

**LIVES OF GREAT MONKS AND NUNS**

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**BDK English Tripiṭaka 76-III, IV, V, VI, VII**

**LIVES OF  
GREAT MONKS AND NUNS**

**The Life of Aśvaghōṣa Bodhisattva**

Translated from the Chinese of Kumārajīva

(Taishō Volume 50, Number 2046)

by Li Rongxi

**The Life of Nāgārjuna Bodhisattva**

Translated from the Chinese of Kumārajīva

(Taishō Volume 50, Number 2047)

by Li Rongxi

**Biography of Dharma Master Vasubandhu**

Translated from the Chinese of Paramārtha

(Taishō Volume 50, Number 2049)

by Albert A. Dalia

**Biographies of Buddhist Nuns**

Translated from the Chinese of Baochang

(Taishō Volume 50, Number 2063)

by Li Rongxi

**The Journey of the Eminent Monk Faxian**

Translated from the Chinese of Faxian

(Taishō Volume 51, Number 2085)

by Li Rongxi

**Numata Center  
for Buddhist Translation and Research  
2002**

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## **A Message on the Publication of the English Tripiṭaka**

The Buddhist canon is said to contain eighty-four thousand different teachings. I believe that this is because the Buddha's basic approach was to prescribe a different treatment for every spiritual ailment, much as a doctor prescribes a different medicine for every medical ailment. Thus his teachings were always appropriate for the particular suffering individual and for the time at which the teaching was given, and over the ages not one of his prescriptions has failed to relieve the suffering to which it was addressed.

Ever since the Buddha's Great Demise over twenty-five hundred years ago, his message of wisdom and compassion has spread throughout the world. Yet no one has ever attempted to translate the entire Buddhist canon into English throughout the history of Japan. It is my greatest wish to see this done and to make the translations available to the many English-speaking people who have never had the opportunity to learn about the Buddha's teachings.

Of course, it would be impossible to translate all of the Buddha's eighty-four thousand teachings in a few years. I have, therefore, had one hundred thirty-nine of the scriptural texts in the prodigious Taishō edition of the Chinese Buddhist canon selected for inclusion in the First Series of this translation project.

It is in the nature of this undertaking that the results are bound to be criticized. Nonetheless, I am convinced that unless someone takes it upon himself or herself to initiate this project, it will never be done. At the same time, I hope that an improved, revised edition will appear in the future.

It is most gratifying that, thanks to the efforts of more than a hundred Buddhist scholars from the East and the West, this monumental project has finally gotten off the ground. May the rays of the Wisdom of the Compassionate One reach each and every person in the world.

NUMATA Yehan  
Founder of the English  
Tripiṭaka Project

August 7, 1991



## Editorial Foreword

In January 1982, Dr. NUMATA Yehan, the founder of the Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai (Society for the Promotion of Buddhism), decided to begin the monumental task of translating the complete Taishō edition of the Chinese Tripiṭaka (Buddhist canon) into the English language. Under his leadership, a special preparatory committee was organized in April 1982. By July of the same year, the Translation Committee of the English Tripiṭaka was officially convened.

The initial Committee consisted of the following members: (late) HANAYAMA Shōyū (Chairperson), BANDŌ Shōjun, ISHIGAMI Zennō, KAMATA Shigeo, KANAOKA Shūyū, MAYEDA Sengaku, NARA Yasuaki, SAYEKI Shinkō, (late) SHIOIRI Ryōtatsu, TAMARU Noriyoshi, (late) TAMURA Kwansei, URYŪZU Ryūshin, and YUYAMA Akira. Assistant members of the Committee were as follows: KANAZAWA Atsushi, WATANABE Shōgo, Rolf Giebel of New Zealand, and Rudy Smet of Belgium.

After holding planning meetings on a monthly basis, the Committee selected one hundred thirty-nine texts for the First Series of translations, an estimated one hundred printed volumes in all. The texts selected are not necessarily limited to those originally written in India but also include works written or composed in China and Japan. While the publication of the First Series proceeds, the texts for the Second Series will be selected from among the remaining works; this process will continue until all the texts, in Japanese as well as in Chinese, have been published.

Frankly speaking, it will take perhaps one hundred years or more to accomplish the English translation of the complete Chinese and Japanese texts, for they consist of thousands of works. Nevertheless, as Dr. NUMATA wished, it is the sincere hope of the Committee that this project will continue unto completion, even after all its present members have passed away.

It must be mentioned here that the final object of this project is not academic fulfillment but the transmission of the teaching of the

Buddha to the whole world in order to create harmony and peace among humankind. To that end, the translators have been asked to minimize the use of explanatory notes of the kind that are indispensable in academic texts, so that the attention of general readers will not be unduly distracted from the primary text. Also, a glossary of selected terms is appended to aid in understanding the text.

To my great regret, however, Dr. NUMATA passed away on May 5, 1994, at the age of ninety-seven, entrusting his son, Mr. NUMATA Toshihide, with the continuation and completion of the Translation Project. The Committee also lost its able and devoted Chairperson, Professor HANAYAMA Shōyū, on June 16, 1995, at the age of sixty-three. After these severe blows, the Committee elected me, Vice President of Musashino Women's College, to be the Chair in October 1995. The Committee has renewed its determination to carry out the noble intention of Dr. NUMATA, under the leadership of Mr. NUMATA Toshihide.

The present members of the Committee are MAYEDA Sengaku (Chairperson), BANDŌ Shōjun, ISHIGAMI Zennō, ICHISHIMA Shōshin, KAMATA Shigeo, KANAOKA Shūyū, NARA Yasuaki, TAMARU Noriyoshi, URYŪZU Ryūshin, YUYAMA Akira, Kenneth K. Tanaka, WATANABE Shōgo; and assistant member YONEZAWA Yoshiyasu.

The Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research was established in November 1984, in Berkeley, California, U.S.A., to assist in the publication of the BDK English Tripiṭaka First Series. In December 1991, the Publication Committee was organized at the Numata Center, with Professor Philip Yampolsky as the Chairperson. To our sorrow, Professor Yampolsky passed away in July 1996. In February 1997, Dr. Kenneth K. Inada became Chair and served in that capacity until August 1999. The current Chair, Dr. Francis H. Cook, has been continuing the work since October 1999. All of the remaining texts will be published under the supervision of this Committee, in close cooperation with the Editorial Committee in Tokyo.

MAYEDA Sengaku  
Chairperson  
Editorial Committee of  
the BDK English Tripiṭaka



## Publisher's Foreword

The Publication Committee shares with the Editorial Committee the responsibility of realizing the vision of Dr. Yehan Numata, founder of Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai, the Society for the Promotion of Buddhism. This vision is no less than to make the Buddha's teaching better known throughout the world, through the translation and publication in English of the entire collection of Buddhist texts compiled in the *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō*, published in Tokyo in the early part of the twentieth century. This huge task is expected to be carried out by several generations of translators and may take as long as a hundred years to complete. Ultimately, the entire canon will be available to anyone who can read English and who wishes to learn more about the teaching of the Buddha.

The present generation of staff members of the Publication Committee includes Diane Ames, Marianne Dresser, Eisho Nasu, Koh Nishiike, and Reverend Kiyoshi Yamashita, president of the Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, Berkeley, California. The Publication Committee is headquartered at the Numata Center and, working in close cooperation with the Editorial Committee, is responsible for the usual tasks associated with preparing translations for publication.

In October 1999, I became the third chairperson of the Publication Committee, on the retirement of its very capable former chair, Dr. Kenneth K. Inada. The Committee is devoted to the advancement of the Buddha's teaching through the publication of excellent translations of the thousands of texts that make up the Buddhist canon.

Francis H. Cook  
Chairperson  
Publication Committee



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## **Lives of Great Monks and Nuns**

*The Life of Aśvaghoṣa Bodhisattva*

*The Life of Nāgārjuna Bodhisattva*

*Biography of Dharma Master Vasubandhu*

*Biographies of Buddhist Nuns*

*The Journey of the Eminent Monk Faxian*



# **The Life of Aśvaghōṣa Bodhisattva**

Translated from the Chinese of Kumārajīva  
(Taishō Volume 50, Number 2046)

by

Li Rongxi





## Translator's Introduction

Aśvaghōṣa (cir. first to second centuries C.E.) was a well-known Buddhist poet, philosopher, and Mahayana theorist of India, and is counted as the eleventh patriarch in the line of transmission of the Dharma beginning with Mahākāśyapa. This concise *Life of Aśvaghōṣa Bodhisattva* gives only a brief account of how he was converted from Brahmanism to Buddhism by Pārśva but, according to the *Record of the Origin of Transmitting the Dharma-piṭaka* (*Fu-fa-zang-yin-yuan-zhuan*, Taishō 2058), his predecessor was Pārśva's successor, Puṇyayaśas.

In the history of the development of Buddhism, Aśvaghōṣa is considered one of the founders of Mahayana Buddhism. The following eight texts, which are extant in Chinese translations in the Taishō edition of the Tripiṭaka, are attributed to him:

*Buddhacaritakāvyā*, five fascicles, translated by Dharmarakṣa (Taishō 192).

*Sūtrālaṅkāra-śāstra*, fifteen fascicles, translated by Kumārajīva (Taishō 201).

*Sutra of the Six Ways of Transmigration* (*Ṣaḍgatikārikā*), one fascicle, translated by Sūryakīrti (Taishō 726).

*Sutra of the Ten Evil Deeds* (*Daśakuśalakarmapatha*), one fascicle, translated by Sūryakīrti (Taishō 727).

*Sutra of a Nirgrantha Inquiring into the Meaning of Non-ego* (*Nairātmyaparipṛcchā*), one fascicle, translated by Sūryakīrti (Taishō 1643).

*Mahāyānaśraddhotpāda-śāstra*, two Chinese translations, one by Śikṣānanda, one fascicle, (Taishō 1666), and the other by Paramārtha, two fascicles, (Taishō 1667).

*Da-zong-di-xuan-wen-ben-lun*, twenty fascicles, translated by Paramārtha (Taishō 1669).

*Fifty Stanzas on Serving the Guru (Gurusevādharmapañcāśadgāthā)*, one fascicle, translated by Sūryakīrti (Taishō 1687).

Among these eight texts, the *Buddhacaritakāvya* and the *Mahāyānaśraddhotpāda-śāstra* are perhaps the most popular among Mahayana Buddhists, although the authenticity of the latter text is a subject much debated by Buddhist scholars.

Besides being a Buddhist theorist with significant influence on the development of Mahayana Buddhism, Aśvagoṣa was also the initiator of Buddhist chanting and hymn singing. In order to propagate Buddhism, he wrote many melodious stanzas and songs, which were said to be so sweet and pleasant to the ear that many people were converted to Buddhism upon hearing them. It is still the practice of Buddhist monks, in both Theravadin and Mahayana countries, to chant stanzas and hymns in praise of the Triple Gem in their daily ceremonies and at special religious functions.

In the *Biography of Dharma Master Vasubandhu* (Taishō 2049), included in this volume, Aśvagoṣa is said to be a native of Sāketa in Śrāvastī. He was invited to Kaśmīra (Kashmir) by Kātyāyanīputra to take part in the compilation of the *Abhidharma-vibhāṣā-śāstra* (Taishō 1546), which consisted of one million stanzas and was completed in twelve years under the auspices of King Kaniṣka.

**THE LIFE OF AŚVAGHOṢA  
BODHISATTVA**

Translated from Sanskrit into Chinese by  
Kumārajīva, Tripiṭaka Master  
of the Later Qin Dynasty (384–417)



The Master, who was named Āśvaghōṣa Bodhisattva, was a disciple of Elder Pārśva. When Elder Pārśva, being deeply concerned about the Buddha-Dharma, entered *samādhi* in order to contemplate who was competent to renounce the world and widely propagate the teachings of the Way so as to enlighten living beings, he had a vision of a hermit heretic in Central India who was well versed in worldly wisdom, eloquent in debate, and good at argumentation. The hermit announced, “If there is any *bhikṣu* who can hold debate with me, let him strike the *ghaṇṭā* (bell). If he cannot, he is not qualified to strike the *ghaṇṭā* in public and receive offerings from the people.”

183a22

Elder Pārśva then set out from Northern India with the intention of traveling to the city of Śākya in Madhyadeśa. On his way, he met some *śrāmaṇeras* who joked with him, saying, “Virtuous Elder, let us carry your books for you.” Then they took away his books and teased him in various ways for no reason. Elder Pārśva’s countenance did not change and, with a placid mind, he took no notice of their mischievous tricks.

183b

One of the *śrāmaṇeras*, who was a well-learned person, discerned that the elder was a great and farsighted man and suspected that he was no ordinary person. He questioned the elder and observed his behavior, and found that he never ceased in his spiritual progress. [Elder Pārśva’s] being was settled, his mind was deep and far-reaching, and he never thought of trivial matters.

When all the *śrāmaṇeras* realized that the elder was a man of great virtue and unfathomable magnanimity, they treated him with doubled respect and served as his attendants in order to help send him on his way.

Then Elder Pārśva disappeared by supernatural power. Upon arriving in Central India, he stayed in a monastery. He asked the *bhikṣus*, “Why do you not strike the *ghaṇṭā* according to the Dharma?”

The *bhikṣus* said, “Elder Mahallaka has a reason for not striking it.”

“What is the reason?” asked Pārśva.

The *bhikṣus* replied, “There is a heretical recluse who is good at argumentation. He announced that if none of the Buddhist *śrāmaṇeras* in the country can debate with him, they should not strike the *ghaṇṭā* in public to receive offerings from the people. Because of this, we do not strike the *ghaṇṭā*.”

Elder Pārśva said, “Just strike the *ghaṇṭā*. If he comes, I will deal with him.”

Surprised at these words, the old *bhikṣus* were doubtful and could not come to a decision. After assembling and discussing the matter, they said, “Let us strike the *ghaṇṭā*. If the heretic comes, we will ask the elder to do whatever he pleases.” Thus they struck the *ghaṇṭā*.

The heretic appeared and asked, “Why do you strike this piece of wood today?”

The *bhikṣus* replied, “An elder *śramaṇa* came from the north and struck the *ghaṇṭā*. It was not we who struck it.”

The heretic said, “Ask him to come.” Then Elder [Pārśva] came and met the heretic, who asked him, “Do you intend to hold a debate with me?”

“Yes,” [Pārśva] replied.

The heretic said with a contemptuous smile, “This elder *bhikṣu* looks quite old and his words are nothing unusual. How can he hope to hold a debate with me?”

They then agreed to hold a debate in seven days’ time at that spot, in the presence of the king, ministers, other great masters of the Dharma, *śramaṇas*, and heretics.

On the night of the sixth day, Elder Pārśva entered *samādhi* to contemplate what he should do. At dawn on the seventh day, a great congregation assembled. [Pārśva] arrived first and ascended the high seat, looking more cheerful and pleasant than usual. The heretic arrived later and took a seat at the front. He observed that the *śramaṇa* had a peaceful countenance and a quiet and calm demeanor and that his physical body possessed all the characteristics of a debater. He thought, “Is this not a saintly *bhikṣu*, with such a calm and pleasant presence and a physical body that has

all the characteristics of a debater? Today we shall have a splendid debate.”

183c

They first discussed what punishment should be meted out to the loser. The heretic said, “The defeated person should have his tongue cut off.”

Elder Pārśva said, “We must not do that. Let the defeated man become the disciple of the victor. That would be a fair enough agreement.”

“Yes,” replied the heretic, who then asked, “Who will speak first?”

Elder Pārśva said, “As I am advanced in age, have come from a distant place, and took my seat here before you, I should speak first.”

The heretic said, “That is agreeable to me. I will refute whatever you may say.”

Then Elder Pārśva said, “We should make the country be at peace, the great king enjoy a long life, and the land rich and happy without any calamity.”

The heretic remained silent, not knowing what to say. According to the rule, the one who was unable to respond lost the debate. He submitted to becoming the elder’s disciple, had his head and beard shaved, became a *śrāmaṇera*, and received full ordination. Sitting alone at another place, he pondered, “My brilliant talents and deep knowledge have won me worldwide fame. How is it that by a few words I was defeated and made a disciple?” Thinking of this, he was unhappy.

Elder [Pārśva] understood the heretic’s mind, and asked him to come to his room. He demonstrated his supernatural power, performing various kinds of transformations. Then the heretic realized that his teacher was no ordinary person and was happy to be subdued by him, thinking, “It befits me to be his disciple.”

The teacher said to him, “It was not easy for you to have [developed] such brilliant talents, but you have not achieved the truth. If you learn the Dharmas I have acquired, the [five] organs (*indriya*), the [five] powers (*bala*), the [seven factors of] enlight-

enment (*bodhyaṅga*), and the [eightfold] path, and become endowed with profound and elucidative eloquence and a clear understanding of the meaning of all doctrines, you will be unrivaled in all the world.”

Elder [Pārśva] then returned to his own country, while his disciple remained in Central India, where he became well versed in various sutras and thoroughly mastered both Buddhist and non-Buddhist teachings. His matchless talents in debate won him the respect and admiration of the four groups of Buddhist followers (monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen), and the king of India held him in great esteem.

Later on, the king of Minor Yuezhi in Northern India attacked Central India and besieged it for a long time. The king of Central India dispatched a letter that read, “If you want anything from me, I will give it to you. Why should you surround and aggravate my people by staying here for such a long time?”

The [Yuezhi king] replied, “If you intend to surrender, send me three crores of golden coins and I will spare you.”

The king replied, “I do not have even one crore of golden coins in the whole of my country. How can I acquire three crores of golden coins?”

The [Yuezhi king] replied, “You have two great treasures in your country: one is the Buddha’s almsbowl, and the other is an eloquent *bhikṣu*. Give these to me, and they may be reckoned as equivalent to two crores of golden coins.”

The king said, “I value these two treasures highly. I cannot surrender them.”

Then the *bhikṣu* preached the Dharma to the king, saying, “Nothing in the world is comparable to the edification of living beings. The Way of the Buddha is deep and broad. It is meant to save both oneself and others. Among the virtues of a great person, the salvation of others is the greatest. Worldwide edification is difficult; a king can rule but one country. If you disseminate the Way of the Buddha, you will be a king of the Dharma across the four seas. That a *bhikṣu* should save people is not objectionable.



Merits exist in the mind, whether one is far or near. Be magnanimous and farsighted. Why should you look only at what is before your eyes?”

Because the king had always venerated the *bhikṣu*, he respectfully accepted his advice and handed him over to the envoy. After the envoy of the king of Yuezhi returned to his own country, the courtiers discussed the matter and said, “It befits the king to venerate the Buddha’s almsbowl. But it is too much to accept that a *bhikṣu* is worth a crore of golden coins, when there are so many *bhikṣus* everywhere under the sky.” 184a

The king ascertained that the *bhikṣu* was a well-learned person of superior ability and understanding who taught and benefited the people in a broad and profound manner, and whose eloquent preaching could edify even nonhuman beings. In order to remove his courtiers’ doubts, he ordered that seven horses not be fed for six days. On the morning of the sixth day, he assembled all Buddhist and non-Buddhist *śramaṇas* of different schools and invited the *bhikṣu* to preach the Dharma to them. All those who listened to him became enlightened. The king tethered the horses in front of the assembly and placed grass before them. Betel, which horses like, was also placed in the fodder. With tears flowing, the horses listened to the [*bhikṣu*’s] preaching without any thought of eating the fodder.

Thus everyone knew that the *bhikṣu* was no ordinary person. Because even horses could understand his words, he was named Aśvaghōṣa (“Horse Cry”) Bodhisattva. He propagated Buddhism widely in Northern India to teach and benefit all living beings. As he knew well how to use expedient [means] to help people achieve merit, he won the respect of the four groups of Buddhist followers. All acclaimed that day as a day of merit.

End of *The Life of Aśvaghōṣa Bodhisattva*



# **The Life of Nāgārjuna Bodhisattva**

Translated from the Chinese of Kumārajīva  
(Taishō Volume 50, Number 2047)

by

Li Rongxi



## Translator's Introduction

This text is a legendary account of the life of Nāgārjuna, the well-known Mahayana scholar and founder of the Mādhyamika school of Buddhism in ancient India. A native of Southern India who lived in the second half of the second century C.E., Nāgārjuna exerted a profound influence on the development of Buddhism in his own time and in later ages. His theory of the Middle Way (*madhyama-pratipad*) explains the emptiness of all phenomena by the eight negations. He taught that in time there is neither beginning nor ending, neither permanence nor impermanence. And in space there is neither identity nor difference, neither coming nor going. Phenomenal existence is interpreted to be “worldly truth,” while according to “superior truth,” nothing really exists as an unchanging entity.

The Middle Way avoids the two extreme views of total annihilation and eternal substantial existence. It emphasizes the doctrine of causal existence. Things appear to exist when a certain composition of causes (*hetu*) and requisite conditions (*pratyaya*) occurs, and things disappear upon the decomposition of their causes and conditions.

Nāgārjuna's *Mādhyamika-sāstra* and *Dvādaśanikāya-sāstra*, together with the *Śata-sāstra* by his disciple and successor, Āryadeva, are important texts for the exposition of the doctrines of the Middle Way. On the basis of these three texts, the Sanlun (Three Treatise) school was founded in China and later introduced to Japan, where it was known as the Sanron school. Nāgārjuna's *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sāstra*, a voluminous work expounding the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, exerted a still greater influence upon several schools of Buddhism in China and Japan.

This legendary account of the life of Nāgārjuna, said to have been translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva from 401 to 409 C.E., is actually the last part of Chapter Five of the *Record of the Origin of Transmitting the Dharma-piṭaka*, translated into Chinese by Kekaya and Tanyao of the Northern Wei dynasty (386–534). Kumārajīva's version is practically identical in wording with the *Record*, and his translation of the *Life of Deva Bodhisattva* (Āryadeva) contains a passage that is exactly the same, word for word, with one in this account of Nāgārjuna, except that the name Nāgārjuna is replaced by Deva. This arouses suspicion as to whether this account of Nāgārjuna and that of Āryadeva are really Kumārajīva's translations. He could not possibly have written the same episode about two different persons. Thus, the likely source of the episode is the *Record*.

# **THE LIFE OF NĀGĀRJUNA BODHISATTVA**

Translated from Sanskrit into Chinese by  
Kumārajīva, Tripiṭaka Master  
of the Later Qin Dynasty (384–417)





Nāgārjuna Bodhisattva was born to a brahman family in Southern India. Endowed with unusual intelligence, he could understand things without being told a second time. When still an infant, after hearing brahmans chant the four Vedas, each consisting of forty thousand stanzas with thirty-two syllables in each stanza, Nāgārjuna was able to recite them and understand their meaning. While a young man, his fame as an unparalleled prominent person spread to many countries. He was well learned in such disciplines as astronomy, geography, divination, prophecy, and many other arts and skills.

184a19

He had three close friends, all of whom were also prominent persons of the time. They talked together, saying, “We have learned all the teachings in the world that may enlighten the mind and reveal the truth. Now what else shall we do to amuse ourselves? Indulgence in sensual pleasure would be a great enjoyment, but how can we do this? We are merely brahmans and scholars, and do not possess the influence of noblemen or rajas. It is only through the art of invisibility that we may perhaps enjoy these pleasures.” The four of them looked at one another in silent agreement, and then went together to the home of a sorcerer to learn the art of invisibility.

The sorcerer thought, “These four brahmans are men of great fame in the world and are used to looking down upon people in contempt. For the sake of learning my art, they have condescended to approach me. They are the most talented and brilliant people in the world and know everything, except this humble art of mine. If I teach my art to them, they will surely cast me aside and I will not be able to control them anymore. I will give them the drug to use without telling them what it is. When the drug is used up, they will certainly come again and always serve me as their teacher.” So he gave each of them a blue pill and told them, “Grind these pills with water in a quiet place. When you smear your eyelids with the lotion, you will become invisible; no one will be able to see you.”

184b

As Nāgārjuna was grinding the drug, he smelled its odor. Through this he came to know its component ingredients and quantities without the slightest mistake. He returned to the sorcerer and told him that the drug was composed of seventy ingredients, and described their exact quantities as prescribed in the formula.

“How do you know this?” asked the sorcerer.

“Why should I not know it, since the drug emits odors?” replied Nāgārjuna.

The sorcerer was filled with admiration. “It is unusual even to hear about such people, much more to meet them in person. There is nothing about my humble art that I should keep secret.” He then taught them all the skills of his art.

Having learned the [sorcerer’s] tricks, the four young men enjoyed themselves with ease. They entered the king’s palace frequently and disgraced all the palace beauties. After a hundred days or so, some of the maids in the palace were found to be with child. They were ashamed and reported the matter to the king to ask his pardon. The king was greatly displeased and wondered what evil spirit could have caused such strange things to happen.

The king summoned his wise ministers and discussed the matter with them. An old minister said, “Such things may happen under two circumstances: they are done either by a ghost or by a sorcerer. Let us scatter fine grains of earth at the gates and post sentries to keep watch, so as to check the movements of the transgressor. If it is a sorcerer, his footprints will be discovered and the soldiers may arrest him. If it is a ghost, there will be no footprints, but it can be gotten rid of by exorcism.”

The gatekeepers were ordered to make preparations and discover the truth. As soon as they saw the footprints of four persons, they reported the fact to the king, who summoned several hundred warriors to the palace and had all the gates closed. The warriors were ordered to hack and strike at the air with their weapons. Three of the men were killed in this way. But Nāgārjuna held his

breath and stood quietly near the king, as weapons were not allowed to come within seven feet of the king's head.

At this moment Nāgārjuna began to realize that lustful desire was the root of suffering and the source of all misfortunes. It ruins one's virtue and endangers one's life. He then made a vow: "If I escape I will go to a *śramaṇa* to learn the way of renunciation."

After coming out of the palace, he went to a Buddha stupa in the mountains, where he renounced his home and received ordination as a monk. He recited the whole Tripiṭaka in ninety days and tried to obtain more scriptures, but was unable to get them from any source.

Then he went into the Snow Mountains. There was a stupa where an old *bhikṣu* lived, and he taught Nāgārjuna the Mahayana scriptures. Nāgārjuna gladly accepted and recited the scriptures with delight. Although he understood their substantial meaning, he could not obtain any concrete benefit from them. So he traveled to various countries in search of more scriptures. But he could not find anything anywhere in Jambudvīpa. All heretics, *śāstrs* (writers of commentary), *śramaṇas*, and theoretical schools were defeated by him.

A heretic's disciple said to him, "Sir, you [claim to be] an all-knowing man of perfect knowledge. But you became a Buddhist student. Being a student implies that you have something more to learn. Do you have yet more to learn? If there is even a single thing you do not know, then it is not true that you are a man of perfect knowledge."

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This remark rendered Nāgārjuna speechless and he kept silent in humiliation. Then he became arrogant and thought, "There are many different kinds of teachings in the world. The Buddhist scriptures that we have are wonderful, but by inference I know that they are incomplete. Since they are incomplete, I may extend them in an inferential way so as to enlighten later generations. It is neither contrary to theory nor will it cause any harm in practice. What is the harm of doing so?"

After thinking the matter over, [Nāgārjuna] decided to carry this out. He established himself as a teacher of disciplinary rules, and designed a new kind of garment that was slightly different from those worn by the Buddhists, in order to remove people's misunderstanding and to show that he did not accept the Buddhist teachings. At a selected time on a chosen day, he asked his disciples to observe his new disciplinary rules and don the new garments.

Then he stayed alone in a quiet crystal chamber. Upon seeing him like this, Mahānāga Bodhisattva felt pity for him and took him to his palace in the sea. There he opened his seven-treasure store and seven-treasure cases and gave him many profound Vai-pulya scriptures containing unlimited wonderful teachings.

Nāgārjuna accepted the scriptures and read them. In ninety days he became well versed in most of their contents and acquired a deep understanding from which he gained substantial benefit. Perceiving this, the *nāga* asked him, "Have you read all the scriptures?"

"The scriptures you have in your cases are numberless," replied Nāgārjuna. "It is impossible for me to read them all. What I have read here is ten times more than what I have in Jambudvīpa."

"At other places there are many more scriptures than I have in my palace," said the *nāga*.

Nāgārjuna then focused on a box of scriptures among many that had been given, and attained [the stage of the bodhisattva that is marked by] the understanding that all things have no origination. The *nāga* then sent him to Southern India, where he propagated the Buddha-Dharma widely and subdued the heretics.

In order to expound Mahayana teachings in an extensive way, he composed theoretical discourses (*upadeśa*) in a hundred thousand stanzas and wrote the *Alaṅkārabuddhamārga-śāstra* in five thousand stanzas, the *Mahāmaitryupāya-śāstra* in five thousand stanzas, and the *Mādhyamika-śāstra* in five hundred stanzas. Through these texts the Mahayana teachings were widely disseminated in India. He also wrote the *Abhaya-śāstra* in a hundred

thousand stanzas, from which the *Mādhyamika-sāstra* was extracted.

There was at that time a brahman who was an expert in the arts of sorcery. Wishing to compete with Nāgārjuna for supremacy in sorcery, he said to the king of India, “I can subdue this *bhikṣu*. Your Majesty may test it.”

The king said, “You are most foolish. The brilliance of this bodhisattva can compete with the light of the sun and the moon, and his wisdom may be compared with the mind of the Buddha. How can you be so arrogant as to dare to be disrespectful to him?”

The brahman said, “O king, you are a man of wisdom; why do you feel I am inferior to him before testing this by reason?”

On hearing these words, the king invited Nāgārjuna to come and sit with him in the audience hall early in the morning. The brahman, who arrived later, recited incantations and produced a large, clean pool in front of the audience hall. In the pool was a thousand-petaled lotus flower on which the brahman sat. He challenged Nāgārjuna, saying, “You are sitting on the ground just like an animal, and yet you are trying to argue with a person of great virtue and wisdom who is sitting on a pure lotus flower.”

Then Nāgārjuna produced by magic a six-tusked white elephant that walked on the water in the pool and went toward the lotus seat. The elephant uprooted the flower with its trunk and, raising it high, dashed it on the ground. The brahman, who was badly hurt, paid homage to Nāgārjuna, saying, “I overrated my abilities and insulted you, great teacher! Please accept me with pity and enlighten me to rid me of my ignorance.”

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The king of Southern India ruled over all the states. He was a follower of heretical teachings and refused to see Buddhist *śramaṇas*. All the people in his country, far and near, were under his injunction [to adhere to his beliefs]. Nāgārjuna thought that if the root of a tree was not cut off, its branches would not wither. Similarly, if the lord of men was not converted, the Dharma would not spread.

Now it was the rule of that country to employ hired men to be royal guards to the king. Nāgārjuna answered the [call for] enlistment to be the captain of the guards. Carrying a halberd on his shoulder and marching in front of the ranks, he put the guards in good order and held them under his control. Orders were carried out without stringent compulsion and things were done without being enforced by law. The king was delighted with him, and inquired who he was. The attendants replied, “This man answered the enlistment to serve in the guards, but he takes no grain from the royal granary, nor does he accept any pay in cash. He fulfills his duty prudently in an expert manner. We don’t know what his intentions and desires are.”

The king summoned Nāgārjuna and asked him, “Who are you?”

He replied, “I am a man of perfect wisdom.”

Greatly surprised, the king said, “A man of perfect wisdom appears in the world only very rarely. What is the proof of your self-assessment?”

Nāgārjuna said, “If you wish to know the truth of what I have said, you may put a question to test me.”

The king thought in his mind, “As I am a lord of wisdom, a great debater, it would not add anything to my fame even if I won in the inquiry. But if I were to fail, it would be no small matter. If I do not ask him a question, it would mean that I have been defeated by him right away.” Having hesitated for a long while, the king had no choice but to ask, “What are the *devas* doing now?”

Nāgārjuna replied, “They are fighting with the *asuras*.”

Upon hearing this answer, the king was like a man choking on a piece of food, unable to swallow or spit out what is in his mouth. He could not deny what Nāgārjuna had said, as he could not produce any evidence to counter it, nor could he set forth any reason to admit Nāgārjuna’s assertion.

Before the king could say anything, Nāgārjuna again remarked, “What I have said is not a fiction fabricated to win a

debate. Wait a moment, Your Majesty. There will soon be proof of my words.”

As soon as these words had been spoken, shields, partisans, and other weapons fell down from the sky, one after another. The king said, “Although shields, partisans, lances, and halberds are tools of war, how can you be sure that they were being used by the *devas* and *asuras* engaged in fighting?”

Nāgārjuna said, “Explanations of empty words are not as good as proof of facts.” When he had said this, severed fingers and toes along with ears and noses of *asuras* rained down from the air. He also made the king, his ministers and subjects, and the brahmans clearly see the warring parties fighting in the air.

Then the king paid homage to Nāgārjuna and accepted his teaching. The countless brahmans in the audience hall also shaved off their tufts of hair and received full ordination.

There was a Hinayana teacher who always felt resentful and jealous. When Nāgārjuna was about to leave this world, he asked the Hinayana teacher, “Would you like me to stay in this world for a long time?” The teacher replied, “Certainly not!”

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Nāgārjuna then retired to a secluded chamber and did not come out for an entire day. His disciples broke down the door and found that he had discarded his corporeal body as a cicada exuviates its cocoon and departed from this world. It has been one hundred years since he passed away. In the various states of Southern India, temples were erected in his honor, just as the Buddha was venerated.

His mother gave birth to him under an *arjuna* tree, so he was named Arjuna. And because the *nāga* helped him achieve the Dharma, the word *nāga* was prefixed to his name. Hence he was called Nāgārjuna. (According to the *Record of the Origin of Transmitting the Dharma-piṭaka*, he was the thirteenth patriarch. With the help of an elixir, he lived a long life of over two hundred years in order to sustain the Buddha-Dharma. As mentioned in the *Record*, he taught innumerable people.)





*End of The Life of Nāgārjuna Bodhistattva*

**Biography of Dharma Master  
Vasubandhu**

Translated from the Chinese of Paramārtha  
(Taishō Volume 50, Number 2049)

by

Albert A. Dalia



## Translator's Introduction

The *Biography of Dharma Master Vasubandhu* (Chinese: *P'o shu p'an t'ou fa-shih chuan*), Taishō 2049, is credited to the Chen dynasty (557–589 C.E.) Indian Tripiṭaka and Dharma Master Paramārtha (Chinese: Chen-ti; 499–569 C.E.). Paramārtha was from a brahman family in western India and is considered to be the most important Indian translator in southern China during the Southern Dynasties period (520–589 C.E.). He arrived in Canton in 546 and was welcomed in the Liang dynasty (502–557) capital of Nanjing by Emperor Wu-ti two years later.

Paramārtha's life in China covered a period of dynastic transition in southern China. It was an era marked by tremendous social and intellectual upheaval. As new social and religious forces played important roles in establishing the Chen dynasty, Paramārtha's most significant translations introduced the writings of the Vijñānavāda/Yogācāra ("Idealist" or "Consciousness Only"/"Yoga Practice") school of Indian Buddhism into China.

The historical dates of Vasubandhu, a central figure in the development of Indian Vijñānavāda thought, have been the focus of much controversy. In general, most scholars designate either the fourth or fifth century as the period of Vasubandhu's life. Most recently the evidence is being interpreted to favor the fifth century. Even when narrowed down to the fifth century, two sets of dates have been proposed: either 400–480 C.E. or 420–500 C.E. Recent Japanese scholarship seems to favor the former dates.

If the fifth-century dates are accepted for Vasubandhu, then the transmission of his works and the biography by Parāmartha represented fairly recent developments in Indian Buddhism. Vasubandhu's writings had an important impact on the Chinese

Buddhist Ti-lun and Pure Land teachings. Moreover, his *Abhidharmakośa* was a treasure for the Mahayana schools, as it systemized older Buddhist theories for them to draw on or to criticize.

Vasubandhu's greatest influence on Chinese Buddhism, however, was through his Vijñānavāda/Yogācāra writings. One of the most important schools of Chinese Buddhism, the Chan (Japanese: Zen) school, which arose during the Tang dynasty (618–906 C.E.), was heavily influenced by Vijñānavāda thought. Moreover, in the second decade of the twentieth century, when Buddhism was being revitalized in China, Vijñānavāda doctrines were at the forefront of the intellectual debate between science and religion. From its introduction in the sixth century to the present day, Vijñānavāda thought has had a significant influence on Chinese intellectual history.

Paramārtha's biography of Vasubandhu introduced the great Indian Buddhist master into the Chinese Buddhist tradition. In later periods, Vasubandhu was raised to the status of a bodhisattva because of the respect he engendered among the Chinese. This biography also provides information on the development of Indian Buddhism during a crucial juncture in its history.

The text is written in a style that is fairly typical of Buddhist biographical writing in China during Paramārtha's lifetime. There has been some speculation that the text was not actually written by Paramārtha but memorized and later recited by him in China and that the written record was compiled by his disciples. The Southern Dynasties period in China was a time when popular interest was piqued by the extraordinary, the mysterious, and the magical. This preoccupation with the fantastic colored much of intellectual life of this period, and Buddhism was a prime source of such interest. Thus it is not unusual to find Chinese Buddhist biographical writing from this period filled with incredible stories. Paramārtha's biography of Vasubandhu is no exception; it is recorded with the same sense of the extraordinary that marks the rest of Southern Dynasties literature.

Aside from treating the unusual as commonplace, the biography informs us that Vasubandhu was born in Peshawar in Gandhara (Gandhāra), India. He was the second of three brothers, among whom was another outstanding Mahayana Buddhist theoretician, Asaṅga. According to the biography, Vasubandhu's older brother Asaṅga persuaded him to turn his considerable talents to the development of Mahayana Buddhism.

In following Vasubandhu's career from one doctrinal confrontation to another, the reader will note the great emphasis that Indian Buddhism of this period placed on exegesis and the formal rules of logic and grammar. These arts were also passed on to the Chinese during the Southern Dynasties period and continued to develop along Chinese lines.

The biography concludes with Vasubandhu's death at the age of eighty in Ayodhyā.



**BIOGRAPHY OF DHARMA-MASTER  
VASUBANDHU**

Translated from Sanskrit into Chinese by  
Paramārtha, Tripiṭaka Master (557–598),  
Chen-ti of the Chen Dynasty





Dharma Master Vasubandhu was a native of Puruṣapura, a country in Northern India. “*Puruṣa*” means “hero” and “*pura*” means “land.”

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The genealogy of the *deva* Viṣṇu records that Śakra, the King of Heaven, had a younger brother named Viṣṇu. Śakra sent him to be king of Jambudvīpa to suppress *asuras*. The *deva* Viṣṇu was thus born in Jambudvīpa as the son of King Vasudeva.

There was an *asura* named Indradamana. “Indra” is Śakra’s name and “*damana*” means “to suppress.” This *asura* was often in battle with Śakra, and had that name in order to claim that he was able to defeat Śakra.

The *Vyākaraṇa-sāstra* explains the word “*asura*” (“evil pleasure”) by saying that evil is pleasure for them, therefore this name is used to describe them. Now, all the *devas* take pleasure in doing good, but *asuras* always enjoy evil, so they have this name. They may also be called “non-gods.”

This *asura* had a younger sister named Prabhāvatī. “*Prabhā*” means “bright” and “*vati*” means “courtesan.” This woman was very attractive. Because the *deva* wanted to destroy the *deva* Viṣṇu, he plotted to use his sister to deceive the *deva*. By means of sorcery, he darkened a place in Jambudvīpa and stayed there, allowing no one to see him.

He ordered his sister to stay in a bright place, saying to her, “If any man desires to take you for his wife, you should say to him, ‘My brother is a great fighter. If you desire to take me for your wife, you must contest with my brother. But if you are able to fight him, then we can be married.’”

Later the *deva* Viṣṇu saw the woman at that bright place. His heart took great delight in this, and he asked, “Who are you?”

She answered, “I am an *asura* virgin.”

The *deva* said, “All *asura* women usually marry *devas*. Since I am without a wife and you are also without a husband, I wish to marry you now. Do I have your consent?”

The woman answered according to her brother’s previous instructions. The *deva* said, “You now care what becomes of me

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and for this reason you speak these words. You already love me. How can I ignore that? I have great strength and am able to fight your brother.”

The woman then consented and they became husband and wife. Later the *asura* went to the bright place. He asked the *deva* Viṣṇu: “You must explain why you abruptly took my younger sister to be your wife.”

The *deva* answered, “If I were not a hero, I would deserve blame for taking your sister to be my wife. But I am a hero without a wife, and your sister is a virgin without a husband. It is just for this reason that I have chosen her. Why do you take offense?”

The *asura* said, “What ability do you have that you claim to be a hero? If you are a hero, you will be able to fight me and win. Then I will let my sister marry you.”

The *deva* responded, “If you do not believe me, then let us resolve this.”

Then they both grasped weapons and began cutting and stabbing each other.

The *deva* Viṣṇu had the Nārāyaṇa body, so cutting and stabbing could not affect him. The *deva* cut off the *asura*’s head, but the head came back again. He cut off other parts of his body, but each time the severed part returned to the *asura*’s body and, unharmed, reattached itself. From morning until evening they cut and stabbed without rest, but the *asura* showed no signs of dying and the *deva*’s strength was lessening. If they were to go on fighting into the night, the *asura*’s strength would become even greater.

Prabhāvatī, fearing that her husband was not the equal of her brother, picked a blue lotus flower, tore it, and threw each half to opposite sides. Prabhāvatī ran back and forth between the two halves. The *deva* then understood what she meant and grasped the *asura*’s body, tore it in two, and threw each half to opposite sides. The *deva* then ran back and forth between them. As a result of this, the *asura* died.

The *asura* had previously gone to an immortal and begged for a boon, saying, “I wish that if my body is cut into pieces, these pieces shall return to their places and be restored.”

The immortal had granted the *asura* this boon, and so from then on, if he was cut or stabbed, he did not lose his life. However, the immortal had wished to ensure that the *deva* would kill the *asura*, so he had not given the *asura* the boon of regaining his life should his body be cut into two separate halves. This, then, caused his death.

The *deva* Viṣṇu showed his heroism in that region. Therefore, because of all this, the name “Land of the Hero” was established there.

This land had a “national master,” a brahman whose family name was Kauśika. He had three sons, all with the same name, Vasubandhu. “*Vasu*” means “heaven” and “*bandhu*” means “kin.” This was the custom in India for naming sons: they were all given the same name, with additional names given to distinguish one from another.

The youngest Vasubandhu left home life to join the Sarvāstivādins and attained the fruit of arhatship. His other name was Viriñcivatsa. “*Viriñci*” was his mother’s surname and “*vatsa*” means “child” or “son.” This kind of name could be applied to humans or animals; thus, a calf could be called a “*vatsa*,” whereas [in China] a calf is called a “*t’u*.”

The eldest Vasubandhu was a person with the basic nature of a bodhisattva. He also left home to join the Sarvāstivādins. Later, by practicing meditation, he attained freedom from desire. He then contemplated the meaning of *sūnyatā*, but was not able to gain insight into it. He wanted to kill himself. While in *samādhi* the arhat Piṇḍola saw this situation and came from his region in East Videha to explain the Hinayana meditation on *sūnyatā* [to Vasubandhu]. By meditating in accordance with what the arhat taught him, the eldest Vasubandhu at once gained insight into it.

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Although [the elder Vasubandhu] had attained the meditation on *śūnyatā* of the Hinayana vehicle, his mind was still not at peace. He thought, “The truth should not end here.” Because of the extraordinary powers of that vehicle, he went to the Tuṣita Heaven. There he inquired of the Bodhisattva Maitreya, who explained the Mahayana meditation on *śūnyatā* to him. Returning to Jambudvīpa, he meditated as he had been taught and at once attained enlightenment. At the time of his contemplation, the earth moved with six kinds of vibrations. Because of his attainment of the Mahayana meditation on *śūnyatā*, he adopted the name Asaṅga. “*Asaṅga*” means “without attachment.”

Asaṅga then went up to the Tuṣita Heaven several times, questioning Maitreya about the meaning of the Mahayana sutras. Maitreya extensively explained them. Asaṅga returned to Jambudvīpa to explain it to the others, according to what he had achieved. But many of those who heard [these teachings] did not give rise to faith. Asaṅga then made a vow: “I now wish to cause all sentient beings to have faith in the Mahayana doctrine. I pray that the great teacher will come down to Jambudvīpa to explain the Mahayana and cause all sentient beings to attain complete faith in and understanding of the doctrine.”

Just as Asaṅga had prayed for, Maitreya then came down at night to Jambudvīpa, emitted a bright light, and gathered a great assembly of all those who had affinity with him. At the Dharma hall, Maitreya recited the *Sutra of the Seventeen Bhūmis* (stages) (*Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra*). After reciting a portion, he expounded on its meaning.

It took the nights of four months for Maitreya to finish expounding the *Sutra of the Seventeen Bhūmis*. Although all the people were together in the same hall listening to the Dharma, only Dharma Master Asaṅga could get close to the Bodhisattva Maitreya. The others listened only from a distance. So at night they all listened to Maitreya teach the Dharma, and during the day Dharma Master Asaṅga explained to the people what Maitreya

had expounded. Because of this, all the people heard and believed in the Mahayana taught by the Bodhisattva Maitreya.

Dharma Master Asaṅga practiced the sunlight *samādhi*. He practiced and studied as it had been explained to him, and he then attained this *samādhi*. After he attained this *samādhi*, what he could not previously understand became completely clear. All that he had seen and heard was forever borne in his mind, without forgetting. He understood the meaning of the *Avataṃsaka* and of all the other Mahayana sutras the Buddha had spoken in the past. Maitreya, in the Tuṣita Heaven, explained the meaning of all the Mahayana sutras to Dharma Master Asaṅga, who was able to penetrate the Dharma and recall all of it. Later, in Jambudvīpa, Dharma Master Asaṅga wrote commentaries on many great Mahayana sutras, explaining all the Mahayana teachings that the Buddha had spoken.

The second Vasubandhu also left home to join the Sarvāstivādins. He studied widely and learned much. He mastered all the ancient literature. His spiritual ability was refined and bright, without equal. His self-discipline was pure and lofty, difficult to match. Since his brothers had other names, this Dharma master was called simply Vasubandhu.

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In the five hundred years after the Buddha's nirvana, there lived an arhat whose name was Kātyāyanīputra. His mother's surname was Kātyāyanī and he was named after her. He had previously left home [to follow] the Sarvāstivādins. Originally an Indian, he later traveled to the country of Kāśmīra in northwestern India.

An assembly of five hundred arhats and five hundred bodhisattvas, working together with Kātyāyanīputra, compiled the Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma (commentary). It was arranged in the eight *granthas*. "*Grantha*" means "knot" or "section," to indicate that different kinds of concepts are interrelated. Also it gathers the concepts and prevents them from scattering; this is why it is said to be a "knot." Each kind of concept, however, has a definite

limit; this is why it is called a “section.” This composition is also hailed as the *Discourse to Unfold Wisdom* (*Jñānaprasthāna*).

By means of extraordinary powers and the power of the vows, [the compilers] extensively proclaimed far and near, “If any of you have previously heard the Abhidharma spoken (by the Buddha), then tell what you have retained, be it great or small.” This invitation enabled the *devas*, *nāgas*, and *yakṣas*, including the *devas* of the Akaniṣṭha Heaven, to come. All submitted the Abhidharma they had heard from the Buddha, whether it was brief, elaborate, or only one sentence or one *gāthā* (verse). From these, Kātyāyanīputra, together with all the arhats and all the bodhisattvas, then selected which concepts to include. If a concept did not contradict the sutras and the Vinaya, they selected it and inscribed it. If a concept was contradictory, they rejected it. They then compiled these materials and grouped them according to the concepts. For example, if a passage clarified the concept of wisdom, it was placed in the wisdom *grantha*. If it clarified the concept of *samādhi*, it was placed in the *samādhi grantha*. All the rest were categorized in the same way.

The complete eight *granthas* had fifty thousand *gāthās*. After completion of the eight *granthas*, they wished to prepare a *Vibhāṣā* to provide interpretation.

Bodhisattva Aśvaghōṣa, of Sāketa in the country of Śrāvastī, thoroughly understood the eight divisions of the *Vyākaraṇa*, the four Vedas and the *Six Discourses* upon them, and the Tripiṭakas of the eighteen [Hinayana Buddhist] schools. His writings were well regarded in all the colleges, and [his deportment] was considered as in perfect accordance with the Vinaya. All others emulated him.

Kātyāyanīputra sent a messenger to Śrāvastī, inviting Aśvaghōṣa to clarify the literary expression [of the *Vibhāṣā*]. When Aśvaghōṣa arrived in Kaśmīra, Kātyāyanīputra explained the eight *granthas* in succession. Together with all the arhats and bodhisattvas, they thoroughly examined and discussed the mean-

ings. Once the meanings of the concepts were determined, Aśvaghōṣa wrote it all down. It took twelve years to complete the preparations for the *Vibhāṣā*. It consisted of one million *gāthās*. “*Vibhāṣā*” means “extensive explanation.”

When the work was finished, Kātyāyanīputra set up a stone inscription, which read, “From now on, no one who has studied this work shall be allowed to leave the country of Kaśmīra. As for the eight *granthas* and the *Vibhāṣā*, it is likewise forbidden to take these compositions out of this country.” They were afraid that the other schools and the Mahayana would corrupt the true Dharma. They reported the establishment of this proclamation to the king, which the king approved.

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The country of Kaśmīra was surrounded by mountains on all four sides like a fortress. There was only one gate from which to enter or leave. The sages then, by the power of their vows, gathered all the *yakṣas* and had them guard the gate. All those who desired to learn this Dharma would have no problem entering the region of Kaśmīra. The sages also, by the power of their vows, made five hundred *yakṣas* become almsgivers, so that those who studied this Dharma had all their personal needs attended to and lacked nothing.

The country of Ayodhyā had a Dharma master named Vaśasubhadra. He was intelligent and had great knowledge; he was able to grasp anything he heard. He wanted to study the concepts of the eight *granthas* and the *Vibhāṣā* and to spread them to other countries.

Dharma Master Vaśasubhadra took on the appearance of a foolish madman and went to Kaśmīra. He regularly attended the great assembly to listen to the Dharma. He refrained from dignified deportment, speaking and laughing in a bizarre way. Sometimes in the assembly, while discussing the concepts of the *Vibhāṣā*, he would then inquire about the biography of the *Rāmāyana*. All the people treated him lightly and neither noted nor respected him when they heard him speak.

In twelve years [Vaśasubhadra] had heard the *Vibhāṣā* several times and was already well acquainted with the literature's meaning, reciting it all in his mind. Wishing to return to his native land, he went to the gate of the city. All the *yakṣa* spirits sang in a high voice, "A great Abhidharma Master now wishes to leave the country." Then they seized him and returned him to the assembly. The crowd examined and questioned him, but his speech was confused and they could not communicate with him. The crowd denounced him as a madman and chased him away.

Later Dharma Master Vaśasubhadra once again went to the gate, and all the spirits again sang the same command and pulled him back. Consequently the king of the country heard of the matter. He ordered the great assembly to examine and question [Vaśasubhadra] again. The crowd repeatedly did so, but, as previously, they could not communicate with him. The Dharma master went [to the gate] a third time, and again he was brought back. On the fourth attempt, although all the spirits escorted him back, the crowd did not examine and question him again and they ordered all the *yakṣas* to chase him out of the country.

When the Dharma master reached his native land, he proclaimed to places far and near that all might hear and know: "I have already studied and grasped the complete meaning of Kaśmīra's *Vibhāṣā* literature. All those who are able to study it can come quickly to acquire it." Then the people assembled at that place from the four directions like gathering clouds.

Dharma Master Vaśasubhadra was already in his declining years. He was afraid that he might not be able to finish transmitting that Dharma, so he urgently ordered all his disciples to learn it quickly and to record it as soon as he preached it. He was able to accomplish his work in time. When the masters in Kaśmīra heard that this Dharma had already spread to other regions, they all sighed and lamented.

During the period about nine hundred years after the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*, there was a heterodox master named Vindhya-vāsa. "Vindhya" is the name of a mountain. "Vāsa" means "to dwell."



The heretic dwelled on this mountain, and so he was named thus.

There was a *nāga* king named Vārṣagaṇya who lived in a pond below Mount Vindhya. The *nāga* king understood thoroughly the *Sāṃkhya-śāstra*. The heretic knew that the *nāga* king had a good understanding and wished to study under him. The *nāga* king manifested himself in the form of an immortal and dwelled in a leaf hut. The heretic went to him there and expressed his desire to study with him. The *nāga* king assented.

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The heretic plucked flowers and put them in a large basket. He carried the flower basket on his head and went to the *nāga* king's place. Each time he circled the *nāga* king, he tossed a flower as an offering, and as he threw it he composed a *gāthā* of praise. When the *nāga* king heard [a verse], he instantly refuted the meaning set out in the *gāthā* and then picked up the offered flower and threw it out. Immediately the heretic bestowed another meaning on the *gāthā* and threw the flower back to the *nāga* king. In this way he threw in the entire basket of flowers and set forth the meaning of all the *gāthās* [that had been refuted by the *nāga* king].

The *nāga* king admired his intelligence and agreed to expound the *Sāṃkhya-śāstra* for him. He said to the heretic, "After you have finished receiving the treatise, be careful not to make changes to it." The *nāga* king said this because he feared the heretic might be superior to him.

As the heretic received the treatise he simultaneously made selections [from it]. He changed those places that were not in proper order or where the language was not skillful or the meaning not clear.

When the *nāga* king had completed his explanation of the whole treatise, the heretic's composition was also finished, and he then presented his composition to the *nāga* king. When the *nāga* king saw that it was superior to the original, he became angry and jealous. He said to the heretic, "At the beginning I ordered you not to make changes to my treatise. How could you make changes? I ought to forbid the dissemination of what you have written."

The heretic replied, “Master, originally you ordered me not to make changes after the treatise was finished. You did not order me not to make changes during the delivery of the treatise. I have not disobeyed the master’s instructions. Why should you rebuke me? Now I request that the master grant me this boon: that this treatise shall not be destroyed as long as my body is not decayed.” [The *nāga* king] assented.

After the heterodox master received the treatise, his mind became very haughty, cruel, and arrogant. He thought that these teachings were the greatest, that nothing could surpass them. “Only Śākyamuni’s Dharma flourishes in this world, and all sentient beings say his Dharma is great. I must destroy it.”

Then he entered the country of Ayodhyā, beat the debating drum with his head, and announced, “I wish to have a debate with someone. If I lose, then my head should be cut off. If [my challenger] loses, then he ought to pay with his head.”

The king of the country was Vikramāditya, whose name means “Rightly Enforcing Sun.” When the king heard of this, he summoned the heterodox master to question him. The heretic said, “The king is the country’s ruler; toward the *śramaṇa* and the brahman his mind is without partiality. If there are some who cultivate a teaching, you ought to examine if it is true or false. I now wish [for you] to decide if the disciples of Śākyamuni are superior or inferior. We must swear an oath on our heads.” The king listened and granted his permission.

The king sent people to ask all the Dharma masters within the country, “Who is able to equal this heterodox master? If there is anyone who can equal him, he may debate him.” At that time, Dharma Master Manoratha, Dharma Master Vasubandhu, and all those great Dharma masters had gone to other countries and were not there. “Manoratha” means “mind vow.” Only Dharma Master Buddhmitra, the teacher of Dharma Master Vasubandhu, was in the country. “Buddhamitra” means “akin to *bodhi*.” This Dharma master, although once a great expounder, was already aged. His spirit was weak and his debating skills were in decline.

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Dharma Master [Buddhamitra] said, “My Dharma’s great leaders have all gone to foreign regions. The heretic is strong and arrogant and I should not leave him be. It is right that I should handle this matter myself.”

The Dharma master then told the king of this. The king set a date and gathered a great assembly in the debating hall. He ordered the heterodox master and Dharma Master Buddhamitra to debate. The heretic asked, “*Śramaṇa*, do you want to set forth a concept? Or do you wish to refute one?”

Dharma Master [Buddhamitra] answered, “I am like the great sea, there is nothing it cannot contain. You are like a lump of earth that has been thrown into the sea and has sunk. So do as you like.”

The heretic replied, “The *śramaṇa* can set forth a concept and then I will refute you.”

The Dharma master set forth the concept of impermanence, saying, “All worldly phenomena are extinguished instantly. Why is this so? The reason is that a moment later they cannot be seen.” He used all types of principles to establish this statement.

As soon as the heretic heard this, he could recite all of it out loud. The heretic destroyed each principle one by one. He commanded the Dharma master to recite what he had heard. Dharma Master Buddhamitra recited but could not get [the meaning]. The heretic then told the Dharma master to redeem his own statements, and the Dharma master could not succeed in redeeming them, either. Dharma Master Buddhamitra thereby lost. The heretic said, “You are of the brahman caste, and I am also of the brahman caste; we are not permitted to kill. So you must flog your back to make it clear that I am superior.” This was consequently done.

The king awarded three *lakṣas* of gold to the heterodox master. The heterodox master took the gold and gave it to every person within the country. He returned to Mount Vindhya and entered a stone cave. By means of magical powers, he summoned a female *yakṣa* spirit named Dense Forest. From this female spirit he begged a boon: “I wish that after I die, my body shall change to rock and shall never be destroyed.” The female spirit promised him [the

boon]. He himself used a stone to seal the cave; within it he gave up his life and his body became a rock. [He did this] because of his vow in which he had begged a boon from his master, the *nāga* king, “So long as my body has not decayed, the *Sāṃkhya* treatise which I have set forth will also not be destroyed.” Therefore this treatise is still extant to the present day.

Vasubandhu later returned. Hearing of the matter, he sighed in remorse and anger that he had not met the heretic to subdue and humble his arrogance, so as to wipe out [his own] teacher’s shame. But the heretic’s body had already become stone. Heaven’s Kin (Vasubandhu) became even more angry and melancholy. He then composed the *Paramārthasaptati* to destroy the *Sāṃkhya* treatise created by the heretic. From top to bottom, like roof tiles collapsing, not one sentence was able to remain standing.

190b All the other heretics felt deep grief, as if their own lives were destroyed. Although Vasubandhu did not find their master, his doctrine was already totally destroyed; there was nothing for its branches to rely on. To wipe out a disgrace, this affair was settled. The people all heard of this and were joyful. The king used three *lakṣas* of gold to reward Dharma Master [Vasubandhu]. The Dharma master divided this gold into three parts. In the country of Ayodhyā he raised three monasteries: a nunnery, a Sarvāstivādin monastery, and a Mahayana monastery.

Thereafter, Dharma Master Vasubandhu set forth even more strongly the right Dharma. Having already thoroughly comprehended the concepts of the *Vibhāṣā*, he then, for the benefit of all people, expounded on the concepts of the *Vibhāṣā*. He would expound for a day and then compose one *gāthā* summarizing the concepts he had spoken on during the day. He engraved the *gāthā* on a bronze plate, then hung it on the head of a drunken elephant, striking a drum and commanding, “Who is able to refute this *gāthā*’s meaning? The one who is able to refute it should immediately come forward.” In this way, one after another, he composed six hundred or so consecutive *gāthās*, gathering together the concepts of the *Vibhāṣā*.

He summarized them all one by one, and consequently no one was able to refute them. [These *gāthās* form] the verse section of the *Abhidharmakośa*.

After the *gāthās* were completed, [Vasubandhu] took fifty catties of gold together with the *gāthās* and delivered them to all the *Vibhāṣā* masters in Kaśmīra. What they saw and heard greatly delighted them. They said, “Our correct Dharma has already been broadly proclaimed.” But the *gāthās*’ language was subtle and profound; it could not be completely understood. So they added another fifty catties of gold to the previous fifty to make a hundred catties of gold. They presented this to Dharma Master Vasubandhu, asking him to explain in prose the meaning of the *gāthās*. The Dharma master then wrote a prose text to explain the *gāthās*, in which he established all the concepts of the Sarvāstivādins. For [those sections] he thought were improper, he used sutra division concepts to refute them. The text was named the *Abhidharmakośa-śāstra*. After this *śāstra* was complete, he sent it to the masters of Kaśmīra, who saw that [the text destroyed] some of the interpretations held by them. They became worried and bitter.

Vikramāditya’s crown prince was named Bālāditya. “*Bāla*” means “new” and “*āditya*” means “sun.” The king had originally ordered the crown prince to go to Dharma Master [Vasubandhu] to receive the Vinaya. The king’s wife left the home life and also became the Dharma master’s disciple. The crown prince later became the king. Mother and son together invited the Dharma master to dwell in the country of Ayodhyā and receive their support. Dharma Master Vasubandhu accepted [the invitation].

The brother-in-law of King New Sun [Bālāditya] was a brahman priest named Vasurata. This heretic master could understand the *Vyākaraṇa-śāstra*. When Vasubandhu created the *Kośa-śāstra*, this heretic tried to refute it by using the concepts of the *Vyākaraṇa-śāstra*, saying that the words and sentences set forth by Dharma Master [Vasubandhu] contradicted the concepts of the *Vyākaraṇa-śāstra*. The heretic asked the Dharma master to defend

the *Kośa*. If he failed, it would be destroyed. Dharma Master Vasubandhu replied, “If I didn’t understand the *Vyākaraṇa-śāstra*, how could I understand the profound teaching?”

Then Dharma Master [Vasubandhu] created a *śāstra* to refute the concepts of the *Vyākaraṇa-śāstra*. From beginning to end, all thirty-two sections [of the *Vyākaraṇa-śāstra*] were destroyed. The *Vyākaraṇa-śāstra* was therefore lost; only [Vasubandhu’s] *Abhidharmakośa-śāstra* still exists.

190c The king offered one *lakṣa* of gold to the Dharma master, and the king’s mother offered him two *lakṣas* of gold. Dharma Master Vasubandhu divided the gold into three parts. He built a monastery in each [of the countries of] the Land of the Hero, Kāśmīra, and Ayodhyā.

The heretic became ashamed and angry and wished to suppress Dharma Master [Vasubandhu]. He sent a man to India to ask Dharma Master Saṅghabhadra to come to Ayodhyā and compose a treatise to refute the *Kośa-śāstra*. Dharma Master [Saṅghabhadra] came and composed two treatises. One was the *Samaya of Light* (*Samayapradīpikā*) treatise, which had ten thousand *gāthās*. It set forth the concepts of the *Vibhāṣā* only. “*Samaya*” means “groups of concepts.” The second treatise was called *Following the Truth* (*Nyāyānusāra*), and it had one hundred twenty thousand *gāthās*. It upheld the *Vibhāṣā* and refuted the *Kośa-śāstra*. After he finished the treatises, he called Heaven’s Kin (Vasubandhu) to have a face-to-face debate to decide the matter.

Heaven’s Kin knew that although [Saṅghabhadra] had refuted the *Kośa-śāstra*, he could not destroy it. So he declined the face-to-face debate, saying, “I am now old, so do as you wish. I formerly composed my treatise to refute the concepts of the *Vibhāṣā*. I did not ask to have a face-to-face debate to decide the matter. You have now composed your treatises; why should you call on me? A wise person should know which is right and which is wrong.”

Dharma Master [Vasubandhu] was already thoroughly versed in the concepts of the eighteen [Hinayana] schools, and he had a

marvelous understanding of the Hinayana vehicle. He held fast to the Hinayana and did not believe in the Mahayana, saying that the Mahayana had not been spoken by the Buddha.

Dharma Master Asaṅga already saw that his brother's intelligence surpassed that of others. His knowledge was profound and extensive. He was well versed in Buddhist and other principles. [Asaṅga] feared [Vasubandhu] would compose a treatise that would discredit the Mahayana.

Dharma Master Asaṅga, who was living in the Land of the Hero, sent a messenger to Ayodhyā to tell Vasubandhu: "I am now seriously ill. It is urgent that you come."

Heaven's Kin (Vasubandhu) immediately returned to his native land with the messenger. He saw his older brother and inquired about the cause of his illness. His brother replied, "My heart has a serious illness. It is because of you [that this illness] arose."

Heaven's Kin asked, "How? Give me the reason."

His brother said, "You do not believe in the Mahayana and you are always attacking it and speaking ill of it. Because of these bad actions, you will be forever lost in evil realms. I am grieved and troubled. I will not survive for long."

When Heaven's Kin heard this he was horrified and alarmed. He then asked his brother to expound the Mahayana. His brother explained briefly the essential concepts of the Mahayana. Dharma Master [Vasubandhu] possessed clear intelligence and deep insight, so he immediately comprehended that the Mahayana principles surpassed those of the Hinayana. He then studied the whole of the Mahayana concepts with his brother, and later understood the matter as [Asaṅga] did. [Vasubandhu] thoroughly attained the whole of [the Mahayana] and understood its meaning clearly. He meditated on it from beginning to end, and his meditation reflected the truth as it should be. Nothing was contradictory.

For the first time [Vasubandhu] was convinced that the Hinayana was inferior and the Mahayana superior. If there were no Mahayana there could be no fruit of the *triyāna* (three vehicles)

way. Because he had formerly done evil by speaking ill of the Mahayana and did not believe in it, [Vasubandhu] was afraid that due to this evil conduct he would fall into an evil realm. He deeply reproached himself and desired to repent of his former errors.

He went to his brother's residence. He stated his ignorance and said that he now wished to confess his former mistakes but did not know by what means to gain pardon. [Vasubandhu] said, "Because of my tongue I formerly [gave rise to] slander. Now  
191a I should cut out my tongue to atone for this offense."

[Asaṅga] said, "You may have your tongue cut out a thousand times, but you still will not be able to eradicate this offense. If you really wish to eradicate your misdeeds, you ought to find other means."

Dharma Master [Vasubandhu] then asked his brother to explain a method for eradicating his offense. His brother said, "You skillfully used your tongue to defame the Mahayana. If you desire to eradicate this offense, then you ought to skillfully [use it] to expound the Mahayana."

After the death of Dharma Master Asaṅga, Heaven's Kin (Vasubandhu) then started to write *sāstras* expounding Mahayana sutras such as the *Avataṃsaka*, the *Nirvana*, the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka*, the *Prajñāpāramitā*, the *Vimalakīrti[nirdeśa]*, and the *Śrīmalā[devī]siṃhanāda*. These Mahayana *sāstras* were all written by Dharma Master [Vasubandhu]. He also wrote the *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi* and composed commentaries for Mahayana *sāstras* such as the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha*, the *Nature of the Ratnatraya (Buddhagotra-sāstra)*, and the *Door of Nectar (Sukhāvativyūha)*.

The ideas and literary work in all his compositions are excellent and subtle. All those who read or hear them can do nothing but have faith and seek [the Mahayana]. For this reason, all those studying the Mahayana and the Hinayana in India and in the borderlands use what Dharma Master [Vasubandhu] wrote as the basis of their study. There is not any teacher of a heretical sect of



any other Dharma master who, upon hearing Dharma Master Vasubandhu's name, would not be in awe and submit.

[Vasubandhu] died in the land of Ayodhyā at the age of eighty. Although his life was of this world, his true nature is difficult to comprehend.

End of the *Biography of Dharma Master Vasubandhu*



# **Biographies of Buddhist Nuns**

Translated from the Chinese of Baochang  
(Taishō Volume 50, Number 2063)

by

Li Rongxi



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## Translator's Introduction

Baochang's *Bi-qiu-ni zhuan*, or *Biographies of Buddhist Nuns*, is the only compilation of biographies of Chinese Buddhist nuns (*bhikṣuṇīs*) collected in one volume. The text consists of narratives about sixty-five nuns, starting with Jingjian and ending with Faxuan, and spanning two hundred and three years, from 313 to 516 C.E. This was during the Six Dynasties period (222–589), a time when Buddhism had firmly taken root in Chinese soil and was being disseminated widely among the Chinese people.

Influenced by the teachings of Buddhism, female devotees whose piety was equal to that of their male counterparts began to emerge. These devout women wished to engage themselves exclusively in the practice of Buddhism as homeless almswomen. This was a natural development as Buddhism spread in China. To become a nun in the Buddhist tradition, however, had never been an easy undertaking.

The Buddha denounced unequal social systems, particularly the age-old caste system of India. If not in a position to abolish the caste system in society as a whole, he consistently preached and acted against it within the scope of his ministry. The Buddha declared that the nobility or crudeness of a person was not determined by birth but by deeds, and he opened the door of his monastic order to any man, regardless of his original caste. All were welcomed as members of the sangha (monastic community), and enjoyed equal rights and status therein.

Women, however, were not given the same privilege of taking refuge in the Buddha. The Buddha did not overlook the importance of women in society, and indeed praised them profusely on many occasions. And in fact female lay devotees played no small part in propagating the Buddha's teachings in his time, not only by

implementing the teachings but also through substantial material support of the order of monks.

According to the literature the Buddha was initially quite reluctant to grant permission to women to join the sangha. A number of texts, dating from around the first century C.E., contain the dire prediction that the presence of women in the sangha would shorten the existence of Buddhism in the world by five hundred years.

The Buddha's aunt and foster mother, Mahāprajāpatī, like many other female members of the royal family, was converted to the new faith by the force of the Buddha's personality and the profundity of his new teachings. But when she requested permission to join his sangha, he refused. Ānanda, the Buddha's cousin and one of his chief disciples, intervened and appealed repeatedly on behalf of the royal lady. Only then did the Buddha finally give his consent for women to join the order.

However, he did so on the condition that they abide by the Eight Points of Deference. This was a set of special rules for female monastics, in addition to the regular disciplinary rules they were required to observe, which were more stringent and numerous than those required of their male counterparts in the order. The women who insisted on joining the sangha thus showed true and unshrinking determination.

The Eight Points stipulated that (1) a nun, even though a hundred years old, must stand up on seeing a Buddhist monk (*bhikṣu*), however young or newly ordained, and salute him after preparing a seat for him; (2) she must never scold or slander a monk; (3) she must not accuse a monk of faults or speak of his misdeeds, though he may speak of hers; (4) a female novice (*sikṣamāṇā*), having learned *sīla* (moral precepts), must receive full ordination from monks; (5) if she commits an offense in the *saṃghāvaśeṣa* category (grave offenses that are punishable by temporary excommunication), a nun must make an open confession in the presence of the twofold sangha (consisting of both monks and nuns) at the fortnightly meeting; (6) a nun must ask a monk to be her preceptor

once every fortnight; (7) a nun must not spend the summer retreat in the same place as the monks; and (8) after the conclusion of the summer retreat, she must go to the monks to seek a confessor.

Regardless of the restrictive nature of these extra rules, Mahā-prajāpati was overjoyed to accept them. She became the first Buddhist nun in the fourteenth year after the Buddha's enlightenment.

During the reign of King Aśoka (r. ca. 265–238 B.C.E. or ca. 273–232 B.C.E.), the nuns' order, the *bhikṣuṇī* sangha, was transmitted from India to Sri Lanka by his son Mahendra Thera and his daughter Saṃghamitrā Therī. Sent by Aśoka to propagate Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Mahendra successfully fulfilled his mission by converting King Devānaṃpiya Tissa (247–207 B.C.E.) to the new faith and establishing the *bhikṣu* sangha in Sri Lanka.

Princess Anulā, a niece of the Sinhalese king, also desired to join the order. Word was sent to Pāṭaliputra to dispatch competent nuns to Sri Lanka to ordain the princess and her retinue of royal ladies. This was necessary because the Vinaya (monastic rules) stipulated that monks alone, without the participation of nuns, could not ordain novitiates as nuns. As a result of this invitation, Saṃghamitrā and enough other qualified nuns to constitute a quorum were sent to Sri Lanka to ordain Princess Anulā. She became the country's first nun, and the nuns' order was thus established there.

In the mid-fifth century C.E., the Sri Lankan *bhikṣuṇī* sangha was transmitted to China. The nuns' sangha is still extant in China at the present time, though it no longer exists in the country of its origin. There were Buddhist nuns in China before the arrival of the Sinhalese nuns in 429 C.E., but they were not considered fully ordained as they had not received dual *upasampadā* (higher ordination) from both the monks' and nuns' sanghas, as required by the Vinaya.

As seen in this text, Jingjian was the first Chinese woman to devote herself to religious life. She received the ten precepts from a monk named Jñānagiri sometime before 317 C.E., when he

returned to Kaśmīra. However, at this stage of her career, Jingjian is regarded not as a nun but as a “*daśaśīla* observer,” an observer of the ten precepts. Having received the ten precepts did not make her a *śrāmaṇerikā* (properly ordained female novice).

During the Xian-kang period (335–342) of the Jin dynasty (265–420), the Chinese monk Sengjian obtained a copy of the *Mahāsāṃghika-bhikṣuṇī-karman*, together with its *Prātimokṣa* (rules for gaining emancipation), from the kingdom of the Yuezhi people. These texts were translated into Chinese in the first year of Sheng-ping (357). With the aid of these Vinaya texts, a foreign monk, Dharmagupta, built an altar for the full ordination of Chinese nuns. However, the Chinese monk Daochang objected to the ordination ceremony, on the grounds that it was not in conformity with the rules laid down in the *Śīlanidāna-sūtra*.

So it was that Jingjian and three other Chinese women received full ordination as nuns from a group of monks in a ceremony conducted aboard a boat on the Si River. (This event is reminiscent of Sri Lankan custom; even today ordination ceremonies are often performed on a boat anchored in the Kelaniya River, in front of the Kelaniya Temple in the vicinity of Colombo.) This was the only means through which the women could receive ordination at that time, because there were no proper *bhikṣuṇīs* to complete the requirements for a dual ordination ceremony. These requirements were satisfied only when the Sinhalese nuns arrived in China in 429 C.E., and, in particular, by the second group of eleven Sinhalese nuns headed by Therī Devasārā, which arrived in the Chinese capital in 433 C.E.

Devasārā and her group of Sinhalese nuns established the first true *bhikṣuṇī* order in China, through a formal dual ceremony of ordination performed in cooperation with the monks. This important event in the history of Buddhism is not only related in Chinese Buddhist works such as this *Biographies of Buddhist Nuns* and other historical writings, but is also formally recorded in authentic Chinese histories in clear and unequivocal language.

If Jingjian, the first Chinese woman to receive full ordination from monks alone, cannot be considered a proper nun, then the nun Sengguo, ordained in the tenth year of Yuan-jia (433) by a group of monks headed by Saṃghavarman from India and the group of nuns headed by Devasārā from Sri Lanka, was beyond doubt the first recipient of the valid lineage of the *bhikṣuṇī* sangha in China.

Baochang, the writer of this work, was a well-known Buddhist monk-scholar. He was of peasant descent and became a monk at the age of eighteen under the tutorship of the Vinaya master Sengyou (444–518) of Jian-chu Monastery. There he studied Buddhist texts as well as Confucian and Taoist philosophical works, and he became a versatile scholar.

As a biographer, he is credited, besides the present text, with the *Biographies of Famous Monks* (in thirty-one fascicles). An accomplished cataloguer, he revised Sengsao's *Catalogue of Buddhist Texts of the Hua-lin Garden* and compiled his own *New Catalogue of Chinese Buddhist Texts* (generally known as "Baochang's Catalogue," in four fascicles). With the monk Sengmin of Zhuang-yan Monastery, he compiled the *Jing-lü-yi-xiang* (*Classified Excerpts from the Sutra and Vinaya Piṭakas*) in fifty fascicles. He also took part in the translation work undertaken by Saṃghapāla, a monk from Fu-nan (Cambodia), who rendered a number of Sanskrit texts into Chinese, including the *Vimokṣamārga* in twelve fascicles.

Baochang's contribution through his literary efforts to the dissemination of Buddhism in China earned him a record in a separate section of *Biographies of Eminent Monks*, compiled by Daoxuan of the Tang dynasty, in which details of his career are described.



# **BIOGRAPHIES OF BUDDHIST NUNS**

by Shi Baochang of the  
Great Zhuang-yan Monastery





## Fascicle One

### Baochang's Preface

The mind of purity, lofty aspiration, unusual conduct, and exceptional morality is not only the embodiment of human nature, but also serves as a high standard of virtue to encourage those who are striving to reach the summit of moral integrity. Thus it is said that one who endeavors to emulate the sage Yan Hui is a person in the same category as the sage, just as a horse that aspires to be a thoroughbred is itself a good stallion.

934b8

That is why the good reputations of persons with sublime morality and brilliant character have never ceased to transmit their fragrance from the past. Writers record their words for future generations to read, and historians and biographers write down their deeds to educate future generations. Therefore, it seems impossible to forget their words, even if one were to try to do so.

In the past, when the Great Enlightened One was born in Kapilavastu and the Sun of the Buddha shone over Jambudvīpa, all beings of the three realms took refuge in him and all creatures of the four forms of birth adored him with respect. The tradition of Buddhist nuns had its origin in Mahāprajāpatī. There have been nuns in successive generations who have either attained the various stages of the bodhisattva vehicle or gained the fruit of arhatship. Their names are listed in the *Dharma-piṭaka* as conspicuously as the sun traveling across the sky.

Since the Buddha dissolved his shadow at Kuśinagara and ended his footsteps between the twin *śāla* trees, time has passed incessantly, year after year. There has been degeneration and disorder. Faith and slander have become mixed up, and both faithful followers and slanderers appear and vanish from the world. Due to disturbances caused by unworthy persons, the abstruse teaching sank into oblivion after having been popular for a time. The revival

of the true Dharma after its downfall was the result of the advocacy of wise and sagacious people.

After the Dharma of the Semblance Period had spread to the East, Jingjian became the first nun in China. For several hundred years in succession, nuns of great virtue emerged one after the other, such as Shanmiao and Jinggui, who practiced asceticism very strictly, and Fabian and Sengguo, who fully realized the subtlety of meditation. Sengduan and Sengji had the determination to be truthful and resolute in their faith, and the good reputations of Miaoxiang and Faquan reached far and wide.

Such persons appeared without interruption. Being deep in knowledge and of high virtue, they were persons of actualization, resembling a complete piece of music commencing with the tingling of the bell and ending with the chiming of the ringing jade. They were indeed the mainstay in the Period of Decadence, and belonged to the four types of persons (i.e., monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen) to be depended upon in the time of degeneration.

With the passage of time, the pure disciplinary rules have become somewhat inaccessible, but the virtuous deeds of these nuns will be models for people for a thousand years to come. Yet their deeds and the events of their lives had not been collected and committed to paper in the form of a book, and I have felt regret at this for many years. I started writing the present work by widely collecting eulogistic compositions inscribed on slabs and making an extensive search for notes and records. I made inquiries of erudite scholars and visited elderly people for information.

I have written full accounts of the lives of sixty-five persons who lived from the Sheng-ping period (357–361) of the Jin dynasty, up to the Tian-jian period (502–519) of the Liang dynasty. In my writing I did not aim at making superfluous embellishments, but tried my best to preserve the essential facts, so that those who desire to gain emancipation may strive to attain to the same level of morality as these virtuous persons. As I am a poor hand at writing and my knowledge is limited, there may be omissions and oversights in my work. It is my hope that learned scholars will supply any missing information.

## 1. Jingjian of Bamboo Grove Nunnery in the Jin Dynasty

Jingjian was a native of Peng-cheng. Her original surname was Chong, and her personal name was Lingyi. Her father, Dan, served as governor of Wu-wei Prefecture.

Since childhood, Jingjian loved learning. She became a widow early in life. As her family was poor, she often taught children of noble families to play the Chinese zither and to read and write. When she listened to the Dharma, she had faith in it with a feeling of joy, but there was no one from whom she could seek advice and instruction.

She later met the *śramaṇa* Fashi, who was well learned in the Buddhist scriptures. He had established a monastery at the western gate of the palace city during the Jian-xing period (313–316) of the Jin dynasty. Jingjian paid him a visit. When the monk preached the Dharma to her she became awakened. Thinking that she should try to acquire the benefit of the Dharma while she was still of sound mind and health, she borrowed some Buddhist texts from [Fashi]. By reading these texts she came to understand the gist of Buddhism.

One day she said to Fashi, “As it is mentioned in the scriptures that there are monks and nuns, I wish to be ordained as a nun.”

Fashi said, “In the Western Region there are male and female sanghas, but in this land instruction about the sangha is incomplete.”

Jingjian then said, “Since they are said to be monks and nuns (*bhikṣus* and *bhikṣuṇīs*), how can there be any difference in their instructions?”

Fashi said, “The foreigners said that the nuns have to observe five hundred disciplinary rules, and that must be the difference. But I will make an inquiry about it to the preceptor (*upādhyāya*).”

The preceptor said, “The disciplinary rules for nuns are generally the same [as those for monks], with only minor differences. They cannot be transmitted without a proper procedure. A female

novice (*śrāmaṇerikā*), however, may receive the ten precepts from a monk; but without a preceptress (*upādhyāyī*), she would have nobody to depend on in her religious life.”

Jingjian then shaved her head and received the ten precepts from the preceptor. Twenty-four ladies followed her example. They constructed the Bamboo Grove Nunnery at the western gate of the palace city. These female novices had no preceptress, so they sought advice from Jingjian, who was competent to help them accomplish deeds of virtue.

Jingjian’s preceptor was the *śramaṇa* Jñānagiri, a native of the country of Kaśmīra in the Western Region. He was an intelligent man with a lenient and amiable nature, and was expert in meditation and the recitation of Buddhist scriptures. He came to China at the end of the Yong-jia period (307–312) of the Jin dynasty, and lived by begging alms. Whatever he said was for the propagation of the Way, but the people of the time were so shallow in their faith that they did not ask him for instruction. In the first year of the Jian-wu period (317) [of the Jin dynasty], he returned to Kaśmīra. Later, when Buddhatuṅga came to China and related Jñānagiri’s virtuous deeds, the people regretted that they had not studied under him.

Jingjian took in disciples and supported a group of nuns. She was moderate and elegant in manner and had an upright character. Her sermons were instructive and persuasive, like wind bending the grass beneath it.

During the Xian-kang period of the Jin dynasty, Śramaṇa Sengjian obtained from the country of the Yuezhi the *Mahā-saṃghika-bhikṣuṇī-karman* and the *Prātimokṣa*. These texts were translated into Chinese on the eighth day of the second month in the first year of the Sheng-ping period (357) at Luo-yang. The foreign *śramaṇa* Dharmagupta was asked to erect an ordination platform, but the Chinese *śramaṇa* Shi Daochang raised the objection, on the basis of the *Śīlanidāna-sūtra*, that the platform was not properly erected according to the Dharma.

So a boat was launched on the Si River, and Jingjian, together with three other ladies, went up to the floating platform and received full ordination as nuns from a group of monks. Jingjian thus became the first nun in the land of China.

On the day of the ordination, everyone present noticed an unusual fragrance. They admired it and marveled at it, and respected Jingjian all the more. She observed the Vinaya rules strictly and never ceased in pursuing her studies. Although she received many offerings from devotees, she distributed them to others the moment she received them. She always looked after the welfare of others before she would consider herself.

935a

At the end of the Sheng-ping period, the same fragrance was again noticed and simultaneously a red vapor was seen as a lady holding flowers of different colors descended from the air. Delighted at the sight, Jingjian said to her fellow nuns, "Look after yourselves well in the future. I am leaving you now." After saying farewell to them, grasping their hands in hers, she ascended into the air. The path she traveled on looked like a rainbow stretching up to the sky. She was then seventy years old.

## **2. An Lingshou of Jian-xian Nunnery in the Spurious Zhao Dynasty**

An Lingshou, originally surnamed Xu, was a native of Dong-guan. Her father, named Chong, served as Commander of External Troops at the court of the insurgent Zhao (319–352).

When she was young, Lingshou was intelligent and fond of learning. Her talk was elegant and refined. She was of a tranquil and desireless nature, taking no delight in worldly affairs. Quiet and leisurely in manner, she took pleasure in the study of Buddhism and did not wish to be married.

Her father said, "You should be married. How can you be as you are now?"

Lingshou said, "I fix my mind on the way of karma, and I am always thinking of the supermundane life. Neither blame nor

praise can change my mind, and I am self-sufficient in honesty and uprightness. Why must I conform to the morality of the Three Obediences before I may be considered [worthy] to keep the ethical vows (precepts)?”

Her father said, “If you wish to gain benefit for yourself alone, how can you serve your parents at the same time?”

Lingshou said, “It is precisely for the purpose of saving all people and, needless to say, my parents, that I wish to engage myself in the practice of the Way.”

Chong consulted Buddhataṅga about the matter. Buddhataṅga said to him, “Go back home and keep a pure fast for three days, and then come again.” Chong obeyed him.

Buddhataṅga mixed some red paste with sesame oil, rubbed it into the palm of Chong’s right hand, and asked him to look at it. He saw a Buddhist monk with features resembling his daughter’s preaching the Dharma to a great assembly. He described this to Buddhataṅga, who said, “That was your daughter’s previous incarnation: she was a monk working for the benefit of others. Such was her former life. If you comply with her wish, she will bring glory and exaltation to all the six relations of your family and make you rich and noble; and she may reach the other shore across the great sea of the suffering of rebirth.”

After returning home, Chong granted his permission to Lingshou. She then cut off her hair and received ordination from both Buddhataṅga and the *bhikṣuṇī* Jingjian, after which she founded Jian-xian Nunnery. Buddhataṅga gave her one piece of a seven-striped robe made of cut-flower patches, presented to him by Shi Le (r. 319–333), together with a bathing jar in the shape of an elephant’s trunk.

Lingshou read various texts extensively and could recite whatever she read. Her thought was profound, and her spiritual influence reached far and wide. All the Buddhist devotees of the time respected her. More than two hundred persons renounced home life under her influence, and thus five more nunneries were

constructed. The devotees were not daunted by hard, painstaking work, and all of them made spiritual achievements.

Shi Hu (r. 334–349), out of respect to Lingshou, promoted her father, Chong, to the post of Palace Attendant and also to Governor of Qing-he Prefecture.

### **3. Zhixian of the Western Nunnery in Si-zhou**

Zhixian, originally surnamed Zhao, was a native of Chang-shan. Her father, named Zhen, served as magistrate of Fu-liu County.

Since her childhood, Zhixian was refined in behavior and chaste in character. She donned the religious robe and perfectly observed the disciplinary rules with a spirit of rectitude and profundity, never cherishing any impure thought in her magnanimous mind.

The governor Du Ba, a devout believer in Taoism, hated the Buddhists. He wanted to diminish the number of Buddhist monks and nuns living in the monasteries and nunneries under his jurisdiction by putting them through an examination at a fixed date. The standard of the test was set so high that no ordinary person could possibly pass it. The young monks and nuns were so frightened that they fled in fear. Zhixian alone had no fear and lived with composure in her nunnery as usual.

935b

On the day of the examination, all those assembled at the Archers' Hall outside the city were elderly people. Among the nuns, Zhixian was the only person who was in the prime of life. Du Ba first put some questions to Zhixian and found that she was well above the standard of the test. She was elegant in appearance and spoke in a polished and eloquent manner. Du Ba harbored evil intentions and forced Zhixian to stay alone with him. Having sensed his ill purpose, Zhixian vowed not to violate the disciplinary rules and resisted the governor with harsh words at the risk of her life. Du Ba became furious and struck her with a knife, inflicting more than twenty wounds on her body. She fainted and fell to the ground. When Du Ba had gone away, she recovered consciousness.

Since then Zhixian practiced Buddhism more strenuously and lived an austere life, taking only vegetarian food. She had over a hundred disciples, who were always in perfect harmony with her, like water mixed with milk.

When Fu Jian illegitimately established himself as ruler (in 331), he heard of Zhixian's fame and showed great respect for her. He had an embroidered brocade robe made for her. It took three years to complete the needlework, which was worth a million coins. Afterward she lived at the Western Nunnery in Si-zhou, propagating the right Dharma and spreading faith in and the practice of Buddhism.

During the Tai-he period (366–370), when Zhixian was over seventy years old, she still recited the *Saddharmapuṇḍarika-sūtra* once every day and night. At her living quarters many birds used to perch on the trees and whenever she took a walk in the open, they always followed her, chirping and singing.

#### **4. Miaoxiang of North Mountain in Hong-nong**

Miaoxiang, originally surnamed Zhang with the personal name of Peihua, was a native of Hong-nong. Her father, Mao, had a rich and prosperous family.

Miaoxiang studied the classics at an early age, and when she was fifteen she was married to Huangfu Kui of Bei-di, who was a palace attendant to the crown prince. Huangfu Kui committed a breach of propriety during his mourning period, and because of this Miaoxiang scorned him and asked to end their marriage. She also asked permission to renounce home and enter religious life. Her father consented to both of her requests. She led a strenuous and diligent life and lived as a vegetarian.

Miaoxiang concentrated her mind on learning the texts of wisdom and acquired a clear understanding of the characteristics of the Dharma. She lived on North Mountain in Hong-nong, where a forest faced a wild plain. With her many disciples, she took delight



in leading a leisurely and carefree life. She stayed for more than twenty years at this secluded place, practicing asceticism more and more earnestly as time went on. Whenever she preached the Dharma to the people, she often feared that the listeners would not concentrate their attention; she would exhort them even with tears. Therefore, her instructions always brought great benefit to her audience.

In the Yong-he period (345–356) of the Jin dynasty, the governor of Hong-nong invited her to attend a religious ceremony for seven days. A layman in the assembly asked some questions about Buddhism in an impolite way. Miaoxiang said to the man, with a stern look, “You are not only being arrogant toward me, but you are also showing disrespect to an official of the state. How can you be so imprudent as to misbehave in a public congregation?” Then the man withdrew from the assembly on the excuse of illness. All the clergy and laypeople praised her.

Some time later she was laid up by sickness for some days. On her deathbed she said with serenity to her disciples, “Whoever is born is bound to die, no matter whether he is poor or rich. I am leaving you today.” After saying this, Miaoxiang passed away.

## 5. Kang Minggan of Jian-fu Nunnery

Minggan, originally surnamed Zhu, was a native of Gao-ping. Her family traditionally professed the great Dharma. 935c

She was once captured by an intruder, one of an invading enemy tribe, who intended to make her his wife. In spite of the torture inflicted on her, she was determined not to yield to the insult. Thus she was deported to serve as a shepherdess. After ten years, her desire to return home became more and more strong, but she did not know the way homeward. She always meditated on the Triple Gem (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) and wished to renounce secular life.

Then she encountered a monk, from whom she received the five precepts. The monk also gave her a copy of the *Avalokiteś-*

*vara-sūtra*, which she studied and recited day and night without pause. Minggan wished to construct a five-storied pagoda on her return home, so she fled eastward though in great fear [at traveling alone]. At first she did not know the way, but she continued to go forward day and night. She came to a mountain where she saw a tiger a few paces away from her. She was frightened at the sight of the animal, but regained her composure a moment later. Her wishes were to be fulfilled.

Minggan followed the tiger. After traveling for ten days, she reached Qing-zhou. When she was about to enter a village, the tiger disappeared. At Qing-zhou, she was again captured by Ming Bolian. When news of this reached her home, her husband and son came and retrieved her.

Her family, however, denied Minggan's will and did not allow her to practice asceticism. Only after three years of a hard life of devotion could she engage wholeheartedly in the practice of meditation. She observed the Vinaya rules without blemish. Whenever she committed a minor offense, she would make a confession for a whole morning and would not stop until she had experienced an auspicious sign, such as seeing flowers raining down from the sky, hearing a voice in the air, witnessing a vision of the Buddha, or having a good dream at night.

In her old age, Minggan was even more strict in her conduct. The women north of the Yangzi River respected her as their teacher and took refuge in her.

In the spring of the fourth year of the Yong-he period (348) in the Jin dynasty, Minggan crossed the river with ten people, including Huizhan, to see He Chong, the Lord in Charge of Public Works. He showed respect for her at their first meeting. As there was no nunnery in the capital at that time, He Chong offered his private villa as a location for a nunnery. He asked Minggan what it should be named.

Minggan replied, "Now the four groups of Buddhist followers are all present for the first time in the capital of the great Jin dynasty. What you, the donors, have performed is really a deed of

blessedness. It may be named Jian-fu (Performing Blessedness) Nunnery.” The lord agreed to her suggestion.

Later she fell ill and passed away shortly after.

## 6. Tanbei of Northern Yong-an Nunnery

Tanbei, originally surnamed Tao, was a native of Jian-kang in Dan-yang.

When she was young she had pure faith and wished to practice the true Dharma. Having neither an elder nor younger brother, she lived alone with her mother, whom she served with respect and filial piety. For this she won the commendation of her clansmen. When Tanbei reached marriageable age, she refused to accept any betrothal gifts. Her mother could not act against her wishes and allowed her to renounce secular life. After that she observed the Vinaya rules strictly day and night without negligence.

Emperor Mu (r. 345–362) of the Jin dynasty honored her with deep respect. He often praised her, saying that the more one looked at her, the more pleasant she appeared. He said to Empress Zhang, (born He), “Few nuns in the capital are comparable to Tanbei.”

In the tenth year of Yong-he (354), the empress constructed a nunnery for Tanbei in the Ding-yin Area and named it Yong-an Nunnery (now known as Empress He’s Nunnery).

Tanbei taught the people in a modest and unassuming way and never showed any sign of pride or arrogance. Her fame spread widely day by day, and a group of three hundred persons flocked to her from far and near. In the twenty-first year of Tai-yuan (396), she died at the age of seventy-three.

936a

Her disciple, Tanluo, was witty, wise, and scrupulous and she was well read in the scriptures and Vinaya texts. She was ordered by imperial decree to succeed to the duties of her teacher, Tanbei. In addition to the original houses, Tanluo constructed a four-storied pagoda, a lecture hall, and some other buildings of the nunnery. She also made an image of the reclining Buddha and built a shrine hall for the worship of the seven Buddhas.

## **7. Huizhan of Jian-fu Nunnery**

Huizhan, originally surnamed Hou, was a native of Peng-cheng. She was a person of noble deportment, carried herself with dignity, and was unusually meticulous in her behavior. She had profound thoughts and a magnanimous spirit and regarded saving others as her bound duty. She was a vegetarian and wore plain garments, and she was happy leading a simple life.

Once Huizhan was traveling in a mountainous region, carrying some robes with her, when she encountered a group of bandits. They intended to strike her with their knives, but their hands failed them. Then they asked Huizhan to give them the robes she was carrying with her. She smiled merrily and said to them, "You gentlemen expected much more, but you have actually gotten so little!" So she also untied her new skirt under her robe and gave it to the bandits. But the bandits declined the offer with thanks and returned the robes to Huizhan. She traveled on, leaving the robes behind.

In the second year of Jian-yuan (344) of the Jin dynasty, Huizhan was ferried across the Yangzi River, and was greatly honored by He Chong, the Lord in Charge of Public Works, who invited her to live at Jian-fu Nunnery.

## **8. Sengji of Yan-xing Nunnery**

Sengji, originally surnamed Ming, was a native of Ji-nan. When she was young, at the age of tying up her hair, she fixed her mind upon the Way and intended to renounce the world. But her mother did not allow her to do so and secretly betrothed Sengji. The man's engagement gifts were hidden away from her. She got wind of the affair only when the date of the marriage ceremony was near. She then began to fast, not taking even a drop of water. All her relatives begged her to take food, but she would not change her mind.

On the seventh day her mother called in the bridegroom, who was a devout person. Seeing that his bride-to-be was near death,

he said to Sengji's mother, "Every person has his or her own aspirations, and nobody has the right to suppress them."

Thereupon, her mother gave her consent and Sengji renounced the world at the age of twenty-one. All her relatives, from both the paternal and maternal sides of the family, came to pay tribute to her. They vied with one another in presenting precious and beautiful gifts as well as offering delicious food to her. The governor of the district sent musicians for the occasion, and the magistrate of the prefecture attended the function in person. All the clergy and laypeople remarked with admiration that this was an unheard-of event.

Sengji observed the disciplinary rules with purity and studied the scriptures and Vinaya texts well. Her fame and status were almost the same as that of the nun Tanbei. She was very close to central authority and was expert in deliberating public affairs. For this the Emperor Kang honored her highly.

In the second year of Jian-yuan (344), [Empress Kang], (born Chu), built for Sengji the Yan-xing Nunnery at Tong-gong Lane outside the gate of the city wall of the capital. Sengji lived in this nunnery with over a hundred disciples. In managing the affairs of the nunnery, she was just and fair and won the respect of both the clergy and laypeople. She passed away in the first year of Long-an (397), at the age of sixty-eight.

## **9. Daoxing of the Eastern Nunnery in Luo-yang**

Zhu Daoxing, originally surnamed Yang, was a native of Tai-shan. She was faithful and prudent person, and was never argumentative with others. When she was a novice priestess she always recited Buddhist scriptures while she served the residents of the nunnery. At the age of twenty, she could recite the *Saddharmapuṇḍarika-sūtra*, the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra*, and other scriptures.

936b

After receiving full ordination, Daoxing undertook profound studies to acquire the principles and the wisdom-flavor of the

teachings of Buddhism. She was a vegetarian and led an ascetic life, which became more and more austere as her age advanced. She lived in the Eastern Nunnery in Luo-yang and was good at theoretical discussion. She was particularly well versed in the smaller version of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*. Daoxing valued the understanding of the teachings and would not engage in rhetorical argument. All the Buddhist students of the whole prefecture regarded her as their teacher. She was the first priestess and lecturer on Buddhist scriptures in China.

During the Tai-he period of the Jin dynasty there was a woman by the name of Yang Lingbian who had faith in Taoism and practiced exclusively the art of deep breathing. At first she also had quite a number of people following her with respect. But when Daoxing's way became popular, Yang Lingbian's art ceased to attract people and it passed out of existence.

On the pretext that they both belonged to the same clan, Yang Lingbian got acquainted with Daoxing, and they exchanged visits frequently. But the woman actually bore a grudge against the nun and waited for a chance to poison her. Later, she secretly put a toxic substance in Daoxing's food that caused the nun to suffer from an incurable illness. Daoxing's disciples asked her to name the house where she got the sickness. She said in reply, "I know the person well. But all this is due to my own karma from the past, so you need not make any inquiries. Even if it could do me any good, I would not tell you, and in any case it is of no use to do so."

Then she expired without revealing who had poisoned her.

## 10. Daorong of New Grove Nunnery

Daorong, a native of Li-yang, lived at Wu-jiang Nunnery. She was strict and rigorous in observing the Vinaya rules and was good at the art of divination, knowing beforehand fortune and misfortune. People alleged that she was a holy person. Emperor Ming (r. 323–326) of the Jin dynasty highly respected her. Once he placed

some flowers under her mat to test whether she was a saint or an ordinary person. In truth, the flowers did not wilt.

Before ascending the throne, Emperor Jianwen (r. 371–372) served his teacher, the Taoist master of Qing-shui. This master was known in the capital by the name of Wang Puyang, and a Taoist temple was built for him in the royal residence. Daorong tried her best to edify the emperor-to-be, but he would not listen to her. Later, whenever the maids-of-honor entered the Taoist temple, they always saw that the hall was full of celestial beings in the form of Buddhist monks. The emperor-to-be suspected that this was done by Daorong, but he was not sure of it.

After Emperor Jianwen ascended the throne, some crows made a nest at the Tai-ji Palace, and he ordered Qu Anyuan to make a divination about the event with the milfoil. The diviner said that a woman teacher in the southwest could remove this abnormality. The emperor sent a messenger to invite Daorong from Wu-jiang Nunnery and discussed the matter with her.

Daorong said, “The only thing to do is to fast and observe the eight precepts for seven days. Then the abnormality will vanish by itself.” The emperor listened to her advice and lived an austere life with a concentrated mind. In less than seven days, the crows gathered together and carried the nest away.

Thereafter, the emperor deeply believed in Daorong with respect and constructed a nunnery for her, providing her with all the daily requisites. Because it was in a forest, the nunnery was named Xin-lin (New Grove) Nunnery. He then served her with the proprieties due to a teacher and professed the right Dharma. It was through Daorong’s efforts that the Way of the Buddha was glorified during the Jin dynasty.

At the time of Emperor Xiaowu [of the Jin dynasty] (r. 373–396), Daorong was all the more honored and respected. During the Tai-yuan period (376–396) she suddenly disappeared, and nobody knew where she had gone. The emperor ordered that her robes and almsbowl be entombed, and that was why a grave stood beside the nunnery.

## 11. Lingzong of the Western Nunnery in Si-zhou

936c

Lingzong, originally surnamed Man, was a native of Jin-xiang in Gao-ping. Since her childhood, she had pure faith and was praised by the people of her native place. Her family encountered calamity and misfortune, and she was captured by some invaders. She called on the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha and recited the “Chapter on the Universal Gate” [of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarika-sūtra*] with the utmost sincerity. In order to plead for her release, she plucked out her eyebrows, pretending to be ill with a noxious disease. Thus she was set free.

Lingzong followed the road to return south. When she had gone out of Ji-zhou, she was again pursued by a group of bandits. She climbed a tree in the wood and meditated with a concentrated mind. Her pursuers only looked ahead and did not raise their eyes to look above, so they failed to find her and soon dispersed.

Lingzong came down from the tree and proceeded on her way, but she dared not go begging for food. At first she did not feel hungry. She arrived at Meng Ford in the evening, but there was no boat to ferry her across. In a state of fear and anxiety, she again called on the Triple Gem. Suddenly she saw a white deer coming from out of nowhere. It went down and waded across the stream, raising a cloud of sand and dust without a splash or waves. Lingzong followed the deer and crossed the stream, just as if she were walking on dry land, without getting wet. In this way she was able to reach her home.

Lingzong again entered the religious life to undertake a profound study of Buddhism with an absorbed mind. She learned and practiced the Way diligently with an earnest mind and read the scriptures extensively. She comprehended their deep meaning and grasped the essence of the Dharma.

Upon hearing her name, Emperor Xiaowu of the Jin dynasty sent her a letter to convey his respects. Later, the people suffered from disease and many became impoverished. Lingzong used all



her available resources to relieve their suffering and spared no effort in collecting donations from the public no matter the distance [she had to travel] or the obstacles [she encountered]. She aided those who needed support. A large number of people received assistance and relied upon her, while she herself endured hunger and toiled hard. Her body became emaciated.

One morning when she was seventy-five, Lingzong suddenly summoned her disciples and told them her dream of the previous night. In the dream she saw a huge mountain, Mount Sumeru, with lofty and extremely beautiful peaks that touched the sky and were adorned with precious ornaments shining as brilliantly as the sun. The drum of the Dharma sounded loudly, and the smoke of fragrant incense pervaded the air. When she was told to go forward, she was startled and awoke from her sleep. Then she suddenly had an unusual feeling. It was not painful, but it caused her to fall into a trance. Daojing, a fellow nun, remarked that [the land in the dream] must have been the Land of Bliss. As they were talking, Lingzong passed away suddenly.

## **12. Zhi Miaoyin of Jian-jing Nunnery**

Miaoyin, whose native place is unknown, had set her mind on the Way since her childhood. She lived in the capital and was well versed in both Buddhist and worldly learning. She was good at writing literary compositions. Emperor Xiaowu of the Jin dynasty, Premier Wang Dao of Kuai-ji, Meng Yi, and others all respected her. She often discussed the writing of literary compositions with the emperor as well as with the premier and other scholars at the court. Owing to her brilliant talent, she enjoyed a high reputation.

In the tenth year of Tai-yuan (385), the premier built the Jian-jing Nunnery for Miaoyin and appointed her abbess. She had a following of over a hundred disciples. All the talented and skillful composition writers from within and outside the court approached her to improve themselves. Thus she received a vast amount of offerings and gifts and became a person of enormous wealth in

the capital city. Both nobles and commoners served her with deference, and every day more than a hundred horses and carriages were parked at her gate.

937a When Wang Chen, the governor of Jing-zhou, died, Emperor Liezong (r. 396–398) intended to replace him with Wang Gong. Huan Xuan, who was at Jiang-ling and had suffered setbacks at the hands of Wang Chen, heard that Wang Gong, whom he had always feared, was coming to take the vacant post. Yin Zhongkan was then a student of Wang Gong, and Huan Xuan knew that he was weak in ability and easy to control; therefore Huan Xuan wished to have him fill the vacancy. He sent a messenger to ask Miaoyin to secure the governorship for Yin Zhongkan.

Before long Emperor Liezong asked Miaoyin, “Now that post at Jing-zhou is vacant, who should be appointed to fill it?”

Miaoyin said in reply, “As I am but a humble religious person, how can I allow myself to discuss such secular matters? But I have heard people both inside and outside the palace say that nobody is more competent than Yin Zhongkan. He is a scrupulous and thoughtful man, and both those qualities are needed in the regions of Jing and Chu.”

The emperor consented. Yin Zhongkan was appointed to fill the vacancy left by Wang Chen. In this manner, Miaoyin was influential in the whole court and exercised authority within and beyond the palace.

### 13. Daoyi of Empress He's Nunnery

Daoyi, originally surnamed Jia, was a native of Lou-fan in Yanmen and a paternal aunt of Huiyuan. She was married to Xie Zhi, a man of the same prefecture, who served as magistrate of Xunyang County and died at his post there.

Daoyi, who was then twenty-two years old, discarded all her worldly burdens and donned the religious robe. She was clever, intelligent, learned, and possessed a good memory. She recited the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* and lectured on the *Vimalakīrti-nird-*

*eśa-sūtra* and the smaller version of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*. She had an exceptional understanding of the subtle meanings and the wonderful doctrines. She was strict in observing the Vinaya rules, and her manners were sublime and dignified.

Having heard that the scriptures and Vinaya texts were gradually being translated in the capital, where preaching meetings were held continually, Daoyi went there at the end of the Tai-yuan period of the Jin dynasty. She stayed at Empress He's Nunnery. She engaged wholeheartedly in the study of the *Vinaya-piṭaka* and acquired full understanding of all of its details. She was always humble and polite and never idle, even when she was alone in seclusion. She wore coarse and inferior garments and carried her religious staff and almsbowl by herself. As she was simple and plain without affectation, both the clergy and laity held her in high esteem.

When she was seventy-eight years old, Daoyi fell seriously ill. But she remained deeply pious and never stopped her religious recitations. Her disciples said to her, "We hope that you will give us messages by which we can rectify our defects."

Daoyi replied, "It ill befits me to say anything." After saying this, she expired.

End of Fascicle One of *Biographies of Buddhist Nuns*



## Fascicle Two

### The Song Dynasty

#### 14. Huiguo of Jing-fu Nunnery

Huiguo, originally surnamed Pan, was a native of Huai-nan. She always practiced austerities and never wore thick clothing made of cotton. She paid special attention to the study of the Vinaya and observed the disciplinary rules with perfect purity. Because she was admired by both the clergy and laity, her good reputation spread far and wide.

937b18

Chuan Hongren of Bei-di, the governor of Qing-zhou in the Song dynasty (420–479), highly appreciated her nobility and provided her with rich sustenance. In the third year of Yong-chu (422) (*Baochang's note: Tanzong said it was in the seventh year of Yuan-jia [430], but Bhikṣuṇī Hong-an, the abbess of the nunnery, showed me the document for raising funds to build the nunnery, which bears the date of the third year of Yong-chu.*) the governor assigned the land to the east of his residence for the construction of a *vihāra* and named it Jing-fu Nunnery, with Huiguo as the director. Whatever donations or gifts she received were turned over to the sangha. The activities of the nunnery prospered; and all the residents, old and young, heartily admired her.

Guṇavarman, a Buddhist monk of the Western Region, arrived in the sixth year of Yuan-jia (429). Huiguo asked him, “The nuns of this land who have already received ordination did so without a previous example. If we trace [the nuns’ lineage] back to Mahā-prajāpatī, her case may certainly serve us as a good precedent. But is there any difference after her time?”

“No difference,” replied Guṇavarman.

Huiguo inquired again, “According to the text of the Vinaya, the preceptor who gives ordination under such circumstances is considered to have committed an offense. How can you say that there is no difference?”

The monk replied, “He is regarded as having committed an offense [only] if a female novice did not make preliminary studies of the Vinaya for two years before her ordination in a place where the nun’s sangha existed.”

Huiguo further asked, “It may be allowed because formerly there were no nuns in this country, but they were not absent in Jambudvīpa.”

937c The monk said, “According to the rules of the Vinaya, a quorum of ten monks is required for one to receive full ordination but, in a remote place, five persons may form a quorum to give ordination. This is because we must not do anything contrary to the rules at places where the required conditions are available.”

Huiguo asked again, “How many *li* away is considered a frontier place?”

The monk said, “A place more than a thousand *li* away and separated by mountains and sea is a frontier place.”

In the ninth year (432), Huiguo and her disciples Huiyi, Huikai, and others, five persons in all, received full ordination anew from Saṃghavarman. Huiguo observed the Vinaya rules with veneration and prudence, as if she were protecting her own head. She died in the tenth year of Yuan-jia (433). She was more than seventy years of age.

Huiguo’s disciple Huikai was also well known at the time for her moral integrity.

## 15. Fasheng of Jian-fu Nunnery

Fasheng, originally surnamed Nie, was a native of Qing-he. At the time of the uprising in the state of Zhao, her family fled to Jin-ling. In the fourteenth year of Yuan-jia (437), she renounced home and became a nun at Jian-fu Nunnery.

Being a person of talent and knowledge with intelligent comprehension, Fasheng behaved according to wise judgment. Living in the capital as a refugee in her old age, she always cherished the memory of her native home, even though the imperial capital was prosperous and peaceful. Only by making a profound study of the abstruse principles of religion was she able to dispel sorrow and forget about her advanced age. Then she received the bodhisattva precepts from the Venerable Ou of Dao-chang Monastery. During the day she undertook discriminative studies, and in the evenings she discussed and pondered over the doctrine.

After a number of years, Fasheng gradually became bright and cheerful in sentiment. Although she was getting old, she exceeded those who were in the prime of life. She always wished to be reborn in the Pure Land of Bliss, and told her fellow nuns, Tanjing and Tan'ai, "I engage in the practice of the Way with the intention of being born in the Western Pure Land."

On the twenty-seventh day of the ninth month in the sixteenth year (439), as Fasheng was worshipping the Buddha in the pagoda in the evening, she became afflicted by an illness which eventually turned out to be serious. At the first watch of the night of the last day in that month, when she was dozing in her bed, the Tathāgata descended from the air with two bodhisattvas, discussing the two vehicles. In an instant they came down, riding on fragrant flowers and clouds, with a large retinue to visit Fasheng in her sickbed. A light shone brilliantly and was seen by the whole nunnery. All the residents came to ask her what the light was, and she told them everything. As soon as she finished speaking, Fasheng passed away. She was seventy-two years old.

This was related by Zhang Bian of Wu Prefecture, governor of Yu-zhang, who always honored and respected the nun Fasheng.

## **16. Huiyu of Niu-mu Nunnery in Jiang-ling**

Huiyu, a native of Chang-an, was diligent in cultivating good deeds and well learned in both the scriptures and the Vinaya texts. She

often traveled to edify people and passed through various districts in the country. She would go whenever there was a chance, whether or not it was the cold or hot season. She journeyed to the regions of Jing and Chu in the south and stayed at Niu-mu Nunnery in Jiang-ling. She recited the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*, the *Śūraṅ-gama[-samādhi]-sūtra*, and other scriptures for ten days and gained the benefit of the Dharma. All the clergy and laity in the regions to the west of the state of Tan paid homage to her. She never stopped reading and studying the scriptures and commentaries.

938a

In the tenth month of the fourteenth year of Yuan-jia (437), Huiyu performed the seven-day self-mortification practice, vowing that through the sincere performance of this practice she would become enlightened and see the Buddha after she left her body. Also, she wished to see the Buddha's light within the seven-day [period of the rite]. At midnight on the fifth day, a spiritual ray glowed brilliantly in the woods to the east of the nunnery. She related this to the other residents, and all of them respected and admired her more heartily. Afterward the abbess Fahong built a meditation hall at the site where the ray had gleamed.

Formerly, when Huiyu was at Chang-an, she once saw a light of a reddish-white color at the monastery built by the imperial minister Xue. The light illumined the surrounding place and dimmed after ten days. Later, on the eighth day of the fourth month, a monk of Liu-chong Monastery discovered a one-foot-tall golden image of Maitreya at the place where the light had been seen.

## 17. Daoqiong of Jian-fu Nunnery

Daoqiong, originally surnamed Jiang, was a native of Dan-yang. She was already well read in the classics and history when she was a little more than ten years old. After receiving full ordination, she acquired a clear understanding of the Tripiṭaka and assiduously practiced asceticism. During the Tai-yuan period of the Jin dynasty, the empress admired Daoqiong's lofty behavior and, for the culti-



vation of meritorious deeds, [the empress] mostly depended on Jian-fu Nunnery. Wealthy and noble ladies vied with one another to associate with Daoqiong.

In the eighth year of Yuan-jia (431), Daoqiong made a large number of images that were enshrined in various places. Two golden images, complete with curtains and pedestals, were placed at Peng-cheng Nunnery; one processional image of Maitreya with a canopy and pearls was installed at Wa-guan Nunnery; two golden images with accessory banners and canopies were placed at Southern Jian-xing Nunnery; and an image [of the reclining Buddha] together with a shrine hall were constructed at Jian-fu Nunnery. She also made a processional image of Samantabhadra for which all of the oblatory utensils were fine and exquisite.

In the fifteenth year of Yuan-jia (438), Daoqiong made a golden image of Amitāyus. On the tenth day of the fourth month in that year, that image emitted a ray from between its eyebrows, shining brightly with a golden hue in the nunnery. The clergy and laypeople told one another about the event, and they all came to pay their respects. Upon seeing the divine radiance, all were happy and delighted.

With a legacy bequeathed by the late empress, Daoqiong extended the southern part of the nunnery and constructed more dormitories for the nuns.

## **18. Daoshou of Qi-huan Nunnery in Jiang-ling**

Daoshou, whose native place is unknown, was a person of peaceful and tranquil disposition. She was well known for her filial piety and deference. Since childhood she observed the five precepts and never violated any of the rules.

During the Yuan-jia period (424–453) her father died. Because of her excessive grief in mourning, she suffered from an ailment which caused her neither pain nor itching but reduced her to a jaundiced skeleton. For several years no treatment could cure her.

Then she made a vow that if she was cured of her disease, she would renounce home to become a nun. After making this vow she gradually recovered her health and so, in fulfilment of her vow, she left secular life and went to live at Qi-huan Nunnery.

Daoshou surpassed all others in leading a diligent and ascetic life and she recited the *Saddharmapuṇḍarika-sūtra* three thousand times. [When reciting the sutra] she often saw auspicious signs of light. At midnight of the seventh day of the ninth month in the sixteenth year of Yuan-jia (429), she witnessed a precious canopy suspended in the air over that sutra.

### 19. Shi Xuanzao of Tai-xuan-tai Nunnery in Wu Prefecture

938b Xuanzao, originally surnamed Lu and a native of Wu Prefecture, was the daughter of An Gou, though in the *Xuan-yan-ji* [his] name is given as An Xun. When she was over ten years old, she was afflicted with a serious disease. Despite all the good medicine she had taken, her condition worsened day by day.

At that time, Shi Faji of Tai-xuan-tai Nunnery told An Gou, “I am afraid her illness is caused by her own karma, and no medicine can cure it. According to Buddhist scriptures, those who are in pain and in an emergency may be saved if they take refuge in the Triple Gem, repent, and beg to be saved. If you and your daughter could discard incorrect practices and wash away defilements and impurities with your minds concentrated, she would be cured of her illness.”

An Gou accepted the advice and performed in his house the ceremony for worshiping Avalokiteśvara. With a pure mind and sincere intent, he and Xuanzao worshiped the bodhisattva with great devotion. In spite of her illness, Xuanzao prostrated herself at the shrine and kept her mind in uninterrupted concentration. After seven days she suddenly saw, in the first watch of the night, a golden statue about one foot high that caressed her three times from head to foot. Then she felt that her severe illness was cured in an instant. Since

she had personally experienced this supernatural sign, she begged to renounce secular life and went to live at Tai-xuan-tai Nunnery.

Xuanzao diligently recited the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*. For thirty-seven years, she lived as a strict vegetarian and constantly fixed her mind upon rebirth in the Tuṣita Heaven. In the sixteenth year of Yuan-jia (439) of the Song dynasty, she went to the capital to make copies of Buddhist scriptures. Where she went afterward is unknown.

## 20. Shi Huiqiong of Nan-an Nunnery

Huiqiong, originally surnamed Zhong, was a native of Guang-zhou. She devoted herself to the Way in a noble and unsullied manner and never tasted fish or meat. When she was nearly eighty, she was even more assiduous in performing religious deeds. She always wore ramie or hemp cloth and never used silk or floss silk. Besides taking charge of the nunnery, she engaged in preaching.

Originally Huiqiong lived at Nan-an Nunnery in Guang-ling. In the eighteenth year of Yuan-jia (441), Lady Wang, the mother of the heir apparent of the Prince of Jiang-xia of the Song dynasty, presented Huiqiong with a parcel of land on which she built a convent named Southern Yong-an Nunnery. Later, in the twenty-second year (445), Xiao Chengzhi of Lan-ling erected a stupa in a foreign style at the nunnery. In the fifteenth year of Yuan-jia (438), Huiqiong also constructed the Bodhi Nunnery, of which all the halls, shrines, and other buildings were grand and beautiful. She then went to live there and presented Southern Yong-an Nunnery to the Buddhist monk Huizhi.

In the twentieth year of Yuan-jia (443), while en route to Kuai-ji with Meng Yi, Huiqiong passed away at Po-kang. She had instructed her disciples, "After my death my body need not be buried. You may hire someone to cut it into pieces to feed to living creatures." But when she died, her disciples could not bear to carve up her remains. So they went to report the case to the magistrate of Ju-rong County, who ruled that the corpse should be carried to

the mountains to allow birds and animals to feed on it by themselves.

For more than ten days, the body remained as it was before and did not change its complexion. The magistrate asked the villagers to scatter some raw rice around the corpse. The birds ate up all the rice at some distance from the body, but the grains near it were left untouched. Upon hearing about this matter in the capital, Huiqiong's disciple Huilang rushed to the spot. She brought the remains back and buried them on the hill in front of Gao-zuo Nunnery. A stupa was erected over the grave.

## 21. Puzhao of Zhang-guo Nunnery in Nan-pi

<sup>938c</sup> Puzhao, originally surnamed Dong with the given name Bei, was a native of An-ling in Bo-hai Prefecture. When she was young, she adhered to moral principles. At the age of seventeen she renounced home and lived at Zhang-guo Nunnery in Nan-pi. Later she journeyed with her teacher to Guang-ling to study at Jian-xi Vihāra. She devoted her mind to the practice of the Dharma and won the praise of all the residents of the *vihāra*. After the death of her teacher Huizi, she dissociated herself from both rejoicing and mourning activities and practiced austerities with unparalleled strictness.

In the twelfth month of the eighteenth year of Yuan-jia (441) of the Song dynasty, Puzhao fell ill because of excessive strain. Although her condition was serious, she was still earnest in her mind and kept her deep faith without deviating from her original intention. She prayed sincerely day and night with a concentrated mind. She could not get down from bed, so she worshiped on the pillow, practiced repentance as usual, and also recited three fascicles of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* each day.

In the middle of the second month of the nineteenth year (442), Puzhao suddenly fainted away. She recovered consciousness after two meals' time. She related that [in a dream] she had gone toward

the west and come upon a pagoda in the middle of the road, where a monk was sitting in meditation with closed eyes. He was amazed to see her and asked where she had come from. She answered the monk and inquired of him how far it was from there to her nunnery. The monk replied that it was fifty million *li*.

The road was covered with grass and there were people going along it, but she recognized none of them. The wind blew the clouds so that they were scattered high, the place was neat and clean, and it was particularly bright toward the west. She intended to proceed onward but the monk did not allow her. So she turned back and then woke up abruptly. Seven days later, Puzhao died at the age of twenty-five.

## **22. Shi Huimu of the Nunnery of Zhu-ge Village in Liang Prefecture**

Huimu, originally surnamed Fu, was a native of Bei-di. Leaving home at the age of eleven, she served Huichao as her teacher and observed the minor precepts. She lived at the Nunnery of Zhu-ge Village in Liang Prefecture. In the beginning she studied the larger version of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, of which she recited two fascicles each day. She also read various other scriptures.

Her mother was old and sick and had lost all her teeth, so Huimu chewed dried meat in order to feed her. Because her mouth was impure, she did not receive full ordination, but at all she times repented her own karma.

Huimu suddenly saw the ordination altar, and the sky turned golden in color. When she raised her head to look up, she saw a man in the south wearing a double silk garment entirely yellow in color. He moved to and fro around Huimu and told her, "I have already given you ordination." Then he disappeared in an instant. Huimu did not tell anyone of this event, and she experienced many more strange phenomena like this one.

Huimu's elder brother got wind of the matter and wished to know more about it. He said to her, with false intimidation, "You

have been practicing the Way for so many years, and yet you have gained no benefit at all. So let your hair grow and I will find you a husband.” These words worried her, so Huimu told her elder brother what she had seen. She then received full ordination.

On the eve of receiving ordination, she dreamed that a man transmitted the *Prātimokṣa* to her orally. When she had been ordained, she could recite the text after reading it twice.

During the Yuan-jia period of the Song dynasty, Huimu made images of the Buddhas of the ten quarters and produced copies of the *Prātimokṣas* and the *Karmans* of the four schools of the Vinaya for distribution among the four groups of the Buddhist sangha.

### **23. Fasheng of the Southern Nunnery in Wu County**

939a Fasheng left secular life when she was young, and lived at the Southern Nunnery, or, as it was also called, the Eastern Nunnery, in Wu County. She was well known for her modesty and honesty, as well as for her prudence and assiduousness.

During the Yuan-jia period of the Song dynasty, Sima Long of He-wei, the assistant magistrate of Pi-ling, encountered invaders and was killed in battle. His wife (born Shan), who had lost her parents long ago and had no children, was already an old woman. She went to Wu Prefecture to seek shelter from Fasheng, who received her as [she would] a relative. A hundred days later, the woman fell sick and was ill for three years with a quite serious condition. As Fasheng had no savings in reserve, she had to beg for alms to sustain the woman and provide her with medical treatment. In doing this, she was undaunted by rain and heat, wind and cold. The woman was cured of her illness, and Fasheng was praised and esteemed by the people.

Later she traveled to the capital to study *dhyāna* (meditation) and the Vinaya, thereby gaining complete knowledge of mental concentration and wisdom as well as probing into the profound truth. In teaching her disciples, Fasheng was successful without

resorting to arrogant strictness. When she was active, it was not to seek personal gain; and when she was inactive, she did not mean to win fame by it. Her perfect attentiveness was only to help sentient beings.

When Fasheng reached the age of sixty, she was ill for some time. She said she would not be able to recover her health. Her relatives were surprised to hear this, and asked her why.

She replied, “Yesterday I saw two monks who told me so.” After a moment she spoke again. “Now I see two monks, not the two I saw yesterday, with their right shoulders uncovered, holding flowers in their hands and standing behind my sickbed. I see a Buddha sitting on a lotus flower at a distance, whose light is shining upon my body.” After that Fasheng could not sleep at night and asked others to repeat the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*. Late in the night, when her breath became feeble, she asked others to stop repeating the scripture, but to chant the name of the Buddha while she also did the same. When it was nearly daybreak, she passed away with her countenance unchanged.

## 24. Sengduan of Yong-an Nunnery

Sengduan was a native of Guang-ling. Her family had professed Buddhism for several generations, and all her sisters were devout Buddhists. She vowed to leave secular life and refused to accept any betrothal gift. As she was such a beauty, well known in her native district, wealthy families flocked to her house to make marriage proposals. Her mother and elder brother promised to marry her off to a certain man.

Three days before the wedding, Sengduan fled to a nunnery in the night. The abbess lodged her in a separate room and provided her with what she needed. Sengduan asked for a copy of the *Avalokiteśvara-sūtra*, which she memorized in two days’ time. She worshiped with tears raining down, day and night, without cease.

Three days later, while she was worshiping the Buddha’s image, it spoke to her. “Your betrothed is coming to the end of his

life. Just be diligent in your practice and do not worry.” The next day, the bridegroom was butted to death by a bull.

Sengduan was then free to leave home to observe the prohibitive rules with perseverance. She kept her mind empty and undisturbed in concentration and was reserved, as if she could not speak. But when she engaged in analyzing the nature of name and reality, she would discourse eloquently without feeling tired. She read the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* once every five days.

In the tenth year of Yuan-jia (433), Sengduan traveled south to the capital and lived at Yong-an Nunnery. She administered the affairs of the nunnery with affection for all and treated everybody equally. Both old and young were pleased with her, and they venerated her more with the passing of time.

In the twenty-fifth year of Yuan-jia (448), when she was over seventy years old, Sengduan died. Her disciples, Pujing and Puyao, were renowned for their practice of asceticism. Both of them recited the *Saddharmapuṇḍarika-sūtra*.

939b

## **25. Guangjing of the Middle Nunnery in Guang-ling**

Guangjing, whose original surname was Hu and given name Daobi, was a native of Dong-gian in Wu-xing. While she was young, she renounced home and went to live with her teacher at the Middle Nunnery in Guang-ling.

During her youth, Guangjing was strict in her behavior. When she grew up she practiced contemplative meditation. She refrained from eating delicious food, and when she was about to receive the major precepts, she gave up eating grains completely. She lived on pine nuts for fifteen years after receiving full ordination. Although her intelligence remained sharp and bright, her physical strength diminished and she became feeble and exhausted. Still she prayed sincerely in an acceptable manner and often labored from morning to evening.



The monk Facheng said to her, "Clothing and food are not important matters in Buddhism." On hearing this advice, Guangjing resumed eating polished rice. Then she redoubled her efforts and studied diligently without feeling tired. The number of people who followed her to learn the methods of contemplation was always more than a hundred.

In the fifth month of the eighteenth year of Yuan-jia (441), Guangjing fell ill and said, "I have abhorred and detested this body of mine for quite a long time." Thereupon she repented both mentally and verbally while suffering from illness. Her mind was calm and lucid, and her spirit was cheerful and joyful. On New Year's Day of the nineteenth year (442), she fasted without taking any food or drink and fixed her mind on the Tuṣita Heaven uninterruptedly. She did so without cessation until the night of the eighteenth day of the fourth month, when an unusual fragrance and strange visions filled the air. She passed away that night.

## **26. Shanmiao of Shu Prefecture**

Shanmiao, originally surnamed Quyang, was a native of Fan County. She renounced home while she was young. She was of mild and amiable disposition, and seldom showed feelings of pleasure or displeasure. She never tried to acquire fine clothes or delicious food. She had a younger sister who was a widow and had nobody to depend upon. So Shanmiao lodged her sister and her sister's young son in her room. Her sister often heard Shanmiao lamenting that she was not born at the time of the Buddha. Whenever she made this remark, she would sob sorrowfully and her tears flowed incessantly.

The [two women] lived together for four or five years, but the younger sister never saw her elder sister take a meal. When the younger sister cooked the food and called Shanmiao to eat with her, Shanmiao would say that she had just taken her meal somewhere else, or that she was feeling indisposed and could not eat anything.

In this way, they lived together for a number of years. The younger sister became ashamed of herself and said, “I am so unfortunate as to have lost my husband. Because I have no other relatives, my son and I have come to depend on my elder sister. I must have made the place so squalid and untidy that my elder sister is disgusted with it and will not eat with me.” She said this with tears in her eyes and then wished to leave.

Shanmiao held her hand and consoled her, saying, “You do not understand what I mean. Since I have had good opportunities to obtain alms at some other place, why should I consume food at home? Just stay here with an easy mind. I will make a long journey soon. You will have to look after this house and must not go anywhere.” When she heard these words, the younger sister gave up the idea of going away.

Shanmiao then spun cotton into yarn to produce cloth and also purchased several bushels of oil, which she stored in an earthen jar that she placed in the courtyard. She said to her younger sister, “I intend to perform meritorious deeds with this oil. Please don’t use it.”

939c At midnight on the eighth day of the fourth month, Shanmiao wrapped herself with cloth [in order] to burn her own body. When the fire reached her head, she asked her younger sister to call the ceremonial leader to strike the bell. “I am forsaking this life. Tell all the nuns to come quickly to bid me farewell.” When the nuns arrived, alarmed, Shanmiao was not yet dead and said to them, “Each of you should work hard with diligence. The round of birth and death is dreadful. Try to win emancipation from it, and don’t go around in transmigration. I have given up my body as an offering twenty-seven times in my previous lives, and it is only in this life that I will finally attain the result.”

*(Baochang’s note: When I made inquiries of the local people, some of them said that the immolation took place in the seventeenth year of Yuan-jia [440], while others said that it happened during the Xiao-jian period [454–456] or during the Da-ming period [457–464]. Accordingly, I record all these dates here.)*

## 27. Sengguo of Guang-ling

Sengguo was originally surnamed Zhao and her given name was Fayou. She was a native of Xiu-wu in Ji Prefecture. She had instinctive piety and faith that had been cultivated in her previous lives, and her pure devotion was spontaneous. Even as a child at the breast, she would not eat after midday. For this her parents praised her and marveled at her. On reaching adulthood, she fixed her mind on one purpose. But because favorable circumstances were intermingled with obstacles, she was able to leave secular life only when she was twenty-seven years old.

Sengguo served as a teacher to the nun Huicong of Guang-ling. She observed the Vinaya rules with perseverance in a clear manner, and practiced meditation in a faultless way. Each time she entered *samādhi*, she would sit from dusk to dawn with her spirit dwelling in a state of mental purity and her body as motionless as a withered tree. Yet shallow-minded people still doubted her.

In the sixth year of Yuan-jia (428), a foreign shipowner named Nandi traveled from the Land of the Lion (Sri Lanka) with some nuns, who arrived in the capital of Song and stayed at Jing-fu Nunnery. Some time later, they inquired of Sengguo, “Have there been any foreign nuns in this country before?”

She replied, “No.”

Then they asked, “Where did the Chinese nuns get both of the two sanghas from whom to receive the full ordination?”

Sengguo replied, “They received the full precepts only from the *bhikṣu* sangha, as an expedient means to arouse feelings of the great importance [of becoming ordained] in their minds. In this same way, Mahāprajāpatī received ordination through accepting the Eight Rules of Veneration. Thus the five hundred ladies of the Śākya clan could have Mahāprajāpatī as their preceptress. This was an eminent precedent.”

Even though Sengguo replied thus [to the nuns’ question], she still had doubts in her own mind. So she inquired about the whole

matter from the Tripiṭaka master, who offered the same explanation. Then she asked further, “May one receive full ordination for a second time?”

The master said, “As *śīla*, *samādhi*, and *prajñā* are developed from imperceptibility to prominence, it would be even better for one to receive ordination again.”

In the tenth year (433) the shipowner Nandi came again with eleven nuns, Devasārā and others, from the Land of the Lion. The nuns who arrived earlier had by now mastered the Chinese language. Saṃghavarman was asked to mark the boundaries of a chapter house at Nan-lin Monastery, in which more than three hundred persons were reordained, one after another.

940a In the eighteenth year (441), when Sengguo was thirty-four, she once sat in meditation for an entire day. The ceremonial leader touched her and announced that she was dead. The functionaries of the nunnery were surprised at the announcement, and they all came to look into the matter. They saw that Sengguo’s body had become cold and her flesh stiff, but she was still breathing faintly. When they started to carry her away, she opened her eyes and talked to them, smiling as usual. Thus the ignorant were convinced of her spiritual attainment. It is not known what happened to her afterward.

## **28. Jingcheng of Bamboo Grove Nunnery in Dong-xiang in Shan-Yang**

Jingcheng, originally surnamed Liu with the given name Sheng, was a native of Qiao Prefecture. She observed the Vinaya rules in a consummate and ascetic way, and chanted four hundred fifty thousand words of scriptures. Her nunnery was located in a wood at the foot of a mountain, away from all noisy disturbances. She could engage her mind in contemplative meditation, completely free from worldly din and bustle.

Once a man lost his cow and searched for it everywhere. He came to the mountain during the night and saw a fire blazing over

the woods of the nunnery. But when he arrived at the place, there was nothing there at all.

There was a tiger that always followed Jingcheng wherever she went. When she sat in meditation, it crouched beside her. When any of the nuns in the nunnery committed a fault without making a confession in time, the tiger would become furiously angry, but it would be pleased once the confession was made.

Later, when Jingcheng left the mountain for a short time, she met on the way a woman from Bei-di, who casually exchanged greetings with her as if they were old acquaintances. This woman, who had the surname Qiu and the given name Wenjiang, was originally from Bo-ping. She was by nature fond of the Buddha-Dharma. Having heard that the Way was thriving in the south, she had come to the southern region when the pass opened for travel. She then renounced secular life and practiced austerities with Jingcheng. Both of them refrained from eating grain, living only on sesame seeds and millet.

The fame [of the two women] reached the capital of a barbarian tribe. [The barbarians] regarded them as holy persons and dispatched messengers from afar to greet them. But because they did not want to stay in the frontier region, [Jingcheng and Wenjiang] purposely misbehaved in order to ruin their reputation [with the barbarians]. When the chief of the tribe prepared a sumptuous feast of fish and meat for them, they devoured everything without discrimination. Because of this, the chief despised them and no longer detained them. Jingcheng and Wenjiang then returned to their own nunnery. Jingcheng passed away at the age of ninety-three without illness.

## **29. Faxiang of Tai-xuan-tai Nunnery in Wu Prefecture**

Faxiang, originally surnamed Hou, was a native of Dun-huang. She deported herself in a pure and chaste manner, and her talent and insight were brilliant and outstanding. Devoted to study, she

never gave up learning even though she often lived in want. As she was contented with a life of poverty, she would not change her mind in order to gain glory and eminence. She was married into the Fu family, which suffered more than once from misfortune.

At the time Fu Jian was defeated, [all of] Faxiang's kinfolk were scattered or lost. She then renounced secular life and observed the Vinaya with deep faith and understanding. She often offered her good clothes and food to the nun Huisu. The nuns of the nunnery admonished her, saying, "Huisu is crude and dull witted in speaking. She has never set her mind on the Buddhist scriptures and the Vinaya texts. She wanted to learn meditation, but she had no teacher. She is stubborn and stupid, and is only a foolish woman of the lowest grade. Why don't you plant the seeds of merit in a superior field, instead of cultivating merit in an inferior way?"

Faxiang replied, "Only a holy person knows about the success or failure of the field. As I am only an ordinary person, how can I choose what to accept and what to reject? Should I meet someone in need of alms, what does it matter if I offer something without thinking of my own gain?"

940b Later, Huisu conducted a meditation retreat for seven days. On the third night, she sat together with the assembly. When the others rose from their seats, she did not get up. All the people came to see her and found that she was as stiff as a piece of wood or a rock and did not move when pushed. They said that she was dead, but after three days Huisu got up and was as well as usual. Then the people marveled at her and began to understand Faxiang's foresight and comprehension. Such events as this happened more than once at different times.

When Faxiang was getting old she conducted herself with even more strictness. At the end of the Yuan-jia period, she passed away at the age of more than ninety.

### **30. Yeshou of Eastern Qing-yuan Nunnery**

Yeshou, originally surnamed Zhang, was a native of Peng-cheng.

Her deportment was lofty and austere, and her observance of the Vinaya rules was immaculate. She deeply understood the Mahayana teachings and could comprehend the subtle principles. She was very fond of meditation and reciting the scriptures and never relaxed even at her busy times.

Emperor Wu (r. 420–422), the founder of the Song dynasty, respected her highly as an unusual person. Emperor Wen (r. 424–453), who took the Three Refuges under her guidance when he was young, lodged her in Yong-an Nunnery and offered alms to her incessantly. In the second year of Yuan-jia (425), Wang Jing-shen's mother (born Fan), presented Yeshou with the site of the former ancestral temple of Wang Tanzhi for her to build a convent there. It was named Qing-yuan Nunnery.

Yeshou trained her disciples to be sedate and deferential with perfect discipline. Lady Pan, the imperial concubine, praised her, saying, "Bhikṣuṇī Yeshou propagates the Buddha-Dharma. She is highly respectable." In the fifteenth year of Yuan-jia (438), Lady Pan enlarged the nunnery for Yeshou by building a Buddha hall on the west[ern side] and expanded it to the north by constructing more cells. She also provided the nuns with whatever they needed, and the nunnery became prosperous. The community of two hundred performed religious practices without cease.

When Yeshou grew advanced in age, more people looked up to her. On account of her old age, she pleaded several times to retire but the community did not consent. In the sixth year of Daming (462), she died at the age of ninety.

At that time there were also three nuns, Jing'ai, Baoying, and Falin, all of whom were well known in the capital area for their stainless morality. Jing'ai was experienced in meditation and reciting scriptures and was fair and unbiased regarding [nunnery] affairs. She died in the fifth year of Tai-shi (469). Baoying constructed a five-storied pagoda, studied the principles diligently, and was a strict vegetarian. She died in the sixth year of Tai-shi (470). Falin was well read in Buddhist scriptures and Vinaya texts, and never relaxed even when old. She died in the first year of Yuan-hui (473).

Falin also had a disciple named Tanyin, who was experienced in both meditation and the Vinaya. She detached herself from worldly glory and never cast a glance at the morning market. She died in the sixth year of Yuan-hui (478).

### **31. Fabian of Jing-fu Nunnery**

Fabian, a native of Dan-yang, renounced home when young and became a disciple of Buiguo of Jing-fu Nunnery. Being faithful and prudent as well as pure and discreet, she always lived frugally, wore coarse garments, and ate a vegetarian diet, never tasting any odorous or pungent food. Her fame for loftiness and simplicity was known in the capital from an early time. Yu, the Prince of Lang-ya and the governor of Yang-zhou, respected her highly.

Later, Fabian acquired knowledge of contemplative meditation from the foreign monk Kālayaśas of Dao-lin Monastery, and she practiced it in the prescribed way with full success and complete understanding. Whenever she was present in an assembly, she often looked as if she were dozing. Once, in the refectory, she did not get up from her seat when the others had dispersed. In alarm, the ceremonial leader touched her and found that she was as still as a piece of wood or a rock. The ceremonial leader quickly informed the other nuns, who all came to see. But after a moment Fabian came out of her trance and spoke as usual. All the nuns admired her with redoubled veneration.

940c

In the seventh year of Da-ming (463), Fabian died at the age of over sixty. Two days earlier, Dharma Master Chaobian of Upper Ding-lin Monastery dreamed of a magnificent and beautiful palace city, in which all the apparel, ornaments, and other articles of daily use were brilliant and gorgeous beyond anything ever seen in this world. [The palace city] was full of men and women attired in fine dress, but without a lord. Chaobian asked why and received the reply, “Fabian of Jing-fu Nunnery will be reborn in this place, and she is expected to arrive here tomorrow.”



On that day, Fabian had a shivering spell, and so she sent someone to inform the community. When all the nuns, old and young, had assembled, she said, "There are mysterious figures around me. They appear and disappear abruptly like shadows and clouds." After saying this, she died sitting upright in the meditation posture.

Later there were also [the nuns] Daozhao and Sengbian, who were well known for their strenuous efforts. Daozhao, originally surnamed Yang, was a native of Xu in Bei-di. Living on the support offered by the Prince of Lin-he, she was a vegetarian and a reciter of scriptures.

### **32. Daozong of San-ceng Nunnery in Jiang-ling**

Daozong, whose native place was unknown, lived at San-ceng Nunnery in Jiang-ling. Since her youth she never discriminated against people based on their appearance. When mature, she did not judge people by whether they were ordained or not and associated with both the wise and the ignorant solely for the purpose of practicing the Way. Her meritorious deeds were of all kinds and she was deeply and widely involved in efforts to help people.

In the night of the fifteenth day of the third month in the seventh year of Da-ming (463) of the Song dynasty, Daozong purged herself [by pouring] oil [over herself and setting] herself on fire. While her forehead was burning and her ears and eyes were consumed by the flames, she still recited and chanted scriptures without stopping. Both the clergy and the laity sighed with admiration, and the evil ones as well as the faithful were alike astonished. Those throughout the whole country who heard about this event generated the mind of enlightenment (*bodhicitta*). The eremitic scholar Liu Qiu of the Song dynasty, who respected her highly, composed a verse in praise of her.

### 33. Huijun of Zhu-yuan Nunnery

Huijun, originally surnamed Chen, was a native of Shan-yin. When she was a child, she was bright and intelligent; her devotion surpassed that of ordinary people. In the morning she always burned incense to meditate and worship for a while; at noon she ate only vegetarian food, never taking fish or meat. Although she was staying at home, she lived as though she had renounced secular life. Her parents could not change her mind and permitted her, when she was eighteen, to follow the religious life.

941a Huijun read all Buddhist and non-Buddhist texts that came to her. There was no method of deep meditation and mysterious contemplation that she did not practice. She was quiet and uncontentious, mild and moderate. With her friends and acquaintances, she never spoke frivolously.

(Liu) Yigong, the Prince of Jiang-xia and Premier of the Song court, respected her highly and always provided her with clothing and medicine throughout the four seasons without fail. Huijun never hoarded any private wealth, but spent it all for the construction of the nunnery. The establishment of Zhu-yuan Nunnery was Huijun's achievement. Her delight in meditation did not fade even when she became old. In the eighth year of Da-ming (464) of the Song dynasty, she passed away at the age of seventy-three. Her remains were buried on Fu Mountain.

In the same nunnery there was the nun Senghua, who was an intelligent and outstanding person, well read in many scriptures and Vinaya texts. She was a vegetarian and led an ascetic life, and she was just as famous as Huijun.

### 34. Baoxian of Pu-xian Nunnery

Baoxian, originally surnamed Chen, was a native of Chen Prefecture. At the age of sixteen she lost her mother. For three years of mourning, she refrained from eating grains and lived on the roots of kudzu and taro. She wore neither silk or cotton garments, nor

used couches or mats for seats. When she was nineteen years old she renounced secular life and lived at Jian-an Nunnery. She conducted herself well, practiced religion diligently, and was well learned in meditation and the Vinaya.

Emperor Wen of the Song dynasty treated Baoxian with courtesy and provided her with clothing and food. Emperor Xiaowu (r. 454–464) also treated her with respect and granted her [a large cash stipend] each month. When Emperor Ming ascended the throne (465), he appreciated and received her even more reverentially.

In the first year of Tai-shi (465), Baoxian was appointed by imperial decree the abbess of Pu-xian Nunnery. In the second year (466), she was ordered by imperial decree to be the Directress of Nuns in the capital. She was highly awe-inspiring and passed fair judgment like a divine being. She was good at analyzing the principles of worldly affairs and would always rectify injustice. Endowed with a firm and upright nature, she never harmed or caused trouble to anybody.

Formerly, during the Sheng-ping period of the Jin dynasty, the *bhikṣuṇī* Jingjian, the first Buddhist nun in China, received full ordination only from the order of monks. Huiguo, Jingyin, and others of Jing-fu Nunnery inquired of Guṇavarman about this matter; and he told them, “If two orders of the sangha do not exist in this country, you should receive full ordination from the order of monks alone.”

Later, Huiguo and the others met the foreign nun Devasārā and her group; and in the eleventh year of Yuan-jia (434), they received full ordination for a second time from Saṃghavarman at the ordination platform in Nan-lin Monastery. This was done not because their previous ordination was considered invalid, but because they wished to enhance the goodness of the Vinaya.

After that event some people who were fond of novelty widely emulated their practice and caused inconsistency in the system of the Vinaya. In the second year of Yuan-hui (474), the Vinaya teacher Faying expounded the gist of the *Sarvāstivāda-vinaya* at

Jin-xing Monastery. When the lecture was concluded, more than ten nuns wished to receive ordination again.

Baoxian sent someone to the authorities in charge of monastic affairs and brought back an order to the lecture hall. There it was announced with the striking of a wooden bell (*ghaṇṭā*) that the nuns were not allowed to receive ordination for a second time. If a nun was found to be under age, her teacher should first bring her to repent before the assembly of the sangha and then approach the authorities in charge of monastic affairs. Only with the permission of the authorities and after having been properly checked could one receive ordination for a second time. Anyone who disobeyed this order would be expelled. Thereafter, the erratic practice was suppressed for some time.

941b During her term of office, Baoxian was pure and simple, and she was talented at managing affairs as well as at upholding justice. Under her care the community of nuns lived in happiness. She was kind to her subordinates. For her austere and plain living, the people respected her all the more. In the first year of Sheng-ming (477), she died at the age of seventy-seven.

### 35. Fajing of Pu-xian Nunnery

Fajing was a native of the region north of the Yangzi River. When she was twenty, she encountered a time of trouble and followed her father to take refuge at Mo-ling. Having come from a Buddhist family, she left secular life at an early age and lived at Yong-fu Nunnery.

Fajing observed the Vinaya rules in a pure manner and understood the underlying principle of phenomena. With deep thinking and intensive learning, she made profound studies of the abstruse doctrines. Her fame and position were roughly the same as those of the nun Baoxian.

Emperor Ming (r. 465–472) of the Song dynasty, who considered her an extraordinary person, invited her by imperial decree to live at Pu-xian Nunnery in the first year of Tai-shi (465). When

Fajing was received in the palace, she was treated with the honor due to a teacher or friend. In the second year (466), she was appointed by imperial degree to be the Ceremonial Leader of the capital area. She managed affairs in a fair and correct way, which was truly exceptional. She recommended and promoted people according to circumstances, and submitted to virtue like water flowing downward.

Her reputation of intelligence and virtue was so great that the nuns and their female relatives in the Jing and Chu regions used to write letters and send gifts to her from distant places to become acquainted with her. Seven hundred persons sought instruction from her as a model of the observance of the Vinaya. In the first year of Yuan-hui (473), she died at the age of sixty-five.

### **36. Huiyao of Yong-kang Nunnery in Shu Prefecture**

Huiyao, originally surnamed Zhou, was a native of Xi-ping. She left secular life when she was young, and often vowed to burn herself as an offering to the Triple Gem. By the end of the Tai-shi period (465–471), she asked permission to do this from the prefectural governor Liu Liang, who initially consented. There was a brick pagoda built by Zhao Qian'en's concubine (born Wang), and Huiyao asked permission to burn herself in that pagoda. Wang granted her permission to do so.

In the night of the fifteenth day of the first month, Huiyao, carrying oil and cloth, led her disciples to the pagoda. Before she had finished preparing herself, Liu Liang sent a message that if Huiyao actually burned herself, all the nuns of Yong-kang Nunnery would be heavily punished. Huiyao was obliged to give up her plan for the moment. Wang became enraged and said, "This nun is aiming to gain fame and profit, and so she pretended to do something unusual. But she secretly bribed the people in the *yamen* (office of the prefectural governor) to do this. Otherwise how can those in the city know about it in the middle of the night?"

Huiyao said, “Madame, don’t be so resentful. The sacrifice of my body is my own affair. How can others know about it?”

Then Huiyao returned to her nunnery and stopped eating grains but drank fragrant oil. In the first year of Sheng-ming (477), she immolated herself in the nunnery. When the flames reached her face, she was still reciting scriptures without ceasing. She said to the nuns, “When you collect my remains, you will get exactly two liters of ashes.” When the fire had gone out, they found that it was precisely as she had said.

One month or so before Huiyao burned herself, a foreign monk of about twenty arrived [at the nunnery]. He was of good appearance and had very soft hair, six or seven inches in length, growing on his shoulders. People asked him about it, and he said through an interpreter that because he never covered his shoulders, hair grew on them.

941c He spoke to Huiyao, saying, “I live in the kingdom of Vārāṇasī and have come here for just a few days. I have heard that you are going to sacrifice your body. I present you with a silver urn as a gift.” Huiyao accepted it by placing it on her head, but before she could make further inquiries, the monk hurriedly departed. Someone was then sent to pursue and detain the monk, but he vanished as soon as he went out of the gate. Her *śarīras* (relics), less than two *ge* in quantity, were contained in the silver urn.

End of Fascicle Two of *Biographies of Buddhist Nuns*

## Fascicle Three

### The Qi Dynasty

#### 37. Fayuan of Zeng-cheng in Dong-guan

Fayuan, originally surnamed Yu, was a native of Zeng-cheng in Dong-guan. In the ninth year of Yuan-jia (432) of the Song dynasty, she was ten years old and her younger sister Facai was nine. They knew nothing of Buddhist scriptures or the Dharma, [but both] suddenly disappeared on the eighth day of the second month. They returned home three days later. They said that they had been to the heavenly palace of the Pure Land, where they saw the Buddha and received edification from him.

On the fifteenth day of the ninth month, they went there again and returned after ten days. After that they could write and speak a foreign language and chant Buddhist scriptures. When they saw people from the Western Region, they could talk and joke fluently with perfect mutual understanding.

942a

On the fifteenth day of the first month in tenth year (433), [Fayuan and Facai] vanished once again. Some farmers working in the fields saw them drifting toward the sky in a gust of wind. Their parents were worried about them and offered sacrifices to the gods to seek blessing. After a month, the sisters returned in the form of nuns wearing religious robes, holding their own [shorn] hair in their hands.

They said that they had seen the Buddha and a nun, who said to them, “Due to causes in your previous lives, you are to be my disciples.” Then she raised her hand to stroke their heads, and their hair fell off by itself. She gave the religious name Fayuan to the elder sister and Facai to the younger one. When they were sent back, the nun said to them, “You may construct a *vihāra* and I will give you the scriptures.”

After returning home, Fayuan and her sister Facai demolished the household shrine for worshipping the gods and built a *vihāra* instead. There they lectured and chanted scriptures day and night. In the evenings, a ray of five colors often issued from the mountaintops, as if there were lamps or candles.

From that time on, [the sisters'] deportment was elegant and dignified, and their speech and rituals were perfect and correct. The chanting of scriptures in the capital could not surpass their recitations. Both of the two prefectural governors, Wei Lang and Kong Mo, made offerings to them. Upon hearing their utterances, the governors respected them all the more as extraordinary persons. Hence all the scholars believed in the right Dharma.

In the Jian-yuan period (479–482), Fayuan died at the age of fifty-six.

### **38. Tanche of Southern Yong-an Nunnery**

Tanche, whose native place was unknown, became a disciple of Bhikṣuṇī Puyao when she was young and went to live at Southern Yong-an Nunnery with her teacher. Puyao was well known in her time for being pure in practicing the Way and excellent in learning, while Tanche comported herself well without affectation and pursued her studies ceaselessly. She was determined to completely understand the abstruse meanings of the Buddha-Dharma. Before she received ordination, she was already well learned in the scriptures and commentaries. After she was fully ordained, she made extensive studies of the Vinaya.

Tanche was a talented person capable of dealing with important affairs, and she was particularly good at preaching and lecturing. She could make detailed analyses of things and elucidate obscurities, as well as delve into profundity and unveil the hidden. All nuns, old and young, asked her to be their teacher. They followed her in groups, carrying their books with them, wherever she went, in order to attend her preaching meetings. All the ladies of the



five ranks of nobility and the seven families of distinction and those below them in status paid homage to her. In the second year of Yong-ming (484) of the Qi dynasty (479–502), Tanche passed away at the age of sixty-three.

### 39. Sengjing of Chong-sheng Nunnery

Sengjing, originally surnamed Li, was a native of Kuai-ji, but her family resided at Mo-ling. When she was still in her mother's womb, the family arranged an assembly and invited a monk from Wa-guan Monastery as well as the nun Tanzhi from Chao-xi Nunnery. The monk and nun were asked to point their fingers at the belly of the pregnant lady and call the fetus in her womb their disciple, while on behalf of her unborn child the mother called the two monastics teachers and promised to send the child, whether male or female, to lead the homeless religious life.

One day, when the mother was about to go into labor, she dreamed of a divine being, who said to her, "You should observe the eight precepts of purification and abstention." So she ordered that arrangements be made. But before a monk could be invited and an image installed, she gave birth to Sengjing. At that time a voice in the air was heard to say, "The child may be given to the nun Bai of Jian-an Nunnery to be her disciple." The mother acted accordingly.

When Sengjing reached the age of five or six, she could recite from memory whatever scripture or hymn she heard people chanting. She studied several hundred scrolls of scriptures with deeper and deeper understanding as the days went by. She lived on vegetarian food with self-restraint, and her pure manner of life became gradually well known.

942b

During the Yuan-jia period, when Kong Mo of Lu Prefecture was dispatched to the garrison at Guang-zhou, Sengjing went there with him. There she met the foreign nun Devasārā and others, who were on their way to the capital of the Song court. All of

them were of unusually lofty manners and character. Sengjing received ordination from them once again, gaining a deep comprehension of the doctrine of impermanence.

Then she wished to sail across the sea to visit the sacred sites [in India]. However, both clergy and laypeople were prohibited from going abroad, so Sengjing stayed at Ling-nan for more than thirty years. Wherever her moral influence prevailed, rude folk changed their mental aspect. Thirteen families offered their houses and gardens to her and jointly built for her a nunnery at Chao-ting, with the name Zhong-zao Nunnery.

When Emperor Ming of the Song dynasty heard about her, he sent a messenger to invite her from a great distance, to the deep disappointment of the clergy and laity of Pan-yu [where she was staying]. After returning to the capital, Sengjing was ordered by imperial decree to live at Chong-sheng Nunnery, and both the clergy and laypeople followed her example in conduct and behavior. Yue Zun of Dan-yang donated his residence to make a nunnery for her, and later she went to live there.

Both Crown Prince Wenhui of the Court of Qi and Prince Wenxuan of Jing-ling admired her manners and virtue and offered donations to her without negligence. When Sengjing was eighty-four years old, she died on the third day of the second month in the fourth year of Yong-ming (486). Her remains were buried on the southern side of Zhong Mountain. Her disciples erected a stone memorial tablet on which was inscribed the epitaph composed by Shen Yue of Wu-xing, Vice-Minister of the Imperial Secretarial Department.

#### **40. Sengmeng of Qi-ming Nunnery in Yan-guan**

Sengmeng, originally surnamed Cen, was a native of Nan-yang, but she was of the fifth generation since her family had moved to live in Yan-guan County. Her great-grandfather, named Shuai, was a former member of the civil service of the Jin dynasty and

served as the magistrate of Yu-hang. Her family professed Taoism and also traditionally worshiped evil spirits.

Since her childhood, Sengmeng had a deep aspiration to rise above vulgarity. When she was twelve, her father died, and she wailed so much that she spat blood and went into a faint for some time before regaining consciousness. After the conclusion of three years' mourning, she showed others the nature of immortality and took leave of her mother to lead the homeless life.

Sengmeng was pure in conduct and served her teacher with respect and veneration. She ate only vegetables and unpolished rice in order to sustain her life. She practiced the Way and made confessions without becoming tired or indolent. Whenever she repented her former sins she would shed tears with sincerity, and she could do what others could not do. Upon hearing of her good name, Zhang Dai of Wu Prefecture, the prefectural governor of Yi-zhou, honored her with deference and begged her to be his personal teacher.

In the first year of Yuan-hui (473) of the Song dynasty, the nun Jingdu came to Wu [Prefecture] and brought Sengmeng along to the capital, where she lived at Jian-fu Nunnery. She studied various scriptures day and night and always followed after teachers and attended their preaching meetings with an unwearied mind. She heard much, and with her retentive memory she could remember whatever had come to her ears. In this way, she studied and acquired a thorough understanding of all the scriptures and Vinaya texts. When she practiced meditation with a serene mind, she would sit placidly in an upright posture.

In the fourth year of Jian-yuan (482) of the Qi dynasty, Sengmeng's mother fell ill. The eastern part of her residence was given to make a convent with the name of Qi-ming Nunnery. There shrine halls were built and trees and bamboo were planted in rows. It was quiet and peaceful within and without, resembling the abode of immortals. Food was distributed to the hungry, and clothes were given to those who were cold.

942c Once a hunter came near the southern end of the nunnery. The flying birds and running beasts flocked to Sengmeng to seek protection, but the falcons and hounds chased after them to within an arm's distance. Sengmeng placed herself between them. Although she was pecked and bitten, the birds and animals that came to her for shelter were saved.

Many people stayed together with her for more than thirty years, and they never saw her give vent to anger or resentment. She died in the seventh year of Yong-ming (489) at the age of seventy-two.

At that time there was also the nun Sengyuan, who was a daughter of Sengmeng's cousin. She too was well known for her filial piety. Her conduct was lofty and superior, and her wisdom and discernment were deep and concentrated.

#### 41. Miaozi of Hua-yan Nunnery

Miaozi, originally surnamed Cao, was a native of He-wei. She was mild and brilliant by nature, and molded her mind according to the Great Edification. She observed the prohibitive rules of the Vinaya as persistently as if she were safeguarding lustrous pearls. With a mind of patience, she bore no ill will against anyone, and even when she had been insulted or was annoyed, she always wore a kind countenance. She lived in seclusion, with curtains dropped, to engage in studies year round and never felt bored for a single day. As she had acquired a perfect understanding of the aspects of all things, the people honored her with their respect for her.

When the meditation hall was first built, Emperor Wu (r. 483–493) of the Qi dynasty issued a decree inviting Miaozi to preach on the *Śrīmālādevīsīṃhanāda-sūtra* and the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra*. When she started preaching on the topic, and during the course of her lectures, the emperor personally attended several preaching meetings and asked numerous questions, which Miaozi did not hesitate to answer comprehensively. She analyzed [the questions] one by one, beginning from the base. The emperor

repeatedly praised her, and the four groups of Buddhist followers highly respected her with admiration.

Prince Wenxuan of Jing-ling of the Qi dynasty demarcated Zhong Mountain [as the place] to collect and bury the remains of famous and virtuous ones. In the second year of Jian-wu (495), Miaozhi died at the age of sixty-four, and her ashes were buried on the southern side of Ding-lin Monastery. The wife (born Jiang), of Wang Lun of Lang-ya, an Imperial Attendant at the Court of Qi, wrote an eulogistic epitaph with a preface, which was inscribed on a stone tablet planted on the left side of the tomb.

## 42. Zhisheng of Jian-fu Nunnery

Zhisheng, originally surnamed Xu, was a native of Chang-an; but her family had lived at Kuai-ji for three generations when she was born. At the age of six she went with her grandmother to the capital, where she visited Wa-guan Monastery and saw the magnificent *caitya* (sanctuary) beautifully decorated with precious ornaments. She was moved to tears and wished to cut off her hair and become a nun. When her grandmother asked her why she was crying, she explained her intention; but her grandmother said that she was too young and would not permit it.

During the turbulent time of the Song dynasty, all of the four classes of [Buddhist followers] lost their vocations. A number of years of this disorderly state of affairs passed. When Zhisheng was approaching twenty, she was able to renounce secular life and went to live at Jian-fu Nunnery. Her singular practices were peerless, and her severance of worldly connections was difficult for others to emulate. She attended lectures on the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* and could grasp the meaning of the text after hearing it only once. Later, when she studied the *Vinaya-piṭaka* she did not need to work on it a second time.

Her faculty of retention was well known to all, and all looked up to her with increased respect. She wrote several tens of scrolls of theoretical commentaries, with abstruse meanings and subtle

and profound principles, in concise but comprehensive language. Zhisheng was so pure in character that even if she were to be immersed in a dark fluid she would not become black, and her steadfast nature was like a piece of solid rock that could not be ground thin.

Once, during the Da-ming period, a man plotted deceptively for an appointment with Zhisheng, attempting to commit an impropriety against her. But she had a deep will of morality, and her character was as upright as a precipice. She informed the community of nuns, who wrote a report and sent it to the authorities. She kept the Vinaya rules in a pure manner, as if she were safeguarding lustrous pearls.

943a At that time, of the Ven. Tanbin's disciples at Zhuang-yan Monastery, Sengzong and Xuanqu were jointly in charge of the Buddha hall. Through their negligence a thief came and stole the bodhisattva's necklace of pearls and a seven-jeweled bathing jug. Except for his robes and almsbowl, which were left untouched, the Ven. Tanbin's chamber also became as empty as a hanging bell and he had no means to replace the lost articles. He was so sad and worried about it that he stopped preaching and confined himself in his room for three days. Zhisheng made an announcement to the four groups of Buddhist followers, who replaced the lost properties within ten days. The influence of her virtue was always like this.

On hearing of her reputation, Crown Prince Wenhui of the Qi dynasty often summoned and received her. Each time she was invited to preach on various scriptures in the palace, Prince Wenxuan of Jing-ling, the Minister of Civil Affairs, highly venerated her. Zhisheng's will was as staunch as gold produced in the south, and her mind was as pure as the snow of the north. In guiding and admonishing the nuns, she truly enjoyed the confidence of all. The empress dowager appointed her abbess of the nunnery, and all the resident nuns honored her as their parent.

She received the bodhisattva precepts from the Ven. Sengyuan of Ding-lin Monastery. There was always an incense burner beside

his seat. Zhisheng put a pinch of incense into it, though Sengyuan tried to stop her, saying, "It has not been lit for two nights." The incense she had put in, however, started issuing a dense, fragrant smoke which wafted into the air. Everyone praised her, saying that this was a spiritual response to her devotion and sincerity.

During the Yong-ming period (483–493), Zhisheng once made an offering of food to the [image of the] Holy Monk while she prayed with a concentrated mind. Suddenly she heard the snapping of fingers in the air, and she listened to it attentively with her palms joined together.

Staying at the nunnery for thirty years, Zhisheng never went out to attend a festival or associate with the nobility. She always preferred to remain in a quiet and solitary place and engage in meditation. Thus her fame was not widely spread. Crown Prince Wenhui offered special donations to her, sufficient for her daily and monthly use. More houses were constructed and the whole nunnery lived in glory and abundance. Zhisheng gave away her robes and almsbowl [to raise money] for the carving of stone statues of seven emperors of the Song and Qi dynasties at She-shan Monastery.

In the tenth year of Yong-ming (492), when she was ill in her sickbed, Zhisheng suddenly saw golden carriages covered with jade canopies coming to welcome her. On the fifth day of the fourth month, she said to her disciples, "I am leaving now." Her disciples wept, and then she opened her robe and exposed her chest, on which was shown the character "Buddha" [written] in the cursive style in a brilliant white color with a bright and glossy sheen. At noon on the eighth day she died at the age of sixty-six, and her remains were buried on Zhong Mountain. Crown Prince Wenhui supplied her with medicine, and all that was needed for her funeral was provided by the government.

### **43. Senggai of Chan-ji Nunnery**

Senggai, originally surnamed Tian, was a native of Jun-ren in the

state of Zhao. Her father, named Hongliang, was the governor of Tian-shui. When she was young, she left home to become a disciple of the nun Sengzhi. She lived at Hua-lin Nunnery at Peng-cheng. She cared nothing for personal gain and was indifferent to praise or blame from others.

In the first year of Yuan-hui (473), when the Tuoba clan of the north invaded the state, Senggai traveled south to the capital with her fellow student Fajin and lived at Miao-xiang Nunnery. She attended numerous lectures on the scriptures and Vinaya texts, and made profound studies of their ultimate meanings. She practiced meditation exclusively and always felt that the days were not long enough [to practice as much as she would like]. Whether it was the cold or hot season, she never changed her garments. She never took seasonal food throughout the the four seasons, eating only one vegetarian dish for her midday meal.

943b

Senggai studied under the two *dhyāna* masters Yin and Shen, both of whom praised her for her faculty of quick awakening. During the Yong-ming period of the Qi dynasty, she went to live at Chan-ji Nunnery with the intention of propagating the way of contemplation. Clergy and laypeople visited her for consultations, and this became so disruptive to her that she had to build a separate meditation room to the left of the nunnery in which she sat in silent contemplation. When she came out of her room, she instructed others earnestly without feeling tired.

Xiao Ziliang, Prince Wenxuan of Jing-ling of the Qi dynasty, provided her with all the requisites for the four seasons. In spite of her old age, she did not slacken in her aspirations. For a whole day she would reside in a state of unattached serenity and she would not lie down all through the night. In the eleventh year of Yong-ming (493), Senggai died at the age of sixty-four.

There was at that time another nun in the same nunnery, named Fayan. Her original surname was Xu, [and she was] a native of Gao-yang. She was diligent in her practice of religion and was also well known for engaging in meditation.



#### 44. Faquan of Eastern Qing-yuan Nunnery

Faquan, originally surnamed Dai, was a native of Dan-yang. She had a dignified appearance and was fond of quietude, and she was diligent in cultivating concentration and wisdom. At first she widely studied various scriptures with Zong and Yuan. Later she learned all the methods of meditation and contemplation, with Shen and Yin as her teachers. In the daytime she perused the texts and made profound deliberations, while at night she experienced the mysterious mental state of contemplation. She could expound all the abstruse texts of the Mahayana teachings and was a teacher of the secret methods of *samādhi*. She ate only vegetarian food, and her clothes were merely for covering her body. She taught and guided the unlearned, and encouraged new students by helping them in their studies. Her listeners practiced the Way and gained much benefit.

The nunnery was a large one and it was difficult to manage. In the third year of Tai-shi (467), the community of nuns discussed the matter and decided to divide it into two parts. The nun Bao-ying sought to build meditation cells and a new relic stupa on the east side of the nunnery. So the nunnery was divided [into two parts], [with the eastern part known] as Eastern Qing-yuan Nunnery.

In the second year of Sheng-ming (478), Baoying passed away. Since the community [at Eastern Qing-yuan Nunnery] had just been established, there was not yet anyone suitable to succeed her. When Faquan was finally chosen to be the abbess, all the nuns, old and young, were delighted and none bore her the slightest grudge. In the first year of Long-chang (494), Faquan died at the age of eighty-three.

The nuns Jinglian, Senglü, and Huixing were also living in the same nunnery at that time. All of them were famous for their learning.

## 45. Jinghui of Pu-xian Nunnery

Jinghui, originally surnamed Yang, was a native of Jian-kang. She aimed at the Way with a sincere and concentrated mind, and took delight in the Dharma with earnest admiration. When she first received full ordination, she studied under the guidance of Ji and Yuan, and made a profound study into the mysteries of Mahayana teachings with deliberate thought.

Ten years after her ordination, she became a prominent teacher. Both Crown Prince Wenhui and Prince Wenxuan of Jingling of the Qi dynasty were fully convinced of her learning. In the eighth year of Yong-ming (490), the Prince of Jing-ling invited her to lecture on the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra* at his residence. Later, she served as abbess for more than twenty years, and the nuns, old and young, served her with the respect due to parents. More than four hundred persons followed her as disciples. In the tenth year of Yong-ming (492), Jinghui died at the age of seventy-two.

The nuns Sengao and Guangjing were both at the same nunnery. They were also well known for their learning and practice.

## 46. Tanjian of Fa-yin Nunnery

943c

Tanjian, originally surnamed Zhang, was a native of Qing-he. She was a disciple of the nun Fajing and lived in the same nunnery, and she traveled to study in the Huaihui region and propagated the right Dharma. She always considered others before thinking of herself, and her aspiration was to save all living beings.

In the fourth year of Jian-yuan (482) of the Qi dynasty, Tanjian founded the Fa-yin Vihāra. She engaged in silent meditation and mastered the method of *samādhi*. Her fame for virtue spread widely, and her spiritual influence reached far. Both the clergy and the laity venerated her and offered her rich alms.

There was then a Ven. Huiming, who was a person deeply fond of quietude. He originally lived at Dao-lin Monastery, which was

constructed and furnished by Crown Prince Wenhui and Prince Wenxuan of Jing-ling during the Yong-ming period. The monks were mostly scholars learned in Buddhist theories and they often lectured on the scriptures and commentaries. The monastery was a clamorous and bustling place from the coming and going of many people, and Huiming wished to leave it. So Tanjian offered her nunnery to him.

She removed to White Mountain, where she built a thatched hut to shelter herself from wind and rain and lived by begging at the proper time for whatever alms she could collect. She frequently gathered firewood, saying that she was performing a meritorious deed. On the night of the eighteenth day of the second month in the first year of Jian-wu (494), Tanjian mounted a pile of firewood and set it on fire in order to immolate herself as a sacrifice to the Triple Gem. When they saw the fire, [people from] the villages nearby rushed to the spot to rescue her, but when they arrived Tanjian was already dead. The religious devotees and laypeople wailed [in grief], and their voices echoed in the valley. They collected her remains, for which a tomb *caitya* was erected.

#### 47. Jinggui of Fa-yin Nunnery

Jinggui, originally surnamed Zhou, was a native of Jin-ling, but her family had lived in Jian-kang County for three generations. During her childhood, she was intelligent and could understand much after hearing [something only] once. She was by nature unaccustomed to the world and wished to renounce home at an early age. Having sympathy with her, her parents did not oppose her aspirations.

Jinggui became a disciple of the nun Fajing and lived at Fa-yin Nunnery. She was pure and profound in her virtuous conduct, and was widely learned in the scriptures and Vinaya texts. She was pure in the Three Activities and was conversant with the secrets of meditation. Her spiritual attainments were so deep and far-reaching that nobody could fathom them. She neglected her

body and forgot about food, and so she always looked haggard and emaciated. Her vigor and perfect ability to uphold goodness and suppress evil were exemplary for the world.

In teaching and guiding her pupils, Jinggui could in most cases instruct them according to their circumstances. The people of the time respected her with heartfelt admiration. She lived with the nun Tanjian at Fa-yin Nunnery and later moved to White Mountain, where she dwelled under a tree. Her meritorious deeds as well as her spiritual influence became widely known. On the eighth day of the second month in the first year of Jian-wu (494), she immolated herself along with the Tanjian on the same night. Both clergy and laity attended her funeral, sobbing and weeping. Her ashes were collected and buried under a tomb *caitya*.

#### 48. Huixu of Ji-shan Nunnery

944a Huixu, originally surnamed Zhou, was a native of Gao-ping in Lü-qiu. She was a noble and straightforward person with an inaccessible air, and looked more like a man than a woman. Her words and speech were very frank and upright, never dodging anything. When she was seven she became a vegetarian and kept fasts with a firm and steadfast mind. At the age of eighteen she left home to live as a nun at San-ceng Nunnery in Jing-zhou. She observed the Vinaya rules in a perfect manner, winning the praise of both clergy and laypeople.

At that time there was at Jiang-ling a recluse nun who enjoyed a reputation for virtue in the western part of the country. On seeing Huixu, the recluse considered her an unusual person. Despite the difference in their ages, the two [women] practiced the Way together companionably. They stayed at the same place for one summer, practicing the *pratyutpanna samādhi*, exerting themselves mentally and physically day and night without rest.

When Shen Youzhi was the prefectural governor, he enforced a general selective elimination of monks and nuns. Huixu went to

the capital in order to avoid the calamity. When Shen had failed [and fallen from power], she returned to the west.

Xiao Yi, the Prince of Yu-zhang, who was the Chancellor of Military Affairs and Minister of War of the Qi dynasty, went to serve as garrison commander in the regions of Jing and Shan at the end of the Sheng-ming period (477–479) of the Song dynasty. Knowing that Huixu was a person of religious practice, he invited her to his official residence and provided her with the four requisites.

At that time the *dhyāna* master Xuanchang came down from the region of Shu to the region of Jing. Huixu learned the methods of meditation from him and made a thorough study of the subtle mysteries. Xuanchang often praised her, saying that her religious practice in her former existence had not been superficial. She was not only proficient in the practice of meditation, but was also a vegetarian and led a life of strict morality. Because of this, the wife of the Prince of Yu-zhang and the other female members of the royal family highly venerated her and learned the methods of meditation from her.

Whenever Huixu received any gifts, she would distribute them to others at once, never hoarding anything for herself. Her mind was magnanimous and far-reaching, and she never concerned herself about her own living. Prince Xiao Yi invited her to return with him to the capital, where he built a *vihāra* for her, named Fu-tian Nunnery, on the eastern estate of the royal family. She often went to the royal residence to practice the Way.

In the ninth year of Yong-ming (491), Huixu said that she was suddenly suffering from illness. But there was no symptom of real sickness, except that she refused to take food. She became haggard in appearance and bitterly begged to return to her nunnery. As soon as she returned to the nunnery, she became quite well. Ten days later, she was again invited to the royal residence. She was ill again as before, but again nobody knew why. Shortly afterward, when the prince had passed away, calamities and misfortunes befell his family one after another.

In the vicinity of the eastern estate, Emperor Wu (of the Qi dynasty) constructed another convent, Ji-shan Nunnery, and brought all the nuns [from Fu-tian] to live in it. Meanwhile, Fu-tian Nunnery was used separately to lodge foreign monks and masters. The royal family continued to offer alms to those who were good at reciting and chanting charms and spells.

After Huixu went to live at Ji-shan Nunnery, she did not set foot in the royal residence again for several years. People from within and outside the residence highly respected this nun, and often exhorted her to pay a short visit to the inner chambers of the royal house. When Lady Zhu wished to invite the nuns to accept alms of food, she first sent a messenger to consult with and invite Huixu, who said, "Very good. As I am getting old and weak, I really wish at this moment to go to the royal house once to bid farewell to the various good ladies." So she went to the royal residence to take part in the function. After it was over, she asked for paper and writing brush and composed this poem:

To those who know me not,  
My name is Old Zhou.  
Being invited to attend  
A seven-day rite.  
I'll not put an end  
To the ceremony of insight.

*(Baochang's note: There were ten more characters expressing farewell, but I have forgotten them.)*

After writing the poem, Huixu talked and smiled with the people, not differing in the least from her usual lofty demeanor. When she took leave of them, she said, "My return to my nunnery this time is our eternal parting. I am getting old and there will be no further reason for me to come to the royal house again." She was then quite healthy, but a month or so after returning to her nunnery, she fell ill. She did not alter her usual activities and died in a few days, on the twentieth day of the eleventh month of the

first year of Yong-yuan (499). Huixu was then sixty-nine years old. Zhou She wrote an eulogistic epitaph in honor of her.

There was also the nun Desheng, who had the same virtue and shared the same aim as Huixu, and was her [sister] in the Dharma. She practiced the Way and trained herself in contemplation under Huixu's personal instruction.

### **49. Chaoming of Qi-ming Nunnery in Qian-tang**

Chaoming, originally surnamed Fan, was a native of Qian-tang. Her father, named Xian, was a scholar at the National Academy when he was young, and his family had professed the great Dharma for generations. When Chaoming was young, she was clever and intelligent and had noble aspirations. She studied the Five Classics with full understanding of their literal meanings. A person of rectitude and politeness, she was respected by people from both within and outside of her family.

At the age of twenty-one Chaoming lost her husband and lived as a widow. A neighbor asked for her hand in marriage, but she refused and took a vow not to marry again. Thus she renounced secular life and went to live at Chong-yin Nunnery. Her mentality and rationality were brilliant and penetrating, and her discernment of the Way was clear and mindful.

Having heard that Dharma Master Tanzheng, of Bei-zhang Monastery in Wu County, was energetic and austere in his religious practice, Chaoming received full ordination from him. Later, she went to Tu-shan to attend the sermons delivered by Dharma Master Huiji on various scriptures, and she studied the gists of his theories. Whatever she had heard once, she never forgot. Both the gentry and the commoners of the three regions of Wu, as well as those within and outside the palace, respected her. Not long afterward, she returned to Qian-tang and sojourned at Qi-ming Nunnery. In the fifth year of Jian-wu (498), Chaoming died at the age of over sixty.

There was also the nun Fazang, who was famous for her learning and practice.

### **50. Tanyong of Fa-yin Nunnery**

Tanyong was the elder sister of the nun Tanjian. She was by nature firm and straightforward, never bending or changing herself to suit circumstances. She always considered the practice of meditation and the observance of the Vinaya as her moral obligation, and she never bothered about food and clothing. She lived at Fa-yin Vihāra, deeply understanding the truth of impermanence and highly revering the teaching of the unchangeability and bliss of nirvana (liberation).

In the first year of Jian-wu (494), Tanyong moved with Tanjian to White Mountain. During the night of the fifteenth day of the second month in the third year of Yong-yuan (501), she piled up firewood and immolated herself as an offering. Those who witnessed or heard about the event made up their minds to practice the Way. They collected her ashes, for which a tomb *caitya* was erected.

### **51. Dele of Qi-xing Nunnery in Shan County**

Dele, originally surnamed Sun, was a native of Pi-ling. Her great-great-grandfather Yu was the prefectural governor of Yu-zhou during the Jin dynasty. She was born with two teeth in her mouth, and when she had grown up she could often see clearly in a dark room without the aid of a lamp or candle.

Dele wished to leave secular life and, as her parents loved her tenderly, they did not have the heart to stand in her way. When she was eight, she was permitted to enter the religious life together with her sister. They became disciples of the nun Lingguang of Jin. After receiving ordination, both of them went to study in the capital, where they lived at Southern Yong-an Nunnery. They

944c



worked hard day and night with earnest determination. They made thorough studies of the scriptures and the Vinaya, and they spoke in a refined and elegant manner. Emperor Wen of the Song dynasty treated them well.

In the seventh year of Yuan-jia (430), the foreign monk Guṇavarman arrived in the capital. The General of Song established Royal Garden Monastery (on the northern side of the road to Jetavana Monastery) and invited Guṇavarman to stay there. In the eleventh year (434), more than ten nuns arrived from the Land of the Lion, and Dele received full ordination again from Saṃghavarman.

In the twenty-first year (444), the nuns Fajing and Tanlan of the same nunnery were involved in a conspiracy led by Kong Xi-xian. They were punished under the law; the nunnery was demolished and all the nuns dispersed. Dele went to stay at Eastern Qing-yuan Nunnery, where she sought advice about the method of deep meditation and made a thorough study into the subtle sphere of the mind.

After the demise of Emperor Wen (453), Dele traveled east to Kuai-ji and stayed at Zhao-ming Vihāra at White Mountain in Shan County. Students flocked to study under her, and she taught them in an easy and natural manner. Thus the Way flourished in the southeast of the country.

In the fifth year of Yong-ming (487) of the Qi dynasty, Yuan Jian, a devout Buddhist believer of Chen-liu, donated his own residence to establish Qi-xing Vihāra, with Dele as the superioress. Both old and young were pleased with her. People far and near admired her moral integrity, and wished to depend on her as their teacher. She had more than two hundred disciples and never accumulated donations offered to her [but dispensed them]. At the annual preaching meeting, she presented gifts to all monks and nuns equally without discrimination. In the third year of Yong-yuan (501), she died at the age of eighty-one.

There was also the nun Sengmao in Shan County, who was originally surnamed Wang and was a native of Peng-cheng. She

was moderate in food and ate only vegetables, and she sincerely practiced austerities as her regular task. She gave all the gifts she received to support Zhu-yuan Vihāra.

End of Fascicle Three of *Biographies of Buddhist Nuns*

## Fascicle Four

### The Liang Dynasty

#### 52. Jingxiu of Chan-lin Nunnery

Jingxiu, originally surnamed Liang, was a native of Wu-shi in An-ding. Her grandfather, named Chou, was a commander of the troops for subjugating the frontier tribes; her father, Canzhi, was the Marquis of Du-xiang in Long-chuan County.

945a7

Since childhood, Jingxiu was intelligent and farsighted and loved to perform benevolent deeds. At the age of seven, she naturally observed fasts, and she learned about abstaining from eating fish and meat when a monk was invited to recite the *Nirvana Sutra* at her home. After that she became a vegetarian, but she dared not let her parents know about it. Whenever salmon or eel was served, she would secretly throw it away. She received the five precepts from the foreign monk Pulian and observed them strictly without fail. She worshiped the Buddha and read and chanted the scriptures day and night without taking rest.

When Jingxiu was only twelve, she begged her parents to [permit her to] renounce home; but they forbade her to do so. After she had learned to write she often copied scriptures. Whatever money she had she spent for the performance of meritorious deeds. She never sought worldly pleasure, and neither wore embroidered brocade nor used cosmetics. She lived in this manner until she was nineteen, when she was permitted to become a disciple of the nun Yeshou of Qing-yuan Nunnery.

Jingxiu served her teacher with utmost sincerity, still fearing that she might not be up to the mark. She diligently practiced the Way with efforts of body, speech, and mind, never relaxing for a moment from morning till night. She was always at the head of

the community in performing the communal duties of the nunnery, and she toiled in drudgery, offering herself for any work that came her way.

There was then an elder named Ma, who was called a divine person by the people. On seeing Jingxiu, he predicted, “This nun will be reincarnated in the Tuṣita Heaven.”

Benevolent deities protected her with respect and were always around her. Once three nuns were sitting in the shrine hall when they suddenly heard a voice in the air like the bellowing of a bull. The other two nuns were frightened, but Jingxiu remained calm and unperturbed. She went back to her room to fetch a candle. She returned to the shrine hall and just as she was ascending the steps, the voice in the air was again heard, saying, “Nuns, make way! *Dhyāna* teacher Jingxiu is coming back!”

On another day Jingxiu was again sitting in the meditation hall with several other nuns. One of the nuns fell asleep and began to snore. In her sleep she saw a man supporting the hall with his head, and he said to her, “Don’t disturb Bhikṣuṇī Jingxiu!” Later, as Jingxiu was sitting together with the other nuns, one of them rose from her seat for a short while. When she returned to her room, she saw a person stopping her with his hand, saying, “Don’t distract Bhikṣuṇī Jingxiu!”

Jingxiu behaved herself in conformity with the rules laid down in the Vinaya. Once she wished to invite the Dharma master Yao to give lectures on the *Sarvāstivāda-vinaya*, but she had only one thousand *jian* (an amount of cash) and worried that it could not be done. In the night she had a dream, in which she saw crows, magpies, and mynas riding in carriages of appropriate sizes and singing in chorus: “We shall assist Bhikṣuṇī Jingxiu in making arrangements for the lectures!” When the function began, seventy donors turned up to vie with one another in making the best of offerings.

945b

Later Jingxiu also invited the Vinaya master Faying to lecture on the *Sarvāstivāda-vinaya* for a second time. On the day when the title of the text was explained, the water in the washbasin

became fragrant by itself. On that day she had no companion to sit with her in the lecture hall and she feared that this would be an infringement of the rule of good conduct. She inquired of the Vinaya master about it, and he said that it was not so.

On seeing that the nuns were not behaving themselves in perfect accordance with the Dharma, Jingxiu remarked with a sigh, "The Great Light has not gone far, and yet spiritual orderliness has [already] slackened somewhat. If I do not rectify myself, how can I guide others?" Thus she conducted the *mānatva* ceremony of absolution to confess her own offenses. When the community saw this, they all retired one after the other to ponder redress of their faults and made confessions with a sense of shame.

In the seventh year of Yuan-jia (430) of the Song dynasty, the foreign monk Guṇavarman arrived in the capital. His exemplary observance of the Vinaya was pure and sublime, and Jingxiu received ordination again from him. The nuns of Qing-yuan Nunnery all had different ways of understanding [and practicing the Dharma], so she thought of establishing a separate lodging where she could strictly observe the prohibitive rules of the Vinaya outwardly while inwardly fixing her mind on silent contemplation. In this way so she hoped to fulfil her own [spiritual] goals to some extent.

In the eighth month of the seventh year of Da-ming (463) of the Song dynasty, the Princess of Nan-chang, together with Huang Xiuyi, donated a piece of suitable land to her for building a *vihāra*. Jingxiu dressed in hempen clothes and ate coarse food, and personally carried mortar and tiles, working hard on the construction from morning till night. Niches were built and images made, and nothing was in short supply. More than ten fellow nuns lived with her in the *vihāra*. They all practiced meditation as their regular duty. In the third year of Tai-shi (467), Emperor Ming (of the Song dynasty) ordered that, according to those who assembled there, the convent should be named Chan-lin (Meditation Forest) Nunnery.

Jingxiu copied with her own hands various scriptures that were preserved in a scriptural terrace specially built in the nunnery. The two *sāgaranāga* brothers showed their traces for a whole day to signify their patronage. None of Jingxiu's acquaintances who [visited the nunnery] failed to see the phenomenon. Each time she made offerings to the [image of the] Holy Monk, there were always unusual signs left on the fruits and food.

Once Jingxiu performed the seven-day offering ceremony. When it was concluded she concentrated her mind in meditation. In [that state] she saw two foreign monks raising their hands and talking together. One was called Mikkala and the other Vikāra. The robes they wore were of the color of ripe mulberries. So Jingxiu used clay to dye her robes the color she had seen in the vision.

Another time she again invited five hundred arhats from Lake Anavatapta, five hundred arhats from Kāśmīra, and also virtuous monks from the capital to attend a twenty-one-day assembly. On the second day there came another foreign monk, of whom the congregation had doubts. They made inquiries of him, and he said that he had come from Kāśmīra a year before. The doorkeeper was asked to keep an eye on him. Many people saw that he went out of the Song-lin Gate and suddenly disappeared after walking about ten paces.

Once Jingxiu cleaned the image of the Holy Monk. [As she did so,] there was complete silence except for the sound made by the gourd ladle. All the auspicious and supernatural manifestations she experienced were like this.

Crown Prince Wenhui of the Qi dynasty and Prince Wenxuan of Jing-ling accorded her rich hospitality and never failed to offer alms to her. She was invited [to the palace] by imperial decree in the third year of Tian-jian (504) of the Liang dynasty. As she was getting old and feeble and could not walk any more, she was allowed the privilege of riding in a sedan chair to the inner palace.

945c On the seventeenth day of the sixth month of the fifth year (506), Jingxiu felt sorrowful at heart and could not eat or drink anything. On the nineteenth day of the sixth month, Dharma

Master Huiling of Peng-cheng Monastery dreamed that he saw an unusually magnificent hall with columns, which was said to be a palace in the Tuṣita Heaven, and he saw that Jingxiu was in it. When he heard that Jingxiu was ill, Huiling went to see her and gave her an account of his dream. He exhorted her, “Since you have been born in a superb place, don’t forget to receive me.”

Jingxiu said, “The Dharma master, being a great man and having propagated the teachings of the scriptures, should naturally live in an excellent place.”

On the thirteenth day of the seventh month, she felt a little better and had a dream in which she saw banners, canopies, and musical instruments on the west side of the Buddha hall. On the twenty-second day, she invited the clerics with whom she was acquainted to bid farewell to them. On the twenty-seventh day, she told her disciples, “I am going up to the Tuṣita Heaven.” After saying this, Jingxiu died at the age of eighty-nine.

### **53. Sengnian of Chan-lin Nunnery**

Sengnian, originally surnamed Yang, was a native of Nan-cheng at Mount Tai. Her father was an assistant to the governor of Mi-zhou. She was the aunt of Dharma Master Tanrui of Cāturdiśa Monastery. She had a noble character from her early days, and her talented ability of discrimination was brilliant and comprehensive.

Having established her virtue while she was young, Sengnian left home at the age of ten to become a disciple of the nun Fahu and lived with her teacher at Tai-hou Nunnery. She led a life of moral integrity with a mind of austerity, and her contemplative thought was subtle and profound. She was well read and versatile, and her writings were good both in meaning and in composition. She was a vegetarian and performed the ceremony of confession even more earnestly during her old age. She recited the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* seven times in one day and night.

Both Emperor Wen and Emperor Xiaowu of the Song dynasty often provided her with substantial aid. During the Yong-ming period of the Qi dynasty, Sengnian went to live at Chan-lin Nunnery. Her mode of meditation became very popular, and she had numerous students. The Prince of Jing-ling, who was the Minister of Civil Affairs, supported her with the four requisites. In the third year of Tian-jian (504) of the Liang dynasty, she died at the age of ninety. Her remains were buried in the village of Zhong-xing in Mo-ling County.

### 54. Tanhui of Chang-le Nunnery in Cheng-du

Tanhui, originally surnamed Qingyang and named Baiyu, was a native of Cheng-du. When she was young she took delight in practicing the Way, but her parents did not allow her to do so.

In the ninth year of Yuan-jia (432), the foreign *dhyāna* master Kālayaśas came to the region of Shu to teach meditation and contemplation. Tanhui, who was then eleven, begged her mother to invite the *dhyāna* master, as she wished to inquire of him about the methods of meditation; her mother consented. The moment Kālayaśas saw her, he remarked with admiration that the child possessed prenatal competence and he asked her to practice meditation. He told the nun Fayu to assist her.

But Tanhui's mother had already betrothed her to the son of her paternal aunt. As the date of wedding was fixed, nothing could be done to alter the plan. Bhikṣuṇī Fayu secretly took the girl to her nunnery, and Tanhui made a deep vow, saying, "If I cannot fulfill my religious purpose and I am forced to do anything else, I will burn myself to death."

946a

Hearing of this matter, the Prefectural Governor Zhen Fachong dispatched a messenger to invite Tanhui. He assembled the chief officials together with their assistants and various people of renown, and requested the presence of the monks and nuns to carry out a



thorough investigation of the matter. Zhen Fachong asked, “Do you think that you can lead the homeless life?”

Tanhui replied, “That has been my humble wish for a long time. Now I beg for your help and support.”

Fachong said, “Good.” He then sent a messenger to consult with her aunt, who readily accepted the governor’s instructions.

Tanhui renounced home when she was just thirteen years old, under the instruction of the nun Fayu, from whom she learned a method of meditation. Immediately after she had received her first lesson, she went to sit at the last seat and entered *samādhi*. She saw two rays of light in the east. One was as white as the sun and the other was pale blue like the moon. In this state of *samādhi* she thought that the white light must represent the path of the bodhisattva, while the blue one must signify the Dharma of the *śrāvaka*, and that if this were truly the case, the blue light should fade away while the white one would glow brighter. In response to this thought, the bluish light vanished and the white ray brightened.

When Tanhui emerged from *samādhi*, she told this to Bhikṣuṇī Fayu who, being skilled in the way of contemplation, was delighted to hear about it and extolled her with praise. There were then more than forty persons sitting together with her, and all of them marveled at this rare occurrence.

Later Tanhui’s betrothed, suspecting that she was deceiving him, led a raid against her and abducted her to his home. Tanhui, who was then sixteen years old, guarded herself against the assault with the aid of her maidservant. Her fiancé was then at the end of his tether. She sued him through the prefectural government. The governor appreciated her unusual conduct and consulted with Kālayaśas, who said, “This person is endowed with intelligence. It would be prudent not to act against her wishes. If her fiancé’s family is willing to settle the case and is short of money to cover expenses, I have a servant whom I can spare to make a contribution.” In this way the problem was solved.

Later, in the course of meditation [practice], Tanhui came to understand the immutability of the Buddha-nature and other Mahayana doctrines that her teacher had not taught her. Various well-known teachers of the time tried their utmost to raise difficult questions to test her, but nobody could baffle her. Thus her fame spread far and near, and she won the trust of all people.

In the nineteenth year of Yuan-jia (442) of the Song dynasty, the Prince of Liu-chuan came to govern South Yan-zhou. He invited Tanhui to his residence when she was twenty-one years old. When the prince was given the title of General of Biao-qi [and so began] to administer the region of Shan, he brought her to the southern part of Chu. One thousand two hundred men and women, both clergy and laypeople, served her as their teacher with great respect and honor.

Months and years passed. Tanhui longed to see her mother and insisted on returning to her home village. As she was distinguished by her virtuous deeds, her disciples increased day by day. To the northwest of the bridge at the market, she built a temple with a stupa. The shrine rooms, halls, sidehouses, and corridors were completed very quickly. She also constructed three more nunneries, all of which were finished with such amazing speed that the people marveled at her and remarked that she possessed spiritual powers. In the third year of Tian-jian (504), Tanhui died at the age of eighty-three.

One time, when Zhang Jun was with his parents in Yi-zhou, he suddenly went straight to visit Tanhui without previous notice. More than thirty guests who had come along with him had just sat down when fruits, rice dumplings, and other seasonal delicacies were immediately served. Later, the prefectural governor Liu Quan also went with his friends [to visit Tanhui], and the same thing happened.

946b

The Prince of Xuan-wu of the Liang dynasty once sent provisions to Tanhui to prepare a feast for a hundred persons. He said that he would not join the gathering, but in the middle of the event

he went there in person and found that there were as many as three hundred monks and some of his assistant officials, nearly four hundred persons in all. At the moment when they were going to perform a religious ceremony, Tanhui sent a maidservant to ask people to help serve the food. Some people were sent to her, and they saw that only two of her disciples and two maidservants were preparing the food without the aid of any other servants. The prince remarked with still greater admiration, “She is unfathomable!”

Once somebody asked Tanhui, “I see that you and your disciples possess no more assets than a middle-class family. How is it that you can do things in such a marvelous way?”

She said in reply, “This poor person never had any savings. Whenever I am in need of money, I just manage to have three or five pieces of gold to spend. Each time I need some money, it comes to me in a way that I do not know.” That person who had talked with her thought that she had an inexhaustible treasury.

There was also the nun Huaguang, who was originally surnamed Xianyu and who had a penetrating understanding of the abstruse subtlety of deep meditation and marvelous insight. She was well-read in the Tripiṭaka as well as in the philosophies of various schools. She was particularly good at writing compositions, and she wrote an encomium in praise of Tanhui with well-regulated phrasing that was not contrary to literary elegance.

### **55. Feng of Lang-zhong Nunnery in the Illegal Capital of Gao-chang**

Bhikṣuṇī Feng, originally surnamed Feng, was a native of Gao-chang. Out of respect for her, people of the time addressed her by her surname. She renounced home at the age of thirty and went to live at Lang-zhong Nunnery in the capital of Gao-chang. Taking only one vegetarian meal a day, she observed the Vinaya rules strictly. By way of fervent devotion she burned six of her fingers, all right up to the palms, and recited the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*

once every three days.

There was then a Dharma master named Fahui, whose religious devotion surpassed that of all others. He was the preceptor of all the nuns in the whole country of Gao-chang. Some time later, Feng suddenly said to Fahui, “*Ācārya* (teacher), you are not yet perfect. Let me be a virtuous friend to you. You, *ācārya*, should go to the kingdom of Kucha, where, under the tent of the Golden Flower Monastery, you may listen to the monk on monthly duty and gain the supreme Dharma.”

Fahui listened to her and accepted her advice. He went to that monastery and saw the monk, who was pleased and offered him a pint of grape wine to drink. Fahui was amazed, “I have come to seek the supreme Dharma, but here you are giving me wine to drink.” When he refused to drink the forbidden beverage, the monk shoved him and ordered him out at once.

Fahui withdrew and thought to himself, “I have come from a great distance but have not achieved my intention. Perhaps I should not disobey him.” Then he drank the wine in one gulp and became intoxicated. He vomited and lost consciousness in a state of total stupor. Meanwhile the monk went away. When Fahui sobered up, he realized that he had violated the Vinaya rules, to his great repentance. He deeply regretted what he had done and intended to take his own life. While he was thinking in this way, he attained the third stage of arhatship. The monk returned and asked him, “Have you achieved it?”

Fahui replied, “Yes!” Then he set out on his return journey to Gao-chang.

946c When he was still two hundred *li* away, Bhikṣuṇī Feng, without being informed beforehand, called the community of nuns to go out and greet him from a great distance. This was an example of her foreknowledge.

All the nuns of Gao-chang honored Feng as their teacher. In the third year of Tian-jian (504) of the Liang dynasty, she died at the age of ninety-six.

## **56. Huisheng of Xian-ju Nunnery of the Liang Dynasty**

Huisheng, originally surnamed Tang, was a native of Peng-cheng. Her father, Sengzhi, took up his abode at Jian-kang. Huisheng wished to renounce home when she was young, and she conducted herself with rectitude. She seldom spoke, and whatever she said she put into practice without being frivolous or impetuous. She often remained indoors for ten days at a stretch, and all those who observed her behavior could not but venerate her with unusual respect.

In the twenty-first year of Yuan-jia (444) of the Song dynasty, Huisheng renounced secular life at the age of eighteen as a disciple of Bhikṣuṇī Jingxiu and went to live at Chan-lin Nunnery. After receiving full ordination, she lectured on the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra* and studied the *dhyāna* of five practices under Bhikṣuṇī Huixu of Ji-shan Nunnery. Later she learned various methods of contemplation from both Siyin of Cao-tang Monastery and Faying of Ling-gen Monastery.

Huisheng had unusual features and marvelous realization, and she possesses unique understanding. When people asked her about it, she said in reply, “Confess all your sins immediately, whether they are grave or trivial, and make repentance with earnestness day and night.”

Both noblemen and commoners honored her with respect and offered alms to her incessantly. In the fourth year of Tian-jian (505) of the Liang dynasty, Huisheng died at the age of eighty-one. Her remains were buried on Bai-ban Mountain.

## **57. Jingxian of Eastern Qing-yuan Nunnery**

Jingxian, originally surnamed Hong, was a native of Yong-shi. Living at Eastern Qing-yuan Nunnery, she was a person of capability and talent and was fond of practicing meditation. She was

well versed in the sutras and the Vinaya, and her words were always refined and honest. Although she did not give lectures, she made profound studies of all the essential teachings.

Emperor Wen of the Song dynasty treated her cordially. As a child, the Prince of Xiang-dong used to suffer from nightmares, but after receiving the Three Refuges from Bhikṣuṇī Jingxian by imperial order, he was cured. After this, the emperor treated her even more cordially, offering her rich donations with great respect, and people within and outside the palace presented personal gifts to her.

When Emperor Ming ascended the throne (465), he honored Jingxian with even more respect and provided her with abundant offerings. Feasts were prepared and lectures arranged one after the other without cease. All the famous scholars of the time honored her as their teacher. Later, she took charge of the affairs of the nunnery for more than ten years. She died at the age of seventy-five, in the fourth year of Tian-jian (505) of the Liang dynasty.

There were also Huigao and Baoyong, both of whom were well-known figures. Huigao sat in meditation and recited scriptures, and diligently managed the affairs of the community. Baoyong lectured on the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* and had a clear understanding of the practice of contemplation.

## 58. Jingyuan of Zhu-yuan Nunnery

Jingyuan, originally surnamed Shi, was a native of Ju-lu. When she was a child she had the intelligence of an adult. At the age of five or six, she often collected sand to build stupas and carved wooden images. She venerated them by burning incense for a whole day, yet [even then] she did not feel that she had sufficiently venerated them. Whenever she heard people saying anything, she would always make thorough inquiries to find out the truth.

Jingyuan renounced secular life at the age of twenty. She thought fondly of her parents, and would neither eat nor sleep but drank only water to observe a fast. She refused to listen to

remonstrances and fasted for seven days, after which she became a strict vegetarian. She strictly observed the Vinaya rules with endurance without being taught to do so. Her teachers and friends respected her with admiration, and she was praised by people far and near. 947a

Crown Prince Wenhui of the Qi dynasty greatly honored her and offered her the four daily requisites, and messengers were dispatched to send letters to her frequently. In the fifth year of Tianjian (506), Jingyuan died at the age of seventy-one.

### 59. Jingxing of Zhu-yuan Nunnery

Jingxing was the fifth younger sister of Bhikṣuṇī Jingyuan. When she was a child, her intellect was fine and brilliant and her far-sightedness firm and comprehensive. She had a frank and upright character and was a person of aspirations. Her manners and deportment were always extraordinary.

When Jingxing was young she was acquainted with Lady Zang, the wife of Guo Qia, the Chief Fodder Supplier. Guo Qia intended to murder his wife, and word of it leaked out in the streets. Jingxing asked her elder brother to admonish Guo Qia, but Guo Qia would not listen to him. Jingxing secretly told Lady Zang, but the lady did not believe it. Holding the lady's hands, Jingxing wept sorrowfully and then returned home. A few days later, Guo Qia did indeed murder his wife.

At the age of seventeen, Jingxing renounced secular life under the tutorship of Bhikṣuṇī Fashi and went to live at Zhu-yuan Nunnery. She studied the *Satyasiddhi-sāstra* and the *Abhidharmakośa*, as well as the *Nirvana Sutra* and the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra*. Whenever she saw the beginning of anything, she could [immediately] comprehend its object and meaning. Her studies were deep and abstruse and she could debate extensively without limit.

Xiao Ziliang, Prince Wenxuan of Jing-ling of the Qi dynasty, provided her with rich alms. The Dharma masters Sengzong and Baoliang held her in great esteem. Whenever she was invited to

give a sermon, the audience always consisted of several hundred people. In the official residence and in the nunneries, religious functions were performed continuously, and none of the advanced teachers of the time could defeat her in argumentation.

Later, the Prince of Jing-ling classified the learned monks and nuns into different ranks with the intention of compiling a record of the sangha. But nobody was found to equal Jingxing. There was a nun who was intelligent and exceptionally well learned, and who could debate extensively in a miraculous way. Jingxing was particularly intimate with her, and the other nuns also regarded her as a budding young person who could match Jingxing.

During her old age, Jingxing took delight in meditation and contemplation, and lived the austere life of a vegetarian. When the emperor heard about her, he praised her highly with admiration. In the eighth year of Tian-jian (509), she died at the age of sixty-six. Her remains were buried on Zhong Mountain.

## **60. Shi Lingyu of Southern Jin-ling Nunnery**

Lingyu, originally surnamed Cai, was a native of Jian-kang. When she was young, she left home and lived in a meditation cell at Empress He's Nunnery as a disciple of Bhikṣuṇī Jingyao, who observed the Vinaya rules in a pure and faultless manner and whose practice of meditation surpassed all others.

When Lingyu was young, she served her teacher respectfully and diligently without negligence. When she began to observe the ten precepts, she behaved herself quite properly. When she received full ordination, she kept the prohibitive rules in a manner as pure as ice and frost. She widely studied the Five Texts, probing into their deep meaning in a marvelous way, and was able to write expositions for their elucidation.

The Prince of Shao-ling of the Song dynasty greatly respected Lingyu and invited her to be the abbess of Southern Jin-ling Nunnery, but she resolutely declined and would not take up the post.



The prince could not force her but he reported the matter to the emperor reigning in the Yuan-hui period (473–477), who sanctioned the appointment by imperial decree. Thus Lingyu could no longer evade the duty and served in the post for a number of years.

She was dignified without being proud and inspired awe without showing severity. In the eighth year of Tian-jian (509) of the Liang dynasty, Lingyu died at the age of seventy-six.

947b

In the same nunnery there were also Linghui, Jieren, and Huili, all persons of renown. Linghui recited the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka*, the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, the *Śrīmālādevīsīṃhanāda*, and other sutras. She was assiduous and lived as a vegetarian, serving as a prominent example to the entire community. Jieren was intelligent and fond of learning, and she never forgot whatever she had set her eyes on. Huili had a correct understanding of emptiness and never deceived others nor competed for anything.

### 61. Sengshu of Xian-ju Nunnery

Sengshu, originally surnamed Huai, was a native of Peng-cheng. Her father, Sengzhen, emigrated to live at Jian-kang. When Sengshu was young, she set her mind on the Way. She became a vegetarian at the age of eight. When she was nineteen, in the twenty-fourth year of Yuan-jia (477) of the Song dynasty, she left secular life under the tutorship of Bhikṣuṇī Jingxiu of Chan-lin Nunnery.

Sengshu's moral practice was pure and austere, and she was without any defect in her religious discretion. She fixed her mind on the study of the sutras and the Vinaya texts, which she read thoroughly. Later she made a special effort to study the *Sarvaśtī-vāda-vinaya* and gained a complete understanding of the meaning of the text. She also received from the Dharma masters Yin and Shen the secret of contemplation and the method of perfect *samādhi*. She then went to live at Chan-lin Nunnery, where she was honored as a teacher of meditation.

The people coming and going and gathering around her made the nunnery a clamorous place, so Sengshu had the intention to live in seclusion. On hearing this, Imperial Lady Zhang, mother of the Prince of Liu-chuan of the Song dynasty, gave up her residence for the purpose of making it a nunnery. But at that time establishing a nunnery at will was not allowed. Not until the first day of the ninth month in the second year of Yuan-hui (474), when Lady Wu Chonghua, mother of the Prince of Ru-nan, presented a petition to the emperor, was imperial permission granted for the construction of the nunnery. It consisted of more than fifty halls and shrines and other rooms and houses, in which Sengshu lived with twenty of her companions of the same aspiration, taking delight in silent meditation. It was named Xian-ju Nunnery.

Whether active or remaining quiet, Sengshu always maintained morality and was never frivolous or ostentatious. During the Song and Qi dynasties, when the country was in turmoil, she continued to practice meditation and lived in peace, unperturbed by worldly concerns. Both Crown Prince Wenhui and Prince Wenxuan of Jingling in the Qi dynasty treated her with great honor. They renovated the whole nunnery, making everything brilliant and splendid, and offered alms throughout the four seasons without cease. When the great [Emperor] Liang established sovereignty and restored order in the country, both the laity and the clergy respected and gathered around Sengshu like clouds from distant places of the four quarters.

Sengshu never kept any private property. Whatever she received she distributed to help the four groups of Buddhist followers, or to release living creatures, or for almsgiving. She made five golden images, all of which were magnificent and beautiful, and had more than one thousand fascicles of sutras and Vinaya texts copied. Their labels, wrappers, ribbons, and rollers were exquisitely decorated with precious ornaments.

In the fourteenth year of Tian-jian (515) in the Liang dynasty, Sengshu died at the age of eighty-four. Her remains were buried on the southern side of Zhong Mountain.

## 62. Miaoyi of Western Qing-yuan Nunnery

Miaoyi, originally surnamed Liu, was a native of Jian-kang. When she was a child, her marvelous ingenuity was fine and outstanding. She renounced home and went to live at Western Qing-yuan Nunnery while she was young, and she observed the Vinaya rules spotlessly, with superior and brilliant spirituality. Her sincere faithfulness and charitable deeds were remembered by the people. She was fond of talking and was particularly good at making humorous remarks.

Miaoyi lectured on the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*, and the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra* more than thirty times altogether, and also expounded the *Sarvāstivāda-vinaya* on different occasions to guide and benefit many people. In the twelfth year of Tian-jian (513), she died at the age of seventy.

947c

## 63. Shi Huihui of Le-an Nunnery

Huihui, originally surnamed Luo, was a native of Qing-zhou. At the age of six, she took delight in the Way, but her parents did not allow [her to renounce home]. When she reached the age of eleven, she stopped eating meat, fish, and pungent roots. She was pure and simple with a noble and expansive mind, and her demeanor and features were serene and elegant. She recited the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* and chanted the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*.

When Huihui was seventeen, she went to the capital with her father. She was energetic and vigorous, and did what others could not do. Out of affectionate pity for her, her parents [at last] allowed her to fulfill her wish. At the age of eighteen, she left home and went to live at Le-an Nunnery. She attended lectures given by the four Dharma masters Bin, Ji, Rou, and Ci on the *Satyasiddhi-śāstra* and the *Nirvana Sutra*, as well as other texts.

Over a ten-year period, her learning thrived like a forest of knowledge, and all the nuns in the capital received instruction from her. From then on, preaching meetings were held frequently

and people assembled from distant places in the four quarters. Huihui lectured and discussed without rest, and practiced meditation and chanting without interruption. She fixed her mind on right remembrance day and night, even foregoing sleep.

All the princes and dukes and both noble and humble people highly respected Huihui. Alms from the ten directions were offered to her in abundance throughout the four seasons. Whatever wealth she received she spent for copying scriptures and making images or for almsgiving whenever it was needed. If there was anything unspent, she would use it for the renovation of Le-an Nunnery, in which everything was new and well kept.

In the thirteenth year of Tian-jian (514), Huihui died at the age of seventy-three. Her remains were buried on Stone Hill.

There was also Huiyin, whose daily task was to worship the Buddha and recite the scriptures.

#### **64. Shi Daogui of Di-shan Nunnery**

Daogui, originally surnamed Shou, was a native of Chang-an. As a child, she was peaceful and simple by nature and was good at studying the principles of nature. A person of aspirations and abilities, she was assiduous and rigorous and lived more ascetically than others. She vowed to spread the Great Edification (i.e., the Buddha-Dharma) and did not eat fish or meat. Her purpose was to aid others and she was content with ragged clothes for herself.

Daogui recited the *Śrīmālādevīsīḥanāda-sūtra* and the *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra* both day and night. Out of affection for her, her parents permitted her to lead the religious life. She renounced home at the age of seventeen and widely read the scriptures and Vinaya texts, making a thorough study of their meaning. She did not covet name and fame, but regarded the practice of the Way as her daily task. She constantly practiced meditation whether walking or sitting. When she repented her faults or made religious vows, her words were so sincere and touching that those who heard them were filled with deep veneration.

Xiao Ziliang, Prince Wenxuan of Jing-ling of the Qi dynasty, treated her with respect and built Di-shan Nunnery [Editor's note: The Taishō text has the characters "Ding-shan" here, but the context makes clear that this is the same nunnery as that named in the heading for this section.] for her in order to bring together a group of *chan* (*dhyāna*) practitioners. He invited Daogui to take charge of the nunnery, but she adamantly declined his invitation. When she was asked to be a model for meditation, she consented.

Then she took up her abode in the forest, where she lived for the rest of her life. Even when dense clouds enshrouded the sun or deep snow buried the mountain, Daogui would still sit up straight in meditation without interruption. Whatever alms she received from devotees she would use for performing meritorious deeds in an extensive way. She never spent any of it for her own benefit.

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In the fifteenth year of Tian-jian (516), Daogui died at the age of eighty-six. Her remains were buried on the southern side of Zhong Mountain.

## **65. Shi Faxuan of Zhao-ming Nunnery in Shan-yin**

Faxuan, originally surnamed Wang, was a native of Shan County. Her father, Daoji, professed the right Dharma because of family tradition. As a child, Faxuan had the aspiration to leave the world (i.e., renounce secular life). When she was only seven years old, she became a vegetarian and led an austere life of self-restraint. When she was eighteen, she recited the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* and acquired a thorough understanding of its gist from beginning to end.

Faxuan always saw a canopy suspended over her whether she was sitting or sleeping. When a matchmaker suddenly came to her, she refused the proposal with a vow. When she was twenty-four, her parents took her to the nun Dele of Qi-ming Nunnery in Shan County, where she took robes in order to observe the prohibitive rules. On that day the canopy disappeared by itself.

Faxuan read the scriptures widely and delved deeply into the substance of the teachings. After she had received ordination, the people of the time, whether in the countryside or in the capital, both the laity or the renowned, and religious figures of theoretical studies, were convinced of her diligence and profundity.

In the latter part of the Song dynasty, there was a Dharma master named Sengrou who traveled around east China giving lectures on sutras and *sāstras*. From the Tu and Sheng Mountains, he went to the Cave of Yu, or he ascended Ling-yin and journeyed to Gu-su. Sengrou enumerated the gist of the *sāstras*, while Huichu expounded the essence of the sutras. Faxuan thoroughly mastered the subtle points and completely understood the profound teachings of them all.

During the Yong-ming period of the Qi dynasty, Faxuan also received instruction in the *Sarvāstivāda-vinaya* from Dharma Master Huixi. What learning she absorbed was improved daily, and what she comprehended increased every month. Then she went to live at Zhao-ming Nunnery in Shan-yin. [There] she lectured on sutras and Vinaya texts one after the other, enjoying a high reputation in the region of Yu-yue.

Faxuan did not keep private property, but spent all gifts and donations on the renovation and decoration of the buildings of the nunnery, the structure of which was so fine and beautiful that it looked like the work of divine hands. It was completely furnished with copied sutras and images cast in metal.

Zhang Yuan of Wu Prefecture, Yu Yong of Ying-chuan, and Zhou Yong of Ru-nan, prominent personages of the time, all went in person to pay their respects to her. When Xiao Zhaozhou, the Prince of Ba-ling of the Qi dynasty, was governor of Kuai-ji, he provided her with rich offerings. Prince Yuanjian of Heng-yang of the Liang dynasty came to the prefecture to invite her to be his mother's teacher. In the fifteenth year of Tian-jian (516) of the Liang dynasty, Faxuan died at the age of eighty-three.

End of Fascicle Four of *Biographies of Buddhist Nuns*

**The Journey of the  
Eminent Monk Faxian**

Translated from the Chinese of Faxian  
(Taishō Volume 51, Number 2085)

by

Li Rongxi





## Translator's Introduction

*The Journey of the Eminent Monk Faxian*, also known as *A Record of Buddhist Countries*, is an account of the travels of Faxian, who began his journey to India by land in 399 C.E. and returned to China by sea in 414. As he mentions at the beginning of this work, Faxian's purpose was to acquire and bring back texts on the Buddhist monastic rules and precepts (Vinaya) for Chinese monks.

When Buddhism was first introduced to China, in the first century C.E., missionaries from India and Central Asia brought texts consisting of the fundamental teachings of the Buddha, but not those concerning the monastic rules, the Vinaya. The monastic rules were considered important only for those who had renounced secular life to become monks and form an organized sangha (community of monks). But there were not yet many monastics or would-be monastics in the early stages of the propagation of Buddhism in China. Much later, during the third century C.E., the Central Indian monk Dharmakāla introduced the Vinaya to China. Dharmakāla came to Luo-yang in the Jia-ping period (249–254), during the reign of Prince Qi of the Wei dynasty (220–265). He was learned in both Mahayana and Hinayana canonical works and Vinaya texts.

Though there were at the time some who had decided to lead a religious life according to Buddhist teachings, they could hardly be called *bhikṣus* (monks) in the strict sense of the term. These unordained recluses shaved their hair to distinguish themselves from the laity. But as they had not studied the Vinaya, which provided rules for the monks' daily activities and ordination ceremonies, and spelled out how to form a legitimate sangha, they knew nothing of the proper lifestyle of a *bhikṣu*. These renunciants asked Dharmakāla to translate the Vinaya texts into Chinese.

Dharmakāla thought that the *Vinaya-piṭaka*, the entire corpus of Vinaya texts, was too voluminous to be translated into Chinese, and that other doctrinal texts, rather than Vinaya texts, should be introduced first. So he translated only a short text, the *Mahāsāṃghika-vinaya-hṛdaya*. He also initiated the ceremony of ordination for Chinese monks. This constituted the introduction of the Vinaya to China.

At about the same time in Loyang, from 254–256, Dharmakīrti, a monk from Parthia, translated the *Dharmagupta-karman* into Chinese. The *Bhikṣuprātimokṣa* must have also been translated into Chinese around this time as well, for an extant record indicates that Sun Hao, the ruler of Wu (r. 264–280), wished to read the *Bhikṣuprātimokṣa* but was not allowed to do so, as the text was written exclusively for monks and was not for laypeople.

This, then, is the historical situation that inspired Faxian to undertake a perilous journey to India in order to seek more Vinaya texts. He departed from Chang-an in 399.

A few years later, on the seventeenth day of the tenth month in 404, Puṇyatara, a monk from Kaśmīra (present-day Kashmir), began the work of translating into Chinese a more complete Vinaya text, the *Sarvāstivāda-vinaya*, in cooperation with the monk Kumārajīva. But Puṇyatara died before completing the work, having translated only about two-thirds of the text, and the work was suspended. Dharmaruci, a monk from Kucha, who arrived in the Chinese capital in 405, was asked to continue the translation with Kumārajīva, who died in 409 (or 412, according to some sources). The translation of this important text was begun while Faxian was traveling in India. Had such a comprehensive Vinaya text been available in Chinese a few years earlier, Faxian would probably not have risked his life to go to India.

In 410, Buddhayaśas translated into Chinese the *Dharmagupta-vinaya*, in sixty fascicles. This Vinaya text was later studied and followed by the majority of Chinese Buddhist monks. Faxian also obtained the original Sanskrit version of this text in India.

But, after returning to China, he did not translate the text, perhaps because it had already been translated by Buddhayaśas.

Faxian's major contribution was his translation of the *Mahā-sāṃghika-vinaya*, in forty fascicles. He completed this work around 418 with the help of Buddhabhadra, a native of Kapilavastu. Around the same time, Buddhabhadra translated the *Avatamsaka-sūtra* at Jiankang (present-day Nanjing).

Faxian also brought back to China the Sanskrit text of the *Mahīśāsaka-vinaya*, but did not translate it. In 424, four years after Faxian's death, Buddhajīva, a monk from Kaśmīra, translated this text into Chinese in an edition of thirty fascicles.

Faxian appears to have been a man of iron will. At the age of sixty-five he faced the hardships of travel and returned home an old man of seventy-nine. He had only seven years remaining in which to fulfill his ambition of propagating the Vinaya in China. But he was able to bring back many Vinaya texts that were then unknown in China, so his journey was a success. Furthermore, he has given to posterity an account of his travels to India and to the countries of Central Asia that describes not only the state of Buddhism at the time, but also the cultures and customs of the people he met during his fourteen years abroad.

Faxian had three elder brothers, all of whom died young. Fearing that Faxian might suffer the same fate as his brothers, his father sent him to a monastery to become a novice at the tender age of three. His father believed that monastic life would ward off premature death. Faxian died a monk at the ripe old age of eighty-six at Xin Monastery in Jinzhou, in the present-day province of Hupei.

Several editions of this work have appeared in different collections of the Tripiṭaka and separate editions have been published by individuals. It is therefore inevitable that variant readings may appear. Texts were hand-copied and it was very easy for scribes to make mistakes. Because most Chinese characters are similar in structure, they may be easily misread by a careless scribe. There

are ambiguous sections in the text due to errors of transcription, and readers of later generations must correct them through comparative studies and textual research.

Some mistakes are obvious. For instance, at the beginning of this work, Faxian is said to have started his journey “in the second year of Hong-shi, the cyclical year of Ji-hai.” This is a self-contradictory statement—the second year of Hong-shi falls in the cyclical year of Geng-zi (400), not Ji-hai. If it were Ji-hai, then it would have to have been the first year of Hong-shi (399). The Chinese characters for “Ji-hai” are more complicated in structure and hence less liable to be miswritten than the character for “one,” which is simply a short horizontal stroke. A careless transcriber may add another short horizontal stroke to it and create the character for “two” (or second). Thus the character indicating the cyclical year of Ji-hai is more likely to be correct than the simple character for the number “two.” This is proved by collateral evidence provided by other works, such as the *Biographies of Eminent Monks* compiled by Huijiao of the Liang dynasty. The third fascicle of that work relates that Faxian left Chang-an in the third year of the Long-an period (397–401) of the Jin dynasty, which corresponds to 399 C.E.

In this translation, I followed the text contained in the Taishō edition of the Tripitaka, with a few exceptions where the context required me to follow the readings given in the footnotes rather than those in the text itself.

In the epilogue to his edition of the *The Life of Faxian*, Hu Zhenheng, a scholar who flourished during the Wan-li period (1573–1620) of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), pointed out some editorial inconsistencies in the text. Since they do not affect the contents of this work as a whole, I will refrain from going into detail about his remarks.

**THE JOURNEY OF THE  
EMINENT MONK FAXIAN**

A Record of the Journey to India of Shi Faxian,  
a Śramaṇa of the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317–420)



While Faxian was living in Chang-an, he deplored the fact that the *Vinaya-piṭaka* was incomplete. Thus, in the second year of Hong-shi, the cyclical year of Ji-hai, he set out for India with his intimate friends Huijing, Daozheng, Huiying, and Huiwei to seek Vinaya texts.

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Beginning the journey in Chang-an, they crossed the Long Mountains and reached the country governed by Qifu Quiangui. There they spent the summer in retreat. After the summer retreat, they proceeded to the country ruled by the Tufa Rutan and crossed the Yang-lou Mountains before reaching the garrison town of Zhang-ye, which was then in great turmoil. The roads were impassable. Out of hospitality, the Prince of Zhang-ye invited them to stay and acted as their supporter. Thus they met [the monks] Zhiyan, Huijian, Sengshao, Baoyun, and Sengjing. Pleased to learn that they were all traveling for the same purpose, the monks stayed together to observe the summer retreat.

When the summer retreat was over, they proceeded to Dun-huang, where there was a fortified region about eighty *li* from east to west and forty *li* from south to north. They stayed there for over a month, then Faxian and his group, five persons in all, parted from Baoyun and the others and resumed the journey with a messenger. Li Hao, the governor of Dun-huang, provided them with the necessities required to sustain life when crossing the desert. In the desert there were many evil spirits and frequent hot winds. Those who encountered them all died; none could hope to escape with a whole skin. Not a bird flew above, nor any beast roamed below. As far as the eye could see, there was no road anywhere on which to cross the desert. Only the skeletons of dead persons served as road markers.

After traveling for seventeen days, covering a distance of about fifteen hundred *li*, the group reached the country of Shan-shan. It was a rugged and barren land. The laypeople dressed in roughly the same manner as the Han people, except that their garments were made of felt or coarse cloth. The ruling prince professed the Dharma, and there were about four thousand monks,

all belonging to the Hinayana school. All the laypeople and monks of the various countries practiced the Dharma of India, some of them more strictly and some less so. From here westward, all the countries [of Central Asia] were similar in that while the indigenous languages differed from country to country, all the monks studied the old Indian texts and languages.

Having stayed there for one month, the group then continued their journey to the northwest. After fifteen days, they reached the country of Agni. In this country there were also about four thousand monks of the Hinayana school who observed the Dharma in a perfect manner. Monks from China were not accepted as members of the sangha. With the help of Fu Gongsun, a monk serving in the refectory, Faxian stayed there for more than two months and then rejoined Baoyun and the others.

857b The people of Agni lacked training in the rules of courtesy and treated their guests inhospitably. So Zhiyan, Huijian, and Huiwei returned to Gao-chang with the intention of procuring necessities for the journey, while Faxian and his group proceeded directly southwest with the supplies provided by Fu Gongsun. There were no inhabitants along the way and the journey was very difficult. The hardships they experienced were beyond human understanding.

After one month and five days' travel, they managed to reach Khotan. In this rich and happy country the people lived in prosperity and believed and took delight in the Dharma. The monks numbered in the tens of thousands and most of them studied Mahayana Buddhism. Adequate food was given to the community of monks. The people of this country were as numerous as the stars in the sky. Each house had a small stupa erected in front of the door, the smallest ones being about twenty feet in height. There were dwellings to provide lodgings and other requisites for guest monks from the four quarters.

The lord of the country lodged Faxian and his party in a monastery called Gomati. It was a Mahayana establishment. Three thousand monks partook of their meals together at the sound of



a drum. When they entered the refectory, they behaved with sedate propriety and took their seats in due order. All was quiet, and they used their almsbowls without making any noise. When they wished to refill their bowls, they were not allowed to call out, but would simply wave their hands at the attendants.

Huijing, Daozheng, and Huida went on ahead to the country of Khaśa, while Faxian and the others, wishing to witness the image-welcoming procession, remained behind for three months.

In this country, there were fourteen large monasteries, not counting the smaller ones. Starting on the first day of the fourth month, the streets of the city were swept clean and sprinkled with water, and the lanes and roads were decorated. A large canopy was stretched over the city gate, and everything was well adorned. The king and his queen, along with their maidservants, were seated under the canopy at the city gate. The king respected the monks of Gomati Monastery who belonged to the Mahayana school, so they were the first to parade their Buddha image in the procession.

At a distance of three or four *li* from the city, a four-wheeled cart over thirty feet high had been constructed in the shape of a mobile shrine. It was beautifully adorned with the seven kinds of precious stones, silk pennants, and canopies. Attended by two bodhisattvas, the image stood in the middle of the cart, while a retinue of celestial beings carved in gold and silver were suspended in the air.

When the image arrived at a point about a hundred paces from the city gate, the king took off his crown and changed into fresh clothing. Going barefooted and holding flowers and incense in his hands, he went out of the city to receive the image, with his attendants following behind him. He saluted the image's feet, scattered flowers, and burned incense. When the image was entering the city, the queen and her maidservants on the tower of the city gate scattered various kinds of flowers, which rained down in profusion. Such adornments and offered items were different for each cart. Each monastery was assigned one day to parade its images. The procession started on the first day of the fourth month and ended

on the fourteenth day. At the conclusion of the image procession, the king and queen returned to their palace.

Seven or eight *li* to the west of the city, there was a monastery called New Royal Monastery, which had been built eighty years before. Its construction went on through the reigns of three kings. A composite structure made of various kinds of precious substances, the monastery was about two hundred fifty feet in height, decorated with ornamental engravings and hollow carvings, and covered with gold and silver foil. At the back of a stupa, there was a beautiful and magnificent shrine hall for the Buddha's image. All the beams, pillars, doors, and windows of the shrine were adorned with golden foil. Apart from this, there were monks' living quarters, which were also decorated in a manner splendid beyond description. The costly jewels in the possession of the kings of the six countries east of the Pamirs were mostly presented as offerings to the monasteries and seldom used for personal adornment.

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After the conclusion of the image procession in the fourth month, Sengshao set out for Kaśmīra with a foreign monk. Faxian and his group proceeded to the country of Kukyar and reached it after a journey of twenty-five days. The king of this country was energetically engaged in Buddhist learning. There were more than a thousand monks, most of whom belonged to the Mahayana. Having stayed here for fifteen days, the group traveled southward into the Pamirs for four days and reached the country of Ladakh, where they sojourned for the summer retreat. When the summer retreat was over, they traveled through the mountains for twenty-five days, reaching the country of Khaśa, where they rejoined Huijing and the others.

At that time, the king of Khaśa was holding the *pañcavārṣika* (quinquennial assembly), to which large numbers of monks from the four quarters were invited. At the assembly, the monks' seats were adorned and canopies were suspended in the air. Gold and silver lotus flowers were placed at the back of their seats. Clean mats were placed on the ground for the monks to sit on.

The king and his ministers made offerings to the monks according to Buddhist tradition for one, two, or three months, usually in the spring. At the conclusion of the assembly, the king advised his ministers to make offerings to the monks for one, two, three, five, or up to seven days. When all offerings had been made, the king himself fitted his own horses with saddles and bridles, and gave them to high-ranking ministers of the country, bidding them to ride them to offer the monks various things, such as white felt, gems, and other things the monks needed. The king and his ministers offered these things, having made their vows. These alms, however, were later exchanged for other items the monks needed.

This country was mountainous and cold, and no grain but wheat could be cultivated there. At the time the monks ended their summer retreat, the mornings would often become frosty. Thus the king usually asked them not to hold their summer retreat until after the wheat had been harvested.

In this country there was a stone spittoon once used by the Buddha. Its color was the same as the Buddha's almsbowl. There was also a tooth of the Buddha, for which the people of the country erected a stupa. There were more than a thousand monks, all belonging to the Hinayana. To the east of these mountains, the garments of the laypeople were like those in China, except that they were of felt and coarse cloth. The monks' religious utensils were so superior that it is impossible to describe them in detail. This country was in the middle of the Pamirs. From here onward the plants, trees, and fruits were all different, except that the bamboo, pomegranate trees, and sugarcane were the same as in the land of the Han people (China).

From here [Faxian and his party] proceeded westward to India. After a month's travel they crossed the Pamirs, where there was snow in summer as well as in winter. There was a venomous dragon which, if angered, would snort out noxious gas or cause rain, snow, or sandstorms. Not one person out of ten thousand who encountered this disaster escaped safely. Local people called this place the Snow Mountains.

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After crossing the Pamirs, they reached India. On its borders there was a small country called Darada, where there were also many monks, all learning Hinayana Buddhism. Formerly there was an arhat in this country who, by his supernatural power, led a skillful artisan to the Tuṣita Heaven to observe the height and features of Maitreya Bodhisattva so that after returning to this world the artisan could carve a wooden statue of the bodhisattva. The artisan ascended to the [Tuṣita Heaven] three times to observe before he completed the statue. The statue was eighty feet in height and eight feet wide at the pedestal, and it often emitted light on festival days. The kings of different countries vied with each other in making offerings to the statue. It is still standing there.

From here they traveled southwest along the mountain range for fifteen days on a difficult path that was full of obstacles. The crags rose to a formidable height and there was nothing but precipitous rocks towering high in the mountains. One would feel dizzy when looking down from above, and there was no foothold for proceeding along the way. Below flowed a river called the Indus. The ancients had hewn a stairway-like path out of the rocks that had seven hundred steps. After climbing the stairway, the party crossed the river by walking carefully over a rope suspension bridge. The banks of the river were nearly eighty paces apart. According to the archives about distant countries, even Zhang Qian and Gan Ying did not get as far as this place.

The monks asked Faxian, “When was Buddhism introduced to the East?”

He replied, “I have inquired of the people in the East, and they all said that Buddhism was handed down by people of ancient times. Since the raising of the image of Maitreya Bodhisattva, Indian monks have crossed this river with sutras and Vinaya texts. That image was set up about three hundred years after the Buddha’s *parinirvāṇa*, corresponding to the reign of King Ping of the Zhou dynasty (1122–256 B.C.E.). With this in view, we may say that the dissemination of the Great Religion dates from the time of that image. If Maitreya Bodhisattva had not succeeded to

the Dharma of Śākyamuni Buddha, who else could have spread the Triple Gem and enabled the people of the borderlands to understand the Dharma? We may be sure that the commencement of this mysterious event was not the work of men, and there must be a reason for the dream of Emperor Ming of the Han dynasty” (206 B.C.E. – 220 C.E.).

After crossing the Indus River, the group reached the country of Udyāna. This kingdom was located in Northern India, but all the people spoke the language of Central India, which was known as the Middle Kingdom. The laymen’s dress and food were also the same as in the Middle Kingdom, and Buddhism flourished there. The monks’ dwelling places were called *saṃghārāmas*, and there were altogether five hundred *saṃghārāmas*, all belonging to the Hinayana school.

When a guest monk arrived, the resident monks would host him for three days, after which he would be asked to find his own lodgings. Tradition says that the Buddha came to Northern India and it was this country that he visited. He left his footprints there, and they may be long or short according to who looks at them. It is still so today. The rock on which the Buddha aired his robe and the place where he converted an evil dragon were also there. The rock was fourteen feet high and about twenty feet wide, with one flat side.

Huijing, Huida, and Daozheng continued their journey to the country of Nagarahāra, where there was an image of the Buddha. Faxian and his group stayed behind in Udyāna for the summer retreat. After the summer retreat, they traveled south to the country of Suvastu, where Buddhism also flourished. This was the place where Indra once transformed himself into a hawk and a dove to test the Bodhisattva [Śākyamuni], who cut off a piece of his own flesh to give the hawk in order to save the dove. After he had attained enlightenment, the Buddha once came to this place with his disciples in the course of his travels. The Buddha told the [people of Suvastu], “This is the place where I once cut off my flesh to ransom a dove.” Thus the people of that country came to know

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about it. They built a stupa at the spot and adorned it with gold and silver ornaments.

Proceeding eastward down from there for five days, they reached the country of Gandhāra, which was once under the rule of Dharmavivardhana, the son of King Aśoka. When the Buddha was still a bodhisattva, he gave away his eyes as alms to others in this country. There was also a huge stupa adorned with gold and silver ornaments on this spot. Most of the people in this country studied Hinayana teachings.

Seven days' journey to the east, there was a country called Takṣaśilā, meaning "decapitation." When the Buddha was a bodhisattva in a former life, he gave away his head as alms at this place; hence the name. Going further east for two days, they came to the place where the Buddha once gave his body to feed a starving tigress. At both of these places large stupas had been raised and adorned with various precious ornaments. The kings, ministers, and people of different countries vied with one another in making offerings. The practices of scattering flowers and lighting lamps at the stupa never ceased. The people of that land called these two stupas and the two mentioned earlier the Four Great Stupas.

Traveling south from Gandhāra for four days, the group came to the country of Puruṣapura. Once, when the Buddha traveled to this country with his disciples, he said to Ānanda, "After my nirvana, a king by the name of Kaṇiṣka will build a stupa at this place."

King Kaṇiṣka later appeared in the world. He once went on a pleasure trip. Indra, intending to enlighten him, transformed himself into a shepherd boy who was making a stupa by the roadside. The king asked him, "What are you doing?"

The boy replied, "I am making a Buddha stupa."

The king remarked, "That is a very good deed."

Then the king built a stupa more than four hundred feet high right over the one made by the shepherd boy. He decorated it with various kinds of precious ornaments. None of the stupas and temples [Faxian and the group] had seen on the way could compare

with this one in magnificence and grandeur. It was generally said that this stupa was the most splendid in all of Jambudvīpa. When the construction of King Kaniṣka's stupa had been completed, the smaller one, which was about three feet high, emerged on the south side of the larger one.

The Buddha's almsbowl was kept in this country. The king of Yuezhi dispatched a great force to attack the country in ancient times, with the intention of acquiring the almsbowl. Having subdued the country, the devout Buddhist king of Yuezhi made rich offerings because he wanted to take away the almsbowl. He presented offerings to the Triple Gem, then caparisoned a huge elephant and placed the bowl upon it. But the elephant crouched on the ground and would not move forward. Then the king made a four-wheeled cart that was hitched to eight elephants, and the bowl was placed on it. But the cart could not move. The king realized that it was not time for him to own the Buddha's almsbowl. With a sense of deep shame and remorse [at his deeds], he built a stupa and a monastery on the spot, and guardians were stationed there to make all kinds of offerings.

There were about seven hundred monks there. They brought out the bowl every day when it was nearly noon to receive the alms offered by the laypeople. Then they partook of their midday meal. In the evening they brought it out at the time of burning incense. The vessel could contain about two pecks and was multicolored, with black predominating. Its four layers were distinctly visible. About a fifth of an inch thick, it has a brilliant luster. It could be filled to the brim with a few flowers offered by a poor man, but a rich man could never fill it even with a hundred, a thousand, or ten thousand bushels of flowers.

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Baoyun and Sengjing made offerings to the Buddha's almsbowl, and then started on their return journey. Huijing, Huida, and Daozheng went ahead to the country of Nagarāhāra to make offerings to the Buddha's image, tooth, and skull. Huijing fell ill, so Daozheng stayed behind to attend to him, while Huida went back to Puruṣapura alone to rejoin the others and he then returned

to China with Baoyun and Sengjing. Huijing passed away at the temple of the Buddha's almsbowl. Thus Faxian traveled alone to the temple of the Buddha's skull.

Going west for sixteen *yojanas*, he reached the city of Hiḍḍa on the border of Nagarahāra, where the temple of the Buddha's skull was. The whole temple was covered with golden foil and decorated with the seven precious gems. Out of respect for the skull, and hoping to safeguard it, the king had selected eight noblemen of the country and asked each of them to hold a seal of the temple. Early in the morning, the eight noblemen would gather, each to inspect his own seal. Then they opened the door. After the door was opened, they would wash their hands with scented water, bring out the skull, and place it on a high platform outside the temple.

The skull was set on a circular stand made of the seven precious gems, and covered with a lapis lazuli cup adorned with pearls and gems. Its color was yellowish white, and it was four inches across with a protuberant cranium. Every day when it was taken out, the residents of the temple ascended a lofty tower to beat a large drum, blow a conch, and strike cymbals. Upon hearing the sound, the king went to the temple to offer flowers and incense. Then he and his attendants worshiped the skull in due order and left the temple. The king entered the temple by the eastern gate and left by the western gate.

The king worshiped the skull with offerings in this manner every morning, and did not attend to state affairs until he had done so. The laymen and elders, too, made their offerings before attending to their household duties. The people did this every day, never tiring of it. After all offerings had been made, they returned the skull to the temple and kept it in a stupa called Emancipation, which was made of the seven kinds of jewels. The stupa was about five feet high and it could be opened and closed.

Every morning in front of the gate of the temple, vendors sold flowers and incense. Worshipers purchased them to make offerings. The kings of various countries also constantly sent envoys to make



offerings. The site of this temple, about thirty paces square, never trembled even during thunderstorms or earthquakes.

Proceeding northward for one *yojana*, Faxian reached the capital of Nagarahāra, where the Bodhisattva in one of his former lives had purchased with silver coins five lotuses to offer to the Buddha Dīpaṃkara. In this city there was a stupa in which was enshrined a tooth of the Buddha. The tooth was worshiped in the same manner as the skull.

One *yojana* to the northeast of the city, Faxian came to a valley. There a staff once used by the Buddha was enshrined in a temple. The staff was made of red sandalwood, about sixteen or seventeen feet long, and was kept in a wooden tube, which even a hundred or a thousand men could not move.

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At a place four days' journey toward the west of the valley, there was a *saṃghāṭī* robe of the Buddha, which was enshrined in a temple. Whenever a drought occurred in this country, the people would bring out the robe to worship it and make offerings to it, and then rain would come down in torrents.

Half a *yojana* south of the city of Nagarahāra, in a mountain facing southwest, there was a grotto in which the Buddha had left his image. Viewed from a distance of about ten paces, it looked just like the Buddha's true form with golden features issuing brilliant light. But the nearer one went to it, the less distinct it became. It looked like a dim shade. The kings of various countries had sent skillful artists to copy it, but none could succeed in doing so. It was said by the people of that country that all the thousand Buddhas had left their images [in this grotto].

About four hundred paces to the west of the image was a place where the Buddha, when he was in this world, once shaved his hair and pared his nails. With their own hands, the Buddha and his disciples built a stupa that was seventy to eighty feet high. The stupa was still standing there as a model for future stupas. Beside it there was a monastery with over seven hundred monks living in it. This monastery had as many as a thousand stupas that were built in memory of various arhats and *pratyekabuddhas*.

Faxian and two others stayed [at that place] for three months during the winter, then headed south across the Lesser Snow Mountains, which were covered with snow in summer as well as in winter. While they were passing through the shaded northern side of the mountains, a sudden icy blast swept down and made them shiver in the bitter cold. Huijing could proceed no further. White foam oozed from his mouth. He said to Faxian, "I am done for. You should leave me now. Don't perish with me." Thereupon he passed away.

Faxian held him and cried out, "You have died without attaining your goal. What can we do about it?"

Faxian gathered his strength to forge ahead and succeeded in crossing the mountains to go south to the country of Lakki. [In that place] there were nearly three thousand monks who studied both the Mahayana and the Hinayana. Faxian stayed in this country for the summer retreat, then went south and reached the country of Varāṇa after ten days' travel. There were also about three thousand monks there, all of whom belonged to the Hinayana school.

Proceeding from [Varāṇa] eastward for three days, he again crossed the Indus River, where the land was flat on both banks. Beyond the river was a country called Bhiḍa, where Buddhism flourished and both the Mahayana and Hinayana teachings were studied.

On seeing a monk coming from China, the people were greatly moved and remarked, "How is it that a man of the borderland could have become a monk to practice the Way and come so far to seek Buddhism?" They provided Faxian with all he needed and treated him with courtesy.

In the course of traveling southeast for nearly eighty *yojanas*, Faxian passed by a great number of monasteries inhabited by some ten thousand monks. Having passed through these places, he came to the country called Mathurā, where he again crossed the Yamunā River. On both sides of the river were twenty monasteries with about three thousand monks. Buddhism flourished there.

All the kings of the Indian countries west of the desert were devout believers in the Buddha-Dharma. When they offered alms to the monks, they would take off their crowns. Together with their relatives and ministers, they would serve food to the monks with their own hands. When the meal was over, they would spread a carpet on the ground to sit on in front of an elder monk. In the monks' presence they dared not sit on couches. The manner in which a king made offerings during the Buddha's lifetime has been handed down to the present time.

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The region to the south of this country was known as the Middle Kingdom. There the climate was temperate, without frost or snow. The people were well off and happy; they were not placed under household registration or official restrictions. Those who tilled the king's land were asked only to pay land rent and were free to quit or stay as they pleased. The kings ruled without recourse to capital punishment. Offenders were only obliged to pay a penalty according to the nature of the offense. Even those who plotted high treason only had their right hands cut off [as punishment].

The king's guards and attendants received regular provisions and compensation. All the people in this country refrained from slaughtering living creatures, drinking intoxicants, and eating onion and garlic, with the exception of the *caṇḍālas* (outcasts), who were considered "evil men" and were segregated from the others. Whenever, they entered a town or a marketplace, they would strike a piece of wood to identify themselves, so that other people might know [they were coming] and avoid encountering them. In this country no pigs and fowl were raised and no living creatures were sold [at market]. There were no butchers or winesellers in the markets. For trading the people used cowrie [shells] as money. Meat was sold only by *caṇḍāla* fishermen and hunters.

After the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*, the kings, elders, and lay Buddhists constructed monasteries for monks and provided them with fields, houses, gardens, husbandrymen, and farm cattle, all of which were specified in title deeds inscribed on iron sheets. Those iron sheets were handed down from king to king. As none had

dared to nullify these deeds, they were still in force. The resident monks were furnished with living quarters, beds and bedding, food, drink, and garments; nothing was wanting or in short supply. Such was the case everywhere.

The monks always practiced virtuous deeds as their duty. They recited scriptures or sat in meditation. When a guest monk arrived, the resident monks would receive him cordially, carry his robes and almsbowl for him, bring water for washing his feet and oil for anointing them, and provide him with a non-mealtime beverage. After [the guest had] rested briefly, they would inquire as to how many years he had been a monk. Then, according to his seniority, they arranged a room furnished with bedding and other things for him. They did these things according to the Vinaya.

At the places where the monks dwelled, there were stupas built in honor of Śāriputra, Maudgalyāyana, or Ānanda, and stupas in honor of the Abhidharma, the Vinaya, and the Sutras (the three divisions of the Tripiṭaka). One month after the summer retreat, those families who wished to accumulate merit would collect alms for the monks and distribute a collection for a special occasion. The monks would meet in a great assembly to preach the Dharma. When the preaching was over, various flowers and incense were offered to the stupa of Śāriputra. Lamps were kept burning throughout the night.

Actors were employed to reenact the story of Śāriputra who, when he was a brahman, had gone to seek permission from the Buddha to become his disciple. The stories of Mahāmaudgalyāyana and Mahākāśyapa were also staged in the same way. Many nuns made offerings to the stupa of Ānanda, as he had asked the Buddha to permit women to join the sangha. Many novices made offerings to the stupa of Rāhula; Abhidharma teachers, to the stupa of Abhidharma; and Vinaya teachers, to that of the Vinaya. Each group made offerings once a year on its specific day. The Mahayana Buddhists made offerings to Prajñāpāramitā, Mañjuśrī, and Avalokiteśvara.

At the conclusion of the summer retreat, when the monks added one more year to their monastic age, the elders, lay Buddhists, brahmins, and others brought all kinds of robes and other things needed by the monks and presented them as offerings. The monks shared these gifts among themselves. Since the Buddha's nirvana, such rules of conduct as those observed by the holy monks had been handed down.

859c

After [Faxian and his party] crossed the Indus River and entered Southern India, they traveled forty or fifty thousand *li* to the sea in the south. All the land was flat without large mountains and valleys. It had only rivers and streams.

At a distance of eighteen *yojanas* to the southeast, there was a country called Sāṅkāśya. This was the place where the Buddha descended from the Trāyastriṃśa Heaven after going up there to preach the Dharma to his mother for three months. The Buddha ascended to heaven by his spiritual power, without letting his disciples know about it. But after seven days he showed his miraculous power of flight, and Aniruddha, with his power of clairvoyance, saw the World-honored One from a great distance. He said to the Venerable Maudgalyāyana, "Please go and salute the World-honored One."

Maudgalyāyana went to worship the Buddha. He fell at his feet and exchanged greetings with him. The Buddha said, "After seven days, I shall descend to Jambudvīpa." Then Maudgalyāyana returned to earth.

Now the great kings, ministers, and people of the eight countries (i.e., countries of the eight directions, everywhere) had not seen the Buddha for a long time and were eager to see him. They assembled in this country to wait for the World-honored One.

A nun named Utpalā thought, "Today all the kings and people will meet the Buddha. But I am a woman. How can I see him first?" Thereupon she transformed herself by supernatural power into a holy *cakravartin* (universal monarch) to worship the Buddha before all the others.

When the Buddha descended from the Trāyastriṃśa Heaven, there appeared in the air three jewel-ladders. The Buddha walked down the central one, which was made of the seven kinds of gems. The heavenly king Brahmā also caused a white silver stairway to appear at the right side, on which he attended the Buddha with a white whisk in his hand. Indra created a purple golden stair on the left side, on which he attended the Buddha with a canopy made of the seven kinds of gems. Innumerable heavenly beings followed the Buddha down to earth.

When the Buddha had come down, all three ladders, with the exception of seven steps, sank into the ground. King Aśoka later wished to learn the depth of those steps and commanded men to dig in the ground. But they could not reach the base even though they had dug down to the Yellow Spring, the deepest place in the earth. Thus the king's faith was strengthened and he had a temple built over the steps. On the middle ladder, a sixteen-foot statue of the standing Buddha was raised. Behind the temple a stone pillar was planted. It was twenty cubits tall and had a lion carved on its top. On the four sides of the pillar were engraved images of the Buddha, as lustrous and transparent as glaze.

Once a heretical teacher came to contend with the monks for the right to live there. When the monks were defeated in argument, they swore in unison that if that place was really a dwelling for monks, there should be a miracle to prove it. When these words were spoken, the lion on top of the pillar roared aloud to prove it. The heretic was frightened and withdrew in humiliation.

860a As the Buddha had received heavenly food for three months, his body effused a celestial fragrance unlike that of earthly men. He bathed himself and at that spot people of a later time constructed a bath that was still standing there. A stupa was also built at the place where the nun Utpalā first worshiped the Buddha. In addition, stupas were built to enshrine the Buddha's hair and nails, which he had cut while he was living in this world, and to mark the places where three former Buddhas and Śākyamuṇi

Buddha had engaged in sitting or walking meditation and the places where there were images of various Buddhas. All these stupas remained intact. Stupas were also built at the places where Indra and Brahmā had descended with the Buddha.

At this place there were about a thousand monks and nuns who shared the food provided by the public and studied both Mahayana and Hinayana teachings. At their dwelling places a white-eared dragon served as their supporter. It brought about rich harvests and caused rain in the proper seasons, preserving the country from all calamities and enabling the monks to live in peace. Being grateful for its favor, the monks built a house for the dragon with a seat in it, and also prepared sacrificial food for the dragon. Every day three monks were selected to separately take meals into the dragon's house. At the end of each summer retreat, the dragon assumed the form of a little serpent with white ears. Recognizing it, the monks would put it in a copper vessel full of curd and carry it in procession from the seat of the highest monk to that of the lowest, as if to pay respects to it. After that [the serpent] would disappear. It came out once every year.

This country was rich and fertile, and the people were prosperous and happy. People coming here from other countries were looked after and provided with all they needed.

Fifty *yojanas* north of this monastery, there was a temple called Agnigocara, which was the name of an evil spirit. At the spot where Buddha had converted the evil spirit, people of a later time built a temple and offered it to an arhat. Once the arhat washed his hands and spit some water on the ground, the traces of which were still there and could always be seen in spite of constant sweeping.

There was another Buddha stupa at this place, which was always swept clean by a good spirit, without the help of men. An evil king said, "Since you can clean everything, I will station a large number of soldiers here, who will pile up filth and excrement. Will you be able to clear all that away?" The spirit then caused a gale and cleaned the place.

At this place there were about a hundred small stupas. Even if one tried to count the exact number of these stupas for a whole day, one could not do it. Those who insisted on knowing the number placed a man at each stupa and counted the men. But the number of men was sometimes more and sometimes less, and it was impossible to determine the exact number of stupas.

There was another monastery with six or seven hundred resident monks. In this monastery there once was a place where a *pratyekabuddha* took his meal and entered nirvana. The place is the size of a cartwheel. There was grass growing all around but not on that spot. Nor did any grass grow on the place where the *pratyekabuddha* had aired his robes. The traces left by the stripes of his robes were still there on the ground.

860b Having spent a summer retreat at the Dragon Temple, Faxian traveled southeast for seven *yojanas* to Kanyākubja, a city on the Ganges. It had two monasteries, both belonging to the Hinayana school. Six or seven *li* west of the city, on the northern bank of the Ganges, was a place where the Buddha once preached the Dharma to his disciples. Tradition says that he expounded the teachings of impermanence, suffering, and emptiness, and compared the human body to a bubble or foam. A stupa was built at the spot, and it was still there.

Crossing the Ganges and proceeding south for three *yojanas*, Faxian came to a village called Hari. Here stupas were built at places where the Buddha once preached the Dharma and engaged in sitting and walking meditation.

Traveling ten *yojanas* toward the southeast, he arrived at the great country of Vaiśākha. On the east side of a road, outside the southern gate of this city, there was a willow tree. After chewing a piece of willow twig to clean his teeth, the Buddha inserted it into the ground. There it grew into a tree exactly seven feet high, neither increasing nor decreasing in size. Out of jealousy, heretical brahmins often chopped down the tree, or pulled it out and threw it away. But each time another tree grew up at the same place as before. In this village stupas were also built at the spots where the



four Buddhas engaged in walking and sitting meditation. The ruins were still there.

Going southward from there for eight *yojanas*, Faxian reached the city of Śrāvastī in the country of Kosala. This city was sparsely populated, having only about two hundred houses. It was once ruled by King Prasenajit. In this city stupas were constructed by people of later times near the ruins of the *vihāra* of Mahā-prajāpatī, at the old residence of the elder Sudatta, and at the spot where Aṅgulimāla's remains were cremated after he had attained arhatship and entered *parinirvāṇa*. Out of jealousy, the heretical brahmans of the city attempted to demolish these stupas, but the heavens sent thunder and lightning so that they could not destroy the stupas after all.

On the west side of the road, twelve hundred paces from the southern gate of the city, there was a monastery built by the elder Sudatta. Facing east, the door of the monastery was flanked by two stone pillars. The capital of the left pillar was carved in the shape of a wheel, and on the top of the right one stood a statuette of an ox. The water flowing in the stream was clear on both sides of the monastery and there were many trees. Flowers of different colors made the place a lovely sight. This was known as the Jetavana Vihāra.

When the Buddha ascended to the Trāyastriṃśa Heaven to preach the Dharma to his mother for ninety days, King Prasenajit, eager to see his features, had an image of him carved out of ox-head sandalwood and put it on the place where the Buddha usually sat in meditation. When the Buddha returned to the *vihāra*, the image left its seat and went out to meet him. The Buddha said to it, "Go back to your seat. After my *parinirvāṇa*, you may serve as a model from which the four groups of my followers can make images." The image returned to the seat. This was the first image ever made of the Buddha, and it served as a model for Buddha images for people of later generations. Then the Buddha moved to a smaller *vihāra* twenty paces to the south of the one occupied by the image.

Originally the Jetavana Vihāra had seven stories. The kings and people of different countries vied with one another in making offerings to this *vihāra*. Silk pennants and canopies were hung in the *vihāra*, flowers were scattered, and incense was burned. Lamps were lit every day, [and they burned] continually without interruption. Then it happened that a rat carried off in its mouth the wick of a lamp, which ignited the flowers, pennants, and canopies, and reduced the seven-storied *vihāra* to ashes. The kings and the people of different countries lamented and thought that the sandalwood image must also have been consumed by the fire. But four or five days later, when they opened the door of the smaller *vihāra* on the east, they discovered, to their great delight, that the image was intact. They rebuilt the *vihāra* as a two-story [building] and returned the image to its former place.

860c Upon arriving at the Jetavana Vihāra, Faxian and Daozheng reflected that this was the place where the World-honored One had lived for twenty-five years. They felt sad. They and their friends had been born in a far-off country and had traveled together through many lands, and some had passed away [during the journey]. As they gazed at the place where the Buddha was no more to be seen, they were deeply moved and their hearts were filled with sorrow.

The monks of the *vihāra* came out to ask Faxian and his friend, “Where have you come from?”

They replied, “We have come from China.”

The monks remarked with amazement, “How wonderful it is that men from a far-off country have come all this way to seek the Dharma!” Then they said among themselves, “None of the teachers in our line of succession has ever seen a Chinese monk come here.”

Four *li* to the northwest of the *vihāra*, there was a wood called Sight Recovery. There were once five hundred blind men near the *vihāra*. They had all recovered their sight when the Buddha preached the Dharma to them. Overwhelmed with delight, they thrust their staffs into the ground and prostrated themselves to pay homage to the Buddha. The staffs took root in the ground and

grew up to be trees. Out of respect, nobody ventured to fell them. Thus the place became the wood with that name. After taking their midday meals, the monks of the Jetavana Vihāra often went to the wood to sit in meditation.

Six or seven *li* to the northeast of the Jetavana Vihāra, there was a place where the matron Viśākhā had built a *vihāra* for the Buddha and his monks. The ruins were still there.

The spacious compound of the Jetavana Vihāra had two gates, one facing east and the other north. This was the garden in which the elder Sudatta had covered the ground with gold coins to purchase the site to build a *vihāra*. The *vihāra* stood at the center. This was where the Buddha had stayed longer than at any other place. Stupas were built at the spots where he had preached the Dharma for the salvation of human beings, and where he had engaged in sitting and walking meditation. Each of these stupas had a specific name. This was also the place where sinister plotters had murdered Sundarī with the intention of putting the blame on the Buddha.

On the west side of the road, seventy paces outside the eastern gate of the Jetavana Vihāra, was a place where the Buddha had once debated with the followers of ninety-six non-Buddhist sects. The king, together with his ministers, lay Buddhists, and others, assembled to listen to their debate. Out of jealousy, a non-Buddhist woman named Ciñcāmāṇavikā fastened a bundle of clothes to her belly to appear as if she were with child. She planned to come before the congregation and accuse the Buddha of evil conduct. Indra assumed the form of a white mouse and nibbled through her sash, so that the bundle fell to the ground. The earth gaped at once, and the woman sank into hell alive. There was also a spot where Devadatta attempted to murder the Buddha with his poisoned fingernails. At that very spot he fell alive into hell. Both these places had been marked by later generations. At the place where the debate took place, a *vihāra* about sixty feet tall was built with a sitting statue of the Buddha in it.

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On the east side of the road, there was a non-Buddhist *deva* temple called Overshadowed. It was also about sixty feet tall and stood opposite to the *vihāra* built at the place of the debate. It was so named because when the sun was in the west, the shadow of the Buddhist *vihāra* always overshadowed the *deva* temple; but when the sun was in the east, the shadow of the *deva* temple always fell northward and never overshadowed the Buddhist *vihāra*. The non-Buddhists always sent men to look after the *deva* temple. They swept the ground and sprinkled water on it, burned incense, and lighted lamps. But at dawn the lamps were always found in the Buddhist *vihāra*.

The brahmans said resentfully, “The Buddhist monks are stealing our lamps to offer them to the Buddha.” Since [the transfer of the lamps] did not cease, the brahmans kept watch at night. They saw the *deva* they worshiped take the lamps, circumambulate the Buddhist *vihāra* thrice, and offer the lamps to the Buddha. Then the *deva* suddenly disappeared. Realizing that the Buddha’s spiritual power was great, the brahmans left their homes and became Buddhist monks. It was said that this event had only recently occurred.

[In the vicinity of] the Jetavana Vihāra there were eighteen monasteries, of which all but one were occupied by monks. In the Middle Kingdom there were ninety-six non-Buddhist teachers, who knew not only the present but the future. Each teacher had his own disciples, who also lived on alms but did not use begging bowls. In order to seek merit, they built welfare facilities along the roadsides. They provided shelter, bedding, food, and drink for wayfarers, monks, and travelers. But they did so with different expectations. Followers of Devadatta made offerings to three former Buddhas but not to Śākyamuṇi Buddha.

Four *li* southeast of the city of Śrāvastī was the place where the Buddha stood by the roadside when King Virūḍhaka set out to attack the kingdom of the Śākya clan. A stupa was erected to mark the spot.

Fifty *li* to the west of this city, [Faxian's] party arrived at a town named Tadwa, which was the birthplace of Kāśyapa Buddha. Stupas had been built at the sites where he met his father and entered nirvana. A great stupa had also been raised to entomb the whole body of Kāśyapa Buddha.

Traveling twelve *yojanas* southeast from the city of Śrāvastī, [the group] came to a town named Napika, which was the birthplace of Krakucchanda Buddha. Here, stupas had also been built at the places where he met his father and entered nirvana.

From here, going north for less than a *yojana*, they came to a town which was the birthplace of Kanakamuni Buddha. Again, there were stupas at the places where he met his father and entered nirvana.

From here, after going east for less than a *yojana*, [Faxian's party] reached the city of Kapilavastu. It was completely deserted, without king or citizens. There were only some monks and few dozen lay families. At the ruins of King Śuddhodana's palace, there was an image of Prince [Siddhārtha]'s mother, depicting the Prince entering his mother's womb on a white elephant. A stupa was built at the spot where the Prince had gone out of the city by the east gate, saw a sick man, and ordered his charioteer to drive him back to the palace.

There were also the places where Asita read the physiognomical marks of the Prince; where the Prince and Nanda hauled an elephant away from the road; and where [the Prince] competed in archery. His arrow flew thirty *li* and pierced the ground, causing a fountain to spring up. People of later times made a well at the spot so that wayfarers might drink water from it.

Stupas had also been built at the places where the Buddha, after attaining enlightenment, returned home to see his father; where the earth quaked in six ways when five hundred youths of the Śākya clan became monks and saluted Upāli; where the Buddha preached the Dharma to celestial beings and the four heavenly kings guarded the four gates of the hall, so that the king, his father,

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could not enter; where the Buddha sat in meditation facing east under a *nyagrodha* (banyan) tree—which is still growing—while Mahāprajāpati offered him a piece of *saṃghāti* robe; and where King Virūdhaka slaughtered the descendants of the Śākya clan, all of whom, after death, attained the stage of *srotaāpanna*.

Several *li* northeast of the city was the royal farm where Prince Siddhārtha once sat under a tree and watched farmers plowing. Fifty *li* east of the city was the royal garden named Lumbinī, in which Queen Māyā entered a pond to bathe. After bathing she came out of the northern side of the pond and walked twenty paces. Holding the branch of a tree, she gave birth to the Prince while facing toward the east. As soon as the Prince was born, he took seven steps. Two dragon kings bathed him, and a well had been made at the place where they bathed him. The monks now drew drinking water from it as well as from the pond.

All Buddhas always have four places, namely: the place where they attain enlightenment, the place where they first turn the Wheel of the Dharma, the place where they preach the Dharma and subjugate heretics through argumentation, and the place where they descend from the Trāyastriṃśa Heaven after preaching the Dharma to their mothers. They have other places, too, according to the circumstances of different times.

The country of Kapilavastu was extremely desolate, with only a few scattered people living there. The roads were frightening. There were white elephants and lions. Nobody should travel there without taking precautions.

Five *yojanas* east of the Buddha's birthplace, there was a country called Rāmagrāma. The king of this country obtained a share of the Buddha's relics, brought them home, built a stupa, and named it Rāmagrāma. Beside the stupa was a pond in which a dragon lived. The dragon kept constant watch over the stupa and made offerings to it day and night. When King Aśoka was in this world, he intended to demolish eight stupas and construct eighty-four thousand new ones. He had already pulled down seven stupas and had come to destroy this one. The dragon appeared, took the

king to its palace, and showed him all its offerings. The dragon then said to the king, “If your offerings are better than mine, then destroy this stupa and take away the relics. I will not quarrel with you.” Realizing that the dragon’s offerings were not of this world, King Aśoka returned to his home.

As it was a deserted place with no one to keep it clean, a herd of elephants often came with water in their trunks to sprinkle on the ground. They also offered various kinds of flowers to the stupa. Once a monk came from another country to worship the stupa and was frightened by the sight of the elephants. Hiding behind a tree, he saw that the elephants presented offerings in a proper way. He deplored the fact that because there was no monastery with monks to look after the stupa, the elephants had to keep it clean. Thus he renounced the status of fully ordained monk and became a novice. He cut weeds and plants, leveled the ground, and made the place clean and tidy. He exhorted the king to build a monastery there and volunteered to be its abbot. Monks were now living in this monastery. This event occurred recently, and since then the abbots of this monastery have always been novices.

Three *yojanas* to the east was the place where Prince Siddhārtha ordered [his servant] Chandaka to return home with his white horse. A stupa had also been built there.

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Going four *yojanas* further east, the party came to the Charcoal Stupa, where there was also a monastery.

Continuing east for twelve *yojanas*, they came to the city of Kuśinagara. Between two *śāla* trees by the side of the Hiranyavati River to the north of the city, the Buddha entered *parinirvāṇa* with his head toward the north. There were the places where Subhadra, the Buddha’s last disciple, attained arhatship; where the World-honored One, lying in a golden coffin, received homage for seven days; where the *vajra* guardians laid down their diamond maces; and where the eight kings divided the Buddha’s relics. Stupas had been erected at all these places, and a monastery was also standing there. This city was also scarcely populated, having only a few monks and some lay devotees.

Traveling twelve *yojanas* to the southeast, [Faxian's] party reached the place where the Licchavis wished to follow the Buddha to the spot where he was going to enter *parinirvāṇa*, but the Buddha did not allow them to do so. Since they refused to go away, the Buddha caused a deep ditch to appear, which the Licchavis could not cross. After giving them his almsbowl as a testament to their faith, the Buddha sent them home. A stone pillar with inscriptions had been erected at this spot.

After going eastward from here for ten *yojanas*, the party reached the country of Vaiśālī. In the large wood to the north of the city of Vaiśālī, there was a storied *vihāra* which had once been the dwelling place of the Buddha. There was also a stupa containing half of Ānanda's relics. This city was originally the hometown of Lady Āmrapālī, who constructed a stupa for the Buddha, the ruins of which are still there. On the west side of the road, three *li* to the south of the city, was the garden that Lady Āmrapālī offered to the Buddha for his dwelling place.

When the Buddha was about to enter *parinirvāṇa*, he left the city of Vaiśālī through the western gate with his disciples. Turning right to look back at the city, he said to his disciples, "This is the last place I will stay in my life." A stupa was built at this spot by the people of a later time.

Three *li* to the northwest of the city, there was a stupa by the name of Bows and Lances Laid Down. The name was derived from the following story. Once a king lived in the upper reaches of the Ganges [River], and one of his concubines gave birth to an immature fetus. Out of jealousy, the queen said [to her], "You have given birth to an inauspicious omen." So the fetus was put in a wooden box and thrown into the Ganges.

Now it happened that another king was taking a pleasure trip in the lower reaches of the Ganges and saw the wooden box floating in the river. He had the box opened and found one thousand unusually handsome infants in it. The king raised them, and they grew up to become brave warriors who subdued every country they attacked. Then they started to attack their [real] father's kingdom.



The king, their father, was so greatly worried that his concubine asked what was the cause of his anxiety. The king replied, “The king of the neighboring kingdom has a thousand sons of incomparable valor, and they are coming to invade our kingdom. That is why I am worried.”

The concubine said, “Don’t worry, my dear king. Just raise a tall pavilion at the east corner of the city and place me on top of it when the invaders come. I will be able to make them retreat.”

The king did as she suggested. When the invaders approached, the concubine stood on the pavilion and said to them, “You are all my sons. Why are you rebelling?”

The invaders retorted, “Who are you? Why do you claim to be our mother?”

The royal lady said, “If you don’t believe me, just look up and open your mouths.”

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Then she squeezed her breasts with both hands. Five hundred jets of milk gushed out of each breast and spurted into the mouths of her thousand sons. Realizing that she really was their mother, the invaders laid down their bows and lances. Meditating on this event, the two kings became *pratyekabuddhas*. Two stupas were built for them, which are still there.

Later, when the World-honored One attained enlightenment, he told his disciples, “This is the place where in a former life I laid down my bow and lance.” Thus the people came to know of the matter and built a stupa there, and it was so named. The one thousand sons were actually the one thousand Buddhas of the *bhadra kalpa* (the present age).

It was beside the Stupa of Bows and Lances Laid Down that the Buddha passed away. The Buddha told Ānanda, “After three months, I will enter *parinirvāṇa*.” As Ānanda had been bewitched by Māra the Evil One, he could not beseech the Buddha to remain longer in the world.

Three or four *li* to the east there stood another stupa. One hundred years after the Buddha’s *parinirvāṇa*, a monk of Vaiśālī advocated the ten acts. He had misinterpreted the Vinaya to argue

that the Buddha's teaching supported him. [Editor's note: This refers to the events now known as the Second Council, which was associated with the first schism of the Buddhist sangha.] Then the arhats and Vinaya-abiding monks, seven hundred in all, gathered at this place to check and review the Vinaya. People of a later time built the stupa, which is still standing on the spot.

Going eastward from here for four *yojanas*, the party came to the confluence of five rivers. When Ānanda was traveling from Magadha to Vaiśālī, where he intended to enter *parinirvāṇa*, the *devas* informed King Ajātaśatru of his intention. The king himself adorned a chariot and, leading his troops, pursued Ānanda to the bank of the river. Then the Licchavīs of Vaiśālī, hearing that Ānanda was coming to their country, also came out to welcome him on the other side of the river. Ānanda reflected that if he proceeded on his way, King Ajātaśatru would grieve, while if he turned back, the Licchavīs would feel unhappy. So he went to the middle of the river, where he burned himself with the flames of the fire *samādhi* and entered *parinirvāṇa*. His relics were divided into two portions, one for each side of the river. Thus each king had half of Ānanda's relics and they built stupas for them after returning home.

After crossing the river, [Faxian's group] went south for one *yojana* and reached the city of Pāṭaliputra, which was the capital of King Aśoka in the county of Magadha. The royal palaces in the city had all been built out of stone by celestial beings and deities. The walls and watchtowers, the ruins of which still remain, had all been decorated with carved designs and ornamental engravings that were not produced by human hands.

King Aśoka's younger brother, having attained arhatship, lived on Mount Gr̥dhra-kūṭa, where he enjoyed serenity and quietude. The king respectfully invited him to live at his home and offered to support him. But the arhat took delight in the quiet surroundings of the mountain and he declined the invitation. The king said to his younger brother, "If you accept my invitation, I will make a mountain for you in the city."

Then the king prepared food and drink and summoned the spirits and deities. He said to them, “May all of you please accept my invitation for tomorrow. But as there are no seats, each of you must bring one for yourself.” On the following day each of the great spirits and deities came with a huge boulder, four or five paces square [in dimension]. After they had used the boulders as seats for the feast, they were asked to pile them up to form a large hill. At the bottom a chamber about thirty feet in length, twenty feet wide, and over ten feet high was built with five boulders.

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In this city there lived a follower of the Mahayana by the name of Rājasvāmin, the son of a brahman, who was wise and intelligent. He excelled in everything. He lived a life of purity. The king respected him as his teacher. Whenever the king paid him a visit, he never dared to sit indiscreetly in the presence of the brahman. If the king held his hands to show affection or respect, the brahman would always wash himself afterward. When he reached fifty years of age, he was revered by the whole country. It was due to his presence alone that Buddhism was disseminated and the heretics could gain no advantage over the Buddhist monks.

Besides the stupa built by King Aśoka, there was a magnificent Mahayana monastery. There was also a Hinayana monastery, where six or seven hundred monks lived in a most orderly manner with perfect decorum. Monks of high virtue and scholars from the four quarters came to this monastery to seek knowledge and truth. The brahman’s teacher, who was named Mañjuśrī, was honored by the virtuous monks and Mahayana monks. He also lived in this monastery.

In the whole of [the country of] Madhyadeśa, the capital was the largest city. The people were rich and prosperous and vied with each other in performing benevolent and righteous deeds. On the eighth day of the second month every year, they held an image procession. A four-wheeled cart with a five-story bamboo structure resembling a stupa was constructed, complete with such architectural fittings as struts and beam-supporters, and about twenty feet in height. It was covered with white felt on which various

celestial beings were painted in color. It was decorated with gold, silver, and glaze, and silk pennants and canopies were hung on it.

On the four sides of the structure were niches in which sitting images of the Buddha were enshrined. These images were attended by standing figures of bodhisattvas. Twenty such carts were each adorned in a different way. On the day of the procession, the monks and laymen of the country assembled to play music and make offerings of flowers and incense. The brahman came out to receive the Buddha images, which were brought into the city one after another. Those images were kept there for the night. Lamps burned throughout the night and music was performed in honor of the images. In all [the] countries this image procession was conducted in the same way.

The elders and householders of this country established facilities for welfare and medical care in the city. The poor, the homeless, the disabled, and all kinds of sick persons went to the facilities to receive different kinds of care. Physicians gave them appropriate food and medicine to restore their health. When cured, they left those places.

After demolishing seven stupas, King Aśoka built eighty-four thousand new ones. He built the first great stupa at a spot about three *li* to the south of this city. In front of the stupa was a footprint of the Buddha. A *vihāra* had been constructed there with its door facing north. To the south of this stupa, there was a stone pillar, fourteen or fifteen feet in diameter and more than thirty feet tall. It was carved with the following inscription: “King Aśoka offered Jambudvīpa as a gift to the monks of the four quarters and then redeemed it with money. He did so three times.”

862c Three or four hundred paces north of the stupa was the site where King Aśoka built the city of Niraya. In the middle of this site stood a stone pillar, also more than thirty feet tall, with the figure of a lion on its top. An inscription on the pillar gave an account of the reason for the building of the city of Niraya and the dates of the construction.

Traveling from here southeast for nine *yojanas*, [Faxian's] party came to a small, solitary, rocky hill. On the top of the hill was a stone cell facing south. Once when the Buddha sat in this cell, Indra sent Pañcaśikha, a celestial musician, to play the harp to amuse him. There Indra made inquiries of the Buddha on forty-two points and marked a rock with his finger for each question. The marks were still there. There was also a monastery.

One *yojana* to the southwest, [the group] reached the village of Kālapināka, the birthplace of Śāriputra, who had returned to this village to enter *parinirvāṇa*. A stupa was built at the place where he died and it was still standing there.

One *yojana* to the west, they arrived at the new city of Rājagṛha, which was built by King Ajātaśatru. There were two monasteries in the city. Three hundred paces from the western gate of the city, there stood a gigantic and magnificent stupa built by King Ajātaśatru to enshrine his share of the Buddha's relics.

Traveling southward out of the city for four *li*, [Faxian's party] entered a valley surrounded by five hills. They felt as if they were encircled by a city wall. This was the site of the old city of King Bimbisāra. It was five or six *li* from east to west and seven or eight *li* from south to north. This was where Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana first met Aśvajit, where Nirgranthaputra made a fiery pit and prepared poisoned rice for the Buddha, and where King Ajātaśatru intoxicated a black elephant with the intention of murdering the Buddha.

In the garden of Āmrāpālī at the northeast corner of the city, some venerable people of repute had built a *vihāra*. They invited the Buddha and his twelve hundred fifty disciples there and made offerings to them. The ruins were still there, but the city was in a state of desolation without habitants.

After entering the valley and climbing the hills for fifteen *li* toward the southeast, [the group] came to Mount Gṛdhrakūṭa. Three *li* from the summit, there was a cave facing south in which the Buddha used to sit in meditation. Thirty paces to the northwest

was another cave. Once, when Ānanda sat in meditation in this cave, Māra Pāpiyas turned himself into a vulture and stayed in front of the cave to frighten him. With his supernatural power, the Buddha stretched his hand through the rock and patted Ānanda on the shoulder to allay his fear. The traces left by the bird and the hole made by the hand of the Buddha were still there. Thus this place was called the Mountain of the Vulture Cave.

In front of the cave was a place where the four Buddhas had sat. Each of the arhats had a cave for himself to sit in meditation. There were several hundred in all.

Once, when the Buddha walked in meditation from east to west in front of his cave, Devadatta viciously rolled down a rock from the precipice to the north and hurt the Buddha's toe. The rock was still there. The Buddha's preaching hall had fallen into ruin. Only the foundations of the brick walls remained. The peaks of this mountain were beautiful and majestic, and it was the highest of all the five mountains.

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In the new city [of Rājagṛha], Faxian bought incense, flowers, and oil for lamps. He asked two local monks to guide him to Mount Gṛdhrakūṭa, where he offered the flowers and incense and refilled the lamps to keep the flames burning. He cried in deep sorrow at the place where the Buddha had taught the *Śūraṅgama[-samā-dhi]-sūtra*. Then he said, "Faxian, who was not yet born at the time of the Buddha, was able to see nothing more than the ruins and monuments left by him." He recited the *Śūraṅgama[-samā-dhi]-sūtra* in front of the cave. After spending the night there, he returned to Rājagṛha.

On the west side of the road, about three hundred paces north of the old city, was the Veluvana Kalandaka Monastery. The monastery was still there and was kept clean by the monks living there. About two or three *li* to the north, there was a *śmaśāna* (burial ground). Three hundred paces to the west along the southern hill was the Pippala Cave, where the Buddha used to sit in meditation after his meals.

Five or six *li* further west was the Saptaparṇa Cave on the shady northern side of the mountain. This is the place where five hundred arhats assembled to chant and compile the sutras after the Buddha's nirvana. At the time of the recital, three high seats were prepared with graceful adornments. Śāriputra took the left seat and Maudgalyāyana the right. Mahākāśyapa presided over the assembly. One of the five hundred arhats was absent from the congregation. Ānanda was not allowed to enter the cave and was outside the gate. A stupa built at this spot was still standing there. Along the mountainside, there were many caves used by the arhats for meditation.

Three *li* east of the northern part of the old city was the cave of Devadatta. Fifty paces from the cave there was a huge square rock of black color. Once a monk paced on it and meditated on the impermanence, suffering, and emptiness of the human body. Thus he understood that the human body was impure. Despising his own body, he wanted to kill himself with a knife. Then he remembered that the World-honored One had made a rule forbidding suicide. However, since he hoped to put an end to the three poisons, he started to cut himself. When he first slashed his flesh, he attained the stage of *srotaāpanna*. When his body was half severed he realized the stage of *anāgāmin*. When it was completely cut in two, he achieved arhatship and entered *parinirvāṇa*.

Traveling west from here for four *yojanas*, the party reached the city of Gayā, which was deserted and without inhabitants. Going toward the south again for twenty *li*, they came to the place where the Bodhisattva practiced asceticism for six years. There was a wood at that place. Going three *li* to the west, they visited a spot where the Buddha once bathed himself in a pool and a heavenly being lowered the branch of a tree to help him out of the pool.

Traveling two *li* to the north, they reached the place where the maiden named Mekā offered milk porridge to the Buddha. Two *li* further to the north, under a big tree, was a rock on which the Buddha sat facing east and ate the porridge. Both the tree and the

rock were still there. The rock was about six feet square and two feet high. As the climate in the Middle Kingdom is temperate, there are some trees that are several thousand or even ten thousand years old.

863b From here they proceeded northeast for half a *yojana* till they came to a cave. Once the Bodhisattva entered this cave and sat cross-legged facing the west, reflecting that if he were going to attain Buddhahood, there should be some divine signs to prove it. Then the shadow of a Buddha about three feet high, which is still distinctly visible, appeared on the rock wall. At that moment heaven and earth quaked and celestial beings proclaimed in the air, "This is not the place for a Buddha of the past and future to attain Buddhahood. Less than half a *yojana* to the southwest is a place under a pipal tree. That is the place for Buddhas of the past and future to attain Buddhahood."

Having said this, the celestial beings led the way, singing, and the Bodhisattva rose and followed them. Thirty paces from the tree, the heavenly beings offered him some *kuśa* grass, which he accepted. When he had proceeded another fifteen steps, five hundred bluebirds came flying toward him, encircled him three times, and flew away. When the Bodhisattva reached the pipal tree, he spread the *kuśa* grass on the ground underneath and sat down facing the east. At that moment, Māra the Evil One sent three charming women from the north to tempt the Bodhisattva, while Māra himself came from the south to attack him. But the Bodhisattva just pressed the ground with his toes, and the troops of Māra retreated in confusion, while the three girls turned into three old women.

At the above-mentioned place where the Buddha practiced asceticism for six years, and at the other places, stupas with Buddha images had been built by people of later times and still exist now.

Stupas were also built at the following sites: the place where the Buddha enjoyed the bliss of emancipation and gazed at the pipal tree for seven days after his enlightenment; where he paced eastward and westward for seven days under the tree; where



celestial beings created a chamber of seven jewels for the Buddha to use for seven days; where the blind *nāga* Mucilinda coiled around the Buddha for seven days; where Brahmā came to make a request of the Buddha, who was sitting on a square rock facing east under a *nyagrodha* tree; where the four heavenly kings offered him an almsbowl; where five hundred merchants presented him with baked flour and honey; and where he converted the Kāśyapa brothers together with their one thousand disciples.

At the place of the Buddha's enlightenment, there were three monasteries; monks resided in all of them. The local people provided the monks with daily necessities in abundance, and nothing was insufficient for their needs. The monks strictly observed the Vinaya rules and their decorum in regard to personal behavior in sitting, standing, or joining an assembly was exactly like that of the holy monks during the Buddha's lifetime.

Since the time of the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*, Four Great Stupas have been well kept from generation to generation. These four stupas were at the places where the Buddha was born, where he achieved enlightenment, where he first turned the Wheel of the Dharma, and where he entered *parinirvāṇa*.

Once King Aśoka, as a child in a former life, was playing on a road. He met Kāśyapa Buddha going round for alms. Delighted, the child offered Kāśyapa a handful of soil, which the Buddha took with him and scattered over the ground where he used to engage in walking meditation. As a result of this good deed, the child became a king of the iron wheel (*cakravartin*) and ruled over Jambudvīpa. Once, while riding in a chariot of iron wheels and making an inspection tour of Jambudvīpa, King Aśoka saw the hell between two iron-encircled hills where the wicked were punished.

He asked his ministers, "What is this place?"

They replied, "This is where Yama, the King of the Dead, punishes the wicked."

On hearing this, King Aśoka reflected, "If the King of the Dead can make a hell to punish the wicked, why should not I, a ruler of men, make a hellish place to punish criminals?" So he inquired of

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his ministers, "Which of you will act as the warden of a prison to punish criminals for me?"

The ministers said in reply, "None but the most wicked of men will do that."

Thereupon King Aśoka sent his ministers out in all directions to search for a wicked man. They came upon a vicious man beside a pond. He was tall, strong, and swarthy, with yellow hair and blue eyes. He could catch fish with his feet. He called to birds and beasts and when they came, he shot them. Not a single one escaped. Having found this man, the ministers took him to the king.

The king instructed him secretly, saying, "Build a square enclosure with high walls. Plant all sorts of flowers and fruit trees, and make a nice bathing pool inside it. Decorate the place with beautiful ornaments to make it attractive to the people. Make the gate strong. Should anyone enter the gate, arrest him, put him to all kinds of torture, and never allow him to come out again. Even if I should enter the place myself, you must torture me as well and never let me go. Now I appoint you the lord of this hellish prison."

Then a monk entered the gate while begging for food from door to door. At the sight of him, the warden prepared to torture him. The terrified monk pleaded with the warden to let him have a midday meal first. Meanwhile another man came into the gate, and the warden put him into a mortar and pounded him till red froth appeared. On seeing this, the monk contemplated the fact that this corporal body is impermanent, painful, and empty, just like a bubble or foam. Thus he attained arhatship. Then the warden seized [the monk] and cast him into a boiling cauldron, but he was tranquil in mind and serene in countenance. The fire went out and the water cooled. A lotus flower grew out of the water and the monk was sitting upon it.

The warden immediately went to tell the king, "Something strange has happened in the prison. Please, Your Majesty, come and see."

The king said, "We made an agreement before, and I dare not go."

The warden said, “This is no small matter. It befits Your Majesty to go promptly. We may alter our former agreement.”

So the king followed the warden to the prison, where the monk expounded the Dharma to King Aśoka. The king understood the Dharma. He demolished the prison and repented all the evils he had committed. From that time he respected the Triple Gem and often went to a pipal tree under which he repented his transgressions, reproached himself, and observed the eight precepts.

When the queen inquired of the ministers where the king went away to so frequently, they told her that the king went to the pipal tree. The queen sent men to have the tree cut down when the king was away from the tree. When the king saw what had happened he fainted and fell to the ground. His ministers sprinkled water on his face and, after a long while, he regained consciousness. The king then piled up bricks around the stump of the tree and irrigated the roots with a hundred pitchers of milk. He prostrated himself on the ground and vowed, “If the tree does not grow again, I will never rise from the ground.”

As he uttered this vow, the tree began to grow from its roots to its present height of nearly a hundred feet.

From here the party traveled three *li* to the south and reached a mountain called Kukkuṭapada. Mahākāśyapa still lives in this mountain. He split the mountain to enter it, and the opening was so small that it was hardly possible for a man to pass through. Extremely deep in the mountain, there was a hole on a crag in which Mahākāśyapa’s whole body was preserved. Outside the hole was the earth that he used to clean his hands. Whenever the local people suffered from a headache, they would rub their heads with the earth to effect a cure.

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Even in that day arhats lived in the mountain and monks of various countries went there every year to make offerings to Mahākāśyapa. If someone who had a mind full of devotion arrived, an arhat would come at night to have a discussion with him. When his doubts were cleared up, the arhat would vanish all of a sudden. The mountain was covered with trees and plants and is infested

with lions, tigers, and wolves. No one should go there without taking precautions.

Faxian headed toward Pāṭaliputra. Going west along the Ganges for ten *yojanas*, he reached a *vihāra* named Wilderness, where the Buddha had once lived. There are monks residing in it now.

Again proceeding west along the Ganges for twelve *yojanas*, he arrived at the city of Vārāṇasī in the country of Kāśī. About ten *li* to the northeast of the city was the Deer Park. Formerly a *pratyekabuddha* lived in this park and wild deer often came there for shelter. When the World-honored One was about to achieve enlightenment, heavenly beings announced in the air, “The son of King Śuddhodana, who renounced home to attain the Way, will become a Buddha in seven days.” On hearing this announcement, the *pratyekabuddha* entered nirvana. Thus this place was called the Deer Park Vihāra of the Ascetics. After the World-honored One had attained Buddhahood, people of later times built a *vihāra* there.

The Buddha wished to convert the five persons, Kauṇḍinya and the others, who said among themselves, “This *śramaṇa* Gautama practiced asceticism for six years, living on one grain of sesame and one grain of rice each day, yet he did not realize the Way. Now he has entered worldly life without any restraints of body, speech, and mind. What truth can he have attained? If he comes here today, be sure not to speak to him.”

There was a place where the five had risen and saluted the Buddha when he approached them. Sixty paces further to the north was the spot where the Buddha sat facing east and delivered his first sermon to convert Kauṇḍinya and his companions. Twenty paces to the north was the place where the Buddha predicted the future of Maitreya, and fifty paces to the south was a place where the *nāga* Elāpattra asked the Buddha when he could get rid of his *nāga* form. At all these places stupas had been built which are still standing. In the park there were two monasteries; monks resided in both.

Thirteen *yojanas* northwest of the Deer Park *vihāra* was the country of Kauśāmbī. The *vihāra* in that country was named the Garden of Ghoṣira and the Buddha once lived in it. Most of the monks residing at the *vihāra* belonged to the Hinayana school.

Eight *yojanas* to the east from there was a place where the Buddha converted an evil demon. There was also a place where the Buddha used to engage in sitting and walking meditation while he lived there. Stupas had been built at those spots. There stood a monastery with over a hundred resident monks.

Two hundred *yojanas* to the south of this place was the country named Dakṣiṇa, where the monastery of the past Kāśyapa Buddha was located. It was hewn out of a huge rocky mountain. It had five stories. The first floor was cut in the shape of an elephant and had five hundred cells; the second was in the shape of a lion and had four hundred cells; the third was in the shape of a horse and had three hundred cells; the fourth was in the shape of a cow and had two hundred cells; and the fifth was in the shape of a dove and had one hundred cells. On the top there was a spring. Water flowed down from it in a circuitous channel in front of the cells until it reached the lowest floor, and, meandering by the cells, issued at last through the door.

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In all the cells windows were hewn through the rock to let in daylight, so that it was bright inside and no corner was dark. At the four corners of this monastery, steps were chiseled on the rock to serve as a ladder. Since people of the present time are short, they [have to] climb the ladder to get to the place that people of old times could reach in one step. This monastery was called Pārāvata, meaning “dove” in the Indian language. Arhats always lived in this monastery. The land was deserted without inhabitants. There was a village located far away from the mountain, where all the people held heterodox views and knew nothing of the Buddha-Dharma. There were *śramaṇas* as well as brahmins and other heretics [there].

The people of that country often saw men flying to the monastery. When monks from different countries came to worship

at this monastery, the villagers would ask them, “Why don’t you fly?” They would answer, expediently, “Our wings are not yet fully grown!”

In Dakṣiṇa the roads wound among perilous mountains and travel was difficult. Those who wished to go to a place that was hard to reach had to present money or gifts to the king of the country, who would then appoint guides to lead them from one post to the next. Faxian could not afford to go to that [remote] monastery. Thus he relates here what he heard from local people.

Going eastward from the country of Vārāṇasī, Faxian returned to Pāṭaliputra. He had come for the purpose of acquiring the Vinaya texts. But in the countries of Northern India there was no Vinaya text to copy, because it was transmitted orally from teacher to pupil. He had to travel as far as Central India, where he obtained a copy of the *Mahāsāṃghika-vinaya* from a Mahayana monastery. This was the Vinaya observed by the first congregation of monks during the Buddha’s lifetime, and it had been handed down from the Jetavana Vihāra.

The eighteen schools of Buddhism had their own respective Vinaya traditions. They were not variant in major points but differed in minor points, having more or less strict regulations. The *Mahāsāṃghika-vinaya* was the most extensive and complete text of the Vinaya. Faxian also obtained another copy of the Vinaya in seven thousand stanzas, the *Sarvāstivāda-vinaya*, which was the one observed by the monks in China. It had also been transmitted orally from teacher to pupil without being committed to writing.

From that monastery he also obtained the *Samyuktābhidharma-hṛdaya-sāstra* in six thousand stanzas, a sutra in twenty five hundred stanzas, the *Vaipulyaparinirvāṇa-sūtra* in five thousand stanzas in one fascicle, and the *Mahāsāṃghikābhidharma-sāstra*. Faxian stayed [at that place] for three years, studying Sanskrit texts and the Sanskrit language and copying the Vinaya texts.

After he arrived in Central India and observed that the monks' rules of conduct and decorum of behavior were so admirable, Daozheng lamented the incompleteness of the Vinaya rules observed by the monks in the remote country of China. He swore not to be reborn in a far-off country until he achieved Buddhahood. So Daozheng remained in India and never returned home. Faxian's intention in undertaking the journey was to propagate the Vinaya in China, so he returned home alone.

Eighteen *yojanas* eastward down the Ganges, on the southern bank, was the great country of Campā. There stupas were built at the sites where the Buddha's *vihāra* existed, where the Buddha used to engage in walking meditation, and where the four Buddhas meditated in a monastery. Monks live in the monastery now.

Going further east from there for nearly fifty *yojanas*, Faxian reached the country of Tāmralipa, which had a seaport. In this country there were twenty-four monasteries, all of which were occupied by monks. Buddhism flourished there. He stayed in this country for two years, copying scriptures and images of the Buddha.

Then he sailed on a large trade ship southwest across the sea. Helped by the favorable dry monsoon wind of early winter, the vessel reached the Land of the Lion after fourteen days and nights. The people of this country said that the distance of the voyage was about seven hundred *yojanas*. This country was on an island [spanning] fifty *yojanas* from east to west and thirty from north to south. To its right and left there were about one hundred small islands, ten or twenty or even two hundred *li* apart. All these small islands were under the domination of the main island.

Many gems and pearls were produced on this island. There was a district about ten *li* square where *maṇi* pearls were found. The king sent men to guard the pearls and took a levy of three-tenths of the pearls collected there.

There were originally no inhabitants of this country except for spirits, deities, and *nāgas*. Merchants of different countries came here to trade. At the market the spirits and deities would not

appear in person but would simply display their valuable commodities with prices marked on them. The merchants would pay the marked prices and take the goods away directly. As the traders traveled to and fro or settled on the island, people of various countries heard about the pleasant conditions of this country and came there, too. In this way it gradually became a large kingdom.

The climate was temperate without any differences between winter and summer. Plants and trees always grew luxuriantly. The people could sow seeds in their fields at any time of the year and there was no fixed season for farming.

Once the Buddha came to this country to convert a vicious *nāga*. With his supernatural powers, the Buddha set one foot north of the royal city and the other on top of a mountain fifteen *yojanas* away. A great stupa four hundred feet tall had been built over the Buddha's footprint north of the royal city. It was of gold and silver and was decorated with ornaments consisting of various kinds of jewels. Next to this stupa was a monastery named Mount Fearless in which five thousand monks lived. A shrine for the Buddha's image had been built with gold and silver and carvings of different precious stones. A green jade image about thirty feet tall was installed in the shrine. The whole statue sparkled with the brilliance of the seven precious substances. Its magnificent features were so awe-inspiring that they were beyond description. In its right palm was a priceless pearl.

865a Many years had passed since Faxian left China, and he had associated only with people of foreign lands. All the mountains, rivers, plants, and trees that met his eyes were strange to him. Moreover, his companions had parted from him; some had remained behind and others had passed away. Looking at his lonely shadow, Faxian often felt sad. When he was standing beside the jade image and saw a Chinese white silk fan that had been offered by some merchants, he could no longer refrain from shedding tears of homesickness.

A former king of this country had dispatched a messenger to Central India to fetch a seed of the pipal tree. He had planted it



beside the shrine hall. The seed grew into a tree about twenty feet tall that inclined toward the southeast. Fearing that it might fall, the king had a huge pillar set up to support the trunk. The pillar was so large that eight or nine men could extend their arms around it. At the place where the pillar supported the pipal tree, a new branch grew out from the trunk and pierced through the pillar down to the ground, taking root in the earth. This side branch had grown to such a large size that four men could extend their arms around it. Although the pillar had been cleft in two, it had not been removed, as it still supported the tree by clasping the branch.

Under this tree there was a *vihāra* in which a sitting image of the Buddha was enshrined. Monks and laypeople constantly worshiped the image. In the city there was also the Temple of the Buddha's Tooth, made of the seven precious substances. The king led a life of purity and observed the Buddhist precepts. The citizens also had a deep respect for Buddhism. No famine or turbulence had ever occurred in this kingdom from the time of its establishment.

The monks had large amounts of jewels, gems, and *maṇi* pearls in their storehouses. Once the king went to inspect these storehouses. On seeing the *maṇi* pearls, he coveted them and wanted to seize them for himself. After three days, however, he repented and went to the monks to pay homage to them and confess his sins. He said to the monks, "From now on let it be a monastic rule not to allow kings to inspect the storehouses. Only those monks who have been fully ordained for no less than forty years may be admitted into them."

In this city there were many rich people, elders, and merchants of all trades. The houses were beautifully adorned. The streets and roads were level and well laid out. At the crossroads there were preaching halls. When the high seats were prepared on the eighth, fourteenth, and fifteenth days of each month, the four groups of Buddhist followers, both clergy and laity, gathered to listen to the sermons. The people of this country said that the public provided food for sixty thousand monks. The king also supported five or six

thousand monks in the royal city. The monks who lived on food provided by the public went with their almsbowls to collect it and returned with as much food as their vessels could contain.

865b The Buddha's tooth was usually brought out in the middle of the third month. Ten days before it was shown, the king had a huge elephant decorated and an eloquent person dressed in royal robes. This person rode on the elephant and made the following announcement as he beat a drum:

The Bodhisattva practiced for the incalculably long time of three *asaṃkhyeya* (immeasurable) *kalpas*, never sparing his own life. He gave up his kingdom, his wife, and his child. He even tore out his eyes to give them to others. He cut his own flesh to ransom a dove, gave his head as alms, offered his body to feed a famished tigress, and did not begrudge his marrow and brain. Having suffered these pains, he achieved Buddhahood at last for the sake of all living beings. While he was in this world he preached the Dharma and edified the people for forty-five years, giving rest to the weary and saving the unsaved. When his karmic relationship with living beings had come to an end, he entered nirvana. Since his *parinirvāṇa*, one thousand four hundred ninety-seven years have passed. Because the Eye of the World closed, all living beings were left in perpetual grief. Ten days from now, the Buddha's tooth will be brought out and carried to the Abhayagiri Vihāra. All monks and laymen who wish to accumulate merit, [you should] level the streets, decorate the roads, and prepare all kinds of flowers, incense, and other offerings.

After this announcement was made, the king set up on both sides of the road [images of] the various transmigratory forms of the Bodhisattva in his past five hundred incarnations, such as Sudāna, Śyāmaka, the elephant king, a deer, and a horse. All these forms, true to life, were painted in colors and richly adorned. Then the Buddha's tooth was brought out and carried in the middle of the

road. Offerings were made to it all along the way until it reached the shrine hall of the Abhayagiri Vihāra. There monks and laymen assembled to burn incense, light lamps, and perform all kinds of religious ceremonies day and night without stopping. After ninety days the tooth was carried back to the *vihāra* inside the city. This *vihāra* was open on fast days, when the tooth was worshiped according to tradition.

On a hill forty *li* to the east of the Abhayagiri Vihāra stood a *vihāra* by the name of Caitya with some two thousand monks living in it. Among them was a monk of great virtue named Dharmakīrti, who was venerated by all the people of the country. He had lived in a cave for more than forty years and always cherished such a mind of compassion that under his spiritual inspiration snakes and mice lived together in the cave without one harming the other.

Seven *li* to the south of the city there was a monastery named Mahāvihāra, in which three thousand monks lived.

A *śramaṇa* of high virtue observed the Vinaya rules so perfectly that the people of the country suspected him to be an arhat. When he was on his deathbed, the king came to see him. According to Buddhist custom, the king assembled some monks and asked them, “Has this monk achieved arhatship?”

They truthfully answered, “He is an arhat.”

After his death, the king had his remains cremated in a funeral ceremony befitting an arhat, in accordance with the rules laid down in the scriptures and Vinaya texts. At a spot four or five *li* east of the *vihāra*, five large logs were piled up to make a pyre about thirty feet square and nearly thirty feet in height. Sandalwood, aloeswood, and other aromatic woods were placed on the top. Steps were made at the four sides. The top part of the pyre was covered with pure and fine white felt all around. A large bier was made, resembling the hearses used in China but without dragon and fish adornments.

At the time of the cremation, the king, the countrymen, and the four types of Buddhists assembled to make offerings of flowers and incense. Then they followed the bier to the crematorium. There

the king again made his personal offering of flowers and incense. When this had been done, the bier was placed on the pyre, butter was poured over it, and it was burned. As the bier was burning, those in attendance respectfully took off their upper garments and, together with their feather ornaments and parasols, cast them into the flames from a distance as additional fuel for the cremation. When the cremation was over, the ashes were collected and a stupa was built for them. Faxian did not arrive in time to see the saintly monk in the flesh, but he witnessed his funeral ceremony.

The king, a devout believer in Buddhism, desired to build a new *vihāra* for the monk. First he invited the monks to a grand assembly. After offering food to them, he selected a pair of his best oxen and adorned their horns with gold, silver, and other precious objects. He had a fine golden plow prepared, and personally furrowed the four sides of a piece of land to mark the boundaries. Then he endowed the monks with the inhabitants, fields, and houses on the land. The transfer was incised on an iron title deed, so that it could be handed down from generation to generation and nobody would dare to alter or annul it.

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While sojourning in this country, Faxian heard an Indian monk, seated on a high pulpit, reciting the following scripture:

The Buddha's almsbowl, which was originally kept in Vaiśālī, is now in Gandhāra. After several hundred years (*Faxian's note: At the time of recitation, Faxian heard the monk mention the exact number of years, but he has since forgotten it.*), it will go to the country of Western Yuezhi. After several more centuries, it will go to the country of Khotan. After several more centuries, it will go to the country of Kucha. After several more centuries, it will go the Land of the Lion. After several more centuries, it will go to China. After several more centuries, it will return to Central India and ascend to the Tuṣṭa Heaven, where Maitreya Bodhisattva will see it and exclaim, "The almsbowl of Śākyamuni Buddha has arrived!" Then he, together with heavenly beings, will

offer flowers and incense to it for seven days. After the seven days, it will return to Jambudvīpa, where the *nāga* king of the sea will carry it to his *nāga* palace. When Maitreya is about to achieve Buddhahood, the bowl will be redivided into four parts and returned to its original place on Mount Vinataka.

When Maitreya has realized Buddhahood, the four heavenly kings will venerate him in the same way as they did former Buddhas. The thousand Buddhas of the *bhadra kalpa* all use this same almsbowl. When the bowl has vanished, Buddhism will gradually disappear. After the disappearance of Buddhism, the lifespan of human beings will diminish to become as short as five years. By that time there will be no more rice and butter in the world, and men will become so wicked that even pieces of wood in their hands will turn into weapons for harming each other. Those who have done meritorious deeds will escape to the mountains to avoid the calamity and come out again when all the evil men have killed each other. They will say to each other, “Men’s lives were once very long, but as they were very wicked and committed all sorts of evil actions, our lives too have been shortened to five years. We should now do good together, have compassion in our minds, and cultivate sincerity and righteousness.” Then human life will be gradually lengthened to become as long as eighty thousand years.

When Maitreya appears in the world and starts to turn the Wheel of the Dharma, he will first save the followers of the Dharma who have not yet been saved by Śākyamuni Buddha, including monks and the laypeople who take the Three Refuges, observe the five or eight precepts, and make offerings to the Triple Gem. The second and third groups to be saved will be those who are karmically connected with him.

Faxian wished to copy this sutra, but the person said, “There

is no written text of this sutra. I just recite it from memory.”

Faxian stayed in this country for two years and obtained the texts of the *Mahīśāsaka-vinaya*, the *Dirghāgama*, and the *Samyuktāgama*, as well as some texts of the *Kṣudraka-piṭaka* (*Miscellaneous Collection*), all of which were unknown in China.

866a Having acquired these Sanskrit texts, he set sail on a large merchant ship which carried about two hundred passengers. A small boat was towed behind for use in case the large vessel should be wrecked, as sailing on the sea was hazardous. They had sailed eastward with a favorable tradewind for only three days when the ship was caught in a typhoon. It sprang a leak and water rushed in. The merchants wanted to take the small boat but those already in it hacked off the cable for fear that too many people might overload the boat. The terrified merchants, fearing that they might meet their ends at any moment, began to throw their bulky merchandise overboard to prevent the ship from taking on water.

Faxian also cast his pitcher, washbasin, and some other personal articles into the sea. Fearing that the merchants might throw away his sacred texts and images, he invoked Avalokiteśvara with his whole heart and prayed to the monks in China: “I have come so far to see the Dharma. May your spiritual power carry me back to my destination!”

The typhoon lasted thirteen days and nights. They reached the shore of an island. When the tide ebbed, they found the cause of the leak in the ship and repaired it then sailed on again. The sea was swarming with pirates from whom no one escaped alive after encountering them. The great sea stretched on without limit. One could not tell east from west. Only by observing the sun, moon, and stars could they navigate. On rainy days, the ship simply drifted aimlessly before the wind. On dark nights all they could see were giant billows of waves beating one against the other and shimmering like lambent flames, with huge turtles, sea monsters, and other strange creatures in them.

The merchants were at a loss and could not tell directions. As the sea was fathomless, there was nowhere to cast anchor. It was not until the weather turned fine that they could determine the directions and get on the right course. If they had happened to strike a reef, they would have been dead. Having voyaged in this manner for about ninety days, they reached a country named Yavadvīpa.

In this country the heretical teaching of Brahmanism flourished and there was almost no trace of Buddhism. After staying there for five months, Faxian embarked on another large merchant ship, which also carried some two hundred men. With provisions for fifty days, the ship set sail on the sixteenth day of the fourth month. He observed the summer retreat on board ship, which sailed north-east, bound for Guang-zhou.

They had been sailing for about a month when one night, during the second watch, they encountered a black cyclone with torrential rain. All the merchants and traders were terror-stricken. At that moment Faxian again wholeheartedly invoked Avalokiteśvara and the monks in China. Thanks to the protection of their spiritual power, the voyagers survived the night until daybreak. At dawn the brahmins discussed the matter and said among themselves, "It is because we have a Buddhist monk on board our ship that we have been so unlucky and suffered such great trouble. We should drop the monk on an island. We should not risk our lives because of one man."

Faxian's patron said, "If you want to put the monk ashore, you will have to put me down, too, or kill me first. If you make him get off the ship, I will certainly report the matter to the king on our arrival in China. The king of China also believes in Buddhism and honors Buddhist monks." The merchants faltered and dared not put Faxian ashore.

Because the weather was continuously cloudy or rainy, the pilot charted a wrong course. Consequently the ship sailed for more than seventy days. Their provisions and fresh water were nearly exhausted. They used salty seawater to cook their food and

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shared the fresh water among themselves, each person getting about two liters. The [supply of water] was almost exhausted, too. The merchants considered the matter together, saying, "Usually it takes just fifty days to reach Guang-zhou. But we have been sailing now for many more days than that. Have we taken a wrong course?" So they steered northwest to look for land.

After sailing for twelve days and nights, they reached the southern shore of Laoshan in Changguang Prefecture, where they obtained fresh water and vegetables. They had passed through dangerous and difficult days with fear and anxiety. When they arrived at the shore they saw the familiar vegetable goosefoot and they realized that they had landed on Chinese soil. But they did not see any people. Not knowing where they were located, some said they had not yet reached Guang-zhou, and others said that they might have already passed it. Nobody could tell exactly where they were. Then some of them rowed a small boat into the harbor to look for people to ask what place it was. They met two hunters, whom they brought back to the ship so that Faxian could act as interpreter to make inquiries. Having reassured the hunters of his goodwill, Faxian asked them slowly, "Who are you?"

They replied, "We are Buddhist believers."

He then asked, "What are you looking for in these mountains?"

They replied, "Tomorrow is the fifteenth day of the seventh month. We are trying to get peaches to offer to the Buddha."

Faxian further inquired, "What country is this?"

The hunters said, "This is Changguang Prefecture in Qingzhou, under the rule of the House of Jin."

Having heard this, the merchants became delighted and begged some men to send their goods to Changguang Prefecture. On hearing that a monk had crossed the sea and arrived with Buddhist scriptures and images, Li Yi, the Buddhist prefect of Changguang, came with his men to the seaside to receive the scriptures and images with due honor and carry them to the prefectural city. The merchants returned to Yangzhou, leaving Faxian behind in Qingzhou, where he was invited to stay for a winter and a summer.



When the summer retreat was over, Faxian, having been away from his fellow monks for such a long time, wanted to proceed immediately to Chang-an. But as the duty he had taken upon himself was so important, he instead went south to the capital. There, with the cooperation of a *dhyāna* master, he translated the sutras and Vinaya texts into Chinese.

Faxian started his journey from Chang-an and spent six years to reach Central India, where he stayed for six years. Then it took another three years for his return to Qing-zhou. He had traveled through nearly thirty countries, from west of the Sha River to the land of India, where the dignified deportment of the monks and the excellence of their teachings could not be described in detail. Because his fellow monks in China were not well informed in these matters, he risked his humble life to return home by sea through many difficulties. Under the protection of the Triple Gem, he was saved from dangerous situations. He wrote down this sketch of his travels so that his learned fellow monks might share his experiences.

This was written in the twelfth year of Yi-xi (417) of the Jin dynasty, the cyclical year of Jia-yin, dominated by the star Canopus.



It was at the end of the summer retreat that we welcomed Faxian. When the eminent monk arrived, we invited him to stay with us to partake of the feast of the winter solstice. We repeatedly asked him about his travels in his spare time after lecturing. He was a polite and affable person who always spoke the truth. We urged him to relate in detail what he had briefly told us before. Thus he once again gave us a complete account, from beginning to end.

He said, "When I look back on what I have been through, my heart begins to pound and I start sweating. I bravely undertook a perilous journey, not sparing my body, because I had a purpose and I foolishly and singlemindedly devoted my life to it. That was why I cast my life into the journey in which death seemed almost

certain, in the hope that I might have one chance out of ten thousand of surviving.”

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We were quite moved by what he had said. Such men as this person are rare, whether in ancient times or in the present day. Since the Great Religion spread to the east there has been no one equal to Faxian in his selfless search for the Dharma. From this we know that no obstacle can impede the progress of a man who has a mind of sincerity, and no meritorious deed will end in failure if one is determined to achieve it. Is it not true that he succeeded in his praiseworthy pursuit because he disregarded what others valued and valued what others disregarded?

End of *The Journey of the Eminent Monk Faxian*

## Glossary

*anāgāmin* (“non-returner”): A sage who has destroyed all evil passions and is therefore not subject to rebirth in samsara. The third of the four stages of spiritual development in the Hinayana. *See also* arhat; Hinayana; samsara; *srotaāpanna*.

arhat (“worthy one”): One who has completely eradicated all passions and desires and attained emancipation from the cycle of birth and death (samsara); the highest of the four stages of spiritual development and the ideal of the Hinayana. *See also* *anāgāmin*; Hinayana; samsara; *srotaāpanna*.

*asuras*: A class of demonic beings that are in constant conflict with the *devas*. *See also* *devas*.

Avalokiteśvara: The name of a great bodhisattva who represents compassion. *See also* bodhisattva.

*bhikṣu*: A fully ordained Buddhist monk. Monks undertake to adhere to the Vinaya, a code of rules and disciplines. *See also* Vinaya.

*bhikṣuṇī*: A fully ordained Buddhist nun. Nuns undertake to adhere to the Vinaya, a code of rules and disciplines. *See also* Vinaya.

*bodhi*: Enlightenment.

bodhisattva: (literally, “enlightenment being”): A person who has made the aspiration to one day achieve enlightenment (*bodhicitta*) with a view to the welfare and happiness of all beings. This altruistic ideal is at the core of Mahayana teachings, as opposed to the concern for individual attainment emphasized in the Hinayana. As Mahayana philosophy developed over the centuries, bodhisattvas were deified; these great bodhisattvas, such as Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī, and Maitreya, are passionless, selfless beings with universal compassion who see the emptiness of phenomena and are destined to become a Buddha. *See also* Hinayana; emptiness; Mahayana.

Chan (Japanese: Zen): A major East Asian school of Mahayana Buddhism that emphasizes the practice of meditation. “*Chan*” is a transliteration of the Sanskrit term “*dhyaṇa*,” meditation. *See also* *dyhāna*; Mahayana.

*devas*: Heavenly beings, gods.

Dharma (“truth,” “law,” “principle”): The Buddhist teachings, such as the four noble truths, the eightfold path, emptiness, and so on. *See also* eightfold path; emptiness; four noble truths.

*dhyāna*: meditation, meditative concentration.

eightfold path: (1) right view, (2) right thought, (3) right speech, (4) right action, (5) right livelihood, (6) right effort, (7) right mindfulness, and (8) right meditation. The practice of the eightfold path is the means by which suffering can be ended, and it is taught as part of the four noble truths, one of the basic doctrines of Buddhism. *See also* four noble truths.

eight precepts: A set of prohibitory rules undertaken by lay Buddhists at certain times. They are: (1) not to kill; (2) not to steal; (3) not to engage in sexual misconduct (i.e., adultery); (4) not to use false or harmful speech; (5) not to use intoxicants; (6) not to sleep in a raised or luxurious bed; (7) not to engage in idle pleasures such as using perfumes, oils, or decoration on the body, singing and dancing, or viewing plays and dances; and (8) not to eat after midday. The first five of these are the five basic precepts. *See also* five precepts; precepts; ten precepts.

emptiness (*śūnyatā*): The doctrine that all phenomena exist only in dependence on a complex web of causes and conditions and are thus “empty” of any sort of independent, permanent identity. Hinayana schools teach that the concept of a permanent “self” is a delusory idea. Mahayana schools further developed this idea, emphasizing that not only the “self” but all phenomena are originally empty. The theory of emptiness was elaborated extensively in the Prajñāpāramitā literature and became a central tenet of Mahayana Buddhist thought. *See also* Hinayana; Mahayana; Prajñāpāramitā.

Five Classics: The five literary works of Confucius, the *Book of Changes*, the *Odes*, the *Book of History*, the *Book of Rites*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, which were studied as part of a classical education in China.

five precepts: The five basic prohibitory rules undertaken by all Buddhists. They are: (1) not to kill; (2) not to steal; (3) not to engage in sexual acts (for monastics) or sexual misconduct, i.e., adultery (for laypeople); (4) not to use false or harmful speech; and (5) not to ingest intoxicants.

four daily requisites: The four necessities of life that monks and nuns are allowed to possess, (1) food, (2) clothing, (3) a sleeping or dwelling place, and (4) medicine.

four forms of birth: According to Buddhism, the four possible ways that beings may be born, i.e., (1) from a womb (viviparous), as with mammals (2) from an egg (oviparous), as with birds; (3) from moisture, as with worms and fishes; and (4) by metamorphosis, as with moths from a chrysalis or as spirits reborn into heavens or hells.

four groups of followers: The four classes of Buddhist followers, i.e., *bhikṣus* (monks), *bhikṣuṇīs* (nuns), *upāsakas* (laymen), and *upāsikās* (laywomen). *See also* *bhikṣu*; *bhikṣuṇī*; *upāsaka*; *upāsikā*.

four noble truths: The fundamental Buddhist teaching: (1) life is characterized by suffering; (2) the cause of suffering is craving; (3) there is an end to suffering; and (4) the way to end suffering is the practice of the eightfold path which leads to nirvana. *See also* eightfold path; nirvana.

four heavenly kings: The guardian kings of the four heavenly realms that comprise the Buddhist cosmos.

*ge*: A unit of capacity, approximately one-tenth of a pint.

Hinayana (“Lesser Vehicle”): A term applied by Mahayana Buddhists to the various schools of early Buddhism that exalt as their ideal the arhat. *See also* arhat; Mahayana.

Holy Monk: An image, often of Mañjuśrī, displayed in the monk’s or nun’s hall of a Mahayana monastery or nunnery. *See also* Mahayana; Mañjuśrī.

Jambudvīpa: The southern continent of the Buddhist cosmos, corresponding to our world.

*kalpa*: An immense period of time, an eon.

karma (“action”): any action of body, speech, or mind (thought), which may be either morally good, bad, or neutral. The consequences of one’s actions lead to states of either pleasure or suffering or to neutral states. The concept of karma is connected with the Buddhist theory of transmigration, since most actions have either a positive or negative effect on a person’s consciousness and lead to rebirth in samsara. *See also* samsara; Three Activities; transmigration.

*lakṣa*: A unit of measure, usually 10,000.

*li*: A unit of distance, approximately one-third of a mile.

Mādhyamika: One of the major schools of Mahayana Buddhism, established by Nāgārjuna and his followers. Its tenets are primarily based on the Prajñāpāramitā sutras. *See also* Mahayana; Prajñāpāramitā.

**Mahayana** (“Great Vehicle”): A branch of Buddhism that emerged in India around 100 B.C.E., centered on the doctrine of *sūnyatā* (emptiness) and which exalts as its religious ideal the bodhisattva, a selfless being who delays his or her own entry into nirvana in order to help liberate all sentient beings. To distinguish its soteriological path from the ideal of the arhat promulgated in earlier Buddhist schools, Mahayanists applied the term Hinayana (“Lesser Vehicle”) to that branch of Buddhism. *See also* arhat; bodhisattva; emptiness; Hinayana.

**Maitreya**: The name of a great bodhisattva who is revered as the Buddha of the future. *See also* bodhisattva.

**Mañjuśrī**: The name of a great bodhisattva who represents wisdom. *See also* bodhisattva.

**nirvana**: Liberation from samsara, the final goal of Buddhist aspiration and practice, a state in which all passions are extinguished and the highest wisdom attained. *See also* eightfold path; samsara.

**parinirvāṇa**: Complete nirvana; perfect extinction. The term is also used to refer specifically to the passing into final liberation of the Buddha. *See also* nirvana.

**Period of Decadence**: The last of the three periods of the Dharma predicted to occur after the Buddha’s *parinirvāṇa*. During the Period of Decadence (which corresponds to the present age), the teaching of the Buddha exists, but neither practice in accordance with the teaching nor enlightenment in this life are possible. The other two periods are the Period of the True Dharma, when the Buddha’s teaching was practiced and enlightenment was attainable; and the Semblance Period, when the teaching was practiced but enlightenment was no longer possible. *See also* Semblance Period.

**prajñā**: Nondiscriminating or transcendental wisdom.

**Prajñāpāramitā** (“perfection of wisdom”): The name of a body of Mahayana literature that emphasizes the doctrine of emptiness, and which served as a fundamental text for a number of Buddhist schools, including Mādhyamika and Yogācāra. *See also* emptiness; Mādhyamika; Mahayana; Yogācāra.

**pratyekabuddha** (“solitary enlightened one”): A sage who attains enlightenment without the guidance of a teacher and who intends neither to guide others nor to expound the teaching to others. One of the two kinds of Hinayana sages. *See also* Hinayana; *śrāvaka*.

**precepts**: Vows concerning moral conduct taken by lay Buddhists and monastics. While different types of lay Buddhist practitioners take

- various sets of precepts, all Buddhists are supposed to follow the five basic precepts. In addition, there are two hundred fifty monastic rules for monks and three hundred forty-eight for nuns, which are detailed in the Vinaya. *See also* eight precepts; five precepts; ten precepts; Vinaya.
- Pure Land: The name of a cosmic realm of perfect peace and happiness, presided over by Amitabha Buddha. Also called the Land of Supreme Bliss and the Western Paradise. The term also refers to a major school of East Asian Mahayana Buddhism. *See also* Mahayana.
- sāgaranāga* (“ocean serpent”): A type of *nāga*, or semi-mythical serpent. *Nāgas* appear in many Buddhist texts as guardians of Buddhist scriptures that are kept at a palace deep in the ocean.
- Śākyamuni: The historical Buddha, who lived in India in the fifth century B.C.E. and whose life and teachings form the basis of Buddhism.
- śāla* trees: The twin trees under which the Buddha passed into *parinirvāṇa*. *See also* *parinirvāṇa*.
- samādhi*: A state of meditative concentration.
- samsara: The cycle of birth, death, and rebirth through which beings migrate due to karmic causes, generally contrasted with nirvana. The Buddha’s teachings are designed to liberate sentient beings from samsara, which is considered the world of suffering. *See also* karma; nirvana.
- sangha: The Buddhist order. Originally meaning the community of ordained monks, the term came to encompass all four groups of followers of the Buddha’s teaching. In a wider sense, the sangha includes all Buddhist practitioners. Also one of the Three Refuges. *See also* four groups of followers; Three Refuges.
- śarīras*: (“ashes”) Refers to the remains, or relics, of esteemed monks and nuns that are collected upon cremation of the body and venerated. They are sometimes interred in a stupa, a reliquary monument.
- Semblance Period: The second of the three periods of the Dharma predicted to occur after the Buddha’s *parinirvāṇa*. During the Semblance Period, the teaching of the Buddha existed and was practiced but enlightenment was no longer possible. The other two periods are the Period of the True Dharma, when the Buddha’s teaching was practiced and enlightenment was attainable; and the Period of Decadence, when the teaching exists but neither practice nor enlightenment are possible. *See also* Period of Decadence.

seven precious gems: A phrase generally used to indicate something luxuriously or richly appointed. Different texts cite various combinations, including pearl, diamond, coral, ruby, emerald, sapphire, topaz, crystal, silver, gold, etc.

*śikṣamāṇā*: A young (age eighteen to twenty) female Buddhist novice.

*śīla*: morality, uprightness in keeping the precepts. *See also* precepts.

*śramaṇa*: A religious mendicant, one who has renounced lay life and taken up ascetic life seeking salvation. May also refer to a Buddhist monk.

*śrāmaṇera*: A male Buddhist novice who has taken vows to obey the ten precepts. *See also* ten precepts.

*śrāmaṇerikā*: A female Buddhist novice who has taken vows to obey the ten precepts. *See also* ten precepts.

*śrāvaka* (“word-hearer”): Originally, a disciple and contemporary of Śākyamuni Buddha, one who heard his teachings directly. Later used generally by Mahayana Buddhists to refer to Hinayana Buddhists. One of the two kinds of Hinayana sages. *See also* Hinayana; Mahayana; *pratyekabuddha*; Śākyamuni.

*srotaāpanna* (“stream-enterer”): One who has entered the stream of emancipation, i.e., a practitioner who has entered the Buddhist path. The first of the four stages of spiritual development in the Hinayana; the other three stages are that of *sakṛdāgāmin*, (“once-returner”), one who will return to the world (i.e., samsara) only once more before full realization of arhatship; *anāgāmin* (“non-returner”); and arhat. *See also* *anāgāmin*; arhat; Hinayana; samsara.

Taoism: A school of mysticism founded in China around the sixth century B.C.E., based on the teachings of the legendary figure Lao-tzu as explicated in the text of the *Tao te Ching*. The basic principle is that of the Tao, the “Way,” the natural law of the universe. The Taoist goal is to achieve oneness with the Tao.

ten precepts: A set of prohibitory rules undertaken by Buddhist novices. They are: (1) not to kill; (2) not to steal, (3) not to engage in sexual acts; (4) not to use false or harmful speech; (5) not to take intoxicants; (6) not to use perfumes or oils on the body; (7) not to sing, dance, or view performances of theater, dance, etc.; (8) not to sleep on a raised or luxurious bed; (9) not to eat past midday; and (10) not to handle gold, silver, or jewels. The first five of these these comprise the five basic precepts undertaken by all Buddhists. *See also* eight precepts; five precepts; precepts.



- Three Activities: The three actions of body, speech, and mind, through which karma is created. *See also* karma.
- Three Obediences: A set of restrictive injunctions on the conduct of women found in Indian Brahmanic texts such as the *Mānavadharmā* (“Laws of Manu”) and in later Chinese sources as well. They stipulate that a woman must be obedient to her father when young, to her husband when married, and to her son when elderly.
- three realms: The three realms of samsaric existence in Buddhist cosmology, (1) the realm of desire (*kāmadhātu*), the lowest realm in which beings experience desire and are attached to form; (2) the realm of form (*rūpadhātu*), the middle realm in which beings have severed desires but still exist in subtle material form; and (3) the formless realm (*ārūpadhātu*), the highest realm experienced by beings who have severed all desires and attachment to form but have not yet achieved enlightenment. *See also* samsara.
- Three Refuges: Buddha, Dharma (the teachings), and Sangha (the monastic community). These are said to be refuges because upon ordination the practitioner “takes refuge” in them. Also known as the Triple Gem. *See also* Dharma; sangha; Triple Gem.
- transmigration: The cycle of birth and death to which sentient beings are subject. Beings are reborn in one of the three realms of samsara according to karmic causes created in previous lives. The Buddha’s teachings are designed to free sentient beings from the suffering of samsaric existence, which is contrasted with nirvana, liberation from the cycle of transmigration. *See also* four noble truths; karma; nirvana; three realms.
- Tripiṭaka: The three divisions (*piṭaka*, “baskets”) of the Buddhist canon, consisting of the Abhidharma, treatises on Buddhist doctrine; the Sutra, the sermons of the Buddha; and the Vinaya, the monastic code.
- Triple Gem: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. *See also* Three Refuges.
- upāsaka*: A male lay Buddhist. All lay Buddhists undertake the practice of five basic precepts. *See also* five precepts.
- upāsikā*: A female lay Buddhist. All lay Buddhists undertake the practice of five basic precepts. *See also* five precepts.
- vihāra*: Originally, a dwelling for monastics. The term may also refer to a Buddhist monastery/nunnery, temple, hall, or other religious building.

## Glossary

**Vinaya:** Texts on monastic discipline, outlining the precepts and rules of behavior to be followed by Buddhist monks and nuns. One of the three divisions of the Tripiṭaka. *See also* precepts; Tripiṭaka.

*yakṣas:* A class of demonic beings.

**Yogācāra:** A major Mahayana Buddhist philosophical school, founded in the fourth century by Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, which advocates the doctrine of “consciousness only.” Also known as Vijñānavāda. *See also* Mahayana.

*yojana:* literally, “stage”; a unit used to measure how far an army can march in one day. The exact distance is unknown but is likely roughly equivalent to seven to nine miles.

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