

Faxian and the Construction of the Buddha's Shadow Platform at Mount Lu*

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Abstract: The building of the Buddha's Shadow Platform by Huiyuan is a well-known event in the Buddhist history of Medieval China. The Platform was an imitation of the so-called Buddha's Shadow in a stone cavern in Nagarahāra, a country located in today's Afghanistan. Huiyuan says he got the related information from a Chan Master from Kashmir and a *Vinaya* Master from the South. It is clear that the Chan Master from Kashmir is Buddhahadra, a Buddhist monk from India, but who is the *Vinaya* Master from the South? The paper's aim is to prove that this Master is no other than Faxian, one of the most prominent pilgrim monks who visited India, including other countries in the West, early in the fifth century.

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Faxian is one of the most famous Buddhist monks in Chinese history. He left Chang'an in 339 CE on a journey to the west with the goal of acquiring scriptures, and he reached India four years later. Faxian stayed in India for roughly six years before travelling to present-day Sri Lanka. Two years later, he headed back east by boat, but several wild storms at sea left his ship utterly disoriented. They were only certain which way was north and accordingly headed in that direction. On the fourteenth day of the seventh month of 412 CE, Faxian's ship arrived at Mount Lao 嶗山 in present-day Qingdao 青島 city, where they realised they had reached China. As a result, Faxian disembarked and made contact with the local officials, as is recorded in *Faxian zhuan* 法顯傳 (Account of Faxian):

Provincial governor Li Yi 李嶷, a reverent believer in Buddhism, heard that Buddhist monks were crossing the seas by boat with Buddhist scriptures and statues, so together with his attendants, he immediately came to the coast. He welcomed the arrival of Buddhist scriptures and statues, then returned to the capital. Afterwards the merchants proceeded to Yangzhou and Liu Yan invited Faxian to spend one winter and one summer in Qingzhou.

太守李嶷敬信佛法，聞有沙門持經像，乘船泛海而至。即將人從，來至海邊。迎接經像，歸至郡治。商人於是還揚州。(劉洸)青州請法顯一冬一夏。¹

Faxian spent 'one winter and one summer' in Qingzhou 青州; that is, the winter of 412 and the summer of 413 CE. However, some researchers have different opinions as to whether or not he was in Qingzhou. One of these researchers is the Japanese scholar Adachi Kiroku 足立喜六, who believes this indicates he was in Qingzhou; another opinion comes from Tang Yongtong 湯用彤, who believes he was actually in Pengcheng.² Whatever the case, at this time, Faxian wanted to return to Chang'an, but then he changed his plan:

¹ *Faxian zhuan*, T no. 2085, 51: 866b12–15; Zhang, *Faxian zhuan jiaozhu*, 173.

² Zhang, *Faxian zhuan jiaozhu*, 176, note 20.

After the summer retreat (*xiazuo* 夏坐) session finished, since Faxian had left his fellow monks for a long time, he wanted to return to Chang'an. However, he was shouldering several great tasks, so he went to the southern capital (Jiankang), for helping the Chan Master to translate Buddhist *sūtras* and *Vinayas*.

夏坐訖，法顯離諸師久，欲趣長安。但所營事重，遂便南下向都，就禪師出經律。³

Disregarding exactly where he spent this time, after that summer, Faxian went to Jiankang 建康 (present-day Nanjing). Provided there were no delays, he likely arrived during the fall of 413 CE, roughly at the end of the seventh month or the start of the eighth.⁴ Whether Faxian arrived in the south or in Jiankang, looking over what later happened, it appears his main objective was to translate 'Buddhist *sūtras* and *vinayas*'. This 'Chan Master' 禪師 obviously is Buddhahadra from India who had already become rather well-known in China.

Afterwards, the *Faxian zhuan* provides a complete summary of Faxian's journey to the west to acquire scriptures:

I, Faxian, set out from Chang'an and arrived in central India six years later. I stayed there for six years before returning. After three years of travel, I reached Qingzhou. Altogether, I travelled through almost thirty countries. I crossed the deserts, heading west, arrived at India. The Buddhist *Vinaya* practice by the *Samgha* are exceptionally dignified which cannot be described in detail. Since these are not known to my fellow monks, I paid no mind to my insignificant life and headed across the vast sea, surmounting numerous difficulties so that I could return to China. Thanks to the blessings of the three venerated Buddhas, I was able to surmount the difficulties I encountered

³ *Faxian zhuan*, T no. 2085, 51: 866b15–17; Zhang, *Faxian zhuan jiaozhu*, 173.

⁴ According to Buddhist regulation in the Han area, the *zuoxia* 夏坐, summer retreat of monks starts on the sixteenth day of the fourth month and ends on the fifteenth day of the seventh month.

and safely crossed the sea. I wrote down my journey, hoping that the good people can learn about these experiences. The current year is the year of *jiayin* 甲寅 (414 CE).

法顯發長安，六年到中國。停六年。還三年，達青州。凡所遊歷，減三十國。沙河已西，迄於天竺。眾僧威儀法化之美，不可詳說。竊惟諸師未得備聞，是以不顧微命，浮海而還，艱難具更。幸蒙三尊威靈，危而得濟。故竹帛疏所經歷，欲令賢者同其聞見。是歲甲寅。⁵

The main text of the *Faxian zhuan* stops here. What follows is a 'postscript' 跋:

In the twelfth year of the Yixi Era (416 CE), which was also a *bingchen* 丙辰 year when the *suixing* 歲星 was in the direction of *shouxing* 壽星. After the summer retreat session ended, I went to greet Master Faxian. After Faxian arrived, we stayed together through the winter. I took advantage of the interim time to study scriptures and repeatedly asked Faxian about his travels. Faxian was very courteous and amicable, and he spoke in accordance with the facts. As a result, I urged him to produce a detailed account of his former journey. Faxian again provided me with a narration from start to finish. He said, 'Looking back over the whole of the experience, I feel deeply moved and recall being drenched in sweat. This was a dangerous quest, but I did not care for my life because I held onto an aspiration, and I wholeheartedly hoped to have it realised. As a result, I cast my life into a place where safety was not guaranteed in the least, seeking to actualize a great aspiration'. With respect to this person's actions, one can but sigh with admiration. It seems that from ancient times to the present, there are few like him. From the time Buddhism was transmitted to the east, no other person's deeds can compare with the sacrifice made by Faxian to seek out Dharma. It can be known from this that the power exhibited by a genuine mind can extend to anywhere. With strong willpower, there is no exploit that cannot be achieved. Accomplishing great achievements is not born out of

⁵ *Faxian zhuan*, T no. 2085, 51: 866b15–17; Zhang, *Faxian zhuan jiaozhu*, 177.

forsaking what those of secular minds deem important; rather, such achievements are realized when one places importance on undertakings that others have abandoned.

晉義熙十二年，歲在壽星。夏安居末，迎法顯道人。既至，留共冬齋。因講集之餘，重問遊歷。其人恭順，言輒依實。由是先所略者，勸令詳載。顯復具敘始末，自云：顧尋所經，不覺心動汗流。所以乘危履險，不惜此形者，蓋是志有所存，專其愚直。故投命於不必全之地，以達萬一之冀。於是感歎斯人，以為古今罕有。自大教東流，未有忘身求法如顯之比。然後知誠之所感，無窮否而不通；志之所將，無功業而不成。成夫功業者，豈不由忘夫所重，重夫所忘者哉？⁶

The author of the ‘postscript’ is apparently, or perhaps actually is, the person who transcribed the *Faxian zhuān*. He was a scribe at the very least. While the words further above can be deemed a personal account by Faxian, this paragraph is not.

The question that interests me here is whether or not Faxian went to any other places besides Jiankang between 413 CE and 416 CE after he arrived in the south. Speaking more concretely, the question that I want to raise is, ‘Did Faxian travel to Lushan during this period of time?’ Also, did he meet with Huiyuan 慧遠 (334–416) while in Lushan? Others already raised such questions in the past, and for a time there have been different opinions regarding the answer to these questions. The overriding believe is that Faxian did not go to Lushan.⁷

Below are a few ideas and postulations of mine. Correct or not, I hope to receive further advice from my fellow colleagues. What I wish to discuss roughly includes three points.

The first point is whether or not Huiyuan was at Lushan during the time that Faxian left the north (whether that be Qingzhou or Pengcheng) for the south in 413 CE. Huiyuan passed away in either

⁶ *Faxian zhuān*, T no. 2085, 51: 866b23–c5; Zhang, *Faxian zhuān jiaozhu*, 179.

⁷ Among those who believe Faxian went to Lushan, there is Xu Wenming 徐文明 (Xu, ‘Xuanga’). However, Chen Jinhua 陳金華 has a different opinion (see Chen, ‘Fotuobatu’, 116–17).

416 or 417 CE, and while it is not clear exactly when Faxian passed away, it certainly happened sometime after 418 CE.⁸ Thus, from a temporal standpoint, it is completely within the realm of possibility that the two figures crossed paths.

The second point is whether or not Huiyuan and Faxian had any contact with one another. Within documents, there is no clear-cut record, and proof is needed in order to say they had contact. Those who support and those who refute the notion that the two figures met all support their claims with evidence. Huiyuan's famous work the 'Foying ming' 佛影铭 (Buddha Shadow Inscription), in particular, has been provided as evidence. Though it is not long, an early section reads:

The Buddha Shadow is in an ancient stone cavern at the southern mountain in Nagarahāra, a country in the Western Lands. Between here and the Buddha's Shadow Cavern stands quicksand, by road, with the distance of 15,850 *li*. The legend as to how it was left behind is explained in detail in the past records. ... Previously, I followed my master, who has already passed away. I single-mindedly tended to him for many years. Although he imparted rudimentary knowledge to me and provided me with benevolent guidance while I wholeheartedly devoted myself to Buddhist scriptures, I, however,

⁸ Faxian's biography in the *Chu sanzang ji ji* (T no. 2145, 55: 15.112b25–26) reads: (Faxian) 'went to Jingzhou and passed away at Jingzhou's Xin Monastery 辛寺 at the age of eighty-two'. But his biography in the *Gaoseng zhuan* says he passed away at the age of eighty-six, while not mentioning which year. The postscript of the Chinese translation of *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya* 摩訶僧祇律私記 says that the date while Faxian finished his translation of *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya* at the Daochang Monastery in Jiankang is the end of the second month in 418 CE (T no. 1425, 22: 40.548b5–9). The biography of *Futuoshi* 佛馱什 in the *Gaoseng zhuan* says that before the seventh month of 423, Faxian had already passed away (no. 2059, 50: 3.339a4–6). According to this information, Zhang Xun posited that Faxian passed away at some point between late in the second month of 418 CE and the seventh month of 423 CE (Zhang, *Faxian zhuan jiaozhu*, 1–2). We can perhaps infer that Faxian passed away in 422 CE.

remained full of curiosity towards those magical stories, and for this reason I became more devoted to Buddhism. When I encountered monks from the Western Regions, I listened to them tell me about their various journeys. As a result, I knew the story of the shadow, though I didn't entirely understand what it was. At Mountain Lushan, I met a Chan Master from Jibin (罽賓禪師)⁹ and a *Vinaya* Master from the south (南國律學道士). They had both been to the Buddha's Shadow Cavern in India before, so I thoroughly questioned them about it. What they said was consistent with the stories I had previously heard. Afterwards, I finally learned that the Buddha's image could indeed exist in the form of a shadow. It seemed that many of the notions that I had had in the past were with a basis. This caused me to thoroughly understand the piety of the Buddha and his accomplishments. As a result, I led those of a common pursuit as myself to mutually uncover an unadulterated understanding of the Buddha shadow. Charitable figures made contributions to help establish a Buddha's Shadow Platform, and to memorialize this event, we engraved this inscription in stone.

佛影今在西(域)那伽訶羅國南山古仙石室中。度流沙，從徑道。去此一萬五千八百五十里。感世之應。詳於前記。……遠昔尋先師，奉侍曆載。雖啟蒙慈訓，托志玄籍。每想奇聞，以篤其誠。遇西域沙門，輒餐游方之說，故知有佛影而傳者尚未曉然。及在此山，值罽賓禪師、南國律學道士。與昔聞既同，並是其人遊歷所經。因其詳問，乃多先征。然後驗神道無方，觸像而寄。百慮所會，非一時之感。於是悟徹其誠，應深其位。將援同契，發其真趣。故與夫隨喜之賢，圖而銘焉。¹⁰

Below is an inscription written by Huiyuan that was carved into stone and explains the construction of the 'Buddha's Shadow Platform' (*Foying tai* 佛影臺):

⁹ As for the location of Jibin, there are different identifications. I believe at this time, while people says Jibin, that means today's Kashmir.

¹⁰ Huiyuan, 'Foying ming', *Guang Hongming ji*, T no. 2103, 52: 15.197c08–198a15.

On the first day of the fifth month of 412 CE during the Jin Dynasty, we collectively built a Buddha's Shadow Platform and carved images of the Buddha into it. This was a manifestation of our piety towards the Buddha. Although a great deal of manpower was put into the construction, we would still not dare to boast of it as a great undertaking. On the year that we constructed the Buddha's Shadow Platform, we saw an auspicious celestial phenomenon, which is referred to as 'Chifenruo' 赤奮若. So on the third day of the ninth month, we examined the record in details and carved it on the stone. The event started with the Buddhist texts, thus the people's reverence of the Buddha increased hundredfold. Being moved by the remains of the Buddha in heart, both monks and lay believers were so pleased with it. As our devotion responds with the truth, we forget the great labors of it. At this time all the distinguished guests who held pens were praising and singing. Trusting the miraculous phenomenon, we all thought of the beautifulness of the past. This is for our contemporaries while we expect the excellent people in future to come again. At this gathering of the Buddha Shadow, the benevolence of the Buddha's compassion is obvious. As we stand in front this Platform and sigh with emotion, our thought already goes beyond the realm of spirits.

晉義熙八年歲在壬子，五月一日，共立此臺，擬像本山。因即以寄誠。雖成由人匠，而功無所加。至於歲次，星紀赤奮若貞於太陰之墟。九月三日乃詳檢別記，銘之於石。爰自經始，人百其誠。道俗欣之，感遺跡以悅心。於是情以本應，事忘其勞。於時揮翰之賓，僉焉同詠。咸思好遠猷，托相異聞。庶來賢之重軌，故備時人。於影集大通之會，誠悲現所期。至於佇襟遐慨，固已超夫神境矣。¹¹

Huiyuan spent his entire life without ever leaving China. After he split away from Dao'an, he went to Lushan, where he remained until his death. So how did he know about Buddha's Shadow Cavern?¹²

¹¹ Huiyuan, 'Foying ming', *Guang Hongming ji*, T no. 2103, 52: 15.198b5–13.

¹² Chen Jinhua provides a very good discussion of this. The only point where I disagree is with respect to the 'Vinaya Master from Nanguo 南國'. Chen be-

First, let's look at when Huiyuan said: 'The legend as to how they were left behind is explained in detail in the past records'. In regards to the 'Buddha Shadow' (*Foying* 佛影), Huiyuan had something of an understanding about this name from the Buddhist texts he was familiar with. However, the 'Buddha's Shadow Cavern' was ultimately in the west—in India—so he certainly never knew exactly what was there. This much Huiyuan noted explicitly:

Previously, I followed my master, serving him for several years. Although he imparted rudimentary knowledge upon me and provided me with benevolent guidance while I wholeheartedly devoted myself to the marvelous scriptures; however, I remained full of curiosity toward those magical stories, and for this reason I became more devoted to Buddhism. When I encountered monks from the Western Regions, I listened to them tell me about their various journeys. As a result, I knew the story of the Buddha's Shadow, though I didn't entirely understand what it is.

遠昔尋先師，奉侍歷載。雖啟蒙慈訓，托志玄籍。每想奇聞，以篤其誠。遇西域沙門，輒餐游方之說，故知有佛影而傳者尚未曉然。¹³

We do not know exactly who the 'monk from the Western Regions' 西域沙門 that Huiyuan crossed is, but Huiyuan did learn

lieves that 'Nanguo' refers to the south of India. As a result, he believes this 'Vinaya Master' is likely from the south of India. But I think here the word Nanguo 南國 means south China and the character *guo* 國 has nothing to do with the meaning of a political state, whether of India or of China. Zhipan 志磐 (d. after 1249) believes that during the Yao Qin (384–417 CE) period, Buddhayaśas 佛陀耶舍 came to Chang'an. See *Fozu tongji*, T no. 2035, 49: 26.261b21-24. Buddhayaśas was also from Jibin, and his greatest accomplishment was to translate the *Dharmagupta-vinaya* 四分律 while in Chang'an. As a result, Buddhayaśas could indeed be considered a 'Vinaya Master', but Buddhayaśas never went to the south of China. See Buddhayaśas's biographies in *Chu sanzang ji ji* (T no. 2145, 55: 14.102a15) as well as *Gaoseng zhuan* (T no. 2059, 50: 2.333c16).

¹³ 'Foying ming', *Guang Hongming ji*, T no. 2103, 52: 15.198a7–10.

about the Buddha's Shadow Cavern from this person, or perhaps from this group of people. As for the exact details of the Buddha's Shadow Cavern, this much was clearly unknown to him, as he admitted, 'As a result, I knew the story of the shadow, though I didn't entirely understand what it was.' Huiyuan indeed had a relatively detailed understanding of the Buddha's Shadow Cavern once he got to Lushan and especially after he welcomed other monks who had come there to visit. Huiyuan referred to one of the monks as the 'Master from Jibin', while he called the other 'the *Vinaya* Master from the south', which is made clear here:

When I went to Lushan, a Chan Master from Jibin (鬪賓禪師) and a *Vinaya* Master from the south (南國律學道士) were there. They had both been to the Buddha's Shadow Cavern in India before, so I thoroughly questioned them about it. What they said was consistent with the stories I had previously heard. Afterwards, I finally learned that the Buddha's image could indeed exist in the form of a shadow.

及在此山，值鬪賓禪師、南國律學道士，與昔聞既同，並是其人遊歷所經。因其詳問，乃多先征。然後驗神道無方，觸像而寄。百慮所會，非一時之感。¹⁴

It was because of this that Huiyuan wrote the 'Foying ming':

This caused me to thoroughly understand the piety of the Buddha and his accomplishments. As a result, I led those of a common pursuit as myself to mutually uncover an unadulterated understanding of the Buddha shadow. Thus I, together with the good people who have supported me to build the Buddha's Shadow Platform, painted the image of the Buddha and engraved this inscription in stone.

於是悟徹其誠，應深其位。將援同契，發其真趣。故與夫隨喜之賢，圖而銘焉。¹⁵

¹⁴ 'Foying ming', *Guang Hongming ji*, T no. 2103, 52: 15.198a10–13.

¹⁵ 'Foying ming', *Guang Hongming ji*, T no. 2103, 52: 15.198a13–15.

‘The Chan Master from Jibin’ is Buddhahadra. In regards to this, there is no dispute amongst researchers; however, many different opinions exist as to the identity of ‘the *Vinaya* Master from the south’. Some say it refers to Faxian, but the majority of researchers believe this is not the case.

This raises a third point: Is ‘the *Vinaya* Master from the south’ Faxian, or not? I believe he is, and I have four principal reasons for believing this.

First, given the situation at that time, if it is said that a ‘*Vinaya* Master’ 律學道士 had some kind of connection or relationship to Lushan, then it is not likely that this title could be referring to anyone besides Faxian. Seeing as it is the case that they referred to him as a ‘*Vinaya* Master’, then it is certain that this person had a relationship with the Disciplinary Rules of Buddhism and possesses thorough knowledge of *Vinaya* (律學修養). According to what we know about the monks from that time who are closely related to *Vinaya*, there were a few in the north who had mostly come from the Western Regions, but none of them went to the south. Faxian was then perhaps the only famous *Vinaya* figure in the south. Faxian had travelled a tremendous distance to acquire Buddhist scriptures, and he had gone to India with the intent of acquiring Buddhist *Vinaya* texts. In Chinese Buddhist history, among those who had the objective of reaching India to acquire scriptures, Faxian is the first one who really completed the task. Additionally, while Faxian was in India, he principally studied Buddhist *Vinaya* Texts. He brought Buddhist texts back to China with him, and of the texts he brought back, a large portion is of the *Vinaya*. Of the five Buddhist Nikāyas that circulated throughout ethnically Han regions, three out of five either completely or almost completely used *Vinaya* brought to China from India by the hands of Faxian. Namely, these were the *Sapoduo lü chao* 薩婆多律抄 (Excerpts of the *Sarvāstivādavīnaya*) of the *Sarvāstivāda Nikāya* and the *Mahāsāsakavinaya* (*Mishasai lü* 彌沙塞律; commonly written as *Wufen lü* 五分律) of the *Mahāsāsaka Nikāya* and the *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya* (*Mohe Sengqi lü* 摩訶僧祇律) and *Sengqi biqiu jieben* 僧祇比丘戒本 (Skt. **Mahāsāṃghika-pratimokṣa-sūtra*) of the *Mahāsāṃghika Nikāya*. Of these texts, the *Mahāsāṃghikavinaya* was translated by the ‘Master from Jibin’,

Buddhabhadra, and the translation just so happened to have been carried out in the south in Jiankang.¹⁶

Second, Huiyuan said that it was from 'the Chan Master from Jibin' and 'the *Vinaya* Master from the south' that he heard about the 'Buddha Shadow' as well as the 'Buddha's Shadow Cavern': 'They had both been to the Buddha's Shadow Cavern in India before, so I thoroughly questioned them about it.' In other words, 'the Master from Jibin' and 'the *Vinaya* Master from the south' had both previously gone to the 'Buddha's Shadow Cavern'. With respect to this point, Faxian's experiences correspond the most. Huiyuan also said, 'What they said was consistent with the stories I had previously heard.' As for what Huiyuan asked about, it is likely that some of the answers to his questions are contained in the *Faxian zhuan*:

In the south of Nagarahāra, going southwestwards through the mountain, in a half Yojana distance, there is a stone cavern. The 'shadow of the Buddha' is within this cavern, and from ten steps away, the true form of the Buddha seems present. It is a beautiful shade of gold that shines brilliantly. As you get closer, it gets darker, as if it is actually the Buddha. The kings of many countries have sent skilled painters there to make a copy of it, but none succeeded. Legend contends that thousand Buddhas will leave their shadows there. About a hundred steps from the shadows is where the Buddha shaved his head and cut his nails while living, and there is a pagoda there that the Buddha and his disciples collectively built, which is seven or eight *zhang* tall and constructed in the way that future pagodas would be built. It still exists today. Beside it is a monastery of over seven hundred Buddhist monks. Here there are about thousand pagodas of *arahats* and *pratyekabuddhas*.

那竭城南半由延，有石室，博山西南向，佛留影此中。去十余步，觀之如佛真形。金色相好，光明炳著。轉近轉微，髣髴如有。諸方國王遣工畫師摹寫，莫能及。彼國人傳云，千佛盡當於此留影。影西四百步許，佛在時剃髮剪爪。佛自與諸弟子共造塔，高七八丈，以為

¹⁶ Cf. Wang, 'Faxian yu Fojiào lü'.

將來塔法。今猶在。邊有寺。寺中有七百餘僧。此處有諸羅漢、辟支佛塔乃千數。¹⁷

Of course, there is a problem here; that is, when Huiyuan talked about ‘the Chan Master from Jibin’ and ‘the *Vinaya* Master from the south’, he mentioned both of them at the same time. The first is easy to understand, as is the second, as ‘the *Vinaya* Master from the south’ refers to a monk with a thorough understanding of *Vinayas*. ‘Jibin’ and the ‘south’ were also mentioned at the same time, and while the former is easy to understand, what exactly does ‘south’ refer to? Why did Huiyuan say this?

Chen Jinhua believes that the term ‘Nanguo’ 南國 does not refer to the south of China but rather the south of India. I, however, believe this term refers to the south of China because here the character *guo* 國 cannot be understood in the political sense of the word ‘state’, it should be understood as making a general reference to an area or region. In this case Nanguo 南國 means the south. Examples of such usage can be readily found in other places. Here are three examples from Buddhist texts wherein such usage of the word can be found:

1. The first example is from *Wuzhu Sun Quan lunxu Fodao sanzong* 吳主孫權論敘佛道三宗 [Sun Quan, the King of the Kingdom of Wu on the three religions including Buddhism and Daoism], which is in the first *juan* of *Guang Hongming ji* 廣弘明集 (Expanded Collection for the Propagation and Clarification of Buddhism) that mentions Kang Senghui 康僧會 (181?–280):

When the Three Kingdoms were in a confrontation, each side was of formidable strength. At that time, Buddhism had already spread throughout the Central Plain for a good while, but it had not yet spread to the area south of the Yangtze River. Kang Senghui wanted to propagate Buddhism unto a place where it was yet to spread, so he travelled from the north to the south (nanguo 南國).

¹⁷ *Faxian zhuàn*, T no. 2085, 51.859a3–11; Zhang, *Faxian zhuàn jiaozhu*, 47.

時三國鼎峙，各擅威權。佛法久被中原，未達江表。會欲道被未聞，化行南國。¹⁸

The *Guang Hongming ji* claims that this sentence was recorded in the *Wu shu* 吳書, but this is not correct.

2. The second example is from the biography of the Nun Jingchen 靜稱 (d.u.) included in the *Biqiuni zhuan* 比丘尼傳 [Biographies of *Bhikṣunīs*]. The *Biqiuni zhuan* were written close to the time of Huiyuan. It refers to Jingchen:

Jingchen later departed the nunnery to head to the south. On the road, she encountered a woman from the north. She met with the woman several times, and then Jingchen noticed that it seemed she had returned to her hometown. This woman had the surname of Qiu and the name of Wenjiang; she was originally from Boping. She also believed in Buddhism. Upon hearing of the prosperity of the south (nanguo 南國), she went to a checkpoint and snuck into that land.

後暫出山，道遇一北地女人。造次問訪，欣然若舊。女姓仇名文姜，本博平人也。性好佛法，聞南國富道關開，託避得至此土。¹⁹

3. The third example is Daoxuan's 道宣 (596–667) *Guanzhong chuangli jietan tujing bingxu* 關中創立戒壇圖經並序 [Preface of the Text and Diagram to Establish a Precept Platform in Guanzhong], which reads: 'Checking all the records, I found the precept platforms in the south (nanguo 南國) are built not in same way. A precept platform in the capital of the Song has been discussed above.' 今通檢《別傳》諸記，南國諸方戒壇非一，宋都一壇如上已辨。²⁰

¹⁸ *Guang Hongming ji*, T no. 2103, 52: 1.99c16–17:

¹⁹ *Biqiuni zhuan*, T no. 2063, 50: 2.940a10–13.

²⁰ *Guanzhong chuangli jietan tujing (bingxu)*, T no. 1892, 45: 813b27–28.

In Huiyuan's time, as the north and south were governed separately, people living in the south (during the Eastern Jin Dynasty and afterwards), were generally referred to as people of the Nanguo, that is, the southern people. Although Faxian was born in Shanxi, after returning from Sri Lanka, he spent the rest of his life living within the boundaries of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, and it seems perfectly reasonable that he could have been regarded as a 'southern' person. Moreover, I think that throughout the course of Faxian's activities in the south, it is not necessarily certain that people there knew his ancestral home was Pingyang County, Shanxi.

Furthermore, perhaps Huiyuan was one of these people. In a strikingly similar way, Buddhahadra's ancestral hometown is decidedly not Jibin, yet Huiyuan still found it fitting to refer to him as 'the *Vinaya* Master from Jibin'. Why? Clearly it is because all of the methods of meditation and theories passed on by Buddhahadra were, for the most part, derived from Jibin. As a result, Huiyuan used the term 'Jibin' when referring to him. Jibin has absolutely nothing to do with Buddhahadra's ancestral hometown, but Huiyuan used this term because, when deciding how to refer to another, he relied on his complete understanding of a person's background. He treated Buddhahadra—'the Chan Master of Jibin'—in this way, and he also treated Faxian—'the *Vinaya* Master of the south'—in the same way.

It seems that something should be noted here. From my perspective, Chinese people of that time did not necessarily consider Jibin to be a part of India. It is very often known that Jibin and India were neighbours, but it is uncertain as to whether or not it was then an autonomous region or was a part of India. This much is not certain.

Third, Buddhahadra and Faxian collaborated to translate scriptures, and the two figures had a close relationship. Faxian brought all kinds of Buddhist texts back from India, and the most important two translations derived from these were the six volumes of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra* (*Da bannihuan jing* 大般泥洹經) and the forty volumes of the *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya* (*Mobe sengqi lü* 摩訶僧祇律), which were completed as a result of the two figures' partnership. Saying that the two men joined Huiyuan's activities conforms to reason. The paragraph from the *Faxian zhuan* that is quoted at the very top of this article explains what Faxian did after his summer

retreat session in Qingzhou ended in 413 CE. It reads, 'He wanted to return to Chang'an. However, he was shouldering several great tasks, so he went to the southern capital (Jiankang), for helping the Chan Master to translate Buddhist *sūtras* and *vinayas*.'

This monk is Buddhahadra; that is, he is the one Huiyuan referred to as 'the Chan Master from Jibin'. When Faxian went to the south in search of a collaborator for translating Buddhist scriptures, the figure he found was indeed none other than Buddhahadra. When Buddhahadra went to Lushan, Faxian had also gone there. This is also a rational turn of events.

The fourth point is derived from the words of Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433 CE). He was a contemporary of Huiyuan, and while Xie Lingyun was just a few years younger than Huiyuan, he was nevertheless a worshipper and follower. After Huiyuan wrote the 'Foying ming', Xie Lingyun also wrote his own 'Foying ming', which clearly said:

Master Faxian has been to Jetavana (in India), so he can describe in detail the 'Shadow of the Buddha'. That is indeed a wonder. It appears on a dark and stiff rock looking as the actual figure of the Buddha. The features of the shadow are extremely dignified, and it is aesthetically sublime. It is not known when it began or when it will end. The shadow is imbued with a consummate expression of peace. Master Huiyuan of Lushan was filled with joy to learn of this, and then he thought of following the way to worship in a gloomy room and found a blank rock. To its north is a high mountain and to the south is a rapid stream. Imitating the Shadow of Buddha, he hopes to take shelter of it on the black rock. As the Buddha-shadow sincerely transmits the appearance of the Buddha, it is thus also capable of transmitting the ultimate way of Buddhism unto those who hold Dharma in their mind.

法顯道人至自祇洹，具說佛影，偏為靈奇。幽岩巖壁，若有存形。容儀端莊，相好具足。莫知始終，常自湛然。廬山法師聞風而悅，於是隨喜幽室，即考空岩。北枕峻嶺，南映彪澗。摹擬遺量，寄託青采。豈唯象形也篤，故亦傳心者極矣。²¹

²¹ *Guang Hongming ji*, T no. 2103, 52: 15.199b10–15.

Moreover, another important point is that Xie Lingyun was instructed to write his ‘Foying ming’ by Huiyuan, which Xie made clear: ‘Carrying on the instructions from venerated Master Huiyuan, I composed this article and let it engraved on this stone’ 道兼道人, 远宣意旨, 命余制铭, 以充刊刻.²²

These two versions of the ‘Foying ming’ have the same subject, were written on the same topic at essentially the same time, and include essentially the same content. Huiyuan was tied to the event, and Xie Lingyun was seemingly also related. The time and place recorded in Lingyun’s text provide the closest account of what happened at that time. So if we don’t believe him, who can we believe?

In previous discussions, others have also raised a question: Even if it is assumed that the Master from Jibin and the *Vinaya* Master from the south are Buddhahadra and Faxian, in the ‘Foying ming’, Huiyuan still said that he built the Platform with his disciples on the first day of the fifth month of 412 CE. Faxian was then still aboard a ship, floating about at sea. Such is one of the reasons used to illustrate the notion that Faxian was still yet to reach Lushan at that time. However, this is a very easy problem to resolve. Huiyuan built the Platform at Donglin Monastery 東林寺 on Lushan, and he had indeed completed this task by the fifth month of 412 CE. But the ‘Foying ming’ shows that it really happened on the following year; specifically, it was finished in the ninth month of 413 CE. This is because Huiyuan next said, ‘The year that we constructed the Buddha’s Shadow Platform, reckoning according the star positions, is referred to as “Chifenruozhen” 赤奮若貞 located at the place of Taiyin 太陰之墟. So on the third day of the ninth month, we provided a detailed recording of it and carved it onto the stone.’ When the Taiyin is at the position of *chou* 丑, that year is referred to as ‘Chifenruo’ 赤奮若. 412 CE was the year of *zi* 子年, and 413 CE was precisely the year of *chou* 丑年. Consequently, when Huiyuan’s ‘Foying ming’ says the ‘fifth month’, it means the fifth month of 412 CE, and when

²² Xie, ‘Foying ming’, *T* no. 2103, 52: 15.199b15–16.

it says the 'ninth month', it definitely means the ninth month of 413 CE.²³

As a result, for an ultimate verdict, I not only believe that the 'Vinaya Master from the south' is Faxian, I think that this figure could only be Faxian.

If I can establish such an inference, then it can also be shown that Faxian reached Lushan before the third day of the ninth month of 413 CE. This also conforms to the itinerary of Faxian's homeward journey, as detailed at the start of this essay. It is simply that during that time of Faxian's summer retreat session, he was still in Qingzhou, and he later went to the south. So did he first go to Jiankang or Lushan? This much is hard to say, but, in short, he did indeed go to Lushan.

Here, people will perhaps still ask, 'If it is Faxian, then why, with the exception of the document by Xie Lingyun, do all other relevant documents—including the most important of them, Huiyuan's "Foying ming"—not directly mention Faxian's name?'

My explanation for this is as follows: in the time that Huiyuan wrote the 'Foying ming', Faxian was certainly not as famous as he would later become—especially when compared to the present day, wherein essentially many people know about him. From Buddhist history books and other history books still in existence today, including the *Faxian zhuan*, we know that there were actually quite a number of monks at that time who went to India to acquire scriptures, and Faxian was merely one among their ranks. At that time, he was not necessarily as prominent of a figure as he would later be. Indeed, Faxian is principally known on account of his writing—disregarding the question of whether he wrote the *Faxian zhuan* or it is a record produced by someone else—that was passed down. With respect to the Buddhist monks who came to China from Western Regions, including India, to propagate Buddhist teachings, we also come across a similar kind of situation. There were a great many who came to China that, because they did something of note or on account of

²³ In their above-quoted articles, Xu Wenming and Chen Jinhua posit these opinions regarding the time when Huiyuan wrote the 'Foying ming'.

some other cause, had their actions diligently recorded, which caused them to join the thin ranks of figures who later became famous. Whether a single monk in history becomes famous or not is a question involving a whole host of factors and a touch of fate. But drawing on this same line of thought, although Buddhahadra became very famous within Buddhist history, Huiyuan merely referred to him with the abbreviated name of ‘Master from Jibin’. As for Xie Lingyun’s situation, this is somewhat different. Xie Lingyun actively participated in the project of revising the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (*Da banniepan jing* 大般涅槃經) and this revised work is based on the text of Faxian’s six *juan* translation and the text of Dharmakṣema’s 曇無讖 (385–433) forty *juan* translation. Xie Lingyun not only had a strong impression of Faxian, but also undoubtedly revered him.²⁴

Finally, I also want to explain another point: although I believe that Faxian went to Lushan, Zhang Xun’s 章巽 (1914–1994) collated annotation on the *Faxian zhuan*, used an edition of the *Faxian zhuan* from Japan’s Kamakura period (1192–1333) wherein ‘Huiyan’ was added in the postscript (*ba* 跋). But I don’t think this constitutes sufficient proof.²⁵ This postscript was likely written in 415 CE, and by looking at records in Buddhist catalogue works it is clear that Faxian had long since returned to Jiankang by this point of time. As to this question, I fundamentally agree with the opinion of Max Deeg.²⁶ However, that the Kamakura edition includes the name

²⁴ See Wang, ‘Da banniepan’.

²⁵ Zhang, *Faxian zhuan jiaozhu*, 179

²⁶ Deeg, *Faxian*, 577, note 2533:

Das Subjekt ist zu ergänzen. Ich kann mich auf keinen Fall Zhangs Emendation anschließen, der hier *Huiyuan* 慧遠 (334–416) einsetzt (vgl. v.a. Zhang, 180, Anm.3), und dabei nur einer einzigen Ausgabe, dem Kamakura-Ms., folgt. Dies ist umso unverständlicher, als Zhang in seiner Einführung (S.23f.) ausdrücklich betont, daß diese Hs. auf einer relativ jungen Version basiere und voller Fehler sei. Die Emendation basiert also eher auf einem Prozeß des ‘wishful thinking’ als auf einer soliden Grundlage. Es ist kaum vorstellbar, daß *Faxian* den berühmten *Huiyuan*, den er womöglich noch aus *Chang’an*, aus der nächsten Umgebung von *Daoan*,

of 'Huiyuan' also explains one matter; namely, it shows that several hundred years before, people had taken note of the relationship between Faxian and Huiyuan, and as a result they had added Huiyuan's name. These people who noticed this relationship were either Chinese monks or Japanese monks. Ultimately, though, the above-mentioned dispute is indeed 'nothing new under the sun'. Accordingly, it can be said that these are simply some minor thoughts of mine, and they do not count as any kind of extraordinary 'new idea'.

There is one more point that perhaps needs to be explained: the above discussion is directly related to the experiences of Faxian after he returned to China from India. At the same time, it is also related to the construction of the 'Buddha's Shadow Platform' and what was written in the 'Foying ming'. But it is actually not this simple. This discussion can also be extended to touch on the context surrounding the formation of the Buddha Shadow legend, and if this is done, then it is actually related to meditation practice of Buddhism during that time along with its theories and practice of visualization in front of a Buddha's image. As for the Middle Age period of Buddhist history that we are today researching, it seems that all of these questions perhaps need to be further considered.

gekannt haben mag, in seinem Domizil auf dem *Lushan* 廬山 besucht hat, und daß dieser Besuch in einer frühen Version des GFZ an vorliegender Stelle gestanden hätte, ohne daß die Biographien *Faxians* oder *Huiyuans* in CSJ oder GSZ, die ja zumindest für *Faxian* als Informationsquelle ausschließlich das GFZ hatten und der originären Version desselben zeitlich am nächsten standen, diese Information nicht verwertet hätten. Der Einschub des berühmten Namens im *Kamakura*-Ms. oder deren Vorlage mag auf die Phantasie eines Redaktors zurückgehen, der den beiden großen Mönchen aus welchen Gründen auch immer ein Zusammentreffen zuschreiben wollte. Das besondere Interesse *Huiyuans* an dem Schatten des Buddha in *Naḡarabhāra*, auf den ja *Faxian* recht ausführlich eingeht, könnte bei diesem Einschub das Argument geliefert haben, wobei *Huiyuan* seine Informationen schon viel früher, als Schüler von *Daoan*, und dann von *Budhabhadra* bekommen hatte (vgl. Zürcher (1972), 224).

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Abbreviation

T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. See Bibliography, Secondary Sources, Takakusu and Watanabe, eds.

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