

Article

Who Can Revive Buddhist Ordinations? Explaining the Eminence of Guxin Ruxin in Late Ming China

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Abstract: Guxin Ruxin 古心如馨 (1541–1616) is credited with the revival of monastic ordinations, which ranks among the major breakthroughs of the late Ming Buddhist renewal. Despite the long-standing ban on ordination ceremonies, he managed to win the trust of fellow monastics, attract local patrons, and eventually gain imperial approval. This paper aims to unravel the reasons that this Vinaya master was recognized as legitimate by contemporaries and descendants, focusing on two key episodes in his hagiographies. In the first of them, Guxin Ruxin had a vision of Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī transmitting monastic precepts to him, whereas in the second one his identity as a reincarnation of Upāli was revealed through a miracle he performed during the restoration of Porcelain Pagoda in Nanjing. The research has shown that the second account was a later interpolation designed on the basis of the hagiography of another prominent monk, Xuelang Hong'en 雪浪洪恩 (1545–1607). By contrast, the first of the narratives, although heavily laden with the elements of local lore, could be a reflection of real experience. The inspiration Guxin Ruxin drew from it might explain his commitment to the cause of Vinaya revival and the ensuing charisma.

Keywords: Chinese Buddhism; Vinaya; narrative; hagiography; ordination; Jiangnan; Wutai Mountain; Guxin Ruxin; Xuelang Hong'en



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1. Introduction

The later decades of the Ming dynasty saw a surge of enthusiasm about Chinese Buddhism¹, which led to the emergence of prominent masters and reintroduction of neglected traditions². One such tradition was Vinaya, the study of disciplinary regulations and the mastery of formal action in the saṃgha. This revival of Vinaya³ was important not only because it reestablished the significance of discipline as a basic prerequisite of proper monastic life but also because it reinstated the practice of holding ordination ceremonies, a crucial element of securing succession in the Buddhist monastic order. The former of these achievements can be attributed to the collective effort of quite a number of monks⁴, whereas the architect of the new ordination system was Guxin Ruxin 古心如馨 (1541–1616)⁵. Although he had not received a proper ordination himself, he was recognized as a legitimate Vinaya master in his own lifetime, and the innovative ordination procedure⁶ he introduced became a nationwide standard. Moreover, his activities brought about a change in the Buddhist policy of Ming emperors. Ordering Guxin Ruxin to hold an official ordination ceremony, the Wanli emperor⁷ canceled the long-standing ban on ordinations imposed by the Jiajing emperor⁸. This paper explores the factors that led to this imperial recognition, focusing on key episodes in Guxin Ruxin's life reflected in his hagiographies. What made Guxin Ruxin popular in his own day? How was his rise to prominence interpreted by later generations of hagiographers? Answering these questions will not only improve scholarly understanding of the late Ming Buddhist revival but also serve as a reference for the ongoing debate on the reintroduction of female ordination in a number of Buddhist traditions⁹.

In the Anglophone literature, Jiang Wu introduced a brief biography of Guxin Ruxin, mainly comprised of four events. Firstly, at an early age, Guxin Ruxin became a novice under Su'an Zhenjie 素庵真節 (1519–1593), abbot of Qixia Monastery 棲霞寺 in Nanjing. Secondly, the young monk traveled to Wutai Mountain 五臺山¹⁰, where he had a vision of Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī¹¹ bestowing full precepts on him. Thirdly, in 1584, he came to reside in a small chapel called Gulin¹² 古林庵 in Nanjing, which he transformed into a monastery. Finally, in 1613, the Wanli emperor recognized his achievements and put him in charge of the official ordination ceremony on Wutai Mountain (Wu 2008, p. 30). As for the scholarship in Chinese and Japanese, Zhan Tianling introduced to his readers one more episode: through a miracle performed during the restoration of Porcelain Pagoda¹³ of Bao'en Monastery 報恩寺 in Nanjing, Guxin Ruxin was recognized as a reincarnation of Upāli, the disciple of Buddha Śākyamuni who was most erudite in the matters of Vinaya (Zhan 2007). The Chinese scholar also briefly discusses Guxin Ruxin's only extant piece of writing, *Jing Lü jiexiang busa guiyi* 經律戒相卮薩軌儀 (*Posadha Ritual in Accord with the Characteristics of Precepts in Sūtra and Vinaya*). The same pattern of exposition is followed by scholar monks Shengyan and Guodeng (Shengyan 1996, pp. 143–44, 149; Guodeng 2004, pp. 89–102). By contrast, Japanese scholar Hasebe Yūkei does not analyze the teaching of Guxin Ruxin, but rather focuses on meticulous calculation of various chronological points in his life (Hasebe 1992, pp. 195–96).

Except for the aforementioned ritual text, the lion's share of information on Guxin Ruxin is available from sources in the form of hagiographies. The scholars have utilized or at least mentioned four such sources: *Nanshan zongtong* 南山宗統 (*Genealogy of Nanshan School*, pp. 19–20; henceforth NSZT), *Lüzong dengpu* 律宗燈譜 (*Genealogy of the Lamp of the Vinaya School*, B22, No. 118, pp. 710b–12a; henceforth LZDP; see Supplementary A3), *Lümen zuting huizhi* 律門祖庭匯志 (*Collected Gazetteer of the Patriarchal Yard of the Vinaya School*, pp. 23–26; henceforth LZHZ; see Supplementary A4), and *Xinxu gaosengzhuan* 新續高僧傳 (*Newly Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks*, B27, No. 151, pp. 232a–b). Taking these as a starting point, the present research adds two more sources and also draws the attention to the timing and circumstances of these compilations. The earliest source on Guxin Ruxin is probably his hagiography in the *Qingliangshan zhi* 清涼山志 (*Gazetteer of Qingliang Mountain*; henceforth QLSZ, pp. 146–47; see Supplementary A1). In a preface dated autumn 1596, Kongyin Zhencheng¹⁴, 空印鎮澄 (1547–1617) stated that he compiled the gazetteer at the request of Yuanguang 圓廣, abbot of Dabao Tayuan Monastery 大寶塔院寺 (QLSZ, pp. 8–9). The next version of the gazetteer was commissioned by the Kangxi emperor¹⁵, who provided a preface dated 1701 (QLSZ, p. 7). The hagiography of Guxin Ruxin in the QLSZ contains information on the ordination endorsed by the Wanli emperor, which was held in 1615. This means that the text of the hagiography in its present state could not have been included in Kongyin Zhencheng's edition, and should have appeared only in the Kangxi edition. The important feature of this text, however, is that it differs from all the other hagiographies in its account of the details of Guxin Ruxin's vision on Wutai Mountain. Thus, it should be considered an early version, which could probably have been composed on Wutai Mountain by Guxin Ruxin's disciple Chengfang Yuanqing¹⁶ 澄芳遠清 (d.u.).

The next early source is the *Fanwangjing pusajie chujin* 梵網經菩薩戒初津 (*Initial Approach to Bodhisattva Precepts of Brahmā's Net Sūtra* X39, No. 700, pp. 159a–b; henceforth FPC; see Supplementary A2) written by Yijie Shuyu¹⁷, 宜潔書玉 (1645–1722), heir of Baohua¹⁸, 寶華 lineage and abbot of Zhaoqing Monastery 昭慶寺 in Hangzhou 杭州. This source includes three hagiographies of Vinaya school masters, i.e., Guxin Ruxin, his disciple Sanmei Jiguang 三昧寂光 (1580–1645), and the latter's disciple Jianyue Duti 見月讀體 (1601–1679), who succeeded Sanmei Jiguang as the abbot of Baohua Mountain and was the master of Yijie Shuyu¹⁹. Chronologically, the following two sources are the aforementioned eighteenth-century genealogies of the Vinaya school. The first one, the NSZT, was compiled by yet another Baohua abbot Wenhai Fujū in the 1730–1740s. The second one, the LZDP,

to a large extent drew on its material, being a compilation of Hengshi Yuanliang 恒實源諒 (1699–1765), abbot of Tanzhe Monastery²⁰ 潭柘寺 in Beijing, who represented a rival lineage of the Vinaya school. His preface to the genealogy is dated 1765. The hagiographies of Guxin Ruxin in these two sources generally coincide, with only slight differences that could be attributed to stylistic fashioning²¹.

Two more hagiographies of Guxin Ruxin appeared early in the twentieth century. The first source here is the *LZH*, written by Furen Renyou²² 輔仁仁友 (1862–1929), abbot of Gulin Monastery, with a preface by the author dated 1905. As shown by the scholarship, the main purpose of Furen Renyu in composing this text was to foster the fame of Guxin Ruxin as the original revival of the Vinaya school and reestablish the status of Gulin Monastery as its ancestral seat (H. Ma 2014, p. 90). Although the *LZH* should be considered a late source compared to the late-seventeenth-century *FPC* and eighteenth-century genealogies *NSZT* and *LZDP*, its differing content represents a new turn in the understanding of Guxin Ruxin by his successors. By contrast, *Xinxu gaosengzhuan*, the second source of the early twentieth century, closely follows the text of the *LZDP* hagiography and thus does not add new value to the research.

This paper reveals that Guxin Ruxin's hagiographies mainly focus on two miraculous episodes: on Wutai Mountain and at the restoration site of Porcelain Pagoda. The first one must have been based on a genuine experience of epiphany, which was utilized by later hagiographers to address the concern about the authenticity of Guxin Ruxin's bhikṣu precepts. The second one was a later interpolation aimed at explaining the success of Guxin Ruxin among the monastics and lay patrons of the Jiangnan 江南 region. The introduction of this miracle entailed a shift in the time frame of the events of his life, as the hagiographers perhaps sought to move his arrival to Nanjing closer to the actual restoration of Porcelain Pagoda. Finally, it is possible to suggest that, rather than a single miraculous event, the true source of Guxin Ruxin's success as a Vinaya patriarch was his long-lasting effort to propagate the importance of monastic precepts, probably inspired by a vision of Mañjuśrī on Wutai Mountain.

2. Vision of Mañjuśrī on Wutai Mountain

The sources unanimously state that after a certain period of study with his tonsure master, Guxin Ruxin undertook a three-year pilgrimage to Wutai Mountain where he met Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. Nevertheless, the accounts of this encounter differ, especially between the *QLSZ* and the rest of the sources. This section traces the evolution of this episode in the hagiographies to highlight the methods and meaning of subsequent alterations. The hagiography in the *QLSZ* presents the experience of Guxin Ruxin on Wutai Mountain as follows:

As twilight encompassed the scenery, [he] lingered near Jingang Grotto²³, gazing around. All of a sudden, [he] saw an old woman, her body withered and her hair white, wearing a tattered hat and dressed in rags, who came out of a grove holding a monk's robe²⁴. She called out to [Guxin Ru]xin saying: "Greatly virtuous one, [you] are doing homage in a sincere and diligent way, without fearing the hardship of labour. This Dharma robe of mine was previously received by my son, who died unexpectedly afterwards. Now it should be granted to you. It is difficult to see Mañjuśrī, and the hard toil might be wasted in vain. Even if you see the Bodhisattva without recognizing, what will be the benefit?" As [Guxin Ru]xin kept silence in hesitation, the old woman moved somewhat away and called out: "Greatly virtuous one, I am Mañjuśrī." He rushed to catch up with her, but already lost sight of her, with only the robe left to him. Thereupon, he set off on the way back, shedding tears and bowing along the way.

Right at that time a monastery monk saw in a dream a spirit, who came with an admonition: "Reverent Upāli is coming. You and the others should hurry to welcome him and pay respects." Through this [combination] of causes and

conditions, the monks and disciples were all aware [of the arrival of Guxin Ruxin]. Along the road, countless men and women were making offerings with incense and flowers.

Therefore, [Guxin Ruxin] took up residence in Miaode Chapel²⁵. Then [his presence] stimulated the emission of light from the five peaks [of Wutai Mountain], and [Guxin Ruxin] saw amid the precious light how the Mahasattva stretched out a hand and rubbed the crown of his head, which burst open [for him] the Dharma gate of the mind-grounds²⁶.

The miraculous narrative about the events on Wutai Mountain clearly breaks down into three parts. In the first part, Guxin Ruxin encountered an old woman who handed over to him a monk's robe, which used to belong to her late son. Then she cautioned Guxin Ruxin that Mañjuśrī is hard to see and even more difficult to recognize, and eventually proclaimed herself to be Mañjuśrī, disappearing immediately after that. In the second part, an unidentified monk of Miaode Chapel on Wutai Mountain received a warning from a spirit in a dream that Upāli was coming, and consequently everyone welcomed the approaching Guxin Ruxin as a reincarnation of Upāli. The third part described how, during Guxin Ruxin's stay at the chapel, the peaks of Wutai Mountain shone with light, amid which Mañjuśrī appeared again and bestowed on him a deep understanding of the Bodhisattva precepts.

The hagiography in the *FPC* demonstrates significant changes compared to the above narrative. Specifying that Guxin Ruxin bowed every three steps during his three-year pilgrimage, it describes the events at the destination of his journey in the following way:

As he bowed to the middle of the mountain, he saw an old woman, who came out of a grove holding a monk's robe. She asked: "Greatly virtuous one, [you] are doing homage in a sincere and diligent way. What are you seeking?" He replied: "I seek to see Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī personally bestowing great precepts [on me]." The old woman said: "If it is so, I now give you this Dharma robe. It is only that I am afraid that it is difficult to see the Bodhisattva, and even in case of seeing [you] might not recognize [him]." As patriarch [Guxin Ruxin] accepted the robe with his hands, the old woman pointed [at something] with her finger saying: "You want to see Mañjuśrī. Is that not him?" Just as the patriarch looked back, the old woman disappeared. The five peaks emitted light, which turned into a cloud canopy. The Bodhisattva cast down a hand from amid the light and rubbed the crown of the patriarch's head saying: "Bhikṣu Guxin, Mañjuśrī has already bestowed the precepts on you." At this uttering, the patriarch was suddenly awakened to the Dharma gate of the mind-grounds and the essential principle of the Vinaya.

This narrative visibly coincides with certain portions of the *QLSZ* text, and also presents the same plots of an old woman and a vision of Mañjuśrī in the sky. This testifies that it was either that the *FPC* utilized the text of the *QLSZ*, or both hagiographies originated from a common source. In spite of evident similarities, the *FPC* version shows major differences. Firstly, the events from the first and the third parts of the *QLSZ* version are merged into a single dramatic episode of a robe-granting old woman being immediately substituted by a celestial image of Mañjuśrī. This increases the emotional intensity of the scene, and provides additional proof that the old woman actually was Mañjuśrī. Secondly, the place names that appear in the *QLSZ*, such as Jingang Grotto and Miaode Chapel, are omitted in the *FPC*, which makes the scene less mundane and more fraught with symbolic meaning. Thirdly, the *FPC* utilizes Chan rhetoric to underscore the significance of Guxin Ruxin's achievement. Such expressions as "at this uttering"²⁷, "suddenly awakened," and "essential principle" are obvious borrowings from the terminology typical of Chan descriptions of awakening.

Thirdly, the *FPC* changes the very meaning of the miracle. When explaining Guxin Ruxin's motivation to undertake a pilgrimage to Wutai Mountain, the *QLSZ* stresses his

desire to uphold Vinaya in the milieu dominated by doctrinal study: “At that time there were many who discussed sutras, but few who promoted Vinaya. [Guxin Ru]xin said with a sigh: ‘It is due to perseverance in Vinaya that Buddhadharma abides in the world. Why should [one] not specialize in Vinaya studies in order to repay the kindness of the Buddha?’” Conversely, the *FPC* puts this argument into the mouth of Guxin Ruxin’s tonsure master Su’an Zhenjie, depicting Guxin Ruxin’s reaction as resolutely making “a wish to see Mañjuśrī in order to receive personal transmission and obtain precepts.” Accordingly, within the miraculous encounter episode, the *FPC* introduces an utterance by Mañjuśrī explicitly proclaiming to have transmitted precepts to Guxin Ruxin. Thus, the whole episode starts to function as a testimony of the legitimacy for all of the ordinations that would be held by Guxin Ruxin later on. This point would be eagerly endorsed by later hagiographies in the *LZDP* and the *LZH*. Not only would they follow the dramatic single-episode strategy but also they would add more details, specifying that “at this uttering, the master was suddenly awakened to the Dharma gate of the mind-grounds of five types [of offenses]²⁸ and three groups [of precepts]²⁹ and witnessed the Vinaya of Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna suddenly flowing out of his chest. His heart was filled with great joy, which is beyond any comparison. In this way, master [Guxin Ru]xin obtained precepts from Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī!” Evidently, the later accounts employed more Vinaya terms in characterizing Guxin Ruxin’s insight and underscored the fact of the direct transmission of precepts from Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī.

In the course of the above comparison between the *QLSZ* and the *FPC* narratives, the former appeared to reflect a more detailed, less glossed version of the story. However, such a proposition should also be treated with caution, as both place-names in the *QLSZ* hagiography, i.e., Miaode Chapel and Jingang Grotto, were at the time well-known sites with huge symbolic meaning, especially due to their connection with thaumaturges of earlier epochs and great monks of the late Ming. The *QLSZ* preserves three hagiographies of Tang monks³⁰, in which the miracles happen exactly at Jingang Grotto, among which the story of Buddhapālita³¹ 佛陀波利 (*QLSZ*, pp. 186–87) features some striking similarities to that of Guxin Ruxin. Hearing that there is an abode of Mañjuśrī in China, Buddhapālita, a North Indian monk, traveled to Wutai Mountain. “Having arrived to the southern part of [Wu]tai Mountain, he walked slowly along the Huyang ridge. While gazing up and down, [he saw that] the trees were reaching up into the clouds, and the land was covered with flowers. . . He suddenly saw an old man who came out of a gorge and spoke to [Buddha]pālita in the language of Brahmins.” The old man inquired whether he had brought a certain scripture, which the pilgrim had not. Then the old man reprimanded him saying: “Since you have not brought the scripture you have come in vain! What benefit could there be? Even if you were to see Mañjuśrī, how would you recognize him?” Further in the story, Buddhapālita brought over the sutra and translated it³².” As the translation was completed, [Buddha]pālita went with his Sanskrit book to Wutai Mountain, where he entered Jingang Grotto and surprisingly did not come out³³. The same hagiography reports an alternative version stating that when Buddhapālita entered the grotto, he saw a magnificent net of light. As he turned back to call out to his companions, the sagely scene disappeared. Then, Buddhapālita died in a sitting posture on the side of the rock.

Several points in this account have parallels in the hagiography of Guxin Ruxin. Firstly, Buddhapālita traveled to Wutai Mountain for the reason that it was the seat of Mañjuśrī. The *QLSZ* ascribes a similar motivation to Guxin Ruxin: “Having read the Avatamsaka [Sutra] up to the Dwelling Places of Bodhisattvas Chapter³⁴, [he] came to know that Mahasattva Mañjuśrī permanently abided on Qingliang [Mountain].” Although the *FPC* does not include this episode, it is preserved in all of the other hagiographies of Guxin Ruxin. Secondly, both pilgrims encounter elderly interlocutors who voice the same concern of seeing but not recognizing the Bodhisattva. Finally, Jingang Grotto features in both stories as a place where divine light was witnessed. On the one hand, it can be suggested that Guxin Ruxin was familiar with these legendary tropes, which could have influenced his experience on Wutai Mountain³⁵. On the other hand, a considerable portion

of the narrative might have been supplemented by the author of the hagiography in the *QLSZ*, the gazetteer of Wutai Mountain. Still, even if the latter be the case, there is no compelling evidence against the basic fact that Guxin Ruxin did go to Wutai Mountain and experience some kind of epiphany there.

The two remaining episodes of Guxin Ruxin's stay at Wutai Mountain according to the *QLSZ* hagiography are dominated by supernatural events, which also turn out to be based on widespread tropes. The head-rubbing gesture is well known from sutras³⁶, whereas prophetic dreams of a spirit (*shen* 神) are widespread in Buddhist hagiographies. More specifically, the hagiographies of two of Guxin Ruxin's disciples feature such episodes. In the case of the aforementioned Chengfang Yuanqing, a spirit came to Guxin Ruxin in a dream to tell him that an emanation of Manjuśrī (i.e., Chengfang Yuanqing) was coming from Wutai Mountain, and instructed the Vinaya master to transmit ordination to him in an expedient way (*QLSZ*, p. 147; *LZDP*, p. 0715a). On the eve of the arrival at the capital of Dahui Yonghai 大會永海 (d. 1628/9), another disciple of Guxin Ruxin, Empress Dowager Cisheng³⁷ 慈聖 (1545–1614) dreamed about Chan master Niaochao³⁸ 鳥巢 coming from Wutai Mountain and subsequently installed the newly arrived monk as abbot of Minzhong Monastery³⁹ 愍忠寺 (*LZDP*, p. 0713a). Thus, the introduction of a prophetic dream was at that time used as a means to explain events that would otherwise seem a departure from the regular order of things. Notably, the *FPC* and the later hagiographies of Guxin Ruxin move the prophetic dream episode to another place and time, adding new characters and content. The next section examines the roots of and reasons for this change in the narrative.

3. Reconstruction of Porcelain Pagoda

Dewei Zhang began his monograph on the late Ming Buddhist revival with an illustration of the desperate condition of Jiangnan monasteries in the middle of the sixteenth century. He used as an example the plight of Bao'en Monastery, which, despite being a state-sponsored Buddhist site, was bogged down in debt after paying for the funeral of its abbot in 1565 and suffered further misfortune as a lightning-caused conflagration destroyed the main body of the monastery. At this point, Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清 (1546–1623) and Xuelang Hong'en 雪浪洪恩 (1545–1607), two young Bao'en monks, made a vow to rebuild the monastery (D. Zhang 2020, pp. xiii–xiv, 157–71). Whereas the former sought assistance at the imperial court, the latter chose to stay in the south (D. Zhang 2014, p. 276). Without considering the life of Xuelang Hong'en as a whole, this paper focuses on his effort to restore Porcelain Pagoda of Bao'en Monastery. This event is described in all of Guxin Ruxin's hagiographies, except for the *QLSZ* version. As the *FPC* narrates:

At that time, Dharma master Xuelang [Hong'en] was fulfilling the decree to restore Changgan Precious Pagoda⁴⁰. The construction was drawing to a close, with [only] the roof of the pagoda being hard to lift. [Xuelang Hong'en] spent day and night in dismay, hoping for compassionate response from buddhas. In a dream, he saw [Bodhisattva] Skanda⁴¹, who consoled him saying: "When reverent Upāli comes here, it will start to be possible to fulfill your wish." Next morning, Vinaya patriarch [Guxin Ruxin], wearing a robe, holding a bowl and leaning on a walking stick, circumambulated the pagoda. Immediately, its roof got up. Immensely relieved, Dharma master [Xuelang Hong'en], along with monks and laypeople, burned incense in veneration now that they believed that [Guxin Ruxin] was a reincarnation of Upāli.

The *LZDP* version adds more details to the story. Firstly, it specifies that Xuelang Hong'en was supervising the construction works, but the actual person in charge was a Sichuan monk called Juchuan⁴² 巨川. Secondly, Guxin Ruxin's appearance is described in greater detail, as he entered the scene of events "with his head uncovered and his feet bare, leaning on a walking stick and holding a bowl, with a shoulder exposed." These characteristics point to strict observance of Vinaya rules and thus explain why Xuelang Hong'en could have taken Guxin Ruxin for a reincarnation of Upāli. Thirdly, rather than

acting on his own initiative, Guxin Ruxin is asked to assist by Xuelang Hong'en and leads the monks of the monastery to perform the circumambulation. Furthermore, the ascent of the roof is depicted more vividly, happening "in a soaring manner, like a bird hurrying to the nest." Finally, Xuelang Hong'en is reported to have announced the content of his dream, testifying to the assembly that Guxin Ruxin was a reincarnation of Upāli.

On top of that, the LZDP developed the pagoda plotline by means of inserting a new episode elsewhere in the hagiography. Whereas the other versions were terse when recounting Guxin Ruxin's studies as a novice under Su'an Zhenjie, the LZDP named him the seventh out of his master's ten most prominent disciples, and relayed one occasion during their studies:

"At that time, master Su [an Zhenjie] was lecturing on the Lotus [Sutra]. When he reached the Precious Pagoda chapter⁴³, a precious pagoda was seen in the air. Monks and laypeople stared up and called it a rare [miracle], assuming it to be an unusual auspicious [sign that appeared as] a response to master [Su'an Zhenjie's] virtuous deed of expounding on the sutra."

This very chapter of the sutra claims that a precious pagoda will appear wherever the Lotus Sutra is preached. In fact, the same episode is recorded in the hagiography of Su'an Zhenjie⁴⁴ in *Bu xu gaoseng zhuan* 補續高僧傳 (*Supplement to the Continuation of Biographies of Eminent Monks*, X77, No. 1524, fascicle 5, p. 399a14–15). After exposing the sequence of main events in his life and providing the key dates, the hagiography lists four miracles performed by Su'an Zhenjie, three of which are connected with expounding on sutras, including the following:

One day as he was expounding on the Lotus [Sutra] up to the Precious Pagoda Chapter, a shining image was seen [hovering] in the air in a majestic way. Minister Wang Daokun⁴⁵ made an inscription about it. The venerable minister organized non-discriminating assemblies twice at Jiaoshan of Xin'an. The people who saw [the miracle] numbered dozens of groups. They prostrated in front of the master to express gratitude for liberating them from suffering. The minister saw it in person.

As *Bu xu gaoseng zhuan* was compiled by Minghe 明河 (1588–1641) towards the end of the Ming dynasty⁴⁶, it is most possible that the eighteenth-century author of Guxin Ruxin's hagiography in the LZDP was able to draw on this material. Originally, this event was utilized among other miraculous episodes to underscore the spiritual achievements of Su'an Zhenjie. The most probable reason for its introduction into the hagiography of Guxin Ruxin should have been to hint at the later miracle at Porcelain Pagoda.

Evidently, the accounts of events in the QLSZ and the FPC contradict each other, with the former placing Guxin Ruxin's recognition as Upāli at Wutai Mountain and the latter (followed by the LZDP and the LZH) claiming it to have happened in Nanjing. Fortunately, there are other sources describing the restoration of Porcelain Pagoda, which can be consulted to determine if Guxin Ruxin's participation indeed took place. The aforementioned Hanshan Deqing recollected the story of Bao'en Monastery and its reconstruction in Xuelang Hong'en's hagiography included in *Hanshan laoren mengyouji* 憨山老人夢遊集 (*Dream Travels Collection of the Venerable Hanshan*, fascicle 30, X73, No. 1456, pp. 676–79; henceforth MYJ; see Supplementary B1), a collection of Hanshan Deqing's materials recorded and edited⁴⁷ by his disciples and published posthumously⁴⁸. Starting with the fire in the later years of the Jiajing period, the MYJ moves on to describe how Hanshan Deqing met Xuelang Hong'en on the route to the destination of his southern exile in the winter of 1595⁴⁹ and mourned the failure of his efforts to gain help at court. Finally, the successful restoration of Porcelain Pagoda is described as follows:

Three years after I crossed the mountain ridge, in *wuxu* year⁵⁰, seeing that the top of the pagoda of our monastery got tilted, venerable [Xuelang Hong'en] rose with determination to restore it. In a short while, help came from the authorities,

as censor venerable Zhu took up the initiative, and venerable [Xuelang Hong'en] personally went to see hundreds of people, one by one begging throughout the capital city [i.e., Nanjing, the southern capital]. In a short while, the hearts of people were aroused with enthusiasm, and the accumulated capital swiftly amounted to hundreds and thousands. Thereupon, the great construction commenced. The pagoda was twenty five *zhang* high, and the core beam required for fitting the roof was about seven *zhang* long. Since the scaffolds were only half of the height, it fell down like a mustard seed summoned by an [electrified] amber and a needle attracted by a magnet. The situation was difficult indeed! Getting greatly perplexed, venerable [Xuelang Hong'en] suddenly vomited several litres of blood, whereupon the core beam entered [the right position]. No one of those people who were on the scaffolds was even slightly wounded, being like birds settled on young branches. Was it not caused by the power of the mind [of Xuelang Hong'en]?!

Similar to the content analyzed above, this narrative also described a major hindrance Xuelang Hong'en encountered at the restoration of Porcelain Pagoda. It was impossible to lift the main beam to fix the roof of the pagoda, as the scaffolds were too low. The predicament was also resolved by a miracle. Another similarity between the two narratives is the comparison with birds. According to the *LZDP*, the roof of the pagoda went up "in a soaring manner, like a bird hurrying to the nest," whereas the *MYJ* described the people on scaffolds, who safely survived the ascent of the beam, as "being like birds settled on young branches." However, in the *MYJ* version, the beam miraculously fits in the place after desperate Xuelang Hong'en vomits blood, and the whole accomplishment is attributed to the power of his vow to restore the monastery, whereas Guxin Ruxin's participation is not mentioned at all. Apparently, Hanshan Deqing did not witness the restoration in person, as he stayed in exile in the south⁵¹, so it might be suggested that he did not know the actual course of events and based his interpretation on the desire to laud his lifelong friend, Xuelang Hong'en.

Fortunately, in addition to the sources that might be corrupted by the personal connection between their authors and protagonists of the narratives, there is yet another early source that preserved the account of the restoration of Porcelain Pagoda. It is *Kezuo zhuiyu* 客座贅語 (*Collected Talks with Sitting Guests*; henceforth *KZZY*) by Gu Qiyuan⁵² 顧起元 (1565–1628), whose preface is dated 1617. The events under our scrutiny appear in two consequent entries named *Bao'en si ta* 報恩寺塔 (*Pagoda of the Bao'en Monastery*) and *Yi seng* 異僧 (*Unusual Monk*) (*KZZY*, fascicle 7, pp. 55–57, see Supplementary B3). Gu Qiyuan starts his account by enumerating the dimensions, structures, and materials of the pagoda. Then he mentions the relic (*śarīra*, *sheli* 舍利) hidden within, referring to the practice of circumambulation of the pagoda and miraculous apparitions the relic was believed to produce. After that, he describes an interesting event that took place during a recent restoration:

In the *gengshen* year⁵³ of Jiajing period, the monastery caught fire, which destroyed the protective railing around the pagoda. However, the pagoda stayed intact. In the middle of *gengzi* year⁵⁴ of Wanli period, the roof-support beam of the pagoda got rotten by half, and the golden roof had tilted. Xuelang Hong'en enthusiastically set upon rectifying it, personally collecting donations that amounted to thousands of taels. Scaffolds were built to change the wooden roof-support beam, while the remaining funds were used to construct the railing of the pagoda, which regained its prior appearance. Earlier, I wrote a text to commemorate this.

Evidently, unlike Hanshan Deqing, Gu Qiyuan does not directly link the reconstruction of Porcelain Pagoda and the destruction of Bao'en Monastery by fire. For Hanshan Deqing, the calamity of the monastery and the vow to restore it was a logical prelude to the later repair of the pagoda. By contrast, according to Gu Qiyuan, the main structure of the pagoda did not suffer from the fire. Rather, the problem with the roof was a separate event, caused by a rotten support beam that required substitution. In the next entry, Gu Qiyuan discusses

the participation of an unusual monk in the construction. Again, the troublesome beam is impossible to lift, and a helping hand appears.

When Xuelang [Hong'en] was repairing the pagoda, the erected scaffolds reached the same level as the roof of the pagoda. A monk from some region, who was residing under the guidance of Xuelang [Hong'en], was good at climbing high. At that time, it had just rained, and this monk put on shoes with nails, ascended to the ninth level of the pagoda, went out of the door, turned around and grabbed with his hands the eaves of the roof, pulled himself upwards, and got to the dew-receiver⁵⁵ of the pagoda. People looking from beneath were shaking [with fear], but this monk moved back and forth and all around with the dexterity of a macaque, so easily as if he were on smooth ground, and everyone thought that he must have been a spirit. My younger brother Yuwang witnessed it with his own eyes. [When I learned this story from him,] I said that either this unusual monk should have had wings made of flesh on his sides or he should have been a man of exceptional courage⁵⁶, or he should have been able to [miraculously] surmount walls. In short, there are many able and stalwart men in the school of Dharma.

The second part of the entry narrates a story about a Tang monk who lent assistance during construction in a monastery by aptly ascending the roof of a building⁵⁷. Notably, Gu Qiyuan's account follows the structure of this Tang story that first provided background information about the construction project, then described the clothing of the unusual monk, went on to narrate his movements, comparing his dexterity with that of monkeys, birds, spirits, and demons, and finally drew a conclusion. Unlike the hagiographies, this Tang story as well as Gu Qiyuan's account refer to an unidentified monk and lack any traces of thaumaturgy, with no rituals performed and actions of the protagonist presented in a detailed and sober way. Moreover, Gu Qiyuan claimed that the scene was witnessed personally by his own brother, which may be quite true, as the *KZZY*, according to the preface, mainly consists of his discussions with visitors who came to see him while he stayed ill at home, and his brother could well have been among such guests. At this point, it may be suggested that the *KZZY*, finalized in 1617, was the earliest source to describe unusual events at Porcelain Pagoda, whereas all of the later hagiographical accounts borrowed its content to develop miraculous episodes. The same applies to one more source that features Guxin Ruxin at the site of Porcelain Pagoda. It is *Jietan fu* 戒壇賦 (*Ordination Platform Poem*) by Wang Gai⁵⁸ (BHSZ, pp. 409–22, see Supplementary B4). The poem is preceded by an introduction, which delves directly into the Bao'en story:

In the past, when restoring the pagoda of Great Bao'en Monastery, great master Sanhuai⁵⁹ was distressed by the failure to lift the roof. It coincided with Guxin [Ruxin]'s arrival from San Mountain, and as [Guxin Ruxin] made three bows, the roof was elevated. Thus he came to be famed as Upāli. As for Upāli, he was the origin of Vinaya. Prior to Guxin's arrival, an entry into the dream was stimulated. At that time, in the depository of the pagoda an iron chest was found with the *Baozhi shuojie tu* inside, depicting the construction of a three-level ordination platform, with [Bao]zhi⁶⁰ occupying the place of the presiding master and Vinaya master [Seng]you⁶¹ settled as an honoured witness. . . . Upon careful examination, Guxin [Ruxin] realized that the way he preached the precepts on San Mountain was merely a provisional [version] and wished to imitate the [depicted] system."

The introduction goes on to narrate that Guxin Ruxin's disciple Sanmei Jiguang replicated the ordination platform in wood on Baohua Mountain, whereas the next Baohua abbot Jianyue Duti built it in stone. Wang Gai described the structure of the platform and noted its popularity under Jianyue Duti and his successor Ding'an Deji 定菴德基 (1634–1700). Finally, Wang Gai made some observations on the origins of ordination platforms:

According to my research, ordination platforms started from Nanshan⁶², who lived by Linde period⁶³. People believed that this is ancient, lacking the knowledge that [Bao]hua Mountain was opened [as a Buddhist site] since Baozhi, and the ordination platform follows the track of Baozhi. Should Tianjian⁶⁴ period of Liang be compared with Linde period of Tang, will it not be more ancient? In the second month of spring of *gengwu* year⁶⁵, I was passing by [Baohua Mountain] with my [travelling] umbrella and sandals. Taking a tour around [the mountain] and sighing with admiration, I stayed over for two consecutive nights. Venerable Ding [’an Deji] bade me to praise it in a poem.

At this point, the introduction ends, followed by the poem itself. Notably, the narrative of Guxin Ruxin is briefly outlined at the very start of the introduction, with the major nodes of the plot mentioned only in passing and in confused order (the dream is placed after the references to the elevation of the roof and recognition as Upāli). At the same time, a striking new detail is added. It turns out that while Guxin Ruxin was at the site, an important finding was made in the depository of the pagoda⁶⁶, called *Baozhi shuojie tu* 寶誌說戒圖 (*Illustration of Professing Precepts by Baozhi*), which provided Guxin Ruxin with an authoritative source of establishing ordination platforms⁶⁷. Even more importantly, the platforms that follow this design were constructed on Baohua Mountain, which meant that the roots of its ordination system stretch back in history to the times of Baozhi. This was an earlier time compared to the seventh-century life of Daoxuan, who was usually credited with establishing the Chinese style of ordination platforms. It can be observed how the Precious Pagoda miracle of Guxin Ruxin was borrowed in yet another narrative to serve an absolutely new purpose, now arguing for the ancient origin of ordinations at Baohua Mountain.

4. The Two Miracles and the Overall Timing

This section aims at understanding the place of the two miraculous episodes discussed above in the course of Guxin Ruxin’s life. Although the major episodes are mostly the same, the hagiographies suggest two versions with regard to the timing of the events. The *QLSZ* states that Guxin Ruxin took tonsure during the Jiajing reign, which could not be later than 1566, the last year of the Jiajing period. This was followed by three years of study under the tonsure master and three more years of pilgrimage to Wutai Mountain. Thus, the vision of Manjuśrī there could not have happened later than 1572. The consequent events are reported briefly as follows:

He travelled extensively, visiting many regions and [attracting] companions on the [Buddhist] path, who came to rely on him and trust him. He arrived in Jixiangli in Jinling, where he established a monastery named Gulin. Numerous disciples came, and many Dharma assemblies were held.

After this, the narrative directly moves on to dwell on the episode of imperial order to hold an official ordination on Wutai Mountain, for which a reference date is also left unspecified. The short account of the events between the vision of Manjuśrī and imperial patronage mainly includes three parts. Firstly, Guxin Ruxin traveled around the country attracting disciples. Secondly, he came to reside at Gulin Monastery in Nanjing (mentioned in the text with its old name Jinling). Thirdly, as he stayed there, a huge congregation gathered around him. Quite unexpectedly, the *FPC* hagiography departs from the timing suggested by the *QLSZ* by almost twenty years. It supplements Guxin Ruxin’s birth date, the 10th day of the 6th month of *xinchou* year of the Jiaxing period (3 July 1541), and explains his decision to renounce secular life:

His father died at an early [stage of his life], and he was raised by his mother. In *renwu* year⁶⁸, his mother passed away too. Seeing the false and illusionary [nature] of secular connections, he sought to leave home [under the guidance of] Dharma master Su’an.

This passage indicates that Guxin Ruxin became a monk in 1582, which means that he was forty-one years old at the time. Moreover, when listing the life span and the length of other periods of his life, the hagiography states that the period when he was a tonsured monastic (*randao* 染道⁶⁹) was 34 years. As his death year is reported to be *yimao*⁷⁰ (approximately 1615), the 34 years since tonsure would start in 1581, which roughly coincides with 1582. The same timing is accepted by the *LZDP* hagiography, which omits the family background, but retains the “forty years of age” as the time of renunciation and 34 years as the period of being a tonsured person. Accordingly, this later time of tonsure shifts the time of receiving full precepts from Manjuśrī. The *FPC* and the *LZDP* state that Guxin Ruxin’s “period as an ordained monk”⁷¹ was 27 years, which points to its start in 1588, sixteen years after the latest date suggested by the *QLSZ*. Finally, yet another period in Guxin Ruxin’s life is the time of propagating precepts (*hongjie* 弘戒 or *hongjie* 宏戒). The *FPC* and the *LZDP* consider it to be 22 years and 25 years, respectively, which would mean the start of such activities in 1593 or 1590.

Surprisingly, the *LZH*, being a much later source, is in line with the *QLSZ* version as far as chronology is concerned. It borrowed the formula of “strongly believing in the Three Jewels while living at home” and deciding to renounce secular life from the *LZDP*, but substituted the age of forty with the age of twenty. Consistently, it switched the numbers in the periods of life. All in all, it denoted six periods: “monastic age” of 55 years (starting from 1560), “age with precepts” of 49 years (starting from 1566), “tonsure age” of 49 years again, “Dharma age” of 44 (starting in 1571), period of “proliferating precepts” of 43 (starting in 1573), and period of being an abbot of 32 years (starting in 1583). It also provided a date when Guxin Ruxin was invited to head Gulin Monastery, which happened in *jiashen*, the 11th year of Wanli period⁷², roughly corresponding to 1584. Thus, according to this list, Guxin Ruxin was tonsured in 1560 (which is in line with the *QLSZ*) and received full precepts from Manjuśrī in 1566 (six years later than 1560, which is also in accord with the *QLSZ*). Six years after his vision, Guxin Ruxin started to promote precepts (in 1573), which he continued for ten years until arriving at Nanjing to become the abbot of Gulin Monastery (in 1583). This is in sharp contrast to the claim of the *FPC* and the *LZDP* that Guxin Ruxin received tonsure in 1581/2 and started propagating precepts as late as 1590/3.

Among these two versions, the earlier one seems more plausible for two main reasons. Firstly, the death of the mother does not seem to be a viable explanation for a forty-year-old person to take tonsure. One might expect more remarks on his marital status and career vicissitudes. By contrast, a twenty-year-old orphan who loses his last kin is more likely to opt for monastic life. Secondly, 1584 is stated as the date when Guxin Ruxin became abbot in the *LZH*, the source compiled by a Gulin abbot, who was most probably well informed about the history of his temple. Unlike all the previous accounts of Guxin Ruxin’s life, the *LZH* specifies that he was invited by a monk called Jueming Xiang 覺明香 to head Gulin Chapel, which was a tiny establishment and probably a hereditary temple. The installment of an outstanding monk played a pivotal role in its transformation into a large monastery that attracted numerous disciples⁷³.

At this point, one might ask about the reason that the events in Guxin Ruxin’s life were moved to a later stage by the author of the *FPC* hagiography. A tentative explanation might be connected with the episode of the Porcelain Pagoda restoration that he inserted into the narrative. Unlike the *QLSZ*, the *FPC* does not make any reference to Guxin Ruxin’s promoting Vinaya in various regions after the vision of Manjuśrī⁷⁴. Instead, it makes do with a simple statement: “After that, [Guxin Ruxin] gradually returned to Jinling.” What is directly hooked to it is the whole Porcelain Pagoda episode, after which it is stated that “thereupon, [Guxin Ruxin] was invited to open an ordination [platform] at Gulin [Chapel]. Later on, he resided in more than thirty monasteries in the north and south.” This account implies that Guxin Ruxin almost immediately returned from Wutai Mountain to Nanjing, where he was swiftly recognized as a reincarnation of Upāli and embarked on a career as a Vinaya master. However, the actual restoration of Porcelain Pagoda was a rather late event. It may be out of desire to bring Guxin Ruxin’s arrival at Nanjing closer to it that

the author of the *FPC* hagiography decided to shift the overall timing. This pattern stayed intact for the following two centuries, until the author of the *LZH* returned to the time frame of the *QLSZ*. Preserving the Porcelain Pagoda episode was not problematic, for now it was preceded by the invitation of Guxin Ruxin to Gulin Chapel. In this way, the Gulin abbot who wrote the *LZH* underscored the importance of Gulin as the starting point of Guxin Ruxin's career in Jiangnan.

Should later interpolations be removed, what can be said about Guxin Ruxin's life path? There is not much reason to doubt that Guxin Ruxin indeed had an unusual vision at Wutai Mountain, for many such visions had been recorded and a three-year pilgrimage is fairly likely to yield such an experience. Undoubtedly, the content of the vision should have been informed by his religious beliefs, and determining the proportion of legend filled in by later hagiographers is not of major importance. What does matter, however, is the confidence the vision must have inspired in Guxin Ruxin. Traveling around the country, he started to gain trust from other monks as a capable Vinaya master, and the installation as abbot in Nanjing gave a new boost to his career of promoting precepts in Jiangnan. Thus, it is self-confidence and genuine commitment to the cause of Vinaya that should be credited as the key factors of his success.

5. Conclusions

Guxin Ruxin is one of the key figures in the late Ming Buddhist revival, due to his contribution to the restoration of ordination ceremonies after a long-standing ban. Understanding the way the interrupted ordination lineage was restored is highly relevant today with regard to the debates of reviving bhikṣuṇī ordinations in several Buddhist traditions. However, the available sources, which are mostly hagiographies, are far from giving a direct answer to this question. Rather, they bear witness to several attempts at developing the narrative, thus not only (or even not so much) showing what happened during Guxin Ruxin's life but also reflecting the vision of later hagiographers of what made him a trustworthy reviver of Vinaya. Concentrating on two crucial episodes in his life, as well as the overall layout of the texts, this research traces the alterations of the narrative and identifies possible reasons for such changes.

The authors of at least three out of the four hagiographies of Guxin Ruxin analyzed here were monks belonging to various lineages that originated from him. As the research has shown, these authors attached great importance to positioning the founding father of the revived Vinaya school as a person directly blessed by Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī and recognized as a reincarnation of Buddha's disciple Upāli. Using the classifications of monastic ideals suggested in scholarship⁷⁵, it can be said that thaumaturgy was the top-ranking feature of this Vinaya patriarch in the eyes of his successors. One might expect a great master of Vinaya to excel in observing disciplinary rules or distinguish himself as an ingenuous commentator. Remarkably, asceticism and scholarship are allocated a much humbler place in the hagiographies of Guxin Ruxin, mostly mentioned in passing in the course of narrating the two key miracles.

This observation serves as a valid illustration of the saint-making mechanism described by Vincent Goossaert, David Ownby, and Ji Zhe. One of the factors at work here is charisma, defined as "the expectation of the extraordinary," with a stress on the voluntary wish of the followers to subdue to the leader and recognize this figure as an extraordinary one (Ownby et al. 2016, pp. 16–17). The case of Guxin Ruxin shows how charisma works over time, when posthumous hagiographers are willing to add more and more details to depict him as a supernatural being. At the same time, they could not avoid mentioning that in the interim between the miraculous deeds, Guxin Ruxin traveled around the country attracting followers and promoted monastic precepts in several dozen monasteries. This tireless perseverance and personal commitment may have been the source of Guxin Ruxin's charisma *intravivam*, making him a strong leader whose legacy would be consistently accepted and reinforced by the generations to come.

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Abbreviations

B	<i>Dazangjing bubian</i> 大藏經補編 (<i>Supplement to the Dazangjing</i>)
BHSZ	<i>Baohuashan zhi</i> 寶華山志 (<i>Gazetteer of Baohua Mountain</i>)
BSPAD	Renming guifan ziliaoku 人名規範資料庫 (Buddhist Studies Person Authority Database)
BSPLAD	Diming guifan ziliaoku 地名規範資料庫 (Buddhist Studies Place Authority Database)
CBETA	Zhonghua dianzi fodian xiehui 中華電子佛典協會 (Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association)
CTEXT	Zhongguo zhexue shu dianzihua jihua 中國哲學書電子化計劃 (Chinese Text Project)
FGDC	<i>Foguang dacidian</i> 佛光大辭典 (<i>Great Foguang dictionary</i>)
FPC	<i>Fanwangjing pusajie chujin</i> 梵網經菩薩戒初津 (<i>Initial Approach to Bodhisattva Precepts of Brahmā's Net Sūtra</i>).
KZZY	<i>Kezuo zhuiyu</i> 客座贅語 (<i>Collected Talks with Sitting Guests</i>)
LZDP	<i>Lüzong dengpu</i> 律宗燈譜 (<i>The Genealogy of the Lamp of the Vinaya School</i>)
LZH	<i>Lümen zuting huizhi</i> 律門祖庭匯志 (<i>Collected Gazetteer of the Patriarchal Yard of the Vinaya School</i>)
MYJ	<i>Hanshan laoren mengyouji</i> 憨山老人夢遊集 (<i>Dream Travels Collection of the Venerable Hanshan</i>)
NSZT	<i>Nanshan zongtong</i> 南山宗統 (<i>Genealogy of Nanshan School</i>)
QLSZ	<i>Qingliangshan zhi</i> 清涼山志 (<i>Gazetteer of Qingliang Mountain</i>)
T	<i>Taishō shinshū daizōkyō</i> 大正新修大藏經 (<i>Taishō Revised Tripitaka</i>)
X	<i>Manji shinsan Dainihon zokuzōkyō</i> 卅新纂大日本續藏經 (<i>Manji Newly Compiled Great Japanese Supplementary Canon</i>)
ZFSH	<i>Zhongguo Fosi Shizhi Huikan</i> 中國佛寺史志彙刊 (<i>Collected Edition of Historical Gazetteers of Buddhist Monasteries of China</i>)

Notes

- ¹ The importance of the Ming and Qing periods in the history of Chinese Buddhism was first highlighted in the middle of the twentieth century (W. Jiang 1931; Y. Chen 1959, 1962). For main contributions discussing this phenomenon as a whole, see (Yü 1981; Brook 1993; Wu 2008; D. Zhang 2020).
- ² Inquiry into the history of Chinese Buddhism during the late Ming started in the 1970s–1980s with the research on the four great monks of the late Ming (*Mingmo sida gaoseng* 明末四大高僧), i.e., Yunqi Zhuhong 雲棲株宏 (1535–1615), Zibo Zhenke 紫柏真可 (1543–1603), Hanshan Deqing, and Ouyi Zhixu 藕益智旭 (1599–1655). The groundbreaking works on these monks in 1970s–1980s include Anglophone studies (Hsu 1979; Yü 1981; J. C. Cleary 1989), as well as works in Chinese (Guoxiang 1987) and Japanese (S. Zhang 1975). The latter work was also translated into Chinese (Shengyan 1988). Later on, the focus shifted to

include a broader spectrum of traditions, such as Chan (Hasebe 1993a; Wu 2008), Tiantai (Y. Ma 2011), Mādhyamaka (Brewster 2018; Liu et al. 2020), and Vinaya (Hasebe 1993a; Shengyan 1996).

Another revival of Vinaya that currently attracts much scholarly attention took place in the modern period (see, e.g., Bianchi 2017, 2019, 2020; Campo 2017).

Both Shengyan (1996, pp. 134–35, 142–43) and J. Wang (2006, pp. 431, 460–70, 478–97) note that the teachings of Vinaya were promoted both by the members of Vinaya school and by outsiders, including non-sectarian monks and Chan masters.

The time frame of life indicated for monks in this paper is based on (Foxue mingxiang guifan ziliaoku jianzhi jihua 2021a).

This procedure, called Triple Platform Ordination, implies that novice initiation, full ordination, and bodhisattva ordination are conducted in the same place within a short period of time, ranging from several weeks to several months. A detailed description of the procedure can be found in (Welch 1967, pp. 285–301; Hasebe 2000; Orsborn 2021).

His era name was Wanli 萬曆, his personal name was Zhu Yijun 朱翊鈞, and his temple name was Shenzong 神宗. He lived in 1563–1620 and reigned in 1572–1620.

His era name was Jiajing 嘉靖, his personal name was Zhu Houcong 朱厚熜, and his temple name was Shizong 世宗. He lived in 1507–1567 and reigned in 1521–1567. The Jiajing emperor ordered the closures of particular ordination platforms in 1526 and 1546, and after another ban in 1566, ordination platforms were officially shut throughout the late Ming. The prohibition was reiterated by his successor in 1572, and supported again by Prime Minister Zhang Juzheng 張居正 (1525–1582) in 1579 (Wu 2008, pp. 28–29).

These nuanced debates are beyond the scope of current research, which solely seeks to provide historical evidence that may be used for comparison and reference. On these debates, see, e.g., (Heirman 2011).

Wutai Mountain is traditionally listed among the four most important Buddhist mountains of China. Considered to be the abode of Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, it is also known as Qingliang Mountain 清涼山. The literature on Wutai Mountain is vast. Among recent book-length contributions, see (Andrews et al. 2021; Chen et al. 2022).

Mañjuśrī, or Wenshu 文殊 in Chinese Buddhism, is a bodhisattva associated with wisdom in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Visions of Mañjuśrī on Wutai Mountain enjoyed a long tradition, and received attention in such scholarship as (Stevenson 1996) and (Birnbau 2004).

The site of the monastery is currently occupied by Gulin Park 古林公園. The biographies of succeeding abbots of the Gulin lineage that originated from Guxin Ruxin are provided in (Zhan 2007).

The pagoda of this monastery is widely known as *Liuli ta* 琉璃塔, which literally means “Glass Pagoda”, but is commonly rendered as Porcelain Pagoda as a reference to the actual material. On the meanings of the term *liuli*, see (Yu 2018; Tarocco 2021, pp. 246–48). Huang (2021) discussed the history of the pagoda, its perception in the West, and contemporary archeological findings. However, the historical section of her article mainly draws on the material of *Jinling fancha zhi* 金陵梵剎志 (*Gazetteer of Nanjing Monasteries*). On this gazetteer, see (Ouyang 2012; Scott 2020, p. 62). This gazetteer was first printed in 1607, and thus only covered the time span until the repair of the pagoda during the Yongle period 永樂 (1402–1424).

Kongyin Zhencheng has mainly attracted scholarly attention due to his contribution to the intellectual developments in the late Ming Buddhist community. In Chinese scholarship, see, e.g., (C. Jiang 1990, pp. 185–227; 2006, pp. 299–382); in Anglophone literature, see (Wu 2008, p. 27; Brewster 2018; Liu et al. 2020, pp. 7–14).

His era name was Kangxi 康熙, his personal name was Aisin Gioro Xuanye 愛新覺羅•玄燁, and his temple name was Shengzu 聖祖. He lived in 1654–1722 and reigned in 1661–1722.

Chengfang Yuanqing was the person who petitioned the emperor to hold an ordination at Wutai Mountain led by Guxin Ruxin. On Chengfang Yuanqing, see (H. Ma 2013, 2014).

For an introduction to Yijie Shuyu’s biography and writings, see (Guodeng 2004, pp. 216–21).

Baohua Mountain became a nationwide hub of Vinaya tradition through the efforts of Guxin Ruxin’s disciples. On the prominence of Baohua Mountain in the twentieth century, see (Welch 1967, p. 286). Baohua Mountain was one of the main objects of research on Chinese Buddhist monasteries by both Prip-Møller (1937, pp. 297–352) and Welch (1967, p. 5). The biographies and ideas of prominent abbots of Baohua Mountain in the seventeenth century are summarized in (Guodeng 2004, pp. 103–216, 226–31; Wen 2005; J. Wang 2006, pp. 445, 480–97). The reconstruction of the monastery on Baohua Mountain in the seventeenth century is analyzed in (Zhou 2022).

My previous analysis of these three hagiographies revealed that with regard to the latter two patriarchs, Yijie Shuyu utilized their pagoda inscriptions, omitting everything but the thaumaturgic episodes through which these monks were recognized as reincarnations of prominent masters of the past. By contrast, the hagiography of Guxin Ruxin provides a detailed description of his life, and for the first time in the sources includes the Porcelain Pagoda episode as well as the information that after his death, the Wanli emperor composed an encomium comparing him with Upāli (Lepneva 2019b).

On Tanzhe monastery in the Qing, see (Naquin 1998; Lai and Zeng 2010, p. 173; D. Zhang 2020, pp. 203–5; Vetluzhskaya and Lepneva 2022, pp. 3–4). Hasebe (1993b, pp. 94–95; 1994, pp. 239–44) discussed the biographies of Wenhai Fujū and Hengshi Yuanliang and provided a detailed comparative analysis of the structure of their respective genealogies.

Since the LZDP is available online, the hagiography in the LZDP rather than the one in the NSZT is cited further in this paper.

- 22 For the biography of Furen Renyou, see (Zhan 2010).
- 23 According to BSPLAD, Jingang Grotto 金剛窟 was located about twenty *li* to the southeast of the Northern peak, under the Eastern mountain of the Louguan Gorge 樓觀谷 of Taihuai Town 台懷鎮. Stevenson (1996, pp. 208–9) calls it “perhaps the most famous of Wutai’s many pilgrimage sites” and further provides background information on its development from a site of indigenous popular lore into a center of the Chinese cult of Mañjuśrī. As shown by the sources and literature, this was a well-known place in the late Ming as well. In particular, it possessed special importance for Hanshan Deqing, who dreamed about a miraculous encounter in this grotto and also recollected Kongyin Zhencheng preaching there (D. Zhang 2016, pp. 340–41). According to the latter’s pagoda inscription that entered Hanshan Deqing’s MYJ as well as the QLSZ, after attending the 1581 Dharma assembly organized by Hanshan Deqing and Miaofeng Fudeng 妙峰福登 (1540–1612), Kongyin Zhencheng practiced meditation for three years, was asked by Yuanguang to write the gazetteer of the mountain, and stayed to preach on sutras. “He expounded on Avatamsaka sutra, the students numbered several thousand fingers, he sat on a cold cliff amid ice and snow, which must have been at Jingang Grotto” (QLSZ, p. 163).
- 24 On the importance of the robe as a mark of a monk’s Buddhist identity, see (Kieschnik 2003, pp. 89–93; Heirman 2014).
- 25 According to BSPLAD, Miaode Chapel 妙德庵 was located in the Zixia Gorge 紫霞谷 on the southern side of the Northern peak. According to the relevant hagiographies in the QLSZ, in the 1570–1580s, Miaode Chapel attracted a number of prominent monks, including three of the four great monks of the late Ming, i.e., Zibo Zhenke, Hanshan Deqing, and Yunqi Zhuhong. Zibo Zhenke, along with his disciple Mizang Daokai 密藏道開 (d.u.), supervised the carving the Jiaxing canon here in 1589–1593 (QLSZ, pp. 149, 155); for the history of the carving of this canon, see (Long 2016; D. Zhang 2021). Miaofeng Fudeng and Hanshan Deqing stayed there in 1578–1581, copying Avatamsaka sutra in blood (QLSZ, p. 153); for the history of their friendship, including this joint practice, see (D. Zhang 2016, pp. 337, 340, 352). Yunqi Zhuhong “stimulated the emission of light by Mañjuśrī, stayed in Miaode Chapel, and spent about forty days with Hanshan [Deqing] and Miaofeng [Fudeng]” (QLSZ, p. 160).
- 26 The term “mind-ground” (*xindi* 心地) is likely to be a reference to the name of *Fanwangjing Lushenafu pusa xindi jiepin dishijuan shang, xia* 梵網經盧舍那佛說菩薩心地戒品第十卷上、下 *Brahmā’s Net Sutra: The Mind-ground Dharma Gate Taught by Vairocana Buddha, Chapter Ten, in Two Fascicles* (T24, No. 1484). On this text as a source of Bodhisattva precepts in Chinese Buddhism, see (Muller and Tanaka 2017).
- 27 Anderl explains the expression “at the uttering” (*yanxia* 言下) as literally meaning “under words,” but used in a sense “based/caused/triggered by words.” It is frequently used to describe the situation when particular words trigger an enlightenment experience. For this as well as the role of speech acts in Chan texts, see (Anderl 2012, pp. 31–33).
- 28 Five types of offenses (*wupian* 五篇) are the groups in which all of the offenses of full monks or full nuns are subdivided according to the gravity of the fault, with corresponding degree of severity of punishment. According to *Foguang dacidian* 佛光大辭典 (*Great Foguang dictionary*; henceforth FGDC), these five types comprise *boluoyi* 波羅夷 (Skt. *pārājika*), *sengcan* 僧殘 (Skt. *saṃghāvaśeṣa*), *boyiti* 波逸提 (Skt. *pāyantikā*), *boluoti tisheni* 波羅提提舍尼 (Skt. *prāṭideśanīya*), and *tujiluo* 突吉羅 (Skt. *duṣkṛta*) (*Foguang dacidian bianxiu weiyuanhui* 1989). For more on the types of offenses according to Vinaya, see (Heirman 2019).
- 29 According to the FGDC, three groups of pure precepts (Skt. *tri-vidhānīśīlāni*, Ch. *sanju jingjie* 三聚淨戒) are “the precepts of avoiding all evil actions” (Skt. *saṃvara-śīla*, Ch. *she lüyi jie* 攝律儀戒), the precepts of doing all good deeds (Skt. *kuśala-dharma-saṃgrāha-śīla*, Ch. *she shanfa jie* 攝善法戒), and the precepts of benefiting all sentient beings (Skt. *sattvārtha-kriyā-śīla*, Ch. *she zhongsheng jie* 攝衆生戒).
- 30 Those of Buddhapālita, Wuzhu 無著, and Fazhao 法照. The hagiography of Fazhao is translated and discussed in detail in (Stevenson 1996, pp. 208–9).
- 31 The earlier version of the story of Buddhapālita appears in the preface to his translation of the *Foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼經 (*Sūtra of the Superlative Dhāraṇī of the Buddha’s Crown*, T19, No. 967). This earlier version was translated by Copp (2014, pp. 160–63), who also explored the problems of time and reasons for its creation. I follow Copp’s translation in parts that coincide with the QLSZ. The sources and developments of Buddhapālita’s story have received considerable attention in scholarship (Andrews 2013, pp. 114–15; J. Chen 2002b, pp. 106–10; Y. Lin 2008, pp. 157–58, 161–66). On the alternative translation of the protagonist’s name as Buddhapālī or Buddhapālita, see (Copp 2014, p. 277).
- 32 The narrative of the aforementioned preface to the *Foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing* presents the end of his life in a simple way, saying that “he took the original text and journeyed to Wutai Mountain and entered the mountains, from which he has not emerged” (Copp 2014, p. 161). However, the hagiography in the QLSZ provides two versions of his disappearance or death, with both episodes taking place at Jingang Grotto.
- 33 This might be a reminiscence of the earlier lore of Jingang Grotto as a kind of a grotto heaven (*dongtian* 洞天) of religious Daoism, which means a cave leading to another world; on this earlier perception of Jingang Grotto, see (Stevenson 1996, p. 208).
- 34 Chapter thirty-two. For the full translation of Avatamsaka Sutra in English, see (T. Cleary 1993).
- 35 As previous research has shown, “earlier accounts of Mount Wutai determined later visitors’ itineraries and shaped their expectations about the site” (Andrews 2013, p. 143).
- 36 According to the FGDC, this gesture of “rubbing the crown of the head” (*moding* 摩頂) is known from sutras, where the Buddha applies it to pass the Dharma or make a prediction to a disciple about future enlightenment.

- 37 Dewei Zhang provides a detailed discussion of Cisheng's place in the court events of the Wanli era and illustrates her role in the late Ming Buddhist revival, analyzing the geography, timing, and forms of her Buddhist patronage (D. Zhang 2020, pp. 56–89).
- 38 According to BSPAD, during the Tang, there were two Chan masters named Niaochao, i.e., Niaochao Daolin 鳥窠道林 (741–824) and Niaochao Yuanxiu 鳥窠圓脩 (735–833) (Foxue mingxiang guifan ziliaoku jianzhi jihua 2021b). However, the sources that the two entries are based on are different, whereas the hagiographies of the two monks feature coinciding details, which may suggest that there was actually only one Chan master Niaochao. However, this topic requires further research, which goes beyond the subject of the present paper.
- 39 Minzhong Monastery (presently known as Fayuan Monastery 法源寺) became the seat of a lineage of Guxin Ruxin's disciples, which came to be known as the Minzhong lineage. For more on Minzhong Monastery, see (Vetluzhskaya and Lepneva 2022, p. 2). The Mingzhong lineage was removed from the monastery when Wenhai Fujun was summoned by the Yongzheng emperor to hold an ordination ceremony there in 1734. For more on these events, see (Lepneva 2019a). However, a strong subbranch of this lineage developed in Tanzhe Monastery.
- 40 The imperial record about the reconstruction cited by Ellen Huang notes that the monastery was initially built in 239 under the name of Changgan Monastery 長干寺 (Huang 2021, p. 215), which can explain the name Changgan Pagoda in the source as an allusion to the old name of the temple.
- 41 Skanda (here *Weitian* 韋天, more widely known as *Weituo* 韋馱 in Chinese Buddhism) is a bodhisattva who is believed to be a guardian of Buddhist monasteries.
- 42 I was not able to identify this monk through BSPAD or searching the CBETA corpus.
- 43 Chapter 11 of the sutra.
- 44 D. Zhang (2020, pp. 109, 274) mentions this episode too, relying on another source.
- 45 Wang Daokun 汪道昆 (1525–1593) was a prominent late Ming official and literatus.
- 46 For a short introduction of this collection of biographies, see (Benn 2007, p. 165).
- 47 Starting from the second fascicle, at the start of each fascicle, the names of these disciples are provided. Attendant Fushan 福善 made daily notes, disciple Tongjiong 通炯 performed the editing, while student Liu Qixiang 劉起相 of Lingnan 嶺南 carried out the proofreading, which evidently took place after Hanshan Deqing went into exile, as the student from Lingnan region (south of the Nanling Mountains 南嶺) is mentioned.
- 48 The collection of his manuscripts and the preparation for the publication started either in the *bingshen* year of the Shunzhi period (approx. 1656): see *Hanshan dashi mengyou quanji xu* 憨山大師夢遊全集序 (Preface to the Full Collection of Dream Travels of Great Master Hanshan, MYJ, pp. 459b07–460a08) by Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582–1664, *jinshi* 1610) or in the *dingyou* year (approx. 1657), see *Lu mengyou quanji xiaoji* 錄夢遊全集小紀 (Short Note on Recording the Full Collection of Dream Travels, MYJ, pp. 460c04–461a04) by the monk Jinshi 今釋. On Qian Qianyi, see (H.-Y. Lin 2018). D. Zhang (2020, p. 283) notes Qian Qianyi's contribution to the compilation of the MYJ.
- 49 Hanshan Deqing was exiled to Leizhou 雷州 in Guangdong province in the autumn of 1595. For more on his exile, see (D. Zhang 2020, pp. 164–71).
- 50 Period from 6 February 1598 to 26 January 1599.
- 51 An account of the events at the restoration site also appears in Xuelang Hong'en's pagoda inscription *Huashan Xuelang dashi taming* 華山雪浪大師塔銘 (Inscription on the Pagoda of Great Master Xuelang of [Bao]hua Mountain; see Supplementary B2), recorded in *Baohuashan zhi* 寶華山志 (Gazetteer of Baohua Mountain; henceforth BHSZ, pp. 268–69). This inscription was composed by Zou Diguang 鄒迪光 (1550–1626, *jinshi* 1574) at the request of Cangxue Duche 蒼雪讀徹 (1588–1656), disciple of Yiyu Tongrun 一雨通潤 (1565–1624), who, in turn, was disciple of Xuelang Hong'en. Zou Diguang's position is indicated as deputy censor (*xianfu* 憲副), which may point to his service as deputy commissioner of education in Huguang (*Huguang tixue fushi* 湖廣提學副使) in 1586–1592. On the analysis of the time of his service, see (Sun 2014, pp. 11–13). As Cangxue Duche was only four years old when Zou Diguang quit public service, the indicated position of Zou Diguang should be considered a reminiscence of the past and cannot be taken as a clue to the time when the pagoda inscription was composed. Even though Xuelang Hong'en died in 1608 and his pagoda inscription could have been completed by Zou Diguang earlier than the hagiography of Xuelang Hong'en by Hanshan Deqing, the comparison of the texts seems to point to the opposite direction. The former includes the prologue of the events describing the two monks' vow to restore the damaged Bao'en Monastery and Hanshan Deqing's recollection of it wherever he stayed without forgetting it for a single moment. These personal remarks most probably were first written by Hanshan Deqing's and borrowed by Zou Diguang, which implies that the whole text initially was created by Hanshan Deqing. As a whole, Zou Diguang's account of the events does not feature any major departures from the version in the MYJ.
- 52 On Gu Qiyuan, see (Tu 1976).
- 53 Period from 26 January 1560 to 15 January 1561.
- 54 Period from 14 February 1600 to 2 February 1601.
- 55 Metal circles at the top of a pagoda, (*chenglupan* 承露盤).
- 56 Literally, his gall bladder should have been the size of a dipper. In Chinese culture, the gall bladder is associated with courage.

- 57 Gu Qiyuan named the source of the early tale to be *Youyang zazu* 酉陽雜俎 (*A Table Full of Miscellaneous Writings from South of You Mountain*), which is a collection of fantastic stories compiled by Duan Chengshi 段成式 (803–863), a Tang period writer and politician.
- 58 Wang Gai 王槩 (1645–1707) is mentioned along with his style name Anjie 安節. He was a well-known painter and seal-carver, residing in Nanjing (C. Wang 2002). Apart from this *fu* poem, Wang Gai's stay at Baohua Mountain is reflected in seven more poems dedicated to various vistas (BHSZ, pp. 69, 81, 96, 121, 138, 140, 142). Wang Gai's text about the ordination platform is briefly discussed in (Zhou 2022, p. 22).
- 59 Sanhuai 三懷 is another name of Xuelang Hong'en.
- 60 Baozhi 寶志 (418–515) lived during the Southern Liang dynasty and was highly respected by the Wu emperor of Liang 梁武帝. Zhou (2022, p. 2) notes that the BHSZ claimed that Baozhi was the earliest Buddhist monk to inhabit Baohua Mountain, where he stayed in 502 CE. For research papers that focus on Baozhi, see, e.g., (Makita 1978; Cai 1999).
- 61 Vinaya master You 祐 here most probably refers to Sengyou 僧祐 (445–518), who is well known to scholars as an early Buddhist bibliographer. See (Storch 2014; Tsyrenov 2018).
- 62 Nanshan Daoxuan 南山道宣 (596–667) was an influential Vinaya commentator and the founder of the Nanshan school of Vinaya 南山律宗, see (J. J. Chen 2002a; Zou 2018). In 667, he wrote *Guanzhong chuangli jietan tujing* 關中創立戒壇圖經 (Illustrated Scripture Concerning the Erection of the Ordination Platform in the Guanzhong Region, T No. 1892, vol. 45). See, e.g., (J. Wang 2006, pp. 204–6). For the allusions to Daoxuan's layout in the actual structure of the ordination platform on Baohua Mountain, see (Zhou 2022, p. 13).
- 63 The Linde period 麟德 lasted from the first month of 664 through the first month of 666.
- 64 The Tianjian period 天監 (502–519) was the first reign period of the Wu emperor of Liang.
- 65 Period from 11 March to 8 April 1690.
- 66 The testimony of Wang Gai's account of the iron chest and Gu Qiyuan's account about the relic within the pagoda sheds new light on the results of the aforementioned archeological discoveries, highlighted by Huang (2021, pp. 223–27). As she explained, the findings provided verification of the pagoda that was previously documented only in text. However, she provided only one such text as illustration, i.e., *Jinling fancha zhi*. The present research therefore adds two more sources that reflect the historical perception of Porcelain Pagoda as a repository of relics and manuscripts.
- 67 The text claimed that the original picture was installed for worship at Jiming Monastery 雞鳴寺, but was destroyed by fire, with only Guxin Ruxin's copy surviving. Whether the actual picture existed or not, the reference to Jiming Monastery may reflect a connection with the Wu emperor of Liang, who founded this monastery under the name of Tongtai 同泰寺 and held grand ceremonies there. On Tongtai Monastery, see (Janousch 2016, pp. 285–88). On the great assemblies of the Wu emperor, see (J. Chen 2006).
- 68 Period from 24 January 1582 to 23 January 1583.
- 69 The term literally means to be dyed into the Way, referring to the “dyed robe” (*ranyi* 染衣), i.e., a robe dyed in colors considered ugly according to Vinaya. Upon taking tonsure, a person is expected to don this kind of inferior garment rather than secular clothing, which might keep an attachment to outward beauty. For more on the practice of dyeing monastic robes, see (Heirman 2014).
- 70 Period from 29 January 1615 to 16 February 1616.
- 71 The FPC uses the term “monastic age” (*sengla* 僧臘), whereas the LZDP chooses the term “Dharma age” (*fala* 法臘). According to the FGDC, these two terms, along with the term “age with precepts” (*jiela* 戒臘), can be used interchangeably to denote the period from the last day of the summer retreat in which the person participated after full ordination to the end of the life. Alternatively, “Dharma age” can mean the number of years after tonsure, as opposed to “age with precepts” as the time after full ordination.
- 72 Period from 12 February 1584 to 30 January 1585.
- 73 On the importance of a charismatic abbot for the revival of a monastery, see (Scott 2020, pp. 23–27).
- 74 As mentioned above, the QLSZ talks about him “travelling extensively,” “visiting many regions,” and attracting disciples. The LZDP substitutes this with saying that he “returned from the north to the south, revived the teaching of precepts and focused on upholding the Buddhist discipline as pure as ice and frost.” The LZH makes a further addition here, noting that he wrote books in several fascicles, such as Transmission of Precepts, and also made a pilgrimage to Emei Mountain, where his place of residence came to be known as Guxin Terrace. However, both of these statements seem to be ungrounded. According to H. Ma's (2014, pp. 91–92) analysis, there is no other evidence of Guxin Ruxin's being the author of a book on ordination regulations, except for the claims made by Furen Renyou in the LZH. As for Guxin Ruxin's second pilgrimage, the *Emeishan zhi* 峨眉山志 (*Gazetteer of Emei Mountain*, p. 34) connects this toponym with Chan master Guxin, i.e., Guxin Minghu 古心明惠, whose activities mainly took place during the Kangxi period (1622–1722). As such, this should be considered either a mistake of Furen Renyou or another case of deliberate use of details from other monks' life stories to enrich the hagiography of Guxin Ruxin.

- ⁷⁵ Ermakov (1991, pp. 82–93) developed a biographical typology of monks, which includes such four types: scholar, wonder-worker, monk in secular world, and recluse. Kieschnik (1997, p. 4) categorized monastic ideals as asceticism, thaumaturgy, and scholarship.

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