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Becoming Chinese Buddhas: Claims to Authority and the Making of Chan Buddhist Identity

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For generations, many scholars took for granted that the Chan tradition is best regarded as the "meditation school" in Chinese Buddhism.[1] This interpretation of Chan's institutional identity derived largely, and understandably, from the literal meaning of the word *chan* 禪, from which the tradition took its name. *Chan* (along with *channa* 禪那) transliterates the Sanskrit term *dhyāna*, which refers to a kind of meditation.[2] Over the last several decades, however, many scholars have begun to argue that the meaning of the term *chan* fundamentally changed between the Tang (618-907) and Song (960-1279) dynasties. As the capital-c Chan tradition rose to dominant status in tenth- and eleventh-century China, the earlier notion that Chan masters were most essentially experts in meditation was replaced by new formulations of Chan identity, including the claim that Chan masters should be considered full-fledged buddhas.[3]

1) For just a few representative examples, see *The Buddhist Tradition in India, China, and Japan*, ed. W. M. Theodore De Bary (New York: Modern Library, 1969), 207-40; and Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: India and China*, tr. James W. Heisig and Paul Knitter (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2005), 68.

2) On the reception of Buddhist meditation methods labeled *chan* in medieval China, see Eric Matthew Greene, "Meditation, Repentance, and Visionary Experience in Early Medieval Chinese Buddhism" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of California, Berkeley, 2012).

3) Judith A. Berling, "Bringing the Buddha Down to Earth: Notes on the Emergence of *Yü-lu* as a Buddhist Genre," *History of Religions* 27 (1987): 56-88; T. Griffith Foulk, "Myth, Ritual, and Monastic Practice in Sung Ch'an Buddhism," in *Religion and Society in T'ang and Sung China*, ed. Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Peter N. Gregory (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 1993), esp. 153-54, 160-61, 179-80, and 193-94; T. Griffith Foulk and Robert H. Sharf, "On the Ritual Use of Ch'an Portraiture in Medieval China," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 7 (1993-94): 195; Robert H. Sharf, "The Idolization of Enlightenment: On the Mummification of Ch'an Masters in

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This process appears to have begun in the early eighth century and crystallized in the legend of Huineng 慧能 (or 惠能, 638-713), who was celebrated in the *Platform Sūtra* and for posterity as both a Chinese buddha and the "sixth patriarch" of Chan. By the eleventh century, these scholars have proposed, a growing body of Chan literature had begun popularizing the image of Chan as a school of "native Chinese Buddhas whose modes of expression were well tuned to the sensibilities of the educated elite in China," as T. Griffith Foulk put it.[4]

Yet important questions remain unresolved concerning this transformation of Chan identity and the concomitant expansion of Chan Buddhists' claims to authority. How, exactly, did Chan Buddhists claim to be buddhas? And how did they understand the nature of this claimed equivalence between Chan masters and buddhas, especially in the absence of the special signs that canonically distinguished buddhas from ordinary people? In this article, I introduce evidence from Chan literature demonstrating that Chan Buddhists themselves struggled with the question of what it means to be a Chinese buddha. I show how they devised multiple rhetorical strategies for remaking the lofty status of buddhahood into an identity that might convincingly be affixed to living (and recently dead) Chinese Buddhists, despite the manifest dissimilarities between Chan masters and buddhas.

Chan Buddhists' claims to buddhahood were closely connected with claims that the Chan lineage can be traced back to the Buddha Śākyamuni, and even to the "buddhas of the past." Claims that some or all Chan masters should be treated as buddhas were also bound up with doctrines of universal buddhahood, such as the ideas widely accepted in medieval China that all sentient beings possess buddha-nature (*foxing* 佛性) or that all sentient beings' minds are fundamen-

Medieval China, *History of Religions* 32 (1992): 6-7; idem, "Ritual," in *Critical Terms for the Study of Buddhism*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2005), 261-67; idem, "Mindfulness and Mindlessness in Early Chan," in *Philosophy East & West* 64 (2014): 937-38; John R. McRae, *Seeing Through Zen: Encounter, Transformation, and Genealogy in Chinese Chan Buddhism* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2003), 7; Alan Cole, *Fathering Your Father: The Zen of Fabrication in Tang Buddhism* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2009); idem, *Patriarchs on Paper: A Critical History of Medieval Chan Literature* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2016); and Eric Greene, "Another Look at Early Chan: Daoxuan, Bodhidharma, and the Three Levels Movement," *T'oung Pao* 94 (2008): 50-51 and 105-8.

4) Foulk, "Myth, Ritual, and Monastic Practice," 154.

tally coextensive with metaphysical buddhahood. Yet claims that Chan masters were buddhas cannot be reduced to either genealogy or metaphysics alone. Instead, I suggest that genealogy and doctrinal metaphysics served as two tropes—among others—that Chan Buddhists used to translate the exclusive personal status of buddhahood into a Chinese cultural idiom.

This article is divided into three sections. In the first section, I explore the ways that tropes of genealogy served to rhetorically connect Chan Buddhists with the Buddha Śākyamuni and the buddhas of the past, even as these tropes also established categorical distinctions between Chan masters and buddhas. I pay particular attention to confusion surrounding the question of how the "buddhas of the past" fit into the broader schema of Chan lineage transmission.

In the second section, I turn to claims made by early Chan Buddhists during the Tang era that certain Chan masters should be considered buddhas or near-buddhas. Building on Alan Cole's suggestion that early Chan history might be read as a series of "efforts to create Chinese buddhas,"[5] I nevertheless also contend that Cole mistakenly reads all claims to membership in a Chan lineage as inherently entailing claims to buddhahood, leaving us with a still-inadequate understanding of how early Chan Buddhists actually began advancing specific claims to be buddhas. Focusing on the handful of extant Tang-era cases in which certain Chan masters *explicitly* claimed or were claimed to be buddhas or near-buddhas, I examine the ways these claims related to claims by Chan Buddhists to membership in an orthodox Chan lineage, as well as how claims to the personal status of buddhahood related to understandings of the doctrinal metaphysics of universal buddhahood. I argue that in order to be convincing, claims that certain Chan masters were buddhas had to address and overcome the assumption widespread among medieval Chinese Buddhists that buddhas are otherworldly beings recognizable by particular bodily signs and supernatural powers.

In the third section, I analyze an overlooked claim to the personal status of buddhahood found in the discourse record of Chan master Xuansha Shibei 玄沙師備 (835-908), but actually dating to roughly a century after Xuansha's death. In the proclamation attributed to

5) Cole, *Fathering Your Father*, 2.

Xuansha that he is not merely a distant lineage-heir of the Buddha Śākyamuni but rather is the Buddha's "fellow student," and in the subsequent reception of this novel formulation, I argue that we find a valuable case study for understanding how Song-era Chan Buddhists made new sorts of claims to personal buddhahood independent of claims to spiritual filiation or doctrinal metaphysics. Xuansha's formula heralded a period when normative conceptions of Chan mastery came increasingly to be viewed as categorically equivalent to the status of being a buddha, a claimed equivalence that helped sanction the rise of Chan as an elite institution and invested Chan literature with authority equivalent to canonical Buddhist sutras.

From Buddhas to Patriarchs: Powers and Perils of Genealogy

Among the various facets of Chan identity that took shape between the Tang and Song dynasties, genealogy has received the bulk of scholarly attention. Indeed, many scholars have viewed claims to genealogical filiation with earlier Chan masters via ties of fictive kinship as the quintessential rhetorical mechanism by which successive generations of Chinese Buddhist monastics competed for the mantle of Chan orthodoxy.[6] In line with this view, the last several decades have witnessed a dramatic revision of received ideas about Chan history as scholars parsed the complex dynamics by which Chan lineages were constructed and reconstructed over the course of the tradition's first several centuries of existence.[7] Some scholars have also suggested that broad familiarity with the concept of genealogy among literate Chinese elites lent this mode of claiming authority special rhetorical power.[8] In this section I

6) On Chan lineages as forms of "fictive kinship," see Morten Schlütter, *How Zen Became Zen: The Dispute over Enlightenment and the Formation of Chan Buddhism in Song-Dynasty China* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 2008), chapter 3.

7) The scholarly literature on this subject is vast. Several major works in English that explicitly take up genealogy as a key problem in the history of Chan include Bernard Faure, *The Rhetoric of Immediacy: A Cultural Critique of Chan/Zen Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1991), chapter 1; Wendi L. Adamek, *The Mystique of Transmission: On an Early Chan History and its Contexts* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2007); and McRae, *Seeing Through Zen*, chapter 1.

8) John Jorgensen, "The 'Imperial' Lineage of Ch'an Buddhism: The Role of Confucian Ritual and Ancestor Worship in Ch'an's Search for Legitimation in the Mid-T'ang Dynasty," *Papers on Far Eastern History* 35 (1987): 89-133; John R. McRae, "Encounter Dialogue and the

take a more circumscribed look at Chan genealogy in order to consider how it served as a key trope in articulating a close connection between Chan masters and buddhas. I also consider how logical problems inherent to the genealogical model lingered even into the Song dynasty, after the Chan school was firmly established, prompting various responses from Buddhists inside and outside of Chan circles.

The notion of a lineal succession of Buddhist "patriarchs" understood to be direct heirs of the Buddha seems to have been first invented in medieval China. Although the earliest formulations of this trope consisted solely of lineages of mythical Indian patriarchs, in the sixth and seventh centuries several attempts were made to connect Indian to Chinese patriarchal lineages.[9] For its part, the concept of the Chan tradition as an elite lineage of patriarchs beginning with the meditation master Bodhidharma (d. ca. 530) first began to take shape at the end of the seventh century in an epitaph for a monk named Faru 法如 (638-89),[10] and the early eighth-century Chan compilation *Chuan fabao ji* 傳法寶記 (*Record of the Transmission of the Dharma-Treasure*) hinted at the idea that this lineage actually had a much longer pre-history in India before Bodhidharma transmitted it to China.[11] When a consensus around Huineng's status as the tradition's pivotal sixth Chinese patriarch began to take hold during the eighth century, the notion of a lineage of Chan patriarchs extending without break all the way back to the

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Transformation of the Spiritual Path in Chinese Ch'an," in *Paths to Liberation: The Mārga and Its Transformations in Chinese Buddhist Thought*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. and Robert M. Gimello (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 1992), 359; and William M. Bodiford, "Dharma Transmission in Theory and Practice," in *Zen Ritual: Studies of Zen Buddhist Theory in Practice*, ed. Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), 262-69.

9) Linda Penkower, "In the Beginning… Guanding 灌頂 (561-632) and the Creation of Early Tiantai," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 23 (2000): 245-96; and Stuart Young, *Conceiving the Indian Buddhist Patriarchs in China* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 2015), chapters 2 and 3.

10) Yanagida Seizan 柳田聖山, *Shoki zenshū shisho no kenkyū* 初期禅宗史書の研究 (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1967), 35-46 and 487-96; John R. McRae, *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch'an Buddhism* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 1986), 43-44 and 85-86; and Bernard Faure, *The Will to Orthodoxy: A Critical Genealogy of Northern Chan Buddhism* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1997), 27.

11) See Yanagida, *Shoki zenshū shisho no kenkyū*, 561 (for the original text) and 47-58 (for a translation into Japanese). The passage is translated and discussed in McRae, *The Northern School*, 256 and 80-82. See also the discussions in Philip B. Yampolsky, *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1967), 6; and Faure, *The Will to Orthodoxy*, 163-4.

Buddha Śākyamuni also developed into its mature shape, as Chan Buddhists appropriated and adapted key elements of earlier attempts to assemble patriarchal lineages connecting Indian and Chinese Buddhist figures for their own purposes.[12]

The *Platform Sūtra* itself features Huineng on his deathbed receiving a question from one of his disciples: "As for the transmission of this teaching of sudden [awakening], from its beginnings to the present, how many generations have passed?" 此頓教法傳授，從上以來至今幾代 ?[13] Huineng replies: "In the beginning it was transmitted between the seven buddhas [of the past], with Śākyamuni Buddha being the seventh, [then to] Mahākāśyapa as the eighth, Ānanda as ninth…" 初傳授七佛，釋迦牟尼佛第七，大迦葉第八，阿難第九 … and so on through a series of Indian figures, finally being brought to China by Bodhidharma.[14] This lineage schema reached its more or less final form in the 801 CE *Baolin zhuan* 寶林傳 (*Record of Baolin* [*Temple*]), to whose basic structure all Chan Buddhist genealogies from the Song period onward adhered.[15] Out of this schema, moreover, the legend of the Buddha Śākyamuni's silent transmission of the "treasury of the true Dharma-eye" (*zheng fayan zang* 正法眼藏)—which came to designate the mysterious and formless object of Chan transmission—to his most perspicacious disciple Mahākāśyapa developed by the early Song into one of the Chan tradition's most famous myths.[16]

Yet for all its rhetorical power, the trope of genealogy by which the Chan tradition was directly connected to the Buddha (and to the

12) Yampolsky, *The Platform Sutra*, chapter 1; Elizabeth Morrison, *The Power of Patriarchs: Qisong and Lineage in Chinese Buddhism* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), Part 1; T. Griffith Foulk, "Sung Controversies Concerning the 'Separate Transmission' of Ch'an," in *Buddhism in the Sung*, ed. Peter N. Gregory and Daniel A. Getz, Jr. (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 220-94.

13) *Nanzong dunjiao zuishang dasheng mohe boreboluomi jing Liuzu Huineng dashi yu Shaozhou Dafansi shifa tanjing* 南宗頓教最上大乘摩訶般若波羅蜜經六祖惠能大師於韶州大梵寺施法壇經 (hereafter *Liuzu tanjing*) 1, T. 2007: 48.344b25; translation loosely follows Yampolsky, *The Platform Sutra*, 179.

14) *Liuzu tanjing* 1, T. 2007: 48.344b26-27; translation loosely follows Yampolsky, *The Platform Sutra*, 179.

15) Yampolsky, *The Platform Sutra*, 47-52; and Foulk, "Sung Controversies," 225-26.

16) This story did not reach its final, canonical form until the 1036 CE *Tiansheng guangdeng lu*; see Albert Welter, "Mahākāśyapa's Smile: Silent Transmission and the Kung-an Tradition," in *The Kōan: Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism*, ed. Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), 75-109. For more on this story and on the evolution of Chan notions of a formless object of transmission, see Foulk, "Sung Controversies."

buddhas of the past) also proved to be a source of vexation. For one thing, the legendary transmission of the Chan tradition's formless essence from the Buddha to Mahākāśyapa served at once as a vital point of connection and an awkward boundary between the categories of "buddhas" and "Chan patriarchs." Whereas in the *Platform Sūtra* Mahākāśyapa is listed as eighth in the line of transmission following the seven buddhas of the past, in the *Baolin zhuan* he is referred to as the "first patriarch" (*diyi zu* 第一祖), instituting a categorical break between "buddhas" and "patriarchs" that would be followed in all subsequent lineage texts.[17] This break ensured that later Chan Buddhists could construe the Buddha Śākyamuni as himself also a patriarch or Chan master only with some rhetorical difficulty,[18] and also signaled that Chan patriarchs should be understood as categorically unlike buddhas in various important ways.

In the very act of claiming for Chan Buddhists direct spiritual filiation from the Buddha, in other words, the *Baolin zhuan* helped fix in place particular boundaries of categorical difference between "buddhas" and "patriarchs," which crucially shaped subsequent developments of Chan identity. Most obviously, the trope of genealogy established a chronological priority of buddhas over Chan patriarchs—and, by extension, over all Chinese members of Chan lineages. More subtly, in reaching back before the Buddha Śākyamuni to include the "buddhas of the past" at the inaugural foundation of the Chan lineage, the *Platform Sūtra* and *Baolin zhuan* also introduced a division within the concept of transmission itself, implicitly splitting it into two different modes: on the one hand, transmission from buddha to buddha operating across vast spans of cosmic time; and on the other, transmission from patriarch to patriarch operating at the temporal scale of (relatively) ordinary human lifespans.

Even attempts by Chan Buddhists to avow the perfect identity of these two modes of transmission nevertheless ended up preserving a lingering sense of division separating them. For example, the Chan master Foyan Qingyuan 佛眼清遠 (1067-1120) is credited with proposing:

17) *Baolin zhuan*, 1.20a; in *Sōzō ichin Hōrinden, Dentō gyokueishū* 宋藏遺珍寶林傳、傳燈玉英集, ed. Yanagida Seizan (Kyoto: Chūbun shuppansha, 1975), 11.

18) Chan Buddhists occasionally portrayed the Buddha as behaving like a Chan master; see Foulk, "Sung Controversies," 268.

"Thus, buddha transmits to buddha and patriarch transmits to patriarch. Beyond this there is not a hairsbreadth of difference [between them]" 所以佛付佛，祖付祖，更無絲髮之異.[19] Here Foyan reaches for identification between what he frames as separate modes of transmission: that which takes place between buddhas and that which passes between patriarchs. Yet he tellingly acknowledges that there remains a difference between the two—paradoxically it is only "beyond this," beyond some irreducible difference between buddha-to-buddha and patriarch-to-patriarch transmission, that the two modes of transmission might be seen as identical. Moreover, precisely in the act of equating buddha-transmission and patriarch-transmission, Foyan fails to articulate any lineal connection between the two; his formulation does not include a scenario in which the gap is bridged and "buddha transmits to patriarch." Of course, we know that Chan Buddhists envisioned this bridge to have taken place between the Buddha Śākyamuni and his disciple Mahākāśyapa. But Foyan's omission of this bridge in his attempt to claim a kind of parallelism between the two modes of transmission speaks to larger rhetorical difficulties posed by the inclusion of the buddhas of the past in the Chan lineage.

Even as it helped bolster the Chan tradition's claim to a deep and longstanding connection between buddhas and patriarchs, the incorporation of the buddhas of the past into Chan genealogies also provoked longstanding confusion and criticism from both inside and outside the ranks of Chan Buddhists. Extant versions of the *Baolin zhuan* do not open with the buddhas of the past, but because the first eighty lines of the text as we have it are missing, scholars have speculated that the buddhas of the past may have been mentioned in this missing portion.[20] Re-

19) *Guzunsu yulu* 古尊宿語錄 27, X. 1315: 68.173c18-19.

20) Yampolsky believed that this missing portion likely included the seven buddhas and their verses; see Yampolsky, *The Platform Sutra*, 48, n.168. By contrast, Japanese scholars have tended to argue that the *Baolin zhuan* does not include the seven buddhas; see, for example, Tokiwa Daijō 常盤大定, *Hōrinden no kenkyū* 寶林傳の研究 (1934; rpt. Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1973), 11-12; and Mizuno Kōgen 水野弘元, "Denbōge no seiritsu ni tsuite" 傳法偈の成立について, *Shūgaku kenkyū* 2 (1960): 38-40. Yanagida Seizan initially suspected the seven buddhas were included in the missing portion, but later changed his mind under the influence of Mizuno's article and proposed that the *Zutang ji* probably invented the convention of placing the seven buddhas and their verses at the beginning of Chan genealogical compilations; see Yanagida, "Sodōshu no honbun kenkyū (ichi)" 祖堂集の本文研究(一), *Zengaku kenkyū* 54 (1964): 50. More recently, Shiina Kōyū 椎名宏雄 has also

gardless, a passage at the end of the entry for the Chan patriarch Sengcan 僧璨 (d. 606) in the *Baolin zhuan*'s last extant fascicle depicts a layperson asking a certain *trepiṭaka* named Qianna 揵那 how many Chan patriarchs in total there were in India. Qianna's reply suggests that the answer depends on how you count. He offers several options: if one counts from Mahākāśyapa one gets a certain number, if one includes a collateral line one gets another number, and if one includes the seven buddhas of the past one gets a third number.[21] The passage is interesting for illuminating a period of time in the development of Chan genealogy during which the seven buddhas might optionally be appended to the beginning of the Chan lineage—indeed, might be counted as honorary primordial patriarchs—or, conversely, might equally be left off the lineage's roster of members.

From the tenth century onward, however, virtually all Chan texts included the seven buddhas at the beginning of the tradition's genealogy. Among extant materials, the orthodoxy of the seven buddhas' inclusion is inaugurated in two important mid-tenth-century Chan texts: the *Zutang ji* 祖堂集 (*Patriarchs' Hall Collection*) and Yongming Yanshou's 永明延壽 (904-976) *Zongjing lu* 宗鏡錄 (*Record of the Source-Mirror*). Both texts present the seven buddhas of the past at the Chan lineage's outset without introduction, pairing each buddha with a verse encapsulating his respective teaching.[22] Neither text makes any attempt to explain how exactly transmission between buddhas of the past took place, or how buddha-to-buddha transmission relates to face-to-face transmission between Chan patriarchs.

By contrast, the 1004 CE *Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄 (Jingde-*era Record of the Transmission of the Lamp*)—the first imperially-sponsored Chan "lamp record," featuring roughly 1,700 entries for members of Chan lineages arranged genealogically—prefaces its list of the buddhas of the past with brief introductory remarks under the heading "On the Seven Buddhas" (*xu qifo* 敘七佛):

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expressed doubt that the seven buddhas were included in these missing lines; see Shiina, "Hōrinden itsubun no kenkyū" 『宝林伝』逸文の研究, *Komazawa daigaku bukkyō gakubu ronshū* 11 (1980): 255.

21) *Baolin zhuan* 8.44a–45a; in Yanagida, *Sōzō ichin Hōrinden, Dentō gyokueishū*, 153-54.

22) *Zutang ji*, ed. Sun Changwu 孫昌武 et al. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004), j. 1, vol. 1, 1-5 (hereafter cited as *Zutang ji* [j.], [vol.].[page]); *Zongjing lu* 97, T. 2016: 48.937c5-26.

> The buddhas of old appeared in the world in inexhaustible succession, and they cannot be comprehensively known or counted. For this reason, even though in the [present] "good" eon [alone] there have been a thousand thus-come ones (buddhas) up to Śākyamuni, [here] we only record seven buddhas. According to the *Dīrghāgama Sūtra*, "The seven buddhas, [through] the strength of their zeal, emitted light and dispelled darkness. Each of them sat beneath a tree and there attained perfect awakening." Furthermore, Mañjuśrī was the patriarch-teacher of the seven buddhas. When the Mahāsattva Jinhua Shanhui ascended to the peak of Mount Song to practice the Way, he felt the seven buddhas guiding his way and Vimalākīrti supporting him from the rear. The present section of the account begins from the seven buddhas onward.
> 古佛應世綿歷無窮，不可以周知而悉數也。故近譚賢劫有千如來暨于釋迦，但紀七佛。案《長阿含經》云：「七佛精進力，放光滅暗冥。各各坐諸樹，於中成正覺。」又曼殊室利爲七佛祖師。金華善慧大士登松山頂行道，感七佛引前維摩接後。今之撰述斷自七佛而下。[23]

Introducing the buddhas of the past at the *Jingde chuandeng lu*'s outset, this passage seeks first and foremost to justify the specific number of buddhas listed—seven—given the virtually infinite number of buddhas understood to pervade the Buddhist cosmos across time and space. It proposes that the number seven is merely a convenient stopping point and suggests that a full accounting of all buddhas would be infeasible.

At the same time, it is striking that the passage does not address what the "buddhas of old" have to do with the Chan lineage in the first place. "On the Seven Buddhas" does not explicitly contend that the "inexhaustible succession" of buddhas involved any lineage of transmission comparable to the Chan lineage. Rather, it cites a jumble of references—to a canonical *sūtra* discussing the seven buddhas,[24] to the notion that the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī is "patriarch-teacher" of the seven buddhas,[25] and to a legend of the Chinese layman Mahāsattva Shanhui (497-569, also known as Fu Xi 傅翕 or Mahāsattva Fu 傅大士) bearing witness to the

23) *Jingde chuandeng lu* 1, T. 2076: 51.204c7-12. On this passage see also Albert Welter, *Monks, Rulers, and Literati: The Political Ascendancy of Chan Buddhism* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2006), 126-27. Welter's translation of this passage on p. 127 loosely guides my own, with some differences of interpretation.

24) The source is *Chang ahan jing* 長阿含經 1, T. 1: 1.2b20-21.

25) I have been unable to determine the origin of this idea, but it went on to be widely repeated in Chan literature.

seven buddhas atop Mount Song[26]—that together attest to widespread awareness of the concept of the seven buddhas in India and China, but do nothing to justify their inclusion at the inception of the Chan lineage. This passage thus offers clues that Chan Buddhists in the early Song, inheriting the (by then orthodox) incorporation of the buddhas of the past into the Chan lineage, were themselves not quite sure what to make of it.[27]

The incongruity of the seven buddhas' inclusion in the Chan lineage was not lost on Song-era critics of Chan, most notably those belonging to lineages in the rival Tiantai tradition. In the eleventh century, for example, Shenzhi Congyi 神智從義 (d. 1091) lamented what he viewed as the absurdity of proliferating depictions of the seven buddhas and twenty-eight Indian patriarchs of Chan, each accompanied by a transmission verse (更有刻石鏤板圖狀七佛二十八祖，各以一偈傳授相付。嗚呼！假託何其甚歟?).[28] Huiyan Fazhao 晦巖法照 (1185-1273) observed more pointedly that among the seven buddhas of the past, three are understood to have lived in the previous eon and four in the present eon, asking: "Distantly separated by eons, when could they have met to transmit the Dharma?" 時劫隔遠，何嘗相見付法耶?[29] Even if we take into account the notion that each buddha receives a prophecy of future buddhahood from a buddha of the past, Fazhao continues, this does not explain how the Chan concept of lineal transmission might be applied to successive generations of buddhas. After all, Śākyamuni is said to have received the prophecy of his future buddhahood during a distantly past life from the Buddha Dīpaṃkara, his predecessor by some twenty-four generations, and not from the Buddha Kāśyapa, Śākyamuni's immediate predecessor (the sixth "buddha of the past") (設有授記之

26) Chan Buddhists counted Fu among the handful of honorary Chan masters who did not formally belong to any Chan lineage. This story appears in *Shanhui dashi yulu* 善慧大士語錄 4, X. 1335: 69.130a15-16.

27) Indeed, the Chan encyclopedia *Zuting shiyuan* 祖庭事苑 published in 1108 also registers confusion at the *Jingde chuandeng lu*'s opening explanation of the seven buddhas, and seeks to clarify the matter further; see *Zuting shiyuan* 8, X. 1261: 64.425b16-c12.

28) *Fahua jing san da bu buzhu* 法華經三大部補注 11, X. 586: 28.336b13-15. See also the discussion of this passage in Takao Giken 高雄義堅, *Sōdai bukkyōshi no kenkyū* 宋代仏教史の研究 (Kyoto: Hyakkaen, 1975), 89. Congyi's critique is also included in the *Shimen zhengtong* 釋門正統 5, X. 1513: 75.325a23-b1.

29) *Fahua jing san da bu dujiao ji* 法華經三大部讀教記 15, X. 585: 28.87b12-13.

說，自受於然燈，且非受迦葉佛記).[30] This objection—that the seven buddhas of the past were unlikely to have met in person—was reiterated in subsequent Tiantai critiques of Chan lineage claims as well.[31]

Despite its widespread acceptance in Chan circles, at least one Chan Buddhist in the Song also explicitly objected to the inclusion of the seven buddhas in the Chan lineage. Mingjiao Qisong 明教契嵩 (1007-1072), who wrote extensively in defense of the Chan tradition and its lineage claims against criticism from Tiantai Buddhists,[32] nevertheless elected to exclude the seven buddhas from his own outline of the lineage. At the end of the first fascicle of his *Chuanfa zhengzong ji* 傳法正宗記 (*Record of the Correct Lineage of the Dharma Transmission*), Qisong fields a question about why he has left the seven buddhas out when all other contemporary Chan texts include them. His reply follows the same logic as that of the Tiantai critics we have just considered: "The correct lineage necessarily depends for its efficacy upon in-person transmission between generations. For this reason, this section begins from the Thus-come One Śākyamuni onward" 夫正宗者，必以親相師承爲其効也。故此斷自釋迦如來已降.[33] Unlike other Song-period Chan thinkers, who largely avoided confronting the question of precisely how the seven buddhas fit into the Chan lineage, Qisong's identification of face-to-face interaction as an essential feature of Chan transmission offered clarity even as it dispensed with an important rhetorical mechanism by which his Chan Buddhist predecessors and contemporaries claimed a special connection between Chan masters and buddhas.

The trope of genealogy thus helped Chan Buddhists forge certain kinds of connections between buddhas and Chan patriarchs—and, by

30) Ibid., 87b13-14.

31) See, for example, *Shimen zhengtong* 4, X. 1513: 75.312a15-19. As T. Griffith Foulk observes, Tiantai Buddhists could go only so far in criticizing Chan lineage claims without also calling into question the foundational premises of their own lineage. See Foulk, "Sung Controversies," 271. For more on Tiantai criticism of Chan, see Brook Ziporyn, "Anti-Chan Polemics in Post-Tang Tiantai," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 17 (1994): 26-65.

32) Qisong's defense of Chan is the subject of Morrison, *The Power of Patriarchs*.

33) *Chuanfa zhengzong ji* 1, T. 2078: 51.718c8-9. See the brief discussion in Morrison, *The Power of Patriarchs*, 72. Morrison suggests that in this passage Qisong may also be implicitly contesting the Tiantai tradition's transhistorical claim to a direct lineage connection between Nāgārjuna (ca. 150-250) and Huiwen 慧文 (fl. ca. 6th century) (personal communication, September 2018).

extension, between buddhas and all members of Chan lineages—even as it also erected boundaries separating the two categories. It established the temporal precedence of buddhas over patriarchs, and the incorporation of the "buddhas of the past" into the Chan lineage raised questions about how transmission between buddhas might be comprehended in comparison to the face-to-face transmission understood to have taken place between Indian and Chinese patriarchs. Because the concept of lineage was fundamental to Chan as a living institution, the trope of genealogy has remained pervasive in Chan articulations of identity and claims to authority up to the present day. At the same time, genealogy was only one among a growing number of rhetorical tropes by which Chan Buddhists claimed a special connection to buddhahood between the Tang and Song periods. Increasingly, as we will see, the trope of genealogy was supplemented and even challenged by other ideas about how Chan masters were themselves fully equivalent to buddhas.

Claiming Buddhahood in Early Chan: from Xuanze to Huineng

Foundational studies of early Chan have emphasized the role of competing claims to inheritance of an orthodox Chan lineage alongside claims to doctrinal orthodoxy—especially debates over the relative merits of "sudden" (*dun* 頓) versus "gradual" (*jian* 漸) awakening—as important engines driving religio-literary innovation among Chan Buddhists in the late-seventh and eighth centuries.[34] More recently, in his critical reevaluation of early Chan history, Alan Cole suggests that early Chan genealogies offer "sober historical accounts explaining why certain men, generally eminent men with court connections, should be regarded as buddhas or buddha-like, due to having inherited, directly and in a genealogical manner, the Buddha's wisdom."[35]

Cole's work brings much-needed attention to the long-overlooked question of how claims that Chan masters are buddhas figured into the larger picture of Chan claims to authority during the Tang dynasty. Yet

34) See, for example, McRae, *The Northern School*; Faure, *The Will to Orthodoxy*; and Adamek, *The Mystique of Transmission*.
35) Cole, *Fathering Your Father*, 2.

Cole's analysis suffers from his conflation of claims to genealogical orthodoxy with claims to buddhahood, obscuring how Chan Buddhists actually made these two types of claims in different ways, and indeed (as we will see in the next section) hindering us from seeing latent tensions between them. Whereas Cole's analysis proceeds on the assumption that all Chan claims to genealogical orthodoxy are *ipso facto* also claims to buddhahood[36]—in effect portraying all Chan lineage members as claimed "Chinese buddhas" from the very first articulations of Chan lineage[37]—in the previous section I suggested that genealogical tropes helped Chan Buddhists claim a special connection between canonical buddhas and the Chan lineage in certain ways, yet that these same tropes also ended up distinguishing buddhas from Chan masters in other ways. Even claims that Chan Buddhists transmitted the essence of the Buddha Śākyamuni's mind or teaching did not necessarily entail the stronger claim that Chan Buddhists are themselves buddhas.

When, and how, did early Chan Buddhists begin to explicitly claim to be buddhas or to hold an equivalent level of realization to the Buddha Śākyamuni? These claims, it turns out, seem to have remained relatively few and far between during the Tang. Although Tang-era Chan Buddhists frequently expounded upon the by-then orthodox doctrinal ideas that all sentient beings possess buddha-nature, or that all sentient beings' minds are ultimately identical to buddhahood, they seldom marshalled these doctrines toward the socio-religious end of claiming that particular Chan masters were living buddhas—let alone that all members of Chan lineages were buddhas. The several cases in which Tang-era Chan Buddhists did claim the personal status of buddhas, moreover, deserve more careful scrutiny than they have hitherto received. In this section, I examine early Chan claims that certain Chan masters were buddhas or near-buddhas, and propose a new analysis of the relationship between these claims to personal buddhahood, doctrinal discourses of universal metaphysical buddhahood, and claims to genealogical orthodoxy.

36) See, for example, Cole's suggestion that the Faru stele portrays both Bodhidharma and Faru as buddhas, in *Fathering Your Father*, chapter 3; and his suggestion that Jingjue's claim to belong to an orthodox Chan lineage in compiling the *Lengqie shizi ji* effectively renders him a "local buddha," in *Fathering Your Father*, 179.

37) Cole, *Fathering Your Father*, 2, 15, 20, 63, 72, 117, 168, 190, 193, 202, 210, and 305.

Alan Cole identifies two cases that he sees as anticipating Chan claims to the personal status of buddhahood and to genealogical connection with the Buddha Śākyamuni: first, the portrayal of the legendary scholar-monk Tiantai Zhiyi 天台智顗 (539-598) in the writings of his disciple Guanding 灌頂 (561-632); and second, writings by members of the Three Levels movement (*Sanjie jiao* 三階教) about the movement's founder Xinxing 信行 (540-594).[38] As for Zhiyi, although it is true that Guanding seems to have authored one of the earliest genealogies connecting a Chinese monk (in this case Zhiyi) to a sequence of Indian patriarchs, Cole does not adduce sufficient evidence to justify his argument that Guanding portrayed Zhiyi as a Chinese buddha.[39] Instead, genealogical innovations aside, Guanding's treatment of Zhiyi participated in standard medieval Chinese Buddhist practice of hagiography.

By contrast, Xinxing really was portrayed as a high-level bodhisattva whose teachings might equal or surpass the canonical sūtras attributed to the Buddha Śākyamuni—although, as Eric Greene notes, it does not seem that Xinxing was portrayed as a full-fledged buddha.[40] In his appraisal as a bodhisattva Xinxing was not entirely alone: the layman Fu Xi, for example, was also described in medieval sources as a tenth-stage bodhisattva (the level penultimate to buddhahood), and the Daoist polymath Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456-536) was said to have received a dream prophecy that he was a seventh-stage bodhisattva.[41]

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38) Cole, *Fathering Your Father*, chapter 2.

39) Cole, *Fathering Your Father*, 61-63. The closest Cole comes to presenting evidence that Zhiyi was portrayed as a buddha is his argument, borrowed from earlier work by Jinhua Chen, that Guanding's biography in the *Xu gaoseng zhuan* implicitly compares Guanding to the Buddha's disciple Ānanda and Zhiyi himself to the Buddha; see *Fathering Your Father*, 62.

40) Greene, "Another Look at Early Chan," 106-8. For Greene's suggestion that Xinxing was not viewed as a buddha, see "Another Look at Early Chan," 107, n.209.

41) Funayama Tōru 船山徹, "Seija kan no ni keitō: Rikuchō Zui Tō bukkyōshi chōkan no ichi shiron" 聖者観の二系統——六朝隋唐仏教史鳥瞰の一試論, in *Sangyō kōshō ronsō* 三教交渉論叢, ed. Mugitani Kunio 麦谷邦夫 (Kyoto: Kyōto daigaku jinbun kagaku kenkyūjo, 2005), 381-82. It should be added that Chinese emperors occasionally claimed or were claimed to be buddhas or bodhisattvas in the medieval period. For example, the Buddhist monk Faguo 法果 described the Northern Wei's 北魏 (386-534) founding emperor Taizu 太祖 (371-409) as "a *tathāgatha* of our time" 當今如來. See *Weishu* 魏書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 114.3031; and Amy McNair, *Donors of Longmen: Faith, Politics, and Patronage in Medieval Chinese Buddhist Sculpture* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 2007), chapter 1. Various documents from the reign of the female emperor Wu Zetian 武則天 (624-705) also claim or imply that she was a bodhisattva; see Antonino Forte, *Political Propaganda and Ideology in*

But such appraisals were uncommon. As a counterexample, the entry for Zhiyi's teacher Huisi 慧思 (515-577) in the *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳 (*Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks*) features Huisi being asked: "So, are you a tenth-stage bodhisattva?" Huisi replies: "No, I am [only] an 'iron-wheel' [aspirant] at the level of the [preliminary] 'ten faiths'" 又諮：「師位即是十地？」思曰：「非也。吾是十信鐵輪位耳。」[42] Much more common than claims to bodhisattva status (let alone buddha status) was the appraisal of eminent Chinese Buddhist monks as "sages" (*sheng* 聖), a term sometimes associated with buddhahood or the bodhisattva path, but often identified instead with arhats known for their supernatural powers.[43] All of this means that when Chan Buddhists began to claim that certain masters among their ranks were buddhas, this sort of claim had little precedent in China.

As far as I have been able to determine, the earliest such claim is found in the long-lost early Chan genealogy *Lengqie shizi ji* 楞伽師資記 (*Record of Masters and Disciples of the* Laṅkā), compiled by the monk Jingjue 淨覺 (683-750) in the early eighth century and rediscovered among the cache of documents at Dunhuang.[44] In his preface to this text, Jingjue makes the following claim about his own teacher, Xuanze 玄賾 (d.u.): "The master's physical appearance was like that of an ordinary monk, [but] his level of realization was equivalent to the Buddha's" 和上乃形類凡僧，證同佛地.[45]

China at the End of the Seventh Century, 2nd ed. (Kyoto: Scuola Italiana di Studi sull'Asia Orientale, 2005), 214-23. However, it is worth bearing in mind that the stakes and implications of praising an emperor as a buddha or bodhisattva were quite different from those involved in applying the same designation to a monk. Buddhas and emperors were both perceived as possessing almost unimaginable power and authority, while monks possessed no such inherent power.

42) *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 17, T. 2060: 50.563b9-10; quoted in Funayama, "Seija kan no ni keitō," 395-96.

43) Funayama, "Seija kan no ni keitō." On the arhat cult, see especially Bong Seok Joo, "The Arhat Cult in China from the Seventh through Thirteenth Centuries: Narrative, Art, Space and Ritual" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton Univ., 2007).

44) On this text and its compiler, see McRae, *The Northern School*, 88-90; and Faure, *The Will to Orthodoxy*, 130-144.

45) Yanagida Seizan, *Shoki no zenshi I* 初期の禅史 I (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1971), 57. In an adjacent passage, the *Lengqie shizi ji* echoes a more common medieval Chinese hagiographical trope describing miraculous signs attending the deaths of eminent monastics. It tells us that when Xuanze died, his body issued forth multicolored relics, "so we knew that the great master had already long since attained the Way" 將知大師成道已久也. Yanagida, *Shoki no zenshi I*, 57.

The caveat accompanying Jingjue's claim that Xuanze's level of realization was on par with the Buddha's—that Xuanze looked like an ordinary monk—is telling. Jingjue could, of course, comfortably draw on scriptural precedent to advance the notion that buddhahood or buddha-nature are ultimately signless. Indeed, the first line of the poem that opens the *Lengqie shizi ji* announces that "buddha-nature is empty and without marks" 佛性空無相,[46] loosely alluding to a passage from the *Jingang jing* 金剛經 (*Diamond Sūtra*) concerning the signlessness of buddhahood[47] and connecting it with the doctrine of universal buddha-nature. During the several centuries before Jingjue's life, in the wake of Dharmakṣema's fifth-century translation of the *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, Chinese Buddhist doctrinal orthodoxy had come to hinge upon the premise advanced in this scripture that all sentient beings, without exception, possess buddha-nature.[48]

Nonetheless, Buddhist scriptures were hardly all in agreement about the signlessness of buddhahood as an exalted socio-religious status assigned to particular individuals, and neither were medieval Chinese Buddhists. As John McRae notes, "'the Buddha' was for medieval Chinese Buddhists not the humanistic image recreated by modern scholarship, but a magnificent golden deity capable of almost unimaginable feats of wisdom and magic."[49] More specifically, the canonical idea that a buddha's body is recognizable by its adornment with a set of visible "marks of the great man" (Skt. *mahāpuruṣa-lakṣaṇa*; Ch. *da zhangfu xiang* 大丈夫相 or *daren xiang* 大人相) was widely known in medieval China, and eminent Chinese Buddhist monks were sometimes described as possessing one or several of these marks.[50]

It is clear from Jingjue's mention of Xuanze's ordinary appearance that he could not count on contemporary readers to automatically agree

46) Yanagida, *Shoki no zenshi I*, 49.

47) *Jingang bore boluomi jing* 金剛般若波羅蜜經 1, T. 235: 8.749a24-25.

48) See Kenneth S. Ch'en, *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1964), 114-116; and Mark L. Blum, *The Nirvana Sutra* (*Mahāparanirvāna-Sūtra*)*, Volume 1* (Berkeley: Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai America, Inc., 2013), xiii-xvii.

49) McRae, "Daoxuan's Vision of Jetavana: The Ordination Platform Movement in Medieval Chinese Buddhism," in *Going Forth: Visions of Buddhist Vinaya*, ed. William M. Bodiford, 68-69.

50) On the "marks of the great man" in medieval Chinese Buddhism, see Kevin Buckelew, "Inventing Chinese Buddhas: Identity, Authority, and Liberation in Song-dynasty Chan Buddhism" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia Univ., 2018), 65-80.

that *personal* buddhahood (as opposed to *metaphysical* buddhahood) is signless. If he could—if Buddhists in medieval China all agreed that bodily appearance had nothing whatsoever to do with the status of being a buddha—then why would Jingjue need to mention Xuanze's appearance at all? In claiming that Xuanze had attained realization on par with the Buddha without showing any outward signs of this realization, Jingjue thus had to work against the conventional idea that personal buddhahood is identifiable by a specific "physiognomy of virtue," as Daniel Boucher puts it.[51]

At the same time, it is important to recognize that although the *Lengqie shizi ji* refers to the doctrinal idea that mind and buddhahood are metaphysically identical, Jingjue never claims to be a buddha himself, and neither does he claim that any other members of the Chan lineage besides Xuanze are buddhas. Of course, Jingjue stands to gain prestige by being counted as heir to the Chan lineage and student of such an exemplary master. But it is worth stressing that claims to prestigious lineage affiliation are not the same as claims to the status of buddhahood. Instead of claiming buddhahood, Jingjue presents the masters that comprise the *Lengqie shizi ji*'s lineage, himself included, first and foremost as experts in and teachers of meditation—an identity that accords with the traditional meaning of the word *chan*.[52]

In contrast to Jingjue's reticence on the matter of his own level of realization, Heze Shenhui 荷澤神會 (684-758)—a rival claimant to Chan orthodoxy who appeared on the scene shortly after Jingjue compiled the *Lengqie shizi ji*—*did* declare himself a bodhisattva at the stage penultimate to buddhahood while promoting his teacher Huineng as the sole true heir to the Chan lineage. As McRae notes, Shenhui "did not fit

51) Daniel Boucher, *Bodhisattvas of the Forest and the Formation of the Mahāyāna: A Study and Translation of the* Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā-sūtra (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 2008), chapter 1.

52) See, for example, Yanagida, *Shoki no zenshi I*, 82, 133, 248-49, 255-56, and 321. Even Guṇabhadra (Qiunabatuoluo 求那跋陀羅; 394-468), a well-known translator of Buddhist scriptures incorporated into the *Lengqie shizi ji* as the lineage's first patriarch, is described rather incongruously as teaching meditation; see Yanagida, *Shoki no zenshi I*, 93. Notably, the entry for the second patriarch Huike proposes that among all buddhas in the ten directions, none has achieved buddhahood except by practicing seated meditation. See Yanagida, *Shoki no zenshi I*, 143. The *Lengqie shizi ji* does not follow up on this connection between meditation and buddhahood, however, and claims to the status of buddhahood in subsequent Chan texts were not justified with recourse to skill in meditation practice.

the standard pattern of the meditation teacher who patiently guided dedicated practitioners as they struggled to work through the various problems and stages of spiritual cultivation. Instead, his life's work was performed on the ordination platform, where he served as inspirational orator, recruiter for the sangha, and fund-raiser for both church and state."[53] In other words, although Shenhui claimed the title of "meditation master" (*chanshi*), he does not seem to have been invested in the practice of meditation in the way that Jingjue was.

Shenhui's discourse record—like the *Lengqie shizi ji* also long forgotten and only recovered among the manuscripts at Dunhuang—contains a dialogue in which Shenhui claims to be a high-level bodhisattva on the cusp of buddhahood. It goes as follows:

> Dharma-master Yuan asked another question: "Meditation master, [you] have moved your mind across the three worthy [stages of the bodhisattva path], the ten sagely [stages], the four fruits, and so on. At what level are you now?"
> 遠法師重問曰：「禪師用心於三賢、十聖、四果人等，今在何位地？」
>
> The master [Shenhui] said: "I am completing the tenth [and final] stage [of the bodhisattva path]."
> 和上答：「在滿足十地位。」
>
> Dharma-master Yuan said: "Bodhisattvas of the first stage can manifest multiple bodies in a hundred buddha realms; bodhisattvas of the second stage can manifest multiple bodies in a thousand buddha realms; and bodhisattvas of the tenth stage can manifest multiple bodies in immeasurable and infinite billions of buddha realms. You've just said that you're completing the tenth stage, so manifest some divine transformations for us now. …"
> 遠法師言：「初地菩薩分身百佛世界，二地菩薩分身千佛世界，乃至十地菩薩分身無量萬億佛世界。禪師既言在滿足十地位，今日爲現少許神變。…」
>
> The master [Shenhui] said: "The *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* says: 'When the Thus-come One (the Buddha) was in the world, he only recognized Cunda's mind as identical to the mind of the Thus-come One. Although Cunda's mind comprehended the permanence of the Thus-come One, the Buddha did not recognize Cunda's body as identical to the Thus-come One's body.' The *sūtra* says: 'Adoration to Cunda! Adoration to Cunda! Although his body is the body of an ordinary person, his mind is like the Buddha's mind!' When the Thus-come One was in the

53) McRae, *Seeing Through Zen*, 55.

> world, he only recognized that the comprehension of Cunda's mind was like that of the Thus-come One—he did not speak of realization in the body. For my body to be that of an ordinary person in this final age of the Dharma, and yet to have cultivated to the point of attaining the tenth [bodhisattva] stage—why should this be considered strange?"
> 和上言：「大涅槃經云：『如來在日，只許純陀心同如來心，心了如來常，不許身同如來身。』經云：『南無純陀，南無純陀，身雖凡夫身，心如佛心。』如來在日，尚只許純陀心了如來常，不言身證。今日神會身是凡夫，末法時中分，修得十地法，有何可怪？」[54]

Commenting on Shenhui's reply, McRae observes:

> This bit of doctrinal sophistry allows Shenhui to negotiate a very important point for Chinese Buddhists… by the combination of the transmission schema and the model of Cunda, 'our own Chinese' teacher Shenhui gave himself the authority to teach in place of the Buddha himself. In other words, Shenhui had devised a way to argue that Chinese Chan teachers had the same religious authority as the Buddha himself. Although the specific argument was never used again, as far as I know, this was a culturally liberating innovation.[55]

It may be true, as McRae here suggests, that Shenhui was unique in appealing to the specific canonical figure of Cunda—the man who fed the Buddha his last meal—and in invoking the idea that eighth-century Chinese Buddhists were living in the "final [age] of the Dharma" (*mofa* 末法) in service of this particular rhetorical maneuver. But Shenhui's claim to mental realization virtually on par with the Buddha *in spite of* his ordinary-looking body hinged upon the same juxtaposition that we saw above in Jingjue's claim that Xuanze's level of realization was equivalent to the Buddha's. Whereas in the case of the *Lengqie shizi ji* I have suggested that Jingjue implicitly anticipates a challenge to the idea that Xuanze attained the same level of realization as the Buddha despite bearing no special marks on his body, here Shenhui faces an explicit challenge to the idea that he is virtually a buddha on the grounds that he seems unable to perform the miraculous bodily transformations canonically understood to accompany such an exalted status.

54) Yang Cengwen 楊曾文, *Shenhui heshang chan hualu* 神會和尚禪話錄 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996), 24; translation partially adapted with alterations from John R. McRae, "Shenhui as Evangelist: Re-envisioning the Identity of a Chinese Buddhist Monk," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 30 (2002): 141-42.
55) McRae, "Shenhui as Evangelist," 142.

This passage from Shenhui's discourse record thus reinforces our sense that the idea of an entirely ordinary-looking Chinese buddha, totally incapable of performing miracles or demonstrating supernatural powers, went against the grain of mainstream Chinese Buddhist thought in the eighth century. As we see in this passage, in order to claim the status of near-buddhahood, Shenhui must construct a complex argument based on his reading of the canonical *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*. The result is "doctrinal sophistry," as McRae puts it, because it seems to disingenuously mobilize a universalist doctrine toward the specific end of claiming an exclusive, exalted personal socio-religious status. It is "culturally liberating," again following McRae, because it opens up the discursive space to imagine the existence of an ordinary-looking Chinese buddha. Whether or not Shenhui compellingly models the status of a Chinese buddha or near-buddha, of course, is another question entirely.

In suggesting that Shenhui's rhetorical strategy for claiming the status of a tenth-level bodhisattva was unique, McRae also misses the ways it anticipates an important scene in the life story of Shenhui's master, Huineng. Huineng's hagiography—which John Jorgensen has convincingly argued was written virtually from whole cloth after Huineng's death—portrays him as a rustic genius who achieved sudden awakening without ever having practiced meditation.[56] As scholars have pointed out, the *Platform Sūtra* casts Huineng as a Chinese buddha first and foremost by appropriating the word *sūtra* (*jing* 經)—traditionally reserved for texts understood to contain the recorded words of the Buddha Śākyamuni—for its title.[57] The *Platform Sūtra* also features a

[56] See John Jorgensen, *Inventing Hui-neng: Hagiography and Biography in Early Ch'an* (Leiden: Brill, 2005). One early version of Huineng's life story features a striking scene in which Huineng attempts to practice seated meditation, but ends up concluding that his effort is in vain. See *Caoxi dashi biezhuan* 曹溪大師別傳 1, X. 1598: 49c15-18; translated in Jorgensen, *Inventing Hui-neng*, 680.

[57] Jorgensen suggests that the title thus claims the text to be "the scripture of a Chinese buddha"; Jorgensen, *Inventing Hui-neng*, 6. On this subject see also Jorgensen, *Inventing Hui-neng*, 355 and 623-24. Christoph Anderl has argued that the term *sūtra* in the title of the *Platform Sūtra* was not originally intended to refer to the contents of the text itself, attributed to Huineng, but instead to the *Diamond Sūtra* that Huineng is thought to have used in ritual contexts; see Anderl, "Was the Platform Sūtra Always a Sūtra? Studies in the Textual Features of the Platform Scripture Manuscripts from Dūnhuáng," in *Studies in Chinese Manuscripts: From the Warring States Period to the 20th Century*, ed. Imre Galambos (Budapest: Institute

passage in which, following the conclusion of one of Huineng's sermons, "all the officials, monastics, and laypeople who were sitting together… exclaimed: 'Who would have expected Lingnan to be so fortunate as to have a buddha born here?'" 合座官僚道俗 … 嗟嘆：「… 嶺南有福生佛在此，誰能得知？」[58] Who, indeed. The *Platform Sūtra* pursues an unprecedentedly elaborate claim to Huineng's status as a Chinese buddha, against which the two cases we have just considered—of Xuanze and Shenhui—seem to pale in comparison.

Nevertheless, one scene from Huineng's life story echoes these earlier cases in important ways and deserves our careful consideration. In the life story of Huineng contained in Shenhui's discourse record as well as in the *Platform Sūtra*, we are told that after hearing someone reciting the *Diamond Sūtra*, Huineng achieved sudden awakening. Thereupon, the story goes, Huineng paid a visit to the monastery of the fifth Chan patriarch Hongren 弘忍 (602-675).

> Great master [Hong]ren said: "Where are you from? Why have you come to pay obeisance to me? What do you seek?" Chan master [Hui]neng replied: "Your disciple is from Xinshan, Lingnan, and thus have I come to pay obeisance to you: only seeking to be a buddha, and not seeking any other thing." Great master [Hong]ren said: "You are a barbarian from Lingnan. How could you be fit to be a buddha?" Chan master [Hui]neng said: "What difference is there between the buddha-nature of a barbarian and your buddha-nature, master?" Great master [Hong]ren marveled deeply at his words, and wished to speak to him further. [Taking account of] the people around them, however, he sent [Huineng] to perform labor along with the assembly.
>
> 忍大師謂曰：「汝是何處人也？何故禮拜我？擬欲求何物？」能禪師答曰：「弟子從嶺南新山，故來頂禮，唯求作佛，更不求餘物。」忍大師謂曰：「汝是嶺南獦獠，若爲堪作佛？」能禪師言：「獦獠佛性，與和上佛性，有何差別？」忍大師深奇其言，更欲共語，爲諸人在左右，遂發遣，令隨眾作務。[59]

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of East Asian Studies, Eötvös Loránd Univ., 2013), 121-75. Nevertheless, by the Song dynasty the term had come to be widely understood as referring to the text attributed to Huineng. See also the discussion in Morten Schlütter, "Transmission and Enlightenment in Chan Buddhism Seen Through the *Platform Sūtra* (*Liuzu tanjing* 六祖壇經)," *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal* 21 (2007): 379-410.

58) *Liuzu tanjing* 1, T. 2007: 48.344b25; translated adapted with minor alterations from Yampolsky, *The Platform Sutra*, 162.

59) Yang Cengwen, *Shenhui heshang chan hualu*, 109. I have here translated the version of the story found in the *Shenhui yulu*, but it is worth noting that there are two textual traditions concerning this passage. The earliest manuscript editions of the *Platform Sūtra*, such as the Stein edition (Yampolsky, *The Platform Sutra*, 127, n.19) and the Dunbo edition (Deng

While this scene has received less scholarly attention than subsequent episodes in Huineng's life story (such as Huineng's poetry competition with Shenxiu and Hongren's dramatic midnight transmission of patriarchal status to Huineng), it offers important insights into the rhetorical mechanisms by which Chan Buddhists began to claim more insistently that certain Chan masters ought to be considered full-fledged buddhas, as well as the challenges they faced in doing so. Arriving at Hongren's monastery, Huineng confidently tells Hongren that he has come seeking only to "be a buddha" (*zuofo* 作佛). Yet he is met with skepticism from Hongren, who suggests that Huineng does not *look* like any buddha he has ever seen. In response, Huineng appeals to the widely-accepted doctrine of universal buddha-nature, which brooks no distinction between people regardless of their appearance. Huineng's appeal succeeds in impressing Hongren, and the scene narratively sets the stage for Hongren's subsequent recognition of Huineng as the sixth patriarch.

Wenkuan 鄧文寬 and Rong Xinjiang 榮新江, *Dunbo ben chanji lujiao* 敦博本禪籍錄校 [Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1999], 223), have Huineng saying that he seeks only "Buddha-dharma to practice" (*fofa zuo* 佛法作). However, in other early versions of Huineng's hagiography he says that he seeks only to "be a buddha" (*zuofo* 作佛), as I have rendered it here. These latter cases include the *Caoxi dashi biezhuan* 1, X. 1598: 86.49c23 (translated in Jorgensen, *Inventing Hui-neng*, 681), the *Shenhui yulu* (cited above), and the *Lidai fabao ji* 歷代法寶記 (Yanagida Seizan, *Shoki no zenshi II* 初期の禅史 II [Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1976], 122; translated in Adamek, *The Mystique of Transmission*, 328-29). A recently discovered manuscript edition of the *Platform Sūtra* dated to 959 (Anderl, "Was the Platform Sūtra Always a Sūtra?," 128) held at the Lüshun Museum 旅順博物館 in Dalian City 大連市, Liaoning Province 遼寧省, China, further attests to this conflicted textual history. The scribe who wrote this manuscript seems originally to have written *weiqiu fo zuo* 唯求佛作, but then added in the margin the character *fa* 法 in between *fo* 佛 and *zuo* 作, presumably upon deciding that it should instead read *fofa zuo*, putting it in line with Stein and Dunbo. The text continues, however, to have Hongren respond by asking how Huineng, being a southerner, could be fit to be a buddha (*kan zuofo* 堪作佛), in line with the *Caoxi dashi biezhuan*, *Shenhui yulu*, and Stein editions (the *Lidai fabao ji* omits this line entirely), but differing from Dunbo. For photographic reproductions of this manuscript, see Guo Fuchun 郭富純 and Wang Zhenfen 王振芬, *Lüshun bowuguan cang Dunhuang ben Liuzu tanjing* 旅順博物館藏敦煌本六祖壇經 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2011), 7. All of this suggests that the scribe who wrote this manuscript was struggling to decide between the multiple versions of the text that were circulating just before it achieved its final, codified form. However, in the end it was *zuofo* ("to be a buddha") that was used in the *Zutang ji* 2, 1.125; *Song gaoseng zhuan* 8, T. 2061: 50.754c20-26; and *Jingde chuandeng lu* 3, T. 2076: 51.222c9-13. *Zuofo* thereafter became fixed as the definitive version. It is for this reason that I have chosen to translate an early version that anticipates this later consensus, in which Huineng says he seeks "to be a buddha."

In his analysis of this scene, Alan Cole suggests that Hongren's interrogation of Huineng participates in a larger narrative "conspiracy" within the text to authorize Huineng's buddhahood. Cole argues that Hongren is depicted making "obvious mistakes," such as proposing "that barbarians can't be enlightened – a racist claim that flies in the face of all Buddhist thought."[60] Cole is right that Huineng's life story was clearly written to authorize his status as the uniquely authoritative sixth patriarch of Chan, and that Hongren's initial response in this scene contravenes the orthodox doctrine of universal buddha-nature. But this does not mean that Hongren is simply mistaken in objecting to the idea that Huineng might be a buddha because of the way he looks. Rather, I think we might more fruitfully read Hongren's question as voicing the same challenge faced by Jingjue and Shenhui in their claims to buddhahood or near-buddhahood: how can an utterly ordinary-looking Chinese person be a buddha? Huineng's life story stages this problem in an exaggeratedly dramatic fashion, because Huineng is portrayed not simply as any ordinary person but rather as someone of notably low social status, an uneducated rustic.[61]

60) Cole, "Conspiracy's Truth: The Zen of Narrative Cunning in the Platform Sutra," *Asia Major* 3d ser. 28.1 (2015): 155.

61) Strikingly similar problems and resolutions were staged in subsequent Chan narratives of other masters' lives, suggesting an ongoing appreciation among Chan Buddhists for rhetorically upending received wisdom about what a buddha looks like. We see such a restaging, for example, in a scene depicting the childhood of one of Huineng's disciples, Nanyang Huizhong 南陽慧忠 (675-775), as narrated in the *Zutang ji* of 952. Having grown up in a rustic farming household, we're told, the boy's precocious aspiration to join the Chan school finds an opportunity for realization when a Chan master passes through the town, and (to the shock of his family) the boy rushes out to greet the master, requesting ordination and admission into a Chan lineage. The master replies: "In this school of mine, one must be the son of a silver wheel-turning king or the grandson of a gold wheel-turning king before one can carry on [the lineage] and not let its reputation fall into decline. A child like you from a three-family village, a boy raised upon the back of an ox—how could you enter into this school? It is not something for which you are endowed" 是我宗門中銀輪王嫡子、金輪王孫子，方始得繼續不墜此門風。是你三家村裏男女、牛背上將養底兒子，作摩生投這個宗門？不是你分上事. If the master's appeal to the status of royalty, rather than buddhahood, as a necessary requirement for admission into a Chan lineage seems odd, we should remember that the Buddha himself was born a prince and that the "marks of the great man" were said in Buddhist scriptures to be possessed by both buddhas and wheel-turning kings. The story continues with the child, echoing Huineng's reply to Hongren, answering the master's provocation with a quote from the *Diamond Sūtra*: "This is a Dharma of equality; it has neither high nor low" 是法平等，無有高下. The master thereupon recognizes that this is no

The problem posed by Hongren's interrogation—*you*, a buddha?—is not only doctrinal, but also social, and the metaphysics of universal buddha-nature doctrine plays a pivotal yet complex role in the problem's narrative resolution. The point of the scene, after all, is not that Huineng has simply reminded Hongren about the *fact* of universal buddha-nature doctrine, which temporarily slipped the fifth patriarch's mind. Indeed, this fact alone attests to Huineng's particular capacities no more than it does to anyone else's. Rather, it is Huineng's compelling *performative* appeal to metaphysics that impresses Hongren. In other words, in the absence of extraordinary bodily appearance, Huineng offers Hongren another, non-physiognomic sign of his advanced level of inner realization. It is this performative sign, and not the metaphysics of universal buddhahood itself, that—like the canonical "marks of the great man"—authenticates Huineng's (potential for) buddhahood in the eyes of Hongren and, by extension, the reader. In turn, this sign and this scene participate in the narrative elaboration of Huineng's persona as a heroic underdog contender for the Chan patriarchy, and, finally—in Cole's words—as a charismatic "bumpkin buddha."[62]

As Eric Greene observes, "[the *Platform Sūtra*'s] understanding of the Chan master as a living Buddha was to have a profound influence on everything from the creation of a distinctly Chan literature to the ritual treatment of Chan abbots in life and in death."[63] Yet this profound influence was not felt overnight. Morten Schlütter notes that the *Platform Sūtra* does not claim that every Chan master is a buddha, but instead uses the idea of Huineng's buddhahood to extol his uniquely exemplary status. The earliest extant editions of the *Platform Sūtra*, he adds, imply that the lofty patriarchal transmission of Chan reached its pinnacle in the person of Huineng but went downhill thereafter, as his disciples were nowhere near his spiritual equals and could only hope to carry on by upholding his teaching as best as they were able.[64]

Moreover, even this more limited claim by the *Platform Sūtra* to Huineng's special status as a buddha was, as Jorgensen suggests, not widely

ordinary child and suggests the boy pay a visit to Huineng. See *Zutang ji* 3, 1.162. The *Diamond Sūtra* quote originates in *Jingang bore boluomi jing* 1, T. 235: 8.751c24.

62) Cole, *Fathering Your Father*, 217.

63) Greene, "Another Look at Early Chan," 105-6.

64) Schlütter, "Transmission and Enlightenment," 406.

accepted until the advent of the Northern Song period (960-1126).[65] The timing of this broadening acceptance of Huineng's buddhahood is noteworthy, since it was precisely during the Northern Song that Chan Buddhists began to advance other, more categorical claims that every member of a Chan lineage holds religious authority equal to the Buddha by definition. Not coincidentally, newer versions of the *Platform Sūtra* produced in the Northern Song contained revisions that narrowed the spiritual gap between Huineng and his disciples, suggesting that some of them may have lived up to their master's lofty example after all.[66]

On close consideration, the connection between early Chan Buddhists' claims to buddhahood and their claims to lineage orthodoxy thus proves complex. As we have seen in the previous section, the *Platform Sūtra* was one of the earliest texts to extend the Chan lineage back in a continuous line to the Buddha Śākyamuni and the buddhas of the past. It may be no coincidence that the *Platform Sūtra* is also the first text to make a strong case for a Chan master's status as a buddha. But it is worth keeping in mind that these were two distinct types of claims. Like the *Lengqie shizi ji*'s treatment of Xuanze vis-à-vis the rest of the Chan lineage, the *Platform Sūtra* never tells us that we should understand all Chan lineage members to be buddhas like Huineng.

And what about Huineng's own important place in the lineage as sixth patriarch? On the one hand, Huineng went on to be remembered for posterity in large part because, by the advent of the Song dynasty, every living Chan lineage had come to trace itself back through Huineng. On the other hand, without the elaboration of a compelling narrative persona attributed to Huineng beginning in the eighth century, it is unlikely that the attempt to install Huineng as the Chan lineage's sole sixth

65) Jorgensen, *Inventing Hui-neng*, 70. An interesting testament to this emerging—but perhaps still fragile—consensus in the Northern Song is offered by Qisong, whose refusal to admit the seven buddhas of the past into his outline of the Chan lineage we considered above. As Yampolsky observes, Qisong "took pains to justify [the *Platform Sūtra*'s] classification as [a sutra]: 'Dajian zhiren [Huineng],' he writes, 'was a Bodhisattva monk, and his preaching of the *Platform Sutra* is basically no different from the Buddha's preaching of the sutras.'" Yampolsky, *The Platform Sutra*, 125, n.1 (romanization altered). It is noteworthy that, although he acknowledges Huineng's words as holding equal authority to those of the Buddha, Qisong cannot bring himself to name Huineng a full-fledged buddha, and instead calls him a "bodhisattva monk"—contrary to the *Platform Sūtra*'s own insistence that Huineng is indeed a buddha.

66) Schlütter, "Transmission and Enlightenment," 407-8.

patriarch would have succeeded in the first place. Indeed, it is telling that Shenhui was ultimately forgotten to history, while the master he promoted—Huineng—went on to be forever remembered and celebrated.

Even if Huineng was not the very first Chinese person to be proclaimed a living buddha, he (and not Shenhui or the equally forgotten Xuanze) was the first to compellingly model Chinese buddhahood for posterity. Interestingly, the model provided by Huineng had nothing whatsoever to do with meditation, but instead privileged Huineng's identity as an uneducated rustic with a genius for intuiting the deeper truths of Buddhism. Of course, being a fictional creation certainly helped the figure of Huineng provide an especially compelling model of Chinese buddhahood, but it is important to recall that Chinese Buddhist readers of the *Platform Sūtra* did not understand him to be fictional. In the final analysis, then, it was not Huineng's place in the Chan lineage that guaranteed his identity as a buddha, but the powerful idea that a Chinese buddha might *look and act like Huineng* that guaranteed his place in the lineage. It was this latter idea, too, that set the stage for Chan Buddhists in subsequent centuries to begin claiming that all Chan masters, by definition, ought to be considered buddhas.

Claiming Buddhahood in Song-era Chan: The Case of Xuansha Shibei

In the ninth and tenth centuries, as Chan lineages proliferated in China, Chan Buddhists continued to reflect on the relationship between the Buddha and the Chan lineage. Yet even in the wake of Huineng's growing recognition as sixth patriarch, and even as Chan Buddhists placed increasingly less emphasis on meditation as the core feature of Chan identity, they did not immediately claim the status of buddhas any more than they had before Huineng. Instead, most typically they framed the Chan lineage as connected genealogically with the person of the Buddha and metaphysically with universal buddhahood.

For example, in his *Chanyuan zhuquanji duxu* 禪源諸詮集都序 (*Preface to the Collected Writings on the Source of Chan*), written around 833,[67] the famous scholiast (and lineage heir of Shenhui) Guifeng Zongmi

[67] Jeffrey Lyle Broughton, *Zongmi on Chan* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2009), 26.

圭峰宗密 (780-841) proposes that "among masters, there are roots and branches" 師有本末.[68] He explains:

> The initial patriarch of all [Chan] lineages is Śākyamuni. The scriptures are the Buddha's words; Chan is the Buddha's intent. The mind and mouth of all the buddhas could not possibly contradict each other. The foundation of the patriarchs' successive transmissions is the Buddha.
> 諸宗始祖即是釋迦。經是佛語，禪是佛意。諸佛心口必不相違。諸祖相承根本是佛。[69]

Here Zongmi suggests that the Buddha Śākyamuni should be considered the "root"—and the "initial patriarch" (*shizu* 始祖)[70]—of the Chan lineage, which constitutes the Buddha's "branches." For Zongmi, the canonical Buddhist scriptures represent the Buddha's "mouth" or words, while Chan represents his "mind" or wordless intent. As scholars have observed, this formulation feeds into Zongmi's larger view that the Buddhist scriptural tradition and the Chan tradition's lineage of transmission are harmonious and complementary. Yet, importantly, they are framed as complementary *offshoots* of the Buddha: beneath this complementarity, the Buddha Śākyamuni remains the ultimate fountainhead of both scriptures and Chan patriarchs, indeed of every kind of Buddhist authority.

Huangbo Xiyun 黃檗希運 (d. 850), a contemporary of Zongmi and lineage descendent of the rival Hongzhou school of Tang-dynasty Chan, formulated Chan identity in terms of the transmission of knowledge about the metaphysical identity of mind and buddhahood: "When the patriarch-teacher [Bodhidharma] came from the west, he only transmitted the mind-buddha (*xinfo* 心佛), directly pointing out that each of your minds is originally Buddha, and that between one mind and

68) *Chanyuan zhuquanji duxu* 1, T. 2015: 48.400b4.
69) Ibid., 400b10-12. Translation adapted with changes from the partial rendering by Gregory, *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism*, 226.
70) Zongmi's designation here of the Buddha as the Chan lineage's "initial patriarch" subtly conflicts with the emerging tendency to designate Mahākāśyapa as "first patriarch," considered above. The discrepancy attests to ongoing uncertainty in the ninth century about where exactly the line between "buddhas" and "patriarchs" ought to be drawn. Qisong also refers to the Buddha Śākyamuni as the "initial patriarch" and to Mahākāśyapa as the "first Indian patriarch"—see *Chuanfa zhengzong ji* 1, T. 2078: 51.716b24 and *Chuanfa zhengzong ji* 2, T. 2078: 51.719a3—but no other Song-era texts seem to have followed suit.

another there is no difference. Thus he is called 'patriarch'" 祖師西來，唯傳心佛，直指汝等心本來是佛，心心不異。故名爲祖.[71] In other words, a patriarch—and by extension any Chan master—is precisely someone who transmits the knowledge that everyone's mind is buddha.

As we saw in the previous section, the doctrinal idea that everyone's mind is fundamentally identical to the Buddha's mind was already found in canonical Mahāyāna scriptures, and in medieval China this idea participated—alongside the doctrine of buddha-nature—in the larger doctrinal discourse of universal metaphysical buddhahood. At the same time, again, this universalist metaphysics alone did nothing to authorize the Chan tradition's special authority in particular; on the contrary, if anything, on its own terms the universalism of this doctrine had the power to undercut the exclusivist structure of Chan lineages. What distinguishes Chan masters from everyone else in Huangbo's formulation is that Chan masters are uniquely capable of *pointing out* the fact of universal buddhahood, and doing so amounts to "transmitting mind-buddha." Yet even this does not entail a strong claim that Chan masters are themselves buddhas.

A little over a century after Zongmi and Huangbo, Yongming Yanshou opened his massive compendium *Zongjing lu* with the following lines:

> The patriarchs manifest the principle of Chan; their transmission is silent and accords with true realization. The buddhas proclaim the gate of the teachings; they set up explanations and lay down the great purport.
> 祖標禪理，傳默契之正宗；佛演教門，立詮下之大旨。[72]

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71) *Wanling lu* 宛陵錄, in Iriya Yoshitaka 入矢義高, *Denshin hōyō, Enryōroku* 伝心法要，宛陵錄 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1973), 117, with punctuation altered. My interpretation of the line *xinxin buyi* 心心不異 follows Iriya's translation; see Iriya, *Denshin hōyō, Enryōroku*, 121. By contrast, Yanagida Seizan interprets this line according to a conventional reading of *xinxin* as meaning "from one moment of thought to the next" or simply "from moment to moment"; see Yanagida, *Zen bukkyō no kenkyū* 禅仏教の研究 (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1999), 431. Ruth Fuller Sasaki offers a third reading of *xinxin buyi* as "mind and Mind do not differ," separating the two *xin* in *xinxin* 心心 into two different meanings of "mind"—namely the minds of individuals and the universal One Mind, respectively. See Sasaki, *The Record of Linji*, 220-21. While Yanagida's interpretation is possible, I do not find sufficient evidence to support Sasaki's reading. I've chosen Iriya's interpretation over Yanagida's because Huangbo is speaking of "all of your minds," and the temporal continuity of mind does not seem to be the main issue at hand.

72) *Zongjing lu* 1, T. 2016: 48.417b5-6. Translation follows Foulk, "Sung Controversies," 241, with slight modifications.

Yanshou here sets the stage for his compilation's contents by suggesting that Chan patriarchs and buddhas are different because they perform different, complementary activities: patriarchs transmit silently, while buddhas proclaim vocally. Of course, notwithstanding his appeal to several famous Chan slogans attributed to Bodhidharma suggesting that the core of Chan identity is "using mind to transmit mind, and not establishing written words" (此土初祖達磨大師云：「以心傳心，不立文字。」),[73] Yanshou acknowledges later in his introduction to the compilation that Chan Buddhists have teachings of their own.[74] Yet he confines discussion of Chan texts to the compilation's beginning and end, filling ninety-seven of the *Zongjing lu*'s one hundred fascicles with quotations from and discussion of canonical Buddhist scriptures.[75]

Zongmi, Huangbo, and Yanshou all suggest that the Chan tradition is closely connected genealogically with the person of the Buddha and metaphysically with universal buddhahood, but they do not explicitly propose that realizing Chan mastery is equivalent to attaining a personal status on par with the Buddha. We do find a proposal of this sort, however, in a passage from the records of Chan master Xuansha Shibei (835-908), which was likely written a little under a century after the master's death and attributed to him posthumously. Patronized by the rulers of what would become the Min kingdom in southeast China, Xuansha was one of the most influential Chan masters of his day, and his lineage descendants went on to play a pivotal role in shaping Chan identity in the tenth and early eleventh centuries.[76] Although this passage from the records of Xuansha has been overlooked by scholars, I propose that it played an important role in the Northern Song reformulation of Chan identity as a school of living buddhas, and thus warrants our careful attention.

In the *Jingde chuandeng lu*, the first imperially-sponsored Chan record, Xuansha is said to have given the following sermon:

73) *Zongjing lu* 1, T. 2016: 48.417b29-c1.

74) See, for example, *Zongjing lu* 1, T. 2016: 417b27-28.

75) Albert Welter, *Yongming Yanshou's Conception of Chan in the* Zongjing lu*: A Special Transmission within the Scriptures* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press), 50-51.

76) On Xuansha and his disciples, see Suzuki Tetsuo 鈴木哲雄, *Tō-godai zenshū shi* 唐五代禅宗史 (Tokyo: Sankibō Busshorin, 1985), 470-98; and Benjamin Brose, *Patrons and Patriarchs: Regional Rulers and Chan Monks During the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 2015), chapter 3.

> As for the transmission that is passed down [in Chan lineages], nowadays everyone says they receive it from that other [person], Śākyamuni. I say that Śākyamuni and I are fellow students under the same master. So tell me: under whom are we training? Do you understand? This is really not easy.
> 如今相紹繼，盡道承他釋迦。我道釋迦與我同參。汝道：參阿誰？會麼？大不容易。[77]

Here Xuansha is credited with pursuing a remarkable rhetorical departure from the genealogical foundations of Chan identity. As we have seen, even when the mythical narrative of Chan transmission from buddhas to patriarchs was characterized as conveying with perfect fidelity the quintessence of the Buddha's mind or teaching, the trope of genealogy nevertheless still implicitly subordinated patriarchs to buddhas—because buddhas were understood to have preceded patriarchs in time, because the role assigned to Chan masters was silently transmitting the mind of buddhahood rather than authoritatively preaching like the Buddha, and so on. Xuansha's formula takes these shortcomings inherent in the trope of genealogy as his starting point, rhetorically rejecting the entire genealogical model and its implied subordination of Chan lineage members as derivatives or "branches" of the Buddha. In place of genealogy, Xuansha proposes a timeless, horizontal equivalence between himself and the Buddha Śākyamuni.

Xuansha's formula supports my contention contra Alan Cole that claims to genealogical orthodoxy did not in themselves entail the stronger claim to personal buddhahood, and that these two types of claims might even sometimes have been felt to stand in tension with each other. Of course, we needn't read this passage as implying a literal rejection of the living institution of Chan lineage transmission; what Xuansha here rejects is an alleged overreliance by his Chan contemporaries on the trope of genealogy to justify the Chan tradition's exclusivist claim to special authority.

The figurative conceit of Xuansha's formula relies on a monastic scenario that had by the time of its composition become commonplace: a group of disciples training under a single Chan master while living in the monastery of which the master was abbot. Xuansha concludes with a flourish by asking an open-ended question: if the Buddha Śākyamuni

77) *Jingde chuandeng lu* 18, T. 2076: 51.344a29-b2.

is not the source of Chan authority, but rather is himself a student of Chan alongside Xuansha, then under whom are they jointly training? Who is this mysterious unnamed master serving as abbot of the imagined monastery that houses both Xuansha and the Buddha Śākyamuni? In other words, who or what is the source of authority greater than both the buddhas and Chan masters, the wellspring of their shared authority, the unit by which they might equally be measured? This ineffable mystery, Xuansha tells his audience, is precisely what Chan aspirants ought to seek out for themselves if they wish to stand alongside the buddhas and Chan patriarchs as "fellow students"—which is to say, more practically speaking, if they wish to be admitted into a Chan lineage. In the meantime, the point is made: Xuansha is no mere descendent of the Buddha but is his full equal. He is, moreover, no wordless complement to the vocal Buddha. Rather, he is like the Buddha in kind: both are "fellow students" (*tongcan* 同參).

This sermon attributed to Xuansha only first appears in the *Jingde chuandeng lu*, and is not found in the earlier *Zutang ji* of 952 CE or the *Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳 (*Song-period Records of Eminent Monks*) of 988 CE, even though these compilations both postdate Xuansha's death. The compilers of these earlier collections were either affiliated with or otherwise sympathetic to Xuansha's lineage and that of his influential master Xuefeng Yicun 雪峰義存 (822-908), and thus would have had no reason to leave out this passage if it had been popularly known at the time.[78] We may therefore assume with some confidence that this passage attributing to Xuansha the claim that he and the Buddha are fellow students was added to his discourse record toward the end of the tenth century, just before the compilation of the *Jingde chuandeng lu*. This development participated in a broader trend that we find taking place across the Chan tradition over the tenth and eleventh centuries, in

78) As Ishii Shūdō 石井修道 has demonstrated, Zanning 贊寧 (919-1001), the compiler of the *Song gaoseng zhuan*, showed a marked preference for the lineages of Guiyang 潙仰 (which came out of the Hongzhou school) and Fayan 法眼 (descendent of Xuansha), to the exclusion of the equally famous Yunmen 雲門. Among Xuefeng's disciples, Ishii suggests that Zanning most heavily emphasized Xuansha, and was personally acquainted with Daoyuan's and Yanshou's master Tiantai Deshao. See Ishii, *Sōdai Zenshū shi no kenkyū: Chūgoku Sōtōshū to Dōgen Zen* 宋代禅宗史の研究：中国曹洞宗と道元禅 (Tokyo: Daitō shuppansha, 1987), 45-55. The compilers of the *Zutang ji* are also believed to have belonged to Xuefeng's lineage; see Welter, *Monks, Rulers, and Literati*, 65.

which members of Chan lineages embellished the discourse records of their lineage forebears. More specifically, the expansion of Xuansha's discourse record reflects the growing proliferation of Xuansha's lineage heirs, all of whom—including the *Jingde chuandeng lu*'s compiler Daoyuan 道原 (d.u.)—had an interest in cementing Xuansha's legacy.

Following the *Jingde chuandeng lu*'s lengthy entry for Xuansha, we find an abridged version of Xuansha's formula repeated in the very brief entry for Xianzong Xingtao 僊宗行瑫 (d.u.), another of Xuefeng Yicun's disciples. The passage in question goes like this: "The master ascended the hall and said: 'I am a fellow student under the same master (*tongcan*) with Śākyamuni. So tell me: under which person are we training?'" 上堂曰：「我與釋迦同參。汝道：參什麼人？」.[79] Xingtao's phrasing is virtually identical to Xuansha's, only reversing the order of "I" and "Śākyamuni" and substituting "which person" (*shenme ren* 什麼人) for "whom" (*ashui* 阿誰). It is possible that the phrase originated in Xingtao's record, but when later editors recognized its rhetorical potential they lengthened and repurposed it to help burnish the record of the much more famous and lineally important Xuansha, and (unsurprisingly) it is this attribution that stuck.

Regardless, later still in the *Jingde chuandeng lu* we find the expression "Śākyamuni and I are fellow students under the same master" raised for discussion in the entry for one of Xuansha's own lineage heirs named Daochang 道常 (d.u.):

> [Someone] asked: "A person of old had a saying: 'Śākyamuni and I are fellow students under the same master.' I have not yet determined under what person they were training." The master [Daochang] said: "Only if you [too] become a fellow student will you then know." [The questioner] asked: "I have not yet determined how to approach this person (i.e. this unnamed master)." The master [Daochang] said: "Then you don't understand [what it means] to train."
> 問：「古人有言：『釋迦與我同參。』未審參何人。」師曰：「唯有同參方得知。」曰：「未審此人如何親近。」師曰：「恁麼即不解參也。」[80]

This exchange hinges on another common feature of discourse record literature: rather than asking the master direct questions, students often

[79] *Jingde chuandeng lu* 18, T. 2076: 51.352a3-4.
[80] *Jingde chuandeng lu* 25, T. 2076: 51.416b20-23.

raised "old cases" for the master's comment. Here the questioner effectively canonizes the phrase "Śākyamuni and I are fellow students under the same master" by raising it for Daochang's commentary as an "old case" and attributing it to a "person of old." The question this unnamed monk asks Daochang seems to play off of Xuansha's open-ended conclusion: who exactly is this mysterious master under whom Xuansha and the Buddha studied? Having heard the expression, the questioner remains confused and asks Daochang for assistance in comprehending Xuansha's meaning. In the ensuing exchange, Daochang suggests that the questioner too must become a "fellow student" alongside Xuansha and the Buddha in order to find out the identity of this mysterious higher authority.

The third and final fascicle of the received version of the complete discourse record of Xuansha—likely a later addition than the first two fascicles—includes not only the original passage from the *Jingde chuandeng lu*, but also a second, further embellished version that borrows the question posed to Daochang and inserts it into Xuansha's own record as though it had been asked of Xuansha himself during another, later performance of the ascending the hall ceremony:

> The master ascended the hall and said: "I am a fellow student under the same master with Śākyamuni." There was a monk who asked: "I have heard that you, master, have a saying: 'I am a fellow student under the same master with Śākyamuni.' I have not yet determined under what person you are training." The master said: "The third son of the Xie [family] on a fishing boat."
> 上堂云：「我與釋迦同參。」有僧問：「承和尚有言『我與釋迦同參』。未審參見什麼人。」師云：「釣魚船上謝三郎。」[81]

This revised account does little to hide its combinatory nature, first describing the master uttering his expression while giving a sermon during the ascending the hall ceremony, only then to have a questioner imply awareness that this expression has already entered the popular canon of Chan aphorisms by his opening statement that he "has heard" the phrase before. The "third son of the Xie [family] on a fishing boat" is another name for Xuansha himself, but its unclear meaning in this context

81) *Xuansha Shibei chanshi guanglu* 玄沙師備禪師廣錄 3, X. 1445: 73.20c4-5. On the textual history of this record, see Suzuki, *Tō-godai zenshū shi*, 471-74.

(perhaps an ironic designation for Xuansha's "true self"?) is characteristic of the apparent non-sequiturs that were increasingly common in Song-era Chan literature.

In any case, the process of this passage's formulation, repetition, and reworking from its first appearance in the *Jingde chuandeng lu* to its revised version in Xuansha's discourse record and beyond hint at its growing popularity over the course of the Song dynasty. In addition to the *Jingde chuandeng lu* and the records of Xuansha, numerous discourse records from the eleventh century onward feature Chan masters telling their students that if they satisfy certain criteria of mastery they will "be fellow students with the old Buddha."[82]

Indeed, the formula attributed to Xuansha that "Śākyamuni and I are fellow students under the same master" seems even to have inspired the original title that Daoyuan gave to the compilation that went on to be renamed the *Jingde chuandeng lu*. Before the name was changed, Daoyuan had chosen to title his collection *Fozu tongcan ji* 佛祖同參集 (*Collection of Buddhas and Patriarchs Studying under the Same Master*). In his detailed study of the composition and compilation of the *Jingde chuandeng lu*, Ishii Shūdō 石井修道 has hypothesized that the phrase *fozu tongcan* in the text's original title should be read as synonymous with the slogan "unity of the teachings and Chan" (*jiaochan yizhi* 教禪一致), and interpreted as revealing the compiler Daoyuan's preference for an ecumenical vision of Chan associated with Guifeng Zongmi and Yongming Yanshou over the supposedly rival notion that Chan constituted "a separate transmission outside the teachings" (*jiaowai biechuan* 教外別傳).[83] Yet while the latter slogan dates to at least the tenth century, the former was not coined until the late Ming dynasty (1368-1644). Ishii's juxtaposition thus runs the risk of anachronism, and at least in

82) See, for example, *Yangqi Fanghui heshang houlu* 楊岐方會和尚後錄 1, T. 1994B: 47.646b14-15; *Baoning Renyong chanshi yulu* 保寧仁勇禪師語錄 1, X. 1350: 69.280a12-13; *Kaifu Daoning chanshi yulu* 開福道寧禪師語錄 2, X. 1353: 69.339a11-12; *Foguo Yuanwu chanshi biyan lu* 佛果圜悟禪師碧巖錄 9, T. 2003: 48.213c16-18; *Dahui Pujue chanshi yulu* 大慧普覺禪師語錄 2, T. 1998A: 47.816c19-20, and 842a13-14; *Hongzhi chanshi guanglu* 宏智禪師廣錄 3, T. 2001: 48.28b15-17; *Hongzhi chanshi guanglu* 9, T. 2001: 48.112a13-15; *Songyuan Chongyue chanshi yulu* 松源崇嶽禪師語錄 1, X. 1377: 70.92c20-21; *Chushi Fanqi chanshi yulu* 楚石梵琦禪師語錄 3, X. 1420: 71.561b6-8; *Guzunsu yulu* 25, X. 1315: 68.163b23-24 and 166b15-16; and *Guzunsu yulu* 34, X. 1315: 68.224b3-5.

83) Ishii Shūdō, *Sōdai Zenshū shi no kenkyū*, 14.

this case the reliance on a heuristic bifurcation of the Chan tradition into two camps respectively supporting and opposing reliance on canonical Buddhist scriptures—a widespread historiographical convention in the study of Chan—might occlude as much as it illuminates.[84]

Instead, I submit as more probable another explanation for Daoyuan's original title: namely, that the title was chosen to reiterate and expand the consequences of Xuansha's statement that "Śākyamuni and I are fellow students under the same master." The connection to Xuansha is likely, I argue, not only because the two phrases share the term "fellow students" (*tongcan*), but also because Daoyuan was himself Xuansha's lineage heir, and because the *Jingde chuandeng lu* allotted a great deal of space for Xuansha's record.[85] As Ishii demonstrated, Xuansha and his lineage heirs receive preferential treatment even in the final received version of the *Jingde chuandeng lu*, which featured editorial revisions undertaken after Daoyuan's initial compilation that are understood to have favored the rival Linji lineage over those descending from Xuansha.[86] In other words, the favoritism showed toward Xuansha in Daoyuan's initial collection was so great that it survived revisions favoring a rival lineage. Finally, we should not forget that it was, again, in this collection that Xuansha's claim to be the Buddha's fellow student was first recorded. Daoyuan may even have had a hand in this passage's initial composition or appropriation from the record of Xingtao.

Daoyuan's original title not only reiterated but also transformed the formula attributed to Xuansha, extending a statement originally made in the first person (and therefore technically applying only to Xuansha

84) For examples of scholarship using the juxtaposition of these two slogans as a historiographical trope to organize Chan history into the story of two rival camps, see, for example, Yanagida, *Shoki zenshū shisho no kenkyū*, 470-77; Welter, "Mahākāśyapa's Smile," 86-91 (on 105, n.55 he acknowledges that *jiaochan yizhi* is a term of later coinage); and Welter, *Yongming Yanshou's Conception of Chan*, 45. For a discussion of the *jiaochan yizhi* rubric and its shortcomings for analyzing Zongmi's writings, see Gregory, *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism*, 224-30. More recently, Yanagi Mikiyasu 柳幹康 has argued that the phrase *jiaochan yizhi* also misrepresents the writings of Yongming Yanshou and better reflects how later centuries of Chinese Buddhists retrospectively transformed Yanshou's image. See Yanagi, *Eimei Enju to* Sugyōroku *no kenkyū* 永明延寿と『宗鏡録』の研究 (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2015), 347-57.

85) What's more, unlike the compilations of Zongmi and Yanshou, the *Jingde chuandeng lu* did not allot any space for canonical Buddhist scriptures or scriptural passages (aside from those alluded to in passing within the records of Chan masters).

86) Ishii, *Sōdai Zenshū shi no kenkyū*, 36-38.

himself) to encompass the entire Chan patriarchy. Although in Song-era Chan texts the term "patriarch" often refers specifically to the six Chinese Chan patriarchs extending from Bodhidharma to Huineng, the title *Fozu tongcan ji*'s derivation from Xuansha's formula suggests that it takes Xuansha himself to be a patriarch, and thus implies that *zu* refers more broadly to all members of Chan lineages whose records the *Fozu tongcan ji* contains. By changing "Śākyamuni and I are fellow students under the same master" into "buddhas and patriarchs are fellow students under the same master," I propose that Daoyuan offered a new vision of precisely what it is that makes the Chan tradition special: not only its exclusive genealogical connection to the Buddha, but even more fundamentally a horizontal fellowship of equivalence connecting buddhas with members of Chan lineages.

It was precisely this equivalence that justified and authorized the imperially-sponsored compilation of the recorded utterances of Chan patriarchs across all lineages that was the *Fozu tongcan ji* (and in turn the *Jingde chuandeng lu*). After all, if Xuansha is on the same level as the Buddha and not merely his lineage descendent, then neither can Chan masters be understood as mere silent transmitters of buddha-mind or wordless complements to the Buddha's vocal teachings. Instead, the spoken and written teachings of Chan masters themselves, which at this time were beginning to comprise a veritable universe of text, could be considered alongside the canonical Buddhist scriptures as equal holders of religious authority.

Meanwhile, although the *Fozu tongcan ji* went on to be retitled to include the reign name of the emperor that sponsored the collection, Daoyuan's original title was not entirely forgotten.[87] Indeed, in at least one case Daoyuan's intervention in Chan identity seems to have mediated—or at least anticipated—the subsequent reception of Xuansha's formula. In the entry for Linji-lineage member Shishuang Chuyuan 石霜楚圓 (986-1039) in the *Tiansheng guangdeng lu* 天聖廣燈錄, the

[87] We know that the original title did not simply disappear when the new title was applied, because Yang Yi's 楊億 (947-1020) original pre-revision preface titled *Fozu tongcan ji xu* 佛祖同參集序 was preserved, transmitted, and even commented upon by later Song-dynasty Chan masters like Juefan Huihong 覺範慧洪 (1071-1128); see his *Linjian lu* 林間錄 1, X. 1624: 87.258b15-c6. Note, however, that Huihong refers to the preface as *Fozu tongyuan ji xu* 佛祖同源集序 (*Preface to the Collection of Buddhas and Patriarchs* [*having*] *the Same Source*), replacing *tongcan* with *tongyuan*.

next major lamp collection after the *Jingde chuandeng lu*, we find Chuyuan sermonizing: "If your faith is sufficient, then you will be a fellow student alongside the patriarchs and buddhas (or patriarch-buddha; *yu zufo tongcan*). If your faith is insufficient, then it can be said that you have brought about your own defeat" 若信得及，與祖佛同參。若信不及，可謂自生退屈.[88] On the one hand, Chuyuan's use of the expression *yu zufo tongcan* resembles his lineage ancestor Linji's repeated admonition that if one simply stops seeking liberation outside oneself, one will already "be no different from the patriarchs and buddhas" (*yu zufo bubie* 與祖佛不別).[89] On the other hand, Chuyuan's use of the phrase *yu zufo tongcan* likely also alludes to Xuansha's claim that he is a "fellow student" of the Buddha, and possibly also to Daoyuan's original compilation title.

This allusion is especially significant for being attributed to a member of the Linji lineage, whose emerging dominance of eleventh-century Chan in competition with the Fayan and Yunmen lineages descending from Xuansha was secured with the publication of the *Tiansheng guangdeng lu* in 1036.[90] Chuyuan's use of the phrase *zufo tongcan* thus suggests that Xuansha's and Daoyuan's formulas were sufficiently powerful that they succeeded in helping set the terms of the Chan tradition's identity and soteriological program among members of rival lineages even after the decline from power of Xuansha's lineage.

At the same time, we also have traces of evidence that some people may have objected to Xuansha's claim to be the Buddha's "fellow student," again on the grounds of bodily appearance. In a passage of text that only survives as an unattributed extract preserved in a later collection, an anonymous questioner asks: "[It has been said that] 'I am a fellow student under the same master with old Śākyamuni.' [But] old Śākyamuni possessed the thirty-two major marks and the eighty minor

88) *Tiansheng guangdeng lu* 18, X. 1553: 78.504c11-12.

89) The phrase is repeated seven times in Linji's record; *Zhenzhou Linji Huizhao chanshi yulu* 鎮州臨濟慧照禪師語錄 1, T. 1985: 47.497b8, 497b17, 497c1, 499c11, 500c6-7, 502a4-5, and 502a13.

90) See Welter, *The* Linji lu *and the Creation of Chan Orthodoxy: The Development of Chan's Records of Sayings Literature* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), 5. By contrast, as Welter has observed, Yongming Yanshou is entirely excluded from the *Tiansheng guangdeng lu*—a remarkable omission given Yanshou's widely-recognized importance for Song-dynasty Buddhists. See Welter, *Yongming Yanshou's Conception of Chan*, 26.

marks [on his body], so how can [a Chan master] claim to be his fellow student?" 問：「『我與釋迦老子同參。』釋迦老子具三十二相八十種好。如何說同參底事」?[91] While the original response to this question is now lost, the compiler of the collection within which the question is preserved, Chan Master Foyan Qingyuan—whose articulation of a parallel between buddha-to-buddha and patriarch-to-patriarch transmission we considered above—follows the Song-era Chan commentarial convention of replacing the original answer with his own alternative response: "Don't come here polluting my ears and eyes" 代云：「莫來污我耳目。」[92] The question perhaps offends Foyan because it insists on the idea that buddhas look a certain way—that they possess a recognizable set of special bodily marks that Chan masters demonstrably lack. Yet from our perspective, the insistence that buddhahood was recognizable by a particular set of physiognomic signs did not merely bespeak a simple misunderstanding of Buddhist metaphysics. Rather, like Hongren's reply to Huineng's assertion that he seeks "only to be a buddha," this insistence reveals an ongoing skepticism about the claim that a Chan master might literally be a buddha.

In announcing his own equivalence with the Buddha Śākyamuni in particular, Xuansha's formulation likely evoked in the minds of early-Song contemporaries all of the miraculous dimensions of Śākyamuni's identity that were canonically understood to set him apart from ordinary people—just as claims to Xuanze's, Shenhui's, and Huineng's buddhahood did in the Tang. This anonymous questioner's objection thus suggests that even after the Chan tradition rose to elite status in the Song, people never entirely stopped challenging claims that Chan masters are buddhas on the grounds that they don't *look* like buddhas.

Of course, as Chan gained almost unrivalled institutional power, members of Chan lineages could increasingly rely on the mere fact of their tradition's social eminence to bolster claims to authority. Yet even with the sanction of such a powerful institution, like the fictional Huineng, individual members of Song-era Chan lineages were surely also expected to demonstrate evidence of personal charisma—to model Chinese buddhahood in some compelling way. In the face of this sort of

91) *Guzunsu yulu* 34, X. 1315: 68.224b3-5.
92) Ibid., 224b5.

challenge, then—*you*, a buddha?—the burden ultimately fell on each Chan master to demonstrate authority in a manner somehow equally compelling as (but, of course, also substantially different from) the Buddha's awe-inspiring bodily marks, the miraculous displays that accompanied his sermons, and so on.

Conclusion

The notion that certain Chinese Buddhists might be considered actual buddhas—not mere participants in the metaphysics of universal buddhahood, but buddhas in the same exclusive sense that the Buddha Śākyamuni was understood to be a buddha—was virtually unprecedented in Chinese Buddhist history when Chan Buddhists began to advance claims of this sort in the eighth century. Yet the ensuing transformation of Chan identity from a lineage of meditation masters into a school of buddhas took centuries, and I have argued that Chan claims to the personal status of buddhahood remained few and far between throughout the Tang. Instead, notwithstanding the important early examples set by these several Tang-era claims, Chan Buddhists did not begin to claim that the entire Chan tradition should be viewed as a school of buddhas until the Northern Song.

Even then, claims of this kind required ingenuity. Xuansha did not simply come out and say "I am a buddha," but rather claimed to be the Buddha's "fellow student." Nevertheless, it was precisely through claims of this sort that Chan identity was transformed, deemphasizing the centrality of meditation to the tradition's identity and advancing claims to buddhahood in its place.[93] In turn, this change in the Chan tradition's

[93] Xuansha's formula offers one important case study of Song-era claims that Chan masters are buddhas, but it was complemented by other claims to buddhahood made by Chan Buddhists, thorough examination of which exceeds the scope of this article. For a sense of how else Chan Buddhists claimed buddhahood in the Song, I here offer three examples. First, Chan Buddhists from the Song period onward routinely connected normative Chan mastery with the figure of the "great man" (*da zhangfu* 大丈夫), a term used by translators of Buddhist scriptures into Chinese to render the Sanskrit term *mahāpuruṣa*, one of the honorific epithets of the Buddha Śākyamuni. On Chan Buddhists' uses of this term; see Miriam L. Levering, "Lin-chi (Rinzai) Ch'an and Gender: The Rhetoric of Equality and the Rhetoric of Heroism," in *Buddhism, Sexuality, and Gender*, ed. José Ignacio Cabezón (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1992), 137-56; and Beata Grant, "Da Zhangfu: The Rhetoric of Heroism in Seventeenth-Century Chan Buddhist Writings," in *Nan Nü: Men, Women and*

identity had important consequences for Buddhist culture in China. The idea that Chan masters are equivalent to buddhas not only helped sanction the Chan tradition's rise to elite status, but also undergirded the treatment of Chan discourse records as sacred texts holding an authority on par with canonical Buddhist sutras, attracting the often enthusiastic attention of literati, imperial officials, and even emperors.[94] Perhaps most importantly, the transformation of Chan identity into a school of buddhas made the idea that there were actual *human buddhas* living in China socially and religiously viable for the first time, and set the terms for Chinese understandings of what those buddhas might look and act like.[95]

What was the relationship between Chan Buddhists' claims to lineage orthodoxy and their claims to the personal status of living buddhas? Scholars of Chan have proposed that genealogy served not only as the discursive arena within which rhetorical battles for Chan orthodoxy were fought, but also as itself a compelling trope in the formulation of a Chan identity that appealed broadly to Chinese contemporaries. "Why," asks John McRae, "did Ch'an become so popular within Chinese Buddhism? … I suggest that at least part of the reason is that its mode of practice and its entire self-understanding were inherently and intrinsically genealogical, in a way that echoed the extended family social structure and that mirrored some of the dominant concerns of post-T'ang

Gender in China 10 (2008): 177-211. Second, Chan masters were often described as "teachers to humans and gods" (*rentian shi* 人天師), another canonical epithet of the Buddha seldom applied to eminent Chinese Buddhist monastics in earlier eras. For examples from Chan literature, see *Yuanwu Foguo chanshi yulu* 圓悟佛果禪師語錄 9, T. 1997: 47.753a14-15; *Yuanwu Foguo chanshi yulu* 12, T. 1997: 769c23-24; *Linjian lu* 1, X. 1624: 87.252a12-13; *Hongzhi chanshi guanglu* 9, T. 2001: 48.119c6; and *Jianzhong jingguo xudeng lu* 建中靖國續燈錄 16, X. 1556: 78.738c24. For examples from the writings of Song-era literati, see *Hufa lun* 護法論 1, T. 2114: 52.643a11-12; *Gaofeng wenji* 高峯文集 (SKQS), 11.6a; *Hushan ji* 湖山集 (SKQS), 2.15a; and *Yunchao bian* 雲巢編, 7.6b, in *Shen shi san xiansheng wenji* 沈氏三先生文集 (SBCK). Third, Chan lineage-members appointed to abbacies were said to have "emerged into the world" (*chushi* 出世) and begun "turning the wheel of the Dharma" (*zhuan falun* 轉法輪) like the Buddha did at his first sermon; see *Chanyuan qinggui* 禪苑清規 7, X. 1245: 63.542c14. For further analysis of claims to buddhahood in Song-era Chan, see Buckelew, "Inventing Chinese Buddhas."

94) Foulk, "Myth, Ritual, and Monastic Practice," 193-94; Mark Halperin, *Out of the Cloister: Literati Perspectives on Buddhism in Sung China, 960-1279* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Asia Center, 2006), 68-70, 81-83, and 107-8; Welter, *Monks, Rulers, and Literati*; and Schlütter, *How Zen Became Zen*, chapters 2 and 3.

95) See Berling, "Bringing the Buddha Down to Earth."

Chinese society."[96] I think McRae is right. But, as I have sought to show in this article, another part of the reason for Chan Buddhism's growing popularity between the Tang and Song eras is surely also the tradition's claim to a special connection between Chan mastery and the personal status of being a buddha.

Indeed, I propose that genealogy alone would never have sufficed to differentiate Chan Buddhists from other groups of elite Buddhist monastics if Chan lineages were not also filled with charismatic figures claiming authority in novel and compelling ways. As we have seen, genealogy offered a powerful but imperfect rhetorical mechanism for articulating a special connection between buddhas and Chan masters. Moreover, Xuansha Shibei's claim to be the Buddha's "fellow student" evinces a perceived deficiency in the trope of genealogy as an instrument of Chan claims to authority, and the welcome reception this formulation received suggests a felt need among early-Song Chan Buddhists for tropes setting Chan masters and the Buddha side-by-side as equals. The emergence of claims like Xuansha's to non-genealogical fellowship with the Buddha might also have participated in broader cultural shifts attending the collapse of the medieval aristocracy, for whom family lineage was the core marker of elite social status, and the rise of new cultural ideals centered around the civil service examination and other mechanisms of social mobility.[97]

How, finally, should we think about the connection between Chan claims to personal buddhahood and the array of Chinese Buddhist doctrines proclaiming universal metaphysical buddhahood? Chan Buddhists actively participated in the elaboration of the doctrinal metaphysics of universal buddhahood, and even some of the tradition's signature literary forms like *gong'an* 公案 ("public cases") can be read as

96) McRae, "Encounter Dialogue and the Transformation of the Spiritual Path," 359.

97) On the collapse of the medieval aristocracy, see especially Nicholas Tackett, *The Destruction of the Medieval Chinese Aristocracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Asia Center, 2014). On the Song-era civil service examination, shifting markers of elite status in the Song, and the period's ideals of social mobility, see, for example, John W. Chaffee, *The Thorny Gates of Learning in Sung China: A Social History of Examinations* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985); Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters: Marriage and the Lives of Chinese Women in the Sung Period* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1993), 114; and Beverly J. Bossler, *Powerful Relations: Kinship, Status, and the State in Sung China (960-1279)* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Asia Center, 1998), 58-59.

forms of doctrinal exegesis.[98] Yet Chan Buddhists also laid claim to an exclusivist identity as a school of buddhas in the older sense of the term. Thus, as the Chan tradition rose to elite status between the Tang and Song dynasties, the relatively simple doctrinal question of who possesses buddha-nature or buddha-mind (everyone) fed into, but was never coextensive with, the more complicated socio-religious question of who—in Hongren's words—was "fit to be a buddha" (*kan zuofo* 堪作佛).

Institutionally speaking, this latter question amounts to asking who was worthy of the privilege of being admitted into a Chan lineage, and answering it required Chan masters to carefully scrutinize their students for signs that they were indeed worthy. In a broader sense, however, asking who is "fit to be a buddha" also means asking how Chan masters demonstrated their possession of an authority equal to that held by the Buddha Śākyamuni in the absence of the Buddha's canonical bodily signs and miracles—how, in other words, Chan Buddhists reinvented the sign-system by which living buddhas might be recognized, and ended up remodeling buddhahood for a new time and place.

Abbreviations

This article uses the following abbreviations:

T. *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大蔵経. Ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭 (Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924-1932).

X. *Dainihon zoku zōkyō* 大日本續藏經. Ed. Maeda Eun 前田慧雲 and Nakano Tatsue 中野達慧 (Kyoto: Zōkyō Shōin, 1905-1912; reprinted as *Xuzangjing* 續藏經, Taibei: Xinwenfeng, 1968-78).

Abstract

According to many recent scholars, by the Song dynasty Chan Buddhists had come to identify not primarily as meditation experts—following the literal meaning of *chan*—but rather as full-fledged buddhas. This article pursues a deeper understanding of how, exactly, Chan Buddhists claimed to be buddhas during the eighth

98) Robert H. Sharf, "How to Think with Chan *Gongans*," in *Thinking with Cases: Specialized Knowledge in Chinese Cultural History*, ed. Charlotte Furth et al. (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 205-43.

through eleventh centuries, a critical period in the formation of Chan identity. It also addresses the relationship between Chan Buddhists' claims to the personal status of buddhahood, their claims to membership in lineages extending back to the Buddha, and their appeals to doctrines of universal buddhahood. Closely examining Chan Buddhists' claims to be buddhas helps explain the tradition's rise to virtually unrivaled elite status in Song-era Buddhist monasticism, and illuminates the emergence of new genres of Chan Buddhist literature—such as "discourse records" (*yulu*)—that came to be treated with the respect previously reserved for canonical Buddhist scriptures.

Résumé

Selon beaucoup de chercheurs, les bouddhistes Chan en sont venus sous les Song à s'identifier non plus comme de simples spécialistes de la méditation — le sens littéral de *chan* — mais plutôt comme de vrais bouddhas. Cet article examine en détail comment les bouddhistes Chan ont développé cette affirmation de leur statut de bouddhas entre le huitième et le onzième siècle, une période clé dans la formation de l'identité Chan. Ce faisant, il explore les rapports entre leur revendication individuelle de bouddhéité, leurs affiliations à des lignages remontant jusqu'au Bouddha historique et leur utilisation d'une doctrine de la nature universelle de bouddha. Une lecture serrée des textes où les bouddhistes Chan affirment être des bouddhas permet de comprendre l'essor de cette tradition vers un statut hégémonique dans la direction des monastères bouddhiques sous les Song ainsi que l'émergence de nouveaux genres de littérature bouddhique — tels que les « entretiens » (*yulu*) — qui en vinrent à jouir d'un respect précédemment donné aux seuls sutras canoniques.

提要

根據許多近年學者的研究，到宋代時，禪宗教徒已不再——根據 "禪" 字的文義——將自己的首要身份視爲冥想者，而是視作完全意義上的佛。本文追求更深入地理解：在 8 至 11 世紀這一禪宗特性形成的關鍵時期，其成佛的主張是究竟如何被提出的。本文亦探究了以下三者的關係：一是禪宗教徒關於個人成佛狀態的宣言，二是他們作爲可推溯到佛陀本人的各個佛教宗派的內部成員身份的訴求，三是他們對普世成佛學說的興趣。對禪宗成佛主張的密切檢視，有助於解釋這一傳統何以在宋代崛起爲最具優勢地位的出世修行模式，並且揭示了新的禪宗文體——譬如 "語錄"——的出現，以及它們如何逐漸獲得以往僅限於對待佛教經典的尊崇。

Keywords

Buddhism – Chan – Zen – Tang dynasty – Song dynasty – identity – authority