

The Rule of Marginality: Hypothesizing the Transmission of the Mengshan Rite for Feeding the Hungry Ghosts in Late Imperial China

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*During the research of this paper, I have received generous help from Robert Gimello, Leonard van der Kuijp, Robert Hymes, Ruth Dunnell, Charles Orzech, Li Ruohong, Liu Guowei, and Jin Hongmei. Early drafts were presented at New England Conference of the Association for Asian Studies (September 30, 2000, Brown University) and Society of Tantric Studies Annual Conference (Flagstaff, Arizona, October 30, 2002).

INTRODUCTION

Sooner or later historians of religion will come to the “nasty” issue of transmission, regardless of which tradition they set foot in. This is because a myth, legend, or theory about how the current tradition has been received plays a central role in establishing the integrity and continuity of that tradition. Exactly because of the centrality of transmission in a given religious tradition, deliberate fabrications and distortions are teeming in various polemics sanctioned by latent or brazen ideological agendas behind them. In Chinese Buddhism, transmission is such a contentious issue that historians cannot ignore it. Almost all Buddhist traditions in China, often addressing themselves as “*zong* 宗” (lineage or school), were united around heavily guarded theories of their transmissions: how the founders of their traditions transmitted the true teaching through an unbroken line of succession of patriarchs. Chan Buddhism, in particular, was enmeshed in numerous polemics about competing theories of dharma transmissions. Even the transmission of a single token, such as the robe of the Sixth Patriarch

Huineng 慧能 (638–713), became the focus of tension and controversy.¹ In this paper, attempting to theorize the mode of transmission in Chinese Buddhism, I focus on the historical process of the transmission of an esoteric ritual in China and conclude that one rule is universally applicable in all phenomena concerning transmission, that is, the rule of marginality. This rule stipulates that when a religious tradition is to be systematically reinvented, the provenance of the transmission, which provides the crucial link with antiquity, is always marginal, obscure, and ambiguous.

In order to elaborate this rule further, I will investigate the process of the transmission of an esoteric ritual in late imperial China and show how this ritual could rise from a peripheral place and be regarded as a genuine link between esoteric Buddhism in the seventeenth century and the ancient tantric tradition in the Tang. This ritual, called the Rite for Feeding the Hungry Ghosts (Shishi 施食), had flourished during Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties and had been incorporated into Chan monastic codes in the seventeenth century. One particular version of this ritual draws our attention because it was entitled Mengshan 蒙山, a mountain located in the Sino-Tibetan border (nowadays in Sichuan Province of China), and was attributed to the Indian monk Budong 不動 (Skt. Akṣobhya) who had served as national preceptor in the Xixia 西夏 (Tangut) state (1038–1227). In addition, it was incorporated into a seventeenth-century Chan Rules of Purity (*qinggui* 清規) composed in Japan by a group of émigré monks from China. Nowadays, it is still one of the essential liturgies in Chinese monasteries. Following this lead, my investigation starts from the emergence of this rite in seventeenth-century Chan monasticism. After comparing the existing liturgical manuals of the Mengshan Rite, I trace the origin of this ritual to a region often referred as Mi-ñag in the historical Sino-Tibetan border and to the Tangut state in which esoteric Buddhism enjoyed tremendous popularity. In light of R. A. Stein's discovery that the Mi-ñag people were actually descendants of the Tangut people, I shall explain that the transmission of this ritual to Mount Mengshan was related to the Tangut diaspora in the Sino-Tibetan border. In addition,

1. For a recent study about the transmission of the robe in Chan history, see Wendi L. Adamek, "Robes Purple and Gold: Transmission of the Robe in the *Lidai fabao ji* (Record of the Dharma-Jewel through the Ages)," *History of Religions* 1, no. 40 (Aug. 2000): 58–81.

based on my research on the role of this Tangut diasporic community in the Sino-Tibetan tea-horse trade, I suggest that the Mengshan Rite might be brought to China proper through frequent commercial exchanges between China and Tibet. My hypothesis is that the Tangut diasporic community, called “Mi-ñag” by the Tibetans, was one possible channel for the transmission of the Mengshan Rite in China. This hypothesis will show that the process of the “tantrification” of Chinese Buddhism in late imperial China was a complex movement towards reassuring the continuity and integrity of Chinese esoteric tradition. At the end of this paper, I theorize the mode of transmissions in Chinese Buddhism and suggest that in the context of late imperial China the transmission of the Mengshan Rite followed the rule of marginality.

THE MENGSHAN RITE AND THE REINVENTION OF THE ESOTERIC TRADITION IN LATE IMPERIAL CHINA

The centrality of ritual in Chinese Buddhist monastic life has been exemplified in Chan/Zen monastic codes, or the so-called Rules of Purity,² in which collective worship and prayer are arranged according to different ceremonial occasions. This orderly arrangement of monastic rituals creates a unique Buddhist configuration of sacred time and space that separates monastic life from the secular world. However, the codification of these rules tends to perpetuate an impression that monastic life is a given, immune to changes. Yet, a historical scrutiny of different versions of Rules of Purity from different historical periods will demonstrate that Buddhist monastic life is a repertoire of a variety of rituals that have been assimilated into a particular Buddhist school through specific channels. In other words, the compilation of Rules of Purity was a result of the gradual assimilation of ritual elements into the monastic setting. This point holds especially true for

2. The genre of Rules of Purity was developed within the Chinese Chan tradition. Although it was allegedly created by the Chan patriarch Baizhang Huaihai 百丈懷海 (720–814), Griffith Foulk argues that it was most likely a product of the tenth and eleventh centuries and reflected the monastic practice at that time. See his “Myth, Ritual, and Monastic Practice in Sung Ch’an Buddhism,” in *Religion and Society in T’ang and Sung China*, ed. Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Peter N. Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1993). However, Dr. Yifa considers Baizhang as the possible author of the first Rules of Purity. See Yifa, *The Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China: An Annotated Translation and Study of the Chanyuan qinggui* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2002), 28–35.

Chan Buddhism because Chan monastic codes are largely an amalgam of Chan mythology, patriarch veneration, *vinaya* rules, the Pure Land aspiration, and more astonishingly, esoteric tantrism. Characterized by the incantation of various *dhāraṇīs* or spells, these tantric elements in Rules of Purity deserve our special attention because the Chinese esoteric school “founded” by Śubhakarasiṃha (637–735), Amoghavajra (705–774), and Vajrabodhi largely disappeared after the Tang, and esotericism only existed in a diffused form in Chinese Buddhist culture.³ In this sense, the Mengshan Rite, an esoteric ritual that can be found only in late imperial China and has been successfully incorporated in Chan liturgical tradition, was a product of the diffusion of esotericism in Chinese Buddhism. However, as I will show, the deliberate attribution of this rite to Amoghavajra through the Tangut master Budong indicates a conscious reinvention of the esoteric tradition in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. What I mean is that during the sixteenth

3. Recent scholarship has seriously questioned the existence of such an esoteric school during the Tang. For a critical assessment of the esoteric school, see Robert Sharf, “On Esoteric Buddhism in China,” *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism: A Reading of the Treasure Store Treatise* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2002), Appendix 1. Charles Orzech, however, argues that the idea of the transmission of esoteric Buddhism indeed took place during the Tang dynasty. See his “Further Notes on Tantra, Metaphor Theory, Ritual and Sweet Dew,” unpublished paper circulated at a seminar entitled “Tantra and Daoism: A Multidisciplinary Conference on the Globalization of Religion and Its Experience,” Boston University, April, 19–21, 2002. See also Charles D. Orzech, “Book Review: Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism: A Reading of the Treasure Store Treatise,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 72, no. 4 (2004): 1073–1076; Charles D. Orzech, “The ‘Great Teaching of Yoga,’ the Chinese Appropriation of the Tantras, and the Question of Esoteric Buddhism,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 34 (2006): 29–78; Charles D. Orzech, “The Trouble with Tantra in China: Reflections on Method and History,” in *Transformations and Transfer of Tantra in Asia and Beyond*, ed. István Keul (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 303–326; and Richard Payne and Charles Orzech, introduction to *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, ed. Charles Orzech, Henrik H. Sørensen, and Richard K. Payne (Boston: Brill, 2011), esp. 7–8. Chen Jinhua has explored the evidence of esoteric Buddhism for the later Tang and beyond in various works. See Jinhua Chen, *Crossfire: Shingon-Tendai Strife as Seen in Two Twelfth-Century Polemics, with Special References to Their Background in Tang China* (Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies of the International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies, 2010), esp. 13.

and seventeenth centuries Chinese Buddhism underwent a series of reconstructions that aimed to reinvent its various traditions by reclaiming continuity with previous “golden ages” in the Tang and Song. Under such an intellectual milieu, some Buddhists such as Zhuhong 祿宏 (1532–1612) consciously sought to reestablish continuity of the esoteric tradition through identifying the Mengshan Rite as a genuine transmission from the Tang.

The Mengshan Rite is extremely popular in modern Chinese Buddhism and has been codified in Chan monastic regulations. In the daily liturgical manuals such as *Chanmen Risong* 禪門日誦, a special kind of esoteric ritual entitled the “Mengshan Rite for Feeding the Hungry Ghosts” (*Mengshan shishi yi* 蒙山施食儀) was attributed to a Xixia (Tangut) monk called Budong who redacted the ritual at Mount Mengshan, which is located in western Sichuan area of China. Judging from this source, the Mengshan Rite is undoubtedly an esoteric ritual, though not in the sense that certain esoteric elements were incorporated in the performance of this ritual. Rather, its structure, the canonical sources to which it was attributed, and Chinese Buddhists’ self-consciousness of its esoteric nature indicate that the Mengshan Rite was a reconstructed legacy of the “esoteric school” in the Tang, which largely ceased to exist as a “school” after the Tang.

The Mengshan Rite is first of all a highly structured esoteric ritual. It is a variation of the so-called *preta* (flaming mouth) releasing ritual (*Fang yankou* 放餓口), which is a widely observed esoteric practice in China. *Preta* in Sanskrit refers to the hungry ghosts who live in the lower rung of the six rebirth realms within the realm of desire. These ghosts were imagined as creatures with huge bellies and tiny necks. As a result of their evil acts in previous lives, the hungry ghosts suffer from insatiable hunger but are unable to eat because food delivered to them is transformed into disgusting substances such as pus and blood. During the Ming, this form of ritual developed rampantly on the basis of an anonymous ritual manual, *Rites from the Essentials of the Yoga Teachings for Distributing Food to Burning-Mouths* (*Yuqie jiyao yankou shishi yi* 瑜伽集要餓口施食儀, T. 1320). According to this text, the ritual for feeding the hungry ghosts begins with the preparation of the altar and the distribution of food and culminates in busting hell and feeding the hungry ghosts. With their sins being destroyed, the hungry ghosts are made to accept the Three Jewels. *Dhāraṇī* chanting, *mudrā* maneuver,

and visualization characterize the whole process and indicate an unmistakable esoteric feature.

Although the central theme of this ritual is food bestowal, we must draw a line between the rite for feeding the hungry ghosts or releasing the flaming-mouth (*Shishi*) and the Plenary Mass of Water and Land (*Shuilu fahui* 水陸法會),⁴ which was said to be initiated by the pious Wudi 武帝 emperor of the Liang 梁 state. The Plenary Mass also flourished in late imperial China. However, according to Daniel Stevenson's study, although this rite incorporated many esoteric elements, it is a mixture of different ritual elements. Moreover, there is no conscious attempt to describe it as an authentic esoteric ritual.⁵

Second, the sutra that formulates the performance of the rite had been canonized and was clearly attributed to the esoteric masters in the Tang. (This certainly does not mean that all later redactions were derived from the texts introduced by these masters.) According to

4. This rite can be traced back to the pious Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty, who had once dreamed of a monk teaching him how to perform the ritual. According to this legend, the Plenary Mass of Water and Land was first held in the Golden Mountain Monastery in 505 CE. For a detailed study, see Michael Strickmann, *Mantras et Mandarins: Le Bouddhisme Tantrique en Chine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), esp. chap. 8, "Les Banquets des Esprits," 369–414. See also Lin Ziqing 林子清, "Shuilu fahui 水陸法會," in *Zhongguo fojiao* 中國佛教 2, comp. Chinese Buddhist Association (Beijing: Zhishi chubanshe, 1982), 383–392; and see Daniel B. 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 Weidner (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 30–72. See also Makita Tairyō 牧田諦亮, "Suiriku'e shōkō 水陸會小考," *Chūgoku Bukkyōshi kenkyū* (Tokyo: Daitō shuppan, 1984), vol. 2.

5. For the difference between *Shishi* and *Shuilu fahui*, see Chiba Shokan 千葉照觀, "Yuga enkō to Suiriku'e 瑜伽焰口と水陸會," *Bukkyō bunka no tenkai: Ōkubo Ryōjun sensei sanjukinen ronbunshū* 佛教文化の展開 : 大久保良順先生傘壽紀念論文集 (Tokyo: Sankibō busshorin, 1994), 351–372. Chiba Shokan believes that the *Shuilu fahui* was derived from the *Shishi* and can be traced to 833 CE. The major difference is that the *Shishi* ritual serves the purpose of ancestor worship while the *Shuilu* rite, often employed by the imperial court and bureaucrats, is targeted at all sentient beings. In addition, the *Shuilu fahui* is a mixture of rituals including ordination, dharma lecture, and some Taoist elements. See also Lü Jianfu 呂建福, *Zhongguo mijiaoshi* 中國密教史 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2011), vol. 3, 173–179.

canonical sources, this rite was introduced by the Tang esoteric master Bukong 不空 (Skt. Amoghavajra, 705–774) and attributed its authority to Ānanda.⁶ Since its introduction into China during the reign of the Daizong 代宗 Emperor of the Tang (762–779), it survived the actual esoteric school and underwent a revival during the Song⁷ and under the Yuan Mongol rule (1279–1368); this rite continued to flourish due to the influence from Tibetan tantrism.

However, at least in the Yuan time, the name “Mengshan” did not appear. According to liturgical works such as *Zhujing risong* 諸經日誦 and *Ōbaku shingi* 黃檗清規 (see below), only in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did the title “Mengshan” become popular. Thus, the creation of this title must be situated in the religious milieu of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Along with the general movement towards Buddhist revival, the making and remaking of esoteric rituals through textual production flourished, and reproduced ritual texts were abundant. Among them, many texts were about feeding the hungry ghosts. Charles Orzech, after examining various ritual manuals created in this time, considered all these rituals derived from *T. 1320* based on textual comparison and redaction. He pays special attention to Zhuhong, who largely based his redaction of esoteric ritual on textual transmission rather than oral transmission. According to Orzech, the textual revival of esoteric rituals was simply like this:

Buddhist monks read the ritual texts for performing the *shishi* and supplemented them as best they could with materials and understanding gleaned [sic] from other esoteric texts preserved in the

6. See Charles Orzech’s translation and explanation of the *Fo shuo jiuba yankou egui tuoluoni jing* (The Buddha’s Discourse on Scripture of the Spell for Saving the Burning-Mouth Hungry Ghost, *T. 1313*), in “Saving the Burning-Mouth Hungry Ghost,” *Religions of China in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 278–283.

7. There was a genuine attempt to revive the *Shishi* ritual. This effort was closely connected to the rise of the *Shuilu fahui* in the Song. For detail, see Stevenson, “Text, Image, and Transformation in the History of the *Shuilu fahui*,” 38–45. See also Lü Jianfu 呂建福, “Fojiao shishifa jiqi zai Songdai de liuxing” 佛教施食法及其在宋代的流行, *Mijiao lunkao* 密教論考 (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2008), 356–370. Hun Lye, “Song Tiantai Ghost-Feeding Rituals,” in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, ed. Charles Orzech, Henrik H. Sørensen, and Richard K. Payne (Boston: Brill, 2011), 520–524.

canon, and with liturgical elaborations garnered from ritual traditions of particular monastic institutions.⁸

It is no doubt that a textual revival of esoteric ritual was underway in that time. But more significant is the fact that Chinese Buddhists themselves, at least in the end of the sixteenth century, had regarded the Mengshan Rite as a genuine legacy of the Tang esoteric tradition. This means Chinese Buddhists in late imperial China were self-conscious of the identity and continuity of the esoteric tradition. For example, Zhuhong, the most influential redactor of Buddhist rituals in the late Ming, publicly acknowledged that Budong was the successor of the Tang esoteric masters and the transmission of the Mengshan Rite was Budong's contribution:

Yoga as a teaching is unthinkable [with regard to its] miraculous transformation and powerful efficacy. After the two masters Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra, there had been no one who was capable of continuing their course. Therefore, their teaching was contained in the royal Tripiṭaka without clear transmission. Only one ritual, the Rite for Feeding the Hungry Ghosts, is popular in the world. However, when this sutra was first translated, there was no *dhāraṇī* other than the *dhāraṇī* of transforming food.⁹ After the second and third translations, it was gradually enlarged and supplemented. Down to what

8. Charles D. Orzech, "Esoteric Buddhism and the Shishi in China," in *The Esoteric Buddhist Tradition: Selected Papers From the 1989 SBS Conference*, SBS Monographs no. 2, ed. Henrik H. Sørensen (Copenhagen and Aarhus: Seminar for Buddhist Studies, 1994), 65.

9. This refers to Śikṣānanda's translation of *Foshuo jiu mianran er'gui tuoluoni jing* 佛說救面燃餓鬼陀羅尼經 (T. 1314), which only contains one *dhāraṇī*. For a translation of T. 1314, see Hun Y. Lye, "Feeding Ghosts: A Study of the Yuqie Yankou Rite" (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2003), 417–425; "Yuqie Yankou in the Ming-Qing," in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, ed. Charles Orzech, Henrik H. Sørensen, and Richard K. Payne (Boston: Brill, 2011), 561–567. There is a Tangut Shishi manuscript entitled *Shi shuishi fangshun yaolun* 施水食放順要論 (TG 288 no. 6503) whose relationship with the later Shishi texts is not clear. See Nishida Tatsuo 西田龍雄, "Xixiayu Fodian bianzhuan de zhu wenti" 西夏語佛典編撰的諸問題, trans. Wang Xi 王曦, in *Han Zang Foxue yanjiu: Wenben, renwu, tuxiang he lishi* 漢藏佛學研究: 文本, 人物, 圖像和歷史, ed. Shen Weirong 沈衛榮 (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 2013), 105–141, esp. 118.

Master Budong transmitted, it became the most complete and utmost perfect.¹⁰

Clearly, according to Zhuhong, the Rite for Feeding the Hungry Ghosts had been considered a genuine esoteric ritual that could be traced back to the Tang. In addition, Budong was revered as a reformer and transmitter of this important tradition. Here, Zhuhong's statement is significant because it reflects a serious effort within Chinese Buddhism to reconstruct the continuity with esoteric Buddhism in the Tang through the Mengshan Rite revised by Master Budong.¹¹

This clue shows clearly the role of the Mengshan Rite and its author Budong in the reinvention of the esoteric tradition. By "reinvention," I mean that in history, "traditions" which claim to be descendants of antiquity are often invented and reinvented in recent times in response to new situations by making references to old forms or symbols. In this sense, I largely borrow Eric Hobsbawn's definition of "invented tradition." As he describes,

"Invented tradition" is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.¹²

10. Zhuhong, "Yuqie jiyao tuxiang yankou shishi xu 瑜伽集要圖像餓口施食序," *Shanfang zaji* 山房雜記, in *Yunqi fahui* 雲棲法匯, *Zhonghua dazang jing*, Ser. 2 (Taipei, 1962), no. 277, 129:54691.

11. For Zhuhong's effort in reviving the esoteric tradition, see Chun-fang Yü, *The Renewal of Buddhism in China: Chu-hung and the Late Ming Synthesis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 184–185; and Chun-jo Liu, Ling-te Liao, and Michael Welch, "The Serendipity Chants: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Recordings of the Buddhist Rite for the Dead, 'Yü-chia ye-k'ou shih-shih yao-chi,'" *Chinoperl News* 3 (1973): ix–xiv. During the late Ming, the Chan master Hanyue Fazang 漢月法藏 (1573–1635) attempted to synthesize esoteric and Chan practices based on the performance of the *Shishi* ritual. See Jiang Wu, *Enlightenment in Dispute: The Reinvention of Chan Buddhism in Seventeenth-Century China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 147–151.

12. Eric Hobsbawn, introduction to *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawn and Terence Ranger (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1.

According to this understanding, “invented traditions” dressed up novelties as antiquities by repeating a set of norms of behavior that claimed to be of an ancient origin. Following this line of thinking, I consider the hallmark of “reinvention” the deliberate reference to rituals, symbols, and transmissions in earlier traditions. In the case of esoteric Buddhism, according to Charles Orzech and Robert Sharf’s studies, esotericism in the Tang is obviously an invention in China by Chinese followers and reinforced by its Japanese heirs. In the seventeenth century, when Zhuhong, among others, deliberately claimed the authenticity of the Mengshan Rite as the only legitimate legacy of the esoteric tradition, a new process of reinvention started.

However, this process could be easily dismissed as another effort in creating mythical history in the wake of a Buddhist revival. Indeed, when a new attempt is made to renew a Buddhist tradition, discontinuity with the early tradition must have been felt keenly by Buddhists themselves. In order to reassume authority and reclaim legitimacy, Buddhist monks, especially those who control the production of texts, are able to invent the tradition through manipulating texts, reinterpreting historical facts, and thinking wishfully. Although the line between myth and reality should be drawn clearly, myth, as manifested in the self-consciousness of the Buddhists, should not be disregarded as pure fabrication. On the contrary, the creation of a myth is part of reality and should be viewed as a disguised form of history that divulges important messages about actual historical process. Our interest here is not to simply identify such efforts as “myth” or “fiction.” Rather, the central issue for us is how Chinese Buddhists made use of a fairly marginal ritual tradition with an ambiguous author, which was never heard of in previous times, to construct the continuity with the previous tradition. Therefore, the method of this research is to take the lead, mythical or legendary, seriously and to reconstruct the possible origins of this particular esoteric ritual with the aid of historical evidence. In the end, our study will reveal that the reinvention of the esoteric tradition in the seventeenth century was based on the marginality of a group of Tangut descendants who formed an active diasporic community. This community became the origin of the transmission of the Mengshan Rite in China through the Sino-Tibetan tea-horse trade.

THE TEXTUAL HISTORY OF THE MENGSHAN RITE IN THE
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY: TWO LITURGICAL MANUALS

The starting point of our investigation, however, is the emigration of a group of Chinese Chan monks to Japan because their monastic codes have preserved valuable sources about Chinese Chan monasticism in the seventeenth century. In Chinese history, the seventeenth century was a period of significant transitions. The Manchu conquest of China not only brought a dynastic change but also initiated a series of intellectual and social changes. Under this circumstance, Chinese Buddhism also underwent significant transformations. As a result of the late Ming Buddhist revival, Chan Buddhism became prominent among Buddhist groups. One sign of the rise of Chan Buddhism is the spread of the Ming-style Chinese Buddhism to Japan. In 1654, a group of Chinese monks from Mount Huangbo 黃檗 (Jpn. Ōbaku) in Fujian Province, led by Yinyuan Longqi (隱元隆琦 1592–1673), landed in Nagasaki, Japan. Within a few decades, these Chinese monks successfully established themselves as an independent Chan/Zen group with distinctive Ming-style monastic practice, which was different from the Japanese Zen practice.¹³ One aspect of their practice, to some extent, “scared” the Japanese monks because these Chinese monks, while claiming to be the “true sect of the Linji” (*Linji zhengzong* 臨濟正宗), were deeply engaged in tantrism, especially the esoteric Rite for Feeding the Hungry Ghosts.¹⁴

It is not clear when the Rite for Feeding the Hungry Ghosts was incorporated into the Chan liturgical tradition. Although esoteric elements in Chan Rules of Purity, such as in the *Chanyuan qinggui* 禪苑清規, could be dated to as early as the Song dynasty, the actual assimilation of this esoteric practice of feeding the hungry ghosts might be traced back to the end of the Song and the early Yuan dynasty. In his *Rules of Purity of the Huanzhu Cloister* (*Huanzhu'an qinggui* 幻住庵清

13. For detail of the history of Ōbaku Zen in Japan, see Helen J. Baroni, *Obaku Zen: The Emergence of the Third Sect of Zen in Tokugawa Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000). See also Jiang Wu, *Leaving for the Rising Sun: Chinese Zen Master Yinyuan and the Authenticity Crisis in Early Modern East Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

14. See Hirakubo Akira 平久保章, *Ingen* 隱元 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1962), 196. See also Kimura Tokugen 木村得玄, *Ingen Zenji to Ōbaku bunka* 隱元禪師と黃檗文化 (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 2011), 295–379.

規), Zhongfeng Mingben 中峰明本 (1263–1323), a Chan master in the Yuan, appended a brief manual of the Rite for Feeding the Hungry Ghosts, which could be an harbinger for the standardization of esoteric practice in Chan monasteries.¹⁵ The earliest appearance of the Mengshan Rite for Feeding the Hungry Ghosts was Zhuhong’s revision of *Zhujing risong* (Various Sutras for Daily Recitation) in 1600, which indicates the existence of the rite prior to the seventeenth century. Its earliest appearance in Chan monastic codes, as far as I know, was the above-mentioned Ōbaku monastic codes and their liturgical manual that were compiled in Japan. In the sixth chapter of *Ōbaku shingi* or the Ōbaku Rules of Purity, which is entitled “Chanting,” the procedure of the Mengshan Rite was outlined as a liturgy carried out during the evening service.¹⁶ The full content of the ritual, however, is preserved in the Ōbaku liturgical manual *Zenrin kaju* 禪林課誦 printed in the second year of the Kanbun 寛文 reign (1662) in Japan. According to Kamata Shigeo’s 鎌田茂雄 study, this ritual text in *Zenrin kaju* is almost the same as the one in *Fojiao zhaomu kesong* 佛教 朝暮課誦, which is currently popular in Buddhist monasteries in Taiwan.¹⁷ Similar ritual texts

15. See “Opening the Gate of Sweet Dew (*kai ganlu men* 開甘露門),” in *Huangzhu qinggui, Shinsan dai Nihon zokuzōkyō* 新纂大日本續藏經, 90 vols. (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1975–1989), orig. pub. as *Dai Nihon zokuzōkyō* 大日本續藏經, 750 vols. (Kyoto: Zōkyō Shoin, 1905–1912), 74:588–591, no. 1248-A. See also Hun Y. Lye, “Feeding Ghosts: A Study of the Yuqie Yankou Rite,” 433–434. For Zhongfeng Mingben’s thought, see Natasha Heller, *Illusory Abiding: The Cultural Construction of the Chan Monk Zhongfeng Mingben* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014). However, Heller did not elaborate on the esoteric aspect of Zhongfeng’s practice.

16. *Ōbaku shingi*, T. 82: 771, no. 2607.

17. Kamata Shigeo, *Chūgoku no Bukkyō ishiki* 中國の佛教儀禮 (Tokyo: Daizō shuppansha, 1986), 253–256 and 278–279. According to Kamata, the Ōbaku (Huangbo) text of the Mengshan Rite starts with a *gāthā* from the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* and ends with the chanting of the *Heart Sutra*, the *Dhāraṇī of Rebirth*, and the *Dhāraṇī of Universal Transference*. However, the modern text of the Mengshan Rite is appended with additional *gāthās* after these. See also Chen Jidong 陳繼東, “Zenmon nichiju Saikō -- Rondon daigaku no SOAS toshokan to Hābādo daigaku Enkyō toshokan no shiryō o chūshin to shite” 『禪門日誦』再考--ロンドン大学の SOAS 図書館とハーバード大学燕京図書館の資料を中心として, *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 印度學佛教學研究 53, no. 2 (2005): 798–793. Hong Chong 侯冲 discovered a new edition of *Chanlin kesong* 禪林課誦 in Yunnan. However, it is not known how it is related to the Japanese Ōbaku

with the same title are also preserved in other popular Chan liturgical books such as *Chanmen risong* 禪門日誦. Among these texts, *Zenrin kaju* is perhaps the earliest liturgical text that formally incorporated the Mengshan Rite into Chan monastic codes although its actual practice in Chan monastic settings could be much earlier.

Based on the ritual manual in *Zenrin kaju* and Pi-Yen Chen's study of this ritual in modern monastic settings, I reconstruct the basic ritual format as follows:¹⁸

THE MENGSHAN RITE FOR FEEDING THE HUNGRY GHOSTS

I. The *gāthā* from the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra*¹⁹

“if people want to know all the buddhas in the past, present, and future, they should reflect the nature of the *dharmadhātu* in which all things are created through the heart.”

II. Inviting all beings for the rite

A. *Dhāraṇī* of hell-busting (all of the following *dhāraṇīs* are chanted three times)

liturgical manual. See Hou Chong, “Cong Zhujing risong jiyao dao Chanmen risong: yi Jizushan Dajuesi Qianlong kanben Chanlin kesong jiyao deng wei zhongxin” 從《諸經日誦集要》到《禪門日誦》：以雞足山大覺寺乾隆刊本《禪林課誦集要》等為中心, in Hong Chong, *Hanchuan Fojiao, zongjiao yishi yu jingdian wenxian zhi yanjiu: Hou Chong zixuan ji* 漢傳佛教, 宗教儀式與經典文獻之研究: 侯沖自選集 (Taipei: Boyang wenhua, 2016), 75–100.

18. The following reconstruction is based on the Mengshan Rite in the *Zenrin kaju* with reference to Pi-Yen Chen's study on this ritual in contemporary monastic setting. I follow Chen's division of the ritual but made certain changes of translation according to the text in the *Zenrin kaju*. See Pi-Yen Chen, “Morning and Evening Service: The Practice of Ritual, Music, and Doctrine in Chinese Buddhist Monastic Community” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1999), 163–177. See also “Sound and Emptiness: Music, Philosophy, and the Monastic Practice of Buddhist Doctrine,” *History of Religions* 41, no. 1 (2001): 24–48. Chen primarily relies on Shi Xingci's commentary on Chinese Buddhist monastic liturgies. See Shi Xingci 釋興慈, *Chongding er'ke hejie* 重訂二課合解 (The Revised Exegesis of the Two Liturgies), orig. pub. 1921 (Taipei: Sheng Guo Press, 1989). I am also indebted to the Harvard-Yenching Library for photocopying the rare book *Zenrin kaju* from the Komazawa University Library. For a recent musicological study, see Yuan Jin 袁瑾, *Fojiao, Daojiao shiye xia de yankou shishi yishi yanjiu* 佛教道教視野下的焰口施食儀式研究 (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chuban she, 2013).

19. *Da fanguang fo huayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經 (*Avataṃsaka-sūtra*), vol. 19, T. 10: 102a–b.

- B. *Dhāraṇī* of universal invitation
- C. *Dhāraṇī* of dissolving rancor
- III. Inviting the Three Jewels
- IV. The *gāthā* of taking three refuges, repenting one's sin, and taking four great vows
- V. Eliminating sinful karma
 - A. Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva's *dhāraṇī* of annihilating the "fixed dharma"
 - B. Avalokiteśvara's *dhāraṇī* of annihilating karmic obstacles
 - C. *Dhāraṇī* of opening the throats
- VI. Delivering the *samaya* precepts by chanting the *dhāraṇī* of *samaya* precepts
- VII. Transforming food
 - A. *Dhāraṇī* of transforming food
 - B. *Dhāraṇī* of sweet dews
 - C. *Dhāraṇī* of one-character water disk
 - D. *Dhāraṇī* of the nourishing sea
- VIII. Reciting the name of seven buddhas
- IX. Feeding the hungry ghosts
 - A. Two *gāthās* praising the merit of achieving buddhahood
 - B. *Dhāraṇī* of unconfined food
 - C. *Dhāraṇī* of universal offering
 - D. Reciting the *Heart Sutra* and the *dhāraṇī* for future rebirth in the Pure Land
 - E. *Dhāraṇī* of universal transference of merit

Readers may notice that this is not a detailed ritual manual with elaborate explanations. Although the Chinese transliterations of *dhāraṇīs* were clearly listed, some other key elements of an esoteric ritual, such as *mudrā* performance and procedures of visualization, were completely omitted. Compared with Orzech's study of T. 1320, this manual preserves the core of the Rite for Feeding the Hungry Ghosts (flaming-mouth), although many new *dhāraṇīs* and *gāthās* were added. This text is obviously a much more abbreviated version for the purpose of daily liturgical chanting rather than for a formal performance upon customary requests. In order to understand the meaning of this text, additional oral instructions must be included.²⁰ Because

20. The explanation of the Mengshan Rite in monastic settings, which may be helpful to understand this text, can be found in Ōfuchi Ninji 大淵忍爾, ed.,

the purpose of my study is not to reconstruct this liturgical practice, I will not pursue an anthropological approach to delineating its actual performance in the seventeenth century. What is important is that this kind of ritual, at least in the late Ming, bore the name “Mengshan” and had been traced back to a mysterious monk call Budong, who was believed to have resided in Mengshan and emended Amoghavajra’s Rite of Feeding the Hungry Ghosts.

The search for Budong’s identity thus becomes the lead of this research. We find that the name “Budong” also appears in other ritual manuals related to esoteric practice.²¹ Among them, one ritual text in the Jiaxing supplementary canon (*Jiaxing xuzangjing* 嘉興續藏經) was

Chūgokujin no shūkyō ishiki: Bukkyō, Tokkyō, minkanshinkō, 中國人の宗教禮儀：佛教，道教，民間信仰 (Tokyo: Fubu shoden, 1983), 129. See also Chen Ming 琛明, *Mengshan shishiyi tanyuan* 蒙山施食儀探源 (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 2004), 23–28. It seems that the author mixed up the identity of the Ganlu master with that of Budong and did not explore the Tangut origin of the ritual.

21. Another liturgical text, entitled *The Text of Worshipping Buddhas and Penance* (*Lifo chanhui wen* 禮佛懺悔文), is also attributed to Budong according to Pi-Yen Chen. But in the *Zenrin kaju*, the authorship of this text, which is entitled *Sanshiwufo wushisan foming chanhui jing* 三十五佛五十三佛名懺悔經 (pp. 22–23), was not specified. For detail, see Chen, “Morning and Evening Service,” 149. This text might be part of the larger text of the Tangut monk Yixing Huijue’s 一行慧覺 work titled *Da fanguang Fo Huayanjing haiyin dao-chang shichong xingyuan changbian lichanyi* 大方廣佛華嚴經海印道場十重行願常備禮懺儀, *Shinsan dai Nihon Zokuzōkyō*, vol. 74, no. 1470. According to Nogawa Hiroyuki, this text was discovered in Yunnan in the seventeenth century and was brought to the Zhejiang area to print by Xu Xiake 徐霞客 upon the request of Lijiang local chieftain Mu Zeng 木增 (1587–1646) and his sons. See Nogawa Hiroyuki 野川博之, “Seika Bukkyō bunken no chūgen ryūden ni kansuru ichi kōsatsu: Reikō doshi Kishi to Jo Kakaku to no kakawari o chūshin ni” 西夏佛教文献の中原流伝に関する一考察--麗江土司-木氏と徐霞客とのかかわりを中心に, *Ōbaku bunka* 黄檗文華 130 (2009): 180–190. See also Nogawa Hiroyuki 野川博之, “Ōbakushū jōyō no Seika bukkyō ibun” 黄檗宗常用の西夏佛教遺文, *Ōbaku bunka* 黄檗文華 129 (2008): 298–310. Another Tangut liturgical text *Mizhou yuanyin wangsheng ji* 密呪圓因往生集 (T. 46. n. 1956) compiled in 1200 was also reprinted in the *Ōbaku Tetsugen Canon* 黄檗鐵眼藏 in Edo Japan. See Nogawa Hiroyuki 野川博之, “Seika Bukkyō bunken ‘Mitsuju en in ōjō-shū’ ni tsuite: Sono Tetsugenban shūroku made no ashidori o chūshin ni” 西夏佛教文献『密呪圓因往生集』について--その鉄眼版収録までの足どりを中心に, *Ōbaku bunka* 黄檗文華 126 (2005): 169–182.

attributed to Budong.²² Strangely, this text has the title *Yuqie jiyao yankuo shishi yi* 瑜伽集要餤口施食儀, the same as T. 1320 does. T. 1320 is an important esoteric text in the history of Chinese Buddhism. Charles Orzech reveals that T. 1320 is an anonymous text that does not attribute authorship to anyone. Following Zhou Shujia 周叔迦 (1899–1970), Orzech identifies T. 1320 as a Yuan text because the Chinese characters used for transliterating *dhāraṇī* are not the same as those used in Tang times, and the possible influence from the Tibetan Vajrayāna is evident.²³ The text in the Jiaxing Buddhist canon however, clearly refers to Amoghavajra as the translator and Budong Jingang 不動金剛 from the Xixia state as editor. In addition, it also includes a commentary composed by Shoudeng 受登 (1607–1675), a Tiantai monk-scholar in the seventeenth century.²⁴

The clear reference to Budong behooves us to focus on this text. It begins with the “Origination of the Rite for Bestowing Food to Burning-Mouth Hungry Ghosts,” which was taken from *Origins of the*

22. *Zhonghua dazang jing, di er ji* 中華大藏經 第二輯 (Taipei: Xiuding Zhonghua dazang jing hui, 1962), vol. 74, 20133–30159. Kirill Solonin suggests that Budong edited the content, especially the spells, based on the Tangut texts, and his work influenced the late Ming eminent monk Zhuhong as well. See Suo Luoning 索羅寧 (Solonin, K. J.), “Yixing Huijue jiqi Dafanguangfo Huayanjing haiyin daochang shichong xingyuan changbian lichanyi” 一行慧覺及其《大方廣佛華嚴經海印道場十重行願常徧禮懺儀》, *Taida Foxue yanjiu* 臺大佛學研究 no. 23 (2012): 1–76, esp. 63–64. The Jiaxing or Jingshan Buddhist canon is a seventeenth-century collection of Buddhist texts available in the Ming and the early Qing. The edition I am using was reproduced in Taiwan in 1962 with supplements from the Jiaxing canon preserved in the Komazawa University Library. The Jiaxing canon also contains many esoteric texts in later Chinese Buddhism. See Robert M. Gimello, “The Jiaxing Canon as a Rare Repository of Later Chinese Buddhist Esotericism,” paper presented at the conference “Keben dazangjing yanjiu de guoqu, xianzai he weilai: yi Jingshan zang wei zhongxin” 刻本大藏經研究的過去、現在與未來：以《徑山藏》為中心, Hangzhou, 2015 May 8–10; “Icon and Incantation: the Goddess Zhunti and the Role of Images in the Occult Buddhism of China,” in *Images in Asian Religions: Texts and Contexts*, ed. Phyllis E. Granoff and Koichi Shinohara (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 225–256.

23. Charles D. Orzech, “Esoteric Buddhism and the Shishi in China,” 56–57.

24. Shoudeng was an accomplished Tiantai monk who redacted several important ritual texts. For a short introduction to Shoudeng, see Guo Peng 郭朋, *Mingqing fojiao* 明清佛教 (Fujian: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1985), 337.

Teachings Given to Ānanda Concerning the Distribution of Food to the Burning Mouths from the Essentials of the Yoga-Tantra (Yuqie jiyao yankou shishi qijiao a'nantuo yuanyou 瑜伽集要餓口施食起教阿難陀緣由) (T. 1319). This excerpt stops at the point when the Buddha instructed Ānanda to build a *samaya* altar. Then, the main body of this ritual text begins and continues according to the following procedures:

- I. The beginning of the ritual
 - A. Alerting the *dharmadhātu*
 - B. Expressing faith by lighting incense
 - C. Marking the boundary of the altar and performing consecration
- II. *Samādhi* (meditation) of feeding the hungry ghosts
 - A. Empowering with *upāya*
 1. Visualizing the pure *dharmadhātu*
 2. Being empowered by a *vajra* master
 - B. *Samādhi* (meditation) of correct actions
 1. *Maṇḍala* for establishing the self
 - a. Taking the three refuges
 - b. Establishing the *maṇḍala* practice
 - i. Opening the birthless gate
 - ii. Establishing *maṇḍala*
 - iii. Dharma gate of celebrating the accomplishment
 - c. Taking vows for transferring merits
 2. *Maṇḍala* for establishing others
 - a. Taking refuges and arousing the mind of *bodhicitta*
 - b. Making offerings to the three refuges and the six realms of beings
 - i. Making offerings to the three refuges
 1. Entering the altar and inviting the sage
 2. Cultivating wisdom and Samantabhadra practice
 3. Reporting the intention to feed the hungry ghosts
 4. Worshipping and offering
 - ii. Feeding the six realms of beings
 1. *Samādhi* and transforming
 - Samādhi* of equal contemplation
 - Samādhi* which concentrates on practice
 - Busting the hell
 - Summoning the ghosts of six realms
 - Dhāraṇī* of evoking crimes
 - Dhāraṇī* of destroying crimes
 - Dhāraṇī* of eliminating “fixed karma”
 - Dhāraṇī* of repentance and elimination of crimes
 - Dhāraṇī* of bestowing sweet dew

Dhāraṇī of opening the throats
 Praising the seven *tathāgatas*
 Offering the food
 Bestowing the three refuges
 Generating the *bodhicitta*
 Bestowing the precept of *samaya*
Dhāraṇī of distributing the food
Dhāraṇī of the nourishing sea
Dhāraṇī for ghosts who are karmically hindered
 from such distribution
Dhāraṇī of universal offering
 Dismissal with *dhāraṇīs* (spirit-spell of Buddha's
uṣṇīṣa)

2. Finishing and receiving benefits

C. Release with complete merits

1. Invoking protective deities of all eight sections
2. Residing peacefully in *samādhi* by reciting the *One-Hundred Syllable Dhāraṇī* to invoke the protection of Vajrasattva
3. Taking vows of transferring merits to all sentient beings

Although the core of the text, namely the section of feeding the hungry ghosts, is, like T. 1320, based on T. 1319, there are many differences among them. First, the text in the Jiaxing supplementary canon does not contain any Sanskrit scripts²⁵ for *dhāraṇī* as T. 1320 does. The beginning

25. The *dhāraṇīs* in Tang esoteric texts were often written in Siddham as they are nowadays in Japanese Shingon Buddhist tradition, which is supposed to be the authentic transmission of Tang esotericism. However, in later esoteric texts, a new script called Lantsha gradually replaced Siddham in China due to the prevalent influence of Tibetan tantrism. The Lantsha script (Skt. Rañjanā or Rañjā) is believed to have been developed in Nepal and was later transmitted to Tibet. As a more angular script than Siddham, it is often used as a decorative font in Tibetan tantrism. Alexander Csoma de Kőrös hints that it is the “pointed variety of the Devanagari alphabet used by the Buddhists in India and Tibet.” See his *Grammar of the Tibetan Language* (Budapest: Akademiai Kiado, 1984), appendix, 38. Its prevalence in China after the Song dynasty (960–1279) shows the increasing influence of Tibetan tantrism introduced by the conquest dynasties. The first noticeable appearance of Lantsha scripts may be traced to the six-script *uṣṇīṣa dhāraṇīs* inscription carved in the Juyong Pass (Juyong guan 居庸關) of the Great Wall, which is dated to 1343 CE. There, Lantsha scripts were used as a decorative font for titles. For detailed and authoritative information, see *Chü-Yung-Kuan: The Buddhist Arch of the Fourteenth Century A.D. at the Pass of the Great Wall Northwest of Peking*,

and the end of the ritual performance in the two texts are also different: the text attributed to Budong is obvious more elaborated than T. 1320, although some salient features such as the *Mahācakra vidyārāja* spell and the Avalokiteśvara meditation are absent in the ritual text in the Jiaying supplementary canon. At the end, the text in the Jiaying canon does not include the “Writ on the Ten Types of Lonely Souls (*Shilei guhun song* 十類孤魂誦)” and the “Praise for Relying on the Three Jewels (*Guiyi sanbaozan* 皈依三寶贊).” In addition, there is no evidence that these two texts influenced each other. It is more likely that they were derived independently from the Tang text.

Textual comparison could continue and include other similar texts that were popular in the seventeenth and later centuries. However, I doubt if such textual studies would be fruitful, considering the vast amount of existing ritual manuals of the Rite for Feeding the Hungry Ghosts.²⁶ It could be true that all these texts were simply derived from the Yuan text (T. 1320) and were largely “indigenous reworking of

2 vols. ed. Jiro Murata (Kyoto: Faculty of Engineering, Kyoto University, 1957), especially the discussion and romanization of Lantscha scripts, 1:137–138. Lantscha scripts also appeared about the same time in Korea. See Akira Yuyama, “Die Sanskrit-Texte in Lan-Tsha und in tibetischer (Dbu-Can) Schrift auf der im Jahre 1346 gegossenen Glocke des Tempels Yeon-Bog-Jeol in Korea,” in *Deutscher Orientalistentag: vom 16. bis 20. September 1985 in Würzburg: ausgewählte Vorträge XXIII*, ed. Einar von Schuler (Stuttgart: F. Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1989), 429–434. For a brief history of the use of Lantscha scripts in China after the Song dynasty, see Takubo Shūyo 田久保周譽, *Bonji shittan* 梵字悉曇 (Tokyo: Hira-kawa shuppansha, 1981), 100–110. The widespread use of Lantscha scripts may have reached its height in the Qing dynasty when Tibetan tantric influence was enormous in the imperial court. This is evidenced by the imperial compilation of *Tongwen yuntong* 同文韻統 (Phonetic Standards for Transliterating Sanskrit, Tibetan, Manchurian, and Chinese), in *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書, Taiwan repr., 1971, 240: 359–448. This work, supervised by lCang-skyā Khutukhtu Rol-pa’i-rdo-rje (1717–1786), used Lantscha scripts as the standard Sanskrit scripts. My writing of this footnote benefits from Robert Gimello’s handout on Lantscha scripts in China.

26. For a list of existing ritual manuals, see Yoshioka Gihō 吉岡義豊, “Mikkyō shigakihō no chūgoku shakai denryō 密教施餓鬼法儀軌の中國社會傳流,” *Chizan Gakuhō* 智山學報 20 (Feb. 1956): 49–64; “Shigaki shisō no chūgoku teki juyō 施餓鬼思想の中國的受容,” *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 5, no. 1 (Jan. 1957): 234–238.

Tang and Yuan rites based on textual comparison,”²⁷ as Orzech argues. The important fact, however, is that some texts, as the two texts studied here do, allude to Mount Mengshan as the origin of the Rite for Feeding the Hungry Ghosts and to Master Budong as the editor of this ritual after Amoghavajra. In the next section, I will examine relevant evidence regarding this myth about the transmission of the Mengshan Rite.

MYTH AND LEGEND OF THE TANGUT MASTER BUDONG AND THE ORIGINS OF THE MENGSHAN RITE

The identity of Master Budong becomes the key to our inquiry because both examined versions of the Mengshan Rite attribute their authorship to this Xixia master. Apparently, he was an eminent monk at the Xixia (Tangut) court. However, there was no record about him in any biographies of eminent monks or dynastic histories before the twentieth century. Surprisingly, his biography was found in a twentieth-century collection of biographies compiled by Yu Qian 喻謙 (?–1933). Ruth W. Dunnell, a leading scholar in the field of Tangut studies, translates Budong’s biography from Yu Qian’s collection in her pioneering work on Xixia Buddhism.²⁸

Shi Budong’s Sanskrit name is Akṣobhya (*a shan pie* 阿閃撇) Woziluo 斡資羅 (Skt. *vajra*), in Chinese Budong Jingang (Unshakable Vajra), called Budong for short. Originally an Indian, when he first left home he traveled widely around India, thoroughly mastered the revealed and esoteric doctrines, and completely understood nature and its phenomenal expression. His reputation spread to neighboring lands. Then he came to Xi Xia and stayed at the Huguo Temple [in Wuwei]. He translated esoteric teachings and disseminated widely the *prajñā vajra* teaching called Yoga. It has five parts (*bu*): one is the

27. Charles D. Orzech, “Esoteric Buddhism and the Shishi in China,” 61–65. See also his “Seeing Chen-Yen Buddhism: Traditional Scholarship and the Vajrayāna in China,” *History of Religions* 29, no. 2 (Nov. 1989): 87–114.

28. Although I was able to track down Budong’s biography in Yu Qian’s collection, I am indebted to Robert Gimello for pointing to Dunnell’s translation. See Ruth W. Dunnell, *The Great State of White and High: Buddhism and State Formation in Eleventh-Century Xia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1996), 32–33. Hun Lye also discussed the hypothesis that the Mengshan Rite might be a Tangut text. See Hun Y. Lye, “Feeding Ghosts: A Study of the Yuqie Yankou Rite,” 315–330.

Buddha (*fo*) part; the second is the Vajra (*jingang*) part; the third is the Ratnasambhava (*baosheng*) part; the fourth is the Lotus (*hualian*) part; the fifth is the Karma (*kamo*) part. Budong only transmitted the Vajra part, so he was named Vajra Supreme Master (*jingang shangshi*). This name was given to him at the time of his consecration. As for Akṣobhya, it means at the very beginning relying on the law of the Akṣobhya part and practicing it. Budong diligently practiced the five repentances (*wuhui*) and broadly demonstrated the three *maṇḍalas* (*dan*). He once took “The Text of the Penitential Offering to the Sutra on the Thirty-Five Buddhas’ Names,” translated by Tang Tripiṭaka Amoghavajra (705–774), and before it added fifty-three Buddhas’ [names?], and after [it] inserted ten great vow-*gāthās* of Samantabhadra, in all making 108 periods of worship (*baiqi*) to cut off the 108 defilements. Later [Budong] moved to Mengshan, Sichuan, where he took the Yoga rite of bestowing food [on monks and ghosts] of Vajrabodhi of the Tang and gave it the translated descriptive name of “flaming mouth.” Further he preached the small rite of bestowing food, calling it the “Mengshan law.” Because he sustained his life solely on the “ambrosial truth” (*ganlu*), he was also given the title Master of the Sweet Dew Dharma. His disciple Lebu 勒布 transmitted his teaching and it was again transmitted by Bao’an 保安; yet a third transmission [was carried out] by Weide Zhuang 威德幢. Now the transmissions are especially numerous. It seems that there will be no Buddhist ritual without this [Mengshan Law]. So difficult is it to preach the dharma. It is not known when Budong died.²⁹

29. Yu Qian, *Xinxu gaoseng zhuan* 新續高僧傳 (New Supplementary Biographies of Eminent Monks) (Taipei: Xinwenfeng, 1975), 1:114–116. Dunnell did not translate the underlined phrase in Budong’s biography. My translation is also tentative. Yu Qian may have consulted a variety of rare sources only available in a small circle of the Chinese monastic community. One of the possible sources might be *Chongding er’ke hejie* 重訂二課合解 by Xingci 興慈, first published in 1921 (repr., Taipei: Fotuo jiaoyu jijinhui, 2009). Xingci discussed the origin of the Mengshan Rite and provided some biographical information about Budong. In fascicle 4 (*Chongding er’ke hejie*, 177), he said:

Budong is his name. A man from Western Region, he cultivated the Vajra division (*Jingang bu* 金剛部). After he was well-versed, he spread this practice broadly. He soon arrived at Xixia and was revered by the King. He often chanted most efficaciously the *Scripture of the Humane King Who Protects the State* 護國仁王經. Because he protected the state and blessed the people, the Xixia King named his temple “Nation-Protecting Humane King.” Based on *Scripture of*

This biography, concerning an Indian monk in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, did not appear in any previous collection of biographies of eminent monks. It only appeared in the 1920s when Yu Qian compiled the fourth collections of biographies of eminent monks.³⁰ Yu Qian's work has been highly regarded because it provides detailed information about eminent monks after the Song, especially monks in the northern dynasties such as Liao (Khitan), Jin (Jurchen), and Xixia (Tangut). Budong's biography, for example, can be found only in this collection. The compilation of his biography is most likely based upon widely circulated oral transmissions about Master Budong's life story and his connection with esoteric rituals. According to Budong's biography which Dunnell has translated above, it is commonly believed that

Thirty-Five Buddha-Names 三十五佛名經 and *Liturgical Text of Worship and Repentance* 禮懺文, he added fifty-three buddhas in the beginning and the Ten Vows of Samantabhadra at the end, making altogether 108 rites in hopes of cutting off the 108 kinds of afflictions (*kleśa*). The text of the Mengshan Rite is also his work. Alas, in the past thousand years and the future, all Chan groves and temples follow these as their routine liturgy. Therefore how inconceivable are the master's achievement and merit!

In fascicle 5 (*Chongding er'ke hejie*, 233), he added the following:

Mengshan is located fifteen *li* west of Mingshan County in Yazhou Prefecture. There are five peaks and the one in the front is the highest, namely Shangqing Peak (*Shangqing feng* 上清峰), which produced the Ganlu tea. Master Budong of the Song practiced cultivation inside and thus was named Master Ganlu. He thought that after the chanting of the *Amitābha-sūtra* (*Mituo jing* 彌陀經) and the *Great Repentance Ritual Text* (*Da chanhui* 大懺悔), all the beings in the Six Paths of Rebirth should be given offerings and the underground world be benefited as well. Based on the Method of Feeding the Hungry Ghosts with Water (*Shui shishi fa* 水施食法) from the esoteric division and *Scripture of Saving the Hungry Ghosts* (*Jiuba yankou e'gui jing* 救拔焰口餓鬼經), he thus assembled these ritual texts together and let the later followers make karmic connections with the underground ghosts and the dead.

30. Its being called "the fourth collection" follows Yang Wenhui's 楊文會 suggestion that Huijiao's, Daoxuan's, and Zanning's collections of biographies should be viewed as the previous three collections and Yu Qian's collection should be the fourth one. See *Zhongguo xueshu mingzhu tiyao* (*Zongjiao*) 中國學術名著提要: 宗教 (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 1997), 552.

Budong was an Indian monk specializing in tantric rituals and later arrived in Xixia and resided in the Huguo 護國 Temple, the most preeminent one in the Tangut state.³¹ For some mysterious reason, he moved to Mount Mengshan in Sichuan and edited Amoghavajra's Rite for Feeding the Hungry Ghosts. In addition, according to this biography, he also created a ritual called the Small Rite for Feeding the Hungry Ghosts. When we associate this paragraph with the textual history of the Mengshan Rite which we discussed above, these pieces of information confirm our discovery that there are two types of the Mengshan Rite: one is the shorter ritual manual preserved in the *Ōbaku shingi* and *Zenrin kaju*, which may be the so-called small rite in Budong's biography; the other is the more elaborate one, which has been preserved in the Jiaxing supplementary canon.

The location of Mengshan is also an important clue for solving the myth about the origin of this esoteric rite that bears the name "Mengshan." According to local gazetteers, Mount Mengshan is situated in Mingshan 名山 County. As Dunnell reveals, a *Ganlu Dashi* 甘露大師 (Great Master of Sweet Dew) had planted seven tea trees on the top of the mountain. However, the current gazetteers³² tell us stories different from our expectation about this Ganlu master: one story in the *Yudi jisheng* 與地紀勝 states that in the Western Han a monk came from Guangdong (*lingbiao* 嶺表) and planted tea trees at the top of Mount Mengshan. He was thus revered as *Ganlu Dashi*. In another story, Yang Shen 楊慎 (1488–1559), a Ming literatus, pointed to a stele that gave some detailed description of this monk, whose name was Puhui 普慧 and secular name was *wu* 吳:

Master Puhui (Universal Wisdom) of Mingshan was originally from Guangdong area and resided in Mount Mengshan. According to a stele, during the Western Han, Monk Lizhen 理真, whose secular name was "wu," taught people to make a living by planting tea on the top of Mount Mengshan. When he died, his statue was made of stone and his followers worshipped him as the Sweet Dew Master. [On the occasions] of flood, draught, illness, and plague, he responded upon prayers without fail. In the thirteenth years of the Chunxi 淳熙 reign

31. For detail about this temple, see Ruth Dunnell, "A History of the Dayun (Huguo) Temple at Liangzhou," *The Great State of White and High*, 87–118.

32. Zhao Yi 趙怡 and Zhao Yi 趙懿, *Mingshan xianzhi* 名山縣志, 1892; Zhao Zhenghe 趙正和, *Mingshanxian xinzhì* 名山縣新志, in *Sichuan fangzhi* 四川方志 (27) (Taiwan: Xuesheng shuju, 1969).

(1186–1187), Yu Dazhong 俞大中, a Jinshi degree holder from this county, reported that the master's merits and virtues had spread among people. The Xiaozong Emperor of the Song (r. 1163–1189) thus bestowed the title of Master of Sweet Dew, Universal Wisdom, and Wonderful Boon (*Ganlu puhui miaoji dashi* 甘露普慧妙濟大師) to him. Thus, here comes the Zhiju 智炬 monastery.³³

The very title “Ganlu” has an implicit esoteric resonance because “Ganlu” (sweet dew, Skt. *amṛta*) was widely used in Chinese esoteric texts as a metaphor of spiritual nectar that quenches human desires.³⁴ But according to Yang Shen's record, this Ganlu master has no direct link with Budong, who also had the title “Ganlu.” Because of the confusion of historical records, Ruth Dunnell suggests that it was highly probable that local gazetteers had conflated several legends together.

Although the record in local gazetteers could be a legend, its main characters in this legend might not be. Historical records show that monks from India played important roles in the Tangut state. For example, according to van der Kuijp's study, Jayānanda, a monk from Kashmir, became national preceptor of Tangut in the twelfth century.³⁵ In our case, the existence of such an eminent Indian monk Budong in Xixia is further validated by Ruth Dunnell. When Dunnell personally examined newly discovered sutra fragments from a ruined temple in the Helan Mountains near Yinchuan with Mr. Shi Jinbo 史金波, a

33. Zhao Yi et al., *Mingshan xianzhi*, 1892, 2:2–3.

34. Charles Orzech speculates that the metaphoric use of “sweet dew” is possibly a congruence of influence from both South Asian and Chinese religions, especially from Taoism. But I suspect when the title “sweet dew” was associated with Mengshan, a place of tea production, it could also refer to tea metaphorically. See Orzech, “Further Notes on Tantra, Metaphor Theory, Ritual and Sweet Dew,” unpublished paper. See also 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 Hawai'i Press, 2002), 213–234. For the use of “sweet dew” in Chinese sources, see James Benn, *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 40.

35. See Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp, “Jayānanda: A Twelfth Century *Guoshi* from Kashmir among the Tangut,” *Central Asian Journal* 37 (1993): 188–197. See also Ruth Dunnell, “Translating History from Tangut Buddhist Texts,” *Asia Major* 22, no. 1 (2009): 41–78; “Esoteric Buddhism under the Xixia (1038–1227),” in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, ed. Charles Orzech, Henrik H. Sørensen, and Richard K. Payne (Boston: Brill, 2011), 465–477.

leading Chinese scholar in Xixia studies, she identified that Budong, bearing the title “Unshakable Vajra Preceptor,” was among the high clerics who produced these fragments.³⁶ Based on these pieces of evidence, Dunnell established the connection between Budong and the Xixia state.

If Master Budong was indeed a celebrated Tangut master and Mount Mengshan was actually connected with Buddhism, the association between Budong and Mount Mengshan in the transmission of the Mengshan Rite entails an inevitable difficulty in explaining several disparate historical events coherently because in history the Tangut Empire never extended to Mengshan area. Hence, it is impossible to imagine the reason why such an important figure would have resided in Mount Mengshan, a local place that had no significance in Buddhist history. Therefore, in order to establish the hypothesis that the Mengshan Rite was derived from Master Budong, two issues need to be addressed: First, according to Chinese sources, from its rise in 1038 to its fall in 1227, the Tangut state never extended to as far as the border of Yazhou Prefecture in Sichuan where Mount Mengshan is situated; it is thus unlikely to imagine that a national preceptor of the Xixia state could have had a chance to visit Mengshan. How then, could Master Budong, who was in the most prestigious Huguo Temple in the Xixia Kingdom, travel a thousand miles to be in western Sichuan, which was at that time the Sino-Tibetan border area? The second question concerns how this ritual was transmitted to China proper even as far as the southeast coastal Fujian area during the Ming, almost four hundred years after the Tangut state had officially ended. If my transmission theory, which traces the origin of an esoteric ritual to Budong and Mengshan, is true, we must find evidence to prove the connection between the Tangut state and Mount Mengshan, and also, the link between Mount Mengshan and China proper. In the next section, I try to answer these two questions and suggest that a Tangut community, which had been relocated in the Sino-Tibetan border area, was deeply involved in trade and commerce between China and Tibet and thus had the opportunity to bring this ritual to China.

36. Dunnell, *The Great State of White and High*, 33 and n40.

THE TANGUT DIASPORA IN MI-ÑAG

The transmission of a religious practice is closely related to the mobility of a particular group of people for whom religion is an indispensable part of life. A religious practice can be disseminated through traveling caravans as a result of the expansion of commercial networks. Transmissions can also be achieved through the active promotion of a kind of practice by diasporic communities, which often act as carriers of exotic religious practices. Being relocated and displaced, diasporic communities are in a marginal position both geographically and socially because of their “foreign” origins. However, marginality also creates the possibilities of exchange because diasporic communities are at the same time imagined as an “authentic” representative of an alien culture.

If the mobility of a group of people is the key to solving the issue about transmission, we need to look at the fate of the Tangut people with whom, Budong, an Indian monk, was associated. Our sources suggest that although as a nation Xixia ceased to exist after the thirteenth century, the Tangut communities were able to survive in the form of diaspora.³⁷ One of such communities, called Mi-ñag and rediscovered later in the twentieth century, was actually located in the Sino-Tibetan border and was close to Mount Mengshan. Moreover, this region, where the Tangut diasporic community is located, used to be the transportation hub between China and Tibet. The Sino-Tibet tea-horse trade had flourished since the twelfth century and continued to grow during the Ming. Because of its geographically advantageous location, this Tangut diasporic community was thus involved in trade and commerce. Based on these historical facts, I attempt to solve the myth about the transmission of the Mengshan Rite by positing two hypotheses: First, there existed a Tangut diasporic community in the Sino-Tibetan border that survived after Kublai Khan (1215–1294) conquered Xixia in 1227. This

37. For evidence about the Tangut diaspora in inland China, see Chen Yuan, *Western and Central Asians in China under the Mongols: Their Transformation into Chinese*, trans. and annotators Ch'ien Hsing-hai and L. Carrington Goodrich (Nettetal: SteylerVerlag, 1989). In recent years, Chinese scholars have conducted many surveys of the Tangut diaspora. Li Fanwen alone launched five field surveys. For his survey results, see Li Fanwen 李範文, *Li Fanwen Xixia xue lunwen ji* 李範文西夏學論文集 (Beijing: Shehuikexue chubanshe, 2012), 658–771.

community preserved a form of the esoteric *Shishi* ritual revised by Master Budong; second, the Sino-Tibetan tea-horse trade was instrumental to the transmission of this ritual to inland China because the descendants of this community had actively participated in commercial activities and thus created the possibility to travel deeply inside China.

To validate the first hypothesis, we need to review briefly the history of the so-called Tangut state. The Xixia regime is the only Chinese dynasty without a dynastic history. Proclaimed by Yuan Hao 元昊 (r. 1031–1048) in 1038, this new state soon became a strong rival of Song China besides the Liao (Khitan) dynasty. In 1227, the Mongols finally conquered the Xixia state. Since then, its religious and cultural heritage seemed to have ceased to exist.³⁸ In the beginning of the twentieth century, a series of expeditions, first led by Russian Captain P. K. Kozoloff and sponsored by the Imperial Russian Geographical Society in 1908 and later by Sir R. Stein in 1914, discovered many Tangut materials in Khara-khoto (Heishuicheng 黑水城). These sources reveal that Xixia was not simply a military power in the eleventh and twelfth centuries but also had created high civilization, including the invention of its unique writing system and the printing of the Tangut Tripitaka, which had been translated into its new scripts. Studies also show the strong presence of tantric Buddhism, suggesting more Tibetan influence on Tangut Buddhism.³⁹

One of the intriguing questions in Tangut studies is the destiny of the Tangut people and the Tangut culture after the conquest by Genghis Khan (1162?–1227), whose generals exacted fierce revenge because Genghis Khan died during the siege of the Tangut state. In fact, some Tangut people were incorporated into the Mongol's administrative

38. For the history of the Xixia state, see Ruth Dunnell, "The Hsi Hsia," in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 6:154–224. Recent studies on Tangut Buddhism show the frequent interaction among Tangut, Tibet, the Song and Liao dynasties, and the later Yuan dynasty. See K. J. Solonin, "Hongzhou Buddhism in Xixia and the Heritage of Zongmi (780–841): A Tangut Source," *Asia Major* 16 (2003): 57–103; "The Glimpses of Tangut Buddhism," *Central Asiatic Journal* 52 (2008): 64–127.

39. See E. I. Kychanov, "Tibetans and Tibetan Culture in the Tangut State Hsi Hsia (982–1227)," in *Proceedings of the Csoma de Kőrös Memorial Symposium* (Budapest: Bibliotheca orientalis Hungarica, 1979), 205–211.

forces and served for the Mongol Yuan government as magistrates during Mongol's rule in China. The Yuan sources testify that a certain number of Tangut aristocrats and military men served in the Yuan regime and were classified as the Semu 色目 people.⁴⁰ In this sense, this group of Tangut people, who were absorbed into the Mongol regime, started the process of diaspora. In contrast to this cooperative attitude towards the conquest, certain Tangut groups, after the Mongol conquest, refused to join the new regime and thus returned to the pasture area along the Tibetan-China border where they rose as a tribe in the eighth century.

The history of this diasporic community along the Sino-Tibetan border was discovered only in the twentieth century. In 1945, Chinese scholar Deng Shaoqin 鄧少琴 published an article that reveals astonishing findings about the Tangut descendants. During his fieldwork in the former Xikang 西康 Province (eastern Tibet), Prof. Deng noticed that the local people in Kangding 康定 had mentioned the King of Sihü (Ch. Xiwuwang 西吳王) who had been the king of north China. After moving to the Sino-Tibetan boarder, he had lived in a place called Muya 木雅 in present-day China. One Buddhist Rinpoche informed Prof. Deng that the King of the Sihü was the later Mingzheng Tusi 明正土司 (Local Tribal Headman of Mingzheng), who was designated the chieftain of Kangding or Dajianlu since the Ming dynasty.⁴¹ Through philological associations, Prof. Deng identified that the name "Sihü" is identical to the name Xixia in ancient pronunciation⁴² and therefore

40. The Mongol Empire classified all people under its rule into four categories according to the sequence of the conquest. Semu refers to central Asians, including the Tangut people.

41. This position was created in the sixth year of the Yongle reign and took charge of three former chiefdoms. See Gong Yin 龔蔭, *Zhongguo tusi zhidu* 中國土司制度 (Kunming: Yunnan minzhu chubanshe, 1990), 265–267. See also Deng Tingliang 鄧廷良, "Mingzheng tusi kaocha ji 明正土司考察記," *Yalongjiang shangyou kaocha baogao* 雅礮江上游考察報告 (Chengdu: Zhongguo xinan mizu yanjiu xuehui, 1985). For an ethnological report from the region, see Gillian Tan, "An Ethnography of Life and Changes among Tibetan Nomads of Minyang Dora Karmo, Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province," *Études Mongoles Et Sibériennes, Centrasiatiques Et Tibétaines* 43–44 (2013).

42. "Sihü" can be also spelled as "Se-hü," which refers to a venomous spirit according to Tibetan historiography. The Xixia/Mi-ñag emperor was believed to be the son of this spirit who gave the power to Xixia to take over China.

contemplated that after the destruction of the Xixia state, one branch of the Tangut people migrated to this area and established a small kingdom that lasted until the Ming dynasty. During the Ming, those descendants of the ruler were bestowed the title “Mingzheng Tusi.” Prof. Deng also proved that etymologically all Chinese names that were used to transliterate the name of this place, such as Muya, Munei 木内, Muna 母納, Minake 密納克, Miyao 弭藥, and Mi’erzhou 彌娥州, are transliterations of the Tibetan name “Mi-ñag,” which refers to Xixia and the region between eastern Tibet and western Sichuan Province. Through Deng’s study, the connection between Xixia and the western Sichuan and eastern Tibet was initially established.⁴³

The relation between Mi-ñag and the Tangut state was further elaborated by R. A. Stein. In 1948, Stein presented a paper to the British Royal Society, later published as “Mi-ñag et Hsi Hsia [Xixia, Tangut].” In this paper, he acknowledged the direct relationship between Mi-ñag and the Xixia state as observed by other scholars. But he noticed an obvious discrepancy between Tibetan sources and Chinese sources. That is, in Tibetan sources the genealogy of the Xixia kings under the name of Mi-ñag is longer than that recorded in Chinese dynastic histories. Tibetan chronicles mention seventeen kings in total and eight more than the number of kings provided in Chinese dynastic histories. Obviously, the life of the Tangut state or the so-called Mi-ñag was much elongated if viewed from the Tibetan side. Stein concluded that the term “Mi-ñag” in Tibetan refers to both the Xixia state in general and the north-west and the west of the kingdom. Therefore, it is reasonable to speculate that after the fall of the Xixia state the descendants of Mi-ñag, who resided between eastern Tibet and western Sichuan, continued the Tangut culture and rulership.⁴⁴ In another article published in 1966, Stein translated relevant passages from the Tibetan *Red Annals* (*Deb-ther dmar-po*) and once again confirmed the existence of

See the section on “Genealogy of Tangut,” in *Tibetan Buddhist Historiography: The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies, An Annotated Translation of the XIVth Century Tibetan Chronicle: rGyal-rabs dsal-ba’i me-long*, trans. K. Sørensen (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994), 84–86.

43. Deng Shaoqing 鄧少琴, “Xikang muyaxiang xiwuwang kao 西康木雅鄉西吳王考,” orig. pub. 1945; repr. in Bai Bin 白濱: *Xixiashi lunwenji* 西夏史論文集 (Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin chubanshe, 1984), 673–694.

44. R. A. Stein, “Mi-ñag et Si-hia: Géographie historique et légendes ancestrales,” *Bulletin de l’École française d’Extrême-Orient* 44, no. 1 (1947–1950): 223–265.

the Tangut culture under the Yuan.⁴⁵ The effort to identify the Xixia descendants is never abandoned in China. From May to September in 1980, Prof. Li Fanwen 李范文 led another field survey of the Tangut descendants in eastern Tibet and western Sichuan. As a result of his research, he confirmed the existence of the Tangut descendants in the Mi-ñag region.⁴⁶

The scholarship on the destiny of the Tangut people shows clearly that one branch of the Tanguts, perhaps one branch of the royal family, continued to be addressed as Mi-ñag in Tibetan sources and actually dominated the western Sichuan region after the fall of the Xixian state in the thirteenth century. The result of these studies begins to shed new light on Budong's residence in Mengshan. Based on Stein's work, my first hypothesis can be summarized as follows.

As discussed before, Mount Mengshan is located in Mingshan County of Yazhou 雅州 Prefecture. Although Mingshan County was largely dominated by the Chinese, Yazhou was always a remote frontier neighboring small tribal states along the Sino-Tibetan border. During the late imperial period, these tribal areas were referred to as Dajianlu 打箭爐 and were under the administration of Yazhou Prefecture. I hypothesize that Budong, as a famous monk in the Huguo Temple, may have followed members of the royal family to the western Yazhou area and temporarily resided in Mengshan where he recompiled the Mengshan Rite for Feeding the Hungry Ghosts.

If it is plausible that the Xixia monk Budong had resided in the Mengshan area and reformulated the ritual, there is still one historical

45. R. A. Stein, "Nouveaux documents tibétains sur le Mi-ñag/Si-hia," *Mélanges de Sinologie offerts à M. Paul Demiéville* (Paris: Bibliothèque de l'Institut des Hautes Études chinoises, 1966), 281–289. Other Tibetan sources also mention Mi-ñag/Xixia. For example, in *rGyal-rabs gsal-ba'i me-long*, it was recorded the Tangut regime lasted for 260 years. However, according to Chinese historiography, it only existed for 188 years. This means that the actual Tangut rule survived after the Mongol conquest. See Sørensen, *Tibetan Buddhist Historiography: The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies*, 84–86.

46. See Li Fanwen 李范文, "Xixia yimin diaochaji 西夏遺民調查記," in *Xixia yanjiu lunji 西夏研究論集* (Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin chubanshe, 1983), 190–278, and his "Jiarongyu yu daofu zuyuan kao 嘉戎語與道孚族源考," *ibid.*, 306–320. See also Way J. Van and Bkhrashis Bzangpo, "Nyagrang Minyag: Prestige and Maintenance of a Traditional Language on the Tibetan Periphery," *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* 38, no. 2 (2016): 245–255.

question that needs to be clarified: Why did this ritual and the legend attributed to Budong become so popular in inland China in late imperial times? For example, its transmission to Japan by the Ōbaku monks from Fujian and its integration into the Chan liturgical tradition attest to its popularity. In addition, as Budong's biography states, "It seems that there will be no Buddhist ritual without this [Mengshan Law]." Although there is no further evidence in Chinese Buddhist sources about its transmission in China, the geographic location of this region suggested a mode of transmission through trade and commerce: if the relocation of the Tangut people at the end of the thirteenth century preserved the Mengshan Rite in the Sino-Tibetan border area, the further spread of this ritual must be closely linked to trade, especially the tea-horse trade, which used to be a flourishing business along the border.

THE SINO-TIBETAN TEA-HORSE TRADE AND THE TANGUT DESCENDANTS

The spread of Buddhism was always closely related to trans-regional trade and the migration of merchants. For example, the early transmission of Buddhism in China was linked to Central Asian merchant groups.⁴⁷ In order to study the transmission of the Mengshan Rite to China, the geographical location of Mengshan and its role in trade and commerce must be considered carefully.

Mount Mengshan in Mingshan County, where Budong allegedly resided, was very important in Sino-Tibetan history because Mengshan tea, the main product of Mingshan County, was favored by the Tibetans. In addition, since Yazhou Prefecture was one of the major transportation hubs between China and Tibet, Mengshan tea naturally became the main staple in the Sino-Tibetan tea-horse trade. The tea-horse trade between Tibet and China grew out of the needs of the two parties: the Tibetans needed strong tea to absorb their heavy meat-based diet while China desperately needed horses for battlefields. In the 1070s, the Song government began to set up the Tea Market Agency (*Chazhengsi* 茶政司) to monopolize the trade. Since then, Tibet became the sole customer of the Sichuan tea industry and "even during the

47. For example, see Jason Emmanuel Neelis, *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks: Mobility and Exchange Within and Beyond the Northwestern Borderlands of South Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

Ming Sichuan's best teas went not to Chinese consumers but to the Tibetans and other non-Han groups in the west, while during the Qing 90 percent of all Sichuanese tea was sold to Tibet."⁴⁸ Among different types of tea, a special kind of tea produced in Mengshan, called "Mengshan tea," was Tibetans' favorite tea in the Sino-Tibet tea-horse trade since the eleventh century. As Paul Smith describes, "Mingshan county, seventy-five miles southwest of Chengdu along the main highway to Tibet, was Sichuan's most prolific producer, with a capacity of 4,000,000 *jin* of tea. It was soon designated the major supplier of 'convoy tea' (*gongcha* 貢茶) for the horse trade."⁴⁹ In the 1070s, the Tea Market Agency even tied Mengshan tea solely to the horse trade with Tibet and legally prohibited the handling of Mengshan tea outside the horse trade.⁵⁰

In the early Ming, the unbroken tea-horse trade had brought certain prosperity to the Mi-ñag region along the Tibet-Sichuan border due to the success of the lucrative business with Chinese merchants.⁵¹ For example, a new city, Dar-rtse-mdo or Dajianlu in Chinese, evolved from a small village into a large Mi-ñag center. The economic prosperity also brought cultural and religious development. As Elliot Sperling observes, "In the fifteenth century we begin to note the appearance of a number of prominent religious figures from the Mi-nyag region of khams, with its center in Dar-rtse-mdo."⁵² These prominent figures include the so-called "five scholars of Mi-ñag" whose biographies still exist.⁵³ In addition, Sperling points out that these Buddhist clergymen were connected with the royal clan of the Xixia state:

48. Paul J. Smith, *Taxing Heaven's Storehouse: Horses, Bureaucrats, and the Destruction of the Sichuan Tea Industry, 1074–1224* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 62. I am indebted to Robert Hymes for this reference.

49. *Ibid.*, 134.

50. *Ibid.*, 270–272.

51. For the tea-horse trade in the Ming, see Morris Rossabi, "The Tea and Horse Trade with Inner Asia during the Ming," *Journal of Asian History* 4, no. 2 (1970): 137–168.

52. Elliot Sperling, "The Szechwan-Tibet Frontier in the Fifteenth Century," *Ming Studies* 26 (1988): 40. See also Huang Hao 黃顥, "Zangwen shishu zhong de Miyao" 藏文史書中的弭藥, *Qinghai minzu xueyuan xuebao* 青海民族學院學報 4 (1985): 60–65.

53. Senge Sangbo 森格桑波 (Sengge Sampe), *Muya wuxuezhe zhuan* 木雅五學者傳 (Chengdu: Sichuan minzu chubanshe, 1986). See also Shangguan Jianbi 上

Among the noted clerics who emerge in the Khams area of Mi-nyag in the fifteenth century are some belonging to a clan bearing the name “Rme-se,” which one of our Tibetan sources describes as “part of the clan of the Mi-nyag (i.e., Tangut) king ‘Tha’i-hu”⁵⁴ and others” (Tib. “Mi-nyag-gi rgyal-po Tha’i-hu-la sogs-pa’i gdung-rigs-kyi-nang-tshan”). The transplanting of possibly a branch of the Tangut royal clan into the Sino-Tibetan frontier regions was part of the process by which the Mi-nyag area in Khams came to support a thriving economy and strong local powers who in that century were able to invite some of the foremost religious figures of Central Tibet to the area.⁵⁵

Sperling’s study shows that a branch of the Tangut royal family was indeed active in the Mi-ñag region and engaged in promoting Buddhism. It is possible that Budong’s disciples were among them and were active in transmitting rituals reformed by Budong. The eastward spread of the Mengshan Rite for Feeding the Hungry Ghosts can also be explained on this basis because this area was closely connected to inland China due to the frequent tea-horse trade. As a major official port of tea-horse trade, Ya’an 雅安, the administrative seat of Yazhou Prefecture, became the starting point for Tibetan merchants and monks to pay their “tribute” visits to China. These merchants and monks likely had more contacts with Buddhists inside China.

It is well-known that the early Ming court favored Tibetan tantrism and had treated the “tribute” clerics very generously in China. This patronage led to an influx of the so-called “Tibetan” monks. The Chinese term “*fanseng* 番僧” was usually designated to monks from Tibet. However, among them many were actually from Mi-ñag, the region closest to the Chinese border but culturally distinctive from Tibet. For example, after a clearance registry of Buddhist clergy in response to complaints about the excessive number of “Tibetan” monks, Ming officials found that most so-called Tibetan monks were not genuine Tibetans. Rather, they came from western Sichuan (Xishu 西蜀) where the diasporic Tangut people held certain control. More importantly, these tribute monks were often engaged in tea-horse trade directly.

官劍壁, “Sichuan de Muya ren yu Xixia” 四川的木雅人與西夏, *Ningxia shehui kexue* 寧夏社會科學 3 (1994): 22–26.

54. According to Deng Shaoqing, it equals to the Chinese transliteration *dawu* 大吳, which means Xixia. See Deng, “Xikang muyaxiang xiwuwang kao,” 681.

55. Elliot Sperling, “The Szechwan-Tibet Frontier in the Fifteenth Century,” 41.

In 1458, 1471, and 1490, the Ming government issued three decrees to prohibit tea trade by “tribute monks.”⁵⁶ All these sources suggest that if the monks from Mi-ñag could penetrate inland China by paying tribute visits and handling tea, especially their favorite Mengshan tea, they were likely able to spread the Mengshan Rite in Chinese Buddhist communities.

One more clue that might help us understand the role of the Tangut descendants in the transmission of esoteric rituals is the evidence that even during the Ming dynasty the Tangut diasporic communities were still active in places such as Baoding 保定, the southern pass to Beijing. In 1962, an *uṣṇīṣa dhāraṇī* pillar (*zunsheng tuoluoni jingchuang* 尊勝陀羅尼經幢), written in Tangut scripts, was discovered in Baoding (Hebei Province). This discovery testifies that living Tangut communities still existed and were deeply committed to Buddhism as late as 1502.⁵⁷ The connection between this community and the Tangut community in Mi-ñag is not clear. But once again the geographical location of this place suggests the implicit link: while Mi-ñag is located at the starting point of the trade route, Baoding is situated at the end of the journey from the Sino-Tibetan border to Beijing.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I try to establish a hypothesis about the transmission of a particular esoteric ritual in late imperial China: The very title “Mengshan,” the name of a mountain directly associated with tea, symbolizes the provenance of the Mengshan Rite for Feeding the Hungry Ghosts in the Mi-ñag region. The alleged author “Budong” is a clue suggesting the connection between the Mengshan Rite and the Tangut

56. See Li Dongyang 李東陽 et al., *Daming huidian* 大明會典 (orig. pub. 1587; repr. Taipei: Zhongwen shuju, 1963), 689–690. For studies of the interaction between Tibet and Ming China, see Shen Weirong, “Tantric Buddhism in Ming China,” *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, ed. Charles Orzech, Henrik H. Sørensen, and Richard K. Payne (Boston: Brill, 2011), 550–560.

57. Shi Jinbo and Bai Bin, “Mingdai xixiawen jingjuan he shichuang chutan 明代西夏文經卷和石幢初探,” in *Xixiashi lunwenji* 西夏史論文集, ed. Bai Bin (Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin chubanshe, 1984), 574–595. See also the same authors, “Mingdai xixiawen jingjuan zaitan 明代西夏文經卷和石幢再探,” in *Xixiashi lunwenji*, 600–623; and Li Fanwen, “Guanyu mingdai jingjuan de niandai he shichuang de mingcheng wenti 關於明代經卷的年代和石幢的名稱問題,” in *Xixiashi lunwenji*, 595–599.

diasporic community. Based on the evidence of the Tangut diasporic community in Mi-ñag and the role of Mount Mengshan in the Sino-Tibetan border, I suggest that the spread of the Mengshan Rite, which had been attributed to the thirteenth-century Tangut master Budong, must have close relationship with the remaining Tangut community, addressed as Mi-ñag by the Tibetans, where the ritual had survived and the tea-horse trade had provided a possible channel for its further dissemination in China.

If this hypothesis can be established, it will also clarify the myth about the visible Tibetan influence in Chinese Buddhism, especially in late imperial China. Based on the role of the Tangut diasporic community in the transmission of the Mengshan Rite, I suggest that at least some tantric elements were not directly brought by the Tibetans. Rather, small ethnic groups along the Sino-Tibetan border, such as the so-called Mi-ñag people, might have contributed to the transmission of tantric rituals in a more direct way.

Finally, I want to relate this study to the general discussion about the issue of “transmission” in Chinese Buddhism because the spread of a particular religious tradition often intrigues scholars to hypothesize different modes of transmission. Erik Zürcher, for example, in his study of the early transmission of Buddhism in China, puts forth the models of “contact expansion” and “long-distance” transmission. He suggests that instead of a gradual expansion through contacts with “West Regions,” Buddhism adopted the mode of “long-distance” transmission to China and thus bypassed the vacuum area of Eastern Central Asia. Only after the development of Eastern Central Asia under Chinese influence in the second century did the Buddhist vacuum start to be filled as a result of population growth and urbanization.⁵⁸ In another study in which he compares the spread of Buddhism in China and the propagation of Christianity in seventeenth-century China, he characterizes the Jesuit missionary approach as “guided transmission” that relied on a centralized ecclesia under the directions of a hierarchy

58. Erik Zürcher, “Han Buddhism and the Western Region,” in *Thought and Law in Qin and Han China: Studies Dedicated to Anthony Hulsewé on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday*, ed. W. L. Idema and Erik Zürcher (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), 158–182; and “Buddhism across Boundaries: The Foreign Input,” in *Buddhism across Boundaries: Chinese Buddhism and the West Regions*, ed. John McRae and Jan Nattier (Taipei: Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Buddhist & Culture Education, 1999), 1–59.

(referring to Rome) completely outside China. Buddhism, in contrast, conquered China through contacts with local communities without a unifying policy.⁵⁹

My study also deals with the issue of transmission, although the temporal and spatial framework is quite different. If a model of transmission must be applied here as in Zürcher's study, I would like to suggest that the transmission of the Mengshan Rite follows the rule of marginality, which means a line of transmission, which was often reconstructed during a time of Buddhist revival, must have had derived from a marginal locality or an ambiguous person whose origins were often difficult to trace. This rule functions on two levels: First, from a historical point of view, when the mainstream tradition suffers severe suppressions and persecutions, marginal places and obscure persons tend to have better chance to maintain continuity of the tradition through the preservation of texts, rituals, or oral transmissions. Second, from an ideological point of view, when a particular tradition is intended to be rejuvenated, the rule of marginality will allow the claimant of the legitimate heir of this tradition to imagine a genuine continuity without further historical scrutiny, because the scarcity of available sources conceals the true history and denies further investigation. I believe that this is what actually happened in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: the marginalized Tangut diasporic community, peripheral in both Chinese and Tibetan cultures, preserved and spread this rite to China proper. However, when a genuine effort had been attempted to resume the continuity of the esoteric tradition, this unclear transmission of the Mengshan Rite was appropriated as part of the process of the reinvention of a tradition. During late imperial China, because of the remote origin of this rite, it was imagined by Chinese Buddhists such as Zhuhong as a genuine transmission from the early esoteric tradition. In this sense, the legend of Master Budong and Mount Mengshan had contributed to the reinvention of the esoteric tradition in late imperial China.

The rule of marginality in the process of transmission can be equally applied to other fields of religious studies. Similar examples

59. Erik Zürcher, "China, Boeddisme en Christendom: Spontane Engeleide Expansie," *Streven* 55 (1988): 913–925; and "Bouddhisme et Christianisme," in *Bouddhisme, Christianisme et Societe chinoise*, ed. Erik. Zürcher (Paris: Julliard, 1990), 11–42.

can be found in various religious traditions that have undergone significant revivals. In the field of Chinese Buddhism, Chan history, a field that is beset by myths and legends of dharma transmission, could be another test case for the validity of the rule of marginality. A ready example is the role of Bodhidharma and Huineng in Chan history. As Bernard Faure points out, they emerged from relative marginality and obscurity and were completely reconstructed in later Chan historiography as the foundational figures of the Chan tradition.⁶⁰ However, due to the limit of space in this paper, we will leave this issue to another occasion.

60. See Bernard Faure, "Bodhidharma as Textual and Religious Paradigm," *History of Religions* 25, no. 3 (1986): 187–198; reprinted in his *Chan Insights and Oversights: An Epistemological Critique of the Chan Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 126–135.

