elements, the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* is the earliest attempt at fully incorporating the ghost-feeding rite into the larger rubric of the esoteric teachings and perhaps into the esoteric traditions that originated from Tang dynasty figures such as Śubhākarasiṃha and Amoghavajra. At the same time, the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* is also the first instance that a ghost-feeding rite is referred to as a “*Yuqie*” rite. “*Yuqie*,” as I have discussed in *Chapter Four*, was used as a referent to the more clearly articulated esoteric tradition found in Amoghavajra and others’ works. Although there are no other ghost-feeding liturgies or records that appear to be from the Liao (other than the Fangshan equivalent of the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*), we do know that esoteric teachings were known and practiced during this period.³⁰

The Xixia State and the Confluence of Tangut, Chinese and Tibetan Traditions

While the development of ghost-feeding rites in the Liao is obscure and evidence extremely sparse, the situation is very different when we turn to the Tangut Xixia. The Tangut Xixia kingdom originated in 983 when Li Jiqian 李繼遷

³⁰ For instance, there is a reference to monks in the Jin who practiced and promoted esoteric teachings can be found in the *Comprehensive Record of the Successive Generations of Buddhas and Patriarchs* (*Fozu lidai tongzai* 佛祖歷代通載, T2036:49.685b.). The *Comprehensive Record* was authored by Nianchang 念常 (1282-1344), a Linji monk (of the Yanqi branch 楊岐) and it is basically a chronicle of the Chan lineage from its mythical past in the seven Buddhas of the past down to the year 1333 (in the Yuan) when the text was completed. According to Nianchang, in the years between 1141 and 1149, a group of seven monks from northern India arrived at the Jin. They were reputed to have great healing and supernatural powers due to their “recitation of the spells of the various Buddhas.” These Indian monks resided in various places while they were in China and some of these places included Mount Wutai in Shanxi Province and Mount Jizu (*Jizushan* 鷄足山) in modern-day Yunnan Province. Mount Wutai was at that time an active center of pilgrimage for Buddhists from both China and the borderlands. It was also apparently host to a particular blend of Buddhism that combined the teachings and practices of the Huayan and esoteric traditions.

(963-1004) launched an independence movement in the Ordos area in western China.³¹ At the height of its power in the twelfth century, Xixia controlled both the Ordos and Kansu corridor.³² The Tangut people referred to themselves as “Mi” and spoke a language that is often classified as a branch of the Tibeto-Burman family. Occasionally referred to as Dangxiang 黨項 by the Chinese and Mi-nyag by the Tibetans, the Xixia state adhered to a religion and culture that was highly influenced and informed by both Song China and Tibet. In particular, the Tangut royal family was renowned for their personal devotion to Buddhism which also translated to public policies.

Although Tangut Buddhism eventually took on a more Tibetan character, it was strongly influenced by Chinese Buddhism in its formation period.³³ Their more powerful neighbor – the Chinese rulers of the Song – exhibited an open and accommodating attitude to Buddhism and probably saw it as an important factor in matters of international diplomacy between China and its neighbors both far and near. Specifically, as Ruth Dunnell argued, “The Buddhist activities of the first four Song emperors in particular... shaped the environment in which Tangut Buddhism emerged

³¹ The Ordos covers the steppe region within the loop of the Yellow River. In the present day, it covers the areas of Ningxia, Shaanxi, Gansu, and Inner Mongolia.

³² Ruth Dunnell, “The Hsi Hsia” in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 6, edited by Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 154. The Xixia kingdom was surrounded on the four sides with the Liao to its northeast, the Song to its southeast, the Uighurs to its northwest and the Tibetans to its southwest.

³³ For a discussion of the importance of the Chinese Buddhism in early Tangut Buddhism – especially of the Chan and Huayan lineages, see K. J. Solonin, “Tangut Chan Buddhism and Guifeng Zongmi,” *Zhongguo foxue xuebao* 11 (1998): 365-424.

and began developing.”³⁴ Although scholarship up until recently often characterized Buddhism in the Song period as a “fall” or “degeneration” from its days of glory in the Tang, we now know that Buddhism in the Song is far from this biased and prejudiced evaluation. In fact, the “days of glory” in the Tang were partly an imagined past produced by monks in the Song. The Song saw a steady flow of Indian monks and scholars arriving in China with new texts. The Song emperors sponsored translation projects, financed the printing and distribution of the Chinese Buddhist canon and also sponsored Chinese pilgrims to India. Xixia, in fact, made four requests for the Song Chinese Buddhist canon between the years 1031 and 1058 and eventually translated the entire Song *Kaibao* canon (*Kaibao zang* 開寶藏) into the newly created Tangut script.

However, as Xia and Song relations intensified and conflicts became more frequent, the Xia rulers began to turn to the Tibetans for their religion. During the Tiansheng 天盛 period (1149-69), the Xixia emperor Renxiao 仁孝 (r. 1139-1193) establishes the office of Buddhist imperial preceptor (*dishi* 帝師) and invites Tibetan clerics to court.³⁵ In particular, the hierarchs of several bKa'-brgyud-pa sub-sects appeared to have maintained close ties with the Xixia rulers. According to a biography of 'Jig-rten mgon-po, the founder of the 'Bri-gung bKa'-brgyud-pa, a

³⁴ Dunnell, *The Great State*, 4.

³⁵ Dunnell, *The Great State*, xxiv.

statue of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī was sent by ‘Jig-rten mgon-po to the Xixia emperor Xiangzong (r.1206-1211) in 1207. This gift was dispatched to the Xixia emperor after the emperor sent lavish gifts of silk and gold entreating the auspices of the hierarch.³⁶ We also know that apart from the ‘Bri-gung bKa’-brgyud-pa, the Karma and ‘Ba’-rom bKa’-brgyud-pa hierarchs were also active in Xixia. In fact, several of these Tibetan hierarchs were appointed as “Imperial Preceptors” (Tib. *ti shri*) at the Xixia court in the early 1200’s.³⁷ The patronage of bKa’-brgyud-pa hierarchs by the Xixia court is thus best understood in the context of the emerging centers of powers in Tibet based on the rise of influential monastic institutions and related family clans in the thirteenth century.

On the less mundane side of things, surviving sources show that the Tanguts were not only passive recipients of Buddhism from China and Tibet but active agents in the mastery, interpretation and propagation of Buddhism as well. Tibetan

³⁶ E. Gene Smith, “Introduction,” in *Mnyam-med ‘Bri-gung-pa chen-po skyob-pa ‘Jig-ten mgon-po’ I bka’-‘bum* (New Delhi, 1969), I-2. It is worth noting that 1207 was also the year when the Mongols under the leadership of Chinggis Khan started their military campaign against Xixia. ‘Jig-rten mgon-po’s gift of the Mañjuśrī image was clearly related to the Xixia royal family’s devoted patronage of Mount Wutai, the sacred mountain of Mañjuśrī since Tang times. Furthermore, as Raoul Birnbaum pointed out, aside from personifying wisdom, Mañjuśrī by the Tang dynasty has also been regarded as a protector of the state. In particular, later Tibetan sources identify Avalokiteśvara with Tibet and Mañjuśrī with China. ‘Jig-rten mgon-po’s gift of a Mañjuśrī to the Xixia emperor when Xixia was under attack by the Mongols was clearly more than a gesture of gratitude for gifts received earlier. For the cult of Mañjuśrī in China, see Raoul Birnbaum, *Studies on the Mysteries of Mañjuśrī* (Society for the Study of Chinese Religions Monograph 2, 1983), 9.

³⁷ See Elliot Sperling’s “Lama to the King of Hsia,” *The Journal of the Tibet Society* 7 (1987): 31-50. In this article, Sperling argues that the Tanguts set the precedence for the later Mongol model of the priest-king relationship that characterized (and complicated) the relationship between political China and Tibet. Sperling, in yet another article on the Tangut Xixia background to Mongol-Tibetan relations, also points out that the strained relationship between Khubilai Khan and several ‘bKa-brgyud hierarchs such as Karma Pakshi might have to do with the fact that these ‘bKa-brgyud hierarchs were once the imperial preceptors to the Tangut Xixia kingdom which the Mongols crushed in 1227. See, Sperling, “Rtsa-mi Lo-tsa-ba,” 801-24.

religious-histories (Tib. *chos 'byung*) record numerous names of Buddhist masters and adepts in Tibet who were of Tangut origins.³⁸ Elliot Sperling's article "Rtsa-mi Lo-tsā-ba Sangs-rgyas grags-pa and the Tangut Background to Early Mongol-Tibetan Relations" discusses the case of a Tangut Buddhist who apparently became a master to prominent Tantric scholars and practitioners in India. This same Rtsa-mi Lo-tsā-ba was apparently born in Mi-nyag and later traveled to Tibet and India to become a noted *siddha* there.³⁹ Thus, it is clear that by late twelfth century, Xixia was already an active center of Buddhism and in particular a center for of esoteric Buddhist teachings deriving from both India and Tibet.

In consonance with their preference for the esoteric teachings, later Xixia emperors (from the twelfth century on) also supported the printing and distribution of a great variety of esoteric texts.⁴⁰ Translations of new esoteric texts from India apparently also occurred during this period as evidenced in *Collection on Rebirth (in the Pure Land) through the Causes and Conditions of Secret Spells* (Mizhou yuanyin wangsheng ji 密咒緣因往生集, henceforth *Causes and Conditions of Secret*

³⁸ For example, we read of an unidentified monk from Mi-nyag (who was apparently ordained in the Chinese Buddhist tradition) who was a chaplain (*mchod-gnas*) to the Tibetan king Khri-sron lde-btsan (Roerich, 789), a certain Mi-nyag-pa Rin-chen rgyal-mtshan who was a master of the Female-gCod (Mo-gCod) lineage, a Mi-nyag sGom-rims (Roerich, 996), a disciple of Phag-mo-gr-pa (1110-1170) who built a hermitage in the 'Bri-gung area to the northwest of Lhasa where later in 1179 'Jig-rten mgon-po established his main monastery and "founded" the 'Bri-gung bka-brgyud-pa (Roerich, 566) and others.

³⁹ He was also instrumental in the transmission of the famous *Kālacakra Tantra* to Tibet as he was the master who gave those teachings to Rgwa lo-tsā-ba Gzhon-nu-dpal (1110/1114-1198/1202) who was at first a reluctant student; apparently complaining of the national origins of Rtsa-mi Lo-tsā-ba. See Sperling, "Rtsa-mi lo-tsā-ba," 801.

⁴⁰ Lu, 496.

Spells).⁴¹ Purportedly compiled in 1200 by Zhiguang 智廣 and Huizhen 慧真 of the Xixia kingdom, the *Causes and Conditions of Secret Spells* credits the translation of the spells in it to a certain foreign monk identified as Jingang zhuang 金剛幢.⁴² The *Causes and Conditions of Secret Spells* brings together a collection of spells that were probably some of the most popular during its time of compilation. It contains a total of thirty-one spells – spells such as the “Great Wheel Gnosis King Spell” (*Mahācakravidyārāja*), the “Purifying the Dharma-realm Spell,” the “Three Syllable Spell,” the “Zhunti Spell,” the “Six Syllable Spell,” the “Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva Five-Syllable Heart Spell” (*Wenshu pusa wuzi xinzhou* 文殊菩薩五字心咒), the “Amitābha Buddha Single-Syllable Spell” (*Amituo fo yizi zhou* 阿彌陀佛一字咒), the “Vajrasattva Hundred Syllable Spell,” the “Twelve Causes and Conditions Spell” and several spells for summoning rain.⁴³ Several of the spells collected in this Xixia text can be found in the Yuan and post-Yuan ghost-feeding texts – spells such as the “Great Wheel Gnosis King Spell,” the “Three Syllable Spell,” the “Zhunti Spell,” the “Six Syllable Spell,” the “Vajrasattva Hundred Syllable Spell” and the “Twelve Causes and Conditions Spell.”

⁴¹ T1956:46.1007a-1013. The earliest appearance of *Causes and Conditions of Secret Spells* in an official canon is in the so-called *Southern Canon* (*Nanzang* 南藏) and the Taishō edition of this text was originally carved in 1615.

⁴² T1956:46.1007a.

⁴³ T1956:46.1007-1013.

While all these spells can be found in other larger texts – usually esoteric *sūtras* – the origins of “Vajrasattva Hundred Syllable Spell” is unknown in China. Although this spell is very important and commonly used in Tibet since the so-called second dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet starting from the eleventh century, the *Causes and Conditions of Secret Spells* is the earliest occurrence of the “Vajrasattva Hundred Syllable Spell” in the Chinese Buddhist canon. While the *Causes and Conditions of Secret Spells* always provides a source for its spells or quotes a passage from the original source of each of the spells, it fails to do so in the case of the “Vajrasattva Hundred Syllable Spell.” Instead, the compilers of the *Causes and Conditions of Secret Spells* merely state that “this spell has the immeasurable merits and (is for) making amends to errors” committed and “it is scattered in various *sūtras*.”⁴⁴ Despite being “scattered in various *sūtras*,” the compilers do not (or perhaps cannot) provide us with any specific references to texts in the official Chinese canon bearing this spell.⁴⁵ My speculation at this point is that the “Vajrasattva Hundred Syllable Spell” came to be included into the *Causes and Conditions of Secret Spells* under the influence of Tibetan Buddhism, which as I have suggested

⁴⁴ T1956:46.1012c.

⁴⁵ Interestingly, in discussing the origins of this same spell in *Nges-don sgron-me* (a commentary on an 16th century ritual text), the 19th century Tibetan master, Jamgon Kongtrul (‘Jam-mgon Kong-sprul blo-gros mtha’-yas-pa, 1813-99) similarly does not provide a specific source for this spell but instead uses the familiar words of “taught in many tantras.” In this particular discussion, he points out that there exists several different types of spells that are referred to as “hundred syllable” and while he provides the textual sources of the other spells, he does not give any for the “Vajrasattva Hundred Syllable Spell.” See, Jamgon Kongtrul, *The Torch of Certainty*, trans. Judith Hanson (Boulder: Shambhala Publications, 1977), 79-80.

earlier, was an important part of Xixia religion. We should recall that by the time the *Causes and Conditions of Secret Spells* was compiled in the year 1200, the Xixia court was already heavily invested in the support of Tibetan Buddhist lineages and their various hierarchs.

The Mengshan Food-Bestowal Rite (Mengshan shishi yi 蒙山施食儀) – A Tangut Text?

An even more significant connection exists between the Tanguts and the ghost-feeding traditions that I am investigating. This connection is to be found in the person of a relatively obscure monk identified variously as “Budong” 不動, “Budong Jingang” 不動金剛, and “Ganlu Dashi” 甘露大師.⁴⁶ It remains difficult to ascertain if the names refer to one or several persons but an early twentieth century collected biographies of monks considers the various names to refer to a mid-twelfth century Indian monk who was active in the Tangut Xixia state. Hence, according to the entry for “the *śramaṇa* Shi Budong of the Huguo Renwang Monastery (*Huguo renwang si* 護國仁王寺, Nation-Protecting Benevolent Sovereign Monastery) of the Xixia (in the) Song (period),” in Yu Qian’s *New Continuation to the Biographies of Monks in Four Chapters (Xinxu gaoseng zhuan siji 新續高僧傳四集)*, Budong’s

⁴⁶ Dunnell points out that “the *Song huiyao* mentions a Ganlu dashi (Sweet Dew Master) active at Mount Meng in the 1180’s.” See Dunnell, *The Great State*, 33. *Song huiyao* 宋會要 is an institutional history of the Song dynasty written by the late Qing scholar Wang Yunhai 王雲海. According to Dunnell, an earlier reference that associates this Ganlu Dashi with Mount Meng can be found in the early Qing text, *Longshu yu wen* 隴蜀餘聞 by Wang Zhishen 王士禎 (1634-1711). See Dunnell, *The Great State*, 191, n. 41.

Indian name was Akṣobhyavajra (which translates into Chinese as “Budong Jingang” or “Unshakeable Vajra”).⁴⁷ Archeological evidence discovered in the early 1990’s confirms the existence of a Xixia cleric by the name of Budong Jingang and *sūtra* fragments in Tangut also contain references to a “national preceptor” (*guoshi* 國師) by the same name. As we have seen above, several Tibetan clerics have already been appointed as “imperial preceptors” by the Xixia court by the early 1200’s.⁴⁸ There is thus the possibility that Budong was of Tibetan rather than Indian descent. But until further evidence is found (perhaps in Tibetan sources?), we can only conjecture. It is, however, safe to assume that there was a Budong or Budong Jingang who was active in the Tangut area during the late Xixia period.⁴⁹ According to Yu Qian, Budong was considered thoroughly adept in both the exoteric and esoteric teachings and understood completely the nature and appearances of all phenomena.⁵⁰ Having journeyed to Xixia, he resided at the Huguo (Renwang) Monastery and spent his time translating the esoteric division of the Buddha’s teachings and “spreading widely the ‘Wisdom’ and ‘Adamantine’ teachings.”⁵¹ The biography also tells us

⁴⁷ Yu Qian, 7.

⁴⁸ Sperling, “Lama to the King of Hsia,” 32.

⁴⁹ Dunnell, *The Great State*, 33.

⁵⁰ Yu Qian, *Xinxu gaoseng zhuan siji* (Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1977), 7. “Nature and appearances” is how I translated “*xingxiang*” 性相. Although “*xingxiang*” could be an abbreviation for Mādhyamaka and Yogacāra philosophical systems, it is unlikely that this is what “*xingxiang*” refers to here.

⁵¹ Yu Qian, 7. I have translated the “*bore jingang*” of “*hongyang bore jingang*” as “Wisdom” and “Adamantine” teachings rather than as a compound (i.e. Wisdom Vajra). For a different translation, see Dunnell, *The Great State*, 32.

that Budong was addressed as the “*Vajra Superior Master*” (*jingang shangshi* 金

剛上師)⁵² during esoteric empowerments.⁵³

Most relevant to us is the latter part of Budong’s biography which tells us that after Huguo Renwang Monastery, Budong moved to Mount Meng in Sichuan province and while there composed several ghost-feeding liturgies. According to the biography,

Later (Budong) moved to Mount Meng in Sichuan. (While there he), took the “Yuqie Food-Bestowal Rite” (*Yuqie shishi yigui* 瑜伽施食儀軌) of Vajrabodhi of the Tang dynasty and re-translated and re-stated it, naming it “Yankou” (i.e. “Burning-Mouth”). Furthermore, he expanded the small food-bestowal rite and called it “Mount Meng Method” (*Mengshan fa* 蒙山法). On account of his using the ambrosial Dharma-food to liberate orphaned(-souls), he was also addressed as “Ambrosia Dharma Master” (*Ganlu Fashi* 甘露法師).⁵⁴

The biography tells us that Budong’s ghost-feeding rites were transmitted to several of his disciples who in turn widely propagated these rites. Among the disciples named is a certain Jingang zhuang (金剛幢).⁵⁵ These events purportedly took place around the beginning of the 13th century. Could this Jingang zhuang be related to the Jingang zhuang credited in the *Causes and Conditions of Secret Spells* as a

⁵² We should recall that “*Vajra Superior Master*” is used in several places in the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy to refer to the esoteric Master and is considered equal to the Three Jewels. See Kamata, 833b, 840b and 841b.

⁵³ Dunnell understands this part of the biography as saying that “*Vajra Superior Master*” was a name Budong was given during “his consecration.” This understanding, though plausible, is unlikely as the title “*Vajra Superior Master*” is normally used in reference to the master conferring esoteric empowerments rather than the disciples receiving the empowerments. Furthermore, the grammar of the relevant sentence in the biography actually indicates that “*Vajra Superior Master*” was how others addressed Budong in the context of esoteric empowerments. See Dunnell, *The Great State*, 32.

⁵⁴ Yu Qian 7. For a different translation, see Dunnell, *The Great State*, 32-33.

⁵⁵ Yu Qian 8.

translator of esoteric teachings active in the Xixia state?⁵⁶ If they are indeed the same person, then we can date Budong to the late 1100's as the *Causes and Conditions of Secret Spells* was completed in 1200 and Budong's biography lists Jingang zhuang as one of Budong's disciples. This will also link Budong to the compilation of the *Causes and Conditions of Secret Spells*; a significant link since the *Causes and Conditions of Secret Spells* appears to be the source of some of the spells used in the *Yuqie yankou* liturgies and Budong himself is linked to at least one *Yuqie yankou* text.⁵⁷

Although Budong's biography clearly has some factual errors, such as attributing the "Yuqie Food-Bestowal Rite" to Vajrabodhi instead of Amoghavajra, it still offers us several intriguing points to consider. According to this biography, Budong apparently had a hand in re-editing or re-codifying a ghost-feeding liturgy which he entitled "Yankou." As Dunnell points out, there is a ghost-feeding liturgy in the *Jiaxing Canon* 嘉興藏 (completed in 1620) that bears an attribution to Budong.⁵⁸ This ghost-feeding liturgy, known as the *Yankou Food-Bestowal Rite of the Collected Essentials of Yuqie* (*Yuqie jiyao yankou shishi yi* 瑜伽集要餤口施食儀), credits Amoghavajra for its initial "translation", "Budong Jingang of the Huguo

⁵⁶ T1956:46.1007a. See my discussion above on the editors of T1956 and Jingang zhuang's role in the compilation of T1956.

⁵⁷ *Zhonghua dazang jing*, 2nd series, 47:30134-30159. See discussion that follows.

⁵⁸ Dunnell, *The Great State*, 33 and 191, n. 39.

Renwang Monastery of the Xixia” for its “re-collating” and a certain Shoudeng 受登 (1607-1675) for its “re-arrangement.”⁵⁹ This relatively late attribution of a ghost-feeding liturgy to Budong was probably the source of Yu Qian’s assertion that Budong re-codified a ghost-feeding liturgy with the abbreviated title of “Yankou.”

Other than this liturgy, the biography also mentions Budong codifying a ghost-feeding liturgy known as “Mount Meng Method.” “Mount Meng Method” was apparently based on an earlier and shorter “food-bestowal rite” (*xiao shishi* 小施食).⁶⁰ Again, it is unclear what sources Yu Qian relied on to provide us with this particular detail of Budong’s liturgical production. However, there is in fact a ghost-feeding liturgy that dates to 1600 identifying itself as the “Mount Meng Food-Bestowal Rite” (*Mengshan shishi yi* 蒙山施食儀, henceforth *Mengshan*). This liturgy can be found included in the breviary that Zhuhong redacted and published in 1600 as *Collected Essentials of Various Sūtras for Daily Recitation* (*Zhujing risong jiyao* 諸經日誦集要). Several scholars have suggested that the main body of Zhuhong’s *Daily Recitation* was probably first put together in the Song.⁶¹ There are

⁵⁹ *Zhonghua dazang jing*, 2nd series, 47:30134. The attribution to Shoudeng is problematic. When the Jiaying canon was completed in 1620, Shoudeng was only thirteen years old. Therefore, this attribution was either added later or the entire liturgy was inserted in the Jiaying canon later. Shoudeng was a late Ming, early Qing period monk who also compiled and redacted other ritual texts such as *Mohe zhiguan guanke* 摩訶止觀貫科, *Yaoshi sanmei xingfa* 藥師三昧行法 and *Dabei chanke* 大悲懺科.

⁶⁰ Yu Qian, 7.

⁶¹ Marcus Günzel, *Die Morgen- und Abendliturgie der chinesischen Buddhisten* (Göttingen: Seminar für Indologie und Buddhismuskunde, 1994) and Chen Pi-yen, “Morning and Evening Service: The Practice of Ritual, Music, and Doctrine in the Chinese Buddhist Monastic Community” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1999), 14.

however, no extant copies of breviaries from the Song period. This same liturgy turns up again in another breviary – the *Chan School Daily Recitation* (*Chanmen risong*) – not too long after Zhuhong’s *Daily Recitation* was completed.⁶² The *Mengshan* rite quickly became part of the daily ritual-program performed at most Chinese Buddhist monasteries and to this day is a standard rite in the afternoon service.

Although several sources identify the *Mengshan* rite with the twelfth century Budong of Xixia, all these sources do not go back further than the seventeenth century. One reference datable to the late-seventeenth/early-eighteenth century, places Budong in the Mount Meng area – referring to Budong as “Ganlu Dashi” and crediting him for planting the original tea plants that later contributed to Mount Meng’s fame.⁶³ As for the earliest extant version of the *Mengshan* liturgy, it can be found in Zhuhong’s breviary completed in 1600. This breviary, however, does not have an author for its *Mengshan* liturgy. It is worth noting that the breviary also does not comment on the authorship of the “Repentance Liturgy” (*Chanhui wen* 懺悔文) which later traditions also credit Budong for compiling.⁶⁴ Although the

⁶² Chen, 14. According to Chen, an edition – possibly the earliest extant – of the *Chan School Daily Recitation* was published as early as 1662 by Lengyan Monastery (*Lengyan si* 楞嚴寺). That the contents of both Zhuhong’s breviary and the *Chan School Daily Recitation* are very similar suggests that both were based on an earlier source, possibly the breviary that Zhuhong referred to in the preface to his newly redacted breviary. See Zhuhong, *Lianchi dashi quanji*, 1715.

⁶³ Dunnell, *The Great State*, 33 and 191, n. 41.

⁶⁴ The earliest explicit reference to Budong’s authorship of this “Repentance Liturgy” is in Budong’s biography provided by Yu Qian. See, Yu Qian, 7.

possibility still exists for Budong to be the author of the *Mengshan* liturgy and codifier of a *Yuqie yankou* liturgy, what we can say with more certainty is that the association between Budong and these liturgies was solidified by Yu Qian's collection of hagiographies published in the early twentieth century. As Dunnell suggests, we can consider Yu Qian's collection as providing "a convenient summary of popular hagiography."⁶⁵ But until we are able to locate more sources regarding Budong and the *Mengshan* and *Yuqie yankou* liturgies he supposedly compiled, Yu Qian's collection can only be a "summary of popular hagiography" current in the early twentieth century. At best, we can regard Yu Qian's entry for Budong as an early twentieth century attempt to reconstruct an historical episode from the twelfth century based on a variety of historical, liturgical and popular sources.

An analysis of the *Mengshan* rite shows that its ritual structure and content are fairly standard compared to most of the available ghost-feeding sources. Just like many other ghost-feeding liturgies, the *Mengshan* rite opens with the "Breaking the Earth-prisons Gāthā" (originally from the *Huayan jing*) followed by a couple of spells. The next section consists of repetitions of homage to a group of divinities: the Three Jewels, Śākyamuni, Guanyin, Dizang and Ānanda. What is interesting here is that this section begins by paying homage to the *Huayan jing*: "NAMO DA

⁶⁵ Dunnell, *The Great State*, 188, n. 7.

FANG'GUANG FO HUAYAN JING" (南無大方廣佛華嚴經)⁶⁶ Although the use of the "Breaking the Earth-prisons *Gāthā*" is pervasive in ghost-feeding liturgies (not only in China but in Korea as well), and this *gāthā* is from the *Huayan jing*, the specific homage-formula for the *Huayan jing* that we find here in the *Mengshan* liturgy is not replicated in the other ghost-feeding liturgies that I have looked at. A speculation that is worth considering here is that this emphasis on the *Huayan jing* might be related to a particular trend of Buddhism that we have discussed earlier in which the esoteric teachings were combined with the teachings of the *Huayan jing* – the type of Buddhism that we find current in the Liao, Jin and Xixia kingdoms.

Like other ghost-feeding texts, the *Mengshan* liturgy contains a litany for the transmission of the Buddhist refuge and precepts. As in other transmission of precepts rites, this includes repentance and the taking of the bodhisattva vows. Unlike the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy we analyzed in *Chapter Three*, the *Mengshan* rite does not provide any spells for this litany section. Aside from Huayan influence, Chan influence is also evident in the *Mengshan* rite. The segment on taking the bodhisattva vows has the standard "Four Great Vows" as well as the version of the same vows found in the *Platform Sūtra*. Other spells such as the "Eradicating Fixed-Karma," "Eradicating Karmic Obstructions," "Opening Throats," "Samaya

⁶⁶ Zhuhong, 1784-1785.

Precepts,” “Transforming Food” (*Bianshi* 變食, i.e. the ghost-feeding *dhāraṇī*) and the “Ambrosia Dhāraṇī,” “Single Character Water Disc,” and “Milk Ocean” – spells that are commonly found in other ghost-feeding rites – are also part of this liturgy. Like many other ghost-feeding liturgies, the *Mengshan* rite has a section paying homage to a group of Buddhas closely associated with ghost-feeding. In this case, the liturgy gives a list of seven Buddhas. The seven Buddhas given here are different from the list of seven in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*. As we recall, the earliest list of Buddhas related to ghost-feeding was four (the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*), followed by the addition of a fifth Buddha in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* and finally expanding to a list of seven in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*.⁶⁷ With the *Mengshan* rite, we also have a list of seven Buddhas but not identical to the list in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*. The *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*, the *Yuan Yuqie yankou* liturgy will preserve the list of seven Buddhas first assembled together in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*.⁶⁸ All later *Yuqie yankou* liturgies – including the one attributed to Budong himself – similarly keeps the list of seven first provided in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*. It is likely that the *Mengshan* list of seven Buddhas was developed in response to the list of seven in the other ghost-feeding rites but as its development occurred more within the

⁶⁷ See *Appendix 4* for a chart listing the expansion of the list of Buddhas associated with ghost-feeding rites.

line of development of the Tiantai ghost-feeding traditions, its list of seven Buddhas is different from the other development. Like Tiantai ghost-feeding traditions, the *Mengshan* does not utilize any *mudrās*.

Ghost-Feeding Liturgies in Yuan Monastic Codes

Before I discuss the history and content of the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*, an important text in the larger context of the development of *Yuqie yankou* rites, I will first discuss two other relevant ghost-feeding liturgies that can be dated to the Yuan dynasty. In terms of the two different developments of ghost-feeding rites that I first discussed in *Chapter Four*, the first text contains several new developments in ghost-feeding rites that will eventually be included in the later *Yuqie yankou* liturgies while the second text clearly belongs to the Song Tiantai ghost-feeding rites.

The first of the two liturgies I will treat in this section appears as an appendix to a monastic code known as the *Pure Rules of the Illusory Abode Hermitage* (*Huanzhu an qinggui* 幻住庵清規), a monastic code compiled by Zhongfeng Mingben 中峰明本 (1263-1323) for the private use of the community at Huanzhu Hermitage (“Illusory Abode Hermitage”), a hermitage built for him by a lay-disciple in 1317.⁶⁹ Zhongfeng Mingben was a Chan monk of the Yangqi 楊岐 branch of the

⁶⁹ See Chun-fang Yu, “Chung-feng Ming-pen and Ch’an Buddhism in the Yuan” in *Yuan Thought: Chinese Thought and Religion on the Mongols*, ed. Hok-lam Chan and Wm. Theodore de Bary (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 419-477.

Linji 臨濟 lineage, a branch of Chan that strongly advocated the practice of meditating on the “public cases” (*gong'an* 公案) as the most effective way of attaining Chan awakening. However, like many monks of his time, Mingben was also known for his accepting attitude towards other forms of Buddhism; considering all as solutions given by the Buddha to the existential problem of birth and death. Although continuously courted by both the high officials and emperor of the Yuan dynasty and ecclesiastical officials, Mingben avoided both, preferring to distance himself from both the political and religious authorities of his times. In spite of his indifference to them, he was greatly honored by them and was posthumously honored by later Yuan emperors with titles of “Chan master” (*chanshi* 禪師) and “national preceptor” (*guoshi* 國師). Furthermore, according to Chun-fang Yu,

Despite his eremitism, Ming-pen had attracted an international following. Among the disciples who either came to him in person or wrote to him for instructions were Japanese, Koreans, Tibetans, Mongols, Western Asians and Annamese. Because of Ming-pen, the kingdom of Nan-chao (in Yunnan) was converted to Ch'an Buddhism.⁷⁰

Mingben apparently built several hermitages in different places between the years 1298 and 1317; all given the name “Huanzhu Hermitage.” The *Pure Rules of the Illusory Abode Hermitage* was completed by Zhongfeng Mingben in 1317 and of particular interest to us is the ghost-feeding liturgy appended to the end of this

⁷⁰ Yu, “Chung-feng Ming-pen and Ch'an,” 430.

monastic code known as “Opening the Gates of Ambrosia” (*Kai ganlu men* 開甘露門) and with a subtitle of “Liturgy for the Universal Offering of Dharma-Food” (*Pushi fashi wen* 普施法食文). In analyzing Mingben’s ghost-feeding liturgy, several points merit our attention. It is clear that Mingben’s ghost-feeding rite has the ghost-feeding rite in the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* as its core. Moreover, its liturgical focus on Śākyamuni, Guanyin and Ānanda is clearly derived from the mythology of the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* in which Ānanda appeals to Śākyamuni for a method to overcome his problem who in turn provides Ānanda with a solution that he (i.e. Śākyamuni) himself first received from Guanyin.⁷¹ Thus, in what first appears to be a simple list of homages to popular Buddhist figures, we are able to discern the “lineage” or pedigree that a liturgy situates itself in. This is a pattern that is not only limited to ghost-feeding liturgies but is common to many other Chinese Buddhist liturgies.

Several parts of Mingben’s liturgy exhibit clear influences from the Song Tiantai ghost-feeding rites; in particular, Zunshi’s tenth century, *Food Bestowal Rite*⁷² discussed in the *Chapter Four*. Among them, the most obvious is the verse section consisting of eight seven-character lines beginning with “The pure drink and food

⁷¹ XZJ111.1005b.

⁷² XZJ101.429b.

empowered by the spiritual spell....”⁷³ This verse, which is, as we have seen, also included in the *Mengshan* liturgy in a slightly amended form, can be found in Zunshi’s *Food Bestowal Rite*.⁷⁴ Perhaps the presence of strong Tiantai elements in Mingben’s ghost-feeding liturgy should not be so surprising considering that one of the most important Huanzhu hermitages that Mingben resided at was located in Xiuzhou 秀州 in modern-day Zhejiang province. During the Southern Song period, Xiuzhou was a region rich with influential Tiantai public monasteries.

Aside from adopting certain Tiantai liturgical-forms, Mingben’s liturgy also appears to have been influenced by the other ghost-feeding textual tradition derived from the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*. Thus, unlike the Tiantai ghost-feeding liturgies, Mingben’s liturgy follows the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* in invoking five instead of four Buddhas – adding Ganluwang as the fifth Buddha.⁷⁵ Unlike the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* which substituted the original Duobao with Baosheng, Mingben’s liturgy retains Duobao. It appears that Mingben had access to a version of the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* that is similar to that found at Dunhuang and not the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*

⁷³ XZJ111.1006a.

⁷⁴ XZJ101.429b.

⁷⁵ XZJ111.1006a.

preserved now in the Taishō.⁷⁶ Although Mingben's liturgy is historically distant from Zunshi's and even further away from the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*, it is evident that continuities exist among ghost-feeding liturgies even when these liturgies are separated by time and in some cases by liturgical traditions.

A careful reading of Mingben's liturgy shows that it is a rite to be performed by a group led by a leader akin to the celebrant in present-day *Yuqie yankou* rites. There are sections in the liturgy where only the leader is delivering the text and there are other sections where the leader addresses the group, inviting them to join him in chanting selected sections.⁷⁷ When the spells are chanted, the ghosts invited to the rite are asked to "listen carefully with an utmost mind" (*zhixin diting* 至心諦聽).⁷⁸ What this suggests to us is that whereas the prose and verse sections are recited by the whole group on behalf of the ghosts, the spells are recited for the ghosts to hear. This framing of the liturgy suggests that Mingben believed in the power latent in the mere hearing of the recitation of spells. The ghosts need not recite the spells themselves nor have human proxies recite the spells in order to benefit from the spells. They simply have to listen to the recitation of the spells "with an utmost mind." Again, in terms of the development of ghost-feeding liturgies, Mingben's text

⁷⁶ See *Chapter Four* under the sub-section "The Case of the Buddhas in the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*" for the discussion on the development of the list of Buddhas found in early ghost-feeding liturgies.

⁷⁷ For example: "I invite all in the great assembly to chant harmoniously, in one voice" (*puqing dazhong tongsheng chenghe* 普請大眾同聲稱和), XZJ111.1006a

⁷⁸ XZJ111.1007b.

prefigured the extensive use of such “verse/prose plus spell” format in later *Yuqie yankou* liturgies.

Aside from Mingben’s ghost-feeding liturgy, we find yet another ghost-feeding liturgy that comes from the same time period. Like Mingben’s liturgy, this other liturgy is found in a monastic code compiled in the Yuan period known as *The Regulations of Lu Monasteries* (*Luyuan shigui* 律圓事規).⁷⁹ *The Regulations of Lu Monasteries* was published in 1325 by Xingwu Xinzong 省悟心宗 (d.u.) for the use of Lu monasteries. A master of the Lu tradition, Xinzong lamented that although Chan monasteries already had monastic codes, Lu monasteries were still lacking in such regulative codes. Thus, Xinzong apparently spent twenty years researching texts and consulting senior Lu masters before publishing his monastic code in 1325.⁸⁰ Embedded within this ten fascicle text is a short ghost-feeding liturgy entitled “Celebrant of Bestowal” (*shizhu* 施主).⁸¹ For the most part, the contents of Xinzong’s ghost-feeding liturgy is very close to Zunshi’s *Food Bestowal Rite* preserved in Zongxiao’s *Survey of Food-Bestowal Rites* discussed in the last chapter. Instead of having only the main ghost-feeding spell, Xinzong’s liturgy also has the “Ambrosia Dhāraṇī.” The other addition in Xinzong’s liturgy is a verse section that

⁷⁹ I have to thank Dan Stevenson for bringing my attention to the ghost-feeding liturgy in *Luyuan shigui*.

⁸⁰ Yifa, 50.

⁸¹ XZJ106.93a.

is attributed to Nanyue Huisi and originally found in Zongxiao's *Survey of Food-Bestowal Rites*.⁸² Although this section does not appear in any of the later ghost-feeding rites, it is still used in the *Presenting Offerings to the Buddhas* (*Foqian shanggong* 佛前上供) rite performed at many Chinese Buddhist monasteries on a daily basis.⁸³ Once again, we see how liturgies frequently incorporate earlier material and in turn become the basis of liturgies produced later. While some material gets left behind or is re-worked, others endure for more than a millennium (like Nanyue Huisi's verse); sometimes in the same liturgical context and in other cases, not.

The Collected Essentials of the Yoga of Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite (Yuqie jiyao yankou shishi yi 瑜伽集要焰口施食儀) and its Yuan Origins

According to the opinion of Zhou Shujia, *The Collected Essentials of the Yoga of Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* (T1320, the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*) was probably composed during the Yuan dynasty. Zhou's theory is largely based on a close investigation of the transliteration system used for the spells in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*. The differences between the transliteration systems used in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* and the *Flaming-Mouth*

⁸² XZJ101.425b.

⁸³ Kamata, 452b.

Food-Bestowal Rite are obvious and easily observed since all the spells in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* are actually included in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*.⁸⁴ A comparison between the transliteration used in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* and the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* which we have established in *Chapter Four* as a Tang period translation also shows a clear difference. Although it is difficult to prove Zhou's assertion that the transliteration of spells in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* clearly places its composition in the Yuan, it is clear that the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* was probably composed no later than the Yuan. The earliest extant version of the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* is to be found in the *Southern Canon* (*Nanzang* 南藏). This canon was published between the years 1372-1403 under the auspices of the first Ming emperor, Hongwu. It is reasonable to assume that the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* must have been in circulation for some period of time prior to the early years of the Ming dynasty for it to be included in the *Southern Canon*.

The composition of the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* marks an important milestone in the development of *Yuqie yankou* rites as it contains several important elements previously unknown to ghost-feeding rites such as the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food* and the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*, and certainly alien

⁸⁴ Zhou, "Yankou," 398.

to the Tiantai ghost-feeding rites. The *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* also contains ritual and textual elements that are probably derived from Tibetan sources. Furthermore, if the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* initiated the process of “esotericizing” the ghost-feeding rite originally inspired by the *Burning-Face/Flaming-Mouth Sūtra*, the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* completed the process. All later *Yuqie yankou* liturgies – from the Ming period on – has the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* embedded in them and can be rightfully considered as merely elaborations of the basic liturgy represented by the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*. Although the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* marks a radical transition in the history of the *Yuqie yankou* rite, it still maintains a textual continuity with earlier ghost-feeding rites.

As pointed out earlier, all the spells found in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* are actually also present in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*. In fact, not only are the spells from the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* retained in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*, but even most of the verse and prose sections of the liturgical part of the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* are reproduced in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*. The *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*’s textual continuity with the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* is even more obvious when we realize that the notes provided in smaller print in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* (notes describing

how each of the *mudrās* should be formed) are repeated verbatim in the equivalent sections in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*. It is clear that the author(s) of the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* had access to the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* and used it as the template for the production of the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*. The following chart shows the relationship between the contents of the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* and the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*:

<u>The <i>Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra</i></u>	<u>The <i>Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite</i></u>
1) Announcement & Invitation	1) Taking Refuge in Superior Master & Three Jewels 2) Generating Bodhi-mind 3) Purifying Hands 4) Mahācakravidyārāja 5) Litany for Taking refuge and generating Bodhi-mind 6) Invitation to Three Jewels and other deities 7) Manifesting Altar through <i>Mudrā</i> 8) Thirty-five Buddhas Confession, <i>Heart Sūtra</i> and Seven-branched Worship 9) Announcement & Invitation 10) Manifesting Offerings with the Mind 11) Three-pointed <i>Mudrā</i> & Spell 12) Transforming into Emptiness Spell 13) Three Syllable Spell 14) Presenting Food Spell 15) Entering Guanyin Samadhi

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 2) Breaking the Earth-Prisons | 16) Breaking the Earth-Prisons |
| 3) Summoning the Hungry Ghosts | 17) Summoning the Hungry Ghosts |
| 4) Summoning Offenses | 18) Summoning Offenses |
| 5) Eradicating Offenses | 19) Eradicating Offenses |
| 6) Purifying (Fixed) Karma | 20) Purifying (Fixed) Karma |
| 7) Repentance | 21) Repentance |
| 8) Bestowing Ambrosia | 22) Bestowing Ambrosia |
| 9) Opening Throats | 23) Opening Throats |
| 10) Names of Seven Buddhas | 24) Names of Seven Buddhas |
| 11) Taking Refuge Litany | 25) Taking Refuge Litany |
| | 26) Taking Refuge Spell |
| 12) Generating Bodhi-Mind | 27) Generating Bodhi-Mind |
| 13) Samaya-Precepts | 28) Samaya-Precepts |
| 14) Bestowing Food | 29) Bestowing Food |
| 15) Single-Character | 30) Single-Character |
| | 31) Spell for Hindered Ghosts |
| 16) Universal Offering | 32) Universal Offering |
| 17) Send-Off | 33) Send-Off |
| | 34) Zunsheng Spell (Uṣṇīavijayā
Dhāraṇī) |
| | 35) Verses on the Six Realms |
| | 36) Verses on Generating Vows and
Transferring Merits |
| | 37) Verses of Auspiciousness |
| | 38) Hundred-Syllable Spell |

Immediately what one recognizes is that the author of the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* has embedded the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* into this new ghost-feeding liturgy and added opening and closing sections. The new opening and closing sections provide this new liturgy with a much more complex ritual framing. As we will see later, much of the elements in these opening and closing sections have

their equivalents in Tibetan Buddhism, thus suggesting perhaps that Zhou's dating of this text to the Yuan might not be too far off the mark.

As I already noted in *Chapter One* in my review of previous scholarship on the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*, one of the most significant additions introduced in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* is the self-identification of the celebrant of the rite with Guanyin. All the ghost-feeding rites prior to the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* do not contain this transformation of the celebrant from an ordinary human being to the exalted state of a divine being. This type of self-identification with a Buddha or bodhisattva is often regarded as one of the hallmarks of “esoteric” Buddhist practices. Whereas other non-esoteric meditations and rituals do involve the use of spells and the visualization or mental construction of images – either mental-images of Buddhas, other divinities or heavenly/pure lands, the manifestation of offerings or the accomplishment of certain activities or supernatural feats – the imagination or visualization of one's own body, speech and mind transforming into a Buddha or a bodhisattva is said to be uniquely “esoteric” in nature.⁸⁵ While the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* attempted to situate itself more clearly in the esoteric rubric of the Buddha's teachings by insisting that only those who have “one should rely on the method of the *acārya*” and “receive the

⁸⁵ This is known in the Tibetan tradition as “deity yoga” (Tib. *lha'i rnal byor*). For one Tibetan view of the centrality of deity yoga in esoteric Buddhist practice, see Tsong-kha-pa, *Deity Yoga*, trans. Jeffrey Hopkins (1981, Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1987), 9-14, 47-62.

Samaya-precepts and enter the Great Maṇḍala to receive empowerment,”⁸⁶ The *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* takes this a step further by incorporating the meditation-ritual of identifying oneself with Guanyin into the *Yuqie yankou* rite. As the Ming dynasty Zhuhong explains later in his commentary on the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy he redacted, this identification with Guanyin allows the celebrant to “universally benefit multitudes of beings in an instant.”⁸⁷

The appearance of several of the new elements found in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* can be more easily explained or understood if it was indeed produced in the Yuan. As I have discussed above, one of the side-effects of the rule of the Mongols of China is the arrival and residency of a large number of Tibetan Buddhist clerics in China proper. These Tibetan clerics were perceived by the ruling Yuan court as masters of complex but efficacious rituals and possessors of great spiritual and magical powers. Although the Yuan court also supported Chinese Buddhist clerics and their monasteries, the Chinese monastics were clearly subordinates to the Tibetans. Despite pressures to compete for patronage by offering similar promises of military success, national security, civil obedience and prosperity, and personal longevity and wealth to the Mongol rulers, Chinese Buddhists for the

⁸⁶ T1318:21.469b.

⁸⁷ XZJ104.863a.

most part did not appear to have adopted the esoteric teachings, practices and rites provided by the Tibetans.

One of the few exceptions, however, appears to be the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*. Although the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* is clearly based on an earlier, Chinese Buddhist ghost-feeding liturgy (i.e. the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*), some of its ritual elements are highly suggestive of Tibetan influences. The first of these elements can be found at the opening of the rite where the celebrant takes refuge in the Three Jewels *and* the “Superior Master” (*shangshi* 上師).⁸⁸ This term “Superior Master” is rare within the Chinese Buddhist milieu. A quick search of the electronic version of the Taishō canon yields only a few scattered references, all no earlier than the Yuan. Furthermore, the master of esoteric teachings in Tang esoteric sources is referred to as “*acārya*” (阿闍梨) and even the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* uses “*acārya*” to refer to the teacher who initiates one into esoteric practices. What is the source of this term “Superior Master”? Could it be a Chinese approximate translation of the Tibetan “lama” (Tib. *bla ma*) which is often glossed as “no higher”?

Furthermore, from the perspective of Chinese Buddhist ritual conventions, the act of taking refuge in the “Superior Master” is similarly an oddity. Although the

⁸⁸ T1320:21.473c.

role of the master is very important in Tang esoteric traditions, there is no evidence of the master being considered an object of refuge on an equal footing with the Three Jewels. But here in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*, the “Superior Master” is treated as even higher than the Three Jewels as the formula for taking refuge begins with “I take refuge in the Superior Master” followed by “I take refuge in the Buddha....”⁸⁹

To further illustrate the resonances between some of the ritual-acts in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* and Tibetan Buddhist rituals, let me focus now on the section of the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* that begins with ritual sequence “Manifesting Offerings with the Mind” (n. 10 in the chart above) and ends with “Presenting Food Spell.” In this section, the celebrant prepares an offering fit for the Three Jewels by imagining (lit. “moving the mind” *yunxin* 運心⁹⁰) the appearance of heavenly offerings that fill the entirety of space while reciting a spell and forming a *mudrā* (n. 10).⁹¹ After producing the offerings, the celebrant now cleanses them by imagining fires issuing from his fingers (another *mudrā*) as he recites another spell (n. 11).⁹² When the spell, “Transforming into Emptiness” is

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ This tem is of course an old and well-known term in the ritual lexicon of Chinese Buddhism, pre-dating the introduction of esoteric material in China.

⁹¹ T1320:21.475b. The original Sanskrit of this spell is: NAMAH SARVA TATHĀGATEBHYO VIŚVA MUKHEBHYAH SARVATHĀ KHAṂ UDGATE SPHARĀṆA IMAM GAGANA KHAṂ SVĀHĀ. Cf. p. 180, n. 98 in *Chapter Three*.

⁹² T1320:21.476a. The spell is: OM VAJRA YAKŚA HŪṂ. Cf. p. 180, n. 99 in *Chapter Three*.

recited, the celebrant should “imagine the vessels of food completely turn into emptiness and from within this emptiness imagine a great precious vessel filled with ambrosia” (n. 12).⁹³ With the recitation of the “Three Syllable Spell” of OM ĀḤ HŪṂ, the ambrosia transforms into “wisdom ambrosia” (*zhi ganlu* 智甘露) (n. 13).⁹⁴ Finally, the offerings, now transformed into “wisdom ambrosia” are offered to the Superior Master and Three Jewels while reciting a spell and holding a *mudrā* (n. 14).⁹⁵

Now, compare the ritual-sequence in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* with the following ritual-sequence described by Stephen Beyer in his book on Tibetan rituals, *The Cult of Tārā*:

As before, it (i.e. the offering) is contemplatively re-created from Emptiness, as the monks recite the AMṚTA and SVABHĀVA mantras and read the textual sequence of its generation, and is then empowered with OM ĀḤ HŪṂ and the flying-bird gesture. Then, with the *torma* gesture the monks offer it to the protectors by reciting three times the mantra, OM Ā-KĀRO MUKHAṂ SARVA-DHARMĀNĀM ĀDHY-ĀNUTPANNĀTNVĀT! OM ĀḤ HŪṂ PHAT SVĀHĀ!⁹⁶

The “AMṚTA mantra” in Beyer’s material refers to a spell that fulfills the same purpose as the “Three-pointed Spell” (n. 11) in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* as both of them are for cleansing offerings and are usually recited right before the

⁹³ Ibid. The “Transforming into Emptiness Spell” is given as: OM SVABHĀVA ŚUDDHĀḤ SARVA DHARMĀḤ SVABHĀVA ŚUDDHO ‘HAM. Cf. p. 180, n. 100 in *Chapter Three*.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid. The spell recited here is: OM ĀKĀRO MUKHAṂ SARVA DHARMĀNĀM ĀDHYĀNUTPANNĀTA OM AḤ HŪṂ PHAT SVĀHĀ. Cf. p. 180, n. 101 in *Chapter Three*.

⁹⁶ Beyer, 221-220.

SVABHĀVA or “Transforming into Emptiness” spell.⁹⁷ As in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*, after dissolving the offerings into emptiness, the offerings are re-created as ambrosia with the spell OM ĀḤ HŪṂ. Elsewhere, Beyer quotes another similar liturgy (with a ritual-sequence that is identical to the one here) which specifically describes the offerings re-created from emptiness as “tormas of divine substance, an ocean of nectar...”⁹⁸ This “ocean of nectar” clearly resonates with the “wisdom ambrosia” of the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*. And finally, the same spell as the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* is used in Beyer’s rite to offer the ambrosia/nectar offering to the intended recipients. I have attempted to find a similar ritual-sequence in the esoteric ritual-manuals current in the Tang period and also in later Japanese *mikkyō* rites but have not found any rite with an exact ritual-sequence. I believe my research has further strengthened Zhou Shujia’s estimation of the Yuan origins of the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* and specifically of the Tibetan influences found embedded in this liturgy.

The closing section of the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* similarly evinces parallels found in Tibetan Buddhism. The “Spell of Hindered Ghosts” (n. 31

⁹⁷ Beyer writes, “In presenting the first of these tormas to the goddess, the offering is cleansed by the recitation of the AMṚTA mantra and purified into Emptiness by the recitation of the SVABHĀVA mantra.” See Beyer, 218. In another Tibetan ritual described by Richard J. Kohn, the cleansing spell in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* – OM VAJRA YAKŚA HŪṂ – is actually used for cleansing offerings. See Richard J. Kohn, “An Offering of Torma,” in *Religions of Tibet in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 260.

⁹⁸ Beyer, 415.

in the chart above), though not found anywhere else in Chinese sources, is a spell still popular among Tibetans.⁹⁹ The “Send-off Spell” in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* differs from the equivalent spell found in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*. Like many dismissal or send-off ritual found in *mikkyō* rites still practiced in Japan, the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* uses the spell “OM VAJRA MOKṢA MUḤ.”¹⁰⁰ However, in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*, this spell has been slightly modified to “OM VAJRA MUḤ.”¹⁰¹ Again, the use of this variant dismissal spell is common in Tibetan rites.¹⁰²

What we have learnt in this discussion on the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* is that while it has a clear textual link to earlier Chinese Buddhist ghost-feeding liturgies, especially the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*, it is also the first ghost-feeding liturgy that actively incorporated Tibetan Buddhist elements. In doing so, a new type of ghost-feeding liturgy emerged. Furthermore, if we privilege those who insist that self-identification with a Buddha or divinity through creative visualization or

⁹⁹ For instance, the Tibetan lama, Zopa Rinpoche teaches his students a simple rite for offering water to what he calls “*drul-geg-ma*” hungry ghosts. According to him, these are hungry ghosts who are “obstructed by three knots and the have no freedom to swallow even a drop of water.... If you recite this blessed, precious mantra and offer a drop of water, the knots in the preta’s necks are instantly untied.” Although the spell he gives is corrupted and transcribed as “OM JVALA MIDAM SARVA PRETA BHYAH SOHA” its original in Sanskrit should be similar to the one found in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* (except that the spell in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* adds AH HUM after the OM. The Sanskrit original should read: OM AḤ HUM CARAMITĀ SARVA PRATĪ BHYĀ SVĀHĀ. See, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, *Teachings from the Vajrasattva Retreat*, ed. Ailsa Cameron and Nicholas Ribush (Weston, MA: Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive, 2000), 654-655.

¹⁰⁰ T1318:21.471c.

¹⁰¹ T1320:21.480c.

¹⁰² Beyer, 224, 358 and Roger Jackson, “A Fasting Ritual,” in *Religions of Tibet in Practice*, 291.

imagination is the hallmark of esoteric Buddhist practice, then we can even consider the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* as the first ghost-feeding rite that fits into this particular definition of “esoteric practices.”¹⁰³

Even if we choose to disregard this debate in defining what is and is not esoteric practice, the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*’s introduction of the ritual of self-identification with Guanyin is still an important contribution to the development of the *Yuqie yankou* rite. I have argued in earlier chapters that one of the strengths of the *Yuqie yankou* rite lies in its “operatic” or “performative” dimension. In *Chapter Two*, I have noted how the *Yuqie yankou* ritual space is set up in the same way that traditional Chinese operas are set up when they are performed at temple events. I have also called attention to the ritual anomaly witnessed in this rite when the celebrant and his assistants physically occupy positions in the ritual space that are often reserved for the Buddhas and other divinities. But in the *Yuqie yankou*, the celebrant is the Buddha. What the celebrant visualizes or imagines internally, is supported by the vestments and crown that he is wearing externally. The celebrant is dressed like a Buddha, physically occupies the position of the

¹⁰³ For a brief but recent discussion of the problem of defining “esoteric” or “tantric” Buddhism and an argument for paying closer attention to the “sustaining metaphor” of “an individual assuming kingship and exercising dominion” in much of esoteric Buddhist material, see, Ronald M. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 118-123. Orzech has also explored this royal imagery in the context of Chinese Buddhism. See, Charles D. Orzech, *Politics and Transcendent Wisdom, the Scripture for Humane Kings in the Creation of Chinese Buddhism* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).

Buddha and is in fact a Buddha – at least for the duration of the performance – enacting the drama of universal liberation. This bold move is only possible after the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* included self-identification with Guanyin as part of the rite. Moreover, even though the appearance of the narrative of Ānanda and hungry ghosts being saved from their plight by the power of spells can be interpreted as a response to the older and more popular complex of Mulian as shaman and the monastic *sangha* as saviors, the transformation of the *Yuqie yankou* celebrant into Guanyin can likewise be seen as the re-emergence of the motif of the monk as shaman and savior.

Early Ming and Buddhism: the Hongwu Emperor's Jiao Monastics

As Yu Chun-fang and others have demonstrated,¹⁰⁴ Buddhism in the Ming can hardly be characterized as in a state of “recession and decline.”¹⁰⁵ The founding emperor of the Ming, Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328-1398) had been a novice monk from the ages of seventeen to twenty-five, living at small rural temple in Anhui province. When he came into power in 1368 and became the Hongwu emperor, it was obvious that the new emperor's years as a novice monk predisposed him towards

¹⁰⁴ Yu Chun-fang, “Ming Buddhism” in *The Cambridge History of China, The Ming Dynasty 1368-1644 Part 2*, vol. 8, ed. Denis Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 893-952, Yu Chun-fang, *The Renewal of Buddhism in China, Chu-hung and the Late Ming Synthesis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981) and Timothy Brook, *Praying for Power: Buddhism and the Formation of Gentry Society in Late-Ming China*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series 38 (Cambridge: Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1993).

¹⁰⁵ Kenneth Chen, 434.

Buddhism. In fact, one of the first things he did when he finally drove the last of the Mongols out of power was to convene performances of Buddhist rites. The emperor sponsored these rites for the repose of the lives lost during the military campaigns that won him the empire. The Jiangshan Monastery (*Jiangshan si* 蔣山寺) in Nanjing was the venue of these rites, rites that were eventually performed on an annual basis in the early years of the Hongwu emperor's reign.¹⁰⁶

In *Chapter One* we have seen that it was the Hongwu emperor who first instituted a classification of Buddhist monastic that formalized the existence of a group of monastics who specialized as ritualists. These monastics, whom the emperor's decree referred to as “*jiao*” (lit. “teaching” or “instructing”) monks, were defined as those who “perform the Buddhas’ methods of benefiting and aiding (beings) by eliminating the (negative) karma created in the present and purifying the errors of the dead created in the past. In this way they teach people of the world.”¹⁰⁷ I also pointed out in *Chapter One* that these *jiao* monastics were commonly referred to as “*yuqie*” monastics, strongly suggesting that by the early Ming the performance of the *Yuqie yankou* rite has become the most visible aspect of the *jiaolyuqie* monastics’ ritual-repertoire.¹⁰⁸ Local gazetteers from the early Ming period show

¹⁰⁶ Yu, “Ming Buddhism,” 899-900.

¹⁰⁷ See p. 73 above.

¹⁰⁸ Yu Chun-fang calls our attention to a specific decree issued in the twenty-fourth year of Hongwu's reign in which the term *yuqie* was used interchangeably with *jiao*. See Yu, *The Renewal of Buddhism*, 149, 301, n. 33.

that the majority of local monasteries were in fact classified as *jiao/yuqie* monasteries.¹⁰⁹ In yet another decree issued in 1391, *jiao/yuqie* monks were given the freedom and encouraged to go into society and perform Buddhist rites since this will enable them to “teach the people to be filial sons who remember to repay the kindness of their ancestors and to think of their own futures.”¹¹⁰ From these two decrees we learn that these *jiao/yuqie* monastics were seen as fulfilling two roles – one magical and the other educational. On the one hand, the performance of rites by these monastics magically eliminated negative karma of the living and purified the errors of the dead. At the same time, the commissioning of these rites by the laity served as an expression and practice of filiality towards their own ancestors which will in turn educate by example the sponsors’ descendents. In the *Yuqie yankou* liturgies we have from the late Ming on, we witness the addition of materials that clearly adjusted the rite so that it was made accessible and appealing to the living sponsors/audience as much as it would also assist and liberate the dead beneficiaries.¹¹¹ The prevalent use of Buddhist funerary and post-mortem rites, a trend confirmed and supported by these two decrees issued by the Hongwu emperor,

¹⁰⁹ Ryūichi Kiyoshi, “Mindai no Yūga kyōsō,” *Tōho gakuho* 11, no. 1 (1940): 405-413, cited by Yu, “Ming Dynasty,” 907.

¹¹⁰ “Jinlu zhi” in *Jinling fanzha zhi*, 2, ed. Ge Yinliang (1607, Nanjing: Guoli Zhongyang yanjiu yuan, 1936), 160, cited by Yu, “Ming Dynasty,” 907.

¹¹¹ See the discussion on late Ming, early Qing recensions of *Yuqie yankou* liturgies below. My descriptive analysis of Ding’an’s *Yuqie yankou* liturgy in *Chapter Three* should also strengthen this claim.

continued throughout the Late Imperial period; a trend increasingly opposed by Neo-Confucians starting from the mid-Ming.¹¹²

The Hongwu emperor in particular, was known having a great interest in matters related to ritual and music. In many ways, his understanding of ritual and music was informed by classical Confucian notions. The following excerpt, quoted from one of the many speeches that the Hongwu emperor gave on ritual, is a good example:

The way to rule the world consists only of ritual and music. If [the ruler] has mastered ritual but not music, he has neither the means to cultivate the people's heart/minds nor [the measures that] originated from the way of governance. If [the ruler] has understood music but not ritual, [he] has nothing that can activate the laws or establish the great rule of avoiding extremities.... There is a notion that in addition to ritual and music, there must also be laws and punishments. In my opinion, they only supplement ritual and music as [a] means of governance.¹¹³

As others have also noted, the Hongwu emperor's ritual (and music) theory, was not only concerned with purely Confucian understandings of the role of ritual and music in statecraft.¹¹⁴ The Hongwu emperor understood ritual and music as the means of communicating with the supernatural world – be it the abstracts of Heaven and Earth, or the gods and spirits who dwell in and control nature or venerable ancestors. Although his pronouncements on ritual were always couched in the language of

¹¹² See Timothy Brook's discussion of the revival of Confucian funerary rituals in the latter Ming period in Timothy Brook, "Funerary Ritual and The Building of Lineages in Late Imperial China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 2, 2 (1989): 465-499.

¹¹³ Joseph S. C Lam, *State Sacrifices and Music in Ming China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 40.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

orthodoxy and tradition, the Hongwu emperor did not shy away from innovations and adaptations. Aside from making some fairly radical changes to the Confucian-modeled state-sacrifices (introducing an integrated rather than separate sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, for example)¹¹⁵, the inclusion of both Buddhist and Daoist elements in these and other state rituals was a cause of consternation among conservative Confucians serving the Hongwu emperor.¹¹⁶

The other aspect of Buddhism in the Ming that is significant to our discussion is the continued patronage that Tibetan Buddhism received from the Ming emperors. This was especially true during the reigns of the early Ming emperors such as Hongwu and Yongle.¹¹⁷ Tibetan Buddhism, as discussed above, made its first official presence in China proper during the Yuan period. The Mongols of the Yuan dynasty were great patrons of Tibetan Buddhism and relied on the religion for both its political ties with its frontier neighbors as well as a source of supernatural power and protection. Yuan emperors appointed Tibetan clerics as “Imperial Preceptors” and received *tantric* initiations from them. Their support of certain Tibetan Buddhist orders, especially the Sa-skye lineage, also helped in the control and administration of

¹¹⁵ For a discussion of the significance of this new innovation and the debates that ensued from the Hongwu emperor’s actions, see Taylor, “Official Religion,” 851-861.

¹¹⁶ For example, the Hongwu emperor once commissioned a famous Buddhist monk Zongle (to be discussed later) to compose eight pieces of music dedicated to the Buddha and had the Court of Imperial Sacrifices perform the songs. See Yu, “Ming Buddhism,” 903. Lam notes that in 1379, the Hongwu emperor appointed “Daoist monk/musicians” to oversee the performance of music at state sacrifices. See Lam, 51-52.

¹¹⁷ The death of Hongwu resulted in a short but vicious power struggle among his descendents that ended with Zhu Di 朱棣 (1360-1424) – one of Hongwu’s sons by a concubine – ascending the throne and becoming the Yongle emperor.

Tibet and in the Yuan rulers' continued negotiations of power and control within their own Mongolian fraternity that still lived outside of China proper. When the Ming dynasty came into power, the Hongwu emperor continued this policy of support for Tibetan clerics – partly due to a need for political stability and partly in their own personal interests in the religion itself. However, instead of the Sa-skya, the Ming emperors mostly supported the bKa-brgyud lineage in its various sub-sects.¹¹⁸

During the reign of the Hongwu emperor, four Tibetan hierarchs were conferred the title of “National Preceptors.” Furthermore, emperor also sent one of his most trusted Chinese Buddhist cleric, Zongle 宗泐 (1318-1391) to Tibet to obtain Buddhist scriptures unavailable in China.¹¹⁹ Records show that when Zongle returned to China with new esoteric scriptures, he presided over the funeral of the Hongwu emperor's empress.¹²⁰ Zongle was apparently an authority on Buddhist liturgy and most known for his composition of hymns that were used that the emperor had the Court of Imperial Sacrifices perform with accompanying dances.¹²¹ It was likely that in Zongle's liturgical activities that he appropriated Tibetan Buddhist elements to appeal to the interests of the Hongwu emperor. We know that the

¹¹⁸ Several different bKa-brgyud sub-sects were supported by the Ming emperors – the most famous being the Karma bKa-brgyud sub-sect whose fifth Black-Hat hierarch was specially honored by the Yongle emperor.

¹¹⁹ There were probably diplomatic and political overtones to Zongle's sojourn to Tibet as well since the Hongwu emperor considered Zongle not merely as a religious authority but a trusted aide.

¹²⁰ John D. Langlois, Jr., “The Hung-wu Reign, 1368-1398” in *The Cambridge History of China, The Ming Dynasty 1368-1644 Part I*, vol. 7, 148.

¹²¹ Yu, “Ming Buddhism,” 901.

Hongwu emperor himself had a great interest in esoteric Buddhist teachings and practices and even personally attempted to standardize the spells and rites used in Buddhist ceremonies.¹²² The Yongle emperor was credited with the compilation of several collections of Buddhist liturgical materials, a collection of biographies of monks and several other commentaries on and prefaces to *sūtras*. His empress, the Renxiao empress 仁孝 (1362-1407) enjoys “the honor of being the first person to transcribe a Buddhist *sūtra* as the result of a revelation received in a dream.”¹²³ The *sūtra* revealed by the Renxiao empress contains mostly spells – spells that were probably derived from Tibetan Buddhist sources.¹²⁴ Another important event during the Yongle period was the visit of the Fifth Zhwa-nag Karmapa, De-bzhin gshegs-pa (1384-1415) (known in Chinese sources as Helima) of the Karma bKa-brGyud sect who arrived in the Ming capital Nanjing in 1407 to perform a “great mass of universal salvation” (*pudu dazhai* 普度大齋) for the benefit of the deceased Hongwu emperor and his empress.¹²⁵ The rite was performed by the Karmapa hierarch together with Chinese monks at the Jiangshan Monastery – the venue of the Hongwu emperor’s sponsorship of similar rites in the early years of the Ming – but now

¹²² Yu, “Ming Buddhism,” 907. Yu notes that out of twenty chapters of the Hongwu emperor’s writings, forty-six were on Buddhist subjects. See, *Ibid.*, 912.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 913.

¹²⁴ *Foshuo diyi xiyou da gongde jing* 佛說第一希有大功德經 (*The Sūtrā of Great Merit and Foremost Rarity Spoken by the Buddha*) can be found in *Qianlong dazang jing*, vol. 150, 494-517.

¹²⁵ A fifty-meter-long silk handscroll that recorded the miraculous events that purportedly occurred during the Zhwa-nag Karmapa’s visit to China is discussed in Patricia Berger, “Miracles in Nanjing: An Imperial Record of the Fifth Karmapa’s Visit to the Chinese Capital,” in *Cultural Intersection in Later Chinese Buddhism*, ed. Marsha Weidner (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), 145-169.

renamed Linggu Monastery (*Linggu si* 靈谷寺). The Yongle emperor's relationship with the Zhwa-nag Karmapa was by no means an isolated case as the emperor not only continued the precedent set by his father but clearly had an even greater and more complex interest in Tibetan Buddhism.¹²⁶

Both the Hongwu and Yongle emperors were undoubtedly attracted to Buddhism for personal, religious reasons and as a matter of political expediency as well. While promoting Buddhism and supporting monastic institutions on the one hand, they were careful to control abuses that inevitably resulted from the favors they lavished on Buddhism on the whole. Furthermore, both emperors displayed a special interest in the liturgical and ritual dimensions of Buddhism. The Hongwu emperor, as we have seen, saw the role of Buddhist ritualists – ritualists who performed the *Yuqie yankou* and other related rites – as educators and teachers of values and ideals such as filial piety, propriety and correct behavior. These ritualists were encouraged to work in the midst of society while *chan* (meditation) and *jiang* (scholastic) monastics were, in theory if not in actual implementation, prohibited from associating with the laity.¹²⁷ We have also seen that the Hongwu emperor's interest

¹²⁶ Yu notes the increase of titles and fiefs that the Yongle emperor bestowed on Tibetan hierarchs – five “kings” (*wang* 王), four “Dharma-kings” (*fawang* 法王), two “sons of the Buddha of the Western Heaven” (*xitian fozi* 西天佛子), nine “(esoteric)-empowering great national preceptors” (*guanding da guoshi* 灌頂大國師), and eighteen “(esoteric)-empowering national preceptors” (*guanding guoshi* 灌頂國師). See Yu, “Ming Buddhism,” 915. His patronage of the Zhwa-nag Karmapa and other Tibetan hierarchs was probably also related to issues of legitimacy that marred the early years of Yongle's rise to power. See Berger, 149-150.

¹²⁷ Yu has a different assessment of the Hongwu emperor's reasons for showing such partiality towards the *yuqieljiao* monastics. In her opinion, the emperor might have perceived these monastics

in ritual was not limited to Buddhist ritual but to both state Confucian and Daoist ritual and music. Thus, the early Ming emperors' attention on ritual and its transformative functions went hand in hand in their interests in Tibetan Buddhism. Chinese monks were sent to Tibet to import practices back to China, Tibetan hierarchs were invited to the capital to perform rites of "universal salvation" (*pudu* 普度),¹²⁸ emperors and empresses were receiving esoteric empowerments, attending and preaching sermons and editing, compiling and even dreaming up both esoteric and non-esoteric *sutrās*. It was within this climate that many *Yuqie yankou* liturgies begin to proliferate all throughout the Ming period so that by the late Ming we read of complaints by Buddhist clerics of the abundance of such liturgies and the obvious ritual confusion and competition that ensued from these different liturgies and performative traditions.

Yunqi Zhuhong and the Redaction of the Collected Essentials of the Yoga of Food-Bestowal Rite (Yuqie yankou shishi yi 瑜伽集要施食儀)

In 1606, Yunqi Zhuhong (1535-1615) re-codified an edition of the liturgical text for the *Yuqie yankou*. As mentioned earlier, many different liturgies for the

as "less 'Buddhist'" and thus did not pose a threat to Confucian norms. See Yu, *The Renewal of Buddhism*, 150. According to Dan Stevenson, there is strong evidence in the various monastic gazetteers that the organizational restrictions were enforced only for several decades although the classification continued to be used.

¹²⁸ "Universal salvation" is an expression long-associated with the genre of food-bestowal rites such as the *Yuqie yankou*, *Shuilu* and *Mengshan*.

performance of *Yuqie yankou* rite were evidently in popular use by the late Ming period. We know of at least two liturgies popular during Zhuhong's time – one attributed to the Chan master Tianji and the other purportedly by a Tiantai monk known as Lingcao 靈操 (d.u.) who apparently produced his based on Tianji's text. Zhuhong's liturgy was also a redaction of Tianji's version. Unfortunately, neither Tianji nor Lingcao's liturgies survive.¹²⁹

Zhuhong justified his 1606 redaction of the liturgy by complaining of the needless length of existing liturgies. In his view, these liturgies suffered not only from their excessive length but of greater concern to him, they ran the risk of, “losing the ancient meaning of the rite,” due to indiscriminate additions introduced by other liturgists from, “external (i.e. inappropriate) sources.”¹³⁰ This appears to be a common justification employed by Zhuhong in his re-codification of other liturgical texts. In the preface to these redactions of different liturgical texts, after complaining about the imperfections of existing liturgies due to later accretions, Zhuhong then presents his own redaction as an effort to regain the original intent of the rites. For example, in his re-codification of the liturgy used for the *Shuilu* rite, Zhuhong similarly wrote disapprovingly of existing liturgies. In the postscript to his

¹²⁹ I was able to purchase a *Yuqie yankou* liturgy at a Buddhist religious supplies store at Mount Tiantai that carries the title “*Tianji Yankou*” but it is doubtful that this is the same text as the one used by Zhuhong as the basis of his own redaction in 1606. The storekeeper claims that the “*Tianji Yankou*” liturgy is “used by Daoists” but I have not been able to verify that.

¹³⁰ XZJ104.795a.

redaction of the Shuilu liturgy, Zhuhong characterized the older rite and its accompanying liturgy, as, “filled with errors and intrusions, making it impossible to find the central thread that unifies [the rite] from beginning to the end.”¹³¹

Thus, in his editorial work on the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy, Zhuhong purportedly removed parts of Tianji’s liturgy that he considered to be extraneous and drawing away from the ancient meaning of the rite. Since Tianji’s text is no longer extant, we have no way of knowing what Zhuhong considered “extraneous” as he himself does not tell us what he has removed from Tianji’s text. We know nothing of the immediate response to Zhuhong’s redaction of this liturgy, as none of the contemporaneous sources speak anything of it. We do know, however, that Zhuhong’s redaction did not immediately displace the popularity and currency of Tianji’s text, as performances of the rite based on Tianji’s text continued well into the Qing dynasty.¹³² As for Zhuhong’s redaction, Zhuhong’s biography indicates that he performed the *Yuqie yankou* rite on a regular basis – presumably using the liturgy he redacted. He performed the rite for reasons that ranged from offering repose to souls, to abating plagues and droughts and to pacifying disturbances caused by tigers attacking humans.¹³³ The rite was probably also performed by the monastic

¹³¹ XZJ129.604b, quoted in Stevenson, “Text, Image and Transformation,” 45.

¹³² Zhou, 399.

¹³³ Yu, *The Renewal of Chinese Buddhism*, 19-20, 23-24.

community at Yunqi Monastery (*Yunqi si* 雲棲寺) – Zhuhong’s monastery – at funerals and other post-mortem memorial services.

As we recall, the early Ming saw the formalization of a category of monastics that specialized in the performance of rites such as the *Yuqie yankou*. I have tried to argue earlier that the Hongwu emperor was at least partially motivated by his understanding and appreciation of the transformative and educational powers of rites when he issued that decree. We know that the Hongwu emperor had a special interest in ritual – be it Buddhist, Daoist or Confucian. The innovations that he introduced to the official state cult – the emphasis on the imperial cult and his reform of sacrifices to Heaven and Earth – were sources of contention between the first Ming emperor and the Confucian literati who served at his court.¹³⁴

The Hongwu emperor’s partiality towards ritual and in our context, towards *yuqieljiao* monastics unfortunately produced certain undesirable consequences for Buddhist monasticism in the mid to late Ming period. As we re-call, Hongwu’s decrees on the tripartite classification of monastics gave the most freedom to the *yuqieljiao* monastics to move about in society and to mingle with the laity. The relative freedom that *yuqieljiao* monastics received very likely contributed to the conversion of many originally non *yuqieljiao* monasteries into such monasteries.

¹³⁴ Romeyn Taylor, “Official Religion in the Ming,” in *The Cambridge History of China, The Ming Dynasty 1368-1644 Part 2*, vol. 8, 866.

The role of Buddhist monastics as ritual-specialists serving the public became solidified during this time. At the same time, the problem of monks who took wives and raised families continued despite the Hongwu and subsequent emperors' efforts to curb such abuses.¹³⁵ Ironically, the formalization of a category of ritualist-monastics probably further facilitated the "secularization" of the monastic community as many of these ritualist-monastics effectively turned into wage earners. A decree issued in 1391 even specified the cash remuneration that monastics should receive for their ritual services based on the roles they play in each rite and the nature and length of the rite.¹³⁶ The rampant sale of ordination certificates in the mid Ming period further exacerbated the situation.¹³⁷ By the late Ming, we read of monks such as Zhuhong being very concerned with the state of monasticism and spending much of their efforts reviving strict monastic discipline. In particular, Zhuhong is known to have compiled primers on monastic discipline for both monks and nuns, created a monastic code for the use of the residents at his own monastery and authored commentaries on classic Buddhist and non-Buddhist morality texts.¹³⁸ In Zhuhong's opinion, the performance of rites by monastics can only be effective if these monastics are firmly

¹³⁵ This phenomenon is said to have proliferated during the Yuan period, a problem that was blamed on the supposed laxity of Tibetan monks in their observation of the traditional monastic vows.

¹³⁶ "Jinlu zhi" in *Jinling fanzha zhi*, 2, 161-162, cited by Yu, "Ming Dynasty," 907.

¹³⁷ See Yu, *The Renewal of Buddhism*, 160-162 where she discusses the sale of ordination certificates starting from the Jingtai period 景泰 (1450-1456) and the effects of this development on the state of monasticism in the mid to late Ming period.

¹³⁸ Yu gives a succinct summary of Zhuhong's efforts in reviving monastic discipline and lay morality in Yu, *The Renewal of Buddhism*, 27-28.

grounded on the pure observance of the monastic rules. Not only will the rites be ineffective if the performers were morally corrupt but the rites will actually backfire.

For example, Zhuhong wrote:

I have heard of a monk who because of insincerity was dragged by ghosts to a river and almost drowned. I have heard of another monk who had lost the key of his trunk and thought of the key while performing the ritual. As a result the ghosts could not eat the rice because it was covered with iron pieces. I have heard of a third monk who had put out his blanket to air and before he took it indoors it rained. While he was performing the ritual, he thought of the blanket. As a result the ghosts could not eat any of the rice because it was covered in animal fur. Each of these monks received retribution in their lifetime. Once there was a man who visited the nether world and saw several hundred monks in a dark room. They were emaciated and dried out and appeared to be in extreme pain. When he asked about their identity, he was told they were all monks who had officiated at the ritual of feeding hungry ghosts incorrectly in their previous existences.¹³⁹

Zhuhong was clearly responding to the conditions that he witnessed around him at the end of the Ming where the so-called *yuqieljiao* monastics have generally degenerated into a class of ritualists who worked at funerals, memorial services and other such contexts for cash benefits. Like the late Qing, early Republican revivalists I spoke of in *Chapter One*, Zhuhong did not discredit the power of the *Yuqie yankou* and related rites. He saw the problem as one that inheres in the monastics who abused their positions and neglected their monastic vows and not in the rites. Therefore, the solution, as far as Zhuhong was concerned, was to be found

¹³⁹ Zhuhong, *Yunqi fahui*, 38a-38b quoted in Yu, *The Renewal of Buddhism*, 185. This quote can also be found in XZJ104.887b-888a.

in the revival of strict monastic discipline and a conviction of the seriousness and solemnity of the rites. It is also instructive to note that in the monastic code of Yunqi Monastery, Zhuhong instituted a cash fine for those residents in the Dharma-hall of the monastery who “secretly learns the ‘Yankou Food-Bestowal Rite’ or the text of the Yankou.”¹⁴⁰ The existence of this rule suggests that monastics were perceived as too eager to learn the *Yuqie yankou* rite and quite possibly for commercial reasons. On the other hand, we also cannot discount the possibility that Zhuhong’s admonitions about the dangerous consequences of incorrect and insincere performances of the *Yuqie yankou* were informed by his conviction of the power of the *Yuqie yankou* and the importance of having only qualified candidates practice it. In a short passage appended to the end of his commentary to the liturgy he redacted, Zhuhong wrote:

This *Yuqie* (teaching) was greatly propagated by Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra of the Tang dynasty.¹⁴¹ These two masters could command ghosts and spirits, move mountains and oceans; the power of their awesome spirit are incomprehensible. After being transmitted for a few generations, there were no capable recipients (of the teaching). The only teaching still preserved is the method of food-bestowal. When the hands form the *mudrās*, the mouth chants the spells and the mind performs the visualizations – the three actions mutually responding (*xiangying* 相應) – this is *Yuqie*. This task is not easy at all. Nowadays, (those who perform the rite are not) even skilled in the *mudrās* and spells, much less in the visualizations! As a result, there is no

¹⁴⁰ *Lianchi dashi quanji*, 4812.

¹⁴¹ I wonder if this is the source of Yu Qian’s assertion in Budong Jingang’s biography that Vajrabodhi was the first to teach the ghost-feeding/food-bestowal rite. See discussion on Budong above.

mutual response. Without mutual response, not only will they not be able to benefit sentient beings but they will end up harming them!¹⁴²

From one perspective, Zhuhong's stories of *yuqie/jiao* monastics-gone-bad and the karmic retribution they had to bear and the various admonitions were clearly intended to counteract what Zhuhong judged to be the trend of commercializing and thus trivializing rites such as the *Yuqie yankou*. But we should also be able to see how Zhuhong's words were at the same time also highly polemical writings generated in a discourse driven by issues of ritual control and access. Just as Zhuhong complained about the sorry state of affairs of Buddhism in the late Ming, we similarly read of such complains in the late Qing and Republican period and likewise, we hear murmurings and complaints of the same type among present-day Chinese Buddhists. Calls for change, reform, or revival can only be meaningful and efficacious when we are convinced that whatever we have now is no longer good, has gone astray or declined.

Zhuhong died in 1615 – nine years after he completed his redaction of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy. For a while, it appears that Zhuhong's redaction might not have amounted to anything beyond being a localized liturgy of the *Yuqie yankou* rite. Sources from Zhuhong's period suggest that Zhuhong's writings and re-codification

¹⁴² XZJ104.887b. For a slightly different reading of this passage, see Yu, *The Renewal of Buddhism*, 184-185.

of liturgical texts were somewhat marginal and received little attention beyond his own circle of disciples.¹⁴³ But this will all change within a mere fifty years. From the marginal, Zhuhong and his liturgical redactions will move to the central and dominant position – in fact, perhaps even a domination that has never been witnessed before in Chinese Buddhist history.

As pointed out earlier, aside from being remembered as an advocate of Pure Land practice and a codifier of liturgies, Zhuhong was also known for his revival of monastic discipline in the Late Imperial period. It was this particular aspect of Zhuhong's activities – his emphasis on strict monastic discipline – that eventually put Zhuhong and his legacy at the center of Chinese Buddhism in the Late Imperial period. Although Zhuhong attracted many disciples, disciples who were members of the literati in the Hangzhou area, his prestige was significantly raised during the time of the early Qing emperors. The early Qing emperors, Kangxi 康熙 (r. 1662-1723) and Yongzheng's 雍正 (r. 1723-1736) were great admirers of Zhuhong and Zhuhong's lifelong endeavor to revive strict monastic discipline. Their personal admiration naturally translated into public promotion of Zhuhong's legacy. I will argue that it was in fact this prestige that Zhuhong and his legacy received from the

¹⁴³ Tradition has it that right after Zhuhong passed away two of his lay disciples spent ten days collecting all his writings. Zhuhong's official collected works was finally compiled and published by a group comprising of eighteen monastic and thirty-eight lay disciples a decade after his death. Yu, *The Renewal of Buddhism*, 28.

favor of the early Qing emperors' that became one of the factors in the hegemonic success of Zhuhong's *Yuqie yankou* liturgy. But as I will show, this success also came with a price – that Zhuhong's liturgy was successful only after it was expanded and elaborated in 1693 to almost twice its original length; so much for his complaints against the “excessive length” of the Tianji liturgy he used in 1606 to redact his own version of the liturgy. But before we look at this episode in the development of the *Yuqie yankou*, let me point out the new elements found in Zhuhong's redaction of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy.

***A Comparative Analysis of the Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite and Zhuhong's
Collected Essentials of the Yoga of Food-Bestowal Rite***

Between the composition of the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* which probably occurred during the Yuan dynasty and Zhuhong's redaction of the *Collected Essentials of the Yoga of Food-Bestowal Rite*, almost two and a half centuries must have elapsed. The Ming dynasty, which reportedly saw a proliferation of *Yuqie yankou* liturgies and the popular performances of the rite at its beginning, is almost coming to an end by the time Zhuhong redacted his version of the liturgy. Although we know of at least two significant versions of the liturgy that were used during this period, both these texts are unfortunately no longer available. We are thus unable to compare Zhuhong's redaction with any post-*Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*

liturgies. But since much of the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* is actually retained in Zhuhong's liturgy, and Zhuhong's liturgy itself is supposed to be a redaction of one of the liturgies that were popular in the Ming, it might be safe to assume that the liturgies that are now unavailable to us were very likely also based on the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*. Thus, if we do a comparative analysis of the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* with Zhuhong's redaction, 1) we might be able to imagine what the other lengthier liturgies were like, 2) what the new elements found in Zhuhong's text are and 3) what these new elements can tell us about the development of the *Yuqie yankou*.

Just as we have seen how the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* embeds the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* within itself, Zhuhong's redaction is basically an amplification of the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*. While the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* essentially adds to the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* by inserting a new section at the beginning and another at the end, the single most significant portion of Zhuhong's addition to the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* is found at the beginning of the liturgy. Zhuhong's redaction begins with the offering of incense accompanied by a short prose segment beginning with "This one stick of incense is neither descended from the heavens nor produced from the earth...."¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ XZJ104.796a.

As I already noted in *Chapter Three*, although Zhuhong's attitude to Daoism was often contentious – or to quote Yu Chun-fang, “highly critical if not downright hostile,”¹⁴⁵ – this prose segment contains terminology and imagery with a strong Daoist-flavor. That Zhuhong did not remove these seemingly Daoist elements but only compensates for them by reading “inner,” (i.e. Buddhist) meanings into them (in his commentary on the liturgy), suggests to us the enduring power of liturgical texts. Although Zhuhong was supposedly redacting Tianji's lengthier liturgy, he did not remove this segment, even with the seemingly Daoist elements. Evidently then, this segment did not constitute the “external (i.e. inappropriate) sources” that detracted from the “ancient meaning of the rite.”¹⁴⁶ Although language with a strong Daoist accent to it is present in this opening incense-offering prayer, the overall flavor of the passage is thoroughly Buddhist – “(This incense) is precepts, is meditation, is wisdom. It is not wood, not fire, not smoke....”¹⁴⁷ As long as the Buddhist elements remain hegemonically central and superior, inclusion of terminology and expressions more often associated with Daoism or of non-Buddhist, indigenous, localized deities and motifs poses no problem to the Buddhist enterprise. In fact, the inclusion of elements considered “non-Buddhist” in origins functions to further

¹⁴⁵ Yu, *The Renewal of Buddhism*, 135.

¹⁴⁶ XZJ104.795a.

¹⁴⁷ XZJ104.796a.

enhance the position of Buddhism, effectively rendering it the position of the master narrative in a tapestry of tales generated by and from different religious traditions.

Other additions in the opening section of Zhuhong's liturgy are mostly of the esoteric type. For example, he adds several purificatory and empowering spells such as the "Great Compassionate Dhāraṇī,"¹⁴⁸ "Purifying the Dharma-realm Spell,"¹⁴⁹ "Empowering Flower-grains Spell," "Empowering *Vajra* and Bell Spells," "Three Syllable Spell,"¹⁵⁰ and "Twelve Causes and Conditions Spell."¹⁵¹ We have already noted that several of these spells added can be found in texts – some directly related to ghost-feeding rites and others only indirectly – compiled in the Liao and Xixia periods.

Whereas the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* renders the formula for taking refuge in the Superior Master and the Three Jewels in Chinese, Zhuhong presents the equivalent section in sinified-Sanskrit that can be re-constructed as: NAMAḤ GURUBHYAH, NAMAḤ BUDDHAYA, NAMAḤ DHARMAYA, NAMAḤ SANGHAYA.¹⁵² Along with these spells, Zhuhong's liturgy has two

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Mingben's ghost-feeding text discussed earlier..

¹⁴⁹ This spell is also used in Daochen's *Rite of Offering to the Buddhas and Benefiting Living Beings* appended to *Collected Essentials on Attaining Buddhahood* and in the Tangut-period compilation *Causes and Conditions of Secret Spells*.

¹⁵⁰ Also found in the *Causes and Conditions of Secret Spells*.

¹⁵¹ Another spell also given in the *Causes and Conditions of Secret Spells*.

¹⁵² XZJ104.798a.

other spells that can be reconstructed as: OM HRĪḤ HAHA HŪṂ HŪṂ PHATṬ and OM ŚRĪ MAHĀKĀLA HAHA HŪṂ HŪṂ PHATṬ SVĀHĀ.¹⁵³ What is most intriguing about this list of six spells is both its contents and arrangement. Although Zhuhong merely identifies this section as the “Spells of the Superior Master and Three Jewels” (*Shangshi sanbao zhenyan* 上師三寶真言) and Ding’an later identifies the first four spells as the “Spells of the Superior Master and Three Jewels” but curiously identifies the fifth spell as the “True Superior Master Spell” (*Zheng shangshi* 正上師) and the sixth as “True Three Jewels Spell” (*Zheng sanbao* 正三寶), it is clear that both Zhuhong and Ding’an have apparently mis-identified the last two spells. While the first four spells are indeed related to the Superior Master and Three Jewels, the fifth spell, OM HRĪḤ HAHA HŪṂ HŪṂ PHATṬ is actually the “heart-spell” of Cakrasaṃvara – an important deity of the so-called “highest yoga tantra” class of deities in Tibetan Buddhism. Cakrasaṃvara is a deity thoroughly foreign to the Chinese Buddhist milieu. Although other esoteric texts of the so-called “highest yoga tantra” class were translated into Chinese in the Song period (such as the Hevajra Tantra), no Cakrasaṃvara text can be found in the various extant versions of the Chinese Buddhist canon. As for the sixth spell, OM ŚRĪ MAHĀKĀLA HAHA HŪṂ HŪṂ PHATṬ SVĀHĀ, it is obviously a Mahākāla spell.

¹⁵³ XZJ104.797a.

Mahākāla is closely associated with Cakrasaṃvara as he is considered the special protector of the Cakrasaṃvara teachings and practices. As for the specific arrangement of these six spells, it is highly suggestive of the Tibetan Buddhist arrangement of the so-called “Six Refuges” commonly found in many Tibetan Buddhist lineages. Whereas most other forms of Buddhism only speak of the usual Three Refuges, in Tibetan Buddhism, the system of Six Refuges is common: the Guru, Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, tutelary or meditational-deity (Tib. *yi dam*) and Dharma-protector.¹⁵⁴ That the spells of Cakrasaṃvara and Mahākāla specifically, are the spells added in Zhuhong’s late-Ming redaction of the *Yuqie yankou* is very likely related to the fact that Cakrasaṃvara is the main tutelary-deity of the bKa-brgyud lineage in its various subsects and Mahākāla is also the main Dharma-protector of the bKa-brgyud followers. We should recall from our discussion above that the bKa-brgyud sub-sects received the most patronage and support from the Ming emperors. Thus it is very likely that bKa-brgyud practices became the most representative Tibetan Buddhist practices in Ming China just as the Sa-skya tradition was a favorite of the Yuan court. But it appears that neither Zhuhong nor later liturgists who re-edited the *Yuqie yankou* liturgies were aware of the significance of these spells and their particular arrangement alongside the other

¹⁵⁴ See, Jamgon Kongtrul, 54-58 for a description and discussion of the Six Refuges.

four spells. We may also wonder if the addition of the two spells – that of Cakrasaṃvara and Mahākāla – was something Zhuhong himself added to the liturgy or if they were already in the liturgy that Zhuhong used as the basis of his redaction. We should note that Hangzhou – where Zhuhong’s Yunqi Monastery was situated – was a key Buddhist administrative center for Yuan Buddhists.¹⁵⁵ In fact, many Tibetan esoteric images were carved at Feilaifeng 飛來峰 in Hangzhou during the Yuan and Ming, images that survive to this day.

The Tibetan Buddhist influence on Zhuhong’s redaction does not end here. I have already discussed in *Chapter Three* the introduction of the practice of *maṇḍala*-offering in the *Yuqie yankou* rite. Zhuhong’s redaction is the earliest extant case of a *maṇḍala*-offering sequence in a *Yuqie yankou* liturgy. Furthermore, *maṇḍala*-offering is not done in any other Chinese Buddhist rites, past and present. As I have argued in *Chapter Three*, this practice is not known in earlier esoteric material of the Tang period. I also argued that the system of offering a *maṇḍala* with twenty-six “heaps” found in Zhuhong’s liturgy appears to be an older system used by bKa-brgyud followers before the system of the thirty-seven heaps devised by the Sa-skyā hierarch, ‘Phags-pa became universally accepted by all lineages in Tibet. Again, Zhuhong’s liturgy points to the strong connection between the Ming emperor’s

¹⁵⁵ I have to thank Dan Stevenson for alerting me to this particular detail on the importance of Hangzhou for Buddhism in the Yuan.

patronage of bKa-brgyud lineages (in particular the Karma bKa-brgyud) and the unstable and shifting *Yuqie yankou* liturgical texts in the Ming.

While the inclusion of Tibetan Buddhist elements into the *Yuqie yankou* rite probably served to boost the perceived power and efficacy of the rite, Zhuhong's liturgy also shows a concerted effort to make the rite more accessible to a general audience. Whereas the Tibetan-inspired spells and ritual-forms served to heighten the esoteric and exotic nature of the rite, these other additions went in the direction of popularizing the rite, rendering it accessible to the general laity. Several new features found in Zhuhong's liturgy testify to this development. If we recall, the earliest ghost-feeding liturgy, the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*, is made up of an opening prayer in verse form followed by a list of spells and no further prose or verse segments. When we get to the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra*, we begin to see more prose added to the liturgy. Either before or after the recitation of almost every spell, the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* provides a brief prose section that is addressed directly to the ghostly-beneficiaries of the rite. For example, before the names of the seven Buddhas are recited, the following words are addressed to the ghosts:

All you children of the Buddhas! I now for your benefit will intone and praise the auspicious names of the Tathāgatas. This can cause all of you to be forever separated from the sufferings of three lower paths and the eight

difficulties and be the true and pure disciples of the Tathāgatas continuously.¹⁵⁶

This exact passage is reproduced in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* which not only retains all the spells and prose sections found in the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* but adds even more verse sections – usually in the form of five-character quatrains. Not surprisingly, to this collection of spells, prose and verse sections in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*, Zhuhong adds even more spells and verse and prose sections. The growth of verse and prose sections can be interpreted as a process of rendering the rite more accessible to a wider audience.¹⁵⁷ At least in present-day performances of the rite, the presence of the prose and verse sections renders the rite intelligible to those who care to or want to understand the ritual proceedings. If a rite consisted only of spells – which technically speaking *is* one of the three essential factors in affecting the feeding and salvation of the ghostly guests (the other two being the corresponding *mudrās* and visualizations) – there is no way for anyone beyond the person performing the rite to know and appreciate exactly what was supposed to be taking place. With the additions of verse and prose sections before and after each spell, however, what Zhuhong has done is to communicate to the audience exactly where the celebrant is at any given point in the rite and what he

¹⁵⁶ T1318:21.470c.

¹⁵⁷ It is of course unclear, at this point, whether Zhuhong himself was responsible for this shift or if this shift already occurred in the liturgies that Zhuhong relied on for his redaction, liturgies by Tianji and Lingcao. Nothing definitive can be said unless and until either the Tianji or Lingcao liturgies resurface.

is supposedly accomplishing. On another level, in providing verbal narrative in the form of didactic explanations, Zhuhong's liturgy is in certain ways attempting to dominate and totalize symbolic readings of the rite. Of course I am not suggesting that everyone who attending a performance of the rite according to Zhuhong's liturgy can easily follow the ritual proceedings. But if one wanted to, it was more possible to do so with Zhuhong's redaction than with the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*, the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* or the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*. And while Zhuhong's liturgy apparently provides more narrative on the rite, it at the same time limits and controls the interpretation and understanding of the rite.

The addition of a whole new section where a range of ghostly-beneficiaries are summoned to the rite is yet another development that was obviously meant for the popularization of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy. After the “Breaking the Earth-Prisons” spell and verse has been delivered, an interesting list of different types of dead human beings is summoned to the rite. In the same juncture in the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite*, only Dizang – the bodhisattva who has vowed to continually harrow the hells – and, “the ten types of orphaned-souls of the Six Realms of the Dharmadhātu” are invited.¹⁵⁸ However, in Zhuhong's redaction almost two and a half centuries later, aside from Dizang, a list of thirteen groups of orphaned-souls are

¹⁵⁸ T1320:21.476c.

individually described and summoned to the rite. And as I noted in *Chapter Three*, the language used in this section can be said to be deliberately adopt a pitiful and mournful tone. When this part of the liturgy is performed, the sadness is further dramatized by the “lament” oral delivery mode used by performers for singing this section of the liturgy. This summoning section is quickly followed by another section where slightly different list of fourteen classes of ghosts and souls are mournfully described and asked to “come receive the ambrosial flavor” (*laishou ganlu wei* 來受甘露未).¹⁵⁹ I have noted in *Chapter Three* that it is not uncommon for some participants to be reduced to tears at this juncture in the performance as the sufferings of the different classes of orphaned-souls evocatively described – the futility of their lives and pursuits when they were alive, the sufferings they are currently experiencing as orphaned and homeless spirits. Perhaps the Hongwu emperor had exactly such responses in mind when he issued the decree designating the *jiao/yuqie* ritualist-monastics as those who will educate and teach the common people virtues such as filiality, loyalty, kindness and morality through the performances of rites.

The Baohua Transformation and Dissemination of Zhuhong's Redaction

¹⁵⁹ XZJ104.813a-b.

Although several other *Yuqie yankou* liturgies follow Zhuhong's 1606 redaction, it was Deji Ding'an's 1693 recension of the liturgy that proved to be the most successful. Like the other recensions contemporaneous to it, Ding'an's liturgy uses Zhuhong's redaction as its core. Since I have already given a detailed descriptive analysis of Ding'an's liturgy in *Chapter Three*, I will not repeat it here. Instead, I will focus on the relationship between Zhuhong's Ding'an's texts and how Zhuhong's redaction – now totally embedded within Ding'an's liturgy – becomes the dominant *Yuqie yankou* liturgical tradition (replacing the earlier liturgies of Tianji and Lingcao). From the Hangzhou area where Zhuhong lived and died at the end of the Ming dynasty, our tale now takes us northwards – towards the Nanjing area, to a monastery I have consistently referred to as Baohua Monastery. Time wise, we will take a small leap forward into the early years of the new Qing dynasty that replaced the Ming in the year 1644. Baohua Monastery was first built in 1605 on a mountain range about twelve miles northeast of Nanjing. The main monastic complex at Baohua Monastery was formally known first as Longchang Monastery (*Longchang si* 隆昌寺) in the Ming Wanli period 萬曆 (1573-1620) and later renamed Huiju Monastery (*Huiju si* 慧居寺) by imperial decree in 1703. However, the popular name “*Baohua shan*” (lit. Mount Baohua) is often used to refer to this monastery.¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ Hence, for convenience sake I have consistently referred to this monastery as “Baohua Monastery” although it should be technically translated as “Mount Baohua.”

Legend has it that the earliest famous Buddhist figure associated with Baohua Monastery was the Liang dynasty 梁 (502-557) monk, Baozhi 寶誌 (418-514), who selected the hill where Baohua Monastery was eventually built as his residence.¹⁶¹

The monastic complex that we now refer to as Baohua Monastery was not built until the Wanli period by the architect-builder monk, Fudeng Miaofen 福登妙峰 (1686-1765).¹⁶² Very soon after its founding, Baohua Monastery began to rise in prominence as a leading monastic center in the south-eastern region of China. The rise of the monastery's reputation was mainly due to the charisma of its early abbots and the patronage of the Kangxi and Yongzheng emperors. For example, in 1663, in the second year of the Kangxi emperor's reign, the emperor issued an imperial command for the construction of an ordination platform at Baohua Monastery.¹⁶³ A previous wooden ordination platform had existed at the monastery but as the numbers of candidates seeking ordination at Baohua Monastery increased over the years, the old wooden ordination platform was deemed unsafe and inadequate. Therefore, in 1663, a larger ordination platform built of stone was constructed by imperial decree.

The Kangxi emperor's personal issuance of the imperial command for Baohua Monastery to build an ordination platform greatly boosted the reputation of the

¹⁶¹ "Baohuashan zhi" in *Zhongguo fosi zhi congkan*, vol. 53, 159-162.

¹⁶² For a discussion of Miaofeng's impressive architectural accomplishments, see Prip-Møller, *Chinese Buddhist Monasteries*, 274-281.

¹⁶³ "Baohuashan zhi," 114-116.

monastery as a pre-eminent monastic center. Baohua Monastery's reputation as the leading monastic center in southeastern China quickly soared to national proportions. Monastics from all over China flocked to Baohua Monastery for their formal ordination into the Buddhist order as receiving one's monastic ordination there conferred great prestige and honor on individual monastics. Baohua Monastery's gazetteer further records a whole series on honors, gifts and endowments it received from the Kangxi emperor – with a visit by the emperor himself in the year 1703 topping the list of honors.¹⁶⁴ The Kangxi emperor's son and successor, the Yongzheng emperor, continued his father's legacy of support for Baohua Monastery.

Aside from supporting Baohua Monastery as *the* monastic center and ordination platform of the empire, if you recall, the Kangxi and Yongzheng emperors also promoted Zhuhong and his legacy, especially in the area of strict monastic discipline. Zhuhong's fame as a promoter of strict monastic discipline and the rise of Baohua Monastery as the foremost monastic ordination center in the country happened concurrently; fueled largely by the support of the father and son emperors. Furthermore, it was the Yongzheng emperor who granted official canon status to Zhuhong's collected works, the *Yunqi fahui*. Not surprisingly then, Zhuhong's redaction of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy eventually made its way to Baohua Monastery.

¹⁶⁴ The opening fascicle of the “Baohuashan zhi” is a list of all the imperial favors conferred on the monastery by the early Qing emperors. See “Baohuashan zhi,” 1-25. It was during this visit that the monastery was re-named Huiju Monastery. See Prip-Møller, *Chinese Buddhist Monasteries*, 284.

Under the hands of Deji Ding'an (1634-1700), the third abbot of Baohua Monastery, Zhuhong's redaction was reworked and new material added to it.¹⁶⁵ Ding'an's redaction was subsequently known as the "*Huashan Yankou*" 華山懺口 liturgy. As noted earlier, other clerics of the time – clerics not associated with Baohua Monastery – also produced their own recensions of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy. One liturgy was published in 1626 by Sanfeng Fazang and another in 1684 by Juche Jixian. But unlike Ding'an's liturgy, these liturgies appeared to have gained little if any currency.

In the year 1733, the Yongzheng emperor summoned Fujū Wenhāi 福聚文海 (1686-1765) the seventh abbot of Baohua Monastery to the capital city of Beijing to act as the ordaining preceptor at an "Imperial Ordination" (*shou huangjie* 受皇戒). For this special ordination, more than 1800 candidates from all over China were selected and interviewed by the emperor himself to be ordained as monks.¹⁶⁶ This imperial command specified that upon completion of the ordination, the newly ordained monks will return with the abbot to Baohua Monastery for a period of training in monastic and spiritual life.¹⁶⁷ It is this particular detail in the imperial command – that the newly ordained monks are to return to Baohua for a

¹⁶⁵ Ding'an doubled the length of Zhuhong's liturgy by adding both new sections as well as various new ritual elements apparently derived from the Tibetan tradition, rather than, as stated by Yu Chun-fang, simplifying Zhuhong's liturgy. See, Yu Chun-fang, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 325.

¹⁶⁶ "Baohuashan zhi," 5-6, 190-191.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. Also see Prip-Møller, *Chinese Buddhist Monasteries*, 292.

post-ordination training period – that we are provided an answer to the question of how the standardization of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy and ritual-forms was achieved in Chinese Buddhism in the Late Imperial period. As a nationally recognized ordination-platform, Baohua Monastery held a pre-eminent position that no other monasteries in China could lay a claim on in the Late Imperial period. The enduring legacy of Baohua Monastery can be seen even in the Republican period. Holmes Welch's *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism* likened the prestige that monastic-graduates of Baohua Monastery received to that by graduates of Sandhurst and West Point.¹⁶⁸ The ordination program at Baohua Monastery consisted of training periods prior to and following the actual ordination ceremony. While all candidates went through the same pre-ordination training in liturgy, monastic deportment and rules, the post-ordination training was optional. Records show that a good number of candidates remained after the ordination for the extended training. This extended training mostly focused on the study of liturgy and ritual. This included the pronunciation of the Chinese characters used to transliterate Sanskrit names and spells, the learning of the complex *mudrās* or hand-gestures used for

¹⁶⁸ Welch, *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism*, 289. Chenhua, who was himself a “graduate” of Baohua Monastery offers a different and highly critical view of the situation at Baohua Monastery. While praising Baohua Monastery for emphasizing strict adherence to rules of deportment, he criticizes the monastery for only emphasizing external deportment (*jiexiang* 戒相, lit. “the [external] characteristics of the precepts”) at the expense of neglecting the study and understanding of the precepts (*jiefa* 戒法) and the practice or observance of the precepts (*jiexing* 戒行). Chenhua also complained of the unnecessary severity at Baohua Monastery, a severity that, in Chenhua’s opinion, was no different from cruelty. For Chenhua’s own account of his ordination at Baohua Monastery, see, Chenhua, 45-59.

performances of the *Yuqie yankou* rite, ritual details related to a whole repertoire of post-mortem rites and finally, ordination ritual and procedure.¹⁶⁹ Some monks stayed for a few months while others remained at Baohua Monastery for years. After graduating from the monastery, most monks returned to their home temples while others take up residence and administrative responsibilities in other monasteries in the different parts of China. This then was what happened when those imperially-ordained monks returned to Baohua Monastery after their ordination in the capital. And the same can be said of other monastics who went to Baohua Monastery to receive their formal ordination and training from the early Qing period on.

We can thus see that Baohua Monastery's reputation as the foremost ordination-platform and monastic center in Late Imperial China indirectly facilitated the national standardization of performances of the *Yuqie yankou* rite according to the *Huashan Yankou* liturgy. Zhuhong's redaction, which was once a marginal tradition, was transformed and placed in the dominant position via the *Huashan Yankou* liturgy. Zhuhong's redaction, lodged within the longer *Huashan Yankou* liturgy, practically displaced all other *Yuqie yankou* traditions and liturgies. Sources speak of at least seven or eight different traditions of the *Yuqie yankou* rite during Zhuhong's time.

¹⁶⁹ Welch, *The Buddhist Revival*, 104-105.

But all these traditions were ultimately displaced by the liturgy taught and performed at Baohua Monastery and by the thousands of graduates it produces annually. The ritual-currency of the *Huashan Yankou* liturgy becomes even more evident when we note the existence of Daoist ghost-feeding liturgies from the Qing period that were clearly based on the *Huashan Yankou* liturgy. At least one of these liturgies is still performed by the Sannai 三奶 Daoists in Hong Kong today.¹⁷⁰

Although Ding'an's *Huashan Yankou* liturgy eventually gained universal currency and became the standard liturgy used for performances of the *Yuqie yankou* rite throughout China, its domination was not accomplished overnight. The monastics who were ordained and trained in monastic deportment, liturgy and ritual at Baohua Monastery steadily expanded over the years. Monastics continued to flock to Baohua Monastery – some returning to their home monasteries soon after their ordinations, while other remained at Baohua Monastery for extended training. Although the support of the government was essential in boosting the reputation of the Vinaya tradition at Baohua Monastery, the charismatic abbots of the monastery must have contributed significantly to the success of Baohua Monastery as well. As more monastics in China received their ordination at Baohua Monastery, the traditions of Baohua Monastery began to spread in a subtle but effective way as newly ordained

¹⁷⁰ Ōfuchi, 799-813.

and trained monastics at Baohua Monastery returned to their home monasteries with the prestige of “graduating” from Baohua Monastery. Surely, the traditions and texts that these graduates brought back with them from *the* monastic center of the nation must have carried a certain prestige and pedigree that easily translated into ritual-currency. Performing the rites the Baohua way was considered performing the rites the right way. When rites are performed “the right way,” they become efficacious; prayers are fulfilled, aims are achieved.

However, it is reasonable for us to expect that not all local traditions were completely receptive to new liturgies and new ritual-traditions – whether they come from another neighboring monastery or from some distinguished Vinaya center such as Baohua Monastery. Having local, native monastics who have returned from Baohua Monastery be the ones to introduce the new Baohua texts and traditions to their respective communities probably reduced the degree of opposition and resistance that these new texts and traditions might have otherwise had to face if they were brought in by outsiders. Having newly ordained and trained monks/performers introduce a prestigious tradition is only one side of the success equation. On the other side of the equation is the transformation of local ritual sensibilities and expectations. The local clientele had to be convinced that the newly imported tradition was “better” or more “right” than existing local tradition. In short, this task

was far from easy or straight-forward. The existence of *Yuqie yankou* liturgies by Sanfeng Fazang and Juche Jixian – liturgies that were also based on Zhuhong’s redaction but different from the *Huashan Yankou* liturgy – suggests some form of resistance or at least differentiation against the growing Baohua influence. But the best example of resistance against the growing popularity and liturgical hegemony of the *Huashan Yankou* liturgy is in the case of the so-called “*Cantonese Yankou*” 廣東燄口 tradition. This *Cantonese Yankou*, which I first learnt of in the summer of 2001 in Hong Kong, refers to the *Yuqie yankou* rite from Dinghu Monastery – hailed as “the finest Buddhist monastery built in South China in the seventeenth century.”¹⁷¹ When I compared the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy originating from Dinghu Monastery with all available extant versions of *Yuqie yankou* liturgies, I found to my surprise that it is closest in length and content to Zhuhong’s redaction of the liturgy in 1606.¹⁷²

Liturgical Hegemony and Resistance in the Early Qing

¹⁷¹ Brook, *Praying for Power*, 137.

¹⁷² I have to thank Professor Li Kwok Fu of Chilin Buddhist Institute in Hong Kong for my accidental “discovery” of this liturgy which is still used at Dinghu Monastery in Guangdong province. In the summer of 2001, I was in China for the entire summer – making Hong Kong my home-base as I traveled to Taiwan and to different parts of mainland China researching the *Yuqie yankou* rite. In between trips, I visited a local Buddhist scholar in Hong Kong. As we sat in his office, one afternoon, sipping tea and conversing on our respective research interests, Prof. Li suddenly handed me a xeroxed document. I immediately recognized the title on the document – it was a *Yuqie yankou* liturgy, a liturgy – but not *the* liturgy! It was a text at least half the length of the liturgy that is normally used today – i.e. the *Baohua Yankou* liturgy. What was even more exciting to me was the fact that the xeroxed copy of the shorter liturgy was done from a recently published original – that the text wasn’t photocopied from an old or ancient text kept in some library, tucked away and long-forgotten. In short, what that translated to was that the shorter liturgy has a living, performed context, not just a trace left behind by a dead tradition. My suspicion was very quickly confirmed when Prof. Li popped in a cassette tape into his tape player and hit the play button. “It’s a recording of the rite performed according to this text” said Prof. Li. I was speechless.

Dinghu Monastery or more correctly, Qingyun Monastery (*Qingyun si* 慶雲寺), is located on Mount Dinghu (*Dinghu shan* 鼎湖山) – “a low peak in a cluster of hills fifteenth kilometers northeast of the city of Zhaoqing, a prefectural capital in Guangdong province.”¹⁷³ Like Baohua Monastery, the founding of Dinghu Monastery was relatively late. Also like Baohua Monastery, once Dinghu Monastery was established in 1635 it quickly grew into an influential monastery, attracting a strong local support base in the Guangdong area. As Timothy Brook has convincingly demonstrated in *Praying for Power*, Dinghu Monastery’s origins, rapid rise to prominence and continued, sustained success was largely due to the support of the local gentry in the Guangdong area.¹⁷⁴ Guangdong province saw a record harvest in the mid-1650’s so that those who controlled the surplus were ready to channel it into monastery-building. The other important factor in Dinghu Monastery’s success was its first abbot and the successive lineage of abbots who mostly maintained the rigorous policies set by its first abbot. In the larger context, the construction of Dinghu Monastery happened at a particular juncture in Late Imperial China when Buddhism was witnessing a sudden revival, especially in south-eastern China.¹⁷⁵ Although the main figures of this national revival mostly

¹⁷³ Brook, *Praying for Power*, 137.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 137-158.

¹⁷⁵ See Yu Chun-fang’s general discussion of the revival of Buddhism during this period in Yu, “Ming Buddhism,” 931-946. Chang Sheng-yan’s monograph on Ouyi Zhixu 藕益智旭 is also an invaluable source. See Chang Sheng-yan, *Minmatsu Chūgoku bukkyō no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Sankibo

operated in the Jiangnan area, Guangdong province in the deep-south was similarly swept by this wave of Buddhist revival.

Liji Daoqiu 離際道丘 (1586-1658), the first abbot of Dinghu Monastery was a Cantonese monk already of significant local renown when he was invited by the founders of the monastery to be its first abbot. At the age of seventeen, he “left the home life” to become a novice monk and very soon afterwards traveled northwards to the Jiangnan area, the heart of the Buddhist revival at that time, and studied with several prominent monks, including Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清 (1546-1623). In particular, his decision to go to Hangzhou in 1610 to study with a famous monk in that area is most significant to our discussion. For this monk was none other than Zhuhong. Daoqiu remained with Zhuhong for several years, possibly until Zhuhong passed away in 1615 and one of Daoqiu’s biographies claims that Daoqiu “inherited Zhuhong’s robes and bowl;”¹⁷⁶ an expression that normally refers to being a successor of a previous master. Zhuhong left a lasting influence on Daoqiu and the Dinghu Monastery that Daoqiu was subsequently abbot of. Like Zhuhong, Daoqiu focused on Pure Land practices that are based on Huayan and Chan understandings of

Buddhorin, 1975). This publication was followed by two other studies on late Ming Buddhism that focused on Hanshan Deqing and Yunqi Zhuhong. See Hsu Sung-pen, *A Buddhist Leader in Ming China: The Life and Thought of Han-shan Te-ch'ing* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1979) and Yu Chun-fang, *The Renewal of Buddhism in China: Chu-hung and the Late Ming Synthesis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981). Chang Sheng-yan later published another book on Buddhism in the late Ming which has a broader and more general focus than his monograph on Ouyi Zhixu. See Chang Sheng-yan, *Mingmo fojiao yanjiu* (1987, Taipei: Fagu wenhua, 2000).

¹⁷⁶ “Dinghushan qingyun si zhi,” in *Zhongguo fosi zhi congkan*, vol. 110, 239.

the mind. Furthermore, these Pure Land practices can only be effective when practitioners are firmly grounded in their strict observance of monastic vows. Daoqiu's emphasis on monastic discipline can be seen in the writings he authored on monastic discipline and on the way Dinghu Monastery was ran. The Dinghu Monastery gazetteer published in the Kangxi period contains a document by Daoqiu that explicitly states that Daoqiu ran Dinghu Monastery, "according to the way and style of Yunqi Monastery – i.e. Zhuhong's monastery."¹⁷⁷ The gazetteer further tells us that of the five portraits that Daoqiu enshrined in the "Lineage Hall" (*zongtang* 宗堂) at Dinghu Monastery, Zhuhong's portrait is one and it in fact occupied the central position.¹⁷⁸ Again, in the "Hall of Gathering Clouds" (*yunlai tang* 雲來堂) – the hall where traveling and visiting monks were entertained and received at Dinghu Monastery, once again, we find Zhuhong enshrined again in that hall alongside "the Generations of Patriarch-bodhisattvas who Released Lives, Son of Elder Flowing Water (*Liushui changzhe zi* 流水長者子), Huiyuan, Zhiyi and Yongming Yanshou."¹⁷⁹

In light of this intimate link between Dinghu Monastery and Zhuhong, my finding that the *Dinghu Yankou* liturgy – *Yuqie yankou shishi keyi* 瑜伽餓口施食科儀 – is closest in length and content to Zhuhong's original redaction, should not be

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 237.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 198.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 202.

such a surprise after all. The year 1610, the year that Daoqiu arrived at Hangzhou to study with Zhuhong was four years after Zhuhong's redaction of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy and by then we know that Zhuhong had been performing the liturgy on a regular basis. But at that time, Zhuhong's redaction of the liturgical-text and the ritual-forms associated with that text was still a marginal tradition that had currency only at Zhuhong's monastery and among his disciples and supporters. It was that version of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy that Daoqiu brought back with him to Guangdong and finally to Dinghu Monastery. From Dinghu Monastery, this tradition began to spread into the area, attaining ritual currency and economy as the local reputation of Dinghu Monastery increased steadily. What we have here is an interesting case of how a liturgy that began as a marginal tradition (i.e. with Zhuhong, in the Hangzhou area) gets transported to a different place (i.e. to Guangdong province in the deep-south), and quickly becomes the dominant tradition in that localized area (especially at Dinghu Monastery). Meanwhile, as we have seen above, Zhuhong's original redaction gets transported to and transformed at Baohua Monastery in the Nanjing area, then very quickly gains acceptance and currency at Baohua Monastery to eventually become the dominant tradition across all of China. However, the tradition that got imported to Dinghu Monastery, though at one point dominant in the Guangdong area, eventually became marginal even in Guangdong (but evidently not

so at Dinghu Monastery) as the Baohua tradition gradually displaced the Dinghu tradition so that today, only Dinghu Monastery and its branch monastery in Hong Kong are performing the rite according to a liturgy that is closest to Zhuhong's original redaction.¹⁸⁰

But Dinghu Monastery was a unique monastery in south China, and in fact, in most of China during the Late Imperial period. It was a unique monastery because it was probably the only major monastery that adopted a policy of not owning any income-producing land. This rule was one established by Daoqiu and despite later efforts to change it out of practical, economic necessity; the successive abbots of Dinghu Monastery have resisted from wavering away from the position of its first abbot.¹⁸¹ Brook notes that this practice of not owning income-producing land was in practice into the nineteenth century.¹⁸² The stubbornness or extremely principled stance adopted by Dinghu Monastery towards such an important and practical issue as owning income-producing land to ensure smooth and reliable financial support for the monastery might perhaps serve as an indicator of the pride that the monastery took in its traditions. This pride must have extended to its spiritual practices and

¹⁸⁰ I have in my collection an audio-recording of the *Dinghu Yankou* rite performed at Zhulin Chan Monastery, Hong Kong in 2001. Zhulin Chan Monastery in Hong Kong is considered a branch-monastery of Dinghu Monastery.

¹⁸¹ Brook, *Praying for Power*, 146-148.

¹⁸² Ibid., 146, citing Xiancheng Ruhai, *Canxue zhijin*, (1827), 1:50b.

ritual-traditions – including then, the *Yuqie yankou* tradition that it received from Zhuhong via Daoqiu.

Hence, when the influence of *Huashan Yankou* swept across China starting from, Dinghu Monastery stood firm by its proud traditions. Part of Dinghu Monastery's ability to resist owning income-producing land hinges upon its ability to convince the local gentry of its uniqueness in the known Buddhist world. The abbots of Dinghu Monastery had to ensure that the monastery sustained a high reputation for piety, monastic discipline, and faithfulness to ritual-orthopraxy to inspire the continuing financial commitment of lay supporters. In terms of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy, despite the encroaching hegemony of the *Huashan Yankou* liturgy, Dinghu Monastery was able to continue using its own liturgy, according to the ritual-forms that came to be transmitted along with its liturgy. Another factor that probably ensured the longevity of the *Dinghu Yankou* liturgy is the existence of a small printing press at Dinghu Monastery. Having its own private, in-house printing press, made it easier for Dinghu Monastery to keep its textual-liturgical tradition alive. Dinghu Monastery's printing press was apparently still in operation in the twentieth century.¹⁸³ It is entirely possible that rather than being a passive tradition that Dinghu Monastery had to defend against the growing hegemony of the

¹⁸³ Brook notes that the Asian Library at the University of British Columbia has in its collection a 1920 edition of the *Heart Sūtra* published Dinghu Monastery. See, Brook, 351, n.17.

ritual-tradition, the *Dinghu Yankou* rite actually served as one of several defenses employed by Dinghu Monastery to fend off the Baohua encroachment.

Compared to the *Huashan Yankou* liturgy, the *Dinghu Yankou* liturgy's addition to Zhuhong's original redaction is minimal. Other than adding a few passages at the beginning of the rite, the *Dinghu Yankou* liturgy is identical with Zhuhong's. The additions in the *Dinghu Yankou* are related to the two general types of *Yuqie yankou* that I have discussed in the *Introduction*. Thus, the *Dinghu Yankou* provides the different opening prayers and hymns to be recited depending on whether it is a “*yang*” and thus auspicious type of *Yuqie yankou* rite that is being performed or a “*yin*” or funerary type of *Yuqie yankou* rite.¹⁸⁴ Interestingly, none of the different editions of the *Huashan Yankou* liturgy I have consulted provide any prayers or hymns to be used for *yang Yuqie yankou* performances. One has to wonder if this can serve as an indication that while *yang* performances are still done with the *Dinghu Yankou* liturgy, it has become a rare affair for the *Huashan Yankou*.

Whereas we know that the Dinghu Monastery's resistance against the *Huashan Yankou* liturgy is successful to a certain degree – to the degree that Dinghu Monastery and possibly several other monasteries closely-affiliated with Dinghu Monastery are still using this liturgy – we cannot be so sure of the success of the other

¹⁸⁴ *Yuqie yankou shishi keyi* (Mount Dinghu: Qingyun Monastery, n.d.).

two *Yuqie yankou* liturgies that post-dated Zhuhong but were published before Baohua Monastery's 1693 recension. As briefly mentioned earlier, Juche Jixian published the *Yuqie yankou zhuji zuanyao* 瑜伽燄口註集纂要 in 1675. Practically nothing is known of Jixian except that he was a younger contemporary of Zhiquan 智銓 (1609-1669) who was listed as a “certifier” of Jixian's *Yuqie yankou* liturgy. Jixian's liturgy mostly follows Zhuhong's and like Zhuhong claims that it is based on Tianji's liturgy but it also incorporates the writings of the “insider Dharma-masters” (*nei fashi* 内法師) – presumably referring to the masters of Jixian's lineage or monastery.¹⁸⁵ Jixian also composed an introduction to the liturgy. In this introduction, he briefly explains what he identifies as the “six principles” (*liuze* 六則) of the rite: 1) the esoteric-teachings of Yuqie (*yuqie mijiao* 瑜伽密教), 2) the altar-rite (*tanyi* 壇儀), 3) the *acārya*, 4) the visualization of the Bodhi-mind (*guan puti xin* 觀菩提心),¹⁸⁶ 5) the seed-syllables and 6) the *mudrās*.¹⁸⁷ Beyond this introduction and the liturgy itself, we do not know anything else about the success of the text or even the circumstances and details of its editor, Jixian.

¹⁸⁵ XZJ104.984b.

¹⁸⁶ Although “*guan*” can be translated also as “to contemplate,” perhaps suggesting a more discursive type of meditation, Jixian's explanation makes it clear that in this context it is “to visualize” since one of the principles of the rite is the visualization of one's Bodhi-mind as appearing in the form of a white, moon disc even though the Bodhi-mind is innately beyond shapes and colors. This appearance as a moon disc is, according to Jixian, for the sake of those who have not attained enlightenment. See XZJ104.936b-937a.

¹⁸⁷ XZJ104.935-937.

But when we come to the second text (which was actually published before Jixian's), we definitely know a little bit more about both the reception of the text and its author. Sanfeng Fazang (1573-1635) was a younger contemporary of Zhuhong. Fazang himself was a Linji monk by ordination lineage and was also a practitioner and master of Chan in his own right. His *Yuqie yankou* liturgy – *Xiuxi yuqie jiyao shishi tanyi* (修習瑜伽集要施食壇儀) – was completed in 1626. Fazang also wrote a brief exposition on the *Yuqie yankou* rite and attached it as the preface to his liturgy.¹⁸⁸ In this preface, Fazang clearly emphasizes the importance of understanding the inner meanings of the ritual-acts. There is also a strong emphasis on the importance of the meditation or visualization aspect of this rite, reflecting perhaps his identity as a Chan master. Fazang writes:

If one does not practice meditation (*chan* 禪), there is no awakening. Without awakening, there is no profound entry into the Dharma-method. If entry into the Dharma-method is not thorough, how can the Dharmas be forgotten (*wangfa* 忘法)? If forgetting the Dharmas are not complete, how can there be functioning (*zuoyong* 作用)? If functioning is not great, there is no mutual-correspondence (*xiangying* 相應). If mutual-correspondence is not ultimate, how can we benefit sentient beings? There are many methods of benefiting sentient beings but in each of them, the seven matters above must be present.¹⁸⁹

Fazang's explanation of the rite basically summarizes the main visualizations involved in the rite by focusing on the Sanskrit seed-syllables visualized and how

¹⁸⁸ XZJ104.889a-893a.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 889a.

each of them becomes the source of various manifestations. Each of the ritual elements found in the liturgy is matched up with a classical Buddhist idea, showing how the liturgy encodes various Buddhist truths that are then actualized when the liturgy is performed. Fazang was particularly disturbed by what he saw as the degeneration of the performances of the *Yuqie yankou* rite into mere theatrical performances, “diluted by songs and melodies that are vulgar and disorderly.”¹⁹⁰ He laments, “They do not know the Profound Essence and the Three Contemplations – what a pity!”¹⁹¹

Towards the end of his preface, Fazang makes the interesting claim that the principles of the *Yuqie yankou* rite that he has written about are entirely based on “the special methods of the Linji and Yunmen (lineages of Chan)” (*quanshi linji yunmen shouduan* 全是臨濟雲門手段).¹⁹² According to Fazang, these “special methods” originated from India and were transmitted from patriarch to patriarch until they were brought to China and eventually transmitted by the Linji and Yunmen lineages. In this same preface, Fazang identifies Nanyang Huizhong 南陽慧忠 (?-775) as the first Chinese recipient of these special methods.¹⁹³ It is unclear to me why Huizhong; but Huizhong was one of Huineng’s “five great disciples.”¹⁹⁴ This extremely

¹⁹⁰ XZJ104.892b-893a.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid., 892b.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ *Foguang Dictionary*, 6031c-6032a.

curious association with Huizhong and Fazang's claim of the "special method" transmitted within the Linji and Yunmen lineages needs further investigation.

Although I have not been able to locate any contemporaneous sources that might reference Fazang's *Yuqie yankou* liturgy and/or tell us something about its popularity, I suspect that it did not enjoy the currency that other similar liturgies might have. This speculation is largely based on the fact that Fazang's teachings for reasons unrelated to his liturgy became the target of the Yongzheng emperor's dislike and were branded "*mara's words*" (*moyu* 魔語). His writings were supposedly banned and his followers dispersed.¹⁹⁵

To this day, Baohua Monastery's *Huashan Yankou* has held sway. It is the most commonly used text and for most, the only *Yuqie yankou* text known to them. The present text includes notes on details regarding visualizations and other ritual-acts not included in Ding'an's original recension of the liturgy. These notes were added to the liturgy by Shengxing Zongzheng, the fifteenth abbot of Baohua Monastery. In the late Qing and early Republican period, performances of the *Yuqie yankou* were common and pervasive. Although Baohua Monastery was still considered a pre-eminent monastic center and the *Huashan Yankou* liturgy continued to be considered the normative *Yuqie yankou* text, of the rite associated with Tianning

¹⁹⁵ *Foguang Dictionary*, 3429b-c.

Monastery (*Tianning si* 天寧寺) in Changzhou 常州 started to show signs of becoming even more well-known and prestigious than those associated with Baohua Monastery. Many present-day editions of the *Huashan Yankou* liturgy are actually based on editions published by Tianning Monastery. Ironically, as discussed in *Chapter Two*, Tianning Monastery's reputation as having a respectable and impressive *Yuqie yankou* tradition was probably the unintended but certainly welcomed results of the monastery's financial woes in the late Qing and early Republican period.

CONCLUSION:

Concluding Reflections and Future Directions

As I stated in the *Introduction*, my first exposure to the *Yuqie yankou* occurred many years ago, many miles away. I did not meet the rite for the first time as an abstracted object of inquiry or in a context where I was an “other.” Instead, the *Yuqie yankou* was long a piece my personal narrative before I ever considered it a potential topic for my dissertation. It was an annual, lived event that I was part of till I left Malaysia at the age of nineteen. Even in the years when I was away from Malaysia, I was able to coincide several of my summer visits to Malaysia with the annual performance of the rite at Puti Cloister. As such, when I finally decided to write my dissertation on the *Yuqie yankou*, I knew that it will not be a study conducted exclusively with the textual-historical approach even though my academic training has been mostly focused on this approach. But there was too much of the *Yuqie yankou* in me to allow me to limit my study of this rite to its historical and textual past. I wanted to not only reconstruct a history for this rite and its liturgical development but also to attend to its lived and performed realities as can be discerned

and interpreted based on present-day performances of the rite and whatever ethnographical documentation that we have from the recent history of the *Yuqie yankou*. I knew then as I am convinced now that only by adopting this dual-tracked inquiry of the *Yuqie yankou* – an inquiry that combines the issues and approaches of anthropology and history – can we gain a more complete and responsive understanding of this rite. I was thus gratified to read later on that this dual-tracked approach that I have taken was exactly what an esteemed scholar in the field has called for and anticipated some twenty years before.

In a review article written in 1980, the late Michel Strickmann aptly stated that “Perhaps it is the too frequent abstraction of sinology from living realities that in part accounts for our backwardness in coming to grips with Chinese religion.”¹ As recourse to this “backwardness,” Strickmann called for “research which systematically integrates the hitherto discrete matter and differing perspectives of anthropology and history” and cautioned us to “lose no time in fusing the concerns of anthropology and history within Chinese studies....”² Although I have doubts if Strickmann, were he still alive today, would consider this dissertation a candidate that stood up to and met his challenge, I submit that at least the attempt was done in good faith. And although I would have liked to weave these two matters and perspectives

¹ Michel Strickmann, “History, Anthropology, and Chinese Religion,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 40, No. 1. (Jun. 1980) 248.

² *Ibid.*, 247-248.

of history and anthropology, texts and people, past and present more seamlessly than I have done so in this dissertation, I am nonetheless satisfied that this dissertation has attempted to combine the two distinctive approaches identified and problematized by Strickmann.

As we have seen, the *Yuqie yankou* rite performed these days is based on a liturgy completed by Deji Ding'an in 1693. In this dissertation, I have attempted to show how a careful reading of Ding'an's recension of the liturgy reveals sedimented layers of liturgies that extend back to almost a millennium. When we start examining each of these layers, we end up unearthing a wealth of historical, cultural, ideological, regional and institutional details and complexes that in turn helps us imagine the worlds that produced these different liturgies that finally culminated in Ding'an's 1693 recension. At the same time, a responsive engagement of this corpus of historical documents and liturgies, opens for us windows into worlds imagined and created by these texts.

But I have learnt in this process that historical reconstructions can at times be testy and tentative. What I can reconstruct and see – even if we pretend that I have done the best that can be done – is only what these texts want me and allow me to see and reconstruct. If we consider the body of materials that I have examined in *Chapter Four* and *Chapter Five*, what we have are only ghost-feeding liturgies

scattered rather irregularly over a period of a thousand years. These liturgical texts do not usually come neatly-packed in a designer gift-box of contexts. To complicate things even yet further, even the traditional datings of most of the historically earlier ghost-feeding liturgies – texts such as the *Method of Bestowing Drink and Food*, the *Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra* and the *Flaming-Mouth Food-Bestowal Rite* – are highly problematic and unreliable. Although I am content (for now,) with my re-dating of these liturgies as accurately as I can, I have been continuously challenged by the problems encountered in attempting to reconstruct the worlds that produced these different ghost-feeding liturgies. The dearth of other historical evidence that can definitively place these ghost-feeding texts in their respective historical contexts adds to the difficulties involved in attempting to reconstruct and re-imagine the worlds that produced by the *Yuqie yankou* and the worlds it in turn imagined and constructed.

As the tale I have sought to tell in *Chapter Four* and *Chapter Five* is a tale reconstructed from texts of uncertain origins, texts written for reasons and uses very different from *our* reasons and interests in examining them, it is not surprising that at times this tale seemed robust and full-bodied while at other junctures extremely bare and perhaps even disembodied. But I contend that it has been a historical tapestry worth weaving and a tale deserving to be told. For any historical reconstruction that

we engage in is necessarily more efficacious and effective in some respects and less colorful and contoured in other ways. The ghost-feeding texts I have examined come from a whole spectrum of contexts and backgrounds – some of them have a clear authorship while others are obscure and perhaps deliberately obscuring. Some of these texts, such as those in the Song, were composed by clerics and recommended for the use of both monastics and laity. Others sought to control and limit accessibility to the rite by demanding lineal ties and monastic affiliations. While some of these texts were liturgies intended for private, personal practice, some functioned as part of the monastic ritual-program and yet others for very public performances often commissioned by the laity. These ghost-feeding texts are thus uniquely poised in a position that cuts across the usual identities and boundaries that we grapple with, boundaries such as lay and monastic, elite and popular, personal and public.

Rather than being a remnant of the past, buried in historical China waiting to be unearthed by some modern scholar, the *Yuqie yankou* continues to be an important and popular rite among modern day Chinese Buddhists. During those years when religious freedom was much more severely curtailed in China than it is today, performances of the *Yuqie yankou* continued uninterrupted in Hong Kong, Taiwan and immigrant Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, Australia, Europe and the

United States. And now, as the situation of Buddhism and Buddhist monastics improve within China, performances of the *Yuqie yankou* has become once again, one of the most popular rites available for sponsors to commission monastics to perform. It is my contention here that if we are to understand the historical development of *Yuqie yankou* and appreciate its enduring and adaptive nature, we have to pay attention to its contemporary expressions and on-going developments and change.

Thus, although my discussion in *Chapter Four* and *Chapter Five* dealt primarily with issues and events in the historical past, the issues themselves are certainly not merely matters of the past. These issues are very much alive today. For instance, although we learnt at the end of *Chapter Five* that Baohua Monastery has successfully placed and maintained their tradition and liturgy of the *Yuqie yankou* in the dominant and normative position in modern Chinese Buddhism, it is not a matter of *if*, but rather *when*, the Baohua dominance too will be marginalized. Standardization can be thorough; but as we have seen, never absolute. In the last couple of years, I have been able to establish a working relationship with the Foguang Shan Buddhist Order – a Taiwanese-based, trans-national, Buddhist organization with over two hundred monasteries, temples and centers worldwide. The current abbot, Shi Xinding, has a personal interest in the transmission of liturgical and ritual traditions within the Order. Even in his younger days, Xinding was a teacher of

Buddhist ritual-traditions and now as the abbot he is often the chief celebrant at major rites performed by the Order at its headquarters in Kaohsiung, Taiwan and at many of their monasteries and centers worldwide. On each occasion that I have met with him, our conversation inevitable comes back to his interest in variant traditions of the major rites still current in Chinese Buddhism – rites such as the *Yuqie yankou* and *Shuilu*. He complains that the current, normative traditions for the performance of these rites are too lengthy and repetitive, echoing Zhuhong's complaints in the sixteenth century. Ironically, the abbot faults Zhuhong for unnecessarily lengthening the *Shuilu* by introducing too many Pure Land ritual elements into the rite. In his progressive view, the idea that ritual and liturgical traditions has and therefore should remain unchanging, is an idea that can only be held by those blind to the historicity of these traditions. By seeking out variant traditions and marginalized ritual-forms, the abbot is clearly, in his own way, challenging the standardization that I discussed in *Chapter Five*. Just as there used to be the *Tianji Yankou* and later *Huashan Yankou* and the minority tradition of *Dinghu Yankou*, members of the Fo Guang Shan Order are already referring to the *Yuqie yankou* performed at their monasteries as the *Foguang Yankou*.

The continuing importance and popularity of *Yuqie yankou* in modern Chinese Buddhism becomes even more impressive when we consider the ideological

onslaughts that it received from Chinese Buddhist reformists during the late Qing and Republican periods. In *Chapter One*, I attempted to show the enduring resilience of the *Yuqie yankou* at a time when both external and internal forces in the modern Chinese Buddhist milieu were working towards obliterating or at least significantly reducing the perceived currency of the *Yuqie yankou* rite. Western missionaries then active in China attacked Chinese Buddhist rites and beliefs as primitive and superstitious. Even those missionaries who seemed to admire certain aspects of Chinese Buddhism could not bring themselves to liking or appreciating the *Yuqie yankou* – for all its “art and solemn earnestness,” it is in the end nothing but “black magic and animistic exorcism.”³ On the other hand, the attitude of the Chinese Buddhist reformists, chief among them Taixu, was one of embarrassment and apologies where they attempted to slide under the rug those elements of Chinese Buddhism that they recognized and labeled “superstition.” Instead of these “superstitions,” theirs was a Buddhism with a lofty philosophy that stood above the ignorant piety of the common-folk. They also promoted it as an educational system very capable of responding to modernity and an ancient Eastern wisdom that surpassed any and all Western intellectual traditions. Although much of what we see today in Chinese Buddhism is a legacy of these reformists, these reformists ultimately

³ Reichelt, 105.

failed in their efforts to be rid of the embarrassment that they identified with rites such as the *Yuqie yankou*.

I believe these reformists failed in exiling *Yuqie yankou* and other rites due to a host of reasons too numerous and complex to even briefly recapitulate here. But I did try to demonstrate in this dissertation that the success of the *Yuqie yankou* lies partly in the unique qualities found in this rite. Its self-representation as an “esoteric” or “exoteric-exoteric” rite serves as a powerful claim to its efficacy. Chinese Buddhists have especially associated any teachings and practices that involve the use of spells and *mudrās* as potent ritual-technologies capable of delivering swift and exacting results. The *Yuqie yankou* is one such rite and in fact the most explicitly esoteric rite of all rites still performed by Chinese Buddhists.

I have also argued in this dissertation for the importance of paying attention to the performed dimension of the *Yuqie yankou*. Apart from investigating the redaction, recension and codification of liturgies, it is equally important to focus on the musical and operatic qualities of this rite. It is my contention that one of the contributing factors to the enduring presence of the *Yuqie yankou* lies in its musical/operatic qualities. The presence of a rich ensemble of percussive instruments and the use of a wide range of vocal delivery styles renders the rite a musical quality that is often much more guarded and subdued in other types of

Chinese Buddhist rites. In many ways, performances of the *Yuqie yankou* were experienced as performances in the operatic sense. In my analysis of the cast of the *Yuqie yankou* for example, I called attention to the informal selection criterion of the vocal and physical attributes of these aspiring celebrants. They have to have good voices and handsome looks. But unlike the trade of Chinese operas, there is also another set of criterion that sponsors and performers of the *Yuqie yankou* place on aspiring and actual celebrants. Alongside the physical and vocal expectations, the moral and spiritual qualities of celebrants are also center-staged.

Another significant conclusion I have drawn from my research is the importance of correlating our readings of liturgical texts with the actual performances of these liturgies. Of course, not all liturgies or rites that are of interest to us are going to be accessible in the way that the *Yuqie yankou* has been for me. We might be reading liturgies that are no longer performed or liturgies of rites where the gazes and curiosities of outsiders are deliberately kept out. But in cases where the liturgies we study are still performed, it is imperative that we also study their performed realities. I have demonstrated, especially in *Chapter Three*, how the liturgy-as-text and the liturgy-as-performance can often be different. In fact, the ability of liturgy-as-performance to be different from liturgy-as-text – to change, to adapt and to

improvise based on the contingencies of lived realities – is what ensures the endurance of a rite.

By attending to the recent history and contemporary expressions and vicissitudes of the *Yuqie yankou*, I hope I have avoided what Strickmann called the all “too frequent abstraction of sinology from living realities.”⁴ But given my own relationship with the *Yuqie yankou*, one that preceded my induction into the world of academic inquiry, there were many junctures during this entire process when I discovered a need to engage in *some* measure of abstracting the *Yuqie yankou*. It was during those times that I felt that one of most difficult challenges I had to face was to abstract the *Yuqie yankou* to a degree that it becomes sufficiently “other” and “unfamiliar” to me to begin to allow me to re-see, re-construct and re-present this rite.

Future Directions

In researching and writing this dissertation, I have been both gratified and daunted by the discovery of other vectors and trajectories that lay unexplored even though I have postured this project as a comprehensive and multi-disciplinary study of the *Yuqie yankou*. One of the most important avenues that my future research on the *Yuqie yankou* will take me to is the Ōbaku Zen school of Japan. In 1654, ten years after the fall of the Ming, a group of Chinese monks led by the Chan monk Yinyuan

⁴ Strickmann, “History, Anthropology and Chinese Religion,” 248.

隱元 (1592-1673) from Mount Huangbo (*Huangbo shan* 黃檗山) in the southeastern China province of Fujian left China for Japan. Warmly and eagerly received by their fellow Buddhists in Japan – especially Zen monastics of both the Rinzai and Sōtō Zen schools – the Chinese Buddhist tradition that these Fujianese monks brought with them to Japan eventually became the Ōbaku Zen, the third, though significantly smaller in numbers and influence, Zen school in Japan. Among the traditions and texts that these Chinese monks brought with them is the *Yuqie yankou* rite and liturgy. Since 1654 sits right in the midst of a time period in which there was a proliferation of *Yuqie yankou* liturgies (Zhuhong's in 1606, Fazang's in 1626, Jixian's in 1684 and Ding'an's in 1693), it is very likely that the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy used by the Ōbaku Zen school is a liturgy different from those that I have examined for this dissertation. This liturgy, along with other texts preserved in Ōbaku Zen monastic libraries in Japan will undoubtedly provide much information and insights related to Ming Buddhism and ritual and liturgical traditions in the Fujian area. Studying these texts will definitely tell us a lot more than we currently know about the development of the *Yuqie yankou* in the Ming.

A comparative study of such regional liturgies as Zhuhong's redaction which represents a text originating from the Jiangnan area, the Ōbaku Zen liturgy originating from further south in Fujian, and the Dinghu Monastery liturgy in the deep-south in

Guangdong will certainly generate a set of issues hitherto unnoticed by and unknown to scholars. Even though Strickmann in 1980 has cautioned us from being too comfortable with “the predominance of the ‘orthodox’ language of Peking in our curricula,” Sinology and in particular Chinese Buddhist studies has to this day mostly ignored local and regional experiences, expressions and productions of culture, knowledge and history.⁵

The disadvantages of operating under this often invisible bias was made clear to me during one of my interviews with Xinding, the current abbot of the Foguang Shan Buddhist Order mentioned earlier. We were in the midst of a discussion on the different performance traditions of the *Yuqie yankou* rite, comparing the Mount Gu and Sound of Ocean Waves traditions that the abbot is familiar with when he suddenly asked me if I have noticed the rhyming of the verses found in the liturgy. I had to confess that other than reading the liturgy and doing the usual textual work involved in preparing an annotated translation, I have not really paid any special attention to the technical aspects of the language in the liturgy. At that point, the abbot proceeded to sing a familiar quatrain from the liturgy for me in standard, modern Mandarin (Strickmann’s “‘orthodox’ language of Peking”). Immediately after that, he sang the same quatrain again but this time in Fujianese. It then became

⁵ Kristofer Schipper’s article on vernacular and classical ritual in Daoism is a noted exception. See Kristofer Schipper, “Vernacular and Classical Ritual in Taoism,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 45, (1985): 21-57.

clear to me what the abbot was getting at: whereas the quatrain did not really rhyme when sung in Mandarin, it rhymed perfectly in Fujianese. Just in case I was not convinced, the abbot asked me to pick another quatrain in the liturgy for him to sing in both Mandarin and Fujianese. Perhaps needing to be sure that I was really convinced by that point, the abbot suggested that I try singing the quatrain in Cantonese (as he knew I was Cantonese) and not surprisingly, singing the quatrain in Cantonese rhymed better than standard, modern Mandarin.

Since the verses rhymed better when delivered in Southern dialects, does this place the original composition of the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy in the South rather than the North? Did Zhuhong's redaction come from *Yuqie yankou* liturgies that were first composed in the South or did Zhuhong's influential redaction forever gave the *Yuqie yankou* liturgy a Southern character when perhaps the earliest liturgies were of Northern origins or at least included Northern traditions? Although I have not been able to come to a satisfying conclusion on this particular issue at this point, what I did learn from the abbot was what I might be missing and not noticing if I forget that the dominant "'orthodox' language of Peking" is by no means the only Chinese language operative in China. In fact, local and regional materials composed and transmitted in the various dialects contain more than just signs or markers that might betray the geographical or temporal origins of texts and traditions. More importantly, these

vernacular variants are capable of telling us a lot more since the very notion of a China is built upon the reality of many local, regional and heterogeneous places, peoples, languages and localities. Once again, I think Strickmann was correct when he wrote:

Students of Chinese should certainly know of the importance of regional and local cultures in the formation of Chinese culture as a whole. They should also learn that the “dialects” offer more than illustrative material for historical grammar and phonology. They have long been vehicles for potent, distinctive literatures and traditions, and they are still the direct means of access to those traditions today.⁶

As such, the other direction that I hope to take my research is into the different “vernacular” traditions of the *Yuqie yankou*. The minority *Dinghu Yankou* tradition that I have discussed in *Chapter Five* is the most obvious candidate to begin with. I hope to be able to do more work on the recent history of the *Dinghu Yankou* and to understand how those who have adhered to this tradition understand its minority status vis-à-vis the dominant *Huashan Yankou* tradition. The most obvious place to start with research on the *Dinghu Yankou* is of course to Dinghu Monastery in Guangdong province itself. In connection with the *Yuqie yankou* in the deep-south, another attractive candidate – one which I must presently pass over – is the *Yuqie yankou* in Vietnam. Although I know that the *Yuqie yankou* is still performed by Vietnamese Buddhists, I have not had the opportunity or pleasure to either witness a

⁶ Strickmann, “History, Anthropology and Chinese Religion,” 248.

performance or examine the liturgy used in the Vietnamese tradition. It will be very interesting to see if the hegemony of the *Huashan Yankou* extends even to Vietnam.

Furthermore, although the dominant *Huashan Yankou* uses a standard liturgy – the one by Ding'an – we have seen that the *Huashan Yankou* tradition in turn has its variations. Although its variations are not liturgical, variations do exist in the performative aspect of the *Huashan Yankou*. In the case of Taiwan for example, at least two sub-traditions of the *Huashan Yankou* exist – the Mount Gu and the Sound of Ocean Waves. Like the liturgical hegemony of the *Huashan Yankou*, the performative hegemony of the Sound of Ocean Waves tradition is quickly replacing the Mount Gu tradition in Taiwan. In fact, of all the performances of the rite that I have attended, only one celebrant (Jingliang at Puti Cloister) hails from the Mount Gu tradition. It is thus my hope that I will be able to conduct more field research on the Mount Gu tradition before it is completely displaced and replaced. In this regard, several monasteries in Fujian province – in particular Yongquan Monastery (*Yongquan si* 涌泉寺) at Mount Gu – are prime field locations for my research. Tokiwa Daijō who visited Yongquan Monastery in 1929 duly noted “that in the course of his five expeditions to every part of China, he had nowhere else discovered

so many Buddhist works that were not found in any edition of the Chinese Buddhist Canon.”⁷

⁷ Strickmann, “History, Anthropology and Chinese Religion,” 244.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1:

*Translation of the Burning-Face Sūtra (T1314) and the Flaming-Mouth Sūtra (T1313)*¹

<p><i>The Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on the Dhāraṇī-spell that Saved the Burning-Face Hungry Ghost</i></p> <p>At one time, the World-Honored One was dwelling at Kapilavastu at the Nyagrodha <i>saṅghārāma</i>² together with innumerable monks, bodhisattvas and (other) sentient beings who encircled him as he expounded the Dharma for them. At that time, Ānanda was staying in solitude at a pure place, single-mindedly contemplating. Just after the third watch of that night, he encountered a hungry ghost named “Burning-face” (Mianran 面燃)</p>	<p><i>The Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on the Dhāraṇī that Rescued the Flaming-Mouth Hungry Ghost</i></p> <p>At one time, the World-Honored One was dwelling at Kapilavastu at the Nyagrodha <i>saṅghārāma</i> with innumerable monks and bodhisattvas who gathered together. (They) encircled (the Buddha) front and back as he expounded the Dharma for them. At that time, Ānanda was staying in solitude at a quiet place, contemplating the Dharma that he has received. Just after the third watch of the night, he encountered a hungry ghost named “Flaming-mouth” (Yankou 餓口). His appearance was repulsive and his body was emaciated. Fire was burning in his mouth while his throat was like a needle. His hair was disheveled; his nails and teeth were long and sharp. He was extremely frightening.</p>
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¹ The *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* has also been translated by Charles Orzech. See, Charles Orzech, “Saving the Burning Mouth Hungry Ghosts,” *Religions of China in Practice*, ed. Donald Lopez, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) 278-283

² *Saṅghārāma* – “dwelling place of the Sangha.” It originally referred to a forest or grove where the monastic sangha resided at during the annual rains-retreat instituted by the Buddha early in the history of the monastic sangha. Eventually, as the monastic sangha became more sedentary and permanent structures began to be built for the community, *saṅghārāma* came to refer to monasteries in general. In this case “Nyagrodha *saṅghārāma*” probably refers to a grove or forest populated mostly by nyagrodha (*figus bengalensis*) trees.

³ *Sugata*.

⁴ Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva

⁵ Literally, “The Self-existent, Power of Virtue of the World Tathāgata.”

<p>Stopping in front of Ānanda, he addressed Ānanda, “After three days, your lifespan will be exhausted and you will be reborn in the midst of hungry ghosts.”</p> <p>At that time, fear and dread arose in Ānanda’s heart after hearing those words and (so) he asked the hungry ghost saying, “(As for) this miserably calamity of mine, what kind of method can (I use) to spare me of this suffering?”</p> <p>At that moment, the hungry ghost responded to Ānanda by saying, “If during the next morning, you are able to give to hungry ghosts and <i>brahmins</i>, seers and others (equal in) number to the sand grains of hundreds of thousands of <i>nayutas</i> of Ganges rivers – giving each of them a bushel of food and drink the size of bushels of the country of Magadha – and make offerings to the Three Jewels on my behalf, then you can extend your lifespan and (also) cause me to be free from this suffering (of being) a hungry ghost and be reborn in the heavenly realms.”</p>	<p>Stopping in front of Ānanda, he addressed Ānanda, “After three days, your lifespan will be exhausted and you will be reborn in the midst of hungry ghosts.”</p> <p>At that time, fear and dread arose in Ānanda’s heart after hearing those words and (so) he asked the hungry ghost saying, “If after I die I will be reborn as a hungry ghost, and is there any skilful method that can spare of this suffering?”</p> <p>At that moment, the hungry ghost said to Ānanda, “If on the next day you are able to give to hungry ghosts (equal in) number to the sand grains of hundreds of thousands of <i>nayutas</i> of Ganges rivers and to hundreds and thousands of <i>brahman</i>-seers and others – giving each of them a bushel of food and drink the size of bushels of the country of Magadha – and make offerings to the Three Jewels on my behalf, then you can extend your lifespan and (also) cause me to be free from this suffering (of being) a hungry ghost and be reborn in the heavenly realms.”</p>
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⁶ Literally, “Self-existent Awesome Virtue of the World Tathāgata.”

⁷ Orzech somehow has the name “Baosheng” instead of “Duobao” in his translation of T1313. Did he confuse this list of Buddhas with the list of Buddhas in T1315? See, Orzech, “Saving the Burning-Mouth Hungry Ghost,” 282.

⁸ These are four of the five acts in the so-called five-fold worship. “To praise” is to praise and worship the Buddhas. “Entreat” is to plead to the Buddhas to remain in the world and not pass away into nirvana. “Request” refers to the requesting of the Buddhas to teach the Dharma for the sake of all sentient beings while “rejoice in the merits” is to rejoice in the good performed by others, especially by the Buddhas. The fifth act is the act of “transference of merit.”

<p> Ānanda looked at this Burning-face hungry ghost; his physical appearance was withered and extremely emaciated. Fire was burning on his face while his throat was like a needle. His hair was disheveled, his hair and nails were long and sharp and his body seemed like bearing a heavy burden. Moreover, having heard such disagreeable words, he was terrified so that the hair on his body stood on end. Ānanda immediately rose from his seat and quickly went to where the Buddha was. With his five-points on the ground, he prostrated in homage at the feet of the Buddha. As his body and heart trembled, he addressed the Buddha saying, “Save me, World-Honored One! Save me, Well-Gone One!”³ After the next three days (my) lifespan will be completely exhausted. Last night, I encountered a certain Burning-face hungry ghost who said to me, ‘In three days, your lifespan will definitely be exhausted (and you will be) reborn in the midst of hungry ghosts.’ I immediately asked (the hungry ghost) saying, ‘Through what kind of method can (I use) to spare me of this suffering?’ The hungry ghost responded by saying, ‘If you can give food and drink to hungry ghosts and <i>brahmins</i>, seers and others (equal in) number to the sand grains of hundreds of thousands of <i>nayutas</i> of Ganges rivers, then you can extend your lifespan.’ World-Honored One, who will I be able to spare myself of this </p>	<p> Ānanda looked at this Flaming-mouth hungry ghost; his physical appearance was withered and extremely emaciated. Fire was burning in his mouth while his throat was like a needle. His hair was disheveled; his hair and nails were long and sharp. Moreover, having heard such disagreeable words, he was terrified so that the hair on his body stood on end. Ānanda immediately rose from his seat and quickly went to where the Buddha was. With his five-points on the ground, he prostrated in homage at the feet of the Buddha. As his body trembled, he addressed the Buddha saying, “Is there a way to save me from my suffering? I was staying at a quiet place, contemplating the Dharma that I received when I encountered Flaming-mouth hungry ghost who then said to me, ‘After three days, (your) lifespan will definitely be exhausted and (you) will be reborn in the midst of hungry ghosts.’ I immediately asked him if there is anything that can cause me to be spared of this suffering. The hungry ghosts answered by saying, ‘If now you are able to give various food and drink to hungry ghosts (equal in) number to the sand grains of hundreds of thousands of <i>nayutas</i> of Ganges rivers and to hundreds of thousands of <i>brahman</i>-seers and others, then you will be able to increase your lifespan.’ World-Honored One, how will I be able to help these hungry-ghosts, seers and </p>
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<p>suffering?”</p> <p>Then the World-Honored One told Ānanda, “Do not be afraid now. There exists an extraordinary skilful method that can enable you to give food to these hungry ghosts and all <i>brahman</i> and seers. Do not be grievously troubled.”</p> <p>The Buddha told Ānanda, “There is a <i>dhāraṇī</i> known as ‘The All-Virtues, Brilliant, and Awesome Power.’ If there is anyone who recites this <i>dhāraṇī</i>, then immediately one will accomplish giving to hungry ghosts (equal in) measure to sand grains of <i>asaṃkhyeyas</i> of <i>nayutas</i> of hundreds of thousands of Ganges rivers and sixty-eight <i>asaṃkhyeyas</i> of <i>nayutas</i> of hundreds of thousands of <i>brahman</i>s, seers and others. Each of them will have forty-nine Magadha bushels of food and drink. The Buddha told Ānanda, “In a previous life when I was a <i>brahman</i>, I received this <i>dhāraṇī</i> from Guan shiyin pusa⁴ and from Shijian zizai deli rulai⁵. I then, with the power of the method of this <i>dhāraṇī</i>, was able to fully bestow food on immeasurable, uncountable hungry ghosts and <i>brahman</i> and seers. Because of my bestowing (of food) on the hungry ghosts, (they) were able to depart from their existence (as hungry ghosts and) be reborn in the</p>	<p>others eat?”</p> <p>Then the World-Honored One told Ānanda, “Do not be afraid now. I have a skilful method that can enable you to give various kinds of food and drink to so many hungry ghosts, <i>brahman</i>-seers and others (equal in measure to the) sand grains of hundreds of thousands of Ganges rivers. Do not be grievously troubled.”</p> <p>The Buddha told Ānanda, “There is a <i>dhāraṇī</i> known as ‘The Immeasurable Awesome Virtues, Self-existent, Brilliant, Victorious and Profound Power.’ If there is anyone who recites this <i>dhāraṇī</i>, then one can satisfy with food and drink hungry ghosts and <i>brahman</i>-seers and others (equal in) number to the sand grains of <i>asaṃkhyeyas</i> of <i>nayutas</i> of hundreds of thousands of Ganges rivers. All these beings, each and every one of them, will receive forty-nine bushels of food – each bushel (the size of) bushels used in the country of Magadha. Ānanda, in a previous lifetime as a <i>brahman</i>, I received this <i>dhāraṇī</i> from Guan shiyin pusa and from Shijian zizai weide rulai⁶. (This <i>dhāraṇī</i>) can distribute and bestow various food and drink to immeasurable hungry ghosts, various seers and others, causing all hungry ghosts to be liberated from their suffering bodies and be reborn in the heavens. Ānanda, if you now receive</p>
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<p>heavens. Ānanda, you should now receive and practice this <i>dhāraṇī</i> to protect your own life. The words of the spell are:</p> <p>NAMAḤ SARVA TATHĀGATĀVALOKITE SAMBHARA SAMBHARA HŪṢ.</p>	<p>and practice (this <i>dhāraṇī</i>), your blessings and lifespan will definitely increase. At that moment, the World-Honored One spoke the words of the <i>dhāraṇī</i> for Ānanda:</p> <p>NAMAḤ SARVA TATHĀGATĀVALOKITE OM SAMBHARA SAMBHARA HŪṢ.</p> <p>The Buddha told Ānanda, “If there are virtuous men or women who are seeking longevity and increased blessings or to be able to quickly complete the perfection of generosity, then every morning or at any other times which are without any obstacles too, take a pure vessel and fill it with pure water. Set aside some cooked rice or grains, various cakes and other edibles and add them into the vessel and recite the previous <i>dhāraṇī</i> seven times. After that, invoke the names of the four Tathāgatas:</p> <p>NAMO BHAGAVATE PRABHŪTA RATNĀYA TATHĀGATĀYA.</p> <p>From the blessings of invoking the name of Duobao (Abundant Jewels) Tathāgata, one is able to conquer all ghosts and for many lives to come mitigate evil karma and immediately obtain perfect merit-blessings.⁷</p> <p>NAMO BHAGAVATE SURŪPĀYA TATHĀGATĀYA. From the blessings of invoking the name of Miaoseshen (Wonderful-form Body) Tathāgata, one is</p>
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<p>The Buddha said to Ānanda, “If there is anyone who desires to perform this method of bestowing food, first obtain drink and food and place them in a pure vessel and recite this <i>dhāraṇī</i>-spell (over the) food seven times. From within the door, extend one’s arms outdoors and place (the food and drink) on pure ground and snap one’s fingers seven times. When this bestowing has been completed, in the four directions where there are hungry ghosts (equal in) measure to sand grains in the hundreds of thousands of</p>	<p>able to break the ugly, vulgar and evil appearances of ghosts and immediately obtain wonderful form, perfect and complete.</p> <p>NAMO BHAGAVATE VIPULAGĀTRĀYA TATHĀGATĀYA. From the blessings of invoking the name of Guangboshen (Expansive Body) Tathāgata, one causes the throats of the (hungry) ghosts to widen so that the food that is bestowed can unrestrained hearts be filled and satisfied.</p> <p>NAMO BHAGAVATE ABHAYAMKARĀYA TATHĀGATĀYA. From the blessings of invoking the name of Libuwei (Separated from Fear) Tathāgata, one can cause all the fears of the ghosts to be completely eradicated and depart from the destiny of hungry ghosts.</p> <p>The Buddha told Ānanda, “If virtuous men of (any) family and others, having invoked the names of the four Tathāgatas to bless/empower (the food offering), snap their fingers seven times. Taking the food-vessel and stretching their hands, (they should) disburse (the food) on pure ground. When this bestowal has been performed, the hungry ghosts that are in the four directions, (equal in) measure to the sand grains of hundreds of thousands of <i>nayutas</i> of Ganges rivers – in front of each of them are forty-nine</p>
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<p><i>asaṃkhyeyas</i> of <i>nayutas</i> of Ganges rivers, in front of each and every hungry ghost are forty nine Magadha bushels of food and drink. All these ghosts are completely satisfied and full. When all these hungry ghosts have eaten this food, this will discard (their) unreal bodies and ultimately gain rebirth in the heavens.”</p> <p>(The Buddha) further said to Ānanda, “If there are <i>bhikṣus</i>, <i>bhikṣuṇīs</i>, <i>upāsakas</i> and <i>upāsikās</i> who are able to continually recite this <i>dhāraṇī</i> and offer drink and food, then this will provide and perfect immeasurable virtues and extend and lengthen one’s lifespan. This is (like) accomplishing the merits of making of offerings to hundreds of thousands of <i>asaṃkhyeyas</i> of Tathāgatas. (One’s) countenance will be fresh and clear and (one’s) might and power strong and remarkable. All non-humans, <i>bhūta</i>-ghosts, <i>yakṣas</i>, <i>rākṣasas</i> and hungry ghosts will be in awe of such a person and their minds cannot bear to see (this person). This person will accomplish and achieve great power, vigor and diligence.</p> <p>Again, (the Buddha) said to Ānanda, "If anyone desires to bestow food to the <i>brahman</i>s and seers, then one should obtain drink and food and put them in a bowl. Recite this <i>dhāraṇī</i>-spell over the food seven times and put the food in flowing water. This will completely</p>	<p>Magadha-country bushels of food. When they receive this food, they will be completely filled and satisfied. Then, these ghosts and others will completely discard their ghost-bodies and be reborn in the heavens.”</p> <p>“Ānanda, if there are <i>bhikṣus</i>, <i>bhikṣuṇīs</i>, <i>upāsakas</i> and <i>upāsikās</i>, who continually bless/empower food and bestow it to ghosts with these esoteric words and the names of the four Tathāgatas, they will be able to be complete with immeasurable merits. There is no difference in merit between this and the act of making offerings to hundreds of thousands of <i>asaṃkhyeyas</i> of Tathāgatas. Their lifespans will be extended and lengthened, their physical prowess will increase and their virtuous roots perfected. All non-humans, <i>yakṣas</i> and <i>rākṣasas</i> and other evil ghosts and spirits will not dare to cause harm. Immeasurable merits and longevity can also be accomplished.”</p> <p>“If one desires to bestow to various <i>brahman</i>-seers and others, use pure drink and food to fill a vessel. Then, with the previously (mentioned) esoteric words empower (the offering) fourteen times and cast (the offering) into pure, flowing water. When this is done, that is, the</p>
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<p>present (the offering) to immeasurable <i>brahman</i>s and seers (equal in) measure to the sand grains of <i>asaṃkhyeyas</i> of hundreds of thousands of Ganges rivers; like heavenly drink and food. When the <i>brahman</i>s, seers and others eat this food, all their faculties will be complete, perfect and auspicious. Each of them will pray and praise the benefactor (saying), ‘May the heart of the person who bestowed this food be clear and pure and (may they) quickly attain the awesome virtue of the <i>brahmā</i>-heavens, continuously practicing the pure practices. Perfecting and accomplishing the merit of making offerings to Tathāgatas (equal in) number to the sand grains of hundreds of thousands of <i>asaṃkhyeyas</i> of Ganges rivers and gaining perpetual victory over sworn enemies.’</p>	<p>delightful food of the gods and seers being offered to <i>brahman</i>-seers (equal in) number to the sand grains of hundreds of thousands of <i>asaṃkhyeyas</i> of Ganges rivers, all these seers receive the empowered food through the esoteric words “Awesome Virtues,” each of them accomplish the various virtuous merits that they each fundamentally desire. Each of them at the same moment, make aspiration-prayers saying, ‘May the lifespan of benefactor of this food be extended and lengthened and his physical body and energy be well and blissful. May whatever that is seen and heard (by this person) be correct views and clear and pure, completely accomplishing the awesome virtues of the <i>brahmā</i>-heavens and practicing the practices of the <i>brahmā</i>-heavens.’ Moreover, the (merit gained is) the same as the merit of making offerings to Tathāgatas (equal in number) to the sand grains of hundreds and thousands of Ganges rivers. All oppressions and enemies will not be able to harm one.</p>
<p>“If <i>bhikṣus</i>, <i>bhikṣuṇīs</i>, <i>upāsakas</i> and <i>upāsikās</i> wish to make offerings to all Three Jewels, then they should prepare incense, flowers, drink and food and recite this <i>dhāraṇī</i>-spell, (reciting the) spell twenty one times over the food, and incense and flowers offered, (thus) making offerings to the Three Jewels.</p>	<p>“If <i>bhikṣus</i>, <i>bhikṣuṇīs</i>, <i>upāsakas</i> and <i>upāsikās</i> wish to make offerings to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha Jewels, (they) should empower incense, flowers and pure drink and food (by reciting) the previous esoteric-words twenty-one times and respectfully offer them to the Three Jewels. These virtuous men and</p>

<p>All these virtuous men and women perfectly accomplish the various heavenly and wonderful offerings and the unexcelled offerings, respecting and praising all Tathāgatas and the Three Jewels of all places. All Buddhas will remember, extol and praise (them) and all gods will offer protection.”</p> <p>After the Buddha finished speaking, Ānanda protected his own life (with this teaching) and also taught it widely for the sake of sentient beings, causing all sentient beings to accomplish and acquire immeasurable merits and in each lifetime, continuously meet the hundreds of thousands of <i>asaṃkhyeyas</i> of Buddhas.</p>	<p>women, with the heavenly delicacies of superior flavor that have been created, present and offer to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha Jewels filling the worlds of the ten directions. (These virtuous men and women should) also praise, entreat, request and rejoice in the merits.⁸ (They) will be remembered and praised continuously by all Buddhas and all the gods and benevolent spirits will continuously come offer them protection. This is also the fulfillment of the perfection of generosity.</p> <p>“Ānanda, if you accord with what I have said and practice according to the Dharma and widely propagate and spread (this teaching), (you will) cause all sentient beings everywhere to see, hear, acquire immeasurable blessings. This (<i>sūtra</i>) is named <i>The Sūtra on the Dhāraṇī that Saves Flaming-mouth Hungry Ghost and Suffering Sentient Beings</i>. You should respectfully practice according to its words.”</p> <p>After hearing what the Buddha said, all in the great assembly and Ānanda single-mindedly believed and accepted and joyfully and reverently practiced it.</p>
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APPENDIX 2:

Translation of the Method of Bestowing Drink and Food (1315)

To offer food to sentient beings is to be in accordance with the Dharma. Set forth equally and accordingly, various kinds pure and good (food). Be it one portion, a little or a vessel-full – place and arrange in a copper vessel, in accord with the Dharma. If one does not have a copper vessel, use a white-porcelain (vessel). If one does not have a porcelain vessel, use a lacquered vessel. Put together the drink and food in pure water. Facing east, take one's seat and perform the practice.

If one desires to bestow drink and food to all hungry ghosts, (one should) first generate a wide and great mind and universally invite the hungry ghosts. First, with the utmost mind recite the following verses once. After that, perform the summoning and inviting Dharma. The blessings, benefits and fruits received cannot be measured.

(I) *bhikṣu*, *bhikṣuṇī* (so and so)
 Generating the resolve and respectfully holding
 A vessel of pure food,
 Universally bestowing it in the ten directions
 To all hungry ghosts.
 Those who died recently and long time ago,
 Lords of the mountains, rivers and earth,
 Including *kuangye* (曠野) ghosts⁹
 And the various ghosts and spirits and others,
 In all worlds
 (Existing within) every minute dust mote.
 Pervading the Dharma-realm
 And exhausting the entirety of space,
 Please come and assemble here.
 I now compassionately regard (all of you)
 Universally bestowing this food.
 May each and every one of you
 Accept this food of mine.
 (And) In return making offerings to
 The Buddhas and Sages
 And all sentient beings.

⁹ A type of hungry ghost.

Exhausting the realms in space
 (May) all these sentient beings
 Be full and satisfied
 By relying on this empowered food.¹⁰
 May (they with their) present bodies
 Be separated from suffering and liberated
 And be born in the heavens and enjoy bliss.
 Visiting the pure lands of the ten directions
 As they wish.
 Generating the Bodhi-mind
 And practicing the Bodhi-path,
 And in the future becoming Buddhas
 And never undergo transmigration.
 Those who have attained the Path
 And vowed to liberate (others),
 May you
 Offer me protection and care.
 Continuously, day and night
 Fulfill all my aspirations.
 May the merits produced
 From bestowing this food,
 Be in turn universally bestowed
 To sentient beings of the Dharma-realm.
 Equally sharing (this merit)
 With all sentient beings.
 And together completely transfer
 This merit to
 The Dharma-realm of True Suchness,
 The Unexcelled Enlightenment
 The Knowledge of All-Knowledges.
 May (we) quickly attain Buddhahood
 Without bringing upon (oneself) the “remainder results.”¹¹
 May (we) quickly attain Buddhahood

¹⁰ Literally, food that has been “mantra-fied.”

¹¹ “Remainder results” here probably refers to rebirth in the other five non-human existences. See *Foguang Dictionary*, 6370. Or, this line can also be translated as “Without beckoning the other results”.

By relying on this Dharma.

(Both your) palms should be held together as you recite these verses in your mind.

Make the “Mudrā of Summoning and Inviting and of Opening Throats.” With the (tips of your) thumb and middle-finger of your right hand touching and the remaining three fingers each away (from the two), slightly bent. This is known as the “Universally Gathering Mudrā.” The spell: NAMO BHŪPŪRI KĀRI TĀRI TATHĀGATĀYA. Make this *mudrā* and recite this spell seven times. Broadly (generate) a compassionate mind and aspire to cause all hungry ghosts in all the (the worlds within) minute dust motes of the Dharma-realm completely gather like clouds.

Then, recite the “Opening the Gates of the Earth-prisons and Throats Spell,” saying: OM BHŪPŪTERI KĀRI TĀRI TATHĀGATĀYA. When reciting this spell, use your left hand to hold the food vessel while the right hand is making the earlier “Summoning and Inviting Mudrā.” With each recitation of the spell, snap (your) fingers once. Use the thumb and the middle-finger to snap and make a sound. The remainder three fingers are slightly bent. This is known as the “Breaking the Gates of the Earth-prisons and Opening Throats Mudrā.”

“At that time, the Tathāgata immediately spoke ‘The Immeasurable Awesome Virtues, Self-existent, Brilliant, Victorious Power,’ empowering the drink and food with this *dhāraṇī* saying, ‘NAMAḤ SARVA TATHĀGATĀVALOKITE OM SAMBHARA SAMBHARA HŪṢ.’”¹²

(When you) recite this spell seven times, all hungry ghosts will each receive forty nine bushels of food – bushels used in the Magadha country. After eating, they can be reborn in the heavens or in the pure lands. It can cause the karmic obstacles of practitioners to be destroyed and their lifespans increased. Not to mention in future lives, in this life, they will obtain unlimited and immeasurable merits. Make this *mudrā* and recite this spell to empower the drink and food. With the thumb of the right finger touch the nail of middle-finger in the six repetitions. The other three fingers are upright. With the thumb and fore-finger, snap and make a sound. With every recitation of the spell, snap the fingers once.

¹² The title of the *dhāraṇī* given here is as it appears in Amoghavajra’s translation except that “Victorious Power” here is 勝妙之力 instead of T1313’s 勝妙力.

Then, recite the “Ambrosial Dharma-flavor Spell.” Make the “Bestowing of Fearlessness Mudrā.” With the right hand held upright and the five fingers extended, recite: NAMAḤ SURŪPĀYA TATHĀGATĀYA TADYATHĀ OM SRŪ SRŪ PRASRŪ PRASRŪ SVĀHĀ.

When you make the previous “Bestowing of Fearlessness Mudrā” and recite this “Bestowing Ambrosia Spell” seven times, it can cause the drink, food and water bestowed to transform into immeasurable milk and ambrosia. It can open the throats of all hungry ghosts and can cause the drink and food to increase broadly and (the ghosts) to equally obtain the food.

Next, make the “Single-Character Heart, Water-Wheel Mantra-Contemplation Mudrā.” First, visualize the VAM syllable in the center of one’s right palm. (Its) color is like milk; transforming into an ocean with the “eight qualities,” pouring forth all kinds of ambrosial essence of butter. Then, put the palm above the food vessel and recite the words of the spell. Recite this VAM syllable seven times. Extend the five fingers and point them towards the inside of the food vessel. Visualize the milk and other (substances) flow out from the character, It is like the milk-ocean of the sun and moon. All ghosts and others are completely filled and none are deficient. This is known as the “Universally Bestowing to All Hungry Ghosts Mudrā.” The spell is: NAMAḤ SAMANTA BUDDHĀNĀM VAM.

After visualizing and reciting this spell seven times, disburse (the offering) on pure ground, in a place where no one walks on or on the side of water-ponds and under trees except for peach, willow and pomegranate tress. After disbursing, still with utmost mind, invoke the names of the five Tathāgatas thrice. The merits (of this invocation) are immeasurable.

NAMO BHAGAVATE PRABHŪTA-RATNĀYA TATHĀGATĀYA. “Namo Baosheng (Precious Victory) Thus-Come-One” removes karmas of miserliness and greed and perfects and completes blessings-merits.

NAMO BHAGAVATE SURŪPĀYA TATHĀGATĀYA. “Namo Miaoseshen (Wonderful-form Body) Thus-Come-One” breaks the ugly and vulgar appearances and (make) the physical-form good, complete and perfect.

NAMO BHAGAVATE AMṚTARĀJĀYA TATHĀGATĀYA. “Namo Ganlu wang (Ambrosia King) Thus-Come-One” confers¹³ the heart of the Dharmakaya, causing the attainment of definite bliss.

NAMO BHAGAVATE VIPULA-GĀTRĀYA TATHĀGATĀYA. “Namo Guangboshen (Expansive Body) Thus-Come-One” expands the throats to enjoy the wonderful taste.

NAMO BHAGAVATE ABHAYAM-KARĀYA TATHĀGATĀYA. “Namo Libuwei (Separated from Fear) Thus-Come-One” completely removes fears and (causes the) departure from the realm of hungry-ghosts.

If practitioners can, in this manner, invoke the names of the five Tathāgatas for (the hungry ghosts), the awesome light of the Buddhas will protect them. This can also cause the immeasurable offenses of all ghosts and others to be eradicated their immeasurable merits to be produced. (They) will obtain wonderful form and expansiveness and obtain fearlessness. The drink and food they receive transform into the ambrosial, wonderfully flavored food; quickly leaving their suffering-bodies and be reborn in the heavens and pure lands.

When the food-bestowal has been completed, for the sake of the ghosts and spirits, practitioners should chant and receive the “Bodhisattva Samaya-precepts Dhāraṇī.” Chant the spell three times, saying: OM SAMAYA STVAM. After chanting three times, all ghosts and spirits will then become qualified to listen to the deep esoteric Dharma, thoroughly obtaining the complete Samaya-precepts and immeasurable blessings.

(Now) after bestowing to all hungry ghosts, they are completely full and satisfied. Then, in accord with the method of *dhāraṇī*, issue the send-off so that they can return to their original places. The “Issuing of the Send-off and Liberation Spell” is: OM VAJRA MOKṢA MUḤ. When chanting the “Issuing the Send-off Spell,” first make the *mudrā* of the spell. Form a fist with the right palm. Touch the thumb to the forefinger. With the palm facing upwards, snap the fingers to make a sound. This is known as the “Issuing of the Notice of Send-off.” After every disbursement of food has been completed, recite this (spell) seven times and snap the

¹³ Literally, “pour.”

fingers. This can cause all ghosts and spirits to depart after they have obtained the food. If this send-off is not issued, they cannot leave. If these methods are not complete, then the bestowing to all the hungry ghosts cannot be perfect. There will be those who received (the bestowal) and those who did not. Pointlessly wasting one's energy and effort, what a pity!

If there are practitioners who generate the Bodhi-mind and can practice accordingly and complete this Dharma of bestowing to all hungry ghosts, all hungry ghosts will be full and satisfied and none will be deficient.

The person who practices this Dharma should know this: If drink and food are empowered with this *dhāraṇī*, and holding a bowl of this pure food that is then emptied into pure, flowing water, all *brahman*-seers can be caused to receive this food. After eating, (although) with different mouths, they will in one voice aspire: “(May) this person, in this present lifetime obtain an extended lifespan and (may) this person be complete with the awesome virtues of the *brahmā* heavens, practicing the practices of the *brahmā* heavens.” If (one) uses this spell to empower all offerings for the Buddhas – whether it be water, incense, flower, drink or food – one should repeat this spell twenty-one times and then make the offerings. All these different types (of offerings) are no different from making offerings to all Buddhas of the ten directions.

APPENDIX 3:

Comparative Chart of the Lists of Buddhas in Five Ghost-feeding Liturgies

<i>Flaming-Mouth Sūtra</i>	<i>Method of Bestowing Drink and Food</i>	<i>Flaming-Mouth Liturgy Sūtra</i>	<i>Mengshan</i>	<i>Kai ganlumen</i>
Duobao Miaoseshen Guangboshen Libuwei	Baosheng Miaoseshen Guangboshen Libuwei Ganluwang	Baosheng Miaoseshen Guangboshen Libuwei Duobao Amituo Shijian guangda zizai guangming	Baosheng Miaoseshen Guangboshen Libuwei Ganluwang Duobao Amituo	Duobao Miaoseshen Guangboshen Libuwei Ganluwang

APPENDIX 4:

A Descriptive Analysis of Zhongfeng Mingben's Kai ganlu men

The liturgy begins the rite for purifying and demarcating the ritual-space by reciting of the “Great Compassionate *Dhāraṇī*” thrice. This is followed by the invitation of the Three Jewels and protector-deities to the rite. The Three Jewels and Guanyin are invoked next. Following this is a section for taking refuge in “the Benevolent Father, ōakyamuni, the Unsurpassable Precious Seal of the *Dhāraṇī*-method (lit. “*Dhāraṇī*-gate”), and Guanshiyin who sought and transmitted the spiritual-spell, Ānanda (who caused) this teaching to exist and the assembly of all sages.”¹⁴ The basic ghost-feeding *dhāraṇī* in the *Flaming-Mouth Sūtra* is then recited seven times followed by a verse section of eight, seven-character lines. Like some of the earlier ghost-feeding rites, the “Ambrosia *Dhāraṇī*” is recited next for seven times. Invocations to the Five Buddhas are then recited thrice. This appears to complete the first section of the rite as the supplemental notes in the liturgy indicates that the next section should be chanted after one has taken one’s seat (lit. “entered the seat” [*ruzuo* 入座]).¹⁵

The next section in Mingben’s liturgy begins with the chanting of the now familiar “Breaking the Earth-prisons *Gāthā*” that is also found in the *Mengshan* rite discussed above and in the *Yuqie yankou*.¹⁶ Mingben’s liturgy briefly summarizes the miraculous tale related to this verse but goes on to assert that to call this the “Breaking the Earth-prisons *Gāthā*” does not go far enough in expressing the power of this verse. According to Mingben, the principle encapsulated in this verse has the capacity to “thoroughly break the Ten Dharma Realms” (*shi fajie xijie nengpo* 十法界悉皆能破). The liturgy goes on to explicate a Huayan understanding of the One Mind as the source of all things, enlightened and deluded. In particular, “the Six Realms and four types of birth are completely one’s own Mind.” The liturgy then describes each of the Six Realms along with the causes that lead to rebirth in each of these realms.

The final section in the Mingben’s liturgy is a litany built of four parts focused on the conversion of ghosts via the rite of conferring the Buddhist precepts: i) confessing and purifying obstacle of offenses (*chandi zuizang* 懺滌罪障), ii) taking

¹⁴ XZJ111.1005b.

¹⁵ XZJ111.1006a.

¹⁶ XZJ111.1006a.

refuge in the Three Jewels (*guiyi sanbao* 皈依三寶), iii) receiving the five-branched pure precepts (*shou wuzhi jingjie* 受五支淨戒), and iv) the generating of the Bodhi-mind via the receiving of the Four Boundless Vows (*shou sihong shiyuan fa puti daoxin* 受四弘誓願發菩提道心).¹⁷ Each of these parts consists of either a prose or verse section followed by a related spell.¹⁸ Thus, there is a “Eradicating the Obstacle of Offenses Spell” (*Mie zuizhang zhenyan* 滅罪障真言), a “Taking Refuge in the Three Jewels Spell” (*Guiyi sanbao zhenyan* 皈依三寶真言) and a “Generating Bodhi-mind Spell” (*Fa putixin zhenyan* 發菩提心真言).

¹⁷ XZJ111.1007a. As I have noted earlier, the *Mengshan* rite also includes a litany on the Four Boundless Vows.

¹⁸ There is no spell given for the part on “receiving the five-branched pure precepts.”

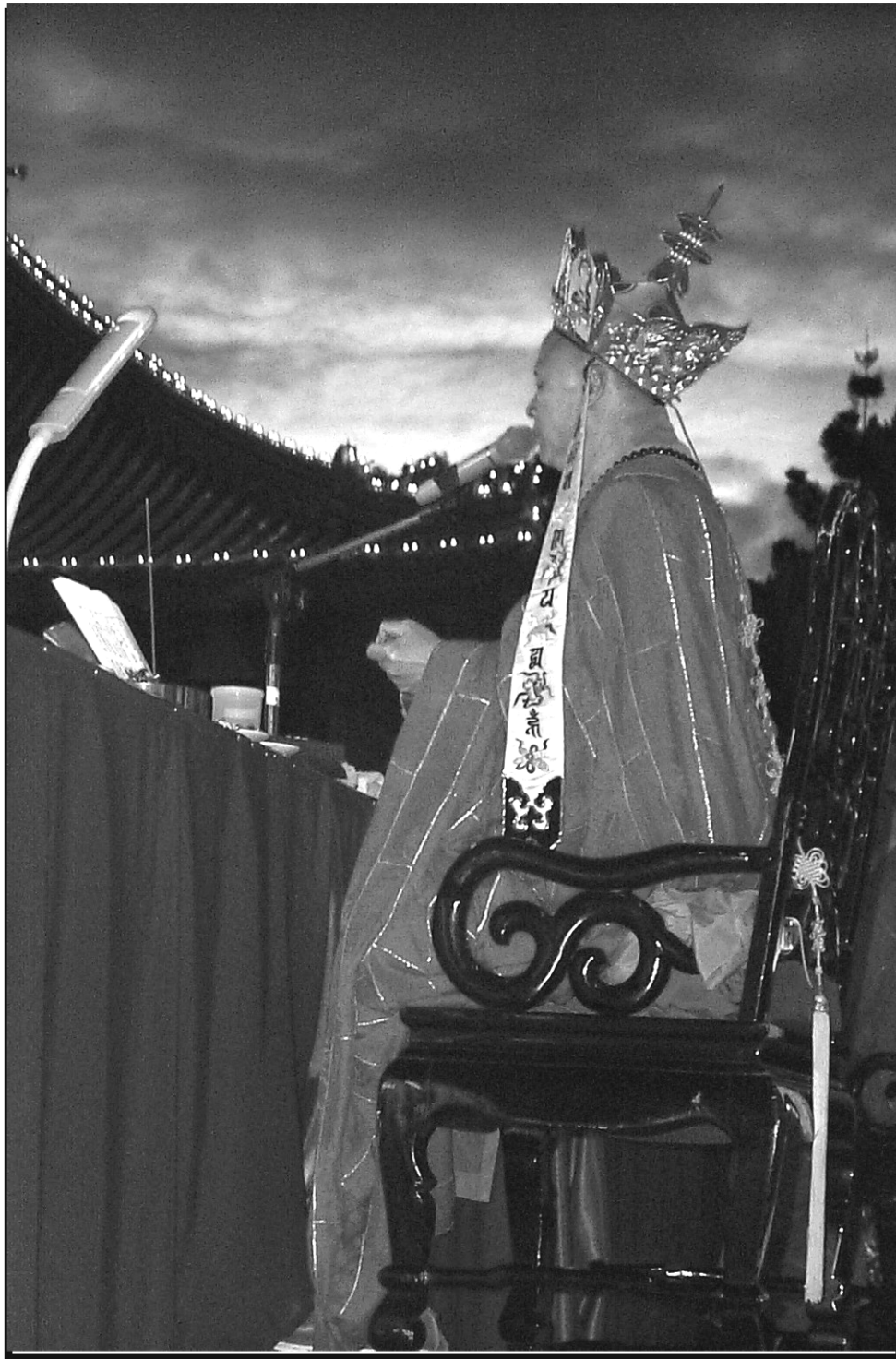
FIGURES

Fig. 1 (Venerable Xinding at Fo Guang Shan, Taiwan)



Fig. 2 (right figure from *Shinzoku kibun*)



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

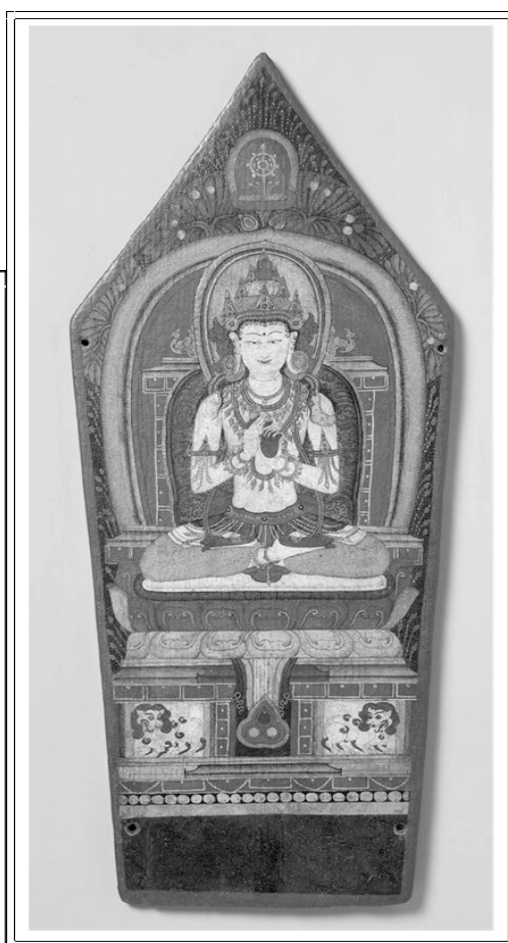


Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

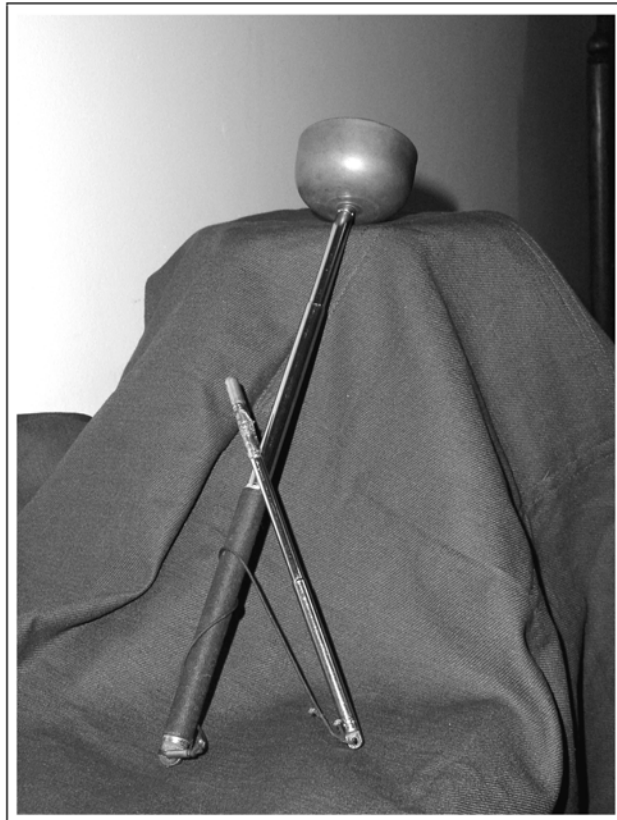


Fig. 9



Fig. 10

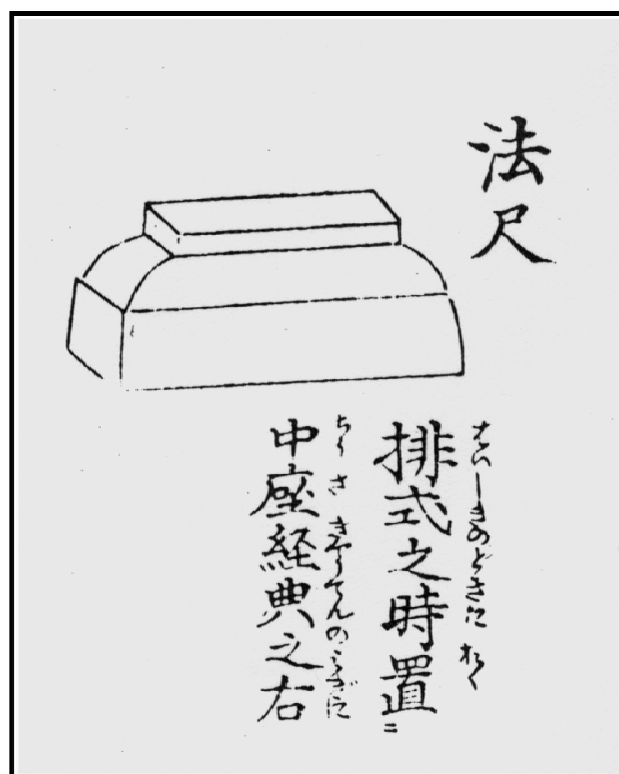


Fig. 11 (from *Shinzoku kibun*)



Fig. 12



Fig. 13 (right figure from *Shinzoku kibun*)

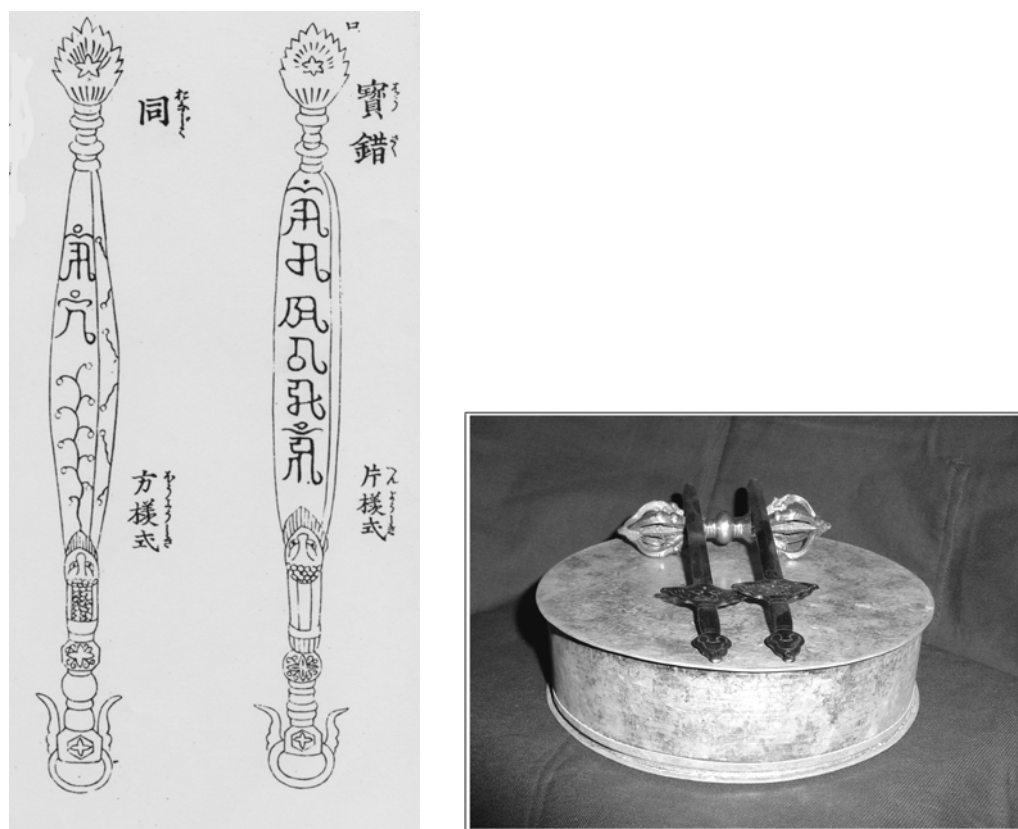


Fig. 14 (left figure from *Shinzoku kibun*)

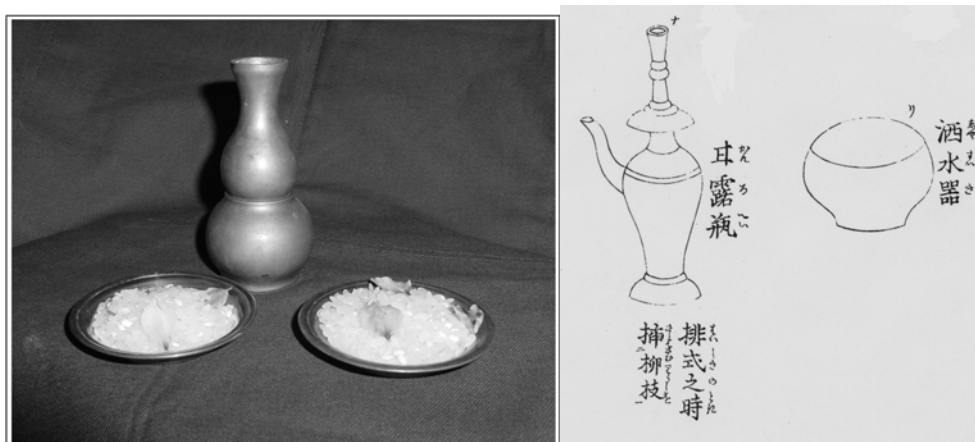


Fig. 15 (right figure from *Shinzoku kibun*)



Fig. 16



Fig. 17

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