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Restoring the Canon in the Wake of Destruction: Daolin Temple and the Dazhong Revival in Late Tang

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Abstract

In the aftermath of the Huichang Persecution 會昌法難 (845), the restoration of scriptural collections became an urgent imperative for local monasteries. This article examines Daolin Temple 道林寺 as a paradigmatic case study of post-persecution reconstruction in the Jiangnan region. Distinguished by Mount Yuelu's 嶽麓山 deep scholarly tradition and a practice emphasizing both Chan and Doctrine, Daolin Temple emerged as a vanguard in the regional quest to restore the canon. To finance this endeavor, the monk Shuyan 疏言 launched a multi-year fundraising campaign using *puman* 撲滿 (coin banks) to gather lay donations. However, the persecution had left Jiangnan's canonical collections decimated, forcing Shuyan to look beyond the region. He ultimately traveled north to Taiyuan 太原 in the Hedong region—an area that had sustained relatively limited damage and was experiencing a vibrant Buddhist revival. This study argues that Hedong's preserved scriptural resources and strong tradition of official patronage were the decisive factors driving Shuyan's northward pilgrimage for scriptures.

Keywords: the Huichang Persecution; Daolin Temple; sutra canon; Jiangnan; Taiyuan

1. Introduction

A defining characteristic of medieval Chinese Buddhism was its profound emphasis on the transmission and exegesis of sacred scriptures. From the Eastern Han dynasty onward, the imperial court frequently established translation bureaus to render Buddhist texts into Chinese—a monumental project significantly supported by local monastic communities. Concurrently, indigenous monks actively composed their own treatises and commentaries, producing a vast body of exegesis alongside the translated canon. By the Sui and Tang dynasties, the Buddhist textual corpus in China had become exceptionally voluminous. Consequently, leading monastics turned their attention to defining the structure and taxonomy of the canon. Building on these efforts, the court commissioned the compilation and dissemination of imperial catalogues in an attempt to standardize the canonical holdings of monasteries across the realm (G. Fang 2006, pp. 71–118; X. Zhang 2019, pp. 178–205; Feng 2025, pp. 38–54).

However, by the mid to late Tang, intellectual interest in theoretical inquiry within the Buddhist community began to wane, leading to a marked decline in the translation and annotation of scriptures (Z. Ge 2001). During this phase, the size of the canon largely stabilized, and regional variations in scriptural collections gradually integrated. This period of consolidation, however, was violently interrupted by the Huichang Persecution (845). In this catastrophic suppression, monks and nuns throughout the empire were forcibly laicized, and monastic properties were confiscated or destroyed (Weinstein 1987, pp. 115–36).

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From the perspective of canonical history, the persecution dealt a devastating blow to scriptural diversity nationwide and decimated local library collections (Y. Huang 2011, pp. 83–92).

Upon his accession to the throne, Emperor Xuanzong 宣宗 immediately lifted the proscription against Buddhism, ordering the reconstruction of monasteries and authorizing new ordinations. While recent scholarship has increasingly examined this Buddhist revival from various regional perspectives (L. Huang 2020; You and Feng 2022), studies focusing specifically on the reconstitution of monastic scriptural collections remain scarce. Crucially, the restoration of the canon was a fundamental component of the post-persecution rebuilding process. Therefore, examining the survival of Buddhist scriptures in local monasteries following the Huichang Persecution, alongside the mechanisms of restoring local canonical systems, is a task of significant historiographical importance.

This article addresses these issues by synthesizing records from monastic biographies and epigraphy with a focused regional case study. Among the monasteries in the Jiangnan region, the restoration of the scriptural collection at Daolin Temple 道林寺 in Tanzhou 潭州 is particularly well-documented. Recently, Fang Yuan has highlighted the exceptional historical value of a ceramic *puman* 撲滿 (coin bank) from the Tang dynasty Changsha kilns, dated to the third year of the Dazhong 大中 era (849) and now housed in the Hunan Museum (Y. Fang 2019; J. Li 2021). The inscription on this vessel documents the fundraising efforts for re-establishing Daolin Temple's canon, directly corroborating evidence found in transmitted literary sources. Complementing this archaeological find are records from contemporary poetry, prose, and Buddhist historiography. Importantly, Fang Yuan's work is of seminal significance in guiding our perspective toward temple canons of the Buddhist revival era. Yet, more historical specifics await excavation. By integrating these diverse materials, we can use Daolin Temple as a lens to reconstruct a comprehensive account of how a Jiangnan monastery restored its scriptures during the Dazhong revival. This case study, in turn, illuminates broader regional variations and strategies in the preservation and transmission of Buddhist texts.

2. The Tradition of Scriptural Veneration at Mount Yuelu

Faming 法明, a monk from the Northern Song monastery Baofan Jiao Temple 寶梵教寺, once cited a telling observation by the Tang scholar Han Zicai 韓梓材:

> Han Zicai was a renowned Tang dynasty Confucian scholar. He authored an inscription for the revolving sutra repository at Qingquan Temple, in which he stated: "During the Dahe era (827–835), there were over thirty thousand Buddhist monasteries in the empire, yet those capable of housing a complete canon numbered no more than ten or a hundred" (Ma and Yuan 1990, vol. 18, p. 6402).
>
> 昔韓梓材,唐之名儒也,嘗為清泉寺作輪藏記,其間所載"大和中率天下佛祠逾三萬,其能置大藏者不過什百"。

This passage is derived from the "Tang Qingquansi Dazangjing Ji" 唐清泉寺大藏經記 (Record of the Great Scriptural Treasury at Qingquan Temple of the Tang), composed by Han in the second year of the Dahe 大和 era (828). If accurate, Han's account suggests that on the eve of the Huichang Persecution, fewer than one hundred monasteries throughout the entire empire possessed a complete Buddhist canon. Historically, Daolin Temple in Tanzhou was neither a preeminent monastic center nor renowned for an extensive library. How, then, did it emerge as a pioneer in the restoration of the canon among the monasteries of the Hunan circuit? To answer this question, we must trace the early history of Daolin Temple.

Virtually no records regarding the history of Daolin Temple prior to the Huichang Persecution can be found in extant Buddhist texts or epigraphic sources. However, Tang dynasty poetry and prose frequently mention Daolin Temple in tandem with Yuelu Temple 嶽麓寺 (also known as Lushan Temple 麓山寺). Prominent poets such as Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 and Shen Chuanshi 沈傳師 documented visits to both sites, noting their proximity on Mount Yuelu. Daolin Temple was at the mountain's foot, merely eight *li* 里 from the city, while Yuelu Temple was perched near the summit, accessible only by a climb of over a hundred steps (Zhu and Zhu 2003, p. 416). Tang Fu 唐扶 famously referred to them as "Daolin and Yuelu, the younger and elder brothers" (道林嶽麓仲與昆) (Peng 1960, p. 5543), a metaphor underscoring their intimate connection.

Fortunately, a surviving Tang stele sheds light on the early history of Yuelu Temple, revealing its origins as the practice center of Chan Master Fachong 法崇 during the Western Jin dynasty, though its layout had evolved significantly by the Tang. A poem by Liu Changqing 劉長卿, describing his journey from Daolin to Yuelu past Fachong's former residence (Zhu and Zhu 2003, p. 418), indicates that this site lay on the path connecting the two temples. This evidence suggests that the two monasteries may have evolved from the bifurcation of Fachong's original practice center. Thus, while Daolin Temple's early history lacks direct textual attestation, the records regarding Yuelu Temple provide invaluable context for understanding the early development of Buddhism on Mount Yuelu.

In 730, the eminent calligrapher and official Li Yong composed the "Stele of Lushan Temple" 麓山寺碑, chronicling the monastery's evolution since its founding in 268. The inscription attests to Yuelu Temple's long-standing tradition of maintaining a scriptural collection, an enterprise sustained by successive generations of local officials. Notable patrons included Wang Sengqian 王僧虔, Inspector of Xiangzhou 湘州 under the Liu Song; Xiao Hang 蕭沆, Grand Administrator of Changsha under the Southern Liang; Quan Wu 權武, Area Commander of Tanzhou during the Sui; and Dou Yancheng 竇彥澄, Vice Prefect of Tanzhou during the Tang (C. Wang 1977, vol. 78, pp. 1322–23).

This tradition of scriptural preservation was intimately tied to the temple's doctrinal affiliation, particularly its deep connection to the Tiantai school. The "Stele of Lushan Temple" records that in 589, the Tiantai patriarch Zhiyi 智顗 preached at the temple. This episode is corroborated by his disciple Guanding 灌頂, who noted that after Zhiyi was invited by the Last Ruler of the Chen 陳後主 to preach in Jinling 金陵. After the dynasty fell, Zhiyi "made his way to the Jing-Xiang region" (金陵既敗，策杖荊湘) (Guanding 1983, p. 194; Daoxuan 2014, p. 629). This suggests that shortly after the Sui conquest of the Chen in early 589, Zhiyi traveled south to Tanzhou and took up residence at Yuelu Temple. His propagation of Tiantai teachings significantly elevated the temple's status within the Buddhist community of Jiangnan. The spiritual lineage connecting the temple to the Tiantai tradition is further exemplified by Master Tanjie 曇捷. Originally practicing in Yuezhou 岳州, Tanjie had followed Zhiyi to study the *Sutra of Golden Light* 金光明經.[1] He later served as abbot of Yuelu Temple, where he oversaw major construction projects. Similarly, another former abbot, Master Shouleng 首楞, is recorded as having "traveled far to the Wu-Hui region to seek out the subtleties of the Tiantai tradition" (遠涉吳會，幽尋天台), thereby upholding the monastery's doctrinal heritage.

However, Yuelu Temple was not exclusively affiliated with the Tiantai school. The "Stele of Lushan Temple" also records the residence of Chan Masters such as Moheyan 摩訶衍 and Huixing 慧性. Moheyan, who initially trained in the Northern School of Chan, later studied under Heze Shenhui 菏澤神會, thereby synthesizing the Northern emphasis on gradual cultivation with the Southern doctrine of sudden enlightenment. He subsequently traveled to Tibet to transmit the Dharma, where he exerted a profound influence on the development of Tibetan Chan Buddhism.[2] While the activities of Chan Master Huix-

ing are less documented, the stele indicates that his thought emphasized the interplay of internal causes and external conditions, as well as the harmonization of inherent nature and actualized practice. This philosophical orientation reflects a clear preference for gradual cultivation.

Given the intellectual backgrounds of these figures, Yuelu Temple can be characterized as a syncretic monastery that placed equal weight on both Chan practice and Doctrinal study. The community's adherence to the Tiantai and Northern Chan traditions fostered an environment where the meticulous study of scriptures was viewed as essential practice. This doctrinal inclusivity was, in turn, the decisive factor in sustaining the temple's long-standing tradition of scriptural collection and preservation.

Regarding the history of Daolin Temple, we can only catch glimpses from later historical sources. Huihong 慧洪's *Chanlin sengbao zhuan* 禪林僧寶傳 (Biographies of Chan Monks) records: "When Xie Shizhi (i.e., Xie Jingwen 謝景溫) served as the prefect of Tanzhou, he wished to convert the Vinaya establishment of Daolin into a Chan monastery. He extended a full ceremonial invitation to Master You to serve as its first-generation abbot, and You accepted with pleasure" (謝師直守潭州，欲禪道林之律居，盡禮致祐為第一世，祐欣然來) (Hui 2014, p. 168). This passage identifies Xie Jingwen as the key figure in transforming Daolin Temple from a Vinaya institution into a Chan monastery. Given that his tenure in Tanzhou began in 1077 (T. Li 2004, p. 6954), it is evident that Daolin Temple retained its character as a Vinaya monastery well into the mid-Northern Song. This is corroborated by Zhao Ning 趙寧's *Changshafu yuelu zhi* 長沙府嶽麓志 (Gazetteer of Mount Yuelu in Changsha Prefecture), which states that "the temple was a Vinaya cloister during the Sui and Tang dynasties and was converted to Chan in the Song" (隋唐為律院，宋改禪) (Zhao 1687, p. 31b).[3]

To further trace its Tang dynasty Vinaya lineage, we find a telling account in the *Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳 (Song Biographies of Eminent Monks). During the Yuanhe era (806–820), a man named Zangyi 藏廙 "informed his parents of his wish to renounce the secular life. His resolve being unshakeable, he went directly to Mount Yuelu in Changsha and entrusted himself to Vinaya Master Lingzhi, requesting tonsure and ordination. Master Lingzhi, observing his strength of will and exceptional character, accepted him" (元和中告親求出家，志不可卻，直造長沙嶽麓，投靈智律師請事剃染。智師察其強願不群，乃攝度之) (Zanning 1987, p. 280). The monastery where Zangyi was ordained was most likely Daolin Temple. The fact that Zangyi, a native of Xin'an 信安 in Quzhou 衢州, traveled such a great distance to Mount Yuelu to study the Vinaya attests to the renown and vitality of Vinaya studies in this region during the mid-Tang period.

In summary, the Buddhist landscape of Mount Yuelu was characterized by the interplay and co-development of multiple schools, a syncretic environment that distinguished it from other prominent Buddhist sites in Tanzhou.[4] Within this context, the Tiantai and Vinaya communities possessed a particularly urgent need for scriptural resources—a need felt most acutely by the Vinaya monks of Daolin Temple. As Fang Guangchang observes, the Vinaya tradition maintains an exceptionally close relationship with the Tripiṭaka compared to other schools. This is because the Vinaya tradition regards the entire canon as a vehicle for liberation, requiring its followers to ground their disciplinary precepts in a broad scriptural foundation (G. Fang 2006, pp. 212–13). This doctrinal imperative explains the strong internal motivation driving the monks of Daolin Temple to actively seek out the canon following the Huichang Persecution. Furthermore, the Huichang Persecution precipitated a significant restructuring of the power dynamics on Mount Yuelu. Prior to the suppression, Yuelu Temple held the dominant position, while Daolin Temple remained relatively obscure. However, post-restoration records indicate a reversal of fortunes: Daolin Temple rose to prominence, while Yuelu Temple temporarily faded into obscurity. Con-

sequently, driven by the dual necessity of securing religious authority and ensuring their community's survival in this new era, the monks of Daolin Temple were uniquely motivated to spearhead the reconstruction efforts and undertake the arduous mission of retrieving the scriptures.

3. The Reconstruction of Daolin Temple and Its Fundraising Activities After the Huichang Persecution

During the suppression of Buddhism, the Hunan Circuit came under close scrutiny from the imperial court. In an edict issued in the first month of the fifth year of the Huichang era (845), Emperor Wuzong specifically admonished local officials for their lax enforcement:

> It has come to Our attention that in the circuits of Liangzhe, Xuan, E, Tan, Hong, Fu, and Sanchuan, owing to their relative remoteness, leniency has been practiced, and consequently, there remain many excesses and irregularities among the monks and nuns. We hereby order the chief officials to conduct further rigorous screening. Even those who were previously registered, if they are young and lack monastic discipline, must be forcibly laicized.[5]
>
> 如聞兩浙、宣、鄂、潭、洪、福、三川等道，緣地稍僻，姑務寬容，僧尼之中尚多踰濫，委長吏更加揀。其有年少無戒行者，雖先在保內，亦須沙汰。

At that juncture, Chan Master Weishan Lingyou 溈山靈佑 commanded immense influence across both monastic and lay communities, hailed as "the empire's premier exponent of the Dharma for several decades" (数十年言佛者，天下以爲称首). Even Tongqing Temple 同慶寺 in Tanzhou, where he presided over a congregation of more than a thousand,[6] was not spared. Following the promulgation of the anti-Buddhist edict, the temple was targeted, and Master Lingyou himself was compelled to return to lay life. His disciple, Chan Master Hongyin 洪諲, managed to evade the purge only through the benevolence of the Changsha layman Luo Yan 羅晏, who hid him in his private residence (Zanning 1987, pp. 283–84). Similarly, the laicized Chan Master Rizhao of Mount Heng 衡山日照, left with nowhere to go, was reduced to seeking shelter in a mountain cave (Zanning 1987, p. 274). These examples offer a stark glimpse into the severity of the persecution in the Hunan Circuit during the Huichang era. The devastation was later vividly recalled by Li Jie 李節: "Images of clay and wood were cast into the waters; words on paper and silk were consumed by fire… Famous shrines and precious temples across the empire were demolished as if swept away" (容貌于土木者沉諸水，言詞於紙素者烈諸火，……天下名祠珍宇，毀撤如掃).[7] Under such dire circumstances, Daolin Temple, which lacked the prominence of Tongqing, would have found its situation even more precarious.

Upon his accession to the throne, Emperor Xuanzong immediately undertook measures to revive Buddhism. In the fifth month of the sixth year of the Huichang era (846), he issued an edict to establish eight Buddhist monasteries in each of the Left and Right Streets of Chang'an. Then, in the intercalary third month of the first year of the Dazhong era (847), he issued an edict stating:

> Regarding the monasteries located in sacred mountains, scenic sites, and prefectures throughout the empire that were dismantled in the fourth month of the fifth year of the Huichang era: should there be senior monks of established repute capable of restoring them, they are fully permitted to assume the abbacy, and the authorities concerned must not prohibit this (Liu 1975, p. 617).
>
> 其靈山勝境、天下州府，應會昌五年四月所廢寺宇，有宿舊名僧，復能修創，一任住持，所司不得禁止。

Chronological analysis of the Huichang Persecution reveals that the destruction of large-scale monasteries occurred primarily after the seventh month of the fifth year (845) (Nie 2018, pp. 100–2). The restoration edict of 847, however, explicitly targeted the hermitages (araṇya) and smaller temples that had been abolished earlier, in the fourth month. As Mount Yuelu qualified as a "sacred mountain and scenic site", and Daolin Temple fell under the category of a smaller temple, the institution met the specific criteria for immediate reconstruction. Although no historical records explicitly document the exact time of Daolin Temple's reconstruction, an inscription on a Tang dynasty Changsha ware *puman* (coin bank) indicates that the rebuilding process had commenced no later than the seventh month of the third year of the Dazhong era (849). The coin bank now housed in the Hunan Museum, bears the following inscription:

> In Tanzhou, authorization has been received to reconstruct Daolin Temple. We seek to recruit two thousand five hundred patrons. Each is to donate one thousand cash to fund the transcription of five thousand scrolls of the Great Canon, one sutra repository, and one relic stupa. Once this treasury is filled, all donors shall share equally in the resulting merit. Respectfully stated by the monk Shuyan on a day in the seventh month of the third year of the Dazhong era (849). The Treasury of Merit and Virtue (Y. Fang 2019, p. 181).
>
> 潭州准造道林寺,招募主施二千五百人,各舍錢一千文寫大藏經五千卷、經藏一和舍利塔一□，藏滿即略施同福。大中三年七月日僧疏言白。福德藏。

Despite its brevity, the inscription offers a wealth of information. The opening phrase reveals that the reconstruction of Daolin Temple proceeded with the explicit authorization of local administrative authorities. When the imperial edict to restore Buddhism was promulgated, the official serving as the Surveillance Commissioner of Hunan and Prefect of Tanzhou was Pei Xiu 裴休. According to the *Xuanhe shupu* 宣和書譜 (Xuanhe Catalogue of Calligraphy), the Northern Song imperial collection included a running-script calligraphy piece by Pei Xiu titled "Pan Shuyan Zhuang" 判疏言狀 (Verdict on Shuyan's Petition) (Fan 2011, p. 103). Although this work is no longer extant, its title strongly suggests it was Pei Xiu's official adjudication of a document submitted by Shuyan—the very monk presiding over Daolin Temple's reconstruction. It is highly probable that Shuyan's petition included a specific request for authorization to solicit public donations. Historical precedents confirm that such administrative procedures were standard. The Japanese monk Ennin 圓仁 recorded a similar fundraising appeal from a sutra-lecturing master at Xiaogan Temple 孝感寺 in Yangzhou 揚州:

> To repair the Pavilion of the Auspicious Image, I am lecturing on the Diamond Sutra and seeking to raise fifty strings of cash. The petition was submitted to the *xianggong*, and permission to solicit was granted. Those who share this karmic cause may entrust their donations to the sutra lecturer at Xiaogan Temple. The full details are in the separate petition (Ennin 2007, p. 94).
>
> 修瑞像閣，講《金剛經》，所乞錢五十貫。狀過相公，賜招募。同緣同因，寄孝感寺講經候緣者。其狀如別。

Contextual evidence identifies this "*xianggong*" as Li Deyu 李德裕, who was then serving as the Military Governor of Huainan 淮南節度使. This episode demonstrates that local monastics were strictly required to submit formal petitions to regional governors to secure approval for fundraising activities. In this light, Pei Xiu's "Verdict on Shuyan's Petition" likely functioned as the official authorization for solicitation, thereby providing the necessary bureaucratic endorsement for Daolin Temple's large-scale fundraising campaign.

It is highly probable that the "Verdict on Shuyan's Petition" was originally enshrined as a sacred treasure at Daolin Temple. According to historical sources from the late Tang

and Song dynasties, the monastery housed a "Hall of Four Excellences" 四絕堂. These "Four Excellences" were defined as the calligraphy of Shen Chuanshi and Pei Xiu, alongside the literary works of Song Zhiwen 宋之問 and Du Fu 杜甫.[8] The selection of Pei Xiu, however, was a subject of debate among later connoisseurs. The Northern Song scholar Jiang Zhiqi 蔣之奇 challenged this choice, arguing that the calligraphy of the famed master Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 ought to have replaced that of Pei Xiu (Zeng and Liu 2006, p. 362). The celebrated calligrapher and critic Mi Fu 米芾 shared this sentiment. Upon visiting Daolin Temple, Mi Fu praised Ouyang Xun's temple plaque, remarking that it possessed "formidable brush strength, constructed through meticulous outlining" (筆力險勁，勾勒而成). In contrast, he later criticized Pei Xiu's calligraphy preserved at Mount Lu 廬山 as lacking in vigor (Mi 2018, p. 8). Evidently, from the expert perspective of critics like Mi Fu, Ouyang Xun's artistic mastery surpassed that of Pei Xiu. Nevertheless, the temple's decision to retain Pei Xiu over Ouyang Xun in the Hall of Four Excellences demonstrates a veneration that transcended purely aesthetic criteria. For a work of Pei Xiu's calligraphy to hold such a distinguished position, to be revered as the temple's signature treasure, the most plausible candidate is the "Verdict on Shuyan's Petition". This document was not merely a piece of calligraphy; it was the tangible symbol of the profound bond between Pei Xiu and Daolin Temple, marking the pivotal moment of the monastery's revival. This precious manuscript was likely requisitioned by the imperial court in 977, along with other masterpieces from across the realm, to be incorporated into the imperial collection.[9] This provenance explains its subsequent recording in the Xuanhe Catalogue of Calligraphy.

According to the *puman* inscription, Shuyan successfully recruited 2500 patrons to fund the construction of the scripture repository at Daolin Temple. This fundraising model, defined by a specific headcount of committed donors rather than the ad hoc participation typical of scripture-lecture assemblies, closely resembled the organizational structure of lay associations known as *yihui* 邑會 or *fashe* 法社. According to Naba Toshisada 那波利貞, lay Buddhist societies in the Tang dynasty typically ranged in size from around dozens of members to several hundred, with those reaching a thousand being rare exceptions (Naba 1974, p. 576). To contextualize the magnitude of Shuyan's achievement, we can compare it to the largest known fundraising effort by a similar association in the late Tang. This event took place in Mingzhou 明州 in 840, during the reign of Emperor Wuzong. The "Jiupin wangshengshe bei" 九品往生社碑 (Stele of the Nine Grades of Rebirth Society) records:

> In the fifth year of the Kaicheng era (840), the gengshen year… in the fifth month of summer, Yu Temple in Kuaiji invited Dharma Master Yuanying to lecture on the Diamond Sutra at the Pingyuan Vihara in Yuyao. During the assembly, 1250 people were inspired to form the Nine Grades of Rebirth Society.
>
> 唐開成五年，歲次庚申，皇帝升極。是歲夏五月，會計（稽）禹寺請元英法師講《金剛經》于余姚平原精舍，會次慕(募)一千二百五十人結九品往生社。

However, the stele itself lists only 133 names. The scholar Lu Zengxiang 陸增祥 reconciled this discrepancy by identifying a principle of "listing one to represent ten" (十舉其一), suggesting a tiered recruitment system where each listed member was responsible for soliciting nine others.[10] Even if we accept the claimed figure of 1250 members at face value, the scale of this prominent society was merely half that of the Daolin Temple project. Similarly, during the Five Dynasties period, a Thousand-Member Association was formed to reconstruct the Dingjin Chan Monastery 定晉禪院 in Wu'an County 武安縣, Cizhou 磁州 (C. Wang 1977, p. 2185). Yet, even this major undertaking fell short of the numbers seen at Daolin. In comparison, the cohort of 2500 patrons Shuyan assembled for the restoration of the scripture repository stands out as an exceptionally massive mobilization of social resources.

Each patron of Daolin Temple was required to donate 1000 cash. According to research by Xu Chang 徐暢, the annual surplus of a small peasant household in the metropolitan region during the mid-to-late Tang was approximately 1000 cash (C. Xu 2016, pp. 87–99). Given the economic trajectory of the era, the annual surplus of an average peasant household in Tanzhou was likely even higher. Following the An Lushan Rebellion 安史之亂, the Jiangnan region rose in economic prominence, with its agricultural productivity gradually eclipsing that of the Central Plain (B. Li 2009, pp. 194–219). Although the Hunan region may not have matched the extreme opulence of Liangzhe 兩浙, it remained remarkably productive. A memorial from the Censorate in 829 attested to this fertility: "The lands of Jiangxi and Hunan are famed for their rich soil; their yields are often double those of other prefectures" (其江西、湖南，地稱沃壤，所出常倍他州) (Q. Wang 1960, p. 5659). Similarly, the statesman Liu Yan 劉晏, in discussing his reforms of the grain transport system, identified Tanzhou as an agriculturally developed region and a vital source of grain for the Guanzhong 關中 area (Liu 1975, p. 3512).

This macro-historical context is mirrored at the micro-level. The immediate environs of Mount Yuelu, where Daolin Temple stood, exhibited signs of flourishing agriculture. The late-Tang poet-monk Qiji 齊己 captured this scene in his poem "Muyou Yuelusi" 暮游嶽麓寺 (Evening Stroll at Yuelu Temple): "Looking back, where is there any idle land? Mulberries and wheat from the four villages blanket the hills and mounds" (回首何邊是空地，四村桑麥遍丘陵) (Peng 1960, p. 9563). Furthermore, the method of collection was crucial: the 1000-cash contribution was gathered using a *puman*. This implies that the sum was accumulated over time rather than exacted as a lump sum. The Xijing zaji 西京雜記 (Miscellaneous Records of the Western Capital) defines the vessel thus: "The *puman* is a clay vessel designed for storing coins. It has an opening for entry but none for withdrawal. When full, it is smashed" (撲滿者，以土為器，以蓄錢具，其有入竅而無出竅，滿則撲之) (H. Ge 2006, p. 215). Thanks to this gradual accumulation, the donation of 1000 cash would not have imposed an excessive financial burden, even on ordinary peasant households in the vicinity of Daolin Temple.

If the fundraising campaign met its targets, it would have amassed a total of 2500 strings of cash. This substantial sum was allocated for three primary objectives: the transcription of a complete set of the Buddhist Canon, the construction of a scripture repository, and the erection of a Śarīra stupa. To assess the budget, we must look to contemporary records of transcription costs. Numerous manuscripts from Dunhuang contain data on the cost of sutra copying. Based on a colophon in manuscript BD06406, some scholars estimate that the cost of transcribing a single scroll in the Dunhuang region was approximately 1000 cash (Song and Wen 2015, pp. 104–5). This figure is corroborated by another manuscript, which records: "The lay devotee Shi Lunzi 石論子 donated 1000 cash to have one scroll of the *Dafoming jing* copied" (邑人石論子施錢一千文，寫《大佛名經》一卷) (Ikeda 1990, p. 384). However, due to its political isolation and logistical challenges, the market in Dunhuang during the mid-to-late Tang differed significantly from that of inland China. Therefore, estimating Shuyan's expenses based on Dunhuang prices would be misleading; we must instead rely on price data from the interior. In 834, the Japanese monk Ennin purchased the four-scroll *Weimo guanzhong shu* 維摩關中疏 (Commentary on the Vimalakīrti Sutra from the Guanzhong Region) in Yangzhou 揚州 for 450 cash (Ennin 2007, p. 61), averaging roughly 110 cash per scroll. Furthermore, accounts in the *Mingbao ji* 冥報記 (Records of Miraculous Retribution) and *Fayuan Zhulin* 法苑珠林 (Forest of Gems in the Garden of the Dharma) suggest that the price of the *Fahuajing* 法華經 (Lotus Sutra) in the interior was relatively stable at 1000 cash for a complete set (L. Tang 1992, p. 94; D. Shi 2003, pp. 1726–27). Given that the Lotus Sutra typically consists of seven scrolls, this equates to approximately 140 cash per scroll.

Based on these price points, the total cost for Shuyan to acquire a 5000-scroll canon would have fallen between roughly 600 and 700 strings of cash. This estimate aligns with contemporary records; for instance, in 842, the monk Shaoyun 少雲 of Futian Temple 福田寺 in Xuanzhou 宣州 raised several hundred thousand cash (equivalent to several hundred strings) to assemble a scripture collection.[11] Regarding the expense of constructing the stupa, the rebuilding of Anguo Temple 安國寺 in Wannian County 萬年縣 provides a valuable benchmark. The document "Chi neizhuangzhaishi die" 敕內莊宅使牒 (Dispatch of the Imperial Order to the Commissioner of Palace Estates) records that in 851, the monk Zhengyan 正言 spent no more than 200 strings of cash on that temple's stupa (G. Wu 2000, p. 2). Consequently, the financial outlook for Daolin Temple was highly favorable. Even after deducting the estimated 700 strings for the scriptures and a hypothetical 200 strings for the stupa, the project would have utilized less than half of the total funds raised. With over 1500 strings of cash remaining from the original 2500, the temple possessed more than sufficient capital to finance the construction of the scripture repository and cover all associated costs.

Shuyan's specific motivation for prioritizing the rebuilding of the stupa appears to be linked to the eminent monk Zhiyi 智顗. The *Tiantaishan fangwai zhi* 天台山方外志 (The Monastic Gazetteer of Tiantai Mountain) preserves a text titled "Xujing fayuan shu 續經發願疏 (Vow for the Continuation of Sutras)" by the Song Dharma Master Yuantong 元通. Significantly, this text is subtitled "Votive Prayer for the Stupa Construction at Daolin Temple in Hunan, in Reverence to the Dharma Master of Wisdom" (敬法智者湖南道林寺造塔願辭) (C. Shi 1985, p. 666). This explicitly indicates that Zhiyi had previously erected a stupa at the site. This original construction likely dates to the ninth year of the Kaihuang 開皇 era (589), when Zhiyi was residing at the neighboring Yuelu Temple. It is highly plausible that the stupa established by the patriarch had become an iconic landmark of Daolin Temple; its destruction would have been keenly felt, explaining Shuyan's urgent desire to see it restored.

Finally, an archaeological detail warrants attention: the aforementioned *puman* bearing the inscription remains perfectly intact. At first glance, this might suggest that the fundraising goal was not met, as the vessel was never opened. Crucially, however, the Hunan Museum houses a second, fragmented *puman* associated with the same campaign to restore the scripture repository (Y. Fang 2019, p. 189). Given that these vessels were designed to be smashed in order to retrieve their contents, the damaged state of this second artifact provides material evidence that the fundraising campaign at Daolin Temple was indeed successfully executed.

4. From Tanzhou to Taiyuan Prefecture: Shuyan's Journey to Acquire the Scriptures

Following several years of fundraising and construction, Daolin Temple finally completed its preparations for procuring the scriptures. Around the ninth year of the Dazhong era (855), Shuyan undertook the journey to Taiyuan Prefecture to acquire the Buddhist canon. This choice of destination presents a historical anomaly. Given that Tanzhou and Taiyuan are separated by thousands of *li*, why would he choose to travel so far to the Hedong region to obtain the canon?

Pragmatically, the restoration of a scriptural collection would prioritize convenience and cost-effectiveness, implying that master copies should have been sought locally. However, Li Jie's account of the devastation in the Hunan region reveals the impossibility of this option:

> South of the Lake [Dongting], the people of this distant region, terrified of the law and unable to discern the Court's true intentions, had previously inciner-

> ated scriptures and dismantled images until virtually nothing remained. Consequently, even when an explicit mandate later permitted their re-establishment, the texts could no longer be obtained.[12]
>
> 自湖以南，遠人畏法，不能酌朝廷之體，前時焚撤書像殆無遺者。故雖明命復許制立，莫能得其書。

Given Emperor Wuzong's specific scrutiny of the Hunan Circuit, Li Jie's bleak assessment cannot be dismissed as mere metropolitan prejudice against a peripheral region. Furthermore, the edict of the seventh month of the fifth year of the Huichang era (845) mandated that within the entire Hunan Circuit, only Kaiyuan Temple 開元寺 in Changsha was permitted to remain active (Nie 2018, pp. 100–2). Yet, despite its status as an officially sanctioned monastery, Kaiyuan Temple was historically obscure and rarely appears in contemporary records. Although Wuzong's earlier decree had stipulated that scriptures and images from dismantled minor temples be transferred to surviving major monasteries (Ennin 2007, p. 450), it is evident that Kaiyuan Temple failed to effectively consolidate or preserve these resources.

Nevertheless, throughout the persecution, monastics across the empire risked their lives to safeguard sacred texts. These concealed caches subsequently served as vital reservoirs for the restoration of the canon. For instance, Yuankan 元堪 of Huayan Temple 華嚴寺 on Mount Wutai 五臺山 walled up the exegetical writings of his late master, Zhiyuan 志遠, to protect them. Following the restoration of Buddhism under Emperor Xuanzong, Yuankan repaired his former residence and retrieved the texts (Zanning 1987, p. 140). Similarly, at Changshou Temple 長壽寺 in Luoyang 洛陽, the monk Zanghuan 藏奐 confronted a devastated landscape where "the Buddhist canon had been incinerated, its volumes reduced to ash" (內典焚毀，梵夾煨燼). Undeterred, he "gathered the scattered remnants and recompiled them into a canon" (手緝散落，實為大藏) (Zanning 1987, p. 276). Such acts of preservation also occurred in the Jiangnan region. The Goryeo monk Shi Yuanbiao 釋元表, having arrived in China during the Tianbao era (742–756), received guidance from the Bodhisattva Mind King 心王菩薩. He subsequently carried the eighty-scroll *Huayan jing* 華嚴經 (Avataṃsaka Sūtra) to Mount Huotong 霍童山 to pay homage to the Bodhisattva Tianguan 天冠菩薩, eventually taking up residence in the Zhiti Stone Grotto 支提石室. During the Huichang Persecution, Yuanbiao placed the sutra in a wooden case and concealed it deep within the grotto (Zanning 1987, p. 743). In the first year of the Dazhong era (847), the monk Huiping 慧評 retrieved the scripture and enshrined it at the Ganlu Duwei Cloister 甘露督尉院.

However, such individual efforts ultimately had limited impact. While preserving even a few hundred scrolls was an arduous task, it was insufficient to support the systematic restoration of large-scale canonical collections. This reality is exemplified by Donglin Temple 東林寺 on Mount Lu, arguably the most successful instance of scripture preservation in the Jiangnan region during the persecution. Long renowned for its extensive library, the temple is recorded in Li Zhao's 李肇 "Donglinsi jingzang bei" 東林寺經藏碑 (Stele for the Scripture Repository of Donglin Temple) as having acquired a collection of ten thousand scrolls during the Yuanhe era (806–820), compiled by the venerable monk Yitong 義彤 of Fucha Temple 浮槎寺 (F. Li 1966, p. 4567). During the persecution, the monk Daoshen 道深 concealed the collection in a stone chamber. Yet, a later account notes: "When the temple was subsequently restored and the scriptures retrieved, more than half had been lost; the monk Zhengyan supplemented them to some extent (後寺復而經出，然亡失者過半，僧正言稍補之)" (Shunyu Chen n.d., vol. 1, p. 19b). Wei Zhou's 韋宙 own inscription at the site corroborates this partial loss:

> The former scripture collection was destroyed along with the temple. Relying on the Preceptor Daoshen, who hid them in stone chambers, the masters Yan and Ming worked to fill the gaps (Shunyu Chen n.d., vol. 5, p. 14b).
>
> 藏經舊日耕置，隨寺毀廢。賴道深和尚藏諸石室，言上人、明上人以補其闕。

According to Cui An's 崔黯 "Fu Donglinsi bei 復東林寺碑" (Stele on the Restoration of Donglin Temple), the "Master Yan" mentioned above refers to the monk Zhengyan, who presided over the reconstruction, while "Master Ming" refers to Yiming 義明, his second-in-command. Although Daoshen had successfully preserved several thousand scrolls, the task of fully restoring the collection proved formidable. As recorded by Cai Jing 蔡京, Zhengyan traveled extensively for years in search of scriptures, yet his efforts were largely in vain (Dong 1983, p. 7892). This impasse was finally broken in the seventh month of the twelfth year of the Dazhong era (858). At that time, Wei Zhou was leading troops to quell military unrest in the Hunan and Jiangxi regions. Passing through Mount Lu, he visited Donglin Temple, donated three hundred strings of cash for the reconstruction of the scripture repository, and pledged his full support for the restoration of the canon (Shunyu Chen n.d., vol. 5, p. 14b). With this vital patronage, the collection was fully reconstituted in less than a year, restoring it to its original scale.

The prolonged struggle at Donglin Temple underscores the formidable challenges monastic communities faced in restoring their libraries independently, reflecting the acute scarcity of scriptures across the Jiangnan region. During this period, even Guoqing Temple 國清寺, the ancestral seat of the Tiantai school, was compelled to look northward for texts. According to the *Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳 (Song Biographies of Eminent Monks), the monk Qingguan 清觀 traveled to Chang'an 長安, where he successfully petitioned for a temple plaque, a bell, and a complete set of the Buddhist canon (Zanning 1987, p. 527). This event is corroborated by the records of the Japanese pilgrim Enchin 圓珍, who was then present in Tang China (Bai and Li 2003, p. 9). Similarly, Dazhong Shengshou Monastery 大中聖壽院 in Mingzhou 明州 acquired its canon from the capital through the patronage of Chancellor Pei Xiu. After the monk Shenzhi 神智 successfully treated Pei's daughter, he was rewarded with a plaque, a bell, an embroidered image, and a full set of scriptures (Zanning 1987, p. 639). Yoshikawa Tadao 吉川忠夫 suggests this donation corresponds to the record in the *Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄 (Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp), which notes that Pei Xiu "personally copied five hundred cases of the Tripiṭaka, which are treasured to this day" (親書大藏經五百函，迄今寶之) (Yoshikawa 1992, p. 265). Notably, these prominent monasteries were only able to restore their collections in the mid-to-late Dazhong era.

In sum, the systematic destruction wrought by the Huichang Persecution made it virtually impossible to readily procure a complete Buddhist canon within Tanzhou or the broader Jiangnan region. This scarcity was the primary factor compelling Shuyan to look beyond the immediate vicinity and seek scriptures in the distant north. Regarding the specific decision to travel to Taiyuan Prefecture, Li Jie's preface records Shuyan's own explanation:

> Taiyuan Prefecture is an ancient capital of the dynasty, abounding in Buddhist temples. I have heard that its commander, the Duke of Fanyang, who holds the title of Sikong, is a man of supreme benevolence. I shall go there specifically to seek the surviving writings of the Buddha, that I may benefit the people of the Xiang River region. Surely, he will heed my plea and assist in its realization (Yao 2006, vol. 96, p. 9b).
>
> 太原府國家舊都，多釋祠。我聞其帥司空范陽公，天下仁人，我弟往求，購釋氏遺文，以惠湘川之人，宜其聽我而助成之矣。

Shuyan's assertion regarding the density of monastic institutions in Taiyuan is corroborated by modern scholarship. Li Yinghui's 李映輝 statistical survey of Tang dynasty monastic distribution identifies Taiyuan Prefecture as a major center of activity in both the early and late periods (Y. Li 2004, pp. 87–93). For the post-Huichang era, the Dunhuang manuscript S.529v, "Shiming xingji" 失名行記 (Anonymous Travel Record), offers valuable data on the state of Buddhism during the transition from the late Later Liang to the Later Tang (Zheng 1989; Shuangyin Chen 2007, pp. 9–27). The author records:

> Within the city of Taiyuan, there are fifteen great monasteries, eleven large Chan cloisters, over one hundred small Chan cloisters, and more than twenty thousand monks and nuns (Hao 2003, vol. 3, p. 48).
>
> 太原城大寺一十五所，大禪院十一所，小禪院百餘所，僧尼二萬餘人。

When compared against data from other locations listed in the same document, Taiyuan ranks among the highest in both the number of religious establishments and the size of the monastic population. This evidence suggests that the Buddhist community in Taiyuan demonstrated remarkable resilience, recovering rapidly after the persecution was lifted and maintaining its status as a regional core of Buddhism.

Further insight is provided by the manuscript P.4648, "Xunli ji" 巡禮記 (Record of a Pilgrimage), another travelogue from the late Tang and Five Dynasties period that records the monastic landscape of Taiyuan in detail.[13] The author's itinerary began at Da'an Temple 大安寺. For a more granular depiction of this site's architecture, we turn to manuscript S.397, "Wutaishan xingji" 五臺山行記 (Record of a Journey to Mount Wutai). This text describes an imposing complex: fronted by a Five Phoenix Tower 五鳳樓, it boasted a nine-bay Great Hall, a nine-bay Lecture Hall, and a bell weighing ten thousand *jin*. To the rear lay the Three Colleges, while the compound also encompassed subsidiary precincts such as the Dabei Cloister 大悲院, the Maitreya Cloister 彌勒院, and the Manjusri Cloister 文殊院, features that collectively attest to the temple's grand scale (Hao 2003, vol. 2, p. 288). Of particular significance to this study is the temple's scripture repository, which housed a complete canon comprising 5600 scrolls. Notably, this count diverges from the standard figure listed in the "Catalogue of the Canon" 入藏錄 of the *Kaiyuan Shijiao Lu* 開元釋教錄 (Kaiyuan Catalogue of Buddhist Teachings). This discrepancy not only highlights the distinctiveness of the regional canonical tradition in Taiyuan but also serves as compelling evidence of the local abundance and vitality of Buddhist scriptural resources.

The itinerary recorded in the "Xunli ji" offers a window into the condition of several venerable monasteries in Taiyuan during the late Tang and Five Dynasties (Tang and Lu 1986, p. 84). The pilgrim's first destination was the prestigious Dachongfu Temple 大崇福寺. Historically the site of an imperial portrait of Wu Zetian 武則天, the temple remained a hub for eminent monks. The Japanese monk Ennin, visiting during the Ullambana Festival of 840, described the scene vividly: "All the cloisters below the pavilion were lavishly arranged, their splendor dazzling the eye, with rare and marvelous offerings on display" (閣下諸院皆鋪陳張列，光彩映人，供陳珍妙) (Ennin 2007, p. 315). The imposing structure Ennin described was likely the five-story "Qian-Yuan Longevity Pavilion" 乾元長壽閣 mentioned in the "Xunli ji".

The author next visited Dazhong Temple 大中寺, noting its great pavilion and an iron Buddha. This site corresponds to the Kaiyuan Temple 開元寺 documented in Ennin's diary, *Nyūtō Guhō Junrei Gyōki* 入唐求法巡禮行記 (Record of a Pilgrimage to Tang China in Search of the Dharma). Ennin recorded ascending a pavilion there to view a "statue of Maitreya Buddha, cast in iron and gilded" (入開元寺，上閣觀望。閣內有彌勒佛像，以鐵鑄造，上金色) (Ennin 2007, p. 316). As Ono Katsutoshi 小野勝年 explains, the temple was renamed

"Dazhong" in honor of Emperor Xuanzong's era following its post-persecution restoration (Ono 1964, p. 176).[14]

Subsequently, the author paid homage to a "Stupa of the True Body Relics" 真身舍利塔 at Jingming Temple 淨明寺. The history of this monument is preserved in the "Huimingsi shelita bei" 惠明寺舍利塔碑 (Stele Inscription for the Śarīra Stupa of Huiming Temple), composed by the Song official Lü Huiqing 呂惠卿. The text identifies it as one of the "King Aśoka Stupas" erected during the Renshou 仁壽 era (601–604) of the Sui dynasty. Remarkably, the stupa survived until 979, when it was destroyed during Emperor Taizong of Song's campaign against Liu Jingyuan 劉景元 (C. Wang 1977, vol. 138, p. 2586). Crucially, the inscription makes no mention of the stupa suffering damage during the Huichang Persecution, implying it remained intact throughout the suppression.

Having surveyed the urban monasteries, the pilgrim turned to the mountain temples in the northwest and west, taking special note of the landmark structures at Kaihua Temple 開化寺 and Tongzi Temple 童子寺. At Kaihua Temple in the northwest, he observed a great pavilion housing a stone Buddha. According to Su Yugui's 蘇禹珪 "Mengshan Kaihuabaoyan ge ji" 蒙山開化寶嚴閣記 (Record of the Precious Adorned Pavilion at Kaihua Temple on Mount Meng), while the original pavilion was destroyed during the persecution in 844, the stone statue itself survived unscathed. In 895, Li Keyong 李克用 sponsored a five-year reconstruction project for the pavilion, which was subsequently expanded and embellished by Liu Zhiyuan 劉知遠 (Dong 1983, p. 9016). Tongzi Temple similarly boasted an image pavilion and a colossal stone Buddha. Ennin, having visited the site earlier, documented the statue's form and identified it as Amitābha. He described it thus: "Its countenance is solemn and majestic, upright like pure white jade. Its seated body is seventeen zhang high and one hundred chi wide" (顏容顒然，皓玉端立。趺坐之體高十七丈，闊百尺) (Ennin 2007, p. 319).

The preceding analysis demonstrates that the major monasteries of Taiyuan either remained largely intact or were swiftly restored during the late Tang and Five Dynasties. Had monumental structures such as the Qian-Yuan Longevity Pavilion at Chongfu Temple or the colossal stone Buddha at Tongzi Temple been razed, their reconstruction would have posed nearly insurmountable challenges. Consequently, the evidence suggests that the Taiyuan region was spared the full brunt of the Huichang Persecution, allowing its Buddhist architecture and facilities to be preserved in a relatively complete state. This preservation laid a crucial foundation for the region's rapid religious revival. Moreover, Taiyuan's prominence was further amplified by the flourishing pilgrimage trade to Mount Wutai from the mid-to-late Tang onwards (Lin 2009, pp. 203–10; Kegasawa 2014, pp. 134–49), as the city served as the essential gateway on this route. Accounts of its thriving temples, disseminated by countless pilgrims, would have reached monks as far away as Jiangnan. For Shuyan, the specific intelligence that Da'an Temple housed a complete Buddhist canon would have been a decisive factor in his planning.

Beyond the immediate resources of Taiyuan, the immense scriptural wealth of nearby Mount Wutai likely constituted another decisive factor in Shuyan's decision to travel to the Hedong region. Long before the Huichang Persecution, the mountain was renowned for housing multiple canonical collections. In 748, for instance, under the orders of Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗, Yang Xian 楊銛 commissioned "5048 scrolls of the complete Buddhist canon, along with 2000 scrolls of Prajñā and Tiantai commentaries" (一切經五千四十八卷，般若四教、天台疏論二千卷) for Qingliang Temple 清涼寺 (F. Li 1966, p. 4356). Similarly, the Samantabhadra Hall 普賢道場 at Jinge Temple 金閣寺 possessed a magnificent 6000-scroll canon transcribed in gold and silver ink. The dedicatory preface for this treasury was recorded by Ennin, and the canon itself was studied by the monk Wuye 無業 during the reign of Emperor Dezong 德宗 (Ennin 2007, p. 294; Zanning 1987, p. 686). While the

precise fate of these precious collections during the persecution remains uncertain, anecdotal evidence suggests strict enforcement in the area; for instance, the monk Yuankan of Huayan Temple was forced to wall up scriptures to preserve them. Nevertheless, Mount Wutai's unique status as the empire's preeminent sacred site ensured it received immediate and exceptional imperial patronage once the anti-Buddhist policies were reversed. An edict issued in early 848 granted Mount Wutai, alongside the Eastern Capital Luoyang, permission to establish five monasteries, each staffed by fifty monks. By contrast, the seats of regional Military Governors were restricted to establishing only one or two monasteries with thirty monks each. Given this preferential state support, it is highly probable that the scriptural collections on Mount Wutai were systematically restored shortly after the proscription was lifted.

The later pilgrimage of the Southern Tang monk Heng'an 恒安 serves as an illuminating parallel. In 917, having encountered a copy of the *Zhenyuan Catalogue* 貞元錄 in Jiangnan, Heng'an vowed to procure the texts listed therein to remedy the deficiencies of the local canon. When his search throughout the Jiangnan region proved fruitless, he journeyed specifically to Mount Wutai in 938. Remarkably, not only did he locate all the works listed in the catalogue, but he also discovered a wealth of additional scriptures that had been absent from the registry (Heng'an 1983, pp. 1048–49). This demonstrates that by the post-restoration era, Mount Wutai had not only reconstituted its canonical holdings but possessed a collection whose scale and completeness far surpassed those available in Jiangnan. The enduring reputation of this scriptural abundance likely served as a powerful incentive driving Shuyan's own pilgrimage to the Hedong region.

A final, decisive factor in Shuyan's choice of Taiyuan was the presence of its governor, whom he extolled as a "man of great benevolence". This figure, identified in the *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 (Old Tang History) as Lu Jun 盧鈞, served as the Military Governor of Hedong during the mid-Dazhong period (Liu 1975, p. 631). Crucially, Lu Jun possessed a formidable reputation for protecting the Dharma. Prior to his tenure in Hedong, he had served as the Military Governor of the Zhaoyi Circuit 昭義軍 (headquartered in Lu Prefecture 潞州) following the suppression of Liu Zhen's rebellion in 844 (T. Wu 1980, pp. 486–87), a post he held throughout the height of the persecution. His protective stance is corroborated by the Japanese monk Ennin, who noted in late 845:

> Only the four Military Governors north of the Yellow River, in Zhen, You, Wei, and Lu, have always respected the Buddhist Dharma. They did not demolish monasteries or laicize monks and nuns. In all matters of the Dharma, they left everything untouched (Ennin 2007, p. 491).
>
> 唯黃河已北鎮、幽、魏、路(潞)等四節度使元來敬重佛法……一切不動之。

The "Lu" circuit mentioned here refers specifically to Lu Jun's jurisdiction. While the scholar Michihata Ryōshū 道端良秀 cautions that Ennin, then in distant Chuzhou 楚州, may have recorded exaggerated hearsay (Michihata 1957, pp. 161–76), the account nonetheless confirms that Lu Jun's pro-Buddhist reputation had radiated as far as the Jiangnan region. It was undoubtedly this widespread renown that inspired Shuyan's confidence to undertake the journey. Furthermore, the *Fozu Tongji* 佛祖統紀 records that Wei Zhou, the Deputy Military Governor of Hedong at the time, also actively assisted Shuyan's project (Zhipan 2012, p. 994). Wei Zhou held a profound personal connection to scriptural preservation: his father, Wei Dan 韋丹, had originally founded the renowned collection at Donglin Temple. Given the proximity of Tanzhou to Jiangzhou 江州, the Wei family's legacy of patronage would have been well-known to Shuyan. Given this background, Shuyan likely anticipated finding a sympathetic ally in Wei Zhou. Indeed, Wei Zhou's

subsequent donation to restore the Donglin collection in 858 serves as a testament to his enduring commitment to the preservation of the Buddhist canon.

As events would prove, Shuyan's faith was well-placed. Upon completing his arduous journey of several thousand li to the north, he arrived in Taiyuan, where Governor Lu Jun readily acceded to his request for assistance. Lu Jun even leveraged his official authority to facilitate the search for scattered scrolls and surviving manuscripts. The scholar Fang Yuan draws a parallel between Shuyan's method and that of Zhang Daozhen 張道真, who compiled a canon for Sanjie Monastery 三界寺 in Dunhuang; Fang even reconstructs Shuyan's operational procedures and the likely official documentation involved by extrapolating from the Dunhuang case (Y. Fang 2019, pp. 191–93). However, a striking contrast lies in the timeline: while Zhang Daozhen's project spanned several decades, Shuyan managed to procure a complete canon of 5048 scrolls in a matter of months. This remarkable efficiency implies two key factors: first, Shuyan was evidently strictly adhering to the *Kaiyuan Shijiao Lu*,[15] which served as the standard bibliographic blueprint for post-persecution restorations; and second, the scriptural reserves in Taiyuan were so extensive that ready-made copies of most texts were immediately available. By the autumn of 855, his mission accomplished, Shuyan returned to Tanzhou with carts laden with scriptures.

The renown of Daolin Temple's restored collection is vividly captured in late Tang poetry. Cui Jue 崔珏, in his poem "Daolin Temple" writes: "In the Fragrant Pavilion, the great Dharma drum sounds at dawn; In the Celestial Palace, scriptures of the Three Vehicles are chanted by night" (香閣朝鳴大法鼓，天宮夜轉三乘書). Similarly, a poem of the same title by Wei Chan 韋蟾 highlights the cosmopolitan prestige of the collection: "From northern tribes comes fragrant clay for sculpting, While texts from Western lands are inscribed on pattra leaves" (北方部落泥香塑，西國文書貝葉寫) (F. Li 1966, p. 1770). Clearly, the canon that Shuyan had acquired became not merely a repository of texts, but a celebrated feature of the monastery, cementing its status in the religious landscape of the late Tang.

5. Conclusions

This article has reconstructed the historical origins, preparatory mechanisms, and procurement routes involved in the restoration of the scriptural collection at Daolin Temple in Tanzhou following the Huichang Persecution. The study reveals that the swift mobilization of the Daolin community was intrinsically linked to the distinct religious ecology of Mount Yuelu. Unlike other prominent Buddhist centers in the Hunan region, where the Chan school held singular dominance, Mount Yuelu maintained a scholarly ethos that placed equal emphasis on Chan meditation and Doctrinal study, while retaining deep ties to the Tiantai tradition. Furthermore, the temple's roots in the Vinaya School provided an intrinsic motivation for this urgent quest for scriptures. In the post-persecution reshuffling of the local religious landscape, rebuilding the library became a strategic imperative for Daolin Temple to reassert its religious authority.

Under the auspices of the Hunan Surveillance Commissioner Pei Xiu, the reconstruction proceeded systematically under the leadership of the monk Shuyan. To finance this ambitious project, Shuyan implemented a fundraising campaign utilizing *puman*, successfully recruiting 2500 patrons. A comparative analysis with contemporaneous lay societies reveals the exceptional scale of this mobilization. With each patron contributing 1000 cash, the campaign amassed 2500 strings of cash, providing a robust financial foundation for the acquisition of the canon.

After extensive preparation, Shuyan undertook the long journey north to the Hedong region. His compulsion to seek a distant source over nearby options underscores the profound regional disparities in scriptural preservation following the Huichang Persecution. During the suppression, Emperor Wuzong had decreed the preservation of select impe-

rial monasteries in Chang'an, such as Ximing Temple and Ci'en Temple, as well as specific Kaiyuan temples in the provinces, thereby securing a remnant foundation for the Tang canon. However, the enforcement of anti-Buddhist edicts was particularly severe in the Jiangnan region, where local collections suffered catastrophic damage. Even Guoqing Temple, the ancestral seat of the Tiantai school, and Donglin Temple, the center of the Pure Land tradition, were unable to replenish their libraries from local resources. Consequently, monks like Qingguan and Zhengyan were forced to leverage trans-regional networks, traveling to Chang'an or relying on the patronage of northern officials like the Wei family.

In stark contrast to the devastation in Jiangnan, the Buddhist community in the Hedong region exhibited remarkable resilience. A synthesis of records from Ennin's diary and Dunhuang travelogues confirms that prominent monasteries in Taiyuan maintained their structural continuity and institutional vitality through the persecution. The preservation of rich scriptural resources in both Taiyuan and neighboring Mount Wutai served as the primary magnet for Shuyan's northward pilgrimage. Furthermore, personal political networks played a decisive role. The Military Governor of Hedong, Lu Jun, and his deputy, Wei Zhou, were both renowned protectors of the Dharma. Lu Jun's pro-Buddhist reputation, which had impressed even the fleeing Ennin, suggests that local scholar-officials served as critical pillars in upholding Buddhist orthodoxy and sustaining networks of faith during the late Tang.

Finally, this case study invites a re-evaluation of the conventional historiography, which often positions the Huichang Persecution as the singular turning point marking the decline of Doctrinal schools and the ascendance of Chan. Attributing this shift solely to the destruction of the canon arguably exaggerates the persecution's long-term impact. First, the destruction of scriptures was neither total nor uniform; significant regional variations allowed for recovery. Second, the waning intellectual interest in doctrinal theory had already begun by the mid-eighth century, exacerbated by the An Lushan Rebellion. Indeed, the devastation wrought by the endemic warfare of the Five Dynasties period appears to have been far more detrimental to the transmission of texts than the Huichang suppression itself. This is evidenced by the Wuyue King Qian Chu's 錢俶 need to dispatch envoys to Japan and Goryeo to retrieve Tiantai texts, which had been "fragmented and rendered incomplete by the wars of the Five Dynasties" (天台教卷，經五代戰亂，殘毀不全) (Zhipan 2012, p. 1018). Viewed in this context, the restoration movement during the Dazhong era (847–860) represents a final efflorescence of the scripture-reliant Doctrinal schools in the history of Tang Buddhism.

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Notes

1 *Fozu tongji jiaozhu* 6.180. In addition, *Guoqing bailu* 國清百錄 vol. 4 mentions "the scholar Tan Jian 曇揵", which should also refer to Tan Jie, see W. Xu (2015, pp. 277–78).

2 The experience of Moheyan entering Tibet and his Chan teachings, see Rao (1982, pp. 697–711); Yang and Wang (2008, pp. 228–43).

3 While the precise institutional nature of Daolin Temple during the late Tang remains difficult to ascertain, T. Griffith Foulk points out that independent "Chan" institutions standing in opposition to "Doctrinal" or "Vinaya" establishments did not exist

in the Tang dynasty. Rather, Chan monks typically resided in Vinaya-regulated monasteries (Foulk 1987, pp. 62–99). Consequently, it is expected that Daolin Temple would uphold its Vinaya traditions and scriptural collection even while engaging with Chan teachings.

4 Mount Shishuang 石霜山, Mount Daowu 道吾山, and Mount Dawei 大潙山 are all dominated by Chan Buddhism, see W. Zhang (1995, pp. 236–38); Y. Li (2004, pp. 259–60).

5 "Huichang wunian zhengyue sanri nanjiao shewen 會昌五年正月三日南郊赦文 (Southern Suburban Pardon Edict of the First Lunar Month in the Fifth Year of the Huichang Era)", from F. Li (1966, p. 2174).

6 "Tanzhou Daweishan Tongqingsi Dayuanchanshi beiming bing xu 潭州大潙山同慶寺大圓禅师碑銘並序 (Stele Inscription and Preface for Chan Master Dayuan of Tongqing Temple on Mount Wei in Tanzhou)" by Zhengyu 鄭愚, from Yao (2006, vol. 63, p. 8).

7 "Song Tanzhou Daolin Shuyan chanshi Taiyuan qujing shi xu 送潭州道林疏言禅师太原取经诗序 (Preface to the Poems on Bidding Farewell to Chan Master Shuyan of Daolin Temple in Tanzhou, on His Journey to Taiyuan to Procure Buddhist Scriptures)" by Lijie 李節, from Yao (2006, vol. 96, p. 9).

8 *Fangyu shenglan* 23.416. *Fangyu shenglan* records that the Hall of Four Excellences (四绝堂) was built by Ma 馬氏 during the Baoda 保大 era (943–957), which is clearly erroneous. Zhou Bida 周必大 (1126–1204), in his "Ti Tanzhou Daolinsi liujuetang 題道林寺六絕堂 (Inscription for the Hall of Six Excellences at Daolin Temple in Tanzhou)", mentioned: "During the Qianfu 乾符 period (874–879) of the Tang, Yuan Hao 袁浩(皓) wrote 'Daolinsi sijuetang ji 道林寺四絕堂記 (the Record of the Hall of Four Excellences at Daolin Temple)', which referred to the calligraphic works of Shen Chuanshi and Pei Xiu, and the poetic works of Song Zhiwen and Du Fu" (Zeng and Liu 2006, p. 362). A similar record is also found in the writings of Cai Mengbi 蔡夢弼 (Cai 2006, p. 11a), a near contemporary of Zhou Bida. Yuan Hao was indeed closely associated with Daolin Temple; the "Yiwenzhi 藝文志 (Treatise on Literature and Art)" in *Xin tang shu* 新唐書 (the New History of Tang) lists the *Poems of Daolin Temple* 道林寺詩 in two volumes, which he compiled. In addition, Wei Chan 韋蟾, who served as an official during the Xiantong 咸通 (860–874) and Qianfu (874–879) periods, also wrote a poem extolling the "Four Excellences" of Daolin (F. Li 1966, p. 1770). These historical sources indicate that the Hall of Four Excellences at Daolin Temple was established, at the latest, during the reign of Emperor Xizong 僖宗 (r. 873–888).

9 In 977, an imperial edict was issued to all prefectures to seek out and present the writings and books of former sages. Accordingly, Shi Xizai 石熙載 of Tanzhou presented the "Daolinsi wangqiaoguan bei 道林寺王喬觀碑", which had been inscribed by Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (S. Xu 1957, p. 2237).

10 "Jiupinwangshengshe bei 九品往生社碑 (The Stele of the Nine Grades of Rebirth Society)", from Lu (1985, pp. 506–7).

11 "Tang Xuanzhou Futiansi cangjingyuan ji 唐宣州福田寺藏經院記 (Record of the Scripture Repository of the Futian Monastery in Xuanzhou, Tang Dynasty)" by Cui guicong 崔龜從, from B. Tang (2017, p. 37).

12 See Note 7 above.

13 Zheng Binglin 鄭炳林 argues that this document dates from the late Tang Dynasty, specifically the Guiyijun 歸義軍 period (Zheng and Xu 2002, p. 1); Du Doucheng 杜斗城 contends that P.4648 could not have been written after the Tang Dynasty (Du 1991, pp. 148–50). Through textual analysis, Li Li 李麗 identifies the "Wang Shizhong 王侍中" mentioned in P.4648 as Wang Jianli 王建立, and on this basis, proposes that the manuscript was likely composed between the fifth year of the Tiancheng era of the Later Tang Dynasty and the twelfth year of the Tianfu 天福 era of the Later Jin Dynasty (L. Li 2000, pp. 35–38).

14 According to Nie's research, the Kaiyuan Temple in Taiyuan was likely preserved during the Huichang Persecution, see Nie (2018, p. 100). It may have been simply renamed.

15 As Jean-Pierre Drège has noted, the Kaiyuan shijiao lu (730) established the definitive structural model for monastic libraries, governing the physical arrangement of the scriptures (Drège 1991, pp. 218–24).

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