

Translation
Biographies of the Chan Masters

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In this paper, I use the Taisho Tripitaka of CBETA Chinese Electronic Tripitaka to translate the biographies of the Chan masters¹ as follows: Shi Hongren 釋弘忍 (T no. 2061, 50: 754a13-754b28); Shi Huineng 釋慧能 (T no. 2061, 50:754b29-755b09); Shi Shenxiu 釋神秀 (T no. 2061, 50:755c26-756b04); Shi Shenhui 釋神會 (T no. 2061, 50:756c07-757a14); and Shi Xuanjue 釋玄覺 (T no. 2061, 50:758a09-758b21).

Biography of Chan Master Shi Hongren 釋弘忍 (601-674) of Dongshan mountain 東山² in Qizhou 蕪州 during Tang 唐 dynasty (618-907)

Shi Hongren's family name was Zhou 周. His family resided on the left bank of the Huai 淮 river of the Xunyang 潯陽³ district. It is said that he was Huangmei 黃梅⁴ people too. Although his father tried to take the governmental exam,⁵ he always failed to achieve [the recognition]. Therefore, he retreated in the hermitage.⁶ When his mother started to have her conception [of him], the moving moon shined bright light into her house that entire evening as similar as daylight on that night. When she delivered him, a bright light was also luminous as it was when she just had the conception's period. The whole family smelled a rare fragrance joyfully and astonishingly. When he started to speak, his energy [style] of talking did not in the same way as other children did. When he was a young child, absolutely he did not play around at all. His father instructed him

¹ *Chanshi* 禪師.

² Dongshan county, a place in Zhangzhou 漳州, Fujian 福建.

³ Xunyang district of Jiujiang city 九江市, Jiangxi 江西.

⁴ Huangmei, a place in Hubei 湖北.

⁵ In order to be an official.

⁶ The meaning of this phrase “*Benyu Qiuyuan* 賁于丘園” is found in the *Ciyuan* 辭源 dictionary, page 81.3.

[how] to read, because of the affection for his son [Hongren]. Due to his past life's accumulation [of knowledge and wisdom], he responded spontaneously to [difficult] matters. His true mind soon sprouted up and matured obviously. Whenever he went out, it seemed as he was waiting for someone.

Once, when the Chan [patriarch] master Daoxin 道信⁷ of Dongshan 東山⁸ met him coincidentally, the Master asked him, "What is your name?" He responded clearly and smoothly; his analysis had the base; his principle was comprehensive with the clear explanation; His oral responses were matched with the questions such as the sound responding to the echo. The Master Daoxin examined skillfully and exclaimed joyfully, "This child is an extraordinary child. Through the divined observation of his endowed body, he is only lack of seven great characteristics of the Buddha.⁹ If he enters the Dharma stream,¹⁰ twenty later he will do great dharma work competently, and he will handle great responsibilities."¹¹ Afterward, the [Master Daoxin] dispatched someone following him to his house to send His message and discuss with his [Hongren] parents about allowing him to leave home life [becoming a monk]. Hongren's parents happily replied, "The [wisdom] light of the Chan Master's great dragon Buddhadharma encompasses and covers widely far and near that our Buddhist people were well favored of relying upon [the Master] as many as the cloud. How much more if this little dump child could handle your [strict] training; if your acceptance is devoid of suffering, then we will not stingily keep [him]."

⁷ Daoxin 道信(580 - 651) was the fourth Chan Buddhist Patriarch.

⁸ Dongshan county is in Zhangzhou 漳州, Fujian 福建.

⁹ Out of thirty-two special marks of the Buddha.

¹⁰ Become a monk, or attain the sage-hood stage.

¹¹ It means that he will become a prominent monk to teach many people.

At that time, he was about seven years old. Afterward, he went to Shuangfeng 雙峰¹² to practice monk-hood life without weariness of the difficulties and obstructions. At night, he controlled his departments by sitting meditation. He resided himself peacefully and prudently. Maturely, he received the complete precepts¹³ and kept them vigorously and purely. Everyday the master Daoxin taught him the principle of sudden and gradual enlightened methods, as well as making the critical assessment about him over a long period of time. Hongren listened and contemplated his master's words and principles respectively; he sensed the matters with detachment of them. Silently and properly he received the teaching¹⁴ as someone who really wants to drink because of thirstiness. Since the master Daoxin recognized that Hongren could be taught, he transmitted and taught his disciple the Way [teaching]. He also instructed [Hongren] to erect a *stupa*. After [Hongren finished his building of stupa] the master Daoxin secretly handed over the Dharma robe¹⁵ to Hongren as an important substance [of a patriarchal and lineage certified seal].

Hongren recognized that if he could rely upon the pure and lofty dharma that has natural essence, then he would be a strong and firm base for other.¹⁶ He received companion harmlessly and continuously. He enjoyed friendship to achieve the success. Also, he had attained directly the unsurpassed dharma that did not need to use any

¹² Shuangfeng, a place in Hunan 湖南.

¹³ The complete precepts of monks.

¹⁴ I think “*Chen 塵*” here means the teaching, not the dust of affliction.

¹⁵ “*Yi 衣*” means cloth, but I think it is the robe that the fourth Patriarch wanted to transmit to Chan master Hongren.

¹⁶ This is my interpretation of the hidden meanings of the sentence, “He recognizes that if he could gnaw the fat and greasy Snow Mountain, he could extract the refined cream cheese, or swallow the diamond under the sea bed, or lean to the root of the large tree.”

expedient means.¹⁷ As a poor girl opens widely the great treasury storage,¹⁸ whoever has entered this path is called ingoing to the Dongshan dharma door [lineage].

Hongren passed away on twenty-third of the tenth month during the second year of Gaozong Shangyuan 高宗上元 reign (674 A.D), at the age of seventy-four. On that day, everyone, including non-sentient being, was sad and dismayed because of missing him.¹⁹ His disciples, Shenxiu 神秀²⁰ and others, respectfully buried his entire body on the ridge of the Dongshan mountain.

At first, during the first year of Xianxiang 咸亨 reign (670A.D), Hongren ordered some of his disciples to say their will [or present their understanding and realization of the dharma]. Shenxiu said the verses first, and Huineng 惠能(638-713) responded later.²¹ Afterward, he transmitted the dharma robe to Huineng who went to Shaoyang 韶陽²² to

¹⁷ The metaphor of “the merchant does not enter the transformational city”, means one does not need to use expedient way to enter Buddhism or to recognize the pure nature.

¹⁸ Namely, whoever enters the Dongshan lineage of Daoxin is similar as entering the treasury house.

¹⁹ Its meaning comes from the metaphor “On that day, it had vapor fog and gloomy weather; the rock and mountain collapsed.”

²⁰ (606?-706).

²¹ Shenxiu 's verse read:

The body is the *Bodhi* tree
The mind is like a bright mirror's stand.
At all times we must strive to polish it
and must not let dust collect.

Huineng's verse read:

Bodhi originally has no tree.
The bright mirror also has no stand.
Fundamentally there is not a single thing.
Where could dust arise?

(Heirich Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History: A History in India and China* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988), 132-133.)

²² It is in Hunan 湖南 province.

teach. Shenxiu went to Jingmen 荊門,²³ which was below Luoyang 洛陽 area,²⁴ to propagate the Chan tradition. The Northern and Southern schools of Chan tradition started since then.

One day, while the Chan master Daoxin enjoyed his sightseeing at Jiujiang 九江,²⁵ he gazed to the Shuangfeng 雙峰²⁶ mountain and saw a purple cloud as the canopy which had the white energy below that cloud and divided horizontally into six rays. Chan master Daoxin told Hongren, “Do you understand that sign?” Hongren replied, “Your dharma will produce a branch that will give rise to six generations.” Chan master Daoxin agreed.

Later on, Farong 法融²⁷ taught at Niutou 牛頭 mountain of Jinling 金陵²⁸ and bequeathed his teaching to the spiritual grandsons, Huizhong 慧忠,²⁹ and five other monks. Hence, he had the title of the Six Patriarch Niutou. Therefore, the fourth patriarch’s dharma had another branch. However, Farong gazed [respected] Hongren [as his superior] because of his inferior. Was that the way of a [younger spiritual] brother?³⁰

During Kaiyuan 開元 reign (713), the prince Wenxue Luqiu 文學閻丘 built a monument pagoda for Hongren. During Daizong 代宗 reign (726-779), an imperial order gave him a posthumous name of “*Daman Chanshi* 大滿禪師” [Chan Master Great Fulfillment] and the name of the pagoda as “*Fa Yu* 法雨” [Dharma Rain].

²³ Jingmen prefecture level city is in Hubei 湖北.

²⁴ Including Henan 河南, Shanxi 山西, Sichuan 四川, and Anhui 安徽.

²⁵ Jiujiang prefecture level city is in Jiangxi 江西.

²⁶ Mountain in Hunan 湖南.

²⁷ Niutou Farong 牛頭法融(594-657).

²⁸ Pre-Han name for Nanjing 南京.

²⁹ Nanyang Huizhong 南陽慧忠(675-775) was a National Teacher.

³⁰ Farong respected Hongren as similar as that of the second wife’s son to the first wife’s son.

At Qichun 蘄春³¹ from the revolution during the late Tang of Tangji 唐季 to the twelfth year of Kaibao 開寶 reign (968 A.D)³² and before the Song king and his generals stabilized the Jiangnan 江南 area,³³ Hongren's body used to flow out the tears that looked like a bloody pearl. His monastic disciples did not know what its meaning was. In fact, that [prophecy] cried for the collapsing of the Tang dynasty.³⁴ Presently, whenever the winter month approaches, the people in this province and other nearby cities and villages hurryingly come together to make the ritual offering to him to pray for their prosperity. When it is near the ritual day of his memorial day, definitely there would be a dark cloud with strong rain and fog; that miserable weather suddenly merges with falling snow. To that [memorial] day, however, it certainly will be sunny and cloudless.

The biography of Chan Master Shi Huineng 釋慧能(638-713) of Nanhua 南華 temple in Shaozhou 韶州³⁵ during the Tang 唐 dynasty

Shi Huineng's family name was Lu 盧; he was the Xinxing 新興 of Nanhai 南海 people.³⁶ His ancestors originally resided in Fanyang 范陽.³⁷ During the Tang Wude 唐武德 reign (618-627 A.D), his father, Xingyao 行偃, was sent to become commoner at

³¹ Qichun 蘄春, place in Hubei 湖北.

³² Of the Song dynasty.

³³ South of Chang Jiang 長江 or Yangzi river 揚子江.

³⁴ I translate this meaning from the sentence, "That is the sign for the Li's nation [Tang dynasty] being collapsed."

³⁵ Now it is called Shaoguan 韶關.

³⁶ Nowadays it is the eastern part of Xinxing county 新興縣 in Guangdong province 廣東省.

³⁷ It is in modern-days Hebei 河北 province.

the Xinzhou 新州 province, and eventually he was demoted to that place.³⁸ Briefly discussing about his ancestors, they escaped to the pavilion Luting 盧亭 of the non-Han island³⁹ that we do not know of.

During the *wuxu* year 戊戌歲⁴⁰ of Zhenguan 貞觀 reign (638 AD) Huineng was born. He was totally literal-minded, virtuous, and genuine; his natural blessing was transcendently bright. Although he lived in a rough, uncivilized, and corrupt custom area, and the influential saturation [of that place] was not deep, his secret conducts and appearances were heterogeneously preserved and hard to fathom. His father passed away when he was young, and then his mother was a widow. His house was frequently empty, and his family did not have any possessions. Everyday, he responsibly carried and sold woods [to feed the mother to survive]. Accidentally, [one day] at the market place, he heard [someone] reciting the *Vajra Prajñā Pāramitā Sūtra Sūtra*.⁴¹ He concentrated his divine mind [on the recitation's sound] through the wall [of the recital's house] slowly without [wishing to] leave. He [came in and] asked [the recital], "To whom did you receive and study this sutra?" Answer, "I received this sutra from the encouragement of the Chan Master Hongren 弘忍禪師 of Fengmao shan 馮茂山, Huangmei 黃梅 in Qizhou 蘄州. The Master said that [if we vigorously recite this sutra] we could realize our pure nature to attain the Buddhahood." Hearing this explanation, Huineng had a

³⁸ According to *The Platform Sūtra (Liuzu dashi fabao tan jing 六祖大師法寶壇經)*, his father was an official at Fanyang, but he was dismissed and banished as commoner to Xinzhou. (Philip B. Yampolsky, trans. *The Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 126.)

³⁹ *Daoyi* 島夷. The ancient Chinese people considered other places (that were different than that of their land) were non-Han places.

⁴⁰ i.e., the twelfth year.

⁴¹ *Jinggang banruo boluo mi jing*, 金剛般若波羅蜜經, T no. 235, 8:748c18.

feeling as a thirsty person drinking cool water. Hurriedly, he went back and arranged a place for his mother to live properly.

Within the Xianheng 咸亨 reign (670-673), he went to Shaoyang 韶陽 and met Liu Zhi Lue 劉志略, whose aunt was a Buddhist nun, Wu Jin Zang 無盡藏; she used to recite the *Nirvana Sūtra*.⁴² Hearing this Buddhist nun's recitation, Huineng explained and analyzed the meaning [of it] for her. She was surprised that [if] he could not recognize the words [of the scripture, so how he could explain it].⁴³ He said, "If one attaches to the words [of Buddhist sutra] to understand the Buddhas' doctrines and principles, one does not [accord with] the Buddha's intention." The nun deeply respected and called him as a practitioner.

Someone encouraged him to go to the ancient Baolin temple 寶林古寺 to practice Taoism. He said to himself, "Originally I vowed to seek the teacher. If I desire to stay at this temple to hold [study] Taoism, is it similar as returning to my hometown?"

On the next day, thereupon he went to grotto Shiku 石窟 in the west of Lechang 樂昌 county. He [met] with the Chan master Zhiyuan 智遠 and informally discussed the wonderful teachings [of the Buddha]. Master Zhiyuan said to him, "Your practitioner has attained the superior ability's dragon seeing."⁴⁴ I cannot understand! I cannot fathom [understand your deep and profound meaning]." Then he encouraged Huineng going to see the Fifth Patriarch at Qichun 蘄春 to certify and said, "Eventually, I humbly concede and request your teaching."

⁴² *Daban niepan jing*, 大般涅槃經, T no. 7, 1:191b03.

⁴³ But how could he explain it?

⁴⁴ It means the ability of understanding and realization is like the sage.

Soon, he said farewell to the monk and went to see the Fifth Patriarch Hongren, who personally observed Huineng and recognized his spirit and appearances stably; he tested Huineng, “Where did you come from?” Huineng replied, “I came from Lingbiao 嶺表 mountain area to request [the dharma] and prostrate [to you]. I only request to be Buddha.” Hongren said, “Lingnan 嶺南 people do not have the Buddha’s nature.” Huineng replied, “People have the northern and southern characters. However, Buddha’s nature does not [discriminate] the southern or northern people.”⁴⁵ Hongren said, “What kind of merits have you done?” Huineng said, “I vow to carry the stone to pound the rice with my utmost strength to offer to the great congregation. [That’s all I can do.]”

Therefore, he toiled and volunteered himself seriously and firstly to do all of the hardships and being ordered and called as a pure person [as a lay person]. He had recognized that [the cycle of] birth and death and Nirvana are equally the same.

Although Hongren nourished [raised his disciples’ mind through his teaching] equally, how could he recognize their mind? Then, [he told] Shenxiu to write the verse. Huineng understood Shenxiu’s meaning and wrote another verse on the wall; these verses reflected their views distinguishably and divergently. These two verses’ profound [of Huineng] and shallow [of Shenxiu] understanding and realization were quite different. Therefore, Hongren secretly transmitted the dharma robe [to Huineng] and said, “My ancient [dharma] teachers previously had sequentially and circularly entrusted [the care of dharma]. What can I do now? Alas! [From now onward] whoever’s life in the next generation going to receive my robe is like the life hanging by a thread. Young fellow, [you] should understand.”

⁴⁵ Meaning that Northern and Southern people all have Buddha’s nature.

Then, Huineng planned to return to his hometown; he hid himself to reside between Sihui 四會⁴⁶ and Huaiji 懷集.⁴⁷ Gradually, he revealed his vanguard inherit wisdom. At great dharma assembly of the dharma master Yinzong 印宗 [who lectured] Nirvana [*Sūtra*] in Nanhai 南海 area, he [Huineng] discussed the analogy of the wind and the flag.⁴⁸ Yinzong submitted and admired him respectfully and spiritually. Afterward, Yinzong assisted Huineng to cut his hair at the Faxing 法性 temple, and the *vinaya* master Zhiguang 智光 transmitted the full marks [of *Bhikṣu*] precepts [to Huineng]. The precept's platform originally was the place where an Indian enlightened monk, the *Tripitaka* master Guṇavarman (ca 425)⁴⁹ who had attained the sage-hood stage, had built during the Southern Song dynasty 南宋朝(420-479) and predicted, "Later on at this place, there will be a flesh Bodhisattva to receive the precept [of *Bhikṣu*]." Also, during the later year of Liang dynasty 梁朝 (502-587), the *Tripitaka* master *Paramārtha* (499-569)⁵⁰ personally planted a small *Bodhi* tree nearby the precept platform and said to his congregation, "I plant this tree here to mark that one-hundred and twenty years later, there will be an enlightened monk⁵¹ who will promulgate the supreme vehicle to rescue immeasurable sentient beings right down here."

⁴⁶ Sihui county level city is in Zhaoqing 肇慶, Guangdong 廣東.

⁴⁷ Huaiji county is in Zhaoqing 肇慶, Guangdong 廣東.

⁴⁸ One monk said the wind blows, and another monk said the flag moved. However, Huineng said that both monks' minds were moved. (John G. Rudy, *Wordsworth and the Zen mind: the poetry of self-emptying* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 268.)

⁴⁹ Ch. *Qiuna Bamo* 求那跋摩.

⁵⁰ Ch. *Zhendi* 真諦.

⁵¹ Here I translate literally the meaning of *KaiShi* 開士 (initial scholar).

Obviously, [to Huineng’s period] that was the place where Huineng stayed and promulgated greatly the Dongshan’s dharma door [lineage] under the Bodhi tree’s shade. All were correspondent coincidentally with the early prophecies.

During the Shangyuan 上元 reign (674-676), while Huineng was expounding [his Chan] school’s style, he was suddenly grieved and displeased. The [disciples in] congregation asked, “Don’t you still have sentiment [of attachment]?” Huineng replied, “The flowing and moving [of life] are unstoppable. Arising and extinguishing [of life and death] are impermanent. Today, my master has gone back to the lonesome [passed away].”

As he had predicted, an inauspicious letter [of Hongren’s death] was sent to him. Afterward, he moved to live at the Baolin 寶林 temple. Later on, following the imperial order, the Regional Inspector⁵² Weiju 韋據 requested Huineng to go to Dafan 大梵 temple to live. Huineng painstakingly refused, and then he entered the noble [holy] Caoxi 曹溪 of Shuangfeng 雙峰 to propagate Buddhadharma. The great dragon suddenly took off, rained down, and distributed all beneficial [waters] equally.⁵³ All things were nourished, and their roots received benefits from the raining water [Dharma].⁵⁴ The guests of five color hemp cloths congested the gateway.⁵⁵ The guests of four-fold assembly circumambulated around his seat.⁵⁶ Sometimes, he pronounced the secret verses or taught the proper *sūtra*. All [sentient beings] were permeated [with his teaching]

⁵² *Cishi*, 刺史.

⁵³ Huineng’s sagely ability of teaching Buddhadharma to benefit other human being is similar as a dragon flying up and sprinkling down the rain to benefit people.

⁵⁴ His teachings nourished the good roots of all beings.

⁵⁵ Namely, many great and vigorous monks, wearing the five color hemp cloths, came to listen to his teachings that crowded his temple.

⁵⁶ The four-folds assembly are the Buddhist monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen.

universally and heard the great *Tripitaka*.⁵⁷ Even they ascended to the rich [mountain of Dharma's treasury] at once they had definitely grasped the precious pearl. All of them were guided by the paths which ultimately lead them to return to the utmost enlightenment. Therefore, people below the heaven [in the whole China] said that the Chan teaching relying on Caoxi [of Huineng] was orally true. From thousand miles away, when the unresolved minds of nine types [of sentient beings]⁵⁸ listened and contemplated the beneficial nectar, they honorably and joyfully greeted [Huineng's teaching] and wished to return and rely [on the Dharma] as their vows.

[At that time] both the Empress Dowager Wu Taihou 武太后 (625-705)⁵⁹ and the emperor Tang Xiaohe 唐孝和(656-710) respectfully sent the imperial seal letters to invite him to visit the capital city due to the recommendation of the Chan master Shenxiu. Also, the Emperor continuously dispatched the Eunuch official⁶⁰ Xuejian 薛簡 to bring the imperial order to him. However, he repeatedly declined [the invitation] on the justification of serious illness [that he could not be able to follow the imperial order]. The mind of the *Muni*'s son⁶¹ dared to disregard the imperial court. The feet of Huigong 遠公 [Huiyuan 慧遠] did not step out of the tiger creek.⁶² Hence, he [Huineng] firmly declined the invitation. Therefore, they could not invite the gentleman [Huineng]. Thereupon, [the emperors] fully bestowed and offered him a *mona kasaya* [monk's robe], an affinity alms

⁵⁷ Here, I translate the "elephant storehouse" as the "great *Tripitaka*" such as the *Sūtra*, *Vinaya*, and *Abhidharma*.

⁵⁸ Probably, they are Bodhisattva being, Arhat being, Pratyaka being, human being, celestial being, semi-god being, hungry ghost being, animal being, and hell being.

⁵⁹ Wu Zetian 武則天 (624-705).

⁶⁰ *Zhongguan* 中官.

⁶¹ The author considered Huineng as the son of Śākyamuni Buddha.

⁶² Huiyuan 慧遠, the First Patriarch of the Pure Land school of Buddhism founded a monastery on Mount Lushan 廬山. According to the legend, Huiyuan did not step out of his mountain for thirty years.

bow, a cloth of sutra fabricating and weaving from the pearl beads, a flush red of green material of silk flower kerchief, and five hundred pairs of loosely woven silk. They also renovated his former residence at Xinxing 新興 into the Quoen 國恩 temple. During the third year of Shenlong 神龍 reign (707), [the emperor] gave an imperial order to the Shaozhou 韶州 province's officials to renovate and decorate rigorously the Buddha hall and the head monk's quarter of Huineng's temple. [The emperor] also changed and bestowed [Huineng's] posthumous temple as "*Faquan* 法泉" [Dharma Fountain].

In the seventh month of the first year of Yanhe 延和 reign (712), Huineng instructed his disciples constructing a *stupa* at Quoen temple; quickly, this *stupa* was built completely. On the third day of the eighth month of the second year of Xiantian 先天 reign (713), suddenly he manifested sickness. [On that day] a rare perfume filled the chamber. A white rainbow appeared on the sky and touched to the ground. After finishing the meal, he took a bath and put on clean clothes. Within an uninterrupted snap of finger, with a subtle breath and closed eyes, his whole body perpetually died. At that time, the mountain's rocks fell down; the springs and creeks dried out; the birds in synchrony wept aloud sound; the apes broke their intestines, shouted out loud, and choked their throat; or perhaps they exclaimed, "The eyes of the world have been extinguished. Who can my cultivation rely on?" Huineng lived for seventy-six years. In the eleventh month [of that year], his body was moved back to the original Caoxi.

The story of Chan Master Shi Shenxiu 釋神秀(606?-706) of Dumen 度門 temple, Dangyang mountain 當陽山 in Jingzhou 荊州,⁶³ during Tang 唐 dynasty

Shi Shenxiu's last name was Li 李 of present-day Dongjing 東京,⁶⁴ and he was of Wei 尉 people.⁶⁵ When he was young, he studied Confucian, Taoist, and history texts, profoundly and thoroughly. He had knowledge extensively and entirely [of the secular teachings]. However, he already had his own aspiration of cutting [hair] and dying [cloth] to leave the dust [of the afflicted world] to receive the Dharma [of Buddhism]. Later on he met the fifth patriarch Hongren 弘忍 of Dongshan 東山 temple in Shuangfeng 雙峰, Qizhou 蘄州 who took sitting in meditation as his business [work]. Thereupon, he exclaimed and admired him, "This is my true teacher!" He determinedly endured the toiling of gathering woods and drawing the water from the well by himself to seek [Hongren's Dharma teaching] the Way.

Previously, during the late Wei 魏 dynasty (386-534),⁶⁶ there was an Indian *śramaṇa*, Bodhidharma 菩提達磨 (480-520), who had attained the wonderful dharma of Chan school that was transmitted by Śākyamuni Buddha himself and passed down [to many generations] sequentially; the robe and the bowl were used as the transmission marks [seals] from generation to generation. [According to the legend] Bodhidharma took the voyage sea coming to [China]. Emperor Liang Wudi 梁武帝 (502-557) asked

⁶³ Jingzhou prefecture level city is nearby Changjiang river 長江 in Hubei 湖北.

⁶⁴ That is Luoyang 洛陽.

⁶⁵ WeiShi county is in Kaifeng 開封, Henan.

⁶⁶ BeiWei 北魏.

conditioned matters,⁶⁷ while Bodhidharma valued transmitting the dharma door [of direct] essential mind. The potential [of the Emperor] and the teaching [of Bodhidharma] were reciprocally in contradiction as pouring water onto the rock. Therefore, [Bodhidharma] went to Wei territory to live in seclusion at Shaolin 少林 temple on mount Songqiu 嵩丘, and soon after he died [over there]. During that year, an ambassador official of Wei dynasty, Songyun 宋雲, saw [Bodhidharma] at the Pamir 蔥嶺 plateau. His disciples [opened] the burial mound, but they found only his clothes and a shoe.

[Bodhidharma] transmitted dharma to Huike 慧可 (487-593); Huike transmitted it to Sengcan 僧粲 (?-606); Sengcan transmitted it to Daoxin 道信 (580-651); Daoxin transmitted it to Hongren 弘忍 (601-674). Hongren and Daoxin stayed together at Dongshan. Therefore, that dharma was called the dharma door [teaching] of Dongshan 東山. Shenxiu had served Hongren who silently acknowledged Shenxiu's effort [talent], regarded highly, and told him, "I have taught many people. However, regarding the complete illumination of understanding of mystical and unsolved matters, no one could surpass you."

During Shangyuan 上元 reign (760-761), Hongren passed away. Shenxiu went to mountain Danyang 當陽 of Jiangling 江陵⁶⁸ to reside.⁶⁹ The Buddhists from around

⁶⁷ Emperor Liang asked Bodhidharma whether he has gained merits of building the temples, printing the sutra, and assisting the monks' ordination or not. Bodhidharma replied that the emperor has no merit at all. According to him, the true merit is the pure knowing, wonderful and perfect which essence is emptiness. One cannot gain such merit by worldly means. (Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History in India and China* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988), 91.)

⁶⁸ Jiangling county is in Jingzhou 荊州, Hubei 湖北.

⁶⁹ Today is Hebei prefect, Danyang district.

four seas came because of the extravagant wind.⁷⁰ The reputation of the Way and the fragrant universally permeated [ignorant people] equally.⁷¹ Because the Empress Dowager Zetian Taihou 則天太后 (625-705) heard [of him], she summoned him to visit the capital. She ordered the shoulder carriage to carry him onto the palace hall, and she herself also kneeled and prostrated him respectfully. At the temple of the inner palace, the Empress made offerings to him abundantly and often inquired about Buddhadharma. She ordered to place imperial order on his previous mountain temple of Dumen 度門 to praise his virtues. At that time, from [the above such as] princes and dukes, and to below such as scholars, warriors, common people in the capital, city, and village apprehensively visited and paid respect to him. Probably, thousand [a great number of] these secular people went to gaze, submit, and pay respect to him each day.

When emperor [Tang] Zhongzong Xiaohu [唐]中宗孝和 (656-710) ascended the throne, he also favored and respected him [Shenxiu] even more. The Palace Secretary⁷² Ling Zhangshuo 令張說 often inquired about the Dharma and respectfully considered himself Shenxiu's disciple. He conservatively [humbly] told others, "The Chan Master's [Shenxiu] height is eight feet. His big eyebrow, elegant eyes, and powerful benevolent and majestic conducts showed that he is a great device [virtuous source] for the imperial court."

Previously, Shenxiu's classmate [dharma brother], Chan master Huineng 慧能, had similar moral and conduct portraits. Both of them mutually and selflessly expanded

⁷⁰ Namely, the Buddhists everywhere in China came to learn from him because of his great virtuous conduct and teaching which spread vastly as the wind.

⁷¹ Namely, his great reputation of achievement spread as fragrant which permeated into the mind of ignorant people.

⁷² *Zhongshu* 中書.

successfully the Way. [Shenxiu] formerly requested the Empress Wu Zetian to invite Huineng going to the capital. However, Huineng seriously and strongly declined the invitation. Shenxiu wrote a preface letter to Huineng personally to explain the Empress's requested intention. Eventually, Huineng did not move [change his mind] and told the [Imperial] Envoy,⁷³ “My body is not healthy. The northern people have short self perception and vulgar attachment, or they do not respect the Dharma. Also, my teacher has bequeathed me that I have karmic affinity with the Lingnan 嶺南 area.⁷⁴ Therefore, I can not disobey [my teacher's teaching].” Huineng never crossed over Dayuling 大庾嶺 mountain⁷⁵ to the end of his life. Below the heaven [people in China] spread the words that Shenxiu's teaching was that of the Northern school, and Huineng's teaching was that of Southern school. These two schools' brand names were initiated from here.

During the second year of Shenlong 神龍 reign (706), Shenxiu passed away. All scholars, warriors, and common people came to attend the funeral procession. An imperial order bestowed his posthumous name as “*Datong Chanshi* 大通禪師” [Chan Master Great Penetration]. Also, [the emperor] ordered to build the Baoen temple at his old residence within the general imperial dwelling. Qi Wangfan 岐王範, the Yan Duke of State 燕國公 Changshou 張說, and the hermit Luhong 徵士盧鴻,⁷⁶ each made [wrote] the monument eulogy and worn mourning clothes. [So] many famous scholars, high ranking officials, [and others came to his funeral service that] could not be counted [easily]. His disciples, Puji 普寂(651-739) and Yifu 義福, were all seriously respected by

⁷³ *Shizhe* 使者.

⁷⁴ South of the five ranges; it is an old term for south China, especially Guandong and Guangxi.

⁷⁵ Dayu mountain range is between southwest Jiangxi and Guangdong.

⁷⁶ The meaning of this title “*Zhengshi* 徵士” is found in the *Ciyuan* 辭源 dictionary, page 1091.1.

the imperial court and ordinary people. They built [carried on] the lineage of their master's Way [teaching].

The biography of Chan Master Shi Shenhui 釋神會 (670-762) of Heze 荷澤 temple, in LuoJing 洛京⁷⁷ during Tang 唐 dynasty

Shi Shenhui's last name was Gao 高, and he was of the Xiangyang 襄陽 people.⁷⁸ He had upright character and learned brightly and vigorously since his youth. He followed his teacher to learn the five texts [of Confucianism]⁷⁹ and had ability to understand them deeply and profoundly. Next, he searched for the magical talismans of Zhuangzi 莊子 (369-286 BC) and Laozi 老子 (c. 500 BC). He evaluated the *History of Late Han* (25-220 CE)⁸⁰ and understood the teaching of Buddha. Because he paid attention to the teaching of Śākya [Buddhism], he did not have intention to be official. He said farewell to his parents and went to Guochang 國昌 temple in his prefecture to leave home life under Dharma master Haoyuan 顥元. He recited many sutras easily as turning the palm [everything went well for him]. He did not like to expound the whole *vinaya*. He heard the model of Chan master Huineng 慧能 at holy Caoxi 曹溪 of Lingbiao 嶺表, who raised the magnificent Buddhadharma that the [Buddhist] scholars hurriedly went to learn. He followed *Sudhana's*⁸¹ example of going south to seek the teaching. He went

⁷⁷ Namely, it was the Luoyang 洛陽 capital.

⁷⁸ Xiangyang district of Xiangfan city 襄樊市, Hubei 湖北.

⁷⁹ The Five Classics of Confucianism are the Book of Songs (*Shi jing* 詩經), the Book of History (*Shu jing* 書經), the Classic of Rites (*Liji* 禮記), the Book of Changes (*Yi jing* 易經), and the Spring and Autumn annals (*Chun qiu* 春秋).

⁸⁰ *Hou Han Shu* 後漢書.

⁸¹ Ch. *Shancai* 善財 (Good Wealth) was a youth from India who was seeking enlightenment. At the behest of *Mañjuśrī*, *Sudhana* takes a pilgrimage on his quest for enlightenment and studies under fifty-three "good

with worn out garments and bound feet; he considered thousand miles as within a short step.⁸²

When just seeing Shenhui, Huineng asked, “Where did you come from?” Shenhui replied, “I came from nowhere.” Huineng asked, “Why don’t you return [to that place]?” Shenhui replied, “There is not a single place to return to.” Huineng said, “You are extremely incomprehensible.” Shenhui said, “My body’s predestined affinity is on the road [path of enlightenment].” Huineng said, “Because you yourself have not reached [to enlightened stage] yet.” Shenhui replied, “Although now I have reached it, I do not hold it.”

Shenhui stayed at Caoxi for many years, and later on he went out everywhere to search for famous holy places. During the eighth year of Kaiyuan 開元 reign (713-741), he followed imperial order to join and live in the Longxing 龍興 temple of Nanyang 南陽 prefecture.⁸³ He continuously and broadly propagated the bright sound [profound doctrine] of Chan Dharma [teaching] in Luoyang 洛陽.⁸⁴ At first, the two capitals⁸⁵ were Shenxiu 神秀’s teaching places. If he [Shenhui] did not explain to the public that his teacher, Huineng, was transmitted the Dharma robe and bowl [as a symbol for mind to mind transmission] by Hongren to be the formal Six Patriarch, then Shenxiu would claim that position [of Six Patriarch] for himself.⁸⁶ Since Shenhui had seen [awakened] his mind under the teaching’s style of Huineng, he wanted to sweep away that gradual

friends." He was the main protagonist in the next-to-last and longest chapter (39) of the Avatamsaka Sūtra (Ch. *Hua yan jing* 華嚴經).

⁸² The meaning is that he did neither concern his health nor the difficulty in searching for good teacher.

⁸³ Nanyang prefecture level city in Henan.

⁸⁴ Luoyang prefecture level city in Henan, an old capital from pre-Han times.

⁸⁵ Changan 長安 and Luoyang 洛陽.

⁸⁶ I translate it from the sentence, “If the fish does not calm the water, then the little tuna relies on the pond and act as the dragon.”

teaching. So, the judgmental distinction of two schools of North and South was initiated since then. Because he went to Puji's⁸⁷ place [to argue], later on he was in trouble.

During Tianbao 天寶 reign (743), because Imperial Censor⁸⁸ Luyi 盧弈 schemed with Puji, they [Luyi and Puji] presented the letter that falsely accused Shenhui of gathering the doubtful and harmful apprentice people. Emperor Tang Xuanzong 唐玄宗 (685-762) summoned Shenhui to go to the capital. At that time, he responded to the emperor with language and principals cleverly and satisfactorily at Tangchi 湯池. An imperial order moved him to go to Junbu 均部.⁸⁹ Two years later, an imperial order changed his residence to live at the *Prajñā* 般若 institution of Kaiyuan 開元 temple in Jingzhou 荊州.⁹⁰

Fourteen years later, the rebellion of An Lushan 安祿山 (703-757) of Fanyang 范陽 took arm going toward the capital. There was disorder [and confusion] within the two capitals. The emperor escaped to Bashu 巴蜀.⁹¹ Deputy Marshal Guo Ziyi 郭子儀 commanded the army to suppress the rebellion. However, because the army supplies were depleted,⁹² Deputy Marshal Guo Ziyi used the expedient scheme of the Vice Director of the Right of the Department of State Affairs⁹³ Peimian 裴冕. He set up the precept platform within the government great repository to transmit the monastic disciplines for

⁸⁷ 普寂(651-739).

⁸⁸ *Yushi* 御史.

⁸⁹ It is Junzhou 均州 province.

⁹⁰ Jingzhou prefecture level city on Changjiang in Hubei 湖北.

⁹¹ Sichuan was originally the province of Qin dynasty 秦朝 (221-206 B.C) and Han dynasty 漢朝(206 B.C-220 A.D).

⁹² I translate its meaning literally from the sentence “*Feiwan souran* 飛輓索然” as the flying and changing direction [of food] which cause [the food] being dry.

⁹³ *Yu pushe* 右僕射.

monks. The monks paid taxes [duties] by string of coins which was called the money of perfume water. They collected these monies to support the army's necessities.

Initially, when the capital Luoyang was captured, Shenhui quickly escaped to the wilderness. At that time, Luyi 盧弈 was assassinated by his enemy. The group [of officials and monks] discussed and then requested Shenhui to preside at that precept platform. At that time, [most of] the Buddhist and Taoist monasteries and temples were burned down to ashes [because of war]. Therefore, they expediently created [constructed] a temporary institution [temple] which used hard resources [of grasses] to build the temple and an altar platform within it. The collected monies were used for military expenditure. During Tang Daizong 唐代宗 reign (726-779), Guo Ziyi 郭子儀 recaptured the two capitals which received considerable support and effort of Shenhui. Emperor Tang Suzong 唐肅宗 (711-762) summoned Shenhui to go to the inner imperial court to receive the offering; [the emperor] ordered the great [talent] craftsmen and workers working together to build a Chan hall within his Heze 荷澤 temple. Shenhui expounded Huineng's lineage Chan teaching style and development prominently which caused Shenhui's teaching to become lonesome [disappear].

During the first year of Shangyuan 上元 reign (760), Shenhui enjoined and said farewell to his disciples. He shunned his seat, gaze the emptiness, bowed and returned to the [his] abbot's room, and passed away on that night. He lived for ninety-three years. On the thirteenth day of the Jianwu 建午 month,⁹⁴ his pagoda was moved to Baoying 寶應 temple at Luoyang 洛陽. The emperor gave imperial posthumous name of "*Zhenzong*

⁹⁴ The fifth month.

Dashi 真宗大師” [Great Master True Ancestor], and his pagoda was named as “*Prajñā* 般若” [Wisdom].

The biography of Chan Master Shi Xuanjue 釋玄覺(665-713) of the Longxing 龍興 temple in Wenzhou 溫州,⁹⁵ during the Tang 唐 dynasty

Shi Xuanjue, whose nickname was Mingdao 明道, had last name of Dai 戴. His ancestors were the fifth generation of Kangong 侃公 of the Late Han ancestor and the ninth generation of Yangong 燕公 noble descendants,⁹⁶ and [later on] they crossed the river to move to Yongjia 永嘉 area to become the Yongjia people. In general, he cut his hair and left home life when he was young. His original mind was fundamentally pure; his wisdom“s seal understood entire texts [of Buddhadharma]. It is not easy to measure his unfathomed [wisdom] which understood the profound emancipation meanings [of Buddhadharma]. He always comprehended the Self and Non-self [principle]. He distinguished and recognized the principles of both emptiness and non-emptiness. He had departed from the four kinds of illnesses.⁹⁷ He wore three pieces of garment.⁹⁸ Since the

⁹⁵ Wenzhou prefecture level city in Zhejiang 浙江.

⁹⁶ Yan was a vassal state of Zhou in modern Hebei and Liaoning (north Hebei); the four Yan kingdoms of the Sixteen Kingdoms were: Former Yan 前燕 (337-370), Later Yan 後燕 (384-409), Southern Yan 南燕 (398-410), and Northern Yan 北燕 (409-436).

⁹⁷ The first is the false thinking. The second is the confused mind. The third is the mind that wants to stop all of the false thinking to attain the complete enlightenment. The fourth is the mind that wants to cut off all physical and mental afflictions as well as the five senses (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body) and their corresponded external stimulus (form, sound, smell, flavor, and touch).

⁹⁸ The great *kasaya* robe, the upper *kasaya* robe, and the inner *kasaya* robe.

virtuous water bathed [cleaned] his body,⁹⁹ he was pure. Because good remedy [of Buddhadharma] cured his eyes,¹⁰⁰ they illumined the light.

His dharma brother was Dharma master Xuan 宣法師 who was also a famous monk. Together with his dharma brother's nephew, Xuanjue prepared to enter the Buddhist monastic community.¹⁰¹ He originally resided at the Longxing temple. He returned and believed only in one dharma door and his image [shadow] even appeared to cultivate vigorously in which [his] concentrated faculty surely was unmovable.¹⁰² His tree of doubts suddenly had been broken down by themselves. All of his minds abandoned self-appearance and were not defiled by the guest dirt.¹⁰³ Seeing nearby the temple had beautiful scenery, he built a meditation hut by himself below a cliff. The blue sea [of mirage] waved around his chest and the green mountain was as his back. The fairyland, immortal guests, and the life's cycle came and went by. The flowery canopy and the smoky cloud intertwined [during] day and night. If he were accomplishing his merit, the Buddha treasures would be arisen.¹⁰⁴ When the divine bell's sound echoed early in the morning, the wonderful house will appear. He resided there, and he did neither use silk cloth to wear nor plow the farm to feed [himself]. Did he use big cloth which was similar to that of Zhuangzi 莊子 (369-286 BCE) as his garment? He himself had Ananda's sweet dew as the meal. He recognized that learning [Buddhism] alone was ill-informed [because as an old saying], "Among three persons that one goes out together, there is at least a person as one's teacher." Therefore, shoulder by shoulder he accompanied with

⁹⁹ 1) Pure; 2) odorless; 3) light; 4) cool; 5) soft; 6) sweet-tasting; 7) thirst-quenching; 8) nourishing.

¹⁰⁰ That is Buddhadharma.

¹⁰¹ I translate literally the word *Ziwu* 緇伍 as Buddhist community.

¹⁰² That is Chan school or meditation.

¹⁰³ The external stimulus of form, sound, smell, taste, and touch.

¹⁰⁴ Meaning that if he could propagate the Dharma, Buddhism would be flourished.

the Chan master Ce 策禪師 of Dongyang 東陽¹⁰⁵ for going out to seek the truth. He went to Shaoyang 韶陽 to inquire the truth under the Chan Patriarch Huineng 慧能, and then he attained the [ultimate] goal [of Chan school]. Also, [there is a postulation that] when he went to see Chan Patriarch Huineng 慧能, he pounded his staff, walked around Huineng’s hut, and started the conversation. These conversations were recorded in other Recorded of Sayings. Although he also went for a long distance to inquire the Dharma [of Chan school] of Shenxiu 神秀, he ultimately had attained the mind of [Chan school] from Caoxi 曹溪 [of Huineng] already. Since he had cut off [all of] his doubts already, Huineng kept him [Xuanjue] to stay back for a night. Therefore, Xuanjue had a title of “*Yi xiu jue* 一宿覺” [An enlightened sage within a night] or “*Youban bianqing* 猶半遍清” [Being purified within half day].

On the seventeenth day of the tenth month of the second year of Xiantian 先天 reign (713), in a private hall of the Longxing 龍興 temple, he sat down comfortably and joyfully entered an unmoved Samadhi. The monks cried in condolence. On the thirteenth day of the eleventh month of that year, his coffin was buried on the sunrise side of Xishan 西山 mountain. He lived for forty-nine years.

Before he passed away, he confined himself to the western cliff of the mountain. When he gazed at his resident temple, thus he sighed, “People fed up with literary style. The flowers and plants in bloom are so luxuriant. What do they use for?”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Dongyang city is in Zhejiang.

¹⁰⁶ Probably, his meaning was that since people attached too much to Buddhist literatures, they did not focus on the practices. It is like that since there were too much flowers but no fruits (to eat), there was no use for those beautiful flowers.

His disciples Xingshi興師 of Wuxing 吳興, the master Xuanshi 宣師 of Xinluo 新羅 country,¹⁰⁷ and others together heard his exclamation, but they did not understand the meaning. [Later on] in searching for this exclamation, it said that “Previously, once a Chan master led his disciples visiting and sightseeing [the mountain]. He gazed afar to a mountain and suddenly called out loudly, „There are a lot of people!“ His disciples also did not understand his meaning. Soon, this Chan master passed away, and his coffin was buried gazing to that place.” Indeed, after he passed away, many people formed a long line to walk and carry his coffin from his temple to the Xishan mountain [the western side of the mountain where he resided] for a long distance. It seemed very touching [and moving because of missing him].

Also, when he was still alive, more than thousand wild geese flew to the western side of the temple. His attendant asked, “Where did they come from?” A sound from the sky said, “We flew from the sea [to come here], because we want to select the bury spot for the Chan master.”

All of his disciples Huicao 惠操, Huite 惠特, Dengci 等慈, and Xuanji 玄寂 propagated his dharma vigorously and vitally. Later on, when official Lyong 李邕 of Beihai 北海¹⁰⁸ was governor of Kuozhou 括州, he compiled the biographical virtuous record of Xuanjue and inscribed it on the stone tablet which was called “Immortal Way.”¹⁰⁹ He had propagated the Way which he had received wisely, cultivated, attained,

¹⁰⁷ *Silla*, Korean kingdom (57 BC-935 AD), was one of the Korean Three Kingdoms from 1st century AD; it defeated its rivals Paikche 百濟 and Koguryo 高句麗 around 660 in alliance with Tang China.

¹⁰⁸ Beihai prefecture level city and seaport in Guangxi 廣西, Bohai Sea, or Lake Baikal.

¹⁰⁹ *Shendao* 神道.

and penetrated properly. A Regional Inspector¹¹⁰ of Qingzhou 慶州, Wei Jing Dou 魏靖都, compiled Xuanjue's dharma teaching and named it as "The Collective Teachings of Chan Master Yongjia."¹¹¹

Previously, he had a dharma friend, Langgong 朗公, at Zuoxi 左溪 who wrote a letter to invite him to visit and stay at his mountain. Because he knew Langgong was waiting to see him at that mountain, he wrote back a friendly and charming letter to encourage his friend [to cultivate]. He wrote a refined, graceful, and extravagant language; his meanings were clear and obvious. He caused the secular and mountain [monastic] people of that mountain unifying as one; the noise's and the calmness's function were mutual supported and functioned.¹¹² All were led to enter the pure mind. Other hidden meanings were explained clearly. The achieved people appreciated. Eventually, the imperial order gave his posthumous name as "*Wuxiang* 無相" [Non-appearance] and his stupa was called "*Jing Guang* 淨光" [The Pure Light].

¹¹⁰ *Cishi* 刺史.

¹¹¹ *Yongjia ji* 永嘉集.

¹¹² The noise refers to people who did not know how to practice meditation; the calm refers to people who practiced meditation.

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