

The Literary Lives of Nuns: Poems Inscribed on a Memorial Niche for the Tang Nun Benxing

WENDI ADAMEK

Stanford Humanities Center, USA

This article introduces two poems inscribed on a memorial niche dedicated to the seventh century Buddhist nun Benxing 本行 at a site known as Bao shan 寶山, located near Anyang in Henan Province. I suggest that the poems were written either by Benxing herself or by one of the nuns who contributed to the memorial, and thus significantly augment the corpus of extant poems ascribable to Tang Buddhist nuns. I introduce the poems in the context of the style of soteriology and ritual practice associated with Bao shan and explore further intersections between devotional and poetic practice in the Tang. In the second half of the article I explore notions of subjectivity, “literature of the beyond,” and the gendered voice. In conclusion, I suggest that although the Benxing poems deploy literary conventions of various kinds they stand out in the context of the Bao shan nuns’ communal devotional practices. They give us a glimpse into the concerns and aspirations of a practitioner within a gendered Buddhist community, providing a singular grounding for conventional images of what it meant to be Buddhist, a poet, and a woman in the Tang.

KEYWORDS Chinese Buddhism, medieval China, gender, Bao shan, poetry by nuns

Introduction

There is only one poem attributed to a Buddhist nun in the *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 (Complete Poetry of the Tang). Here I introduce two poems inscribed on a memorial niche at a site known as Bao shan 寶山, located near Anyang in Henan Province. The memorial niche was dedicated for the nun Benxing 本行 in 676, and I suggest that the poems were written either by Benxing herself or by one of the nuns who contributed to the memorial. If so, then the two poems significantly augment the

corpus of extant poems ascribable to Tang Buddhist nuns. Here I introduce them in the context of the style of soteriology and ritual practice associated with Bao shan so as to explore intersections between devotional and poetic practice in the Tang. I also compare these poems to the *Quan Tang shi* poem, which is attributed to the late Tang nun Haiyin 海印. The Benxing poems deploy standard poetic themes (the “boudoir lament,” reflections on the evanescence of pleasure, and the voice of the imagined dead), sounding warnings that are meant to underscore the need for Buddhist practice. However, we shall further see that Buddhist preoccupation with the nature of the self and the consequences of actions also opened up spaces for literary exploration of indeterminate notions of identity and agency.

In this article I compare particular expressions of subjectivity at the intersection of female devotional and literary practice, restricting my focus to a relatively narrow sampling of materials. I discuss four memorials for nuns at Bao shan, writings by a male cleric connected with Bao shan, and poems by three Tang women with connections to religious practice, both Buddhist and Daoist. I recognize that there is much more available material about the lives of Buddhist nuns in the Tang and later periods, and in my forthcoming book on Bao shan I will address this material in greater depth.

Bao shan’s efflorescence has roots in the Buddhist culture of the short-lived Northern Qi dynasty (550–577).¹ The site has attracted scholarly interest due to the richness of the sculptures, relief carvings, and inscriptions of its main rock-cut cave, Dazhusheng 大住聖. Complex relationships between text and image at this cave attest to the founder’s interest in repentance and visualization practices. What makes Bao shan truly unique, however, is the survival of a collection of thirty-four memorial inscriptions for nuns active in the seventh century. The nuns’ inscriptions are carved beside niches sculpted in the cliffs and rocks of Lanfeng shan 嵐峰山, which faces Bao shan across a narrow valley.

The Bao shan/Lanfeng shan inscriptions constitute the largest single *in situ* collection of traces of medieval Chinese Buddhist nuns. Buddhist female devotees, both nuns and laywomen, were active participants in the rapid growth and sinification of Buddhism, and there are numerous individual memorials and mentions of Buddhist nuns active in the Tang. However, Bao shan presents a rare window into a Tang practice community as seen through the combination of *in situ* artifacts and epigraphical remains. The Lanfeng shan inscriptions reveal that considerable material and cultural resources were devoted to the collective creation of a space dedicated to memorializing Buddhist women. Notably, the inscriptions are carved beside ornate stūpa-shaped niches that originally held, and in some cases still hold, exquisite portrait-like statues of their subjects.

¹ The Northern Qi was founded by the Eastern Wei (534–550) minister Gao Huan’s 高歡 (496–547) second son, who became the Emperor Wenxuan 文宣 (529–559). The capital city of Ye 鄴 in southern Hebei had been established by Gao Huan under the Eastern Wei; Bao shan and Lingquan si were founded on the former trade route between Ye and Luoyang. The Northern Qi was conquered in 577 by the Northern Zhou (557–581), which also supplanted the Western Wei (535–556) regime centered in Chang’an.

Following a brief overview of the site, I introduce the four nuns' memorials that have significant epigraphical content. I discuss the memorials for Sengshun 僧順 and Puxiang 普相 at greater length elsewhere;² here I note the Sanjie 三階 (Three Levels) practices alluded to in Sengshun's memorial and discuss Puxiang's accomplishments in light of the models provided by the only surviving pre-modern collection of biographies of Chinese Buddhist nuns, the *Biqiuni zhuan* 比丘尼傳 (Biographies of Nuns).³ The memorials for Jinggan 靜感 and Benxing are discussed in greater detail. Focusing on Daoist-sounding references in Jinggan's memorial, I note similarities and differences in the vocations of Buddhist and Daoist female practitioners. Turning to Benxing's memorial, I compare the two inscribed poems to verses written by the Bao shan founder Lingyu 靈裕 (518–605).

In the second half of the paper I ask the reader to dive into the murky waters of subjectivity, "literature of the beyond," and the gendered voice. In the section entitled "Buddhist Subjectivities," I discuss the tension between Buddhist aspirations and the emotional resonances used in Chinese poetry, and I compare the Benxing poems to a well-known poem attributed to the Empress Wu Zetian 武則天 (r. 684–705). In the subsequent section, "Poets and/as Nuns," I compare the Benxing poems to Haiyin's poem in the *Quan Tang shi* and discuss Buddhist-inflected poetry in the context of selected critical perspectives on Tang poetic culture. I also address the relative dearth of poems by Buddhist nuns in comparison to the larger extant corpus of poems by Daoist female practitioners. I then conclude with the observation that, when we consider the poems carved on Benxing's niche in relation to other notions of Tang poetic practice and Tang Buddhist practice, we see a particular kind of tension at work at this site, and this is not simply a tension between poetic "form" and Buddhist "content." Which is form and which is content? Buddhist practice is also "form," poetic practice is also "content." My aim will be to highlight the connections between the Benxing poems – which reflect not only Bao shan's brand of hell-and-brimstone Buddhism but also a subtle ambivalence – and the indeterminate subjectivity of selected later poems by female writers. The Benxing poems deploy poetic conventions, but considered in light of other Bao shan memorials and inscriptions they are not conventional. They stand out as a unique facet amidst the Bao shan nuns' communal devotional engagement with the work of words: representing the deceased for posterity, recording the merit of donors, chanting and copying scripture, and Buddhist sermonizing. They give us a glimpse into the concerns and aspirations of a practitioner within a gendered Buddhist community, providing a singular grounding for conventional images of what it meant to be Buddhist, a poet, and a woman in the Tang.

² In "A Niche of Their Own: The Power of Convention in Two Inscriptions for Medieval Chinese Buddhist Nuns," forthcoming in Fall 2009 issue of *History of Religions*.

³ *Biqiuni zhuan* 比丘尼傳, T 2063: 50, said to have been compiled by the monk Baochang 寶唱 in the early sixth century. Baochang's biography is in the *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳, T 2060: 50.426b13–427c20.

An introduction to the Bao shan site

The Buddhist history of Bao shan begins in the sixth century with the carving and dedication of two rock-cut caves dedicated to two important masters. In 591, the site received imperial recognition and was renamed Lingquan si 靈泉寺 by Emperor Wen of the Sui (r. 589–604). In addition to its caves, dedicatory pagodas, and stelae, the site has over two hundred individual memorial niches dedicated by monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen for deceased teachers and family members. Significantly, while a few memorials for monks were carved on Lanfeng shan, Bao shan itself has no memorials for nuns or laywomen.

Most of the inscriptions are brief, recording the name, title, and monastery or convent of the deceased, the date of the dedication of the niche, and sometimes the names of the donors who created the memorial. As a site where small groups of donors could dedicate meritorious images to benefit the deceased and thereby themselves, Bao shan is comparable to more famous sites like Xiangtang shan 響堂山 in Hebei and Longmen 龍門 near Luoyang. However, Bao shan's devotional constructions are smaller and fewer, while its individual Tang-era memorial niches are more numerous.

The two rock-cut cave temples on Bao shan and Lanfeng shan constitute the devotional foci of the site, and the restored Lingquan temple stands in the valley between them, in what is believed to be its original location. The earliest cave is Daliusheng 大留聖, carved in 546 in honor of the monk Daoping 道憑 (488–559). Daliusheng is situated about five hundred meters east of Lingquan temple, and the memorial niches for nuns and laywomen are carved into cliff-faces above, below, and to the east of the cave. Daoping was the disciple of the Northern Wei master Huiguang 慧光 (468–537), who was later considered the founder of the Southern Branch of the Dilun 地論 (Ten Stages) school.⁴

As noted above, the best-known feature of the site is Dazhusheng cave on Bao shan itself, located about five hundred meters west of Lingquan temple, with numerous niches for monks and laymen above and to the west of the cave. Dedicated in 589, Dazhusheng was carved in honor of Daoping's famous disciple Lingyu, who was in turn the teacher of Xinxing 信行 (540–594), the founder of the Sanjie 三階 (Three

⁴ The "Southern" and "Northern" designations are based on the biographies of Bodhiruci 菩提流支 (d. 527) and Huiguang 慧光 (468–537) in the *Xu Gaoseng zhuan*, T 2060: 50.429a5–16 and 607c19–20, which show two lines of affiliation based on exegesis and practice of the Yogācāra tenets of Vasubandhu's *Daśabhūmi-vyākhyāna* (*Shidi jing lun* 十地經論; T 1522: 26), a commentary on the chapter on the ten stages of the bodhisattva path in the *Avatamsaka-sūtra*. The two lines of affiliation were said to stem from disagreements between Bodhiruci and Ratnamati 勒那摩提 (arrived in Luoyang in 508) regarding interpretation and translation of the *Shidi jing lun* (trans. 511); the Northern Branch was said to descend through Bodhiruci, Daochong 道寵 (d.u.), Buddha 佛陀/Bhadra 跋陀 (d.u.), and Sengchou 僧稠 (480–560), while the Southern Branch descended through Ratnamati, Huiguang, Daoping 道憑 (488–559), and Lingyu 靈裕 (518–605). See Bruce Charles Williams, "Mea Maxima Vikalpa: Repentance, Meditation, and the Dynamics of Liberation in Medieval Chinese Buddhism, 500–650 CE" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2002), 106–12. The dates given for Huiguang are based on a recently discovered inscription; see Zhao Lichun 趙立春, "Yecheng diqu xinfaxian de Huiguang fashi ziliao" 鄭城地區新發現的惠光法師資料, *Zhongyuan wenwu* 中原文物 (2006.1): 69–76.

Levels) movement. I will discuss the Dilun and Sanjie movements further as I present aspects of Buddhist soteriology reflected in the nuns' inscriptions.

The site's founder Daoping was said to have died at Bao shan. His disciple and co-founder Lingyu died at Yankong si 演空寺 near Anyang, but it is said that he was buried at Lingquan si on Bao shan and a pagoda was erected for him.⁵ Two freestanding Northern Qi pagodas remain; the "West" pagoda bears Daoping's name, a dedication date of 563, and a reliquary cavity, while the "East" pagoda has no inscription or cavity.⁶ There is also a relief memorial niche and inscription for Lingyu on Bao shan, dated 632.

The earliest datable carved-relief memorial niche with a portrait-statue of the deceased is for the monk Dengzhi 登枝 dedicated in 589, while the earliest for a nun was dedicated in 640 (this is the memorial for Sengshun, discussed below). The Bao shan niches appear to be the earliest extant reliquaries with rock-carved representations of the deceased placed in niches similar to those carved for Buddha-images.

Inscriptions for four nuns

By way of introduction to the inscriptions, let us consider some statistics that supply useful context. Lanfeng shan has eighty-nine extant or documented niches, including forty-two *in situ* inscriptions and five documented inscriptions not matched to any niches. Of the forty-seven inscriptions, thirty-four are for nuns, nine are for laywomen, three are for monks, and one is unclear. Most of the inscriptions for nuns identify them as belonging to two convents: there are twenty-three former inmates of Shengdao si 聖道寺, nine from Guangtian si 光天寺, and only one representative each from Miaofu si 妙福寺 and Qingxing si 清行寺.⁷ The dedication dates range from 640 to 676, with most falling in the decade 648–658.

This body of inscriptions represents roughly a quarter of the total of 145 Bao shan memorial inscriptions from the Sui to the Ming dynasties. Moreover, the total number of inscriptions related to women comprise forty percent of the Sui-Tang inscriptions.⁸ In other collections of Sui-Tang Buddhist biographies and inscriptions, the proportion of material on Buddhist women is much lower. The actual proportion of Bao shan/Lanfeng shan niches for women may have been higher, but there are many niches with illegible inscriptions.

⁵ See *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, biography of Daoping, T 2060: 50.484c11; biography of Lingyu, *ibid.*, 497a5–8.

⁶ See "Henansheng gudai jianzhu baohu yanjiusuo" 河南省古代建築保護研究所, *Bao shan Lingquan si* 寶山靈泉寺 (Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 1991), 315–17.

⁷ See Ouchi Humio 大内文雄, "Hōzan Reisenji sekkutsu tomei no kenkyū – Zui-Tō jidai no Hōzan Reisenji" 宝山靈泉寺石窟塔銘の研究 – 隋唐時代の宝山靈泉寺, *Tōhō gakubō* 東方學報 69 (1997): 287–355, esp. 294, 303–7. It is not clear exactly where these convents were located, as excavations have not yet been carried out.

⁸ These figures are based on my on-site tally of the niches in comparison with the chart compiled by Ouchi Humio. Ouchi's research was based on the collection of Bao shan rubbings from the Jinbun kagaku kenkyūjo collection in Kyoto, which he also compared to other extant collections and publications (see his "Hōzan Reisenji sekkutsu tomei no kenkyū – Zui-Tō jidai no Hōzan Reisenji," 335–45). My transcription of the inscriptions is based on *Bao shan Lingquan si*, the Jinbun kagaku kenkyūjo rubbings, and extensive corrections based on *in situ* examination at Bao shan in July 2005 with the help of Shen Ruiwen (Peking University) and his wife Wang Jing (Renmin University).

Of the thirty-four inscriptions for nuns at Lanfeng shan, thirty tell us only the basics: the name and sometimes the title of the nun, the date of dedication of the niche, names of the donor-disciples, and sometimes the nun's lay surname.⁹ However, four of the inscriptions give us considerably more, and from these four we can draw inferences about the role of literary culture in the practices of the nuns at Bao shan. Three of these literary inscriptions are also the earliest on the mountain, and these exemplars may well represent the beginnings of this funerary grove for nuns. The niche for Benxing is chronologically the last, dedicated in 676. Thus, the four inscriptions discussed each in turn below represent the brief thirty-six-year span of this unique record of two communities of nuns.

1 Lanfeng shan no. 47. Dhyāna Master Sengshun 僧順禪師 (555–639), dedicated in 640.

Guangtiansi gu dabiquni Sengshun chanshi sanshenta 光天寺故大比丘尼僧順禪師散身塔 (Reliquary for the Former Great Nun, Dhyāna Master Sengshun of Guangtian Temple)

Dhyāna Master Sengshun died in 639. Her epitaph makes clear references to practices cultivated by followers of the Sanjie movement: “acknowledging the evil” of one's nature, universal reverence for all beings, and the practice of extreme asceticism and exposure-burial. Followers of the Sanjie movement adopted the practice of “forest burial,” or exposing corpses to be eaten by other beings, as an expression of “limitless giving.”¹⁰

As mentioned above, the Sanjie founder Xinxing was a disciple of the Bao shan co-founder Lingyu. Though Xinxing renounced his monastic vows he maintained ascetic practices that were more rigorous than the monastic norm, and his most dedicated followers adhered to the same demanding regimen. This regimen involved meditation, repentance retreats (*fangdeng chanfa* 方等懺法), six daily periods of worship, and sometimes extreme austerities (*dhūta*) like fasting and begging for food.¹¹

Sengshun's memorial also refers to her practice of Buddha-visualization and her “using up her life” in practice. Although in the nuns' hagiographies in the *Biqiuni zhuan* we often see a link between fasting and scriptural erudition, in Sengshun's memorial there is no reference to scriptural mastery. Instead, we are presented with the image of a woman single-mindedly determined to use up her body and leave no residue, in life or in death.

⁹ The nine inscriptions for laywomen give only basic information, and of the three inscriptions for monks, two are the most elaborate on Lanfeng shan and one is basic.

¹⁰ On forest burial at Bao shan and other sites, see articles by Liu Shufen 劉淑芬: “Death and the Degeneration of Life: Exposure of the Corpse in Medieval Chinese Buddhism,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 28 (2000): 1–30; “Shishi cuoku – Zhongguo fojiao lushizang yanjiu zhi er” 石室瘞窟 – 中古佛教露屍研究之二, *Dalu zazhi* 大陸雜誌 98.4 (1999): 49–152; “Linzang – Zhongguo fojiao lushizang yanjiu zhi yi” 林葬 – 中古佛教露屍研究之一, *Dalu zazhi* 大陸雜誌 96.3 (1998): 22–136.

¹¹ See the *Xu gaoseng zhuan* biography of Xinxing, T 2060: 50.560a; see also James B. Hubbard, *Absolute Delusion, Perfect Buddhahood: The Rise and Fall of a Chinese Heresy* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 10, 19–24.

In Buddhism, the female body is considered to be the karmic result of past evil deeds manifesting in the particular hardships women endure, namely, leaving her own family to be married, menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and the obligation to wait on a man.¹² Sengshun's extreme practices could be understood in this context; women practitioners were assumed to have more karmic residue to clean up, and therefore they had to work twice as hard.¹³ Though the vocations of all the women memorialized at Lanfeng shan are likely to have been viewed in this light by themselves as well as others, in the other memorials we see different facets of practice emerge.

2 Lanfeng shan 45. Dharma Master Puxiang 普相法師 (566–643), dedicated in 644.

Guangtiansi dabiqiuni Puxiang fashi huishenta 光天寺大比丘尼普相法師灰身塔 (Reliquary for the Great Nun, Dharma Master Puxiang of Guangtian Temple)

The inscription for Dharma Master Puxiang celebrates her erudition and reputation as a teacher:

Her diligence was such that before long she was well versed in Vinaya texts, and she expounded on two sections of the subtle scriptures, the *Daśabhūmika* and the *Vimalakīrti*.¹⁴ The Dharma Master wished to open the gate of the Prajñāpāramitā, open the path of the unconditioned, convey people [out of] the great mansion [i.e. saṃsāra, and ferry people over the river of passion. Thus, this caused clergy and laypersons alike to look up to her and many followers to have faith in her.

Puxiang's accomplishments are reflected in her designation as a Dharma Master, one who is qualified to teach Buddhist scriptures. In the *Biqiuni zhuàn*, nuns are frequently praised for mastery of certain scriptures, which meant the ability to memorize and chant them aloud. Many biographies also mention the subject's profound understanding of the meaning of the scriptures and their illuminating lectures to the assembly, and there is no suggestion that such pursuits might be outside their natural abilities. There is also mention of a nun who wrote scriptural commentaries, but unfortunately no such texts survive.¹⁵

¹² *Śṛgālovāda-sutta*, *Dīgha Nikāya*, III. 180–93.

¹³ There is a tendency to question the assertion that women were assumed to be karmically handicapped by referring to literary paradigms such as the Nāga princess in the *Lotus Sūtra*, the goddess in the *Vimalakīrti*, and Layman Pang's daughter. However, these figures were created and celebrated precisely because they represent the extraordinary power of Buddhist insight (and not the power of female insight); see Wendi L. Adamek, *The Mystique of Transmission: On an Early Chan History and Its Contexts*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 226–37.

¹⁴ The references are to *Shidi jīng* 十地經 (*Daśabhūmika-sūtra*), trans. Śīladharma, T 287: 10, which is the scriptural basis of the *Shidi jīng lun* 十地經論, the work that gave rise to the branches of the Dilun school (see n. 4 above), and *Weimojie suo shuo jīng* 維摩詰所說經 (*Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra*), trans. Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什 (344–413), T 475: 14.

¹⁵ See Kathryn Ann Tsai, trans., *Lives of the Nuns: Biographies of Chinese Buddhist Nuns from the Fourth to the Sixth Centuries* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994), 74. Tsai notes that this is the only mention of a nun writing commentaries.

Nuns for whom such records remain are almost all marked as members of the elite class and were therefore connected with male and female peers, both lay and ordained, among whom erudition was prized. However, in spite of evidence of ample literary and contemplative skills, I have yet to discover any medieval Buddhist exegetical treatises ascribed to nuns. No matter how far a nun's prestige reached in her lifetime, it would not win her name or her writings a place in the annals of transmission of the Dharma to the next generation.

3 *Lanfeng shan* 42. *Dhyāna Master Jinggan* 靜感禪師 (561–646), dedicated in 646.

Shengdaosi gu dabiqiuni Jinggan chanshi huishenta 聖道寺故大比丘尼靜感禪師灰身塔 (Reliquary for the Former Great Nun, Dhyāna Master Jinggan of Shengdao Temple)

Dhyāna Master Jinggan's memorial tells us that she was from Dunhuang and her ancestors were Northern Wei gentry. Of the four memorials, hers is the one that shows the farthest-reaching exploration of the scriptures, and even beyond:

She recited the *Vimalakīrti sūtra*,¹⁶ the *Wuliangshou jing*,¹⁷ and the *Śrīmālā-sūtra*,¹⁸ and she went through all the scriptures once. Evening and morning without resting, her recitation and study [of the scriptures] was like an [unbroken] flow. When she reached the age of twenty, she progressed to receiving the complete [precepts], and after that she listened to the five complete Vinayas and explanations of the Mahāsaṅghika and Dharmagupta [Vinayas].¹⁹ She regulated her affairs and resolved her doubts, and there was nothing that was not in accord with principle. When she reached thirty she abandoned the non-cultivation of miscellaneous virtue [i.e she undertook cultivation in every aspect of behavior],²⁰ and sought the foremost subtle sect. She sheltered her body in the *dhyāna* assembly and was a mentor for her companions. She studied the *Yuedian*

¹⁶ T 475: 14 (see n. 15 above).

¹⁷ *Wuliangshou jing* 無量壽經, c. first–second c., trans. Saṅghavarman 康僧鑑 (third c.), T 360: 12. On this sutra, see Luis O. Gómez, *The Land of Bliss: The Paradise of the Buddha of Measureless Light: Sanskrit and Chinese Versions of the Sukhāvativyūha Sūtras* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, and Kyoto: Higashi Honganji Shinshū Otani-ha, 1996), 125–43.

¹⁸ *Shengman furen jing* 勝鬘夫人經, trans. Bodhiruci, in *juan* 119 (Sūtra 48) of the *Dabaoji jing* 大寶積經 (*Mahāratnakūta-sūtra*), T 310: 11. Given the Dilun associations with Bao shan, Bodhiruci's translation was likely to have been the one in use, but there was also an earlier translation by Guṇabhadra 求那跋陀羅 (394–468): *Shengman shizibou yisheng dafangbian fangguang jing* 勝鬘師子吼一乘大方便方廣經, T 353: 12.

¹⁹ The five Vinayas are: *Sarvāstivāda Vinaya* (*Shisong lü* 十誦律), 61 fascicles, trans. c. 404–406 by Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什 and Punyatāra 弗若多羅, T 1435: 23 (cf. T 1436–39: 23); *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya* (*Sifen lü* 四分律) 60 fascicles, trans. c. 410–412 by Buddhayaśas 佛陀耶舍 and Zhu Fonian 竺佛念 et al., T 1428: 22 (cf. T 1429–34: 22); *Mahāsaṅghika Vinaya* (*Mohosengqi lu* 摩訶僧祇律), 40 fascicles, trans. c. 416–418 by Faxian 法顯 and Buddhahadra 佛馱跋陀羅, T 1425: 22 (cf. T 1426–27: 22); *Mahāsāśaka Vinaya* (*Mishasebuhexi wufen lü* 彌沙塞部和醯五分律), 30 fascicles, trans. c. 424 by Buddhajīva 佛陀什, T 1421: 22 (cf. T 1422–24: 22); *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* (*Genben shuoyiqieyou bu lü* 根本說一切有部律), 50 fascicles, trans. c. 700–703 by Yijing 義淨, T 1442: 23 (cf. T 1443–47: 23, 1448–59: 24).

²⁰ *Sanshan* 散善 “miscellaneous virtue” is “the good character attainable when, though not in meditation, one controls oneself in thought, word, and deed” (William E. Soothill and Lewis Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* [London: Kegan Paul, 1937; digitized at <http://www.acmuller.net/soothill/soothill-hodous.html>], 23).

[] *yun jing* 月殿□雲經 [*Scripture of the Moon-Palace* (?) *Cloud*] [regarding] the karma of the genuine self (*shigong zhi ye* 實躬之業),²¹ the three voids²² and the five purities, and she attained a reputation in *dhyāna*.

The memorial goes on to describe Jinggan's minimal diet and the state she attained through her meditations, using a phrase from the *Zhuangzi* that became a trope in both Buddhist and Daoist references to trance-like states: "Her form was the same as a withered tree, her mind was like dead ashes."²³ There are also references that may show some connection with Daoist practice: mention of a Daoist-sounding but unknown text, and the term *shigong* 實躬, "genuine self," which is not commonly used in Buddhist contexts.

Though Daoist practices are very much part of the present-day restoration of Bao shan, there is no strong evidence for Daoist activities at the site during the Tang. However, I would like to take this opportunity provided by the obscure references in Jinggan's memorial to compare the aspirations of Buddhist and Daoist female practitioners as they pertain to the practice environment at Bao shan. The Bao shan community seems to have been concerned with transcendence through repentance and austerities, and this may have made them receptive to prevailing Lingbao 靈寶 Daoist teachings, which include the notion of a complex afterlife process of purification and the possibility of transfiguration into a heavenly form.

The Lingbao orthodoxy incorporated the texts and aspirations of the earlier Shanqing 上清 tradition; in the Shanqing paradigm, male practitioners could form unions with goddesses of the highest heavens, and female practitioners could attain transcendence and be wafted into celestial office in purified, but still female, forms. Transcendence is envisioned as what is impossible on earth: the female body of the ascended is eternally alluring, yet also pure. She is not a concubine or a servant like the "female officials" in the palace; rather, her talents are utilized in an official position with control over the highest sacred texts.

Tang writings by and about female Daoist priestesses and female recluses are more extensive than the record for Buddhist nuns.²⁴ Analyzing poems written by and for elite Daoist women, Suzanne Cahill gives us glimpses of female adepts invested with important roles: keepers of Celestial archives, respected friends of the Queen Mother of the West, and teachers and consorts of male adepts. For example, Wang Wei 王維 (701–761) writes of the hermitess Refined Master Jiao 焦鍊師:

²¹ The *Yuedian* [] *yun jing* as such is not in the *Daozang* index or the CBETA Buddhist canon, but the title is reminiscent of Buddhist-Daoist apocrypha of the fifth century. *Shigong* 實躬 "true self" does not appear in the CBETA canon, the *Siku quanshu*, or in pre-Song works in the *Scripta Sinica* database.

²² *Sankong* 三空: (a) *kong* 空, void, (b) *wuxiang* 無相, without characteristics, (c) *wuyuan* 無願, without volition. Alternatively, (a) *wokong* 我空, emptiness of self, (b) *fakong* 法空, emptiness of dharmas, (c) *jukong* 俱空, emptiness of all things. See Soothill and Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, 74.

²³ See A. C. Graham, *Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1981), 48.

²⁴ See Suzanne E. Cahill, *Transcendence and Divine Passion: The Queen Mother of the West in Medieval China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993) and *Divine Traces of the Daoist Sisterhood* (Magdalena, NM: Three Pines Press, 2006); Livia Kohn, *Monastic Life in Medieval Daoism: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003); Catherine Despeux and Livia Kohn, *Women in Daoism* (Magdalena, NM: Three Pines Press, 2003).

With body erect, you talk in the void;
 With brilliant eyes, you write in the middle of the night.
 Spontaneously you possess the art of refining cinnabar;
 From time to time you discuss the beginning of Grand Simplicity.
 You incessantly receive printed summons revealed by high gods;
 Sometimes the gods descend in soft-wheeled chariots.²⁵

Male poets and even the notorious Daoist priestess-poetess Yu Xuanji 魚玄機 (844–868) celebrated the seductive beauty and refinement of Daoist female adepts.²⁶ Moreover, as discussed further below, some Daoist women, like Yu Xuanji, maintained themselves as entertainers and courtesans. On the whole, however, hagiographies of Daoist female adepts show the same emphasis on fasting and celibacy that we find in biographies and inscriptions for Buddhist nuns. Cahill notes that rejection of food and sexuality represents the only way women could exercise control over their lives, for they, unlike their male counterparts, could not exercise the power of discipline in civil or clerical office or in authoritative textual commentaries.²⁷

The same could be said of the Buddhist nuns, but unlike their Daoist counterparts, Jinggan and the nuns of Bao shan are represented by their disciples as fiercely endeavoring to do away with their genders and identities altogether. Their portrait images, with shaved heads and robes, would not be distinguishable from those of monks – except that when their faces remain, they are often unmistakably feminine. In spite of the references to fasting and wasted bodies, their memorial statues often conform to Tang standards of beauty, showing them with full, round faces.

4 Lanfeng shan no. 72. The nun Benxing, dedicated in 676.

Shengdaosi gu biqiuni Benxing huishenta 聖道寺故比丘尼本行灰身塔 (Reliquary for the late nun Benxing of Shengdao temple)

Benxing's memorialists inscribed a eulogy beside the niche that tells us of their grief and reminds us of our common fate as conditioned beings always approaching death. Inscribed within the space of the niche itself are the two poems that are the main focus of this article.²⁸ The carving style appears to be the same for the eulogy and the poems. However, the possibility that the poems were added later cannot be ruled out.

The first poem is carved as follows on the proper right of the niche, on the stūpa façade:

²⁵ Trans. by Cahill, *Transcendence and Divine Passion*, 224.

²⁶ Compare poems by a male and a female admirer of Daoist beauties trans. by Cahill in *Transcendence and Divine Passion*, 231–32 and 234–37. Cahill notes that the latter example is unusual.

²⁷ Cahill, “Daoist Holy Women of Tang China,” in *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea, and Japan*, ed. Dorothy Ko, JaHyun Kim Haboush, and Joan R. Piggott (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 272–74.

²⁸ These poems are included in the section on inscriptions in *Bao shan Lingquan si*, but many characters were left out (96). Benxing's memorial is also included in Zhou Shaoliang 周紹良 and Zhao Chao 趙超, eds., *Tangdai muzhi huibian xujī* 唐代墓誌彙編續集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001), 218 (Shangyuan 上元 013). This is a reproduction of the incomplete version in *Bao shan Lingquan si*, though with the amendment of 客容 as suggested below.



FIGURE 1 Benxing, LFS 72.
Photo courtesy of Frederick M. Smith

五言自歎
 亂勾一首
 可死去改客儀意愁煩悴柳媚告天不昭求佛
 應知永辭千載樂長向九泉悲

The poem does not scan throughout as pentasyllabic verse, which appears to be acknowledged in the heading.²⁹ Amendment of a character in the first line below and the addition of a character in line four (both in brackets) would render the following:

*Personal Lament*³⁰ *in pentasyllabic verse*
 – a poem in irregular meter

可 ³¹ 死去改客[容] ³² 儀	You could pass away or change in appearance;
意愁煩悴柳媚	thoughts sorrowful and anxious, a withered dissipated beauty.
告天天不昭	You petition Heaven, Heaven is not forthcoming;
求佛[佛]應知	you entreat the Buddha, the Buddha is responsively aware [of your condition]. ³³
永辭千載樂	You take your eternal leave from a thousand years of pleasure,
長向九泉悲	forever turning to the sorrows of the Nine Springs.

The second poem is carved as follows on the proper left above the stūpa:

五言萬劫良緣絕千年
 勝報窮羈逸飄海外旅
 魄委谿中蓋旋縈飛鶴
 空去□□虹唯知守荒地聯
 翩聽業風

²⁹ *Luanju yishou* 亂勾[句]一首 seems to refer to the irregular meter.

³⁰ *Zitan* 自歎 is a recognized poetic form.

³¹ An anonymous reader for *TS* suggested that perhaps the initial 可 should be eliminated or changed, but my photo of the inscription clearly shows that there is a character, and consultation with Chinese scholars on site in 2005 resulted in the conclusion that it is 可.

³² Robert Ashmore suggested to me that there are two engraving errors in this poem: that 客 should be changed to 容, and an additional 佛 should be added to line four (conversation in connection with the Chinese Medieval Studies Workshop, Columbia University, May 2007; I take this opportunity to express grateful thanks to Wendy Schwartz for organizing this workshop and to other participants for their helpful suggestions).

³³ In the *Foshuo foming jing* 佛說佛名經, variations on the phrase *guiming rushideng wuliang wubian zhu Fo yingzhi* 歸命如是等無量無邊諸佛應知 (I entrust my destiny to these immeasurable and boundless Buddhas' responsive awareness) are employed as codas to evocations of sets of Buddha-names. The final 應知 is perhaps perlocutionary in nature ("may they be responsively aware"), intended to elicit the Buddhas' knowledge of the evocation. There are numerous repetitions in the second, third, and fifth fascicles; see, for example, T 441: 14.126c10. This sūtra is linked with the "Buddha-names in Seven Registers" (Qijie foming 七階佛名) used by both Lingyu and Xinxing. Amy McNair cites evidence that the *Foming jing* was the basis for the "Fifteen Thousand Buddhas" devotional program at Longmen's Wanfo 萬佛 Grotto, which had a large number of nun patrons. One of the main patrons was the Palace Chapel nun Zhiyun 智運, and McNair suggests that Zhiyun's "inaugural" inscription may have been made in 676 (incidentally the same year that Benxing's memorial was dedicated); see *Donors of Longmen: Faith, Politics, and Patronage in Medieval Chinese Buddhist Sculpture* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 132–36.

The second poem does scan as pentasyllabic verse (suggested amendments are bracketed):

五言	<i>Pentasyllabic Verse</i>
萬劫良緣絕	Ten thousand kalpas of good causes are cut off,
千年勝報窮	a thousand years of excellent rewards are exhausted.
羈[羈]逸[魂] ³⁴ 飄海外	The roaming <i>hun</i> soul floats across the sea,
旅魄委谿中	the wandering <i>po</i> soul is abandoned in the gorge. ³⁵
蓋旋縈飛鶴	In the canopy of the heavens flying cranes revolve,
空去□□ ³⁶ 虹	from the empty sky [?] rainbows depart.
唯知守荒地	You only know to guard the wasteland,
聯翩聽業風	incessantly obeying the winds of karma.

These poems have the tone of Buddhist didactic verses, *gatha*, written to inspire others to practice the Dharma. References to the “Nine Springs” and the separation of the soul into light *hun* and heavy *po* elements indicate that the writer did not consider Chinese notions of the afterlife incompatible with Buddhist notions of karma. This mingling of metaphysical tropes is less remarkable in a literary context than it would be in a Buddhist philosophical treatise. The *hun* soul floating across the sea while the *po* soul is trapped in the dried-up gorge contrasts well with the image of cranes repeatedly revolving against the sky while rainbows evaporate into the void.

As we will see, the admonitory tone of the Benxing poems echoes repentance verses by the Bao shan founder Lingyu, a century earlier. Yet, as explored in the “Poets and/as Nuns” section, the use of poetic tropes to express indeterminate emotional and metaphysical states is anticipatory of the verses of nuns a century later. Didactic Buddhist verse does not become obsolete, but it opens up further spaces for the questioning of the nature of emotional response: Is it attachment or is it awareness? Is it possible to separate these?

It appears that there is only one extant nun’s poem that predates the Benxing poems. Interestingly, it also one of the earliest recorded Buddhist death-verses, preserved in the *Biqiuni zhuan*. In the entry for the nun Huixu 慧緒 (431–499), it is said that when she was sixty-nine she attended a vegetarian feast in her honor, and though she was in good health and spirits she noted that it was a fine occasion to say farewell.³⁷ After brushing the following poem for her royal hostess, she took her leave and died a month later.

³⁴ Robert Ashmore points out that assuming 魂 rather than 逸 was intended for this line would preserve parallelism and bring the poem closer to observance of tonal prosody (see n. 33 above).

³⁵ An anonymous reader for *TS* pointed out that the juxtaposition of *hai* 海 and *xi* 谿 refers to the mythic image of the endless alternation between the filling and emptying of the eastern sea.

³⁶ No suggestions are ventured for the missing two characters in this line.

³⁷ Stephen Owen writes of links between the themes of “death and the feast” whereby poets advocate drowning awareness of mortality in merry-making or, alternatively, point out the futility of self-indulgence. See *The Making of Early Chinese Classical Poetry* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), 178–213.

世人或不知	People in the world who don't know
呼我作老周	call me "old Zhou!"
忽請作七日	Now I'm invited to a seven-day [feast],
禪齋不得休	but the feast of <i>dhyāna</i> never ends. ³⁸

Both Huixu's poem and the Benxing poems sound the familiar theme of the evanescence of worldly pleasures. Huixu's poem, written by a fifth-century nun whose life was punctuated by the effects of regime change, pokes fun at the random nature of worldly disrespect and worldly honor in a jaunty manner. The Benxing poems, written by or for a nun lamented by a bevy of peers with the resources to leave a lasting memorial, are elaborately morose. Let us take a closer look at the rich legacy of doom and gloom that supported the founding and maintenance of the Bao shan site.

Eschatological pessimism was part of the spirit of the Bao shan founder Lingyu's sixth-century era. During Lingyu's lifetime there were intermittent civil wars following the break-up of the Northern Wei, the Buddhist persecution (574–577) by Emperor Wu of the Northern Zhou, the spectacular Buddhist efflorescence under the Northern Qi, and the wars preceding reunification under the Sui. Lingyu's Dilun (Ten Stages) exegetical tradition was centered in the capital of Ye during the short-lived Eastern Wei and Northern Qi dynasties, where there was widespread belief that the power of the teachings of Śākyamuni Buddha were spent and the Dharma had entered its final stage (*moshi* 末世 or *mofa* 末法).³⁹

Lingyu's life and extant works attest to his concern with rituals of repentance and confession. Dazhusheng cave is a script and stage for repentance rituals; it includes images of the thirty-five Buddhas of repentance from the *Jueding pini jing* 決定毘尼經 (*Vinayaviniścaya-sūtra*) and an inscribed ritual text for veneration and prayers of repentance to the "Buddha-names in Seven Registers."⁴⁰

Furthermore, Lingyu's *Zongchan shi'e jiewen* 總懺十惡偈文 (Verses on Comprehensive Repentance for the Ten Evil Deeds) may have been intended to replace or supplement the more verbose and less comprehensive prayers included in the ritual texts translated from Sanskrit.⁴¹ Lingyu's poem ends with an evocation of the power of repentance to lighten one's karmic burden and motivate the Buddhas to extend their compassion and entirely dissolve one's *kleśas* (mental afflictions or addictions).

³⁸ *Biqiuni zhuan*, T 2063: 50.944a26–b3. Baochang notes that originally the verse was followed by a ten-character farewell, but this has been lost.

³⁹ As the teacher of the Sanjie founder Xinxing, Lingyu was a formative influence on this controversial eschatological movement. Xinxing's teachings were built around the notion of the Final Age, offering practices suitable for the beings of inferior capacity whose karmic burdens have caused them to be born in the end-time. We saw explicit reference to Sanjie practices in the memorial for Sengshun, and it may be that the Benxing poems are also meant to inspire the Sanjie practice of contemplation of the "evil of one's nature."

⁴⁰ Visualizations and repentances focused on the thirty-five Buddhas of confession are specified in the *Jueding pini jing* 決定毘尼經 (*Vinayaviniścaya-sūtra*), T 325: 12, translated in the latter half of the third century. The Dazhusheng "Buddha-names in Seven Registers" inscription is a hybrid text; see Williams, "Mea Maxima Vikalpa," 120–35.

⁴¹ See Williams, "Mea Maxima Vikalpa," 153–56.

Before this hopeful prayer, however, the verses evoke dread of the dark paths of rebirth:

違犯諸如來	I violate [the teachings of] the Tathāgatas
一切清淨戒	[concerning the] Pure Precepts.
嫌恨與愛憎	Resentment and regret, love and hate,
無心而不有	what heart is without them?
是罪若不懺	If I do not repent this misconduct,
長夜熏自心	through the long night (of saṃsāra) it blackens my mind,
積熏而不已	its noxious fumes accumulate without end,
變成地獄處	and it turns into a place in hell,
及與諸苦具	complete with instruments of torture. ⁴²

The Benxing poems, though similarly dark, seem less concerned with being tortured in hell than being lost and insubstantial. Lingyu's insubstantial fumes of sin turn into rebirth in a robust hell-world. In the Benxing poems, in contrast, the worn-out beauty's dependent existence leaves her completely unmoored in death and the wandering soul is unable to remain intact.

It is notable that Lingyu is also the author of two of the earliest recorded Buddhist death-*gathas* by a monk. The sentiments in these poems echo the helplessness in the face of death expressed in the Benxing poems. However, Lingyu's doggerel verses include macabre images and light irony:⁴³

哀速終	<i>Lamenting the Rushing of Death</i>
今日坐高堂	Today I sit in the great hall,
明朝臥長棘	tomorrow I'll be bedded on long thorny branches. ⁴⁴
一生聊已竟	Another life will have ended;
來報將何息	when will karmic consequences ever cease?
悲永殞	<i>Mourning the Everlasting [March] of Death</i>
命斷辭人路	Life's cut off and you leave the human highway,
骸送鬼門前	we send off the bones at the gateway of ghosts.
從今一別後	Once we separate today,
更會幾何年	how many years before we meet again?

Buddhist subjectivities

What is the nature of the afterlife subjectivity imagined in the Benxing poems? The author alludes to traditional Chinese beliefs that the spirit will be confined in a dark netherworld or that the *hun* and *po* souls will part after death. However, here the "light" yang *hun* soul is hardly better off than the "heavy" yin *po* soul, and both

⁴² *Fayuan zbulin* 法苑珠林, comp. Daoshi 道世 (c. 596–683), T. 2122: 53.919a15–19.

⁴³ Quoted from the *Xu gaoseng zhuan* biography of Lingyu, T 2060: 50.496c29–497a3. French translations of these poems by Paul Demiéville are in *Poèmes chinois d'avant la mort*, ed. J.-P. Diény (Paris: L'Asiathèque, 1984), 23–24.

⁴⁴ I.e., on a funeral pyre.

are doomed to disperse. Rather than imagining hell, the author dwells on the loneliness of existence in a disconnected and ambiguous state. She speaks as the “imagined dead,” a wanderer who is unable to enjoy an immortal’s sense of freedom in dissolution of ties to the earth.⁴⁵

The author’s only allusion to the path of salvation is the assertion that seeking the Buddhas will be met with the Buddhas’ “responsive awareness” (*yingzhi* 應知). How might this seeking and response have been envisioned? We cannot know with certainty, but the other inscriptions and the site itself give us clues. As noted, throughout the site we find traces of the continued influence of both Lingyu’s Dilun rituals and Xinxing’s Sanjie soteriology.

Xinxing’s Sanjie soteriology was a potent combination of Dilun-derived repentance rituals and *Tathāgata-garbha* doctrine. Regarding repentance, Bruce Williams has argued that the Dilun school propagated the notion that repentance rituals not only renewed bodhisattva vows and removed the effects of past evil deeds (karma), but even eliminated *kleśa*, the habitual tendencies that influence the course of one’s actions. This was a radical claim that meant repentance itself could effect liberation.

Classically, liberation entails recognition of the self and its attachments as constructs, fleeting dramas without a self-consistent actor. In an oft-explored conundrum, deeds may eventually alter the habitual patterns (*kleśa*) created by past actions, but there is no abiding “person” who is changed. Therefore, the notion that sincere confession of past sins enables one to eliminate the patterns that perpetuate the illusion of self paradoxically *reinforces* notions of personhood, the identification with a past defiled self and a future purified self. This is why the emptiness of repentance would become a symbolic antinomian claim for eighth-century Chan proponents. However, Lingyu’s sixth-century belief in repentance as a catalyst for enlightenment is apparent in his repentance verses.⁴⁶

The other side of Dilun and Sanjie soteriology was the *Tathāgata-garbha* teaching that all beings are matrices of a non-dual Buddha-nature. This would also be stressed in later Chan texts, but *Tathāgata-garbha* formulations of this fundamental emptiness could seem surprisingly concrete. Interest in *Tathāgata-garbha* doctrine can be seen in the reference to the *Śrīmālā-sūtra* in Jinggan’s inscription, above. Let us look the aspiration expressed by the scripture’s protagonist, Queen Śrīmālā, who is empowered by the Buddha to speak the Dharma:

The good son or good daughter who would embrace the True Dharma renounces body, life, and wealth for the sake of the True Dharma. By renouncing the body, these people verify transcendence of the limits of life and death, leave old age and sickness far behind,

⁴⁵ Stephen Owen discusses examples of a “set type” of poetry in the voices of the imagined wandering dead in *The Making of Early Chinese Classical Poetry*, 188–90.

⁴⁶ Williams further argues that Dilun repentance practices influenced Tiantai Zhiyi’s 智顓 (538–597) distinction between phenomenal repentance that eliminates karma and principle repentance that eliminates *kleśa*. The fact that Chan reformers stressed the counterproductivity of trying to eliminate *kleśa* through repentance shows how important the practice had become. See Williams, “Mea Maxima Vikalpa,” 147–58; Adamek, *The Mystique of Transmission*, 144–52.

and obtain indestructible permanence, the unchanging, ultimate, tranquil, and inconceivable Dharmakāya of the Tathāgata. By renouncing life, they verify transcendence of the limits of life and death, forever leave death, and obtain boundless permanence, accomplishing inconceivable good merit and securely abiding in all the miraculous powers of the Buddha-Dharma. By renouncing wealth, they verify transcendence of the limits of life and death, surpass sentient beings, [obtaining] inexhaustible, undiminishing perfect rewards, complete inconceivable merits and splendid attributes, so that all beings will honor and make offerings to them.⁴⁷

This is not simply the desire to be immortal and unbound, free to come and go, and it is also more ambitious than the Shanqing Daoist aspiration to be transfigured into the highest heavens and inducted into the serried ranks of the perfected. Instead, the aspiration articulated in the *Śrīmālā-sūtra* is to be eternal and independent, a refuge unto oneself while at the same time inseparable from the Dharmakāya, embodying universal merit for all beings. Giving up one's body and life, one attains a body of limitless, self-verifying truth and yet remains oneself. This is clearly envisioned as a Buddha-image receiving offerings. Though there are many Mahāyāna scriptures that extol the wonders of the bodhisattva path and its culmination in Buddhahood, this seems a particularly self-gratifying expression of emptiness.

Sanjie soteriology wove this vision of the power of the ultimate Dharmakāya “self” into an equally extreme vision of the abject condition of the provisional, karmically burdened self. As noted above, Sengshun's inscription makes reference to her practice of “acknowledging the evil” of her nature, which is a signature Sanjie practice. I would argue that the tension between Buddhist aspirations and human nature is also at work in the Benxing poems, but both the goal and the means have become less clear.

In order to highlight this tension between grand aspirations and human feelings, I would point out a similar yet more richly contextualized emotional arc expressed in a famous poem attributed to another woman: “Accompanying the Emperor on a Visit to the Shaolin Temple” ascribed to Empress Wu Zetian, who might have spent most of her life in a convent had she not won herself first an emperor and then an empire. Like her scriptural counterpart Queen Śrīmālā, Wu Zetian aspired to the role of a benevolent ruler propagating the Dharma. Later detractors would associate the overreach of her ambitions with Buddhism's tendency to excess.

Yet in this poem written by the future empress sometime between 670 and 690,⁴⁸ Wu Zetian seems to reveal self-doubt along with a fledgling sense of potential greatness. We see her with Emperor Gaozong 高宗 visiting Shaolin temple, the former

⁴⁷ *Shengman furen jing* 勝鬘夫人經, trans. Bodhiruci, in *juan* 119 (Sūtra 48) of the *Dabaoji jing* 大寶積經 (*Mahāratnakūta-sūtra*), T 310: 11.674c1–7. See an alternative translation in *A Treasury of Mahāyāna Sūtras: Selections from the Mahāratnakūta-sūtra*, ed. Garma C. C. Chang (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1983), 370.

⁴⁸ The poem features an outing with Tang Gaozong, who died in 683. However, it is possible that this poem may have been written some time after the occasion it describes; see Kang-i Sun Chang and Haun Saussy, eds., *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 48.

refuge of her deceased mother. The first lines emphasize her lack of freedom – she tours the restricted temple garden as Gaozong’s confined dependent, “granted this favor to leave the fragrant chambers.” In other contexts, this dependency was the essence of the feminine poetic persona; as noted by scholars of women’s writing in China, the trope of the virtuous beauty pining in lonely confinement due to the slander of rivals or the inconstancy of her lord was rooted in the earliest poetic and exegetical traditions, going back to the *Shijing* and *Chuci*.⁴⁹ Evolving into “boudoir laments” that evoke beautiful objects and natural ephemera in order to convey refined desolation, the voice of the dependent woman was assumed by celebrated male poets as well.⁵⁰

The view, however, opens out before the future empress, and we share in the escape of her gaze to far-off dwellings. Then the temple and its inhabitants come into focus: “Golden wheels revolve above the golden land, in incensed chambers move long, fragrant robes.” “Golden wheels” refer to the discs atop the temple-spire, but they also anticipate Wu Zetian’s ambition to become a Golden Cakravartin, a Wheel-Turning king, the benevolent ruler who aids the Buddha. This is the final part of the poem:

Truly it depends upon those with benevolent means
To aid the Almighty One’s power of perfecting the world.
Compassion gives rise to good fortune,
At this place I linger with thoughts of devotion.
But a branch in the wind cannot find peace,
Even tears of blood will not bring her back.⁵¹

Wu Zetian’s compassion, devotion, and world-conquering ambition transcend the limits of her position. She is brought back to earth, however, in the realization that she is “a branch in the wind” who cannot make time stand still or bring back her mother.⁵² Thus we see an arc that traces emergence from confinement, ascent to the dazzling possibility of both freedom and power, and a return to the limitations of the human heart.

The scriptural invention Queen Śrīmālā, the future ruler Wu Zetian, and the nun who wrote the Benxing poems all find empowerment as the voice and body of the Buddha-Dharma. The empress sees herself as the Buddha’s handmaid while the nun admonishes the fading beauty. Yet they both reveal ambivalence: their poignant representations of powerlessness in the face of death are also testimonies to the resistance of human emotions to the grand scale of Buddhist aspirations. In Wu

⁴⁹ See, e.g., Pauline Yu, *The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 44–117.

⁵⁰ See Wilt Idema and Beata Grant, eds., *The Red Brush: Writing Women of Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2004), 73–131; Chang and Saussy, *Women Writers of Traditional China*, 1–7.

⁵¹ Translation quoted from Chang and Saussy, *Women Writers of Traditional China*, 47–48.

⁵² The “branch in the wind” is an image derived from a tale of a filial son whose parents were gone before he had the chance to take care of them.

Zetian's poem we are shown the glory of the vision of a world-savior, but it dissolves in restless regrets. In the Benxing poems we see the poet pitted against herself, exposing a subtle resistance through the fate of the "other" she both impersonates and warns. She uses poetic tropes of mortality to teach Buddhist lessons, and this allows her to indulge in the imaginative projection of painful subjectivity. An implicit Buddhist "I" confronts and scolds an implicit erring "you," which evades both.⁵³ "Incessantly hearing/obeying the winds of karma," the elusive addressee is a kind of shadowy antithesis of Guanshiyin pusa 觀世音菩薩, the bodhisattva of compassion who is the constant "Hearer of the Sounds of the World."

Poets and/as nuns

We turn now to a consideration of poems by monastics and practitioners, both Buddhist and Daoist, in relation to Tang poetics. It is beyond the scope of this article to delve deeply or widely into the complexities of Tang poetic culture; here I engage primarily with Pauline Yu's reflections on Buddhism and poetic aesthetics. Her discussion of the evolution and character of a "literature of the beyond" provides a useful springboard for my reconsideration of the relationship between devotional and personal poetry as revealed in the intersections and divergences between the Benxing poems and later poems written by female practitioners.⁵⁴

As noted, in the *Quan Tang shi* there is only one other extant poem ascribed to a Tang Buddhist nun, the poem by Haiyin 海印 of Ciguang 慈光 temple in Shu 蜀, who is said to have lived in the late Tang:

舟夜一章	<i>A Night on a Boat</i>
水色連天色	The color of the water merges with the color of heaven,
風聲益浪聲	the sound of the wind enhances the sound of waves.
旅人歸思苦	The traveler suffers from a longing for home,
漁叟夢魂驚	the fisherman is startled from his wandering dream.
舉棹雲先到	As soon as the oars are raised, the clouds arrive,
移舟月遂行	wherever the boat drifts, the moon follows behind.
旋吟詩句罷	Now I have finished reciting the lines of my poem,
猶見遠山橫	But I still see the distant mountains stretching out. ⁵⁵

Haiyin works with the palette of emotionally charged tropes that traditionally counter and complement those associated with the neglected woman pining in seclusion. Images of the solitary traveler heading further and further away from all that he

⁵³ This is oddly reminiscent of Gao Xingjian's *Soul Mountain* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2001), a post-modern confessional pilgrimage in which the narrator is a crossroads of mutually resistant projections of himself as "I," "you," and "she."

⁵⁴ Discussions of devotional poetry of the Tang and beyond include Paul W. Kroll, *Dharma Bell and Dhārāṇī Pillar* (Kyoto: Italian School of East Asian Studies, 2001); Mary Anne Cartelli, "On a Five-Colored Cloud: The Songs of Mt. Wutai," *JAOS* 124 (2004): 735–57.

⁵⁵ *Quan Tang shi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), 805.9061; translation quoted from Idema and Grant, *The Red Brush*, 158.

treasures have roots in the earliest poetic traditions and were handled with exquisite restraint and subtlety by the Tang masters.⁵⁶ The haunts of the lone fisherman are associated with both voluntary reclusion and involuntary exile, while empty expanses evoke both transcendence and undeserved banishment from court and culture.

There is nothing that marks Haiyin's poem as Buddhist. Pauline Yu, however, argues that by the ninth century a Buddhist sense of emptiness and impermanence had infused poetic sensibilities. Let us examine the alchemy of this infusion more closely. Yu remarks on the primacy of expressive-affective conceptions of poetry in China in contrast to the mimetic-allegorical roots of Western poetry, and she argues that there is a link between the Chinese affective mode and notions of virtue and harmony. The Dao is considered to be immanent in the world, and through activation of affinities via sound the poet's internal emotional responses resonate with the external. Thus, poetry is not a matter of accurate description but skillful tuning of the feedback loop between inner emotions and the world. In becoming a tuning string for the cosmos, the poet transcends individuality rather than asserting it, but ideally he is also acting as a Sage, stimulating all things to respond to/with virtue. This is an agency and subjectivity that is not oriented to the manipulation of objects, but rather to the activation of harmonious interplay among subjects. Yu quotes the preface to the *Shijing* that is attributed to the first century commentator Wei Hong 衛宏: "Thus in regulating success and failure, moving heaven and earth, and causing spirits and gods to respond, nothing comes closer than poetry."⁵⁷

Yu further discusses theoretical debates and elaborations on the "stimulus-response" (*yinggan* 應感) model of writing from the third through sixth centuries. This literary theorizing has a Buddhist counterpart: Koichi Shinohara, Robert Sharf, and others have shown how Buddhists appropriated the related notion of "sympathetic resonance" (*ganying* 感應) to explain the miraculous efficacy of Buddhist devotion and meditation.⁵⁸ However, we should be aware of distinctions as well as correspondences between literary and soteriological uses of resonance.

Distinctions are apparent when we look at the uses of verse in Mahāyāna scriptures. In the paradigmatic Mahāyāna scripture, the *Lotus Sūtra*, verse passages are used to provide sensory images to illustrate the narrative passages. Ornate verses glorify the powers of the Buddhas and vivify the terror and squalor of the "Burning House" of birth and death. Both the glories and the terrors are illusions, but the former are salvific *upāya*, expedient means created through the merit of the Buddhas, while the latter are created through the delusions and passions of ordinary beings. In scriptural verse (in contrast to classical Indian poetry) there is a tendency to treat

⁵⁶ Yu, *The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition*, 118–31, 192–98.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 31–32.

⁵⁸ See Koichi Shinohara, "Dao-xuan's Collection of Miracle Stories about 'Supernatural Monks' (*Shen-seng gantong lu*): An Analysis of its Sources," *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal* 3 (1990): 319–80; Robert H. Sharf, *Coming to Terms With Chinese Buddhism: A Reading of the Treasure Store Treatise* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 97–111.

emotions other than devotion and compassion as hindrances. Beneficial illusions, including the scriptures themselves, are deliberate creations born of the dispassionate compassion of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

This is somewhat different from the Chinese poetic aesthetic in which the poet's voice is not simply a reaction to prevailing conditions but a channel for resonance and transformation of conditions. Sorrow is most likely to be figured as an appropriate emotion that reflects the poet's steadfast virtue and resonance with the Dao. The locus classicus for the association between suffering and the height of literary expression is Sima Qian's "Letter to Ren An."⁵⁹ In a more rarified mode, Yu shows how literary theory depicted the writing process not as creation *ex nihilo* but as catalysis: "Poetry comes not from within himself alone but as an answer to his 'knock' on nature, with which his mind, as a result of attaining the mental emptiness described above, exists in total harmony."⁶⁰

At the same time, Buddhist philosophical discourses, like the Madhyamaka treatises on emptiness and the identity of *nirvāṇa* (freedom from suffering) and *saṃsāra* (the suffering of birth-and-death), appear to work harmoniously with Chinese poetic notions of the immanence of the Dao in the natural world. Yu argues that Wang Wei's Buddhism enables him to invest the "object-laden world of court-poetry" of the early Tang with a new emotional and philosophical depth.⁶¹ Eighth century philosophical Buddhist-Daoist meditations on the immanence of emptiness/transcendence in sensory reality gave poets a new perspective on the practice of stimulus-response, one that was not weighted with the moral responsibility to harmonize Heaven and Earth. Chan Buddhist insights, Yu argues, enabled poets to present images with the conviction that "the concrete world could embody meaning on its own, without discursive explanation."⁶²

However, I would argue that one cannot leap to eighth- and ninth-century immanence without recognizing the importance of sixth- and seventh-century Buddhist morality and repentance. The "original purity of Buddha nature" does not spring straight from Madhyamaka analysis of non-duality, but derives its psychological and emotional force through the penitential rituals and visionary aspirations of practices aimed at "becoming a Buddha." The other face of the "monism" of universal emptiness that Yu emphasizes is a protean devotionalism. Emotional resonances in the devotional context evoke self-abnegation and fear of dark paths as well as visions of multiple Buddhas triumphant over the sensory world. In this arena, painting and

⁵⁹ Sima Qian argues that throughout history, frustration and misery have been catalysts of great writing, citing the illustrious examples of Confucius, Zuo Qiuming, Han Fei, Qu Yuan and, implicitly, his own punishment by castration and subsequent epoch-making literary efforts. See Sima Qian, "Bao Ren Shaoqing shu" 報任少卿書, in Xiao Tong 蕭統, ed., *Wen xuan* 文選 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986), 41.1864–65. In Stephen Owen, ed. and trans., *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), 136–42.

⁶⁰ Yu, *The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition*, 36.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 201–03.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 205.

sculpture, scripture, liturgy, popular literature, cosmology, and verse appreciation intersect and interact.

In this light, let us return to the opening images in Haiyin's poem: "The color of the water merges with the color of heaven, the sound of the wind enhances the sound of waves." The fact that Haiyin chooses to emphasize the abstract qualities "color" and "sound" by repeating each character twice (水色連天色, 風聲益浪聲) is a somewhat unusual poetic choice, but it makes sense as a reflection on non-duality and interdependence. Through study and practice, the Buddhist practitioner comes to recognize not just intellectually but experientially the ways that substantial qualities are imputed to things that have no substance. In the eighth century, Chan Buddhists would claim that this experiential transformation takes place in a sudden moment of recognition of one's own nature as emptiness/interdependence.

However, the Chan rhetorical denigration of ritual and devotional practice remained bound up with the personal soteriological concerns that permeated Benxing's world. While Haiyun voices the alternating merging and emergence of the self, the endless arising of emotion on the basis of nothing, the Benxing poet speaks to/as a lost soul: "You only know to guard the wasteland, incessantly hearing/obeying the winds of karma." Antinomian discourse did not erase moralizing discourse, it depended on it. In Song Chan literature they perform an increasingly sophisticated duet.

What Yu terms the "literature of the beyond," wherein "words come to an end but meaning lingers on,"⁶³ is homologous with ninth-century Chan discourse on the immediacy and spontaneity of Buddha-nature in "everyday mind" and a transmission "beyond words." Stephen Owen links the aesthetic of the "beyond" to the poet's possession of and by a fortuitous "find" or poetic moment: "The growing interest in the poetic *trouvaile* was related to the formation of a 'transmimetic' aesthetic ('beyond scene,' *jingwai* 景外; 'beyond image,' *xiangwai* 象外; 'beyond words,' *yanwai* 言外) in the late eighth and early ninth centuries. Here the poetic envisagement was distinguished from empirical sensory experience and from the ability of words to directly represent such experience. As *trouvailles* that are 'gotten,' such poetic scenes are possessions and signal the poet's singularity of vision."⁶⁴

Haiyin's poem appears to be a pastiche of tropes rather than *trouvailles* and is not marked as Buddhist. However, I would highlight the ways that her participation in the aesthetic of the "beyond" is colored (*se* 色) by her disappearing/appearing identity as an emotionally and sensorially responsive subject and as a Buddhist nun. Unlike the Benxing poet's *fo yingzhi* 佛應知, the responsive awareness of the Buddha is not named as such. What is evoked is the mutual responsiveness of natural phenomena: "As soon as the oars are raised, the clouds arrive, wherever the boat drifts, the moon follows behind." In the last couplet, the poet draws attention to her

⁶³ Ibid., 206–07.

⁶⁴ Owen, *The End of the Chinese "Middle Ages": Essays in Mid-Tang Literary Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 108.

own voice falling silent in time and space: “Now I have finished reciting the lines of my poem, but I still see the distant mountains stretching out.” There are no gendered or soteriological characteristics to this poem. However, the fact that it is the sole *Quan Tang shi* poem attributed to a Tang Buddhist nun invites us to consider it in light of the ambiguous relationship between identity and self-transformative practice.

Buddhist monks were recognized and for the most part respected participants in poetic culture. Moreover, the persona of the poet came to be viewed as analogous to that of the ideal monk, as both were utterly dedicated to demanding esoteric practices.⁶⁵ Literati Buddhist poets such as Wang Wei and the monk Jiaoran 皎然 (730–799) are recognized as major figures, while the Buddhist eccentrics Han Shan 寒山 (ninth century), Brahmacharya Wang 王梵志 (d. 670?) and others used poetry to admonish and deride the deluded self. Overtly Buddhist didactic, devotional, and philosophical modes were put into various poetic forms, and literary practice was a vehicle of self-realization independent of religious forms. In a culture so rich in hybrid discourses, why would only one poem by a Buddhist nun make it into the *Quan Tang shi*? This becomes even more striking when one notes that surviving poems by Tang Daoist female practitioners are far more numerous and better known.

Perhaps Buddhist nun-poets were at a disadvantage because the Buddhist emphasis on the burden of karmic afflictions left less room to circumvent increasingly constricting social mores for women. In the eighth and ninth centuries, the writing of poetry by women acquired an aura of impropriety; it became associated with “public women” whose poetizing was part of their repertoire as entertainers and companions.⁶⁶ While the persona of the professional woman could coexist with a Daoist vocation, this was unthinkable for a Buddhist nun. Daoist female practitioners had their own obsessions with purity and transcendence, but they could also see themselves (and be poetically supplicated) as goddesses granting favors. The sublimated eroticism of *Chuci* and Shanqing depictions of trysts between humans and divinities suffuses Tang romantic poetry and fiction.⁶⁷

For a provocative poem of self-reflection by the most infamous of these female literatae, we turn to a poem by the Daoist priestess and courtesan Yu Xuanji 魚玄機 (844–868).⁶⁸

On a Winter's Night, Sent to Feiqing

With bitter longing I sought a poem, sang it beneath the lamplight,
Sleepless through the long night, fearing cold coverlets.
Tree leaves fill the courtyard – I grieve at the rising wind,
Through sheer gauze window curtains, I pity the sinking moon.

⁶⁵ For this observation, see Owen, *The Late Tang: Chinese Poetry of the Mid-Ninth Century (827–860)* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), 89–155.

⁶⁶ See Idema and Grant, *The Red Brush*, 15–16, 163–64.

⁶⁷ See Owen, *The Late Tang*, 315–34; *The End of the Chinese “Middle Ages,”* 160–69.

⁶⁸ Poems by Yu Xuanji are translated in Chang and Saussy, *Women Writers of Traditional China*, 66–75; Idema and Grant, *The Red Brush*, 189–95.

Estranged, but not for long – in the end I shall follow my will,
 In flourishing and fading I emptily perceive the nature of my original mind.
 I haven't settled on a spot on the *wutong* for my hidden resting place;
 The evening sparrows twitter, vainly circling the forest.⁶⁹

Sleepless with longing, Yu Xuanji turns her coldly compassionate gaze at her own insubstantiality. She reveals a strikingly Chan understanding of emptiness: the ceaseless play of emotions – longing, fear, grief, pity – are none other than “original mind.” In contrast, Benxing and the Bao shan nuns inherited a tradition of repentance and self-denial that was yoked to the possibility of “becoming a Buddha” and attaining transcendent immortality. Yet the Benxing poetess and Yu Xuanji both voice an awareness of the dissoluble self that hovers at the edge of despair. While the Benxing poems warn others away from the abyss, Yu Xuanji flirts with the nihilism that the Chan master Guifeng Zongmi 圭峰宗密 (780–841) criticized as a mistaken understanding of emptiness.⁷⁰ This warning surfaces in various Buddhist contexts, as the self-deconstruction involved in approaching no-self and emptiness could easily take the form of self-alienation.

However, one does not want to leave the impression that the literary lives of female monastics were invariably melancholy. While Chan poetic and artistic images of light-hearted joy in the Way cannot be reliably anchored in the Tang, there are some intimations of these future developments. In this, as in many things, the Daoists appear to enjoy an advantage. In a final point of contrast to the Benxing poems, let us consider the following versified vows of the ninth century female Daoist adept Qi Xiaoyao 戚逍遥:

I look laughingly at the glaucous sea, about to turn to dust,
 as I part from gathered realized ones, before the Queen Mother's flowers.
 It will be a thousand years before I return home, departing to the realm above the
 heavens,
 meanwhile I'll treasure and give consideration to people in this world.⁷¹

While the Benxing poetess mournfully asks her listeners to imagine themselves as wandering ghosts who have exhausted the rewards of a thousand years of good deeds, Qi Xiaoyao light-heartedly takes on the poetic persona of the “banished transcendent,” exiled to earth for a thousand years because of some celestial misbehavior.⁷² Anticipating her eventual reunion with heavenly companions, she cheerfully contemplates her human relationships as chances to practice transcendent virtues.

⁶⁹ *Quan Tang shi*, 804.9049; translation quoted from Chang and Saussy, *Women Writers of Traditional China*, 71.

⁷⁰ See Peter Gregory, *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

⁷¹ *Jiu Tang shu* (Beijing, Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 4998; translated by Cahill, *Transcendence and Divine Passion*, 222.

⁷² On the trope of the “banished transcendent,” see Owen, *The Late Tang*, 316–17.

Conclusion

In the memorials for Sengshun, Puxiang, Jinggan, and Benxing, and in their sculpted representations, several very different practices of literacy come together. The eulogies for these four women and the Benxing poems show a great deal of training in the discipline of formal composition, displaying parallelism and poetic tropes as well as familiarity with Buddhist terminology. There is nothing to suggest that their fellow nuns did not write these pieces. As monastics, women were able to develop talents that few household women would have had time to cultivate. And yet the eulogies make it clear that the most prized accomplishments were not in recitation, exposition, or composition, but rather in spectacular self-mastery. For Sengshun, Puxiang, and Jinggan, the force of imaginative projection sustained a powerful asceticism that reshaped their bodies and their deaths.

Regardless of their level of literary attainment, the Benxing poems participate in the tradition of literature itself as cultivation. The literati ethos holds that the ability to write meaningfully allusive yet original poetry is a primary means of resonating with the Dao, reflecting and refining one's character. Surviving examples, including Wu Zetian's poem, give us fascinating glimpses of elite Tang women engaging in this type of cultivation.⁷³ The Benxing poems combine established poetic forms, the pentasyllabic personal lament filled with tropes of the abandoned beauty and the wanderer, with an emerging Buddhist genre, the death-verse.

Yet when we look at the portrait-statues themselves, we see the nuns engaged in another kind of cultivation, the cultivation of merit. Like many of the surviving images of nuns at Bao shan, these four are immortalized in the act of writing. The nuns are portrayed with small three-legged tables, their hands as if holding brushes and touching paper. Copying scripture in perpetuity, this representation of endless unvarying reproduction of the Dharma gains merit for the deceased and for the disciples who pooled their resources to make the representations.

Dorothy Ko has challenged the image of the "victimized feudal woman" by looking at women's literary lives in the seventeenth century.⁷⁴ Women of the seventh century left fewer words, but the nuns of Bao shan were clearly using literacy, writing, and image-making to imprint their personalities and collective purpose on the side of a mountain. The Benxing poems may reveal no trace of gender, but their context most emphatically does. In the study of pre-modern literature, in the absence of attribution or context, authors are assumed to be male, and that is entirely understandable. What is more difficult to accept is that the Benxing poems should be sequestered in perpetual purgatory because they are neither firmly attributed nor internally marked with a gendered voice.

These poems are marked within a gendered place. On Lanfeng shan, the nuns of the Bao shan community reveal glimpses of themselves in the inscriptions and

⁷³ See the selection in Chang and Saussy, *Women Writers of Traditional China*, 17–85.

⁷⁴ Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

representations they chose to commission: denying their physicality in fasting and meditation, repenting deeds they cannot remember, endlessly copying scripture, and bleakly contemplating the vicissitudes of rebirth. Isn't all this marvelous effort expended in the desire to escape the condition of the body in general and the female body in particular? Yes, but perhaps we should not dismiss their pursuits and fears as relics of the past too readily. These traces reveal the tension between the "power of denial" in the desire for absolute self-transcendence and the unstable subjectivity that this desire to reshape the self produces. Taking oneself as one's medium is a seductive and dangerous practice, one that tempts poets and penitents, men and women, and medievals and moderns alike.

Notes on Contributor

Dr. Adamek is a China religions scholar who has taught at Barnard College and Columbia University. Her book *The Mystique of Transmission* (Columbia University Press, 2007) centers on an eighth-century Chan/Zen group in Sichuan and won an Award for Excellence from the American Academy of Religion. Dr. Adamek's research interests include Buddhism of the Tang dynasty, donor practices, Buddhist art, and network theory.

Correspondence to: Dr. Wendi Adamek, Stanford Humanities Center, 424 Santa Teresa Street, Stanford, CA 94305, USA. Email: adamekw@gmail.com