

Article

A Historical Survey of Fayun Monastery (法雲寺) in Bianjing (汴京) during the Northern Song Dynasty

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Abstract: Fayun Monastery (法雲寺), a prominent Chan Buddhist monastery in Bianjing (汴京) during the Northern Song Dynasty, thrived for about half a century under the reigns of emperors Shenzong (神宗), Zhezong (哲宗), and Huizong (徽宗). Led by four generations of abbots—Yuantong Faxiu (圓通法秀), Datong Shanben (大通善本), Foguo Weibai (佛國惟白), and Fozhao Gao (佛照杲)—the monastery was esteemed by the royal family and influential in the development of the Yunmen School. This paper examines the monastery's history through the tenures of its abbots, providing insights into the monastery's significance in Northern Song Buddhism and its broader cultural and political context.

Keywords: Fayun Monastery; Faxiu; Shanben; Weibai; Fozhao Gao; Chan Buddhism

1. Introduction

The roots of Chan Buddhism trace back to the early Tang Dynasty, but its pivotal development occurred during the Song Dynasty, when it became the predominant form of elite monastic Buddhism. This era saw the consolidation of the Chan tradition's distinctive characteristics and its rise to prominence, driven by government support, cultural integration, financial patronage from scholar-officials, and the innovative practices of Chan monks. The Song Dynasty government played a crucial role in aligning Buddhist activities with national interests by granting plaques to monasteries, conferring titles on monks, funding monastery properties, and establishing regulations to oversee Buddhist practices. Scholar-officials, as cultural elites, provided financial support and promoted the integration of Chan thought with Confucian philosophy through their literary and academic pursuits. Chan monks, serving as spiritual leaders, disseminated teachings and introduced innovative practices that garnered respect across various social sectors. Together, these factors drove the flourishing of Chan Buddhism during the Song Dynasty, which had a profound influence on both the religious and social-cultural landscape (Schlüter 2008, p. 72).

The development of Chan Buddhism during the Song Dynasty was intrinsically linked to the growth of Chan Buddhist monasteries. The construction and expansion of these monasteries often received support and patronage from nobility, scholar-officials, and even emperors. They invited renowned Chan monks to serve as abbots, bestowed them with honorific titles and Buddhist robes, and frequently held Dharma conferences and lectures. These monasteries became centers of learning and cultural hubs, where monks, celebrities, and scholar-officials often gathered (Huang 1989, pp. 101–23). By studying Chan monasteries in the Song Dynasty, we can understand the interactions between the government, scholar-officials, and Chan monks, and explore the role and function of Chan monasteries and monks in the political and social structure of the Song Dynasty, as well as the development of Buddhism during this period.

Fayun Monastery, the focus of this study, exemplifies the intricate relationships between Chan monasteries, the scholar-official class, and the Song Dynasty government. Located in Bianjing (汴京, also known as Dongjing, 東京, present-day Kaifeng, 開封, Henan,



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河南), Fayun Monastery was founded with the patronage of a princess and her husband. It thrived for approximately 43 years under the reigns of three emperors: Shenzong (神宗, 1048–1085, r. 1068–1085), Zhezong (哲宗, 1077–1100, r. 1085–1100), and Huizong (徽宗, 1082–1135, r. 1100–1125). The monastery had four generations of abbots: Yuantong Faxiu (圓通法秀, 1027–1090), Datong Shanben (大通善本, 1035–1109), Foguo Weibai (佛國惟白, mid-11th century–early 12th century), and Fozhao Gao (佛照杲, ?–?). These abbots, all appointed by imperial edicts, significantly contributed to the monastery's development.

This paper aims to reconstruct the history of Fayun Monastery by examining the tenures of its abbots, providing a clearer understanding of its importance in Northern Song Buddhism and the historical trajectory of the Yunmen School from its peak to its decline. Furthermore, this study explores the interactions between the abbots, scholar-officials, and the Northern Song government, shedding light on the broader socio-political and cultural context of the period.

2. The Establishment of Fayun Monastery and the First-Generation Abbot Yuantong Faxiu (圓通法秀)

During the Xiande period (顯德, 954–960) of Emperor Shizong (世宗, 921–959, r. 954–959) of the Later Zhou Dynasty (後周), dynastic changes and wars continued in the northern region. These conflicts led to the Buddhist management system becoming increasingly chaotic, and the number of monks increased, directly affecting the government's taxation and military service systems. Therefore, in the second year of the Xiande period (955), the Later Zhou began a suppression of Buddhism when Shizong ordered various places to eliminate monks and nuns, demolish monasteries that lacked an imperially bestowed name plaque, and destroy pagodas and Buddha statues. The suppression of Buddhism lasted for five years until his death in 959, known as the "Destruction of Buddhism in the Xiande period" (顯德毀佛) (Zhang 2003, pp. 28–33).

Thereafter, Buddhism in northern China declined significantly. It was not until the Song Dynasty that the situation began to improve. In the Northern Song Dynasty, emperors such as Taizu (太祖, 927–976, r. 960–976), Taizong (太宗, 939–997, r. 976–997), Zhenzong (真宗, 968–1022, r. 997–1022), and Renzong (仁宗, 1010–1063, r. 1022–1063) implemented policies to promote the development of Buddhism. They rebuilt or expanded old monasteries, such as Xiangguo Monastery (相國寺), Kaibao Monastery (開寶寺), Tianqing Monastery (天清寺), Jingde Monastery (景德寺), and Longxing Monastery (龍興寺), and built many new Buddhist monasteries and pagodas, including Zifu Yuan (資福院), Pu'an Chan Yuan (普安禪院), Qisheng Chan Yuan (啟聖禪院), Zisheng Yuan (資聖院), Hongfu Yuan (洪福院), and Baoxiang Chan Yuan (寶相禪院). They also appointed Buddhist masters as monastery abbots. Moreover, under the influence of these rulers, the royal family, nobles, and ministers also contributed money and organized the construction of monasteries, rapidly increasing the number of Buddhist monasteries in Bianjing and promoting a flourishing of Buddhism (Wan 1996, pp. 248–250).

The development of Chan Buddhism during the Song Dynasty began with the establishment of Chan monasteries, particularly in Bianjing. According to Volume 45 of the *Fozu tongji* (佛祖統紀 [Annalist Records of Buddhas and Patriarchs]) written by Zhipan (志磐, ?–?), "From the destruction of Buddhism in the Zhou Dynasty to the revival of Buddhism in the Jianlong period (建隆, r. 960–963), the only sects that flourished in the capital were the Nanshan Lü (南山律), Xianshou (賢首), and Ci'en (慈恩), which emphasized Buddhist Doctrine (教理). The outstanding scholars were not fond of talking about name and form (名相), so the Tiantai (天台) school and Chan Buddhism failed to flourish. Since the Chunhua period (淳化, 990–994), the patriarch of the Tiantai school, Siming Zhili (四明知禮, 960–1028) and Zunshi (遵式, 964–1032) became famous and were honored by Yang Yi (楊億, 974–1020) and Chao Jiong (晁迥, 951–1034) and given the titles of Fazhi Dashi (法智大師) and Ciyun Zunzhe (慈雲尊者) by Emperor Zhenzong. However, the Tiantai school was still not prevalent at the capital city. As for Chan Buddhism, Emperor Renzong was enthusiastic about Chan Buddhism and intended to support its development in the capital.

In the 1st year of the Huangyou period (皇祐元年, 1049), the inner minister Li Yunning (李允寧, ?–?) offered his residence in Bianjing as a Chan Monastery, which was bestowed with the title ‘Shifang Jingyin Chan Monastery’ (十方淨因禪寺). Emperor Renzong issued an edict inviting a virtuous monk to be the abbot, and Ouyang Xiu (歐陽修, 1007–1072) recommended Yuantong Ju’ne (圓通居訥, 1010–1071), who declined due to illness and recommended Huai Lian (懷璉, 1007–1090) as abbot”.¹

From this record, we can understand the development of Buddhism in the early Song Dynasty. The founding of Shifang Jingyin Chan Monastery contributed greatly to the popularity and development of Chan Buddhism in Bianjing. By the time of Emperor Shenzong, after decades of development, Chan Buddhism had gained the support and attention of the royal family and scholars and had begun to flourish in the capital and the northern regions (Huang 1989, pp. 110–11; Yang 2006, p. 105). It was under such circumstances that a number of Chan monasteries, such as Fayun Monastery, came into being.

According to the first fascicle of *Jianzhong jingguo xudeng lu* (建中靖國續燈錄 [Continued Jianzhong Jingguo Lamp History]) compiled by Foguo Weibai, “In the third year of the Yuanfeng period (元豐三年, 1080), Emperor Shenzong issued an edict to build the Huilin Chan Yuan (慧林禪院) on the eastern side (Dongxu 東序) and Zhihai Chan Yuan (智海禪院) on the western side (Youwu 右廡) of the Great Xiangguo Monastery (大相國寺). In the fifth year of the Yuanfeng period (1082), at the request of the Princess of Yueguo (越國大長公主, 1051–1123) and her husband Zhang Dunli (張敦禮, ?–1107), the Fayun Chan Monastery (法雲禪寺) was built on the southern side of the Great Xiangguo Monastery. Since then, the monastery flourished, and admirers of Chan Buddhism gathered in Bianjing”.² Moreover, it is recorded in the 30th fascicle of *Jianzhong jingguo xudeng lu* that “after the completion of the Fayun Monastery, Emperor Shenzong bestowed the title of Fayun on it, all requests were complied with, and he personally ordered the selection of famous monks to preach the Dharma. There were often more than a few hundred students coming to the Fayun Monastery”.³ Additionally, Nianchang (念常, 1282–1341?) of the Yuan Dynasty recorded in his *Fozu lidai tongzai* (佛祖歷代通載 [A Comprehensive Registry of the Successive Ages of the Buddhas and the Patriarchs]) that “in the 6th year of the Yuanfeng period (1083), the construction of the Fayun Monastery in the capital was completed (元豐六年, 京城創法雲寺成)”.⁴

It can be seen from the above that Fayun Monastery was built from the fifth to the sixth year of the Yuanfeng period, with the Princess and her husband as its sponsors (檀越, *dānapati*). When Fayun Monastery was founded, Chan Buddhism had already developed to a certain extent in Bianjing and received the support of the ruler and the attention of many monks. Regarding the specific location of Fayun Monastery, it is known from Weibai’s account that it was located to the south of the Great Xiangguo Monastery. According to the historical map of Bianjing in the Northern Song Dynasty, the Great Xiangguo Monastery was located in the vicinity of the imperial city of Bianjing.⁵ Thus, Fayun Monastery should also have been located in the vicinity of the imperial city, close to the political center, making it very convenient to make friends with princes and nobles and perform various religious functions.

After the completion of Fayun Monastery, the first problem faced was the selection of the abbot. In the tenth month of the seventh year of the Yuanfeng period (1084), upon the recommendation of the Princess of Yueguo and her husband Zhang Dunli, Emperor Shenzong appointed Faxiu as the first abbot of Fayun Monastery and bestowed on him the honorific title of “Yuantong” (圓通).⁶ Faxiu⁷, the sixth generation of the Yunmen school, was born into the Xin (辛) family, and was originally from Longcheng of Qinzhou (秦州隴城, present-day Tianshui, 天水, Gansu, 甘肅). He became a Buddhist monk at the age of three under Monk Lu (魯和尚) of Yingqian Monastery on Mountain Maiji (麥積山應乾寺, present-day Maiji District, 麥積區, Tianshui, Gansu, founded in the Tang Dynasty) and changed his surname to Lu (魯). At the age of nineteen, he passed the scripture examination and received the complete precepts (受具足戒). He set his mind on Buddhist teachings and studied various Sutras and Abhidharma texts, such as the *Yinminglun* (因明論), the

Weishilun (唯識論), the *Baifalun* (百法論), the *Jingangjing* (金剛經), the *Yuanjuejing* (圓覺經), and the *Huayanjing* (華嚴經). Whenever he lectured on these texts, he was able to quickly comprehend their deeper meanings and explain them to the people.⁸

In explaining the *Yuanjuejing*, Faxiu often relied on the *Yuanjuejing dashu shiyi chao* (圓覺經大疏釋義抄 [Subcommentary to the Great Commentary on the Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment]) by Guifeng Zongmi (圭峰宗密, 780–841) of the Tang Dynasty, but he had difficulty agreeing with Zongmi's practice of learning Chan. The only person he admired was Yuan Huayan (元華嚴) who lived in Daming Fu (大名府, present-day Daming County, 大名縣, Handan, 邯鄲, Hebei, 河北), but he deeply regretted that Yuan Huayan did not attach importance to sutra over Chan practice. He said, "Sutra is full of Buddha's meaning, so people like Yuan Huayan should not take it lightly. Chan is not the Buddha's meaning, so people like Guifeng should not study Chan. Anyway, I don't believe that the Buddha has ever privately transmitted Chan to Mahākāśyapa (大迦葉) except for his teachings." He stopped preaching and went to the south, determined to eliminate Chan in return for the Buddha's kindness.⁹

From this, we can see that Faxiu's previous prejudice against Chan Buddhism was quite deep. However, the result was unexpected. Around the seventh year of the Qingli period (慶曆七年, 1047), he came to the Tiefo Monastery (鐵佛寺) in Wuwei (present-day Wuwei County, 無為縣, Anhui), where he realized the profundity of Chan Buddhism and recognized his own inadequacy during a conversation with Tianyi Yihuai (天衣義懷, 993–1064). Subsequently, he turned to studying Chan with Yihuai day and night, and, seventeen days later, when he heard the case "Baizhao asked Baoci 'What will happen when love is not yet born?' Baoci said, 'Separate'. (白兆參報慈'情未生時如何?' 慈曰: '隔')", he was fully enlightened (大悟) and officially became a Chan master. After that, Faxiu followed Yihuai to study Chan, moving between Chizhou (池州, today the southwestern part of Anhui, bordering Jiangxi, 江西) and Wudi (吳地, now Zhejiang Province, 浙江 and Jiangsu, 江蘇), for a long period of ten years.¹⁰

After completing his studies around the second year of the Jiayou period (嘉祐二年, 1057), Faxiu first opened an altar to preach the Dharma on Mount Simian (四面).¹¹ In the following years, he served as the abbot of several monasteries in sequence: Qixian Monastery (棲賢寺) on Mount Lu (廬山), Jiangshan Monastery (蔣山寺, also known as Mount Zhong, 鍾山, present-day Nanjing, Jiangsu), Baoning Monastery in Fengtai (鳳台保寧寺, present-day Nanjing, Jiangsu), and Changlu Chongfu Monastery in Zhenzhou (真州長蘆崇福寺, present-day Yizheng, 儀征, Jiangsu). In the tenth month of the seventh year of the Yuanfeng period, Faxiu was appointed as the first abbot of Fayun Monastery and bestowed with the Chan name "Yuantong". On the day of his appointment, Emperor Shenzong sent an envoy with incense and a monk's robe, along with a royal message, to show his high regard for the Dharma. At that time, Zhaojun (荊王趙顥, 1056–1088) also attended the Dharma assembly, demonstrating the imperial court's recognition of Faxiu. On the fifth day of the third month of the eighth year of the Yuanfeng period (1085), Emperor Shenzong passed away, and Emperor Zhezong ascended the throne. On the 10th day of the fourth month (Tongtian Festival, 同天節), which was Emperor Shenzong's birthday, Emperor Zhezong invited monks, including Faxiu, to enter the palace and pray for the late emperor's blessings.¹² Shortly after the completion of Fayun Monastery, the Princess of Yueguo called on the people to contribute funds for casting a bell for the monastery, and many responded enthusiastically. In the fourth month of the first year of the Yuanyou period (元祐元年, 1086), Fayun Monastery cast a bell weighing 10,000 catties, and Su Shi (蘇軾, 1037–1101) personally wrote the *Fayunsi zhongming* (法雲寺鐘銘 [Bell Inscription of the Fayun Monastery]).¹³ Song literati often wrote inscriptions for Buddhist monasteries to celebrate the completion of construction projects, changes in public status, or the granting of name plaques. These inscriptions reveal much about the organization of Buddhism during the Song Dynasty and literati attitudes toward it. These inscriptions were often included in their collected works (Schlüter 2008, p. 7).

On the 29th day of the eighth month of the fifth year of the Yuanyou period (1090), Faxiu became seriously ill. Emperor Zhezong appointed an imperial physician to treat him, but Faxiu politely refused. He said, “If you are sick, you are going to die, and if you try to cure yourself, you are just attached to life. People’s life and death are just a dream, so why do you have to insist on it?” This statement shows that he had already seen through life and death and accepted the natural law of birth, old age, sickness, and death. At the end of his life, Faxiu reflected on his experiences, not lingering on worldly splendor but rather exhorting his disciples to be at ease with their cultivation and not to be obsessed with life, death, and vanity. He then sat down and passed away at the age of 64, with an ordination age of 45.¹⁴

There is no record of Faxiu’s works or discourse records (語錄) in the existing historical biographies, but a few Dharma sayings (法語), poems (詩文), and verses (偈頌) attributed to him are scattered in various Buddhist history books. During his lifetime, Faxiu had 55 Dharma heirs, 27 of whom are recorded in the Lantern Records. Among them, Weibai was the most outstanding and succeeded in becoming the third abbot of Fayun Monastery. Additionally, according to Buddhist historical records, Faxiu also had many interactions with celebrities and scholars of his time, such as Wang Anshi (王安石, 1021–1086), Jiang Yingshu (蔣穎叔, 1031–1105), Sima Guang (司馬光, 1019–1086), Li Gonglin (李公麟, 1049–1106), Huang Tingjian (黃庭堅, 1045–1105), and Wang Shen (王誥, 1048–1104). When interacting with these worldly celebrities, he always adhered to the principle of frankness and straightforwardness, speaking forthrightly without flattery, regardless of their status. Similarly, he was also forthright in his dealings with Buddhists, and his style of propagating the Dharma was stern, not allowing any slackness or prejudice. It is precisely for this reason that Faxiu was honored by many people both inside and outside the Buddhist community, earning the name “Xiu Tiemian” (秀鐵面, Iron-faced Xiu). This reputation is not only related to Faxiu’s profound attainments in Buddhism and his strict self-discipline, but also to his unique charisma and philosophy of dealing with the world.¹⁵

In brief, Faxiu was appointed as the founding abbot of Fayun Monastery in the tenth month of the seventh year of the Yuanfeng period, and served until his death on the 29th day of the eighth month of the fifth year of the Yuanyou period, nearly seven years later. During his tenure, Faxiu not only participated in the daily Buddhist services, but also contributed to the construction of the monastery’s bell and took part in ceremonies organized by the imperial family to pray for the blessings of Emperor Shenzong. Due to his profound Buddhist attainments, exceptional ability to propagate the Dharma, and unique charisma, Faxiu earned the high respect of the imperial court, the nobility, and scholars. Consequently, the fame of Fayun Monastery increased significantly. As the sixth-generation master of the Yunmen School, Faxiu’s leadership at Fayun Monastery also helped develop and strengthen the influence of the Yunmen School during that time.

3. The Development of Fayun Monastery and the Second-Generation Abbot Datong Shanben (大通善本)

At the end of the same year, after the passing of Faxiu, Emperor Zhezong appointed Shanben as the second-generation abbot of Fayun Monastery by an imperial edict. Shanben,¹⁶ whose surname was Dong (董), was a descendant of the Western Han Confucian master Dong Zhongshu (董仲舒, 179 B.C.–104 B.C.) and hailed from Zhongshu Village in Taikang (太康). His grandfather’s name was Qi (琪), and his father’s name was Wen (溫), both of whom served as officials in the state of Yingzhou (潁州, present-day Fuyang, 阜陽, Anhui). Shanben was likely born in Yingzhou. He lost his father when he was just one year old and was raised by his mother in his Uncle Zu Jie’s (祖玠) home. He studied Confucian Classics from childhood and became a learned man in adulthood. However, Shanben had no intention of pursuing an official career. He was keen on avoiding grains (辟穀) and practiced seated meditation (坐禪), preferring to remain inconspicuous. In the eighth year of the Jiayou period (嘉祐八年, 1063), the 28-year-old Shanben entered the Dizang Yuan (地藏院) of the Xiansheng Monastery (顯聖寺) in Bianjing, passed the scripture examina-

tion, and formally became a fully ordained monk. He then studied the Vinaya (毗奈耶) and the Zahuajing (雜華經) under the preceptor Yuancheng Huiyi (圓成惠揖, ?–?). Later, Shanben was enlightened by a night dream of Shan Cai (善財), who guided him to the south, so he left Bianjing and traveled south to seek a teacher. At that time, the fifth Chan master of the Yunmen School, Yuanzhao Zongben (圓照宗本, 1021–1100), was teaching Chan in the Wuzhong area (吳中).¹⁷ Shanben went to the Ruiguang Monastery (瑞光寺) in Suzhou (蘇州) and studied under Zongben. Due to his outstanding talent and diligence, he achieved success within five years and soon became unrivaled among his peers. Consequently, Zongben placed great reliance on Shanben and entrusted him with the hopes for the expansion of the Yunmen School.¹⁸

In the spring of the seventh year of the Yuanfeng period (1084), Shanben crossed the Jiujiang (九江)¹⁹ and traveled through Huaishan (淮山, present-day Xuyi, 盱眙縣, Huai'an, 淮安, Jiangsu), visiting ancestral pagodas and enjoying the scenic beauty of the mountains, rivers, and jungles, hoping to spend his life there. He resided in Taishouyan (太守巖, located in Fushan, 浮山, present-day Zhenyang County, 樅陽縣, Anqing, 安慶, Anhui). A few years later, Shanben reappeared and served as the abbot of three monasteries in turn. First, he served as the abbot of Shuanglin Monastery (雙林寺) in Wuzhou (婺州, present-day Jinhua, 金華, Zhejiang) for six years, earning the respect of people in the eastern Zhejiang region (浙東, present-day the eastern part of Zhejiang Province, mainly in the areas of Ningbo, 寧波, Shaoxing, 紹興, and Zhoushan, 舟山). He was even regarded as the reincarnation of Fu Dashi (傅大士, 497–569).²⁰ After retiring from Shuanglin Monastery, Shanben succeeded his teacher Zongben as the abbot of Jingci Monastery (淨慈寺) in Qiantang (錢塘, present-day Hangzhou, 杭州, Zhejiang). At that time, there were more than a thousand Buddhist disciples in Jingci Monastery, donations were abundant, the Dharma seat was flourishing, and the number of worshippers was endless, making visitors feel as if they had come to the Western Heaven. Due to this prosperity, two generations of Chan Masters, Zongben and Shanben, who were called “Daxiao ben” (大小本, Big and Little Ben), became well known. In the fifth year of the Yuanyou period (1090), Faxiu passed away, and shortly thereafter, Shanben took over the abbotship of Fayun Monastery by royal decree of Emperor Zhezong. He was given the Chan name “Datong Chan Master” (大通禪師) at the request of the Princess of Yueguo.²¹

Interestingly, Faxiu and Zongben were fellow disciples, meaning Faxiu was Shanben’s Shishu (師叔, paternal uncle; master’s fellow disciple). When Shanben studied Chan with Zongben, Faxiu was already a well-known Chan master whom Shanben particularly admired. When Faxiu served as the abbot of Qixian Monastery, Shanben often went to ask him questions. Their relationship was as close as that between Yangshan Huiji (仰山慧寂, 807–883) and his paternal uncle Dongsi Ruhui (東寺如會, 744–823). Moreover, it seems that it was not a coincidence that after Shanben resigned from the post of abbot of Fayun Monastery, Faxiu’s disciple Weibai took over as the next-generation abbot. Shanben was an honest and proud man who never said anything against his will to agree with others. However, during his tenure as the abbot of Fayun Monastery, princes and nobles donated money and goods to build and renovate the monastery, making it magnificent and resplendent like a treasure house. After serving as the abbot of Fayun Monastery for eight years, Shanben petitioned to leave his position and retire. After his request was granted, Shanben went to the Chongde An (崇德庵) in Longshan (龍山) of the West Lake (西湖), where he remained for ten years, isolated from the world, living with his disciple Sirui (思睿). In December of the third year of the Daguan period (大觀三年, 1109), Shanben passed away at the age of 75, the Buddhist year being 45.²²

Regarding the time when Shanben took over as the abbot of Fayun Monastery, it likely occurred shortly after 29 August of the fifth year of the Yuanyou period (1090), when the first-generation abbot Faxiu passed away. As for the date when Shanben retired from the position of abbot of Fayun Monastery, there are two records. First, as mentioned earlier, after Shanben served as the abbot of Fayun Monastery for eight years, he lived in seclusion at Chongde Monastery in Longshan for ten years until his death in December of the 3rd

year of the Daguan period. Combined with the above information, the date of Shanben's departure from the capital and his retreat to Longshan is estimated to be at least around the third year of the Yuanfu period (元符三年, 1100). Thus, the period during which Shanben served as abbot of Fayun Monastery was probably between the end of the fifth year of the Yuanyou period (元祐五年, 1090) and the second year of the Yuanfu period (1099), a period of about eight years.

In addition, fascicle 4 of the Yuan dynasty's *Shishi jigu lue* (釋氏稽古略 [An Outline of Historical Researches into the Śākya Family Lineage]) by Juean (覺岸, 1286–?) records that “in the fall of the 7th year of the Yuanyou period (1092), Shanben was granted permission to return to the West Lake in Hangzhou due to old age (元祐七年秋, 師丐老歸杭州西湖, 制可)”.²³ According to this statement, the length of the period during which Shanben served as abbot of Fayun Monastery was two years, from the eighth month of the fifth year of the Yuanyou period to the fall of the seventh year of the Yuanyou period. After careful consideration, we accept the record of the *Chanlin sengbao zhuan* (禪林僧寶傳 [Biography of the Chan Monks]). The reason for this is that, among the two records, the information about Shanben in the *Chanlin sengbao zhuan*—which was completed in the Song Dynasty—is more detailed, and the author Huihong's (惠洪, 1071–1128) information comes directly from Shanben's disciple Sirui, making the information relatively credible. In addition, it is unreasonable for Shanben to resign unilaterally after less than two years in office. In short, Shanben assumed the abbotship of Fayun Monastery around the end of the fifth year of the Yuanyou period and arrived at the latest at the beginning of the sixth year of the Yuanyou period (1091). His departure from the abbotship of Fayun Monastery was probably around the end of the second year of the Yuanfu period, no later than the first month of the third year of the Yuanfu period, the day of Emperor Zhezong's death (1100), totaling about eight years. During Shanben's tenure at Fayun Monastery, he made additions to the monastery, allowing it to develop even more than in the early days of its establishment.

4. The Prosperity of Fayun Monastery and the Third-Generation Abbot Foguo Weibai (佛國惟白)

After Shanben retired from his position as abbot of Fayun Monastery, Weibai was appointed as the third-generation abbot. Weibai,²⁴ born into the Ran (冉) family in Jingjiang (靜江, present-day Guilin, 桂林, Guangxi, 廣西) (Zong 2021), was a disciple of Faxiu. According to the 20th fascicle of the *Chanrong songgu lianzhu tongji* (禪宗頌古聯珠通集 [Comprehensive Anthology of the String of Pearls Verse Commentary of the Chan Lineage]), Weibai had studied with Huanglong Huinan (黃龍惠南, 1002–1069) from the first year of the Xining period (熙寧元年, 1068).²⁵ Perhaps it was shortly after Huinan's death (1069) that Weibai became a disciple of Faxiu to study Chan and achieve enlightenment. After completing his studies, Weibai successively held the position of abbot at Guishan Monastery (龜山寺) in Sizhou (泗州, present-day Sixian County, 泗縣, Anhui) and Tangquan Monastery (湯泉寺) in Fangxian (房縣, present-day Fangxian County, 房縣, Shiyan, 十堰, Hubei, 湖北).²⁶

In the first lunar month of the third year of the Yuanfu period, Emperor Zhezong passed away and was succeeded by Emperor Huizong (徽宗, 1082–1135, r. 1100–1125). Soon afterward, Weibai was appointed abbot of Fayun Monastery in Dongjing and was honored with the title of “Chan Master Foguo”. On the 16th day of the second month of the third year of the Yuanfu period, Weibai entered the palace for the first time, ascended to the high seat (陞座), and taught the Dharma (說法) for the sacrificial ceremony thirty-five days after the death (五七祭典) of Emperor Zhezong, by Emperor Huizong's imperial decree. On the 22nd day of the fourth month of the same year, Weibai once again entered the palace, this time in the Hall of Funing (福寧殿), ascended to the high seat, and taught the Dharma for the sacrificial ceremony one hundred days after the death (百日祭典) of Emperor Zhezong, by Emperor Huizong's imperial decree. On the 17th day of the second month of the first year of the Jianzhong Jingguo period (建中靖國元年, 1101), Weibai entered the palace for the third time by imperial decree, ascended to the high seat, and taught

the Dharma at the Cide Hall (慈德殿) for the sacrificial ceremony thirty-five days after the death of the empress dowager.²⁷

On the 15th day of the 7th month of the first year of the Jianzhong Jingguo period, Weibai handed over the 30 fascicles of the *Jianzhong jingguo xudeng lu* and the 3 fascicles of the Contents that he had compiled to Zhang Dunli, who was a *dānapati* of Fayun Monastery, hoping that he would be allowed to submit them to Emperor Huizong for inclusion in the Buddhist Canon. On the 15th day of the 8th month of the same year, Emperor Huizong wrote the *Yuzhi jianzhong jingguo xudeng lu xu* (御制建中靖國續燈錄序 [The Imperial Preface to the *Jianzhong jingguo xudeng lu*]) in his own handwriting, authorizing the *Jianzhong jingguo xudeng lu* to be included in the Buddhist Canon.²⁸

In the spring of the second year of the Chongning period (崇寧二年, 1103), Weibai received Emperor Huizong's permission to travel to Mount Tiantai (天台山, present-day Tiantai County, 天台縣, Zhejiang). On the 18th day of the 8th month of the same year, Weibai arrived at Zhizhe Chan Monastery (智者禪寺) at Mount Jinhua (金華) in Wuzhou to study the Buddhist Canon. On the first day of the 11th month of that year, Weibai took the essence of the Buddhist Canon and compiled the *Dazangjing gangmu zhiyao lu* (大藏經綱目指要錄 [Essential Guide and Checklist of the Great Canon]), in 8 fascicles. On the third day of the 2nd month of the next year (1104), the compilation was completed, totaling more than 200,000 characters (Weibai 1993, p. 248).

On the 15th day of the first month of the fourth year of the Chongning period (1105), Weibai wrote the *Dazangjing gangmu zhiyao lu shu* (大藏經綱目指要錄述 [Preface to the Essential Guide and Checklist of the Great Canon]). At the beginning of the same year, he submitted the woodblock print of the *Dazangjing gangmu zhiyao lu* to the court. On the 28th day of the 10th month of the same year, Emperor Huizong issued an imperial decree allowing the *Dazangjing gangmu zhiyao lu* to be included in the Buddhist Canon and bestowed two empty-name certificates of ordination to Weibai. The next day, the Secretariat (中書省) issued an edict, which was sent to the Ministry of Rites (禮部) of the Department of State Affairs (尚書省) on the first day of the 11th month. Subsequently, the Ministry of Rites issued an edict to Weibai. By the end of the fourth year of the Chongning period, the series of events leading to the incorporation of the *Dazangjing gangmu zhiyao lu* into the Buddhist Canon was completed one after another (Weibai 1993, pp. 249–50).

Several years later, Weibai left his position as abbot and moved to Tiantong Monastery (天童寺) in Mingzhou (明州, present-day Yinzhou District, 鄞州區, Ningbo, Zhejiang), where he lived until his death.²⁹

Regarding Weibai's disciples, there are eight of them recorded in fascicle 25 of the *Jianzhong jingguo xudeng lu*.³⁰ As for his works, in addition to the aforementioned *Jianzhong jingguo xudeng lu* (30 fascicles) and the *Dazangjing gangmu zhiyao lu* (8 fascicles), there is also the *Foguo Chanshi Wenshu zhinan tuzan* (佛國禪師文殊指南圖讚 [Chan Master Foguo's Illustrated Verses of Praise on the Teachings of Mañjuśrī], 1 fascicle). It is quite rare that the *Jianzhong jingguo xudeng lu* and the *Dazangjing gangmu zhiyao lu*, as the writings of a Chan master, have been successively included in the Buddhist Canon.

As for the specific date when Weibai took over as abbot of Fayun Monastery, there is no clear explanation in the historical materials of the Song and Yuan dynasties. Only Juding's (居頂, ?–1404) *Xu chuandeng lu* (續傳燈錄 [The Sequel to the Lamp History]) fascicle 19 mentions the "Spring of the 3rd year of the Yuanfu period (元符三年春)".³¹ The earliest record of Weibai as the abbot of Fayun Monastery is the aforementioned February 16th in the third year of the Yuanfu period, when Weibai entered the palace to attend the anniversary of the death of Emperor Zhezong. Undoubtedly, those qualified to attend such ceremonies at the palace were either abbots of famous monasteries or senior monks of the time, and Weibai's teacher Faxiu, as the first abbot of Fayun Monastery, had also attended such ceremonies. Thus, even if it was later when he first entered the palace, by the middle of the second month of the third year of the Yuanfu period he was already the abbot of Fayun Monastery. It is also possible that Weibai's appointment as abbot of Fayun Monastery dates back even further, to the end of the second year of the Yuanfu period,

when the previous abbot Shanben stepped down from his post. Because of the serious illness of Emperor Zhezong, the official appointment should have been made after Emperor Huizong's accession to the throne.

In addition, there is no clear record of the date when Weibai retired from his post as abbot of Fayun Monastery. In the existing historical materials, the last record of Weibai being addressed as "Abbot of Fayun Monastery" was in November of the fourth year of the Chongning period. The period from the third year of the Yuanfu period to the end of the fourth year of the Chongning period (崇寧四年, 1105) totals less than six years. Moreover, it is unlikely that Weibai resigned from his post immediately after the affairs related to the collection of the *Dazangjing gangmu zhiyao lu* into the Tripitaka had been completed. Therefore, it is more likely that Weibai stepped down as abbot of Fayun Monastery in the period between the fourth year of the Daguan period and the first year of the Zhenghe period.

In summary, Weibai took over as abbot of Fayun Monastery at the end of the second year of the Yuanfu period (1099) or at the beginning of the next year (1100). The exact time of his retirement from the post is not currently known. During his tenure, he attended sacrificial ceremonies for deceased emperors and empress dowagers on three occasions by imperial edict. He also wrote and submitted two works, *Jianzhong jingguo xudeng lu* and *Dazangjing gangmu zhiyao lu*, which were included in the Buddhist Canon after receiving imperial edicts. The inclusion of these two works in the canon is related to the advantage of his identity as the abbot of Fayun Monastery and the assistance of the princess and her husband, who were the sponsors of the monastery. This reflects both the personal success of Chan Master Foguo Weibai and the attitude of the rulers of the time toward Chan Buddhism. The three generations of abbots of Fayun Monastery belonged to the Yunmen school, indicating that the Yunmen school was well developed in Dongjing at that time. Consequently, Fayun Monastery became prominent among the monasteries in Bianjing and reached its most prosperous period during Weibai's abbacy.

5. The Fourth-Generation Abbot Fozhao Gao (佛照杲) and the Decline of Fayun Monastery

After Weibai retired from his position as abbot of Fayun Monastery, Fozhao Gao was appointed as the fourth-generation abbot. He is also considered the last-generation abbot of Fayun Monastery, as there is no record of a fifth-generation abbot. Fozhao Gao, also known as Fayun Gao (法雲杲), was the third-generation Chan master of the Huanglong School (黃龍派) of the Linji School (臨濟宗) in the late Northern Song Dynasty. His date of birth and death, place of birth, and common family name are unclear. According to the *Dahui Pujue Chanshi Zongmen Wuku* (大慧普覺禪師宗門武庫 [Chan Master Dahui Pujue's Arsenal for the Chan Lineage]), Fozhao Gao became a monk as a teenager and later traveled extensively to study under various famous masters. Initially, he studied under Yuantong Ji (圓通璣, 1036–1118) of the Huanglong School. Later, he became a disciple of Zhenjing Kewen (真淨克文, 1025–1102), the second-generation master of the Linji School's Huanglong sect, and attained enlightenment on November 21st of the third year of the Shaosheng period (紹聖三年, 1096). Fozhao Gao initially served as abbot of Guizong Monastery (歸宗寺) in Lushan (present-day Xingzi County, 星子縣, Jiujiang, Jiangxi), where he dedicated himself to the propagation of the Buddha's teachings without slackening.³² Later, he was appointed as the fourth abbot of Fayun Monastery by imperial edict of Emperor Huizong. On the day of his inauguration (開堂日) as abbot of Fayun Monastery, the emperor sent an envoy to congratulate him with imperial incense and ordered Fozhao Gao to submit a 'recorded sayings' (語錄). Huihong was present at the Dharma assembly and assisted in the compilation of these recorded sayings.³³ Before the fourth year of the Xuanhe period (宣和四年, 1122), Fozhao Gao retired as abbot of Fayun Monastery and moved to Tieluohan Monastery (鐵羅漢寺) in Jingde (景德).³⁴ Unfortunately, apart from these records, there are no further details about Fozhao Gao, and only some of his Dharma talks and Gong'an (公案) are included in fascicle 23 of the *Jianzhong Jingguo Xudeng Lu*.

There is no clear record of when Fozhao Gao was appointed as the abbot of Fayun Monastery. On the day of his inauguration, Huihong was present at the Dharma assembly and assisted in the compilation of the recorded sayings. According to Huang Qijiang's *Huihong nianpu jianbian* (惠洪年譜簡編 [Compendium of the Annals of Huihong]), the main periods of Huihong's activities in Bianjing were from the fourth to the seventh year of the Yuanyou period (1089–1092) as well as the year from the eighth month of the fourth year of the Dagan period (1110) to the tenth month of the first year of the Zhenghe period (政和元年, 1111) (Huang 1997, p. 350). Therefore, his attendance at the inauguration ceremony of Fozhao Gao could only have taken place between the eighth month of the fourth year of the Dagan period and the tenth month of the first year of the Zhenghe period. As mentioned in the previous section, the last record of Weibai being addressed as “Abbot of Fayun Monastery” was in the eleventh month of the fourth year of the Chongning period. The period from the third year of the Yuanfu period to the end of the fourth year of the Chongning period (崇寧四年, 1105) totals less than six years. Moreover, it is unlikely that Weibai resigned from his post just after the affairs related to the collection of the *Dazangjing gangmu zhiyao lu* into the Tripitaka had been completed. Therefore, it is more likely that Weibai stepped down as abbot of Fayun Monastery sometime between the fourth year of the Dagan period and the first year of the Zhenghe period.

Regarding the time when Fozhao Gao retired from Fayun Monastery, the *Dahui Pujue Chanshi Nianpu* (大慧普覺禪師年譜 [Chronological Biography of Zen Master Dahui Pujue]) recorded that in the fourth year of the Xuanhe period, at the age of 34, Dahui Zonggao (大慧宗杲, 1089–1163) traveled to Bianjing for the first time, intending to visit Fozhao Gao. Unfortunately, by that time, Fozhao Gao had already retired to Tieluohan Monastery in Jingde.³⁵ According to this record, Fozhao Gao had already retired to Tieluohan Monastery before the fourth year of the Xuanhe period. Additionally, both the abolition of Buddhism by Emperor Huizong in January of the first year of the Xuanhe period (1119) and the death of Fayun Monastery's sponsor, the Princess of Yueguo, in the fifth year of the Xuanhe period (1123) (Tuotuo and Yang 1984, p. 8780) had a significant impact on Fayun Monastery. Considering these factors, it is possible that Fozhao Gao, as the last abbot of Fayun Monastery, retired before the fourth year of the Xuanhe period.

At this point, the history of Fayun Monastery was nearing its end. In the first year of the Jingkang period (靖康元年, 1126), the Jin army attacked Bianjing, the Northern Song Dynasty ended, and, with it, Fayun Monastery was also destroyed, never to reappear on the stage of history.

6. Concluding Remarks

By examining the biographies of the four generations of abbots at Fayun Monastery and researching their tenures using the succession of abbots as a timeline, this paper provides an overview and reconstruction of the approximately forty-three years of history at Fayun Monastery in Dongjing. Despite the limitations in available information, this study aims to piece together the monastery's historical narrative as accurately as possible, recognizing that future discoveries may refine these conclusions. Several key points emerge from this examination:

First, the appointment of the abbots of Fayun Monastery by imperial edict and the bestowal of honorific titles underscore the Song Dynasty government's emphasis on Chan Buddhism. These appointments, coupled with the abbots' involvement in significant state ceremonies, illustrate the integral role of Buddhist monks and monasteries within the broader political and social framework of the Song Dynasty. The monks' prayers for national prosperity, imperial longevity, and social harmony highlight the intersection of religious practices with state interests.

Second, the first three generations of abbots were all from the Yunmen lineage, suggesting that Fayun Monastery operated under a “hereditary monastery” system. This system allowed for the succession of abbots within the same tonsure family, emphasizing the teacher–inheritance relationship. However, the shift to a Chan master from the Linji

school as the fourth-generation abbot signifies a broader trend during the late Northern Song Dynasty, in which the Linji school's influence began to overshadow that of the Yunmen school.

Third, the prosperity and decline of Fayun Monastery were closely tied to the support of its sponsors. The patronage from the Princess of Yueguo and her husband was instrumental in the monastery's development. Their contributions facilitated the construction of key structures and the monastery's overall growth. Conversely, the decline of Fayun Monastery can be attributed to the loss of this strong external support, illustrating the dependency of religious institutions on their secular benefactors. After Weibai retired from his position as abbot of Fayun Monastery, Fozhao Gao was appointed as the fourth-generation abbot. The lack of records about a fifth-generation abbot and the subsequent destruction of the monastery during the Jin invasion of Bianjing mark the end of Fayun Monastery's historical presence.

In summary, the history of Fayun Monastery during the Northern Song Dynasty offers valuable insights into the Yunmen School's rise and fall, reflecting broader trends in the development of Chan Buddhism. The interactions between the abbots, scholar-officials, and the Song Dynasty government reveal the complex dynamics that shaped religious and political landscapes. This study not only sheds light on the significance of Fayun Monastery but also contributes to our understanding of the intricate relationship between religion and state in medieval China. Future research could further explore the relationships between different Chan schools and their respective influences, as well as uncover additional historical materials that might provide deeper insights into the lives and contributions of lesser-known abbots and monks associated with Fayun Monastery.

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Abbreviations

B = *Dazangjing bubian* 大藏經補編 [Supplement to the Dazangjing]. Edited by Lan Jifu 藍吉富. Taipei: Huayu Publishing House 華宇出版社, 1985.

GA = *Zhongguo Fosi Shizhi Huikan* 中國佛寺史志彙刊. Edited by Du Jiexiang 杜潔祥. Taipei: Zongqing Book Publishing Company 宗青圖書出版公司, 1980–1994.

J = *Jiaxing Canon (Shinwenfeng Edition)* 嘉興藏 (新文豐版). Taipei: Shinwenfeng Book Publishing Company 新文豐出版社, 1987.

T = *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經 [Buddhist Canon Compiled during the Taishō Era (1912–26)]. Edited by Takakusu Jun-jirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭, et al. 100 vols. Tōkyō: Taishō shinshū daizōkyō kankōkai 大正新修大藏經刊行會, 1988.

X = *Manji Shinsan Dainippon Zokuzōkyō* 卍新纂大日本續藏經. Edited by Kōshō Kawamura 河村孝照, Giyū Nishi 西義雄 and Kōshirō Tamaki 玉城康四郎, et al. 90 vols. Tōkyō: Kokusho Kankōkai 國書刊行會, 1975–1989.

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Notes

- 1 Fozu tongji, T no. 2035, 49:45. 412b410–421.
- 2 Jianzhong jingguo xudeng lu, X no. 1556, 78: 1. 640c-641a.
- 3 Jianzhong jingguo xudeng lu, X no. 1556, 78: 30. 827b19–21.
- 4 Fozu lidai tongzai, T no. 2033, 49: 19. 669c.
- 5 For evidence regarding Xiangguo Monastery being located in present-day Kaifeng, Henan, see [Huang \(1989, pp. 101–7\)](#) and [Duan \(2004\)](#), [Chen \(2005, pp. 353–78\)](#), [Xiong \(1985\)](#).
- 6 Dongpo chanxi ji, B no. 148, 26: 4.713a2; Jianzhong jingguo xudeng lu, X no. 1556, 78: 10. 699c20–23
- 7 For the study of Yuantong Faxiu (圓通法秀), see [Du and Wei \(1993, p. 405\)](#), and [Yang \(2006, pp. 123–26\)](#).
- 8 Chanlin sengbao zhuan, X no. 1560, 79: 26. 543b10–18; Jianzhong jingguo xudeng lu, X no. 1556, 78: 10. 699c6–11).
- 9 Chanlin sengbao zhuan, X no. 1560, 79: 26. 543b16–23
- 10 Chanlin sengbao zhuan, X no. 1560, 79: 26. 543c2–7; Jianzhong jingguo xudeng lu, X no. 1556, 78: 10. 699c11–18.
- 11 Zongtong biannian, X no. 1600, 86: 20. 213a4–5.
- 12 Jianzhong jingguo xudeng lu, X no. 1556, 78: 10. 699c18–700a2.
- 13 Dongpo chanxi ji, B no. 148, 26: 4. 713a1–9.
- 14 Chanlin sengbao zhuan, X no. 1560, 79: 26. 544a1–5; Jianzhong jingguo xudeng lu, X no. 1556, 78: 10.701a22-b3
- 15 Chanlin sengbao zhuan, X no. 1560, 79: 26. 543b10–544a13.
- 16 For the study of Datong Shanben (大通善本), see [Du and Wei \(1993, p. 405\)](#) and [Yang \(2006, pp. 126–27\)](#), [Zhang and Fan \(2023, pp. 30–35\)](#).
- 17 Wuzhong (吳中) area, It covers most of present-day Zhejiang and the southern part of the Yangtze River in Anhui and Jiangsu.
- 18 Chanlin sengbao zhuan, X no. 1560, 79: 29. 549a6–21.
- 19 Jiujiang (九江) is located on the southern shores of the Yangtze River in northwest Jiangxi Province. According to *Jin Taikang diji* (晉太康地記), the name of Jiujiang originated from “Liu Xin thought that the nine waters of Hu Han i.e., Ganshui, Poshui, Yushui, Xiushui, Jinshui, Xushui, Shu shui, Nanshui, Pengshui) entered Peng Li Ze. (劉歆以為湖漢九水 (即贛水、鄱水、余水、修水、淦水、盱水、蜀水、南水、彭水) 入彭蠡澤也)”. Poyang Lake (鄱陽湖) has also been called Pengli Lake historically, but they are not the same.
- 20 Fu Dashi (傅大士) also known as Shanhui (善慧), Fuxi (伏羲), Shuanglin Dashi (雙林大士), and Dongyang Dashi (東陽大士) was a Chinese Buddhist monk who was later deified as the Japanese patron deity of libraries. Dashi (大士), lit. ‘Great scholar’, was used in China as a rendering of the Sanskrit mahāsattva. In addition to the invention of the library system, Fu Dashi was credited with overseeing the construction of the Shuanglin Monastery and compiling an early version of the Chinese Buddhist Canon. He is credited as the author of the *Jingang borejing laisong* (金剛般若經來頌, Taisho大正藏 no. 2732), a commentary on the Diamond Sutra. See [Zhang \(2003, pp. 28–33\)](#)
- 21 Chanlin sengbao zhuan, X no. 1560, 79: 29. 549a22-b4; Jianzhong jingguo xudeng lu, X no. 1556, 78: 15.732c4–6.
- 22 Chanlin sengbao zhuan, X no. 1560, 79: 29. 549a21-b17.
- 23 Shishi jigu lue, T no. 2037, 49: 4. 877c13–14.
- 24 For the study of Weibai, see [Zong \(2021, pp. 77–96\)](#); [2023a, pp. 717–14714-17](#); [2023c, pp. 267–70](#); [2023b, pp. 61–77](#)).
- 25 Chanzong songgu lianzhu tongji, X no. 1295, 65: 38. 718a15–16.
- 26 Jiatai pudeng lu, X no. 1559, 79: 5. 319a14–15.
- 27 Jianzhong jingguo xudeng lu, X no. 1556, 78: 17. 749c2–4; 750b2–3; 751b1–2.
- 28 Jianzhong jingguo xudeng lu, X no. 1556, 78: 1. 640c05–641b2; 30. 826c04–829b7.
- 29 Xuchuan denglu, T no. 2077, 51: 12.536b15.
- 30 Jianzhong jingguo xudeng lu, X no. 1556, 78: 25. 795a08–797a13.
- 31 Xuchuan denglu, T no. 2077, 51: 12.536b15. 595b19–23.
- 32 Dahui pujue chanshi zongmen wuku, T no. 1998B, 47: 1. 947a1–12; 948b20.
- 33 Dahui pujue chanshi zongmen wuku, T no. 1998B, 47: 1. 947a14–20.
- 34 Dahui pujue chanshi zongmen wuku, T no. 1998B, 47: 1. 945a10.
- 35 Dahui pujue chanshi nianpu, J no. A042, 1: 796b8–10.

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