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Re-Ritualizing the Diamond Sutra: The *Xiaoshi Jingang Keyi* (銷釋金剛科儀) and Buddhist Textual Practice in Hokkien-Speaking Regions

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Abstract

This paper examines the *Xiaoshi Jingang Keyi* as a case of textual re-ritualization in the later history of Chinese Buddhism. Originally compiled by the Song dynasty monk Zongjing 宗鏡, the text transformed the exegetical reading of the *Diamond Sūtra* into a structured sequence of ritual acts centered on the notion of "entering the Diamond Dharma Assembly." Its internal design—organized around the scripture's "Thirty-two Sections" (三十二分) and the "Sevenfold Structure" (七種規模)—enabled successive generations to adapt the text to diverse ceremonial contexts. From the Ming and Qing dynasties onward, the *Jingang Keyi* circulated widely in ritual form across China, particularly within the Hokkien-speaking regions of Fujian and Guangdong, where the most active performance traditions emerged and later extended to Taiwan and Maritime Southeast Asia through migration. These vernacular enactments, often led by ritual specialists and supported by female lay associations (*caigu* 菜姑), illustrate how the *Jingang Keyi* was continually localized and revitalized while maintaining its canonical authority. The longevity of the *Diamond Sūtra* tradition depended not only on exegetical commentary but also on the text's inherent capacity for re-ritualization—its ability to generate new performative meanings across changing historical and cultural settings. The *Xiaoshi Jingang Keyi* thus exemplifies how Buddhist scriptures have sustained ritual life through flexible structure, sound, and communal devotion.

Keywords: *Xiaoshi Jingang Keyi*; *Diamond Sutra* commentary; Buddhist ritual text; textual re-ritualization; Hokkien-speaking regions

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1. Introduction

Throughout the long history of Chinese Buddhism, the *Diamond Sūtra* (金剛經) has never been a text confined to reading or philosophical interpretation alone. Its enduring power has always depended on the embodied acts of recitation, exposition, and ritual performance that animated it within monastic and lay communities. Among the many texts that manifest this performative dimension, the *Xiaoshi Jingang Keyi* (銷釋金剛經科儀, *Ritual Manual for the Diamond Sūtra*) occupies a distinctive place, bridging exegetical understanding and ritual practice through a liturgical structure derived from the scripture itself.

Xiaoshi Jingang Keyi, also known as *Jingang Keyi* (金剛科儀) or *Jingang Ke* (金剛科)[1], is a Buddhist hermeneutic work[2] on the *Diamond Sutra* that gained wide circulation and ritual significance from the Southern Song to the Ming and Qing dynasties. The term *Xiaoshi* (銷釋) refers to the clarification and resolution of doctrinal doubts, while **Keyi** (科儀), although later more common in Daoist contexts to mean "ritual procedures", here denotes both the sectional division (*kefen* 科分) and the ritual structure (*yigui* 儀軌) of the text.

The *Jingang Keyi* was originally compiled by the Southern Song monk Zongjing 宗鏡 (fl. Southern Song), who transformed the exegetical reading of the *Diamond Sūtra* into a performative framework centered on the notion of "entering the Diamond Dharma Assembly." Its layered arrangement—organized through the "Thirty-two Sections" and the "Sevenfold Structure" (七種規模)—demonstrates a conscious attempt to translate scriptural comprehension into ritual process. Although previous studies have often regarded the *Jingang Keyi* as an ancillary text to *Diamond Sūtra* commentaries, its sustained ritual use suggests a more autonomous and dynamic function. This ritual adaptability also explains the text's extensive transmission in later periods. From the Ming and Qing dynasties onward, the *Jingang Keyi* circulated in ritual form across China—from the imperial centers of Beijing and the Lower Yangtze region to Yunnan, the southwestern provinces, and the southeastern coastal areas. Descriptions in late-Ming vernacular fiction, such as *The Plum in the Golden Vase* (Jin Ping Mei Cihua金瓶梅詞話), which depicts household performances and offerings based on the *Jingang Keyi*, further attest to the popularity of such practices across social strata.

Within these broad networks, Fujian and Guangdong emerged as particularly active zones of transmission. In the Hokkien-speaking temples of these regions, the *Jingang Keyi* was performed through vernacular melodies (*qupai* 曲牌, tune types) and local chanting styles that transformed the rhythm of interpretation into musical and communal devotion. These practices continued through the modern period, extending to Taiwan and the Chinese communities of Maritime Southeast Asia through migration. The survival of *Jingang Keyi* performances in Hokkien-speaking regions today contrasts sharply with the decline of similar traditions in northern and inland China, illustrating the regional selectivity of Buddhist ritual continuity.

Previous scholarship on the *Xiaoshi Jingang Keyi* has followed a long trajectory from secular literary studies to religion-centered approaches. Early discussions, initiated by Japanese sinologists such as Sawada (1956) and Yoshioka (1952, 1966), focused on issues of authorship and textual formation. Following Zhenduo Zheng's (1934) observation, S. Li (1957) connected the *Jingang Keyi* with the *Luo* religion羅教's *Five Sections and Six Volumes* (*Wubu Liuce* 五部六冊) and the rise of *Precious Scrolls* (寶卷). This perspective dominated the mid-twentieth-century discourse and confined the study of *Jingang Keyi* within the framework of literary history.

From the 1980s onward, researchers began to re-examine the *Jingang Keyi* as a Buddhist ritual text. Zhiming Zheng (1985a, 1985b) analyzed its repentance structure based on the *Jianji* manuscript (X74, no. 1494), identifying its ritual logic; Lan (1995) further emphasized the liturgical nature of the text, while Liu (1994) connected it with the formation of popular religious rituals. Che Xilun's *Comprehensive Catalog of Chinese Precious Scrolls* (Che 1998) and Daniel Overmyer's *Precious Scrolls* (Overmyer 1999) offered bibliographic and interpretive syntheses, though both still treated the *Jingang Keyi* primarily as a textual prototype within the *baojuan* lineage.

Since the late 1990s, the field has expanded through localized and interdisciplinary studies. Hou and Fang (1998) investigated a manuscript preserved in Jianchuan劍川, Yunnan云南, tracing its regional transmission; Yang (2001) positioned the *Jingang Keyi* within the exegetical history of the *Diamond Sūtra*; and Su (2009) reconstructed its ritual enactment through fieldwork among Taiwanese Longhua and *Zhaijiao* communities. Ethnomusicologists such as Chen and Su (2004) and G. Li (2005) have examined the *Jingang Ke*金剛科 tune within the *Xianghua ban*香花板 tradition, while religious studies scholars like Wang (1996) and Lin (2012) have documented its living ritual transmission.

Recent research (Dong 2013, 2015; Tong 2023) has continued this trajectory, reassessing authorship and textual layering and reinterpreting the *Jingang Keyi* beyond the category of *Precious Scrolls*. Together, these studies reveal a disciplinary shift from textual

bibliography toward ritual ethnography and highlight the *Jingang Keyi*'s centrality in the transformation of Buddhist exegesis into living ritual performance.

This paper addresses two interrelated questions:

(1) How was the *Xiaoshi Jingang Keyi* reactivated as a ritual text within later Buddhist traditions?
(2) In what ways did this process of re-ritualization shape the ritual life of the *Diamond Sūtra* across southern coastal China and beyond?

Through these questions, the study situates the *Jingang Keyi* within the broader processes of Buddhist textual adaptation, emphasizing the dynamic interaction between commentary, ritual, and community.

To clarify the analytical framework, this paper defines the key term **textual re-ritualization** as "the historical process through which an established Buddhist text is reactivated and re-performed within new ritual, musical, and social frameworks." This differs from textual ritualization, which designates the initial transformation of exegetical discourse into ritual form. Whereas textual ritualization explains the genesis of a ritual structure from commentary, textual re-ritualization highlights its later revitalization and localization, underscoring the capacity of canonical texts to generate renewed ritual meaning over time and space.

Methodologically, this study combines close textual comparison with regional ethnographic observation. The textual analysis examines how the *Jingang Keyi*'s internal architecture—the "Thirty-two Sections" and "Sevenfold Structure"—embodies a scalable ritual logic, making it adaptable to varying ceremonial frameworks. The regional analysis traces its re-performances among Hokkien-speaking communities, showing how musical form, gendered participation, and local soundscapes collectively reanimated the scripture's ritual function. Together, these perspectives reveal that the vitality of the *Diamond Sūtra* tradition derived not only from exegetical authority but from the text's inherent flexibility as a ritual medium.

Situated within the larger discussion of Buddhist textual practice, this study argues that the *Xiaoshi Jingang Keyi* exemplifies how canonical scriptures have achieved longevity through acts of reinterpretation and embodied performance. Its continued use across southern coastal China and the Chinese diaspora demonstrates that Buddhist textual traditions cannot be understood apart from the ritual and social processes that sustain them. By tracing this interplay of text, sound, and community, this paper contributes to a broader understanding of how Chinese Buddhist texts lived, moved, and performed their own meanings across history.

2. Textual Formation, Versional System, and the Framework for Ritual Enactment

2.1. Formation in the Southern Song and Early Circulation

This section reconstructs the textual formation of the *Xiaoshi Jingang Keyi* (hereafter "*Jingang Keyi*") and clarifies why its internal architecture has predisposed it to ritual enactment. Compiled in the Southern Song and traditionally attributed to Zongjing 宗鏡 (fl. Southern Song), the *Jingang Keyi* re-presents the *Diamond Sūtra* (*Jingang jing* 金剛經) through a structured sequence of explanation, recitation, responsorial cues, and vow closures. As the Chinese dossier emphasizes, the text functioned from the outset not merely as exegesis but as a devotional vehicle: by the Yuan dynasty, it had already reached Western Xia, and by the early Ming dynasty, it circulated broadly "across the Two Capitals and Thirteen Provinces," with diffusion to Korea and Vietnam.

A literary vignette preserved in the Ming novel *Jin Ping Mei* (金瓶梅詞話) depicts household performances centered on the *Jingang Keyi*, implying that the custom of singing/chanting the *Jingang Keyi* predated the novel itself. Rather than taking this passage as proof of a single "origin" of performance, I use it as an index of social embedment: by the

sixteenth century at the latest, the *Jingang Keyi* was intelligible as something performed—recited, responsorially answered, and ritually closed—within domestic and temple contexts alike.

Two points follow for the present study. First, the *Jingang Keyi*'s earliest "publics" were mixed, including monastic clergy, household ritual specialists, and lay congregants who could follow structural cues by ear. Second, the *Jingang Keyi*'s long life cannot be explained solely by doctrinal prestige; it also rests on design choices that made the text scalable, "teachable," and therefore portable across regions.

2.2. Versional System and Material Forms: Distinguishing Core Text from Later Compendia

To avoid conflating distinct layers, I distinguish the core *Jingang Keyi* (the Southern-Song-rooted ritual-commentarial text) from later compendia and pedagogical dossiers that collate, annotate, or streamline *Jingang Keyi* materials. Of particular relevance is Juelian 覺連's mid-Ming compilation, *Xiaoshi Jingangjing Keyi Huiyao Zhuji* (銷釋金剛經科儀會要註解; hereafter *Huiyao*)[3]. The *Huiyao* does not author the *Jingang Keyi*; rather, it reorganizes and comments upon an already existing ritual repertoire, providing didactic sign-posting and convenient access points. In this study, *Jingang Keyi*'s genesis remains medieval, while Huiyao marks a consolidation stage within a living tradition.

In Yoshioka's seminal work "On the Establishment of *Xiaoshi Jingang Keyi*" (Yoshioka 1966), He conducted a comparative analysis of seven texts related to *Jingang Keyi*. His study introduced significant new sources into the research, including the Southern Song's *Lay Master Ruru's sayings* (如如居士語錄)[4], the Korean-printed *Five Commentaries of the Diamond Sutra* (金剛經五家解, hereinafter referred to as *Five Commentaries*)[5] during the Joseon dynasty, and the Russian collection-manuscript Дx.284, which is suspected to be from the Khara-Khoto excavation[6] (entitled *Essential Verses of the Thirty-Two Sections of Diamond Sutra* 銷釋金剛科儀要偈三十二分, hereinafter referred to as *Essential Verses*). Nearly half a century later, Maekawa (2003) first questioned the Ming-Qing forms of the *Jingang Keyi* represented by the Wanli edition (萬曆本)[7], suggesting that parts beyond the *Five Commentaries* were added by later generations, and summarized the gāthās cited from *Ruru's sayings* in *Jingang Keyi*'s Ming-Qing versions; Cai Binglin (Cai 2011) further supplemented this by identifying various citations in *Jingang Keyi*, including Koans (公案), Huatous (話頭), sayings, exegeses (拈解) and lamp records (燈錄). He also presented a detailed content structure of the *Jingang Keyi Ritual Scroll* (金剛科儀寶卷) published by Taiwan's Ruicheng Bookstore瑞成書局 in tabular form. These three studies have provided significant inspiration and support for this study's preliminary work on classifying version systems.

Multiple witnesses of *Jingang Keyi* survive across East Asia and can be grouped into three broad types by textual form and use-context:

- Collected or excerpted texts compiled from several kinds of "Diamond Sutra" commentaries, which include *Keyi*, primarily the *Five Commentaries* and *Essential Verses*;
- Re-annotated and explanatory versions of *Keyi*, itself as the subject of annotation (e.g., *Huiyao*; for further examples, see below).
- Ritual versions that have various liturgical elements at the beginning and end, or chanting versions with Buddha names and singing tone cues. These include Refined Ming-Qing Dynasty woodblock editions and the Jianji manuscript favored by Taiwanese scholars, as well as the so-called "Gushan temple edition" that is still commonly used in Fujian and Guangdong as a representative of the Hokkien system.

Most previous analyses have relied on only one or a few versions without considering the importance of version comparison. Versions belonging to the first category have been particularly overlooked, but they represent a crucial breakthrough for the study of the composition history of *Jingang Keyi*. To clarify this compositional history—including the likelihood of stratification and later interpolation—I begin by specifying the content

structure of the *Jingang Keyi*'s standard form and then check key components against earlier witnesses.

Accordingly, the main content of *Jingang Keyi* consists of explanations and interpretations of the Diamond Sutra, structured around the thirty-two sections (三十二分) of the sutra. This is more of an outline than detailed annotations, reflecting the original intent behind the term "Ke" in the title. According to the *Huiyao* and Jianji manuscript, each "Ke" (科, section) is explained using a fixed **sevenfold structure**, beginning with a section title (e.g., "Reason for the Dharma Assembly法會因由") and following the order from "Outline (the first)" to "Conclusion and Return to the Pure Land (the seventh)". The *Huiyao* refers to this as the "Seven-scales structure(七種規模)"[8]: "There are seven types of formats: 1. Outline; 2. Main Points; 3. Long Passage; 4. Classification; 5. Sutra Recitation; 6. Warning; 7. Concluding in Pure Land". (X24, no. 467, p. 650, a16–18). As shown in Section 2.3, refined Ming–Qing editions total 37 "Ke" (sets) of this sevenfold structure, including framing units before/after the thirty-two sections; these 37 sets constitute the main content of *Jingang Keyi*, which I refer to as its **standard form** and use as the baseline for the versional analysis.

By contrast, the versions *Five Commentaries* and *Essential Verses*, as Table 1 illustrates, each retain only two or three of the seven components. They retain long prose explication and classificatory couplets while omitting chant-forward scale components, which is evidence of primarily exegetical intent.

Table 1. *Jingang Keyi* Scales in the *Five Commentaries and Essential Verses*.[9]

Sevenfold Structure	*Five Commentaries*	*Essential Verses*
① Outline; ② Essence		
③ Extended Passage; ④ Concluding Classification		
⑤ Praise of the Sutra Text		
⑥ Worldly Warning; ⑦ Conclusion and Return to the Pure Land		

Among the two versions, the better-known one is the *Five Commentaries*, which circulated on the Korean Peninsula since the early Ming dynasty, with derivative texts. It compiles five Diamond Sutra commentaries attributed to Fu Xi 傅翕, Huineng 慧能, Zongmi 宗密, Daochuan 道川 and Zongjing. The original compiler remains unknown. The current version in Korea is a revised and annotated edition titled *Explanatory Notes on the Five Commentaries of the Diamond Sutra* (金剛經五家解說誼), edited by the Korean Chan monk Hamhŏ Kihwa (涵虛己和, 1376–1433). Korean scholarship generally treats the Five Commentaries as a compilation of earlier Chinese exegetical materials to which Kihwa later added annotations (see Kim 2009). Furthermore, the post-publication notes of the oldest surviving Korean edition (1415) explicitly state that it reproduces an earlier Chinese version. This evidence supports the view that versions of the Jingang Keyi limited to scales ③④⑤ were already circulating in China before 1415. This suggests that versions of *Jingang Keyi* limited to scales ③④⑤ were already circulating in China before 1415.

The other version, *Essential Verse*, consists of an interpretative gatha of the thirty-two sections of the *Diamond Sutra*, structurally divided into thirty-two neat sections, with each section consisting of five parts, each excerpted from two exegetical texts on the Diamond Sutra. The last two parts correspond to the *Jingang Keyi*'s scale ③ Extended Passage and ④ Concluding Classification, suggesting an imitation of the *Jingang Keyi*. This *Essential Verse* survives as a manuscript in Russian collections, likely originating from Khara-Khoto (hereafter designated as version K), and it is generally dated to the

Song–Yuan period (Zhang 2003), with the Khara-Khoto material suggesting a date after 1242; it has also been frequently miscatalogued as a "Dunhuang baojuan."

The diversity of usage scenarios (ritual as well as exegetical) and region-specific transmission histories has given rise to a richly layered versional system, the development and diffusion of which I have attempted to simulate. For the sake of clarity and comparison, the ten extant and collatable versions required for discussion are hereafter designated by the letters A through J:

- Version A: *Five Commentaries*五家解, recompiled with a preface and annotations by Hamhŏ Kihwa涵虛己和 during the Joseon dynasty (1415);
- Version B: *Xiaoshi Jingang Keyi LushuoJi*[10] 銷釋金剛科儀錄說記, annotated by Cheng Gui 成桂 (1515/1566);
- Version C: *Huiyao* 會要, compiled by Juelian 覺連 (1551);
- Version D: *Jiajing Edition*[11] 嘉靖本, printed by Zhang Jun 張俊 and Wang Yin 王印 (1528);
- Version E: *Wanli Edition* 萬曆本, reprinted by Zhai Shangru 翟尚儒 (1573–1620);
- Version F: *Xiaoshi Jingang Keyi Juxie Qimeng* 銷釋金剛科儀句解啟蒙, edited by Wang Shangru 王尚儒 and transcribed by Liu Wenliang 劉文亮 (1709)
- Version G: *Jianji Manuscript* 建基本, transcribed by Jianji 建基 (1835);
- Version H: *Gushan Edition* 鼓山本[12], published at Gushan Yongquan Temple 鼓山湧泉寺 during the late Qing and early Republican period;
- Versions I/J: *Yunnan Manuscripts*, transcribed by Ācārya monks in Jianchuan 劍川 during the late Qing (c. 1886).

Although version K (*Essential Verse*) is an early witness, it is excluded from the ten collatable versions (A–J) because the manuscript is fragmentary and does not permit full-coverage collation across the Sevenfold Structure. In terms of the Sevenfold Structure, version K—together with version A (1415, Yeongbong Temple煙峰寺, Joseon Korea)—stands out as the only pair lacking components ①, ⑥, and ⑦, indicating a markedly simplified, early profile of the text.

Based on structural content, transmission region, and historical layering, the versions can first be grouped roughly into three preliminary groups: C–D–E–F, G–H, and I–J, while noting that A, B, C, and F tend to carry fewer supplementary components, consistent with a more exegetical-leaning profile. This tripartite grouping remains a working hypothesis, since both printed and manuscript witnesses underwent uneven revision and reproduction. To test and sharpen it, a compilation of all meaningful variant readings shared by at least two versions was prepared (see Appendix 2 in M. Li 2026). This dataset then allows me to calculate pairwise overlap percentages across the ten collation-ready versions and visualize them as a ladder diagram of inter-version similarity (Figure 1), which provides the empirical basis for refining the preliminary grouping into the five versional systems summarized below.

Based on the degree of variant concordance among the ten versions in Figure 1, four clusters can be identified in descending order of overlap percentage: ① D–E: Ming dynasty fine-printed editions (95% overlap); ② B–C–F: annotated versions, (90–91% overlap); ③ I–J: Yunnan Qing dynasty manuscripts (90% overlap); ④ G–H: precious scroll editions (87% overlap).

All four clusters exhibit internal consistency in textual structure and component arrangement, consistent with distinct transmission and editorial profiles within each. In addition, due to their distinct transmission patterns, editorial features, and regional affiliations, the G–H and I–J clusters are clearly differentiated from the D–E and B–C–F systems. Their manuscript formats and vernacular adaptations also suggest that future research should further clarify their relationships to the more standardized printed traditions.

	A									
B	21/37 = 57%	**B**								
C	20/37 = 54%	107/117 = 91%	**C**							
D	26/37 = 70%	87/117 = 74%	90/119 = 76%	**D**						
E	27/37 = 73%	87/117 = 74%	88/119 = 74%	113/119 = 95%	**E**					
F	28/37 = 54%	107/117 = 91%	107/119 = 90%	91/119 = 76%	92/119 = 77%	**F**				
G	19/37 = 51%	51/117 = 44%	51/119 = 43%	68/119 = 57%	67/119 = 56%	57/119 = 48%	**G**			
H	24/37 = 65%	50/116 = 43%	55/118 = 47%	67/118 = 57%	70/118 = 60%	58/118 = 49%	108/124 = 87%	**H**		
I	18/37 = 49%	42/117 = 36%	42/119 = 35%	57/119 = 48%	58/119 = 49%	45/119 = 38%	26/121 = 21%	26/121 = 21%	**I**	
J	14/37 = 38%	45/117 = 38%	43/119 = 36%	54/119 = 45%	53/119 = 45%	49/119 = 41%	26/121 = 20%	24/121 = 20%	110/122 = 90%	**J**

Figure 1. Overlap Matrix of Ten Versions of the *Jingang Keyi*.

The following systems are based on their textual overlaps and structural characteristics, as summarized in the previous section. These systems provide a framework for understanding the versional evolution of *Jingang Keyi*:

- System I: A and K (ancient form, simplified structure);
- System II: D and E (standardized printed editions of the Ming–Qing dynasty);
- System III: B, C, and F (exegetical commentary editions);
- System IV: G and H (ritual chant editions labeled as *baojuan*);
- System V: I and J (Yunnan Ācārya traditional manuscripts).

Although version K is too fragmentary to enter the overlap matrix, its shared structural profile with version A warrants treating A + K as a distinct early system.

The following diagram (Figure 2) schematically illustrates the relationships among these five versional systems and proposes possible transmission tendencies inferred from structural and lexical affinities, rather than asserting exclusive genealogical derivation. The diagram is intended as a heuristic model based on currently available evidence and does not preclude alternative or parallel lines of transmission.

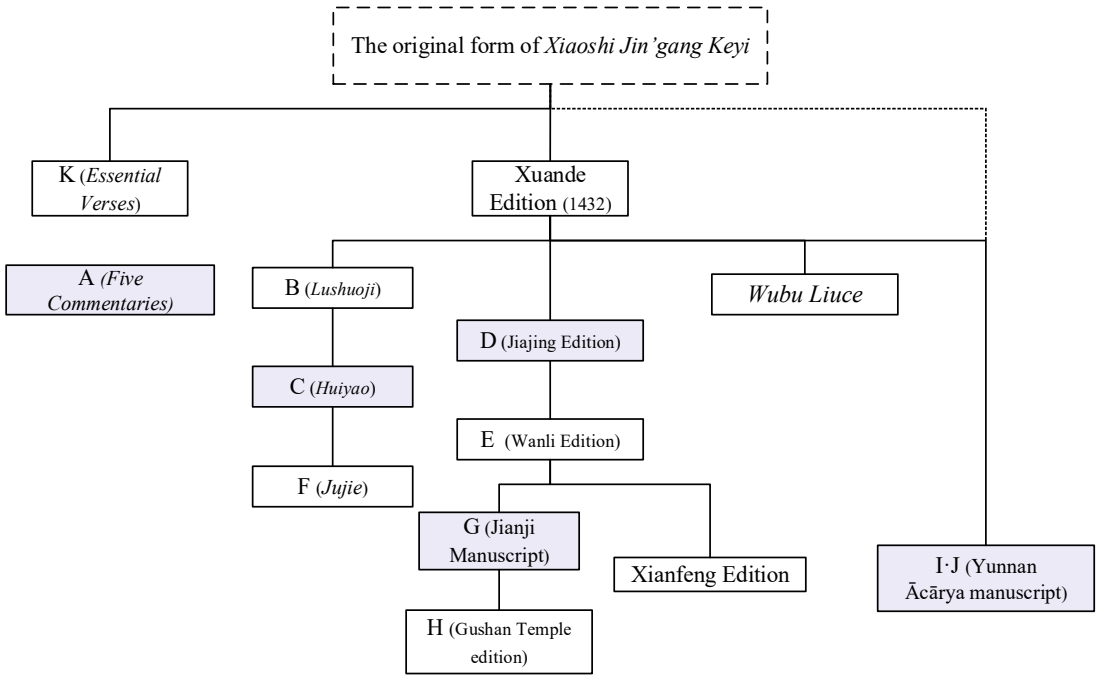


Figure 2. Stratified Version Systems and Simulated Transmission of *Jingang Keyi*.

In late imperial and modern community transmission, two materials were relied on:

- Hand-copied manuscripts: Margins often fix responsorial placements and vow-line closures, and running heads keep the *Thirty-Two Sections* visible to leaders and responders. Such copies supported "teaching circles" and household lineages in regions like Fujian and Guangdong.
- Temple /press editions: These standardized cueing and page layouts are for circulation through lending libraries and temple book rooms. Among them, the "Gushan Edition"—woodblocks held at Yongquan Temple (Fuzhou福州)—became a key textual base for twentieth-century Southeast China and Taiwan. Commercial prints by Ruicheng Bookstore (the earliest extant from 1936)[13] reproduced this lineage and circulated it widely among Hokkien-speaking congregations. Reprints from Zhangzhou Nanshan Temple 漳州南山寺 in the late 1970s further met the post-Cultural-Revolution demand for study and performance copies.

This versional ecology matters for argument and not just for bibliography alone. The versional system here refers to recurring clusters of layout, rubrics, and cue grammar that cut across individual copies: a "Gushan/Ruicheng lineage," for example, tends to stabilize responsorial refrains and vow closures at predictable points in the *Thirty-Two Sections*. Such stability, in turn, supports collective memory and makes the rite learnable through participation.

2.3. Design Features: "Thirty-Two Sections" and a Sevenfold Scaling—Why the Jingang Keyi Is Built to Be Performed

What made the *Jingang Keyi* especially suited to ritual life is not doctrinal content alone but an actionable architecture. Two interlocking features are crucial:

1. Originally standardized as the thirty-two-section division of the *Diamond Sūtra* from Tang and Five-Dynasty recensional traditions, the Thirty-Two Sections (sansh'er fen 三十二分) provide a recognizable argumentative spine segmented into manageable units. Each unit tends to end with closure cues—vow lines (*shiyuan* 誓願) and responsorial refrains—that signal progress and completion to insiders and newcomers alike. The *Jingang Keyi* thus reads as commentary-with-cues: understanding advances through hearing and answering.
2. The Sevenfold Structure ("seven scales," qizhong guimo 七種規模, see Table 2) encodes scaling rules—short skeleton, middle expansion, and full cycle—so that leaders can adjust the duration to their venue and calendar without losing the rite's identity. In practice, communities can present a compressed "short spine" (e.g., funerary or memorial settings), an intermediate build (teaching settings), or the fully elaborated cycle (temple festivals and large public assemblies). Because these scales are tied to the Thirty-Two Sections rather than to any single melody or clerical sub-tradition, different soundscapes (monastic chant, Hokkien opera-derived tunes, Chaoshan潮汕 *xianghua* idioms) can render the same structure legible.

These design features explain two empirical facts documented elsewhere in this article. First, from the late imperial period onward, the *Jingang Keyi* circulated in ritual form across China—from the imperial centers of Beijing and the Lower Yangtze to Yunnan and the southwestern provinces, and then to the southeastern coastal regions. Second, among these, the Hokkien-speaking regions of Fujian and Guangdong preserved the most active performance traditions into the present, which then extended to Taiwan and Maritime Southeast Asia through migration. The same architecture that made the Keyi scalable also made it re-activatable in new social ecologies—a process I analyze as textual re-ritualization (see the Introduction section for the formal definition).

Table 2. Example of the "Seven Scales" Structure for a Section in *Xiaoshi Jingang Keyi*.

Section	Scale	Content	Note
(Content precedes)			
The Interpretation and Chanting Section on "1st The Cause of the Dharma Assembly (法會因由分第一)"	① Outline (提綱)	The cause of the dharma assembly, The origin of the teaching arises as follows: This Dharma was taught by our Buddha. In the land of Śrāvastī, He began by begging food all around. After completing his begging practice in order, He returned to his place and sat in tranquility. Sitting in the lotus posture, He remained serene silence for the entire day. (法會因由，教起根源，如是法我佛宣。 舍衛國中，乞食為先。次第乞已， 本處安然。結跏趺坐，終日默無言。)	The 39-character *Qupai* starts with the four-character titles of the corresponding section from the Diamond Sutra, summarizing its theme.
	② Essence (要旨)	The wisdom of the Diamond Prajñā, Each individual embodies it as it is. The white clouds vanish completely, Leaving behind only the bright full moon. (金剛般若智，個個體如然。 白雲消散盡，明月一輪圓。)	A five-character four-line verse, using Chan sayings to evoke the section's core idea. Some adapted from *Daochuan's Praise on Diamond Sutra*（道川金剛經頌注）[14].
	③ Extended Passage (長行)	(Prose) Guiding Master personally arrives at Śrāvastī, His presence shakes the universe. The Arhats gather at Jetavanavihāra, Their radiance shines like the sun and moon. Entering the city with his alms bowl, Out of compassion for the poor and destitute. … (Question) Why? (白：調禦師親臨舍衛，威動乾坤。阿羅漢雲集祇園，輝騰日月。入城持缽，良由悲湣貧窮。……問：何故？)	Prose-style narration and questioning dialogue. The prose narrative explains the content of the sutra, while the questioning dialogue raises questions or uncertainties.
	④ Concluding Classification (結類)	(Answer) The fine horse has already gone with the whip's shadow, While Ānanda remains still before the World-Honored One. (答：良馬已隨鞭影去，阿難依舊世尊前。)	A two-line response with seven-characters, mostly drawn from patriarchs' sayings.
	⑤ Praise of the Sutra Text (頌經文)	Returning from the alms-round to Jetavanavihāra, robes laid aside, seated at ease. His true compassion is vast, transcending the Three Realms, He guides both humans and devas to attain mastery.. (乞食歸來會給孤，收衣敷座正安居。 真慈洪範超三界，調禦人天得自如。)	A seven-character four-line verse. The first two lines restate the sutra's content, while the last two lines often praise the transcendence of Nirvana, and expound the meaning of realizing true emptiness.

Table 2. *Cont.*

Section	Scale	Content	Note
	⑥ Worldly Warning (警世)	The auspicious name of the Western Pure Land can be proclaimed, And the nine-petaled lotus will surely lead to rebirth. Meet directly here, no need to search elsewhere, Why go through ten thousand and eight thousand miles of wandering? (西方寶號能宣演，九品蓮台必往生。 直下相逢休外覓，何勞十萬八千程。)	A seven-character four-line verse. The content is entirely devoted to praising the Pure Land, praising Amitābha, lamenting the fleeting nature of life, encouraging the secular, and praising the Three Teachings.
	⑦ Conclusion and Return to the Pure Land 結歸淨土	A hundred years pass in the blink of an eye, And one's body eventually turns to ash. Who is willing to awaken before death comes? Awaken to the truth of non-arising and return to where you came from. (百歲光陰瞬息回，其身畢竟化為灰。 誰人肯向生前悟，悟取無生歸去來。)	A seven-character four-line Pure Land verse contrasting worldly suffering with the Other Shore, regularly concluding with the formula "Gui qu lai 歸去來" (return to where you came from).

Section 3 links this structure-first analysis to sound, showing how vow closures, responsorial cadence, and sectional pacing are realized through Hokkien *qupai* and Chaoshan xianghua idioms. Section 4 then follows the regional corridor—Fujian → Taiwan → Chinese diaspora—showing why Hokkien-speaking regions preserved what others largely lost.

3. Ritual Structure and Musical Realization: From the "Thirty-Two Sections" and the "Sevenfold Structure" to Hokkien Qupai and Xianghua Chant

3.1. Structural Grammar and Ritual Architecture

This section treats the *Xiaoshi Jingang Keyi* as a text designed for enactment. I use two working notions. By performative grammar, I mean the set of textual cues, including vow formulas, responsorial markers, and cadence closures, that turn exegetical prose into timed, repeatable actions. By modular framework, I mean a set of extensible modules that can be added, contracted, or swapped while preserving a recognizable spine of the rite.

Internally, the *Jingang Keyi* organizes the *Diamond Sūtra* into the well-known "Thirty-Two Sections", while its commentary is layered by a "Seven-Scale" layout (七种规模) that dictates when a unit is declaimed plainly, sung to a set tune, or expanded by prose exposition. The sequence of "raising a theme, stating essentials, paraphrasing, citing, illustrating, resolving, and concluding" yields predictable entrances and exits for sound. In other words, the layout itself supplies vow lines to close a block, responsorial prompts to stage call-and-response, and cadence markers to align voice with percussion. This is what allows the same exegetical content to be performed at different scales without losing intelligibility.

Recognizing this inner grammar makes the corresponding ritual architecture legible. "Entrance formulas" and "invocations" frame the Dharma assembly; alternating leader–chorus passages stabilize tempo; focal moments indicate where vow lines or refrain-like sentences trigger collective repetition; and elastic corridors indicate where narrative prose can be shortened or lengthened. Because the modules are swappable, officiants can assemble shorter household services or day-long temple programs without abandoning the spine. This also explains how

local sound systems can be grafted onto the text without breaking it: the text tells you where sound must happen; regions decide how it should sound.

This interface is especially clear in Hokkien-speaking performance ecologies, where two naming systems—Chaozhou *qupai* (opera tune-types) and Longhua diao (ritual "rhymes")—index the same performative slots from different vocabularies. Table 3 illustrates their correspondence within the Xiaoshi Jingang Keyi.

Table 3. *Qupai* Longhua tune-types and their placement in *Xiaoshi Jingang Keyi*.

	Chao-Zhou *Qupai*	**Longhua Tune Name**	**Derivation and Entry Point in the *Keyi***	**Section Range in the Keyi**
1	*Qingtianyin* 青天引	*Jingang* rhyme 金剛韻	(*Outline prelude*) "As the 'Precious Scroll of the Diamond' unfolds, the Eight Classes descend…" … "Opening the gate of prajñā, wisdom is none other than one's own nature." 金剛寶卷纔展開，龍天八部降臨來。……揭開般若法門，智慧不離自性。	Preface, Invitation, Praise of the Supreme, Opening the Sūtra
2	*Jinshanghua* 錦上花	*Alms-round* rhyme 乞食韻	(*Sec. 1, Praise of the Sutra Text*) "Returning from alms-round to Jetavanavihāra, robes laid aside, seated at ease…" 乞食歸來會給孤，收衣敷座正安居。……	Sections 1–5
3	*Kongqueshi* 孔雀詩	*Wholesome root* rhyme 善根韻	(*Sec. 6, Praise*) "With wholesome roots firm and doubtless, chasing signs turns one's back on the real…" （第六分·頌經文）善根深固信無疑，取相求玄轉背馳。……	Sections 6–10
4	*Yaoshuanling* 搖船令	*Further-Increase* rhyme 重增韻	(*Sec. 11, Praise*) "Further increasing seven-jewel heaps like sands of the Ganges, is like trading sweet melon for bitter…" （第十一分·頌經文）重增七寶滿恒沙，如棄甜瓜(桃)覓苦瓜。	Sections 11–15
5	*Yan'guosha* 雁過沙	*Evil-Cause* rhyme 惡因韻	(*Sec. 16, Praise*) "Who sowed the evil cause bears the fruit; true nature is empty and unmoved…" （第十六分·頌經文）惡因誰作罪誰招，真性如空不動搖。……	Sections 16–20
6	*Jiang'ershui* 江兒水	*Root-of-Dao* rhyme 道本韻	(*Sec. 21, Praise*) "The root of Dao admits no words to wake one up; the medicine arose to save the sick…" （第二十一分·頌經文）道本無言喚不醒，藥因救病出金瓶。……	Sections 21–25
7	*Yishengfo* 一聲佛	*Gong'an* rhyme 公案韻	(*Sec. 26, Praise*) "The gong'an at hand invite fresh questioning; passions flip pledges into error…" （第二十六分·頌經文）公案現成重審問，愛情翻款錯承當。……	Sections 26–30
8	*Wushengfo* 五聲佛	*Dharma-Emptiness* rhyme 法空韻	(*Sec. 31, Praise*) "Dharma-emptiness is not self, nor is the Way kin; when the tree falls, vine withers, a renewed laughter arises…" （第三十一分·頌經文）法空非我道非親，樹倒藤枯笑轉新。……	Sections 31–32, plus *Heart Sūtra* insertion & dedication blocks

3.2. Musical Modalities and Performative Aesthetics

The *Jingang Keyi*'s performative grammar became audible through melodic resources already embedded in southern ritual culture. In Hokkien-speaking regions (Fujian's Quanzhou–Zhangzhou, eastern Guangdong's Chaozhou-Shantou, later Taiwan), the dom-

inant palette combined the following: (1) an opera-derived *qupai* repertoire (*Qingtianyin*, *Jinshanghua*, etc.); (2) response staging that alternates solo leading and group answering; (3) with percussion marking cadence closures.

Within this palette, verse blocks (偈颂) are set to *qupai* tunes; prose paraphrase segments are declaimed over measured speech-song; and vow lines form recognizable refrains that help an audience "hear" the end of a cycle. Percussion is not ornamental; it signals entry, pivot, and release points, allowing even ad hoc ensembles to keep large-scale form. Where singers are trained in the eight-melody family (八调), timbre and tempo are adjusted so that doctrinal emphases, e.g., emptiness as release and roots of goodness as stabilization, coincide with climactic cadences.

This sonic practice sits on top of the text's modular framework. When time is short (a household memorial), leaders keep modules ①–②–④ (outline–essentials–conclusion) and thin out ③ (extended paraphrase); when there is time (temple-wide assembly), they restore full Seven-Scale layering. The point is not aesthetic luxury but comprehension: the same doctrinal path is delivered at different temporal resolutions. This also explains how, across migrations, singers could re-ritualize the text, substituting locally familiar *qupai* without losing the recognizable steps built into the *Jingang Keyi* (see Section 3.2 for Taiwan and Maritime Southeast Asia cases).

Methodologically, I draw on performance-centered ritual theory (Bell 1997; Tambiah 1985) only to clarify how text becomes action. The present argument remains text-first: melodic choices are not free "ornament" but responses to performative grammar embedded by the compiler(s). Where the grammar supplies vow formulas and responsorial cues, local lineages supply tune types and choral habits; where the grammar marks expandable prose, lineages fit in aria-like passages or speech-song to match time and place.

3.3. Linking Structure and Sound

Bridging the "Thirty-Two Sections" and the "Seven-Scale" layout sets the conditions for sound. The section clusters map to tune families; the scale layout tells leaders when to *stay in prose* and when to *enter verse*. Because these alignments are modular, officiants can compress or dilate the rite without compromising its recognizable contour. In Hokkien-speaking practice, three consequences follow.

First, recognition effects anchor attention. Refrains in vow lines, the return of a tune family at expected section boundaries, and cadence closures all create way-finding for listeners, especially in long events.

Second, substitution without rupture becomes possible. Where an opera tune is less familiar, a Longhua-named rhyme from the same functional slot can carry the block; where a house lineage prefers speech-song, the text's responsorial cues retain the alternation and closure pattern. This flexibility is what allowed the *Jingang Keyi* to travel, first across late-imperial China, and later with migrants, while remaining locally legible (see Sections 3.2 and 3.3).

Third, competitive advantage in ritual settings did not derive from superior doctrinal exegesis but from more explicit performative grammar. Many learned commentaries lacked stable entry–pivot–closure signaling and did not map section clusters to a known melodic family. By contrast, the *Jingang Keyi*'s Seven-Scale layout pre-indexed where sound belongs; communities could "hear" how to stage it. An explicit non-Hokkien contrast case is introduced in Section 3.4, and its broader comparative implications are taken up in Chapter 4's regional model.

3.4. A Non-Hokkien Contrast Case

A brief non-Hokkien contrast can be seen in the Bai Ācārya白族 tradition of Jianchuan, Yunnan, where *Jingang Keyi* materials survive within a mortuary merit-making (zhai齋)

system (Hou and Fang 1998). Compared with the Minnan–Chaoshan–Taiwan cluster discussed above, the Jianchuan parallel passage displays a different musical organisation. In the former cluster, extended sequences of verses are carried by a recognisable contrafact tune—a reusable melodic template with stable phrase articulation and predictable cadences—varying mainly in transposition, metric notation, and ornament density. Shared vernacular prosody across Minnan–Chaozhou–Taiwan may further reduce friction for contrafact fitting and group chanting, whereas the Jianchuan configuration appears to place less weight on such cross-setting portability.

The Jianchuan materials also differ in their transmission ecology. Transmission is concentrated among a small number of male Ācārya specialists, reliant on handwritten ritual books and performed primarily in commissioned mortuary contexts for local Bai communities. The accompanying soundscape privileges high-impact metallic percussion (e.g., large cymbals/gongs and hand bells) together with a text-driven chant delivery, rather than a salient tune-pattern system that repeatedly cycles as a portable melodic model across consecutive stanzas. In practical terms, this yields a soundscape that is effective within its ritual niche but comparatively less modularised for inter-household learning, ensemble standardisation, or mediated circulation.

In sum, in the Hokkien-speaking sphere, the *Jingang Keyi*'s modular framework and performative grammar help explain its long ritual life. They do not foreclose regional creativity; they invite it by specifying the where and leaving open the how. This linkage of structure and sound underwrites the regional analyses that follow.

4. Regional Transmission and Diasporic Continuity

4.1. Fujian as a Living Source Region

This section examines how the *Xiaoshi Jingang Keyi* is realized in performance across Fujian (especially Minnan 閩南), Taiwan, and Maritime Southeast Asia, and how such performance rests on three interlocking conditions: a scalable textual spine, a recognizable soundscape, and durable community networks. Rather than an appendix to scholastic exegesis, in these regions, the *Jingang Keyi* functions as a living liturgical corpus—a ritual book designed to be sung, paced, and modularly expanded or compressed without losing its doctrinal backbone.

4.1.1. Lineages, Venues, and Transmission: From Hand-Copied Manuscripts to Temple and Press Editions

In Minnan settings, the *Jingang Keyi* circulated through temples, temple-affiliated halls, and household altars. Participation was mixed, with ordained monastics, lay ritual experts commonly called *shi gong* （師公; 司公）, and female vegetarian-ritual leaders (*caigu*) assuming distinct, complementary roles according to venue and occasion. Households invited small chanting circles, while halls and temples convened larger assemblies.

The *Jingang Keyi*'s performability is materially reinforced by transmission formats. Hand-copied manuscripts often display clear visual cues for responsorial entries, marking chant (頌) and prose (白) sections and indicating leader/response turns. Later, bound printed temple/press editions standardized refrain markers and call-and-response slots. These layout conventions worked as mnemonic scaffolds for training and collective enactment.

A widely cited twentieth-century case is Jiang Wenze (1905–1995) of Jinjiang. In the Republican era, he copied complete *Jingang Keyi* volumes by hand and gifted them to monastics and lay chanting groups. After the Cultural Revolution, well into his seventies, he continued copying daily, using a pen with carbon paper, and distributing hundreds of sets. As more households and temple-affiliated halls resumed reading and chanting from these volumes, practice quietly returned. Following Jiang's passing, Nanshan Temple pro-

duced a new engraved edition not only with chant and prose, but also with question and response (問答) marks; later reprints (including editions sponsored by *Shi Tianpei* and circulated through the Guanghua Monastery) further stabilized the performing text in local use. The point is not only bibliographic: Minnan communities use these books to make the *Jingang Keyi* resound again as a ritual.

4.1.2. Qupai Practice and the Minnan "Eight-Melody" System

Performance depends on fixed melodic patterns—*qupai*—that structure phrase length, cadence, and closure formulas. In Minnan usage, the *Jingang Keyi* is sung in eight governing tune types (often grouped as *longhua* "tunes"), aligning with segments of the *Jingang Keyi*'s Thirty-Two Sections. While tune names vary by locale, the eight-melody scheme (eight "falls," each with slow–medium–fast variants across repeated stanzas) allows long services to be paced without losing congregational recognition of entrance cues and closure points. The Minnan palette is historically entangled with Chaoshan (eastern Guangdong) *xianghua* practice as discussed above. This auditory interoperability sustains cross-regional performance even when participants come from different local traditions.

4.1.3. Household Layouts, Antiphony, and Scale

Local staging reflects antiphonal design embedded in certain editions. In many Minnan rites, the altar carries a central offering table (facing icons) and a scripture table (facing participants). Four singers sit in facing pairs—commonly labeled East/West/Assistant East/Assistant West in Xianfeng edition[15] 咸豐本prints—while a presiding leader stands or sits to guide tempo and transitions. Larger events add tables to the sides in mirrored fashion, while small-scale services may be limited to one presider (with or without two assistants). The antiphonal "dui-juan" practice (local term "Jingang duijuan," "antiphonal chanting of the Diamond [scroll]") requires at least two parts to realize the *Jingang Keyi*'s responsorial texture; where resources are limited, spoken recitation fills in for unstaffed lines, but the musical logic of leader–response remains intelligible to the assembly.

4.2. From Minnan to Taiwan and Maritime Southeast Asia

From late imperial times into the twentieth century, transmission moved along women's chanting circles, temple-affiliated halls, lay experts, and monastic study tours between Fujian and Taiwan. In the Japanese colonial period, Taiwanese practitioners traveled to Fuzhou's Gushan to take precepts (*shoujie*) and learn ritual (*xuefa*), bringing back Gushan-system prints (notably Ruicheng Bookstore editions). Along this Minnan–Gushan–Taiwan route, venues and calendars diversified from household altars and temple halls to popular-religion venues, with schedules ranging from full-day assemblies to half-day services and multi-day "seven-sevens" memorial cycles. Leadership configurations (monastics, *shi gong*, and *caigu*) coexisted across these settings, while the circulation of hand-copied manuscripts and Ruicheng Bookstore Gushan-system prints functioned as portable textual kits that made rapid convening and teaching practicable.

Two contemporary Taiwanese contrasts are instructive.

(A) Changhua Kaiyuan Shengdian (2020, Buddhist temple public assembly): A full-day communal service led by over a dozen monastics, with elaborate altar setting and a complete singing program. Antiphonal call-and-response is maintained throughout; participants hold one *Jingang Keyi* per person, reciting and singing in unison under monastic direction. The pedagogical premise is collective cultivation: chanting the *Jingang Keyi* as shared practice oriented to doctrine and repentance, with donations voluntary rather than fee-for-service.

(B) Kaohsiung Wujia Xieshan Xinde Tang Guandi Miao (2020, public rite in a popular-religion venue): A half-day event led by a single ritual leader. There is no three-person

seated Q&A chanting and no fixed *qupai* melodies; much of the performance is half-spoken recitation with sparse percussion to mark transitions. Attendance is lighter; registration and merit dedication may be handled remotely. Whereas Buddhist temple assemblies frame the *Jingang Keyi* as doctrinal cultivation with standardized books in hand, Longhua-style halls emphasize efficacy and economy, maintaining clear fee schedules for petitioning the Dipper, disaster-aversion rituals, anniversary rites, or deity birthdays. The contrast is not "music vs. no music," but two ritual economies: one anchored in collective study and repentance, the other in service delivery scaled to community demand, sometimes without full musical realization of the eight-melody system.

Between these poles, private funerary/merit-transfer services (超度荐亡) are common. Families set the altar at home; monastics, *shi gong*, or *caigu* may be invited to preside, and teams are frequent. Even when the schedule compresses procedures to fit one day, performance is not necessarily weak. Beyond a woodblock, bell, small gong, and drum, some services add an erhu, suona, or electronic keyboard. In rare projects (e.g., performance groups affiliated with Buddhist institutions), even Western instruments may be employed to broaden participation and clarity. In public contexts, when the *Jingang Keyi* is paired with multi-day "seven-sevens" memorial cycles, extra inserted stanzas (for example, a short "Diamond gatha") may appear at designated points, a usage traceable to Guangdong Foshan three-scroll Keyi lines and indicative of longhua–xianghua cross-fertilization.

In Taiwan, lecture/teaching formats also thrive. Since the late twentieth century, the Keyi has been taught through Buddhist colleges and temple classes, consecutive lecture series, and recorded media. Influential efforts include Master Wuci (1924–2005) and his *Jingang Keyi Jianghua*; Venerable Miaoguang (1902–2008) teaching the Keyi in Hokkien across more than a hundred and seventy sessions; and Zhu Wenke (1947–2017) hosting a 68-episode television course on the *Jingang Keyi Precious Scroll*. More recently, Buddhist instructors in Taoyuan and bhikṣuṇīs at the Miaoyun Lecture Hall have taught the *Jingang Keyi* by singing first, then expounding, underlining that voice and meaning belong together. Longhua association leaders (for example, the head of Zhanghua Cihuitang) likewise run dedicated *Jingang Keyi* courses for lay members. In these settings, the *Jingang Keyi* performs as a study text in performance, with chanting integral—not ornamental—to understanding.

Beyond Taiwan, Maritime Southeast Asia hosts cognate practices among Hokkien-speaking communities. In Penang (2021), groups at Chongfeng Shantang and Bukit Jermak Xiude Shantang publicly performed what they call "Jingang duijuan," with five lay male singers in white robes, antiphonally rendering the *Jingang Keyi*. Such performances exhibit the same antiphonal grammar and Minnan soundprint, even as local staging and resources vary. Continuity here owes less to formal institutions than to diasporic memory carried by households, halls, and teachers moving along Minnan–Taiwan–Southeast Asia routes.

4.3. Legitimacy and Practitioner Configurations

Debates over who may lead the *Jingang Keyi*—whether monastics, temple-based "xianghua" chanters, or lay experts, including caigu and shi gong—are longstanding. This study describes a tripartite practitioner configuration rather than a fixed hierarchy: roles are distinct and complementary, shaped by venue (household altar vs. temple hall vs. public square), occasion (private funerary request vs. public assembly), and audience capacity (dialect comprehension, musical familiarity). In Buddhist temple settings, monastic leadership tends to anchor doctrinal framing and standardized pacing; in Longhua and related halls, lay expert leadership highlights service efficacy and community access; in household settings, women-led chanting circles sustain continuity between generations and bridge private and public rites. These are not mutually exclusive spheres: cross-training and

personnel movement are common, and the *Jingang Keyi*'s textual modularity allows each sphere to scale the rite without losing recognizability.

4.4. A Regional Model: Why Hokkien-Speaking Regions Preserved What Others Lost

The Minnan–Taiwan–diaspora chain can be synthesized through three interlocking factors that explain both continuity and loss:

(1) Structure (textual spine and scalable formats).

The *Jingang Keyi*'s organization (Thirty-Two Sections; scalable "sizes") and transmission media (hand-copied and printed compendia with clear performance cues) make it teachable and redundant—capable of being shortened without losing doctrinal throughlines, and expanded into full programs when resources allow.

(2) Soundscape (dialect competence and fixed melodic patterns).

Hokkien comprehension and familiarity with *qupai* (fixed tune patterns) and related xianghua formulas supply auditory anchors, such as entry cues, cadence, and closure, so that participants can "hear" where they are in the rite. Where *qupai* competence fades, collective participation becomes harder to sustain.

(3) Network (women's associations, temple halls, diaspora mobility).

Women's vegetarian associations, household chanting circles, temple-affiliated halls, and travel routes (for example, Minnan–Gushan–Taiwan, Taiwan–Southeast Asia) provide personnel, books, and occasions. When these networks thin, practice contracts even if the book remains accessible.

In Fujian (Minnan), all three elements of the model align. Structure is strong owing to long chains of hand-copied manuscripts and later Nanshan and circulation editions that stabilize sectional pacing and closure cues; soundscape is strong through an eight-melody practice in which opera-derived *qupai* interoperate with *xianghua* formulas; and the network is strong via women's devotional circles, temple halls, and household altars. Where these converge, the *Jingang Keyi* shows high continuity and elastic scaling, moving from domestic rites to large assemblies without losing its doctrinal spine.

Two Taiwan sites illustrate how different institutional settings recalibrate the same triad. In a Buddhist temple assembly in Changhua, per-person booklets and standardized pacing highlight structure, Hokkien antiphony sustains the soundscape, and monastic colleges, lecture series, and lay enrollment strengthen the network. The result is a day-long format that integrates pedagogy and repentance within a robust, clearly legible performance frame. By contrast, a Longhua/popular-religion hall in Kaohsiung adopts a short-format skeleton optimized for funerary and merit-transfer needs: structure is intentionally compressed, soundscape is partial (recitative predominates and fixed *qupai* may be minimal), yet the network is conspicuously strong through service-delivery infrastructures, fee schedules, and remote registration. Accessibility and throughput are prioritized while preserving the rite's recognizable responsorial grammar and vow-closures.

In the Penang diaspora, Minnan features travel effectively. Public performances retain enough structure, including audible antiphony, sectional pacing, closure lines, to anchor congregational uptake, while Hokkien participation and Longhua-style cadences provide a familiar soundscape. Local halls and household-based groups keep the network active through sponsorship and instruction, yielding public antiphonal chanting that reproduces the Minnan soundprint under diaspora conditions.

Across these sites, three practice streams recur without forming rigid categories. A funerary/merit-transfer stream thrives where the network is dense, and structure can be compressed into short-format skeletons without forfeiting the *Jingang Keyi*'s doctrinal backbone; the soundscape may be partial, but remains legible. A pedagogical or lecture-

oriented stream flourishes when structure and soundscape are both strong—books in hand, antiphony maintained—supporting "sing first, then expound" programs in colleges, temple classes, and media. An aesthetic or performance-forward stream amplifies soundscape (eight-melody realization, ensemble skills) to clarify structure for audiences and to seed networks through training, recordings, and workshops.

This same model also clarifies loss. When familiarity with *qupai* fades, the soundscape can no longer make the structure audible; when women's networks thin, local custodianship and apprenticeship pathways weaken; when hand-copied or printed book routes are interrupted, teaching materials and sectional cues become scarce. The *Jingang Keyi*'s resilience in Hokkien-speaking regions thus depends less on any single "institution" than on the fit of this triad—scalable textual modules, a soundscape that renders structure hearable, and networks that keep occasions, teachers, and books in motion—enabling sustained textual re-ritualization from late imperial times into the present across Fujian, Taiwan, and the Chinese diaspora.

This contrast helps specify what may be "missing" in many non-Hokkien settings where the *Jingang Keyi* is less visibly flourishing today. The issue is not ritual vitality per se, but the combined presence of (i) a modularised contrafact-tune soundscape that can be readily taught, standardised, and recontextualised, and (ii) dense cross-setting networks (temple–community–household–media) that enable such sonic modules to circulate and generate new performative ecologies. In the Jianchuan case, the three dimensions of Structure–Soundscape–Network still operate, but with a different weighting: structure and specialist authority organise practice more tightly, while soundscape modularity and network diffusion appear comparatively limited. This differential weighting clarifies why robust ritual performance ecologies can persist outside the Hokkien sphere without producing the same degree of contemporary expansion.

5. Conclusions

This article has re-situated the *Xiaoshi Jingang Keyi* as a ritual text rather than a merely exegetical appendix to the *Diamond Sūtra*. Section 2 demonstrates that the *Jingang Keyi*'s medieval formation (traditionally attributed to Zongjing) and its later consolidation in Ming compilations, such as the *Huiyao*, belong to different layers of a living tradition. Distinguishing the core text from later pedagogical dossiers clarified how a versional ecology—exemplified by the Gushan/Yongquan Temple lineage and the Ruicheng Bookstore prints—stabilized layout cues, responsorial closures, and sectioning into Thirty-Two Divisions. The Sevenfold Structure, in turn, provided scalable rules for performance. Taken together, these design choices explain why communities across late-imperial China could hear the *Jingang Keyi* as something to be enacted, not only read.

Section 3 links architecture to sound. By showing how vow lines, responsorial cadence, and sectional pacing are realized through Hokkien *qupai* and Chaoshan xianghua idioms, it is argued that the *Jingang Keyi*'s "performability" is not an accidental accretion but an intended affordance. The point is not that one melody set defines the rite, but that a modular textual framework can be rendered legible by multiple soundscapes. In other words, structure travels first; melody families localize the structure and allow congregations to learn the rite by ear.

Section 4 then explains where and why the *Jingang Keyi* continued most vigorously, along the Fujian–Taiwan–Maritime Southeast Asia corridor. The section documents a repertoire that circulates between private household settings and large public assemblies, animated by different officiant profiles (monastics; community-recognized ritual specialists often labeled *shi gong*; women's lay networks conventionally known as *caigu*). The persistence of Hokkien-speaking performance communities rests on a triad of enabling conditions, encompassing lan-

guage, soundscape, and community networks. Hokkien speech rhythms anchor mnemonic uptake; opera-derived *qupai* and Chaoshan *xianghua* provide recognizable closure formulas; and household-centered lay alliances (including women's devotional circles) sustain teaching, copying, and sponsorship. Where any one of these three conditions attenuated, such as in parts of the Lower Yangtze, Beijing, or the Southwest, the *Jingang Keyi*'s performative life generally receded even when textual prestige remained.

These findings support a broader claim about textual re-ritualization. By this, I do not mean the first conversion of commentary into rite (what I call textual ritualization), but the ongoing re-activation of a received text as ritual in new historical and regional ecologies. The *Jingang Keyi* shows how such re-activation works: a stable argumentative spine (Thirty-Two Divisions) and a scalable programming grammar (Sevenfold Structure) invite different soundscapes to "write in" local prosody, producing durable congregational forms without requiring doctrinal reinvention. In this sense, the *Jingang Keyi*'s longevity in Southern Coastal China and the Chinese diaspora is as much a story of design meeting locality as it is of exegetical authority.

Methodologically, this study integrates close textual comparison (including overlap-matrix visualization of versional clusters) with ethnographic observation and musicological reading of tune types. The combination matters. Without the versional map, performance description risks dissolving into local color; without performance evidence, versional distinctions remain bibliographic. Read together, they show how material forms (hand-copied manuscripts; temple/press editions), structural cues (vow lines; responsorial closures), and sound repertoires co-produce ritual intelligibility over time.

The argument also reframes questions of legitimacy. Instead of presuming a binary between "orthodox monastic" and "folk" practice, the *Jingang Keyi*'s history reveals a division of roles sustained by exchange: monastic spaces provide institutional visibility; recognized lay specialists provide portability across households; women's circles provide continuity, pedagogy, and sponsorship. Debates about who "may" officiate the *Jingang Keyi* often shadow this collaborative ecology. Attending to the ecology itself, rather than adjudicating from above, explains endurance better than doctrinal policing does.

There are, of course, limitations. The present analysis highlights Hokkien-speaking repertoires because these are where living practice and textual evidence currently converge most densely. A fuller map will require comparable documentation from non-Hokkien sites where the *Jingang Keyi* once flourished; systematic musical transcription across regions; and closer comparison with other performative sutra traditions (e.g., *Lotus*, *Kṣitigarbha*, Water-Land assemblies) to test how far the proposed model generalizes. Digitally curated corpora of *Jingang Keyi* copies, aligned at the level of sectioning and scale cues, would also allow for more precise detection of how programming grammars travel.

Even with these limitations, the *Jingang Keyi*'s lesson is clear. The *Diamond Sūtra*'s ritual life in China and beyond has never been only a matter of ideas. It has been enacted through voices, cadences, vows, and networks that translate commentary into embodied participation. By naming and modeling textual re-ritualization, this article offers a way to see that process, not as a deviation from reading but as the means by which reading becomes a shared practice across regions and generations.

The *Xiaoshi Jingang Keyi* embodies the dynamic intersection between Buddhist textual tradition and monastic ritual life. From its Ming dynasty compilation to its continued performance across Maritime Southern China and the Chinese diaspora, the text demonstrates how exegesis could be transformed into ritual architecture. By reading, chanting, and staging the *Diamond Sūtra* through the *Jingang Keyi*, monks（or ritual specialists） enacted doctrinal understanding as an embodied devotional act. The persistence of this performative

mode reveals that textual transmission in Chinese Buddhism has always been sustained by practice—by sound, rhythm, and collective participation.

This study has shown that the *Jingang Keyi* is not merely a derivative commentary but a ritual text that translates scriptural authority into liturgical experience. Its stratified versional system mirrors the functional layers of ritual performance: exegetical, mnemonic, and ceremonial. Each layer has enabled adaptation to different communities and temporal settings, ensuring flexibility without losing coherence. Through this interplay of text and action, the *Diamond Sūtra* has acquired a lived continuity that has traversed dynastic and geographic boundaries.

Tracing the *Jingang Keyi's* regional and diasporic transmission also redefines the cultural geography of Chinese Buddhism. Maritime Southern China emerges as a vital corridor through which monks (or ritual specialists), chanting masters, and lay devotees carried ritual repertoires overseas. Within these interconnected networks, the *Keyi* became a shared script for performing enlightenment—a bridge linking monastic study, communal worship, and transoceanic identity.

Ultimately, the *Xiaoshi Jingang Keyi* invites us to reconsider what it means for a Buddhist text to "live." Its endurance depends not solely on preservation within the canon but on its continual reenactment within bodies, voices, and communities. By highlighting this embodied dimension, the present study contributes to the broader understanding of *monastic lives and Buddhist textual traditions in China and beyond*, revealing that the vitality of the *Diamond Sūtra* tradition rests as much in ritual performance as in the written word.

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Notes

1 "*Jingang Ke*" is an abbreviation for *Xiaoshi Jingang Keyi* found in the Ming dynasty novel *The Plum in the Golden Vase*. It also appears as the external title of annotated Ming editions and the existing Yunnan Jianchuan manuscript劍川抄本, reflecting the popular understanding of the key terms in this text. Other names include (*Xiaoshi*) *Jingang Keyi Baojuan* (*Precious Scroll*).

2 In this study, Buddhist hermeneutics is understood as a dual process, incorporating both the interpretive analysis of textual meaning and the ritual enactment of its spiritual essence.

3 This edition is a composite annotated text referencing the following three contents: a. *The Diamond Sutra* translated by Kumarajiva; b. Zong Jing's exegesis of *the Diamond Sutra* in thirty-two sections; c. The annotations on Zong Jing's *Diamond Sutra Ritual* by three masters in Beijing: Master Da Ning 大宁, Master Jingdu Da 達, and Master PuEn Gui 桂.

4 *Ruru sayings* refers to the collection of aphoristic writings by the Southern Song lay Buddhist Yan Bing 顏丙 (?-1212, a Dharma descendant of Dahui Zonggao 大慧宗杲), who was active in northern Fujian during the same period as Zhu Xi 朱熹. Two principal versions are extant: a seven-volume edition labeled 甲–庚, and a two-volume edition, which was the one used by Yoshioka. Both versions are held at Kyoto University.

5 The *Five Commentaries* was introduced from Korea to Japan no later than 1464. See *Veritable Records of the Joseon Dynasty*, vol. 12, book 33, folio 41a. For prior research on the Diamond Sūtra's Five Commentaries tradition (*Jingangjing wujiajie* 金剛經五家解), including studies in Korean, Japanese, and Western academia, see comprehensive reviews in Müller (1993, 2004, 2006) and Ibuki (1997).

6 The manuscript was originally cataloged as No. 1325 in *the Description of Chinese Manuscripts in the Dunhuang Collection of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts*, Russian Academy of Sciences (LO IOM RAS, which was the Institute of Asian Peoples of the USSR Academy of Sciences) and is now cataloged as Дx.284 (in Menshikov 1999).

7 The external title is *Xiaoshi Jingang Keyi Jing*, divided into two or four sections in accordion-style format, with a consistent layout, and was widely published during the Wanli period of the Ming dynasty. Copies are held in multiple locations (see Che 1998, pp. 323–24), including the National Library of China (NLC).

[8] The term "Seven-scales 七種規模" may not have been coined by Zongjing. Its earliest known appearance is in the preface to *Lushuo Ji* 錄說記, where it is phrased as "七樣規矩" (seven kinds of rules or standards).

[9] The filled cells in the table represent "Yes", and the empty cells represent "No".

[10] First published in 1515. It is the only surviving work among the three annotated books of *Jingang Keyi* that served as the basis for Huiyao. In the preface by the annotator Cheng Gui (the Master PuEn Gui mentioned in the *Huiyao*), there is additional explanation regarding the identity of Zongjing. It is stated that Zongjing is not the author's real name, but rather a title derived from his study her-mitage, Zongjing Hall (宗鏡堂).

[11] A 1528 single-scroll edition, with a copy held by Zhou Shaoliang 周紹良 (See Wang and Lin 1999).

[12] The "Gushan Edition" refers to the version of *Xiaoshi Jingang Keyi* printed from the woodblocks stored at Gushan Yongquan Temple, Fujian Province, which serves as the same source text for the Ruicheng Bookstore editions. For the format, see Pu (2005). The earliest extant edition was published in the Republican period. Although the original blocks are no longer found at Fuzhou's Yongquan Temple, a small number of copies were reprinted at Zhangzhou's Nanshan Temple around 1978.

[13] The various bound editions of *Jingang Keyi* that are currently in stable circulation in Taiwan are almost all published by Ruicheng Bookstore, with the title *Jingang Keyi Precious Scroll* and the colophon stating "Woodblocks stored at Gushan Yongquan Temple, Fujian Province". The earliest extant edition is a 1936 publication stored in Shenzhen, Guangdong.

[14] *Also known as* Chuanlao Song 川老頌, this text forms one of the constituent parts of the *Five Commentaries* and is preserved in a composite commentary edition titled *Jingangjing Zhu* 金剛經註 (X24, no. 461), which includes later annotations from the Ming dynasty. This version serves as a referential source only.

[15] Titled *Jingang Baojuan* (the Diamond Sutra Precious Scroll 金剛寶卷), a four-scroll, thread-bound edition published in the 5th year of the Xianfeng reign (1855) by the Jingsheng Bureau and Songyun Pavilion in Taiwan (See Wang et al. 2009).

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Abbreviations

B = *Dazangjing Bubian* 大藏經補編 [Supplement to the Dazangjing]. Ed. by Lan Jifu 藍吉富. Taipei: Huayu Chubanshe, 1985.

ERDB = *Erudition Database* 愛如生數字平台. Beijing Erudition Digital Research Center 北京愛如生數位化技術研究中心.

KABC = *Korean Archives of Buddhist and Culture* 佛教記録文化遺産檔案館 [Archives of Buddhist Texts and Cultural Heritage]. Managed by Dongguk University 東國大學. Seoul: Dongguk University.

T = *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經 [Taishō Tripiṭaka]. Edited by Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō Kankōkai 刊行會. Tokyo: Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō Kankōkai 大藏出版株式會社, 1988.

X = *Manji Shinsan Dainihon Zokuzōkyō* 卍新纂大日本續藏經 [Newly Compiled Extended Edition of the Japanese Buddhist Canon]. Edited by Zokuzōkyō Hensan Iinkai 續藏經編纂委員會. Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai 國書刊行會, 1975–1989.

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