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Unveiling Hangzhou's Intellectual Legacy: Chinese Buddhist Reference Works and Knowledge Production in the Song and Beyond

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Abstract: This article explores Hangzhou's multifaceted role in shaping Chinese Buddhist culture and contributing to knowledge production. As a vital hub of Chinese material and intellectual culture, Hangzhou's significant contributions to Buddhism are emphasized, shedding light on its key role in disseminating Buddhist teachings and preserving knowledge. The study delves into the rich history of Buddhist reference works, particularly *leishu*, showcasing how these compilations were pivotal in organizing and transmitting Buddhist wisdom. The article connects Hangzhou's intellectual legacy to the broader context of Chinese Buddhism, emphasizing its crucial position in the development and dissemination of Buddhist doctrines. Additionally, it highlights ongoing academic efforts to compile an Encyclopedia of Hangzhou Buddhist Culture, underscoring Hangzhou's continued importance in contemporary Buddhist scholarship.

Keywords: Hangzhou; Chinese Buddhism; knowledge production; Buddhist *leishu*; *The Encyclopedia of Hangzhou Buddhist Culture*



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1. Introduction

Situated in southeastern China, Hangzhou 杭州 emerges as a city endowed with a diverse and profound historical and cultural significance. Its scenic views and intricate weave of traditions have indelibly placed Hangzhou within the overarching narrative of China's heritage. However, exceeding the confines of its famed natural charm, Hangzhou unveils another treasure: an intellectual legacy equally captivating. As one of the Seven Ancient Capitals of China, Hangzhou has long been a cultural hub, and its central place in Chinese material and intellectual culture is beyond dispute.¹ Its prominence in the production of tea, silk, porcelain is more than adequately matched by its poetic, artistic, and religious legacy. Representative poets of the Tang 唐 and Song 宋 periods (618–1279)—notably Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) and Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101), respectively—made Hangzhou their home, and since the first half of the fourth century, when the Indian monk Huili 慧理 (fl. 320s AD) came to Hangzhou and established the Lingyin Monastery 靈隱寺, Hangzhou has also been at the forefront of trends in the Buddhist world. Nonetheless, whether poetry or religious texts, their dissemination through printing spurred a new media paradigm, and since the Southern Song Dynasty (1127–1279), Hangzhou also boasted a robust printing culture that was only matched by a few other locales.² Hangzhou's prominence in the genre was not limited to official printing but also extended to private printing, where it excelled in the categories of philosophy and belles-lettres, which complemented the classics and histories that were usually covered by official printing (Edgren 1990, p. 31). In any case, with its central place in the Buddhist world, it is perhaps not surprising that commercial publishers and booksellers that specialized in Buddhist works were prevalent in Hangzhou, with a good number of works still preserved today (Edgren 1990, pp. 33–34). It is this Buddhist legacy of Hangzhou, encompassing both material and intellectual culture,

that we will focus on in this study. This article thus endeavors to shed light on Hangzhou's meaningful contributions to Chinese Buddhist reference works and the broader field of knowledge production.

2. Regional Importance and Area Studies

In recent decades, area studies have come under increasing criticism for political conservatism and a lack of theoretical sophistication in the face of poststructuralism. Nevertheless, the field has continued to weather this storm, and it remains robust as the 21st century marches on. The history of modern area studies in the US harkens back to the end of World War II when the US government encouraged its growth, and in fact the first great center for area studies was in the Office of Strategic Services (Khosrowjahi 2011, p. 134). Naturally, the growing sophistication in the culture-/language-specific areas of study has manifested in a new level of depth and nuance in the various subfields of literature, art history, religions, etc., giving rise to new theoretical paradigms that will continue to fuel new directions in research.

Regardless of the advances made in the increasing sophistication in the subfields of area studies, the fact remains that the way in which area, regionalism, and localism is defined and understood in the target region remains an important issue for consideration of that culture in situ, an endeavor which is necessary in order to help retain the requisite scholarly objectivity. A nuanced reevaluation of what in fact constitutes area, region, and locality will help situate and map the development of cultural trends within a continuum defined by an axis of time and place that is more faithful to the events on the ground, so to speak. By extension, as our investigations start to include an ever-greater emphasis on the role and function of region as central factors in discourse formation across genres, a more nuanced look into area/region is in order. This endeavor may seem like an instance of promoting "area studies in area studies," but it is perhaps more felicitously stated as "putting the 'area' back in 'area studies'" where the focus will be on the historical, economic, and political verities of a particular area in view of its role across borders and genres. In the case of China and the larger East Asian cultural sphere, Hangzhou is one such region whose cultural prominence recommends it for study in its own right, being worthy of a more sustained, more nuanced investigation.

Despite its significant cultural impact in shaping both Chinese culture and Buddhism, the Hangzhou region has remained relatively underemphasized on the global stage, especially when juxtaposed with the renowned locale of Dunhuang 敦煌 in northwest China. Drawing our attention to this discrepancy, Albert Welter highlights that while Dunhuang's extensive manuscript collection aligns with an Indo-centric perspective that accentuates India as the central locus of Buddhism, it is imperative not to diminish the significance of Hangzhou (Welter 2022a, pp. 7–8). A retrospective analysis of history reveals the undeniable cultural sway wielded by Hangzhou and the ascendance of East Asia as a vibrant focal point for Buddhism.

Welter has persuasively demonstrated the outsized role that the Wuyue 吳越 kingdom (907–978), which largely covered present-day Hangzhou but also included Ningbo/Tiantai as the outer limit of the greater Hangzhou cultural sphere, played in the formation of the "new Buddhism" that coalesced during the Song Dynasty. He locates three crucial works by monks from the Kingdom of Wuyue during the Five Dynasties Period (907–960) that supported a "reimagining" of Buddhism. These texts are the *Zongjing lu* 宗鏡錄 (*Source Mirror Record*) by Yongming Yanshou 永明延壽 (904–975), the *Da Song seng shilue* 大宋僧史略 (*Abbreviated History of Monastics Written in the Song*) by Zanning 贊寧 (919–1001), and the *Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄 (*The Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp*) by Daoyuan 道原 (d.u.). He considers these three texts "contemporary reformulations" of the three pillars of classical Buddhism: morality (*sila*), meditation or mental cultivation (*samadhi*), and wisdom (*prajna*) (Welter 2022a, p. 23). The last of these texts, the *Jingde chuandeng lu*, became a central and foundational text of the Chan/Zen tradition as it would develop in China, and through Japanese and Korean visitors to Hangzhou, to the rest of East Asia as

well. It should be emphasized that the production of these texts as well as the traditions that developed from them were centered in Hangzhou, a location of unique importance in the dissemination of Buddhist models to greater East Asia. This will be examined in greater detail below.

With its distinctive attributes, Hangzhou presents itself as a captivating exemplar for employing a Regional Religious Studies (RRS) methodology to delve into the exploration of East Asian Buddhism. Jiang Wu characterizes the Regional Religious Studies (RRS) approach as “representing a spatial configuration of distinctive religious sites characterized by specific patterns and attributes influenced by diverse regional and local factors, encompassing natural, administrative, political, economic, social, and cultural elements” (Wu et al. 2013, p. 182). Hangzhou’s unique blend of natural landscapes, cultural heritage, and religious diversity provides a compelling case study within the Regional Religious Studies (RRS) framework. By examining the interplay of regional and local factors within Hangzhou’s Buddhist context, we can gain valuable insights into the broader dynamics of East Asian Buddhism and its adaptation to varying geographical and sociocultural environments. In essence, Hangzhou’s rich tapestry of history, culture, and spirituality invites us to explore the intricate relationship between place and religion, making it an ideal nexus point for the study of East Asian Buddhism within the broader context of Area Studies.

3. Role of Reference Works: Preserving and Transmitting Knowledge

Knowledge production is inextricably connected to issues of power, whether political, economic, or religious in nature. Discourse is framed by what is held to be “accepted knowledge,” and whatever serves as the arbiter or source of that knowledge plays an outsized role in setting the intellectual infrastructure of that discourse. In this study, we are going to look at the phenomenon of “reference works” more popularly termed “encyclopedism” in its Western manifestation. Encyclopedism can be expressed as that endeavor in which a series of different authors made use of a variety of shared rhetorical and compilatory techniques to create knowledge-ordering works of different kinds that claimed for themselves to have a kind of comprehensive and definitive status (König and Woolf 2013, p. 1). While this definition of encyclopedism is descriptive of its European/Western manifestation based in the ideals of the Enlightenment, this could also be said to apply for the most part to the Chinese knowledge production and classification. Of course, it is important to note that Hangzhou’s knowledge production extends beyond Buddhism, encompassing fields like Confucianism, literature, art, science, and more. The perception of what best represents Hangzhou’s knowledge production may vary depending on the specific area of interest and historical period under consideration. The association of Hangzhou with Buddhist *leishu* 類書 (classified compendia) is just one aspect of its broader cultural and intellectual history that this article focuses on.

3.1. Knowledge Production and Chinese *Leishu*

In China, the interplay between knowledge production and book publication has played a pivotal role in shaping its historical and intellectual legacy, contributing to the broader scholarly tradition of East Asian book culture. Rooted in history, China’s tradition of knowledge production spans millennia, encompassing philosophical treatises, scientific breakthroughs, and resonant artistic creations across diverse cultures. Books, particularly the encyclopedias and reference compendia known as *leishu*, have assumed a central and transformative role within this narrative. *Leishu* is a genre of Chinese literature that consists of various topics or subjects organized systematically. They typically provide a compilation of information, facts, and ideas on a wide range of subjects. But unlike the “encyclopedias” of the West, *leishu* often do not include detailed explanations or discussions but rather act as references or catalogs of knowledge on a systematized range of topics (Wilkinson 2000, p. 601). In a sense, they may be more closely aligned with what we term “anthologies,” although in their intended comprehensiveness they are also congruent with the term “encyclopedia” (Zurndorfer 2013, p. 505). Given the vast scope of

Chinese *leishu*, there arose a need not just for financial resources and materials but also for well-structured administrative offices to supervise their creation. As a result, the majority of Chinese *leishu* were sponsored by the state. However, instances of private or commercial editions arose, particularly during late imperial China, coinciding with advancements in printing techniques and economic growth.

The origins of Chinese *leishu* can be found in antiquity, with early examples seen during the Western Han Dynasty (206 BCE–9 CE). It can be argued that the earliest manifestation of *leishu* can be traced to the centuries preceding the Common Era, seen in the various lexicons that have their most famous representative in the *Erya* 爾雅 (*Approaching the Refined*). The earliest example of what can be legitimately placed in the genre is the *Huang lan* 皇覽 (*The Emperor's Mirror*), produced in the early third century under imperial auspices, although the work no longer exists. Between the third century and the eighteenth, over 600 *leishu* were produced, although only 200 or so are extant (Wilkinson 2000, pp. 602–3). As time passed, these collectanea could no longer maintain a semblance of comprehensiveness, leading to an increase in specialization that increased their pragmatic value as educational and pedagogic texts. The conceptual refinement of *leishu* gained momentum during the Tang Dynasty (618–907), an era marked by remarkable intellectual advancements and a burgeoning interest in systematic knowledge organization.

The emergence of block-printing techniques, pioneered during the Song Dynasty and developed in the Ming Dynasty, marked a transformative juncture. During the Song Dynasty and later periods, the heightened emphasis on comprehensive knowledge categorization coincided with the evolution of encyclopedic works into more structured and systematic formats, aided by the advent of woodblock printing technology. During the late Ming Dynasty (1506–1644), a notable era of publishing expansion, particularly in commercial publishing, encyclopedias emerged as favored choices among published works. They surged in popularity, eclipsing even the classics, philology, biographies, and numerous other literary genres (Schonebaum 2016, p. 23). After 1550, the infusion of New World and Japanese silver into the Ming economy collectively propelled the acceleration of text distribution and the subsequent spread of knowledge. This expansion broadened its influence beyond China's borders, reaching audiences previously constrained in access (Elman 2007, p. 135). The Qing Dynasty witnessed a continuation of this genre, with scholars and compilers producing a diverse array of encyclopedic works that spanned subjects as varied as history, literature, philosophy, medicine, and technology. The largest collection of books in Chinese history, the *Siku Quanshu* 四庫全書 (*Complete Library in Four Sections*), serves as a remarkable illustration.

Within the broader landscape of Chinese encyclopedias, Buddhist *leishu* occupies a distinct and significant role in the realm of knowledge production and dissemination, aligning with the "Cult of the Book" as defined by Gregory Schopen that underscores the worshiping of written texts within the early Mahayana scriptures (Schopen 1975). Buddhist *leishu* refers to a specialized category of *leishu* that focuses exclusively on Buddhist topics. There are two primary categories that can be identified within Buddhist *leishu* in China: the Buddhist canon and other Buddhist compendia. Notably, the former stands as the most comprehensive compilation of scriptures, texts, and teachings that hold authoritative status within various Buddhist traditions, often encompassing complete works. This category includes a wide array of writings, ranging from sutras (Buddha's discourses) and vinaya (monastic regulations) to abhidharma (philosophical analyses). The latter category is characterized by its focus on systematic organization and categorization of Buddhist knowledge, frequently involving citations and references from a variety of sources. This approach aims to enhance accessibility and comprehensibility for practitioners and scholars alike. While the Buddhist Canon is unquestionably the most important source for the sacred texts and teachings of Buddhism, it can be less accessible and more specialized, primarily intended for practitioners and scholars deeply engaged in Buddhist studies. Buddhist *leishu*, on the other hand, offer a more user-friendly, comprehensive, and accessible overview of Buddhist literature for a broader audience. Therefore, in many contexts, Bud-

dhist *leishu* may be considered more representative of Buddhist literature for educational, reference, and general knowledge purposes. However, the Buddhist Canon remains the ultimate authority in matters of religious doctrine and practice within Buddhism.

As *leishu* started to branch off in different directions, they came to acquire an increasing authority that led them to becoming central textual repositories for educational texts that became important reference aids for passing the civil service examinations, a function that made them indispensable to elite society. This specialization of *leishu* also extended to the Buddhist world. The compilation of Buddhist *leishu* in China started approximately during the period of the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420 to 589). One of the notable early instances of Buddhist *leishu* in China is the *Jinglü Yixiang* 經律異象 (*Strange Tales of Sutras and Vinayas*) attributed to Baochang 寶唱 (466–518) of the Southern Liang 梁 Dynasty (502–557). The tradition of compiling Buddhist *leishu* persisted into the medieval period. One of the most notable and comprehensive Buddhist *leishu* from this era is the *Fayuan Zhulin* 法苑珠林 (*Forest of Jewels in the Garden of the Dharma*) by Daoshi 道釋 (?–683). The *Fayuan zhulin* is divided into 100 “units” (*bian* 篇) which are subdivided into numerous “sections” (*bu* 部) (Nienhauser 1986, p. 372). With the increasing sophistication of the genre, the issue of comprehensiveness would remain, but it would be “localized” within various areas of specialization. To use the Buddhist example, the “specialized” *leishu* of the *Fayuan zhulin* itself attempted a comprehensive treatment of contemporaneous Buddhist doctrine. The compiler so endeavored by appending his own explanations to the numerous quotations from translated Buddhist works as well as non-canonical native Chinese works. This was not the first Chinese Buddhist work to make use of quotations from other translated Buddhist works, but in its comprehensiveness and dedicated structure it is unparalleled, and it remains the work that most faithfully represents the genre of *leishu* in a contemporaneous Buddhist context. It draws its foundation from another of Daoshi’s earlier Buddhist compilations, the *Zhujing Yaoji* 諸經要集 (*Essentials of the Various Sutras Collection*). Another significant contribution to the Buddhist *leishu* tradition was made by Zhipan 志磐 (1220–1275), who authored the *Fozu Tongji* 佛祖統紀 (*Chronicle of the Buddhas and Patriarchs*), a comprehensive work that chronicles the lineage of buddhas and patriarchs in a systematic manner. In late imperial China, particularly during the eighteenth century, collectanea evolved into what resembled a “miniature library,” encompassing a wide spectrum of knowledge. This compilation included not only esteemed literary and philosophical works but also a lower-brow range of illumination texts and esoteric writings. In the context of Buddhism, Buddhist *leishu* continued to play a vital role in disseminating Buddhist teachings, facilitating the preservation of Buddhist knowledge, and providing a comprehensive understanding of Buddhist philosophy and practices within the broader literary landscape of imperial China.

Taking this broad perspective of *leishu*, we can perceive a similar phenomenon in the case of the Chan school. The *Jingde chuandeng lu* consist of a collection of biographies of the patriarchs and teachers of the Chan school, starting with the seven buddhas of the past and including in total 1701 Indian and Chinese patriarchs in the Chan school as it contemporaneously imagined itself. In its comprehensiveness, it very much resembles a historical reference work of the Chan school without directly claiming itself as such. The biographies contained in this text would go on to become the source text of *gong’an* literature and practice as it developed in China, Korea, and Japan. It is from this work that influential *gong’an* texts such as the *Congrong lu* 從容錄 (*Book of Equanimity*), the *Bianyu lu* 碧巖錄 (*The Blue Cliff Record*), and the *Wumen guan* 無門關 (*The Gateless Barrier*) would take their inspiration. Starting with the *Jingde chuandeng lu* and including all of its derivative textual collections, these sources can all be considered part of the Hangzhou Buddhist/intellectual legacy. It will be remembered that this is one of the works that Welter isolates as one of the foundational texts in the “reimagining” of Buddhism in the Wuyue Kingdom—the former name for the area inclusive of Hangzhou. This places the *Jingde chuandeng lu* squarely in the intellectual orbit of Hangzhou, standing as a testament to Hangzhou’s central role in knowledge production across Buddhist traditions, and particularly in the case of the

Chan school. This is precisely what distinguishes Hangzhou from other cultural centers as it served as the launch pad for Chan Buddhism's spread to the rest of East Asia, taking Hangzhou Buddhism's unique formulation which helped in large part to form the basis of orthodoxy in Korea and Japan.

The two most central figures in the formation of Japanese Zen—Eisai 栄西 (1141–1215) and Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253)—respectively, the founders of the Japanese Rinzai 臨濟 and Sōtō 曹洞 schools of Zen, both made pilgrimages to the Hangzhou/Ningbo region where they received their definitive experience and dharma transmission (Welter 2022b, p. 52). On the latter of two trips to China, Eisai remained in China for five years and studied under the Chan master Xu'an Huaichang 虛庵懷敞 (c.1125–1195) on Mt. Tiantai 天台 in present day Zhejiang 浙江 province, and then followed his master to the prominent Jingde Monastery in Hangzhou, where Eisai received Xu'an's Dharma transmission. Dōgen also made two trips to China, and on his second stay he attained enlightenment at Mt. Tiantong 天童, located in present-day Ningbo 寧波, the great port city in Zhejiang province, and part of the same cultural sphere as Hangzhou. These two Japanese figures extended the Hangzhou cultural legacy in the form of the “new Buddhism” to Japan, where it divided into the Japanese Rinzai and Sōtō schools, which, although divided into two distinct schools with diverging practices, both nonetheless accepted the *Jingde chuandeng lu* as authoritative as well as the doctrinal infrastructure associated with it. These two pilgrims demonstrated what Steven Heine described as the need of “venturing beyond conventional geographical and societal boundaries to explore novel approaches to Buddhist theory and practice” (Heine 2023, p. 1). That these two figures spent time on Mt. Hiei 比叡山—often termed the “womb” of Japanese Buddhism—before traveling to the Hangzhou/Ningbo region to have their definitive experience and bring back new models demonstrates the vitality of the tradition that developed in the Hangzhou region starting at the end of the Five Dynasties and continuing through the Southern Song.

An interesting nexus between Hangzhou's intellectual legacy as seen in the “new Buddhism” as well as knowledge production in the tradition of encyclopedic reference works like *leishu* can be seen in the development itself of the *Jingde chuandeng lu*. Welter, in his careful and fertile study of Hangzhou Buddhist culture, looks to Yang Yi's 楊億 (974–1020) editing strategies as it relates to this text (Welter 2022c, p. 31). Yang, an eminent literatus of the Song court, was enlisted to edit and prepare the work, which included the appending of prefaces that codified teachings that were to become central Chan ideals. One of Yang Yi's central ideas found in the preface is “a separate practice outside the teaching” 教外別行, a concept that would go to the very heart of the Chan school's identity and what helped to distinguish its unique and direct claim to the true Dharma of the Buddha. Welter argues that Yang's advocacy of Chan as “a separate practice outside the teaching” represented a central literary model and convention of Song civilization. Welter also notes that Yang's editing strategy for the *Jingde chuandeng lu* can be considered in the continuum of the compilation strategies of Song emperors. He writes, “Yang Yi's strategy for the *Chuandeng lu* may be highlighted with the compilation strategies of the Song emperors. Emperor Taizong sponsored great Song encyclopedic works...” (Welter 2022a, p. 34).³ Looked at in this way, one can see the *Chuandeng lu* as representing a kind of Buddhist *leishu* in that it stands as a collectanea of various Zen anecdotes that would go on to serve as a fount of Chan authority going forward, both in China and the rest of East Asia. In addition, the Buddhist works sponsored by Taizong, such as Zanning's *Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳, also are comprised of a collection of entries intended to categorize knowledge and stand as a reference work. It is then perhaps not surprising that what became considered to be the “Four Great Books” of the Song are comprised of three *leishu* and one literary anthology, three of which were initiated by Taizong himself (Kurz 2001, p. 302). This trend toward classification of knowledge highlighted the power concomitant with the codification of knowledge during the Song both in the Buddhist world and beyond. And it was Hangzhou and the Jiangnan region that played such an important part in this process, with Kurz going so far as to say “the remarkable fact remains that the transmission of texts from the Tang to the

Song took a detour through the south (Kurz 2001, p. 313).” In addition, it is not only the *Chuangdeng lu* and *Song gaoseng zhuan* that can be interpreted within the genre of *leishu* but the Buddhist canon as a whole, something we will consider below.

3.2. Buddhist Canon as a Kind of Leishu

Compared with general Buddhist compendia, the Chinese Buddhist canon stands out for its remarkably extensive scope and content. Following the inception of Buddhism in China, its textual corpus experienced successive phases of translation and dissemination across generations, resulting in a progressive augmentation in volume. Subsequently, these textual materials were aggregated, systematized, and consolidated into an expansive compendium referred to as the “canon”, characterized by a considerable multiplicity of individual volumes. It was started with the textual practices of cataloging, which not only emulated earlier Indian organizational models but also introduced fresh approaches to categorizing and structuring both existing translations and the works that Chinese Buddhists pursued (Zacchetti 2015, p. 91). The culmination of this effort resulted in the creation of comprehensive collections of Chinese Buddhist scriptures, effectively constituting the Chinese Buddhist Canon during the period of the Southern and Northern Dynasties, which coincided with the emergence of other Buddhist compendia. Prior to the Tang Dynasty, the dissemination of the Chinese Buddhist Canon was confined to handwritten manuscripts. It was not until the early Song Dynasty that woodblock printing of the Canon commenced, followed by subsequent developments in typesetting and photolithographic reproduction in the late Qing Dynasty. Currently, twenty-eight versions of the extant Chinese Buddhist Canon are known to exist. The compilation of these Buddhist Canons not only facilitated the accumulation and preservation of Buddhist knowledge within the confines of China but also assumed an unprecedented role in disseminating Chinese Buddhism to distant regions, thereby playing a pivotal part in shaping the contours of the Han Chinese Buddhist cultural sphere. This cultural sphere, with its influence extending to encompass the realms of the Korean Peninsula, Japan, and Vietnam, stands as a testament to the far-reaching impact of these Canons in fostering a shared cultural and intellectual legacy across East Asia.

3.3. Hangzhou and the Buddhist Canon

As our investigation has shown, Hangzhou serves as a vibrant crucible for the exchange of cultural and intellectual ideas, playing a pivotal role as a distinguished center of Buddhism within the nation. The evolution of Hangzhou’s Buddhist legacy commences in the Eastern Jin 東晉 Dynasty (266–420), gains momentum throughout the Five Dynasties, and reaches its zenith during the height of the Southern Song Dynasty. Anchored by an array of temples, esteemed monastics, and a flourishing atmosphere of Buddhist scholarship, Hangzhou has unequivocally transformed into a formidable bastion of Buddhist practice and erudition within the southeastern realms of China. The city’s connection to Buddhism transcends ecclesiastical confines, intricately interwoven with its overarching cultural and intellectual heritage, thereby cementing its status as a pivotal nexus for the propagation, preservation, and nurturing of Buddhist doctrines and traditions.

In terms of the Buddhist Canon, although none of the Song Canon editions originated in Hangzhou, the need for a significant number of block carvers led to the involvement of Hangzhou block carvers at various points in time (Edgren 1990, p. 39). During the Yuan Dynasty, Hangzhou emerged as a pivotal center for Southern Buddhism, with rulers of the era consecutively overseeing the publication of various editions of the Buddhist Canon. Between 1277 and 1290, the *Puning zang* 普寧藏 (*Puning Canon*) was meticulously carved in Hangzhou, situated at the southern mountain of the Puning Monastery 普寧寺 in Yuhang 餘杭 County. Furthermore, the *Qisha zang* 磧砂藏 (*Qisha Canon*), a privately engraved rendition of the Tripitaka that commenced during the Song Dynasty in 1234, reached its completion during the Yuan Dynasty in 1332. Notably, the Hangzhou Printing Bureau 杭州印經局 played a pivotal role in this endeavor, engraving twenty-eight secret sutras 秘密經. Additionally, the extant printed edition of the *Xi Xia* 西夏 (Tangut) *Canon*

was finalized in 1302 within the premises of the Wanshou Monastery 萬壽寺 in Hangzhou (Wang 2005, pp. 111–8). In sum, Hangzhou's enduring legacy as a nexus of Buddhism, intellectual exchange, and the dissemination of knowledge underscores its timeless role in enriching the intellectual and spiritual heritage of humankind.

4. Hangzhou's Tradition of Codifying Knowledge Continues: The *Encyclopedia of Hangzhou Buddhist Culture*

No doubt the treasure trove of documents unearthed in the Mogao 莫高 Caves in the beginning of the 20th century raised the scholarly profile of Dunhuang in a way nearly unparalleled in modern times. Perhaps the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls from the Qumram Caves or the Nag Hammadi Library found in a jar in the Egyptian desert can compare in importance in the way they helped to redefine our understanding of the Hebrew Bible and Christian Scriptures, respectively. The texts from Dunhuang, however, exceptionally broad in their scope, did the same thing for Buddhism, Daoism, philosophy, literature, Central Asian Languages, medicine, and much more. It is therefore natural that over the last century Dunhuang has received an inordinate amount of scholarly attention. Nonetheless, it should be remembered that Dunhuang largely remains the place of *discovery* for these texts, while Hangzhou and its environs remain as the *place* where so much of the Buddhist story in China and greater East Asia unfolded in real time. In consideration of its wealth in terms of Buddhist texts, history and material culture, a dedicated approach to Hangzhou Buddhism and its culture is in order.

The Center for Buddhist Studies at the University of Arizona, College of Humanities is in the process of producing an *Encyclopedia of Hangzhou Buddhist Culture*, of which the present authors are the executive editors. This project includes over 500 thematically arranged entries that are framed by synoptic introductions written by scholars focused on Hangzhou's Buddhist history and legacy. Its historical axis is balanced on Hangzhou during the Song dynasty, although it treats the pre-Tang through the Tang, Ming-Qing, and the Republican periods in depth as well. No doubt, Hangzhou reached its cultural apogee during the Song Dynasty, but the periods preceding and following, respectively, contributed to and synthesized this cultural legacy that vibrantly continues to exist in Korea and Japan. Important Buddhist figures and prominent literati comprise the majority of entries, but the work includes ample space for schools, sects, artistic artifacts, architecture, music, painting, and tea, genres that inhere in the Buddhist cultural sphere.

As the articles in this special issue make clear, the historical, cultural, and intellectual prominence of Hangzhou is gaining its much-deserved scholarly recognition. Its privileged position in the cultural landscape owes much to its serving as a nexus for reimagined approaches to Buddhism, whether through its linking with India—Buddhism's birthplace—or through its dissemination of new modes of Buddhist practice to greater East Asia.

5. Conclusions

Hangzhou's intellectual legacy, particularly in the realm of Buddhism and knowledge production, stands as a testament to its enduring influence on Chinese culture and beyond. This vibrant city, nestled in southeastern China, has played a pivotal role in shaping the intellectual landscape of East Asia. From its rich history as a center of Buddhism during the Song Dynasty to its contributions to the world of reference works and encyclopedias, Hangzhou has left an indelible mark on Chinese intellectual history. In a world where knowledge transcends boundaries and cultures, Hangzhou's legacy reminds us of the enduring power of intellectual exchange and the profound influence of a city that has been at the crossroads of East Asian Buddhism and knowledge production for centuries. Its story is a testament to the richness of human creativity and the boundless potential of intellectual exploration. Today, Hangzhou's intellectual legacy continues to be celebrated and explored by scholars and institutions worldwide. Projects like the *Encyclopedia of Hangzhou Buddhist Culture* are emblematic of the ongoing efforts to understand and document the city's profound impact on Buddhism and knowledge production. As we uncover more

layers of Hangzhou's intellectual heritage, we gain deeper insights into the intricate relationship between religion, culture, and the ever-evolving human quest for knowledge.

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Notes

- ¹ In ancient Chinese history, there were several capitals that served as the center of power and governance for different dynasties and periods. They are today's Xi'an 西安, Luoyang 洛陽, Kaifeng 開封, Beijing 北京, Nanjing 南京, and Hangzhou.
- ² Jianyang in Fujian and Chengdu in Sichuan were also particularly noteworthy as prominent centers in printing.
- ³ Welter cites (Kurz 2001) in asserting that one of the aims for the compilation projects promoted under Taizong was to link the Song with the Tang by imitating the latter's accomplishments in the literary field.

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