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Gregory/Buddhism in the Sung

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Chapter 1

The Vitality of Buddhism in the Sung

Peter N. Gregory

The Sung dynasty (960–1279) has long been recognized as a major watershed in Chinese history. In addition to representing a momentous transition in the structure of Chinese society, the Sung was also a period of great cultural flowering in literature, art, and thought. In recent years a series of monographs have been published on Sung society, government, literature, Confucian thought, and popular religion. Yet the contribution of Buddhism to Sung social and cultural life has been little studied. Indeed, the study of Buddhism during the Sung has lagged far behind that of other periods in Chinese history—especially the Six Dynasties (222–589), the Sui (581–617), and the T’ang (618–907), but to a lesser extent the Ming (1368–1644) as well.

This book is the first extended scholarly treatment of Buddhism in the Sung to be published in a Western language. The studies presented here, however, do not pretend to offer a complete or even representative picture of Buddhism in the Sung. They focus largely on elite figures, elite traditions, and interactions among Buddhists and literati, although some touch on ways in which elite traditions both responded to and helped shape more popular forms of lay practice and piety. All of the chapters in one way or another deal with the two most important traditions within Sung Buddhism: Ch’an and T’ien-t’ai. Whereas most previous discussions of Buddhism in the Sung have tended to concentrate on Ch’an, the present volume is notable for giving T’ien-t’ai its just due. Moreover, whereas previous Western-language treatments of T’ien-t’ai have focused largely on doctrinal developments in the Sui and T’ang, the studies included in this volume present a broader and more contextualized picture of the tradition as it developed in the Sung. Various chapters locate T’ien-t’ai within its social context by discussing official patronage, literati involvement, the role of public and private ritual, the devel-
opment of Pure Land societies, and the construction of an orthodox history of patriarchs. Others clarify the parameters and inner dynamics of the intellectual controversies that engaged the minds of some of the major T'ien-t'ai thinkers throughout the Sung. Still others deal with the complex polemical and sectarian dynamics that characterized the relationship between T'ien-t'ai and Ch'an. In various ways the chapters dealing with Ch'an also present a more contextualized understanding of that tradition by exploring its relationship with literati culture, by investigating the polemical framework of its historiography, and by examining its images of women.

Despite the circumscribed scope of this book, the material it presents amply reveals the vitality of Buddhism in the Sung as well its embeddedness in the social and intellectual life of the time. Indeed, if its various chapters add up to an argument, it is that the study of Sung culture cannot be complete without a reconsideration of the contribution of Buddhism.

One of the reasons for the dearth of research on Buddhism in the Sung has undoubtedly been the tenacity of the opinion that Buddhism during that period was in a state of decline—that the Sung, in fact, marked the beginning of a long and inexorable decline of Buddhism in China that extended down through the remainder of the imperial era. The growing body of new research, however, suggests that, far from signaling a decline, the Sung was a period of great efflorescence in Buddhism and that, if any period deserves the epithet of the “golden age” of Buddhism, the Sung is the most likely candidate.

It is the hope of the contributors to this volume that the studies presented will prove that the stereotype of decline need no longer be taken seriously. The assumptions on which such a judgment could be sustained have become increasingly problematic. Indeed, the whole discourse of “decline” begs complicated definitional questions that bear on how scholars conceive history. If “decline” is meant in quantitative terms—number of monks, number of monasteries, levels of patronage, number of texts written, and so forth—then the Sung was anything but a period of decline. If, rather, “decline” is understood in more qualitative terms, then we are entering a discursive realm in which historical judgment all too easily shades into moral judgment. Within this framework, moreover, it is often held that the very prosperity of Sung Buddhism in quantitative terms signaled its spiritual decline in qualitative terms. But such a judgment is apt to rest more on the moral or religious agenda that the histo-
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rian brings to his or her study than on the material he or she studies. It also presumes a dichotomy between spiritual and material values that would have been rejected by many Sung Buddhists.

The evolution of the view of Sung Buddhist decline is too complex to trace here, but one of its roots is to be found in the rhetoric of Sung Buddhism itself, especially as elaborated by members of the Ch'an tradition. Another is to be found in the sectarian and nationalist biases of Japanese scholarship, whose massive contributions to the field have done so much to inform Western understandings of Chinese Buddhism. And a third is to be found in the moral discourse of Chinese historiography and the prejudices of the Confucian tradition. The legacy of this historiographical tradition is still felt within the discipline of sinology, which tends to marginalize Buddhism as something extrinsic to the study of China.

The view of Sung decline is articulated against the pinnacle supposedly achieved by Buddhism in the T'ang. The T'ang is accordingly pictured as a “golden age” in which Chinese Buddhism came into its own—an age of religious geniuses and doctrinal innovation, in which the major traditions or schools (tsung) of Chinese Buddhism reached their apogee. The Sung, by contrast, is supposed to have lacked creativity and intellectual vitality, as witnessed by the fact that no new traditions were formed. Absent, too, was the production of the great architectonic edifices of doctrine that allegedly marked the crowning achievement of the T'ang Buddhist traditions. The systematic classifications of doctrine (p'an-chiao) that characterized T'ang Buddhist scholasticism not only sought to integrate all of the Buddha's teachings into a coherent and comprehensive framework, but also justified the sectarian claims of the different traditions to represent the supreme teaching of Buddhism.

Although there is some truth to this picture, it also distorts Buddhism in the T'ang as much as it does Buddhism in the Sung. The traditions (such as T'ien-t'ai, Hua-yen, and Ch'an) that developed during the Sui and T'ang never assumed fixed shape as fully wrought systems of doctrine or practice. Rather, they continued to change in profound ways throughout the period, their defining teachings were contested by various proponents, and their core doctrines showed fissures that were to erupt into full-scale controversies in the Sung. Such a picture is also distorted in privileging the formulation of doctrine as the primary field for gauging the intellectual vitality of a tradition. The vitality of Sung Buddhism was expressed in different ways.
Even though no new traditions of Buddhism emerged during the Sung, the process whereby the T’ang traditions constructed themselves continued to evolve throughout the tenth through thirteenth centuries. Indeed, the process begun in the T’ang was only completed in the Sung, when traditions such as Ch’æn and T’ien-t’ai assumed their fully articulated sectarian identity. Part of that process involved the construction of a hallowed T’ang past as a means of rationalizing the privileged status claimed by Buddhists in the Sung. The genealogical histories (tæng-lü), discourse records (yü-lü), and anthologies of ancient cases (kung-an) produced by members of the Ch’æn tradition in the Sung, for example, all served to justify the preeminent place Ch’æn claimed for itself in the world of Sung Buddhism. They did so by connecting that tradition with a line of patriarchs extending all the way back to the historical Buddha and by celebrating the sayings and doings of the great heroes of the eighth and ninth centuries as living exemplars of enlightened activity. The picture of the diminished stature of Sung Buddhism in comparison to the glories of the T’ang is thus the product of Sung Buddhist mythology, and it accordingly reveals more about the construction of Buddhism in the Sung than it does about the realities of Buddhism in the T’ang.

Ch’æn was still in the process of formation in the T’ang. Indeed, it is not clear in what sense one can even speak of “the Ch’æn tradition” at all in the T’ang, when a series of contending lineages arose, each one vaunting its own claims to authenticity. These different lines were not subsumed together into a unified vision of the tradition as a whole until the end of the period with the writings of Tsung-mi (780–841)—but even that remained only another contending claim when it was put forth. The vision of the Ch’æn tradition as a multibranched lineage stemming from a common ancestor and linked together by a mind-to-mind transmission did not take hold as the commonly accepted representation of the tradition until the publication of the Ching-te Record of the Transmission of the Flame (Ching-te ch’üan-teng lu) in the beginning of the eleventh century. The famous slogan by which the tradition came to define itself (“a separate transmission apart from the teachings that is not based on scriptures but, by directly pointing to the human mind, enables [beings] to see their own nature and realize Buddhahood”) was first formulated in the beginning of the twelfth century in the Chrestomathy from the Patriarchs Hall (Ts’u-t’ing shih-yüan), even though various of its elements trace back to T’ang sources. Moreover, as
Chapter 7 by Griffith Foulk shows, the foundational myth on which the Ch’ân tradition laid its historical claim, according to which the historical Buddha first transmitted the dharma to Mahâkâśyapa and thus began the patriarchal succession, continued to evolve throughout much of the Sung, only reaching its final form in the thirteenth century with the publication of the Gateless Barrier (Wu-men kuan).

The various Ch’ân lines of the T’ang had no distinctive teaching or practice that can be reconstructed from contemporary documents. The one practice that is unique to the Ch’ân tradition, the introspection of the kung-an (or kōan, as it is better known in its Japanese pronunciation), was developed in the twelfth century by Ta-hui Tsung-kao (1089–1163). Nor is there any evidence that Ch’ân existed as a separate institution in the T’ang. Elsewhere Foulk has shown that the idealized portrait of the early Ch’ân monastic community supposedly instituted by Pai-chang (720–814) was the creation of Sung Buddhists, and no conclusions about the nature of the Ch’ân institution in the T’ang can be drawn from the famous “Pure Regulations” attributed to him.1 It was only in the Sung, with the establishment of the imperially sponsored system of public abbacy monasteries, that monasteries came to be designed as specifically Ch’ân institutions. Finally, the most distinctive forms of literature by which the Ch’ân tradition has come to be known—the genealogical histories, discourse records, kung-an anthologies, and monastic regulations—were all produced in the Sung. The Ch’ân tradition is thus in many ways more a product of the Sung than it is of the T’ang.

T’ien-t’ai, the other major Buddhist tradition in the Sung, virtually recreated itself in the Sung. First formed during the latter part of the sixth century, when it rose to prominence with the support of the Sui ruling house, it lost favor with the founding of the T’ang and suffered eclipse until the second half of the eighth century, when it experienced a brief revival through the efforts of Chan-jan (711–782). By the tenth century, however, it was on the brink of extinction. In the wake of the warfare and social disruption that accompanied the end of the T’ang and extended through the Five Dynasties period (907–960), many of its central texts had been lost, and its traditions and practices had fallen into abeyance. The two great proponents of the tradition in the early Sung, Chih-li (960–1028) and Tsun-shih (964–1032), on a variety of fronts strove to recreate T’ien-t’ai as an independent tradition and to secure permanent in-
stitutional standing for it. Paralleling the efforts of their Ch'an contemporaries, they sought to establish a firm foundation of local support, and both succeeded in gaining imperial recognition of their institutions as public abbacy monasteries (shih-fang chu-ch'i h yüan) permanently dedicated to the T'ien-t'ai teaching. They redacted T'ien-t'ai texts, wrote commentaries on them, and successfully lobbied for their inclusion in imperially sponsored editions of the canon. Whereas Chih-li strove to define T'ien-t'ai orthodoxy, Tsun-shih devoted more effort to codifying T'ien-t'ai orthopraxy.

While Sung Buddhists were not system builders, those who were engaged with Buddhist doctrine can be seen as playing out the tensions implicit in T'ang thought. In their efforts to clarify the orthodox teachings of their traditions, Sung figures openly addressed the ambiguities and incoherences latent in the systems they inherited from the T'ang, thereby also helping to bring into focus a central problematic that animated Chinese Buddhism as a whole. This phenomenon can be seen most clearly in the so-called Home Mountain (Shan-chia) and Off Mountain (Shan-wai) controversy that came to define T'ien-t'ai orthodoxy during the first three decades of the eleventh century. The central issues of this controversy are ably outlined in Chapter 10 by Chi-wah Chan, and some of its philosophical implications are fruitfully explored in Chapter 11 by Brook Ziporyn. In addition to illustrating the intellectual vitality of Sung Buddhism, this controversy also reveals that the Sung traditions were not self-enclosed systems but developed in continuous dialogue with one another. It is thus worth examining the problematic at the heart of this controversy in a little more detail so as to clarify its broader significance for understanding Sung Buddhism.

The controversy grew out of the ambiguities inherent in Chanjian's reformulation of T'ien-t'ai thought. In order to revive the tradition in the second half of the eighth century, Chan-jian had to respond to a series of questions that had not been addressed by Chih-i (538–597), revered as the grand architect of the tradition. Most important, he had to take into account the teachings of Hua-yen, the preeminent doctrinal tradition at that time. Although he was critical of Hua-yen, Chan-jian also incorporated elements of its theory of mind into his reformulation of the T'ien-t'ai tradition, and it was around those elements that the Sung controversy devolved.

This theory of mind derived from the Awakening of Faith, an apocryphal text most likely composed in China during the third quarter of the sixth century. This text came to occupy a central place
in both Hua-yen and Ch’an teachings during the late T’ang. It developed the Indian Buddhist doctrine of the tathāgatagarbha (the “embryo” or “womb” of Buddhahood) into a theory of the one mind (i-hsin) as the ground of all experience. Whereas the Indian doctrine had referred to the potentiality for Buddhahood inherent in all sentient beings and had thus been primarily soteriological in intent, its Chinese development transformed it into full-blown ontology. This mind was intrinsically pure and enlightened and yet gave rise to and supported all defiled phenomenal states as it adapted to conditions. This idea provided the basis on which the Hua-yen theory of “nature origination” (hsing-ch’i) was developed, according to which all phenomenal appearances (hsiang) were believed ultimately to originate (ch’i) from the nature (hsing), a synonym for the intrinsically pure and enlightened one mind of the Awakening of Faith.

The influence of Hua-yen thought on T’ien-t’ai is reflected in Chan-jan’s use of the term “mind inclusion” (hsin-chü), which to Chih-li’s opponents in the Home Mountain/Off Mountain controversy suggested that Chan-jan emphasized the mind over all other aspects of reality. More important, however, Chan-jan coined the term “nature inclusion” (hsing-chü) to encapsulate Chih-i’s teaching of the mutual inclusion of all aspects of reality. In the early Sung controversy, Chih-li embraced this concept of nature inclusion as the orthodox T’ien-t’ai teaching in contrast to the Hua-yen teaching of nature origination with its primacy of mind advocated by proponents of the Off Mountain position. These two doctrines, which existed alongside one another in T’ang discourse, came to stand for contrasting models in terms of which T’ien-t’ai orthodoxy was negotiated in the Sung. Whereas nature inclusion held that every instance or order of being was contained in every other instance or order of being and thus did not privilege any one over another, nature origination saw each instance or order of being as a manifestation of the underlying nature and thereby privileged nature over everything else. Nature inclusion thus validated the world of phenomena and ordinary experience as the field wherein enlightenment could be realized; nature origination, in contrast, tended to discount the world of phenomena and ordinary experience in favor of a direct apprehension of the intrinsically pure and enlightened mind on which they were grounded.

These issues were thus not merely of scholastic import but also had important ramifications for practice. Chih-li’s Home Mountain position, for example, validated deluded states of mind as the proper
focus of practice and affirmed the nonnegotiable status of the particulars prescribed by ritual procedure, whereas the Off Mountain position tended to devalue ritual particulars as mere expedients subservient to a more abstract discernment of truth. The Off Mountain position thus tended to deemphasize the very ritual and contemplative practices that were most distinctively T'ien-t'ai in favor of an approach that was hard to distinguish from Ch'an. The controversy thus bore directly on the identity of T'ien-t'ai as a distinct tradition of Buddhism.

Even though Chih-li condemned nature origination as a Hua-yen doctrine, his own position in many ways resonated closely with another doctrine elaborated in Hua-yen, one that, up until the middle of the eighth century at least, had been put forward as expressing the most exalted teaching of the tradition. This was the doctrine of universal interdependence (fa-chi̍h yüan-ch'i) or, as it came to be more commonly known, the unobstructed interpenetration of all phenomena (shih-shih wu-ai). Inspired by the Hua-yen (Avatamsaka) Sūtra, this doctrine supposedly represented the enlightened vision of the Buddha, in which he saw the harmonious and unobstructed interdependence and interpenetration of all phenomena in the universe as if reflected on the surface of a vast, calm ocean. Both the T'ien-t'ai doctrine of nature inclusion championed by Chih-li and the Hua-yen doctrine of universal interdependence pictured a world without a fixed center, in which each and every phenomenon could simultaneously be seen as occupying both center and periphery—a world, unlike that pictured by the doctrine of nature origination, that could not be reduced to a single underlying substance or essence.

The doctrine of universal interdependence coexisted with that of nature origination in the Hua-yen thought of the T'ang. Fa-tsong (643–712) and earlier thinkers clearly emphasized interdependence, but the ballast began to shift toward nature origination in the middle of the eighth century, reflecting the growing influence of Ch'an. While Ch'eng-kuan (738–839) still nominally upheld universal interdependence as representing the highest teaching of the Hua-yen tradition, he emphasized nature origination—or the unobstructed interpenetration of principle and phenomena (li-shih wu-ai)—as the basis on which that doctrine was established. He claimed that the interdependence of all phenomena was only possible because all phenomena were grounded on principle. The doctrine of interdependence was unambiguously subordinated to nature origination with
Tsung-mi, who tried to reconcile Ch'an and Hua-yen in the early ninth century. It was the Ch'an-influenced Hua-yen of Tsung-mi in particular that provided the doctrinal cornerstone on which the Off Mountain thinkers in the Sung elaborated their understanding of the T'ien-t'ai tradition. The Home Mountain/Off Mountain controversy in Sung can thus also be seen as replicating, in a different doctrinal idiom, tensions inherent in the Hua-yen tradition.

Although the Home Mountain/Off Mountain controversy was the most visible manifestation of this intellectual tension, Hua-yen scholars in the Sung also addressed this issue. Early in the Northern Sung, Hua-yen thinkers like Chang-shui Tzu-hsiian (965–1038) and Chin-shui Ching-yuan (1011–1088), following the interpretations of Ch'eng-kuan and Tsung-mi, maintained that the unitary and pure “principle” (li) was the basis of reality. Shortly thereafter, however, other Hua-yen thinkers like Tao-t'ing (late eleventh century), Kuan-fu (early twelfth century), Shih-hui (1102–1166), and Hsi-ti (late twelfth–early thirteenth century) returned to the earlier understanding of Hua-yen, which, like the view promoted by the T'ien-t'ai Home Mountain faction, viewed reality as decentered and ungrounded. The attempts by Sung Buddhists, both T'ien-t'ai and Hua-yen, to confront this issue brought into focus an intellectual problematic that animated Chinese Buddhism as a whole. The intensity and thoroughness with which it was argued, moreover, revealed an intellectual world that was anything but stagnant.

The intrasectarian debates over T'ien-t'ai orthodoxy were carried out in a larger intersectarian polemical context defined by Ch'an's status as the dominant tradition of Buddhism in the early Sung. Chih-li's and Tsun-shih's efforts to secure imperial recognition for their monasteries as T'ien-t'ai establishments were aimed at insuring the separate institutional identity of the tradition vis-à-vis Ch'an, whose more prestigious monasteries had already succeeded in garnering such recognition for themselves. Chih-li's attacks against the heterodoxy of the Off Mountain position entailed an argument for the superiority of what he took to be the orthodox T'ien-t'ai teaching over Hua-yen and Ch'an teachings. The basis for his argument rested on doctrinal grounds. The authority on which Ch'an claims of superiority were advanced, however, were not doctrinal but genealogical. Moreover, in claiming to represent an unbroken mind-to-mind transmission of the Buddha's enlightened understanding, the Ch'an tradition had not put itself forward as representing a special “sect” of Buddhism; rather, it claimed to embody the very essence of
Buddhism itself. By contrast, the attacks against the heterodox Off Mountain teachings by the Home Mountain proponents in the eleventh century were more concerned with asserting T’ien-t’ai’s distinctive sectarian identity against Ch’an. Even though Ch’an genealogical claims did not go uncontested by T’ien-t’ai scholars, the Ch’an tradition was still largely successful in advancing them as a means of securing a privileged position for itself. Ch’an was also a national movement, in the sense that its monasteries were located throughout China, whereas T’ien-t’ai developed as a regional phenomenon centered at Ming-chou, Hang-chou, and Mount T’ien-t’ai in Chekiang.

The fact that T’ien-t’ai was forced to develop in the shadow of Ch’an meant that it had to adapt Ch’an strategies of representation in its competition for privilege, prestige, and patronage. Beginning in the early twelfth century, T’ien-t’ai historians began constructing their own lineages, a process that culminated in the Comprehensive History of Buddhas and Patriarchs (Fo-tsu t’ung-chi), composed by Chih-p’an between 1258 and 1269. This text sought to present a universal history of Buddhism from a T’ien-t’ai perspective and reaffirmed Chih-li’s position as the channel through which T’ien-t’ai orthodoxy flowed. As Koichi Shinohara skillfully demonstrates in Chapter 13, this task involved rearranging the content of the biographical records preserved locally in major T’ien-t’ai monasteries around the concept of a universal lineage of dharma succession borrowed from Ch’an genealogical histories. In the course of this process, master-disciple filiations were reconfigured, major figures were sometimes displaced by minor ones, and an originally diverse and multicentered tradition was pressed into a centralized mold according to a logic that had more to do with religious legitimation than it did with historical reality. By representing its masters as dharma heirs of the Buddha and patriarchs rather than as abbots of local monasteries, this new vision of T’ien-t’ai history enabled its members to claim a parity with Ch’an in their competition for patronage and official recognition.

Buddhists in the Sung were thus engaged in a series of spirited, and sometimes fractious, debates, revealing a rich polyphony of intellectual activity. Some of the central issues under debate grew out of tensions that had lain submerged in T’ang thought. They were also directly related to questions of the constitutive identity of traditions such as T’ien-t’ai and Ch’an. Sung Buddhists thus continued the process begun in the Sui and T’ang by which these traditions
constructed themselves. Even though the general contours of these traditions had been roughed out in the T’ang, it was left to Sung thinkers to clarify their distinctive features, a process that also saw an increasing emphasis on orthodoxy, with its inevitable consequence of polarization. This process of polarization, moreover, meant that compromise positions became increasingly difficult to maintain as ideological lines became drawn, as Fouk’s chapter demonstrates in the case of Ch’an.

Proponents of T’ien-t’ai and Ch’an were not only involved in lively dialogue among themselves but were also engaged in complex interactions with Sung society at large. These interactions were seen as being mutually beneficial, and the forms that they took were basically transactional, although what was understood as being transacted varied according to circumstance and the people involved. The different forms these interactions took reveal the variety of ways in which Buddhism had become a part of Chinese culture. Many people from all social strata petitioned Buddhist deities, solicited Buddhist specialists, or made use of Buddhist charms or spells as means of securing health, prosperity, and good fortune or of averting misfortune. In such cases, the primary determinant was more apt to be the efficacy of the particular deity, specialist, charm, or spell than its association with Buddhism, and it was on this level that Buddhism competed with popular religion. Many officials cooperated with Buddhist leaders, publicly sponsored Buddhist rites, or contributed to monastic projects more out of political expediency than out of personal religious commitment. The generation and accumulation of religious merit was probably the most important factor for the overwhelming majority of those who in one way or another thought of themselves as Buddhist. Such merit could be applied to benefits in this life or future lives as well as to more specifically Buddhist soteriological ends, such as rebirth in the Pure Land or enlightenment. It could also be transferred for the benefit of one’s parents or ancestors or dedicated to the health and longevity of the emperor or the peace and prosperity of the realm. Members of the elite thus sponsored and participated in public Buddhist ritual services, joined Buddhist societies, and contributed generously to monastic building and reconstruction projects; they also sought out Buddhist monks as friends, spiritual counselors, and literary companions. The forms of these interactions are too numerous and too varied to summarize, but they serve to illustrate that scholarship should not overlook the power of Buddhist ideas, which, despite the
resurgence of Confucian learning, remained a potent force throughout the Sung.

The various studies included in this volume make no pretense of encompassing the whole spectrum of such interactions, but they do cover enough ground to suggest how deeply entrenched Buddhism was in Sung social life. The nature of the monastic institution was such that it could not exist without the active support of the lay community, whether it be from the state or from individuals. The dynamics of patronage is thus one area where it is possible to see how the interests of the monastic institution and various lay elites often converged. Chapter 8 by Chi-chiang Huang, for example, argues that prefects posted to Hang-chou during the Northern Sung played an important role in making the city a thriving center of Buddhism during the eleventh century. As public officials responsible for the general welfare of the city, prefects felt obliged to support Buddhism regardless of their personal views. Even those who were opposed to Buddhism on ideological grounds supported it in their capacity as officials, as a good working relationship with Buddhist leaders often proved to be indispensable for the successful discharge of their duties. Prefects were thus anxious to enlist the collaboration of eminent monks as part of their effort to maintain social order, and they devoted serious attention to the task of recruiting talented and able monks to head major monasteries in the city. Members of the elite were also often drawn to such monks personally, and many prominent literati not only patronized them in their public capacity as officials but also continued to do so as private individuals as well.

The symbiotic nature of the relationship between monastic leaders and officials is well illustrated by the case of Chih-li's friend and T'ien-t'ai colleague Tsun-shih, who was brought to Hang-chou in 1015 as a result of a concerted recruitment campaign led by the prefect Hsüeh Yen (953–1025). On the one hand, Tsun-shih's reputation as a civic-minded cleric made him particularly attractive to the Hang-chou authorities. His ritual prowess could be harnessed in the service of the public weal, and his efforts at reforming local customs helped offset the influence of heterodox cults. The official support Tsun-shih received from various Hang-chou prefects, on the other hand, was crucial for the success of his mission to revive the T'ien-t'ai tradition, and the personal support he received from one particularly high-placed patron (Wang Chín-jo, 965–1025) was critical for successfully pressing his case at court to have his T'ien-chu
Monastery officially designated as a T’ien-t’ai establishment and to have T’ien-t’ai texts included in the imperially sponsored edition of the Buddhist canon.

In addition to his efforts to reestablish the T’ien-t’ai order, Tsun-shih was also deeply concerned with reforming local religious practices. His campaign against “depraved” cults clearly aligned Buddhism with the interests of the state. As Daniel Stevenson shows in Chapter 9, the language Tsun-shih used in his various tracts on the subject employed the same hegemonic discourse by which the Chinese imperium traditionally sought to exercise control over the potentially disruptive forces of local religious practice. In using this discourse, however, Tsun-shih also clearly maintained the ultimate superiority and effectiveness of Buddhist values. He was especially concerned to convert the populace from making blood sacrifices to deities and from using meat and wine for funerary and ancestral rites. The different treatises he wrote exhorting the public to take up Buddhist merit-making practices reflect the complex dynamics by which Buddhism negotiated its relationship with official values, on the one hand, and popular religion, on the other. The rites that Tsun-shih promoted were aimed at converting local deities and spirits to Buddhism, thereby allowing them a legitimate role within the hierarchical structure of the Buddhist world as “retainers” or “vassals” to the more exalted and powerful Buddhas and bodhisattvas. The logic of religious efficacy to which Tsun-shih appealed provided a unified framework in which Buddhist and indigenous, non-Buddhist deities could function together in the same ritual setting; it also allowed prayers for worldly benefits to coexist with the profession of the highest Buddhist soteriological goals on a single continuum. The hierarchical structure embodied in ritual protocol, moreover, provided a field in which the boundaries between orthodoxy and heterodoxy were constantly negotiated.

Stevenson thus calls attention to the importance of ritual for understanding the complex historical interrelationship between Buddhism and popular religious practice. Just as ritual provided a medium by which indigenous, non-Buddhist deities and practices could be incorporated into Buddhism, so it also served as a means by which Buddhist forms could be appropriated back into popular practices. The formats of the various liturgical and devotional rites that Tsun-shih devised for laity, for example, were based on the more elaborate and demanding ones followed by monks. They also served as models for the liturgical and devotional practices advo-
cated by various lay confraternities that proliferated in the Southern Sung. The authority on which the practices of these lay groups rested was based on their perceived conformity to monastic models. Stevenson thus concludes his chapter by emphasizing the relevance of monastic forms of practice and organization for understanding such groups.

Chapter 12 by Daniel Getz suggests how T'ien-t'ai influenced the development of lay associations in the Southern Sung by providing models of social organization. This phenomenon can be seen most clearly in the Pure Land societies organized by Tsun-shih and Chih-li, each of which represented a different model of social organization. Both were emulated by their T'ien-t'ai descendants in the following centuries. Like the famous society founded in 402 by Hui-yüan (334–416) to which it looked back for inspiration, Tsun-shih's society was small (consisting of about one hundred members), catered to literati, and had more of a contemplative orientation. Chih-li's society, by contrast, was far larger (aspiring to ten thousand members), reached out to include a broad spectrum of society, and emphasized the daily invocation of Amitâbha's name. Whereas Tsun-shih's society was short-lived (lasting only six years, 996–1002) and limited in scope, Chih-li's had a lasting impact on the forms of piety that characterized popular Pure Land devotion in the Sung.

By prescribing one thousand invocations a day, Chih-li emphasized the accumulation of merit through repetition. This quantitative approach to practice was exemplified in the calendar charts issued each year to society members, in which they were to record their daily invocations. Such calendars and invocation practice became an integral part of the Pure Land societies that were subsequently formed by lay men and women during the Southern Sung.

Chih-li's prologue to his announcement of the formation of his Pure Land society is particularly noteworthy in that it details his vision of how the society was to be organized. In it Chih-li called for a total of 210 assembly heads, each of whom was responsible for recruiting forty-eight members. This structure allowed the different groups to meet separately throughout the year, while the entire society would gather together annually. As Getz notes: "The double-tiered organization of Chih-li's society, by empowering the lay assembly heads, also put into place a structure that provided a framework for the future development of lay-initiated Pure Land societies that operated outside of official Buddhist institutional and ideological control." Getz goes on to cite an example of a society formed in the
Vitality of Buddhism in the Sung early thirteenth century by a certain Chiu Ting-kuo, a prefectural school supervisor in Ming-chou. The sources suggest that this society was founded and run entirely by laity. Interestingly, the title applied to Chiu’s role as supervisor (ch’üan-tao chih shou) closely resembles that of the assembly head of Chih-li’s society (ch’üan-ch’ing hui-shou), thereby suggesting how the structure of Chih-li’s society could have served as a model for lay societies organized later in the Sung. It is easy to imagine how groups like those led by Chih-li’s lay assembly heads could gradually have become independent of their monastic moorings as Pure Land devotion became more popular among the general populace throughout the Sung and late imperial period.

The increasing autonomy of lay devotional groups in the Southern Sung was eventually perceived as a challenge to the authority of the monastic establishment. The spread of these societies within and outside the T’ien-t’ai tradition culminated in the formation of a Pure Land patriarchate by T’ien-t’ai historians in the thirteenth century. This enterprise expressed the ambivalence with which the T’ien-t’ai institution had come to regard this movement that it had done so much to inspire: the patriarchate confirmed a growing recognition of the status Pure Land had won for itself as an independent tradition by the end of the Sung at the same time that it tried to keep it within the bounds of monastic control by reasserting its ideological and institutional connection with the T’ien-t’ai tradition. These tensions represented another manifestation of the larger and never-ending struggle engaged in by Buddhists, officialdom, and the populace at large over the right to define and control religious activity.

Literati were also drawn by the power of Buddhist ideas, a point that was not lost on Neo-Confucian ideologues such as Ch’eng I (1033–1107) and Chu Hsi (1130–1200). Chapter 3 by Ari Borrell adds further insight to discussions of the complicated relationship between Neo-Confucianism and Buddhism by examining the thought of Chang Chiu-ch’eng (1092–1159). In his own lifetime Chang was regarded as one of the leading exponents of Tao-hsüeh (Learning of the Way), the school of Neo-Confucianism associated with the Ch’eng brothers. He wrote an influential commentary on the Doctrine of the Mean (Chung-yung), one of the Four Books especially emphasized within the Tao-hsüeh curriculum, and was also a leading lay disciple of the Ch’an master Ta-hui Tsung-kao (1089–1163). He was later excoriated by Chu Hsi as a Buddhist in disguise and effectively excised from the ranks of orthodox Neo-Confucians. The crux
of Chu's criticism centered on Chang's interpretation of the investigation of things (ko-wu). Chang emphasized constant mental vigilance as the most effective way of reaching the state of equilibrium (chung) before the arousal of feelings (wei-fa). This approach to mental cultivation involved a probing investigation (ch'a) into the "who" (shei) that experiences and is aware, and Chang contrasted it with the more passive attitude of "quiet-sitting" (ching-tso) popular among literati. When self-centered human desires are finally exhausted in the course of this effort, a sudden breakthrough may occur, allowing one's originally good nature to shine forth. Only after things have thus been thoroughly investigated (wu-ko) is it possible to address the moral task of transforming society. Chang's approach to mental cultivation seems to be modeled after the kung-an investigation practice (k'an-hua ch'an) advocated by Ta-hui. Borrell concludes his chapter by discussing the social and political ramifications of this dynamic method of practice, pointing out how the vehement opposition shown by Chang and other literati followers of Ta-hui to peace negotiations with the Jurchen during the late 1130s may well have been buttressed and encouraged by Ta-hui's activist position.

Ta-hui is probably the most famous Buddhist figure in the Sung. He had numerous lay disciples among the literati, many of whom were involved in the Sung Confucian renaissance, and he made a conscious effort to address Ch'an teachings to the lay elite. Ta-hui is best known for his advocacy of kung-an investigation, which he emphasized as the most effective means of bringing the mind's ratiocinative functions to a halt so as to make it ready for a sudden breakthrough into enlightenment. In Chapter 4 Morten Schlütter discusses Ta-hui's criticisms of the silent illumination Ch'an (mo-chao ch'an) with which his advocacy of kung-an investigation was inextricably coupled. The controversy that supposedly ensued over these two approaches to Ch'an practice is often regarded as a major fork in the Ch'an tradition, in which Ta-hui and Hung-chih (1091-1157) are pitted against one another as the major exponents of the Lin-chi and Ts'ao-tung lineages, and their positions later came to be seen as defining the distinctive character of the Rinzai and Sōtō approaches to Zen practice in Japan. Schlütter questions whether there really was a "debate" at all, for neither Hung-chih nor any other Southern Sung Ts'ao-tung figure ever identified himself as teaching silent illumination Ch'an, and there is no indication that Hung-chih ever responded to or even acknowledged Ta-hui's attacks.
Schlütter argues that these attacks were not so much aimed at individual Ts'ao-tung masters such as Hung-chih or Ch'ing-liao (1088-1151) as they were at the twelfth-century Ts'ao-tung tradition as a whole. Although Ta-hui's critique singled out an aspect of the Ts'ao-tung approach to meditation, it ignored the overall context in which it was taught and thereby distorted Ts'ao-tung teachings to serve Ta-hui's polemical purposes. Many of Ta-hui's most strident attacks on silent illumination were contained in letters to literati known to have connections with Ts'ao-tung masters. By the twelfth century the Ts'ao-tung tradition was in the midst of a vigorous revival, after having almost become extinct in the eleventh century, and it is likely that Ta-hui saw its fortunes as threatening the predominance of Lin-chi support among the elite.

The first person to attain enlightenment by investigating kung-an under Ta-hui's tutelage was the nun Miao-tao (fl. 1134–1155), who also became his first dharma successor. By examining Miao-tao's relationship with Ta-hui, Chapter 6 by Miriam Levering not only sheds new light on Ta-hui's development as a Ch'an master, but also introduces the life and teachings of a prominent and influential female Ch'an teacher. Ta-hui also had other distinguished female successors—notably, the nun Miao-tsung (1095–1170) and lay patroness Madame Ch'in-kuo (dates unknown). While Ta-hui may have been unusual in his responsiveness to the aspirations of female students, the Sung Ch'an patriarchal records increasingly recognized the accomplishments of female Ch'an students and teachers. By surveying the images of women represented in Ch'an literature produced in the Sung, in Chapter 5 Ding-hwa Hsieh establishes a broader context for Levering's more focused study. The gradual and sporadic inclusion of a few scattered biographies accorded to female Ch'an teachers in eleventh- and twelfth-century transmission records culminated with the Chia-t'ai Universal Record of the Flame (Chia-t'ai p'u-tenglu), compiled in 1204, which accorded entries to sixteen female Ch'an teachers. These biographies show a new, even if begrudging, openness to women within the Sung dynasty Ch'an institution. These women filled the same roles as their male counterparts: they presided over their own nunneries, gave lectures, personally instructed their disciples, wrote poetry, and had their discourse records compiled by their disciples after their deaths. As the Sung progressed, the genealogical histories, kung-an anthologies, and discourse records increasingly projected positive images of women. These images seemed to offer an alternative to domesticity, in which
women could pursue their spiritual and literary aspirations within a Ch'an context. In addition to admitting women into the Ch'an lineage as dharma heirs, Sung Ch'an texts also contained a series of stories in which women played a crucial role in bringing about the enlightenment of monks. While some of these figures were historical, many of the nameless old women (lao-p'o) who appear in Ch'an stories were literary inventions and played a largely figurative role. Among other things, they could be understood as teaching that all distinctions—symbolized by those between genders—are part of the fabric of delusion and are therefore “empty.” All beings, regardless of their gender or marginal status, could thus be seen as capable of attaining Buddhahood.

Chapter 2 by Albert Welter raises a central issue that bears on the significance of the volume as a whole: the place of Buddhism in Chinese culture. Welter explores the voice represented by the noted Buddhist historian Tsan-ning (919–1001) in the debates at the early Sung court over the nature of Chinese culture. The early Sung emperors strove to define their rule as based on wen (civil or literary values; culture) as opposed to wu (martial power), and discussions of state policy toward Buddhism were phrased within a broader debate over a more inclusive and liberal versus a more exclusive and conservative definition of wen. Spokesmen for “ancient” or “classical” wen (ku-wen) defined Chinese culture in terms of hallowed Confucian values that excluded Buddhism, whereas others defined wen in terms of literary refinement and argued for a model that was open to historical development. Tsan-ning's arguments that Buddhism was an integral part of China's classical heritage did not prevail, and the ku-wen position became increasingly powerful at court throughout the Northern Sung. Tsan-ning's more ecumenical vision of Buddhism's place in Chinese culture was also supplanted by the alternative view put forward by Ch'an, which based its claims to legitimacy on its lineal connections to India. Ch'an made no claim for being included as part of Chinese wen and therefore did not challenge conservative Confucians; at the same time, it appealed to more liberal Confucians who subscribed to a literary definition of wen.

The position that won out in the early debates at the Sung court shaped the way history was written. Because it informs the way in which the sources contemporary scholars use were compiled, its effects are reflected in the way we continue to write that history today. The increasingly ideologized discourse in which the Confu-
Vitality of Buddhism in the Sung

The vitality of Buddhism in the Sung, for example, is reflected in the way in which information is compartmentalized in different types of sources. Official sources, for instance, tend to ignore or minimize the role of Buddhism in the life and thought of prominent literati. It is thus possible for a well-trained scholar, relying on standard sources, to present an intellectual portrait of such a figure without any cognizance of the substantial role that Buddhism played in his personal life and ruminations. By the same token, scholars of Chinese Buddhism are often content to remain within the confines of their traditional buddhological sources, unaware of the wealth of material available in non-Buddhist sources. The construction and reproduction of fields like “sinology” or “buddhology” thus tends to militate against an understanding of Buddhism as an integral part of the fabric of Sung intellectual and social life.

If there is an irony here, it is that the model of human culture on which this compartmentalized and bifurcated picture of Chinese society is based is one that, if made explicit, most historians today would roundly reject. For it is one that presumes a static view of culture as defined by a set of unchanging norms. While such a view may exert an enormously powerful force in shaping the history of a culture, it does so as an ideology and is therefore part of the dynamic process by which culture is constructed. Although it may be impossible to proffer a definition of culture on which a majority of historians and social scientists would agree, I think that most would concur that culture is dynamic, that it continues to evolve and change, that it informs human lives and institutions just as it is informed by those lives and institutions, that it is constantly negotiated, and that it is almost always represented in diverse forms. It is this view of culture that finds its historical resonance in the minority opinion in the early Sung debates on the nature of wen.

The study of Buddhism in the Sung affords an important opportunity to integrate the study of Buddhism in China more fully within Chinese studies as a whole. The study of Chinese Buddhism has long suffered from a twofold disciplinary isolation. On the one hand, it is often marginalized within Buddhist studies, which still tends to focus on Indian Buddhism as normative for the field. On the other hand, it is often ignored or given short shrift by scholars working in Chinese social and intellectual history. Part of this latter isolation is surely the fault of Buddhologists, who have not done enough to reach out to their colleagues in Chinese social and intel-
The array of materials available for the study of Sung Buddhism, however, are more varied, complex, and vastly more extensive than those for earlier periods, and their richness enables scholars to address a broader range of concerns that go beyond the traditionally buddhological emphasis on texts and doctrine typical of research on earlier periods of Chinese Buddhism. The Sung sources thus allow scholars to locate Buddhism within its social, political, and cultural context in a way that is impossible for earlier periods.

Notes

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2. I owe this formulation to Robert Gimello; see his 1996 conference paper, “Notes on the Relationship between T’ien-t’ai Buddhism and Northern Sung Literati Culture,” pp. 4-5.