

**The Use of Miracles in Baochang's 寶唱
Biqiuni zhuan 比丘尼傳 –
Research on the Expression of *Ganying* 感應**

Severina Balabanova*

Abstract

This article investigates the first biographical collection dedicated to Chinese Buddhist nuns, the *Biqiuni zhuan* 比丘尼傳 by Baochang 寶唱 (fl. 495-516 A.D.). Taking as its point of departure the notion of *ganying* 感應, it analyzes several biographies which contain depictions of miracles, and argues that there was a close relationship between the expression of *ganying* in the nuns' lives and the subsequent occurrence of miracles. Such miraculous episodes shed light on the manner in which religious people conceive of and establish saintliness. The article describes the portrayal of nuns as virtuous and exemplary women, while at the same time emphasizing the ways in which they do not completely conform to the "reductive portrait" of female practitioners often seen in sacred biographies. The study also compares the *Biqiuni zhuan* to the *Mingseng zhuan* 名僧傳, which was written by the same author, in an effort to determine if and how these two biographical collections differ rhetorically. The article's analysis of the *Biqiuni zhuan*'s narrative structure and biographical source materials is aimed at demonstrating the interaction between the genre of biography and that of (religious) tales of

* Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Chinese Literature, National Tsing Hua University

the miraculous, as well as the difference between Chinese religious biographies and *avādāna* literature. In the conclusion, the article also discusses some of the features of religious literature during the Six Dynasties (220-589 A.D.).

Key words: *Biqiuni zhuan* 比丘尼傳, religious biographies, *ganying* 感應, miracles, miracle story collections, female religious practitioners

Introduction

The perception and establishment of Buddhism on Chinese soil became a fact due to the assimilation of local ideas, customs and traditions into Buddhist practice and theory. This process is reflected in the records of the early times of Buddhism in China. A few centuries after the Buddhist teaching reached China there appeared collections of biographies of monks and nuns, among them the first known to us collection of Buddhist nuns, *Biqiuni zhuan* 比丘尼傳 by Baochang 寶唱 (fl. 495-516 A.D.). The background reality behind the appearance of numerous biographical accounts connected with the religions of Taoism and Buddhism during the Six Dynasties (220-589 A.D.) is the fact this is a “breakthrough era for religion”.¹ I am concerned with the manner in which the authors of the biographies created images of personalities in the context of the religious discourse of the time. It is through the eyes of these personalities that we can see certain aspects of the development of Buddhism (and Taoism) in this important time along their evolution as religious teachings.²

¹ Lee Fongmao 李豐楙, “Xu Xun de xianhua yu shengji — yige feichanghua zushi xingxiang de lishi kehua” 許遜的顯化與聖蹟——一個非常化祖師形象的歷史刻畫, in Lee Fongmao, Liao Zhaocheng 廖肇亨, eds., *Shengzhuan yu shichan — Zhongguo wenxue yu zongjiao lunji* 聖傳與詩禪——中國文學與宗教論集 (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiu yuan Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiusuo, 2007), p. 371.

² Liu Yuan-ju 劉苑如 has noted that *zhuan* 傳 (*transmissions*) in the context of the biographies of Six Dynasties Buddhist monks has the larger goal of setting these in the bigger frame of important events for the Buddhist history in which it differs from *ji* 記 (*records*) whose main purpose is to present individual beliefs and personal experience related to Buddhism. See Liu Yuan-ju, “Wang Yan yu shenghuo fojiao — cong ‘Mingxiang ji’ tan fojiao ji, zhuan zhong de zongjiao shuxie” 王琰與生活佛教——從《冥祥記》談佛教記、傳中的宗教書寫, in *Chaoliang*

It has been observed in the case of the occidental late medieval hagiography that women believers are reduced to only a few characteristics, which best exemplify their religious nature and this phenomenon has been termed a “reductive” portrait of the women.³ How are we to separate *Biqiuni zhuan* from the rest thirty works on women’s education and behavior written during the same period?⁴ Does Baochang’s description of the nuns conform to the definition of a reductive portrait or is it an illustration of his efforts to present a more complex picture of women devoted to Buddhism in one of its significant formative periods (in which aspect it would differ from the reductive portrait focusing only on religious qualities)? Does the borrowing from the miraculous tales genre, in which case we witness a vivid and constantly moving interaction between religion and its literary expression, contribute to this more complex picture?

On the one hand, the position of women in Chinese society has been strictly regulated according to social norms since ancient times, and this discourse remains stable even after Baochang’s time during the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.).⁵ Women have to be filial and to follow the rules

shenghuo shijie de wenxue quanshi - Liuchao zongjiao xushu de shenti shijian yu kongjian shuxie
朝向生活世界的文學詮釋——六朝宗教敘述的身體實踐與空間書寫 (Taipei: Xinwenfeng
chubanshe, 2010), p. 245.

³ This term is used by Gail Ashton who discusses the genre of “sacred biography” referring to female believers in the Western religious context. See Gail Ashton, *The Generation of Identity in Late Medieval Hagiography: Speaking the Saint* (London & New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 11-12, especially p. 12.

⁴ Jen-Der Lee, “Women and Marriage in China during the Period of Disunion,” Ph.D. dissertation (University of Washington, 1992), p. 115.

⁵ For example, *Liji* 禮記 has the following passage: “At fifteen, she becomes an adolescent; at twenty she marries, in some cases she marries at twenty-three. If the marriage is arranged

prescribed to them by traditional Chinese society. Devoting themselves to Buddhism, especially at its comparatively early stages in medieval China, in general was not a path for them to follow.

On the other hand, once deciding to enter Buddhism these women had to face yet another obstacle – the belief that women practitioners or nuns cannot become Buddhas. Although in principle Buddhism claims that both sexes are equal and therefore both men and women have the potential of becoming enlightened beings, or Buddhas, the dispute between different Buddhist schools regarding the inferiority of women was a fact around 1st century A.D.⁶ One of the expressions of this view are the five impediments for women (*nüren wuzhang shuo* 女人五障說) one of which is the impossibility of becoming a Buddha in a woman's body⁷ as well as the principle of becoming a man before becoming a

[through an intermediary], she becomes a wife. If she elopes, then she becomes a concubine. Women pay respect with the right hand.” (十有五年而笄，二十而嫁，有故，二十三年而嫁，聘則為妻，奔則為妾。凡女拜，尚右手。) Wang Yunwu 王雲五, ed., *Liji jin zhu jin yi* 禮記今註今譯 (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1987), p. 482. During the Tang Dynasty there appears another treatise on women and their role in society, *Nü xiaojing* 女孝經: “The way of a woman is to be just in separating righteousness. She should put others first and then think of herself, she should take care of her husband's father and mother, weave clothes, contribute greatly to society, and this is [what is called] filial piety of a commoner's wife.” (為婦之道，分義之利，先人后己，以事舅姑，紡績裳衣，社賦蒸獻，此庶人妻之孝也。) Zheng shi 鄭氏, *Nü xiaojing* 女孝經, in *Congshu jicheng chubian* 叢書集成初編 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), vol. 990, p. 8.

⁶ Arvind Sharma, ed., *Women in World Religions* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 117.

⁷ The rest that they cannot become are: Brahmā 梵天王, Śakra 天帝釋, King of *māras* 魔王, a Cakravartin 轉輪聖王: “Women have five impediments. First, they cannot become Brahmā; second, they cannot become Śakra; third, they cannot become King of *māras*; fourth, they cannot become a Cakravartin; fifth, they cannot be a Buddha. So how can [one in] a woman's body achieve buddhahood quickly?,” (又女人身猶有五障：一者、不得作梵天王，二者、帝釋，三者、魔王，四者、轉輪聖王，五者、佛身。云何女身速得成佛?) Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什, tr.

Buddha (*bianxing chengfo shuo* 變性成佛說) are all evidences for that.⁸ According to this latter principle, in order to realize the five types of status (Brahmā 梵天王, Śakra 天帝釋, King of *māras* 魔王, a Cakravartin 轉輪聖王, a Buddha) a woman must first become a man and it served as material for a narrative theme in which a woman would rapidly change into a man and would attain enlightenment. This theme was first in the *Lotus Sūtra*.⁹ The center of this magical transformation is “the performance of a ritual act of truth”, which means “if I am truly x, let y occur” where magic stands for a metaphor for an enlightened being.¹⁰ On a more popular level this act of truth functions as “a magical formula that could produce supernormal wonders such as sexual change, flowers from heaven, and healing the sick. The efficacy of the rite of truth to produce these changes of a miraculous nature was believed to reside in the performer or speaker of the truth act. The performer is the deity, the invoker of cosmic power.”¹¹ One of the examples of this narrative theme is also one of the best known episodes in the *Lotus Sūtra* where the Nāga

Miaofa lianhua jing 妙法蓮華經, *juan* 4, T. 9, No. 262, pp. 35, c07-08, CBETA. CBETA is the electronic version of the Chinese Buddhist Canon done by the Chinese Buddhist Text Association. Wherever citations are used from this electronic version it will be indicated with CBETA, the volume number, the number of Sūtra and the page.

⁸ A detailed discussion on these phenomena and how Mahayana Buddhism finds a solution to this, see Shi Yongming 釋永明, *Fojiao de nüxing guan* 佛教的女性觀 (Taipei: Foguang wenhua gongsi, 1997), pp. 116-123. On the same problem see also Minamoto Junko 源淳子, *Bukkyō no jiyosei seihitei* 佛教の女性性否定, *Indo Gaku hotoke kyō Gaku kenkyū* 印度學佛教學研究 38/1 (1989): 324.

⁹ Arvind Sharma, ed., *Women in World Religions*, p. 118.

¹⁰ Sharma, p. 120.

¹¹ Diana Y. Paul, *Women in Buddhism. Images of the Feminine in Mahāyāna Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 176-177.

princess transforms herself into a man which is possible to achieve in her lifetime (not in a future one) due to her exceptional spiritual qualities. Only after her instantaneous transformation can she go along the Bodhisattva path and achieve enlightenment:

The dragon girl said to the bodhisattva Wisdom Accumulation and to the venerable Śāriputra, ‘I offered a precious gem, and the World-Honored One accepted it. Was it quick or not?’

He answered, saying, “Very quick!”

The girl said: “With your supernatural power you shall see me achieve Buddhahood even more quickly than that!”

At that time, the assembled multitude all saw the dragon girl in the space of an instant turn into a man, perfect bodhisattva-conduct, straightway go southward to the world-sphere Spotless, sit on a jeweled lotus blossom, and achieve undifferentiating, right, enlightened intuition, with thirty-two marks and eighty beautiful features setting forth the Fine Dharma for all living beings in all ten directions.¹²

龍女謂智積菩薩尊者舍利弗言：「我獻寶珠，世尊納受。是事疾不？」答言：「甚疾。」女言：「以汝神力觀我成佛復速於此。」當時眾會皆見龍女忽然之間變成男子，具菩薩行，即往南方無垢世界，坐寶蓮華，成等正覺，三十二相，八十種好，普為十

¹² Kumārajīva; Leon Hurvitz, tr., *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma (The Lotus Sūtra)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), p. 201.

方一切眾生演說妙法。¹³

The point of view defended in this story is that women are denied enlightenment unless they become men. Such a transformation is possible only *after* the accumulation and possession of exceptional qualities. The potential character of it is reliant on the assumption that the ones able to do it are highly spiritual beings and only one step away from the enlightened state. Understood on another level this transformation is also a miraculous act — the performing of a miracle in this case assumes an exceptional character on the part of the performer. The ones who are able to accomplish this transformation successfully are considered already enlightened beings.

Despite these two established beliefs about women, the traditional Chinese and the Buddhist, in general *Biqiuni zhuan* presents a positive portrait of nuns. The goal of this article is to trace how this becomes possible. I will interpret the idea of *ganying* 感應 (often translated as “stimulus and response” or “sympathetic resonance”) as it appears in this collection, focusing mainly on those biographies which depict the nun circumscribing her in a context of a miracle happening in her life. The relation between *ganying* and miracles is a very significant one as “unlike the Judeo-Christian model of miracles based on the notion of the supernatural, the Chinese model for miracles was based instead on the idea of ‘resonance’.”¹⁴ While in the western tradition of miracles or magic the performer’s actions displaying his powers are directed toward

¹³ Kumārajīva, tr., *Miaofa lianhua jing*, T9, No. 262, p. 35 c13-19.

¹⁴ John Kieschnick, *The Eminent Monk. Buddhist Ideals in Medieval Chinese Hagiography* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1997), p. 97.

the outside world in attempt to change it, in the Chinese Buddhist tradition, especially in the nuns' biographies, the display of unusual powers is usually the result of assiduous religious practice and the direction is the inverse — the focus of all efforts in cultivation is the practitioner herself who receives *lingyan* 靈驗, “a miraculous response”, from the sacred realm and this represents the miracle in her life. While *ganying* is viewed as the process of communication with the sacred spiritual realm, *lingyan* is the specific miracle or extraordinary event, which happens as a result of it.¹⁵

The body of research on *Biqiuni zhuan*¹⁶ has viewed the biography collection justly as a historical piece; these researches have already thrown considerable light on a wide range of problems but have not paid that much attention to the literary value of it. Only rarely in different analyses of the work has attention been paid to the miracle element.¹⁷ It is inherent in the nature of the person who has perfected himself/herself in religious practice to possess “extra-ordinary” virtues which are at the center of the narrative about them and at the core of the idea of divine itself; whose virtues apply to his religious practice as a result of which he acquires “extra-ordinary” powers; and which describe the whole process

¹⁵ Lin Shuyuan 林淑媛, *Cihang pudu – Guanyin ganying gushi xushi moshi xilun* 慈航普渡——觀音感應故事敘事模式析論 (Taipei: Da'an chubanshe, 2004), p. 91. The author discusses this principle in the context of the Guanyin stories but it holds true for all narratives of this type.

¹⁶ For a full enumeration of this scholarship, see my article “Feminine Paradigms of Buddha's Life,” *Shi hui* 史匯 (Zhongli: Zhongyang daxue lishi yanjiusuo) 15 (Dec. 2011): 26.

¹⁷ One such example is Yü Chünfang 于君方, Yu Shuhui 余淑慧 tr., “Biqiuni he yi shensheng?” 比丘尼何以神聖?, in Lee Fongmao, Liao Zhaoheng, eds., *Shengzhuan yu chanshi – Zhongguo wenxue yu zongjiao lunji*, pp. 169-190; K.A. Cissell, “The Pi-ch'iu-ni chuan: Biographies of Famous Chinese Nuns from 317-516 c.e.,” Ph.D. dissertation (University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1972), pp. 120-121.

of transformation from a profane to a sacred existence, to a state of an “extra-ordinary” person (*feichang ren* 非常人).¹⁸ These observations can be applied to the case of the nuns to see how their abilities and powers described in the miracles become part of their divine (*shen sheng* 神聖) nature.¹⁹ In this sense the miracles (an expression of *ganying*) are not just explanatory of their supernatural powers, which need to be acknowledged, but a natural consequence of their practice and an affirmation of the right choice they made by entering Buddhism. In this way their efforts and the results of their practice disprove the belief that

¹⁸ Lee Fongmao, Liu Yuanju, “Daoyan yi” 導言一, in Lee Fongmao, Liao Zhaoheng, eds., *Shengzhuanyu chanshi — Zhongguo wenxue yu zongjiao lunji*, p. 17.

¹⁹ Discussing the religious and personal achievements of the nuns brings the question of the terms that should be employed to describe these nuns. The miracles that happen to them or are performed by them are a result of persistent religious practice and exceptional personal qualities, which renders them equal to monks in this practice, and contests the notion that women cannot achieve buddhahood. *Sheng* 聖 in Chinese tradition possesses a wide range of meanings denoting the ability to apprehend clearly with the senses, a virtuous and sage person, supernatural abilities, a noble ruler from the past, and in Buddhism a person who has entered the right path (after cultivation). See *Hanyu da zidian – suoyin ben* 漢語大字典——縮印本 (Wuhan: Hubei cishushe: Xinhua faxing, 1996), p. 1164. *Shen* 神 is also close in meaning to the spiritual achievement of each practitioner, which endows him/her with some divine spiritual and supernatural powers. In the case of the Chinese Buddhist nuns we see that they are all connected to the divine sacred realm which corresponds to the definition of “saint” but they are not the equivalent of “saints” in Christianity (which is expressed very often by using the term *sheng* 聖) because saints are usually rendered saints and perform miracles only after their death, and include martyrs and ascetics as well. See Wendy Doniger (consulting editor), *Merriam-Webster’s Encyclopedia of World Religions* (Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, 1999), p. 959. John Bowker, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 839. For this reason I will use terms such as “divine” or “perfected in religious practice” designating the exceptional qualities and achievements that these nuns possessed and which in turn made the miracle a possible part of their lives. I thank one of the reviewers for pointing out the importance of these key terms when applying them to the case of the Chinese nuns.

women cannot excel in practice as men do, and provide an alternative to the traditional roles for women established by society.

This article is organized in three parts. The first part describes *ganying* in some Chinese classics, historical records and traditional Chinese short stories *zhiguai xiaoshuo* 志怪小說 (also termed as “stories of the strange”) from the Six Dynasties, and outlines its meaning in their context. After a brief introduction of the genre and the author, the analytical part conceptualizes *ganying* as seen in the nuns’ biographies. Last is the brief comparison with *Mingseng zhuan* 名僧傳, also compiled by Baochang. Some conclusions will be stated in the final part.

The Context of *Ganging*

First, I shall start with a definition of *ganying*. The traditional dictionary on Chinese characters *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 gives the following definition of *ying* 應: 「當也。」 (“Response”), and for *gan* 感: 「動人心也。」 (“Human mind which is moved /touched/stimulated.”)²⁰ Thus, the meaning of the word appears to be that for the mind, which is capable of being moved, there will be an appropriate response. The relation is one of reason and consequence.

The concept of *ganying* in Chinese culture and society is deeply rooted in the Chinese cosmology. It relates to the *Yin-Yang* 陰陽 and *Five elements* 五行 theories, and can be found interpreted in numerous ancient philosophical treatises.²¹ One of these texts, the chapter *Hongfan*

²⁰ Xu Shen 許慎; Duan Yucai 段玉裁, annotated, *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008), p. 502 & 513.

²¹ The connection between Chinese Buddhism and the cosmology of *ganying* has been the object of

洪範 (*Great Plan*) in *Shangshu* 尚書 (*Book of Documents*), for example, explains the phenomena in the natural world happening as a result of the behavior of the ruler of the state:²²

The sovereign is to examine the character of the whole year; nobles and officers, that of the months; and the inferior officers, that of the day. If throughout the year, the month, the day, there be an unchanging seasonableness, all the kinds of grain are natured; the operations of government are wise; heroic men stand forth eminent; and in the families *of the people* there are peace and prosperity. If throughout the year, the month, the day, the seasonableness is interrupted, the various kinds of grain do not become matured; the operations of government are dark and unwise; heroic men are reduced to obscurity; and in the families *of the people* there is no repose. ²³

曰王省惟歲，卿士惟月，師尹惟日。歲月日時無易，百穀用成，
又用明，俊民用章，家用平康。日月歲時既易，百穀用不成，
又用昏不明，俊民用微，家用不寧。

an excellent research by Robert Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism: A Reading of the Treasure Store Treatise* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), pp. 77-133. I am greatly indebted to Prof. Liu Yuan-ju who referred me to this work.

²² Robert Sharf also mentions this chapter. The chapter is characterized by him as a post-Confucian work that predates the second century B.C. Robert Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism: A Reading of the Treasure Store Treatise*, pp. 79-80, 88.

²³ Translation according to James Legge, *The Chinese Classics in Five Volumes*, Vol. 3, *The Shoo King or the Book of Historical Documents* (Taipei: Nantian shuju, 2000), pp. 341-342; see also Qu Wanli 屈萬里, tr. and annotated, *Shangshu jin zhu jin yi* 尚書今註今譯 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1969), pp. 82-83.

It becomes clear that the balance in nature and natural phenomena (seasonableness) is very closely related to the harmony in society, the workings of the cosmos influence directly the social order. Before this paragraph the *Book of Documents* mentions another relation where the morals of the people (rulers) bring about a change in the natural conditions:

There are the favorable verifications — namely, of gravity, which is emblemed by seasonable rain; of orderliness, emblemed by seasonable sunshine; of wisdom, emblemed by seasonable heat; of deliberation, emblemed by seasonable cold; and of sagesness, emblemed by seasonable wind. There are also the unfavorable verifications: - namely, of wildness, emblemed by constant rain; of assumption, emblemed by constant sunshine; of indolence, emblemed by constant heat; of haste, emblemed by constant cold; and of stupidity, emblemed by constant wind.²⁴

曰休徵；曰肅，時雨若；曰乂，時暘若；曰哲，時燠若；曰謀，時寒若；曰聖，時風若。曰咎徵：曰狂，恆雨若；曰僭，恆暘若；曰豫，恆燠若；曰急，恆寒若；曰蒙，恆風若。

This section makes the connection between the acts of the people (*gan*) and the response of the heaven (*ying*) even more evident and unambiguous. We understand that *ganying* is a fundamental principle ruling the state and society and a guarantee for a harmonious living. The proper actions and wisdom are rewarded with benevolent response and

²⁴ James Legge, *The Chinese Classics in Five Volumes*, Vol. 3, *The Shoo King or the Book of Historical Documents*, pp. 340-341.

signs, and a prevailing harmony, which keeps the society thriving; likewise, evildoing or the wrong behavior evokes disaster, dis-balance and disorder. *Ganying* can operate at several levels at the same time. At the first level “within human society, interactions between inferior and superior (typically between rulers and their subjects) are predicated on the rulers responding to the needs of the people. [.....] Second, *ganying* determines the relationship between the realm of humans (*ren* 人) and heaven (*tian* 天): It is understood that human reactions and emotions can and do cause cosmic response and transformation. [.....] Third, the relationship between beings and the Buddha was conceived of in China as one determined by *ganying*.”²⁵ All these levels can be applied simultaneously in people’s lives.

Let me now pay attention to the definition of *ganying* in a Buddhist context: “If people have the good opportunity for their benign roots to be touched, the Buddha will respond to this, and this is called *ganying*. *Gan* belongs to the people, *yng* belongs to Buddha.” (眾生有善根感動之機緣，佛應之而來，稱為感應。感，屬於眾生；應，屬於佛。) ²⁶ The similarity is more than obvious — people have the minds, which can be touched and Buddha is the response to this type of mind (consciousness). It is not surprising that this is a largely influential idea in the Buddhist teaching in China for which it was one of the ways to spread on Chinese soil, and is another proof that “[T]here are numerous apparent parallels —both structural and functional — between Indian Buddhist and

²⁵ James Benn, *Burning for the Buddha: Self-Immolation in Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2007), p. 7.

²⁶ Shi Ciyi 釋慈怡, ed., *Foguang da cidian* 佛光大辭典 (Beijing: Shumu wenxian, 1989), vol. 6, p. 5453.

Chinese cosmological systems.”²⁷ Shortly put, the Buddha/bodhisttvas would appear to those who need them but this happens in specific forms and this idea is an expression of the “buddha-body” *foshen* 佛身 theory. According to it, there is one true body of a buddha — the eternal dharma-body *dharmakāya*. The true body, however, takes on different forms — it could be also be a resonant-body (*yingshen* 應身, also called *quanyingshen* 權應身, “body of expedient response”) or recompense-body (*baoshen* 報身). Both the “true body” and the “body of expedient response” can respond to stimuli; “[T]he difference between the two is that the true-body, whose nature transcends time and space, remains unmoved in its response, while the body of expedient response appears in a particular form at a particular time and place. The fundamental activity of both bodies (and thus of the dharma-body itself) is that of response (*ying*), and if one does not perceive the eternal presence of the Buddha, it is because of the lack appropriate stimuli (*gan*).”²⁸

While the Buddhist understanding of a miracle and of its place in a devotee’s life is very specific (see discussion below), my observation is that the nuns’ biographies with descriptions of miracles are rooted in and are an expression of the belief in *ganying* — the miracles in their lives are a result of their wholehearted devotion to the Buddhist teaching — their hearts are benign and can be moved (*gan*), and consequently evoke a kind of response (*ying*), which, on the one hand, binds them to the Chinese traditional concept of *ganying* and, on the other hand, confirms them as models to follow within the context of Buddhism. In this sense, these

²⁷ Robert Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism: A Reading of the Treasure Store Treatise*, p. 98.

²⁸ Sharf, pp. 106-107. On the discussion of the buddhabody theory, see Sharf, pp. 100-111.

miracles cease to be only miracles — by sharing features with *ganying*, they accommodate the traditional Chinese view on women without contradicting it, and demonstrate the shortcomings of the view that women cannot perfect themselves in practice (to become Buddhas).

In a large number of dynastic history texts the examples that relate to *ganying* are in the context of battles and on how the piousness and reliance on Buddhism can save lives in hard times. Wang Xuanmo 王玄謨²⁹ and Lu Jingyu 盧景裕³⁰ chant the *Guanshiyin Sūtra*³¹ and the *Heart Sūtra* (*Bore boluomiduo xinjing* 般若波羅蜜多心經) respectively, and escape death. As has been noted, in dynastic histories such as *Jin shu* 晉書, *Nan shi* 南史, *Bei shi* 北史 there are sufficient records of biographies related to the Buddhist retribution.³² Some of the biographies in *Jin shu*, for example Dan Daokai 單道開 or Chun Yuzhi 淳于智, are in the context of healing or predictions.³³ A considerable number of stories in the dynastic histories treat the topic of the chanting of the *Guanshiyin Sūtra* which brings relief in hard times and even saves from

²⁹ Shen Yue 沈約, *Song shu* 宋書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), *juan* 76, pp. 1973-1974. His story is also recorded in the *zhiguai* story collection *Yiyuan* 異苑 by Liu Jingshu 劉敬叔 in the Southern Dynasties: see Zhou Yiliang 周一良, *Wei jin Nanbeichao shi zhaji* 魏晉南北朝史札記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), p. 114.

³⁰ Wei Shou 魏收, *Wei shu* 魏書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), *juan* 84, pp. 1859-1860.

³¹ This is the 25th chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*, *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經, which is entitled *Guanshiyin pusa pumen pin* 觀世音菩薩普門品。

³² Lü Simian 呂思勉, *Lü Simian du shi zhaji* 呂思勉讀史札記 (Taipei: Muduo chubanshe, 1983), p. 953.

³³ Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 et al., *Jin shu* 晉書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), *juan* 95, Dan Daokai 單道開, pp. 2491-2492, Chun Yuzhi 淳于智, pp. 2477-2478. Wang Guoliang believes the story of Chun Yuzhi comes from the *zhiguai* story collection *Soushenji* 搜神記, see Wang Guoliang 王國良, *Liuchao zhiguai xiaoshuo kaolun* 六朝志怪小說考論 (Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1988), p. 35.

death.³⁴ Of particular interest in these stories is the fact that the theme of miraculous retribution (in this case the ones connected to the cult of Guanyin) is inserted in the official dynastic biographies and that these stories are perceived as a historical fact. Two observations are in line: on the one hand, this could be explained with the fact that “Kuan-yin has been worshipped in China by both monastics and laymen and women. In fact, the cult cuts across all social classes. [...] miracle tale collections were compiled by both monks and literati.”³⁵ It is highly possible that the compilers of dynastic histories had easy access to recorded texts of retribution as these texts also circulated among the literati. On the other hand, their decision to include such stories in the official histories speaks of the compilers’ attitude toward the miracle tale — it recounts true events and are thus worthy to be told alongside other meaningful historical events.

The *ganying* concept can be found recorded in the lives of the characters in numerous Six Dynasties short stories. Some of them are not

³⁴ The Guanyin cult has been well researched. For example, for the period of the Six Dynasties see Sun Changwu 孫昌武, “Liuchao xiaoshuo zhong de Guanyin xinyang” 六朝小說中的觀音信仰, in Li Zhifu 李志夫, ed., *Foxue yu wenxue: fojiao wenxue yu yishu xueshu yantaohui lunwen ji (wenxue bufen)* 佛學與文學：佛教文學與藝術學術研討會論文集（文學部份）(Taipei: Fagu wenhua gongsi, 1998), pp. 201-228, and his more extensive research on Guanyin in Chinese literature: Sun Changwu, *Zhongguo wenxue de Weimo yu Guanyin* 中國文學的維摩與觀音 (Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu shubanshe, 1996); Chünfang Yü, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); for a comprehensive study on the cult of Guanyin in miraculous stories, see Lin Shuyuan, *Cihang pudu – Guanyin ganying gushi xushi moshi xilun* (Taipei: Da’an chubanshe, 2004); for studies on the *Guanshiyin Sūtra* in as seen in Dunhuang materials see Zheng Acai 鄭阿財, *Dunhuang fojiao wenxian yu wenxue yanjiu* 敦煌佛教文獻與文學研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji shebanshe, 2011), pp. 62-90.

³⁵ Chünfang Yü, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara*, p. 194.

necessarily connected to religious beliefs, still they exemplify and reflect the popular attitude towards such beliefs as the short stories during that time were considered to be tales circulating among the people before they were recorded by a single author. Here are two examples. In the story collection *Soushen ji* 搜神記 by Gan Bao 干寶 (?-336 A.D.) the *ganying* concept is interweaved in the lives of the two characters in the touching tale about Wang Daoping 王道平 and his beloved girl. Their love conquers even death when the girl revives after years in the grave to be re-united with Wang after he had left for a battle for a number of years. The final words of the tale exemplify the mechanism by which their love, or more generally speaking, a person's actions, evoke a certain retribution from the divine realm: "Indeed [this is what is] called pure sincerity which unites heaven and earth, and receives a response like this (*ganying*) (實謂精誠貫於天地，而獲感應如此。)"³⁶ In the Buddhist story collection *Mingxiang ji* 冥祥記 by Wang Yan 王琰 (454?-520 A.D.) we find the story about Chen Xiuyuan 陳秀遠, a fervent believer who reads Sūtras diligently and wants to know his past lives.³⁷ As a result he has a dream sent as a response (*ganmeng* 感夢) and a vision which explains his past lives. In this tale his dream corresponds completely to the Buddhist understanding of the term *ganying* and is related to the traditional explanation as found in pre-Buddhist sources. These are just a few from the many examples of stories belonging to the *lingyan ji* 靈驗記 genre which circulated during the Six Dynasties, an expression

³⁶ Gan Bao 干寶; Wang Shaoying 汪紹楹, annotated, *Soushen ji* 搜神記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), pp. 178-179.

³⁷ Li Jianguo 李劍國, *Tang qian zhiguai xiaoshuo ji shi* 唐前志怪小說輯釋 (Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1995), pp. 588-589.

“derived from a world view that believes that everything is interrelated and interdependent. This belief is called *kan-ying*, which literally means ‘stimulus and response,’ or ‘sympathetic resonance.’”³⁸ Therefore, this type of stories is based on the understanding of the *ganying* principle and exemplifies the congruence between the traditional and the religious (Buddhist) expression of it.³⁹

***Zhuanji* 傳記 and the implications of the miracles**

A lot of the nuns’ biographies are imbued with miracle tale elements. Thus, the accounts of the nuns’ lives occupy a place between the “biographical” and the “hagiographical” (unlike the Indian biography tales which belong clearly to the hagiographical end of the continuum).⁴⁰

³⁸ Chünfang Yü, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara*, p. 153. The author discusses this relation in the context of the miraculous tales about Guanyin but her observations can be related to all miraculous stories.

³⁹ “The compilation of miracle tales, which can be regarded as a subgenre of this literature (*zhiguai* literature – addition mine – S.B.) and frequently shares data with it, is the application of the native *kan-ying* theory to buddhist soteriology.” Yü, p. 155.

⁴⁰ It has been noted that “In short, Baochang used what material he could find, wherever he could find it, and his purpose being didactic and laudatory, the criteria for selection follow more closely our own tradition of hagiography.” (Kathryn A. Tsai, “The Chinese Buddhist Monastic Order for Women: The First Two Centuries,” in Richard W. Guisso and Stanley Johannesen, eds., *Women in China: Current Directions in Historical Scholarship (Historical Reflections, Directions Series)* 8/3 (1981): 5, noted in Katherine K. Young, “Introduction,” in Arvind Sharma, ed., *Women Saints in World Religions* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), p. 16. and that “By contrast, scholars of Hinduism are comfortable with the term ‘hagiography’ for *bhakti* saints. These have been characterized by extraordinary powers, reversals of conventional norms, and sometimes liberated, incarnational, or quasidivine status.” (Katherine K. Young, “Introduction,” p. 17).

The biography genre in the history of Chinese literature has been defined as one of the most important types of writing.⁴¹ Chinese culture has a strong tradition of *liezhuan* 列傳 (biographies) which started as early as Sima Qian's 司馬遷 (145-90 B.C.) *Shiji* 史記 and which all subsequent dynastic histories included as a major part in their contents. One of the specific features of Sima Qian's *liezhuan* is that he covered a wide range of subject matter and accepted materials that were considered doubtful by measures of strict historicity. This semi-fictional aspect has made many scholars see in *Shiji* the seeds of fictional writing.⁴² It is not difficult to see the parallels between these "doubtful" historical materials in *liezhuan* and the insertion of miracles or *ganying* elements in the nuns' biographies. Unlike the earlier *liezhuan*, however, the nuns' biographies are modeled in view of the religious needs of this genre, and should be considered in its context. It is important to note that although *Biqiuni zhuan* is a collection of religious biographies, it does not pertain to the category of the Buddhist *avadāna*, the karmic tale explaining past events of one's life with their retribution effect in the present, hence one's karmic relation to the Buddhist religion. Researches have shown that *avadāna* (also translated into Chinese as *piyu* 譬喻) is structured like a story with a clearly defined plot using many examples to expound the

⁴¹ Kenneth J. Dewoskin, "The Six Dynasties *Chih-kuai* and the Birth of Fiction," in Andrew H. Plaks, ed., *Chinese Narrative. Critical and Theoretical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 49-50. Dewoskin discusses the adaptation of the biography form in the Six Dynasties short stories as it "was conducive to the mixing of fictional material with factual records" which eased the creation of short stories.

⁴² D.C. Twitchett, "Chinese Biographical Writing," in W.G. Beasley and F.G. Pulleyblank, eds., *Historians of China and Japan*, 4th ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 97.

Buddhist teaching.⁴³ One of the reasons why Baochang has used the traditional Chinese biographical form *liezhuan* to record the lives of the nuns is because it is closer to the Chinese stereotypes of literary expressions and thus can be easily accepted by the Chinese. The episodes with miracles are logically embedded into the narration line and do not sacrifice any of the credibility of the events precisely because they are told in the context of a well-known literary expression. The biographies are close to the Chinese perceptions not only with their formal structure, they appeal with their content too, as the karmic relatedness to the Buddhist teaching typical for the *avadānas* is shown in the nuns' lives through the workings of *ganying*.⁴⁴

Miracles (from the Latin *miraculum*, “object of wonder”) in a broad sense are defined as extraordinary events, which evoke a sense of wonder because they cannot be explained by ordinary human power. In the context of Buddhism the miracles in the monks' lives follow those in the life of Buddha. The miraculous events in their lives could be related to their birth, death, their ability to recognize past lives of others, to tame wild animals or change the weather. It is also not by chance that most often miracles in Chinese Buddhist biographies have been translated with

⁴³ Ding Min 丁敏, *Fojiao piyu wenxue yanjiu* 佛教譬喻文學研究 (Taipei: Dongchu chubanshe, 1996), pp. 41-43.

⁴⁴ This is true not only of *Biqiuni zhuan*. According to researches, some writers-followers of Buddhism during the Six Dynasties successfully combine the traditional Chinese view on the daemonic and the auspicious with the Buddhist understanding of *ganying*. See Liu Yuan-ju's analysis of Wang Yan's 王琰 *Mingxiang ji* 冥祥記: “Wang Yan yu shenghuo fojiao – cong ‘Mingxiang ji’ tan fojiao ji, zhuan zhong de zongjiao shuxie” in *Chaoxiang shenghuo shijie de wenxue quanshi – Liuchao zongjiao xushu de shenti shijian yu kongjian shuxie*, p. 235.

the term “resonance, response” “*ganying*”.⁴⁵ This falls in accord with the following observation:

[.....] all Buddhist saints share three essential characteristics: in one form or another, they all renounce the world, they all practice asceticism, and they all work miracles. [.....] He can also expect the cosmos to respond with miraculous phenomena at key points in his ascent to perfect enlightenment.⁴⁶

The miraculous powers displayed by, and therefore characteristic of a Buddhist saint, are mainly a result of meditation and in Chinese translation are termed as *shentong* 神通 (Sanskrit — *abhijñā*, Pali — *abhiññā*; also known as *shentong li* 神通力, *shen li* 神力, *tong li* 通力). The definition of these powers is the following: 1. The power to perform physical miracles; 2. The “divine ear” — the ability to hear sounds at a distance, both those emanating from this world and those from other spheres; 3. The power to penetrate the minds of others; 4. The power to remember past lives over incalculable aeons of time; 5. The “divine eye” — the power to discern the workings of karma.⁴⁷ These powers also constitute some of the superknowledges that define an enlightened being in Buddhism: 1. Knowledge of thaumaturgy (*rddhi-vidhi-jñānam*) — this means the ability to produce forms, to disappear, to walk on water, etc., *shenzu* 神足; 2. The divine ear (*divyam-śrotram*), *tian er* 天耳; 3. The

⁴⁵ Robert E. Buswell, Jr., ed., *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (New York: Macmillan Reference, 2004), vol. 1, pp. 541-543.

⁴⁶ Kenneth L. Woodward, *The Book of Miracles: The Meaning of the Miracle Stories in Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), p. 334.

⁴⁷ Woodward, pp. 334-335.

knowledge of others' minds (*parasya cetah-paryāya jñānam*), *ta xin* 他心; 4. The knowledge (or memory) of one's own former lives (*pūrva-nivāsa-anusmtri-jñānam*), *su ming* 宿命; 5. The divine eye (*divyam cakṣuh*), *tian yan* 天眼; 6. The knowledge of the four truths that will end rebirth (*āsrava-ksaya-jñānam*), *loujin tong* 漏盡通.⁴⁸ Except for the first superpower, which has more concrete dimensions, all the rest are clearly connected to the attainment of an enlightened state and thus go beyond the sphere of mere performing of tricks. It is the level of the divine eye, the knowledge of one's former lives, and the knowledge of the four truths, which are considered a special attainment of truly enlightened beings such as the Buddha and the *arhats*. According to *Jushe lun* 俱舍論 (*Abhidharmakosa*, chapter 27) the nature of all these superknowledges is wisdom, only the attainment of the last one means that the person is holy with the rest five being a product of the process of meditation which ordinary beings can also attain.⁴⁹

It becomes obvious that these superpowers are an essential characteristic of the Buddhist perfected being. They are a result of religious practice and represent his/her highest attainment. It is important to notice that the acquirement and possession of these miraculous qualities is always *active* and *subjective* — they are performed by the saint and directed actively outside of him/her.

⁴⁸ Donald S. Lopez, Jr, "Memories of the Buddha," in Janet Gyatso, ed., *In the Mirror of Memory: Reflections on Mindfulness and Remembrance in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism* (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1993), pp. 24-25. Also *Foguang da cidian*, vol. 5, p. 4252. A discussion on the miraculous powers in Mahayana Buddhism can also be found in Ding Min, *Fojiao shentong: han yi fodian shentong gushi xushi yanjiu* 佛教神通：漢譯佛典神通故事敘事研究 (Taipei: Fagu wenhua gongsi, 2007), pp. 161-196.

⁴⁹ *Foguang da cidian*, vol. 5, p. 4252.

Some Vinaya Sūtras (for example, *Dharmaguptaka-bhiksuni-pratimoksa* 四分比丘尼戒本,⁵⁰ *Sarvastivada-bhiksuni-pratimoksa* 十誦比丘尼波羅提木叉戒本),⁵¹ define the making of false claims as to certain attainments, knowledge or abilities by women as not acceptable and as a reason for them to be excluded from the order. It is obvious as well that the demonstration of powers entailed by such knowledge (if true) is not tolerated and not showing them bears a definite ethical sense. It might seem, then, unjustified to describe the miracles as they happen in the nuns' lives and argue for their divine nature on the basis of their ability to perform (or not) miracles given the fact that they were forbidden to do so by the Buddhist disciplinary code. However, the description of the supernatural and the miraculous is a special type of religious language, it is an expression encouraging the unbelieving to see the difference between the sacred and the profane realm.⁵² Most of the "miracles" in the nuns' lives do not strictly fall into any of the categories above but are by themselves an expression of *ganying*. The nuns do not simply possess divine and extraordinary powers and display them as is the case with most of the monks in the section on divine powers (*shenyi* 神異) in *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳.⁵³ For the nuns miracles are an "answer" and a confirmation from the divine realm for their eligibility to be fully accepted into the Buddhist order and practice. In this I see the

⁵⁰ Buddhayaśas 佛陀耶舍, tr., Huai Su 懷素, compl., *Sifen biqiuni jie ben* 四分比丘尼戒本, T22, no. 1431, p. 1031, b26-c1 (CBETA).

⁵¹ Shi Faxian 釋法顯, compl., *Shi song biqiuni boluoti mucha jie ben* 十誦比丘尼波羅提木叉戒本, T23, no. 1437, p. 479, c13-16 (CBETA).

⁵² Ding Min, *Fojiao piyu wenxue yanjiu*, pp. 469-470.

⁵³ All citations from *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 will follow the edition Tang Yongtong 湯用彤; Tang Yijie 湯一介, ed., *Jiao dian Gaoseng zhuan* 校點高僧傳 (Taipei: Foguang chubanshe, 2001).

much deeper meaning the miraculous events have in the lives of the Chinese nuns than they have in the lives of the monks. Thus, the importance of the miracles is an expression of their whole-hearted and determined spirit in the Buddhist practice, which is a way to prove themselves as religious practitioners, showing them as capable of religious cultivation as monks; they are also a means by which we see these women situated in the context of the expectations from traditional Chinese society proving that they can be nuns and still receive benevolent answers for their choice of life.

It is my intention to demonstrate the connection between the above definition of miracles, their reference to the concept of *ganying* and the meaning they have in the nuns' lives. I would assume that the miracles are a literary device, a special "language" functioning as a metaphor. In this way they would be an expression of a specific way of describing a person who has perfected himself/herself in religious practice, which requires a fixed pattern of events, miracles, stories and which shares much in common with the *lingyan ji* or *zhiguai* literary category. In its turn this would prove miracles as a means of spreading the Buddhist teaching in a Chinese context.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Lee Fongmao has analyzed the way these miraculous or supernatural powers, *shentong* 神通, are part of the *upaya* teaching, which facilitates the adoption of Buddhism on Chinese soil. He discusses *Gaoseng zhuan* and the *shentong* concept related to it in the context of the Six Dynasties religious, cultural, and social context. See Lee Fongmao, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao wenshi yu daojiao zhi guanxi* 魏晉南北朝文士與道教之關係, Ph.D. dissertation (National Chengchi University, 1978), pp. 664-677; Lee Fongmao, *Wu ru yu zhe jiang – Liuchao Sui Tang daojiao wenxue lunji* 誤入與謫降——六朝隋唐道教文學論集 (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1996), pp. 315-336.

Biqiuni zhuan 比丘尼傳

The main source for Baochang's life is *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳 (Further Records of Eminent Monks) by the Tang writer and biographer Daoxuan 道宣 (596-667 A.D.).⁵⁵ According to this record, Baochang leaves home to become a monk at the age of eighteen and Sengyou 僧祐 (445-518 A.D.) becomes his teacher. He is said to be a bright and diligent student who is also well educated in the Chinese classics. Later, he becomes the abbot of *Xin'an monastery* 新安寺. During this age when "Buddhism is thriving" several monks are ordered by the emperor Liang Wudi 梁武帝 (ruled 502-549 A.D.) to compile different compendia with Buddhist texts and commentaries.⁵⁶ Baochang

⁵⁵ See T. 50, No. 2060, p. 426, b13-427, c19. This is cited according to the printed version of the Chinese Buddhist Canon and follows the edition: Takakusu Junjirō, Watanabe Kaigyoku, and Ono Gemmyō, eds., *Taishō-shinshū-daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經 (*Chinese Buddhist canon newly edited in the Taishō era [1912-1925]*), 55 vols (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chubanshe, 1983).

⁵⁶ In *Nan shi* 南史 there is a record which informs us about some of the activities of Liang Wudi: "The Nirvāna sūtras, The Mahāprajñā-pāramitā sūtra, the Vimalakīrti sūtra, the *Sanhui* sūtra, the meaning of all these sūtras was recorded in several hundred scrolls. [He] listened [to expositions of sūtras] and read in his leisure time, and expounded [the sūtras] in the Zhongsan hall and Tongtai monastery. The audience of famous monks of great learning and people of all walks of life often numbered more than ten thousand." (制涅槃、大品、淨名、三慧諸經義記數百卷。聽覽餘閑，即於重三殿及同泰寺講說，名僧碩學，四部聽眾，常萬餘人。) Li Yanshou 李延壽, *Nan shi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), *juan* 7, p. 223. This means that the emperor himself was not only active collecting and assigning cataloguing tasks as to Buddhist texts but was also himself a Buddhist scholar and practitioner who was revered by religious and lay people alike for his talent and devotion. See also Tang Yongtong, *Han Wei Liang Jin Nanbeichao fojiao shi* 漢魏兩晉南北朝佛教史 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1998), pp. 323-327; Pan Guiming 潘桂明, *Zhongguo jushi fojiao shi* 中國居士佛教史, vol.1 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2000), pp. 191-202; Kamata Shigeo 鎌田茂雄; Guan Shiqian 關世謙, tr., *Zhongguo fojiao tongshi* 中國佛教通史 (Gaoxiong: Foguang wenhua jijinhui, 2010), pp.

is also asked to compile books and texts with Buddhist contents.⁵⁷ The biography mentions that he compiled *Mingseng zhuan* 名僧傳 in 31 scrolls. He is identified as the author of *Biqiuni zhuan* as late as the Tang dynasty in the catalogue *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄 (compiled by Zhisheng 智昇 in 730 A.D.); it does mention *Mingseng zhuan* but does not specify the number of its scrolls.⁵⁸ At the same time some of the earliest references to *Mingseng zhuan* in Buddhist literature are *Fahua xuanlun* 法華玄論 and *Fahua yishu* 法華義疏 both by Ji Zang 吉藏 (549-623 A.D.) in the Sui dynasty (581-618 A.D.)⁵⁹ and the earliest inclusion in a catalogue is done by the Sui dynasty Fajing 法經 — *Zhongjing mulu* 眾經目錄.⁶⁰

Biqiuni zhuan was written by a monk who was a versatile writer and an active compiler of Buddhist texts. Well educated in traditional Chinese

255-282.

⁵⁷ In *Sui shu jingji zhi* 隋書·經籍志 it is mentioned that the Buddhist collection of Liang Wudi numbers 5400 scrolls. Wei Zheng 魏徵 et al., *Sui shu jingji zhi*, in *Congshu jicheng chubian* 叢書集成初編, vol. 6 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), p. 133. Doubtlessly, Baochang contributed to it. For a complete list of his works see Xu Yunhe 許雲和, “Liang Yangdu Zhuangyan si shamen Shi Baochang shengping ji zhuzuo kaolue” 梁楊都莊嚴寺沙門釋寶唱生平及著作考略, *Zongjiao xue yanjiu* 宗教學研究 3 (2009): 95-98. De Rauw also has a detailed discussion of Baochang’s life and works, in Tom De Rauw, “Baochang: Sixth-Century Biographer of Buddhist Monks ... and Nuns?,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 128/2 (2005): 203-218.

⁵⁸ T. 55, No. 2154, p. 537c16-538a05.

⁵⁹ T. 34, No. 1720, p. 363c08, T. 34, No. 1721, p. 467b20.

⁶⁰ T. 55, No. 2146, p. 146b06. This fact has led some scholars to doubt the authorship of Baochang on *Biqiuni zhuan*. See for example Cao Shibang 曹仕邦, “Biqiu Shi Baochang shifou ‘Biqiuni zhuan’ zhuanren de yiwen” 比丘釋寶唱是否「比丘尼傳」撰人的疑問, in Shi Hengqing 釋恆清, ed., *Fojiao sixiang de chuancheng yu fazhan – Yinshun daoshi jiuzhi huadan zhu shou wenji* 佛教思想的傳承與發展——印順導師九秩華誕祝壽文集 (Taipei: Dongda chubanshe, 1995), pp. 455-465; Tom De Rauw, “Baochang: Sixth-Century Biographer of Buddhist Monks ... and Nuns?,” p. 215.

texts as well, for Baochang perhaps it was in the normal order of things that in the nuns' depiction he should combine both values appreciated by traditional Chinese society and religious virtues. His work is one proof of the religious capacities of the women.⁶¹ As it was generally more difficult for women at the time to devote to Buddhism, these capacities had to be emphasized by including the element of *ganying*.

As has already been pointed out by scholars,⁶² the miracle tales served as a flexible ready-to-be-used material and easily found its way into the religious biographies of monks. I believe this is also true about the nuns' biographies. The same narrative combinational process occurred in the nuns' biographies in similarity to the monks' biography tradition. Despite the fact that in the preface Baochang himself states that he relies on proven information and material, we find a lot of fictional elements in it (miracle tales), and additional religious elements (Sūtra details and narratives). For example, it has been noted that in some cases Baochang recorded material from different sources, including borrowing elements from works belonging to the *biji* 筆記 genre of the miscellaneous transmissions (*zazhuan* 雜傳). K. Cissell has investigated texts in which we can find different versions of the biographies, and has come to the conclusion that these include: 1. *Mingxiang ji* by Wang Yan; 2. *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林 (Tang Dynasty, compiled by Daoshi 道世, ?-683 A.D.) where we find 5 biographies — 5 coming from

⁶¹ K.A. Cissell, "The Pi-ch'iu-ni chuan: Biographies of Famous Chinese Nuns from 317-516 c.e.," p. 132.

⁶² Koichi Shinohara, "Two Sources of Chinese Buddhist Biographies: *Stupa* Inscriptions and Miracle Stories," in P. Granoff, and K. Shinohara, eds., *Monks and Magicians: Religious biographies in Asia* (Oakville: Mosaic Press, 1988), p. 141; Chünfang Yü, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara*, p. 156.

Mingxiang ji and one from *Jin Nanjing si ji* 晉南京寺記; 3. *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀 (Southern Song Dynasty, compiled by Zhipan 志磐, in 1258-1269 A.D. who probably drew material from all the previous sources); 4. Eulogies and writings by famous literati of the time (for example, Shen Yue 沈約, 441-513 A.D. and his biography of Jingxiu); 5. Local gazetteers. The scholar is of the opinion that either Baochang used and edited the versions in *Mingxiang ji*, or both he and Wang Yan had the same earlier source, or he chose parts of *Mingxiang ji* and *Jin Nanjing si ji* and edited them.⁶³ The fact that one of the most important sources for *Biqiuni zhuan* is *Mingxiang ji* is very important as it suggests the inclination of the author to look for material in *zhiguai biji* 志怪筆記 tales. *Mingxiang ji* is the most significant “collection which helps the spread of the Buddhist teaching” (*shi shi fujiao zhi shu* 釋氏輔教之書) of the Southern Dynasties and is itself recorded in the *zhuanji* section in the Song Dynasty encyclopedia *Tong zhi* 通志.⁶⁴ These facts presuppose a lot of common features between *Biqiuni zhuan* and the Buddhist tales (*fojiao biji* 佛教筆記), between religious biographical collections and religious tales of the miraculous. It is also important to note that not only *Biqiuni zhuan* draws material from *Mingxiang ji* but *Gaoseng zhuan* as well.⁶⁵ In this we see the process of constant interaction between the religious biography genre and the short story texts of the time.

Biqiuni zhuan follows the established pattern of *zhuanji* (described

⁶³ K.A. Cissell, “The Pi-ch’iu-ni chuan: Biographies of Famous Chinese Nuns from 317-516 c.e.,” pp. 3-24.

⁶⁴ Li Jianguo 李劍國, *Tang qian zhiguai xiaoshuo shi* 唐前志怪小說史 (Tianjin: Tianjin jiaoyu chubanshe, 2005), p. 474.

⁶⁵ Tang Yongtong says that the whole account on Tan Huo 曇霍 from *Gaoseng zhuan* is taken from *Mingxiang ji*. Tang Yongtong, *Han Wei Liang Jin Nanbeichao fojiao shi*, p. 392.

above as a subgenre of historical writing); in it we are able to trace features belonging to the miracle tale tradition and these are largely the details pertaining to the *ganying*. In the context of the beliefs that women cannot become a Buddha, it is precisely the *ganying* elements, including the “performance of a ritual act of truth”, which refute this established belief, not because these nuns do become a Buddha within the scope of the biographies but because they are capable of evoking a divine “response”. This “response” under the form of a miracle or some miraculous event is a confirmation of the accumulation of religious qualities and hence affirms their place in the Buddhist practices.

It is in the preface that we learn about the possible reasons behind the creation of the work, the worldview, religious convictions and consciousness of the author.

That Baochang is a fervent Buddhist believer can be traced throughout his collection in the use of rhetoric strategies, but it can also be seen stated straightforward in the preface. He praises the nuns who have devoted their lives to the pursuit of the Buddhist truth: “[.....] nuns throughout the succeeding generations have ascended the stages of the Buddhist path and realized the fruits of spiritual practice. These illustrious examples of the religious life are like the sun passing through the sky, shedding light and warmth on all.”⁶⁶ Thus, it is clear from the very beginning that Baochang will be presenting an ideal image of the

⁶⁶ Kathryn Ann Tsai, tr., *Lives of the nuns. Biographies of Chinese Buddhist Nuns from the Fourth to the Sixth Centuries* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994), p. 15. The English translations and notes on sources are all from this edition. I will abbreviate this source to “*Lives*”. The Chinese text, in addition to the Tripitaka version, is based on the notes and commentaries of the edition Shi Baochang 寶唱; Wang Rutong 王孺童, annotated, *Biqiuni zhuan jiao zhu* 比丘尼傳校註 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006), p. 1.

first Chinese Buddhist nuns and their achievements. To accomplish his task Baochang states that he has been studying epitaphs, eulogies, collections of writing, has met personally some of the nuns and that his work has resulted in the compilation of the biographies. The major principle in his work is not adding or adorning anything but rather working “to preserve the essentials, hoping that those who seek freedom from the world of suffering will emulate the nuns’ virtue.”⁶⁷ The first reading suggests that Baochang has *compiled* the biographies from existing historical and literary sources. We are thus told that what we are about to read in the biographies is true to fact, real and of historical rather than fictional nature. On second reading, however, this passage tells us something more. When speaking about hagiographers, authors have argued that “[T]he bent of his mind will be shown by his choice of documents and pieces of information, and in the interpretation he puts on them and in the way he combines them together.”⁶⁸ This could mean that by observing the way Baochang selected, recorded and presented the material we can gain insight into *his own* religious life, convictions and moral impulses. Furthermore, this could tell us something more about the religious discourse of his time and will therefore enable us to outline some features of it. Abundant with historical facts and events, most of the biographies of the nuns can be verified against a solid historical background. While it is true that writing history is not confined and explained within the narrow frame of the simple recording of events but

⁶⁷ Tsai, *Lives*, p. 16.

⁶⁸ Hippolyte Delehaye; Donald Attwater, tr., *Legends of the Saints* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998), p. 59.

is also the way of *interpreting* them,⁶⁹ it is also a valid assumption that the writing of religious biographies requires a different agenda for the biographer. It is the propagation of the religious belief and its implied virtues that is the ruling principle for the author.⁷⁰

In most of the biographies there is a possible cross-reference to historical figures — emperors, officials, monks (refer to table 1). In addition, among some biographies with sections describing miracles in the nun's life there is a number which include a miracle *and* a clear relation to a historical figure (for example, *Kang Minggan* 康明感, *Daorong* 道容, *Lingzong* 令宗, *Zhisheng* 智勝, *Tanhui* 曇暉). Baochang had two major means employing rhetoric strategies — he must have either added material which *was not* recorded anywhere in official histories, or he must have combined the existing material in such a way as to make the nuns' virtues more explicit. In addition, the widespread cult of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara before and during the time of Baochang lends him a wonderful opportunity to see the lives of the nuns in the light of this cult, thus adding even more “miraculous” material to his collection.⁷¹ Keeping in mind that “[T]he work of the hagiographer

⁶⁹ In his study on the nature and characteristics of the images of saints as represented in religious narratives, Hippolyte Delehaye says that “The historical value of a work does not depend only on the selection of sources, but also on the interpretation of them and the way they are treated.” *Legends of the Saints*, p. 61.

⁷⁰ In comparison as to the motives the preface of *Mingseng zhuan* only mentions the regret that there are no records of monks and therefore they should be recorded, the stated method of material collection is simply to pick facts that have been left out. See Yan Kejun 嚴可均, ed., *Quan Liang wen* 全梁文, vol. 2, *juan* 74, Shi shi si 釋氏四 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1999), p. 826.

⁷¹ The six Dynasties witnessed the appearance of numerous tales of miraculous retribution connected to the cult of Guanyin. For example *Guangshiyin yingyan ji* 光世音應驗記 written

may be historical, but it is not necessarily so. It may take any literary form suited to honouring the saints, from an official record adapted to the needs of the faithful to a highly exuberant poem that has nothing whatever to do with factual reality”,⁷² I believe that through the process of *compilation* (which itself presupposes an act of inventing) and by the inclusion of miracle tale elements Baochang’s biographies expressed his own religious subjectivity. The balance between these two “bents of mind” which we search to find — recording of the historical facts and expressing one’s (religious) subjectivity — is unique. The meeting point gives us one feature of the religious literary discourse of the time.

The fact that *Biqiuni zhuan* follows the established *liezhuan* narrative model represents probably one distinct difference from the *avādāna* tradition with its Indian roots. As Arthur Wright has observed, the differences between the Chinese and the Indian cultures can be concisely summarized in the following characteristics: *language* — Chinese is “uninflected, ideographic, and (in its written form) largely monosyllabic; no systematized”; Indian Buddhist is “highly inflected, alphabetic, polysyllabic, with a highly elaborated formal grammar”; *literary modes* — Chinese is characterized by “terseness, metaphors from familiar nature, limited imaginative range, concreteness”; for Indian Buddhist the typical features are “discursiveness, hyperbolic metaphor, unlimited imaginative flights, predilection for the abstract”; *time and space* — in this category the Chinese is specified as “finite, life-time,

from memory by the Liu-Song Dynasty Fu Liang 傅亮 (374-426 A.D.), *Xu Guangshiyin yingyang ji* 續光世音應驗記 written by Song Dynasty Zhang Yan 張演 in mid-fifth century, *Xi Guanshiyin yingyan ji* 繫觀世音應驗記 compiled by Lu Gao 陸杲 (459-532 A.D.) in 501.

⁷² Hippolyte Delehayé, *Legends of the Saints*, p. 4.

milieu, and generation oriented”, whereas Indian Buddhist is “infinite, aeon-oriented”.⁷³ A. Wright discusses these differences in the context of the initial stage in the translation of Buddhist Sūtras in China. This suggests that his observations are also valid for the whole cultural background that lies behind the works being translated, and would also concern techniques of transfer of specifics from the Indian culture into the Chinese. Buddhist biography writing as seen in *Biqiuni zhuan* should not be an excluded category although the work itself does not strictly fall into the translated Buddhist literature category. For each of the biographies analyzed I will point out the specifics according to two of the categories described by A. Wright — literary modes and time/space in the hope to reach some conclusions about the ways in which these biographies function as examples of Chinese religious literature in the process of forming its own specifics.

In what follows I will focus on several biographies from *Biqiuni zhuan*,⁷⁴ and will provide notes on whether the nun is the subject or the object of the miracles,⁷⁵ sources provenance or later sources and texts

⁷³ Arthur F. Wright, *Studies in Chinese Buddhism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 8. The author also identifies two other points in this paradigm – psychology of the individual and sociopolitical values.

⁷⁴ I divide the biographies in three groups according to the types defined in Wang Rutong’s edition of *Biqiuni zhuan*, see table on pp. 11-12 – the sections on *gantong*, divine powers (*shen li* 神力) and masters of meditation practices (*chanshi* 禪師). I thank the two reviewers who directed my attention to this point. From these I exclude the biographies I have already analyzed in a previous article and those in the *chanshi* section which do not directly describe miracles.

⁷⁵ This distinction resembles the classification given by Yü Chünfang where the author distinguishes between two main types of stories in view of the miracles in them – stories where the nuns experience miracles and stories where they themselves create miracles. Yü Chünfang, Yu Shuhui, tr., “Biqiuni he yi shensheng?,” pp. 179-182. Although I also pay attention to the

where these biographies can be found, and remarks.

1. *Gantong* 感通.

This is the largest group and the miracles encompass dreams, visions, recovery from illness, protection by animals, recitation of Sūtras, revival from death.

In the first biography the family of *Kang Minggan* respects the Great Vehicle for generation (*shi feng dafa* 世奉大法). Her visit to He Chong in 348 is a reference detail with significance for the history of religion showing that Buddhism was part of family life at least several decades before this year. Her whole lifetime is an example of a complete dedication to Buddhism even when facing hardships. The distress she goes through only solidifies her image as a resilient practitioner with an unflinching will. At the time of deciding to go back home to build a pagoda, she is still not a nun but she keeps her determination and is willing to expose herself to the greatest dangers. The episode with the first miracle where a tiger shows her the way home after practicing the Guanshiyin Sūtra is crucial for the development of the plot. At that time she is still not ordained and has only received the five precepts. The appearance of the tiger is twofold — it is necessary for the story to continue, and it proves that her destiny will be bound to Buddhism.⁷⁶ This is also one of the cases where the recitation of this Sūtra evokes

subject/object distinction, my focus is different.

⁷⁶ The presence of a tiger is a frequent element in both nuns' and monks' biographies. The tiger usually protects the virtuous people who communicate with them. See for example the biography of Zhu Fotiao in *Gaoseng zhuan*, scroll 9, pp. 140-141.

miraculous response.⁷⁷ When she later becomes a nun, there are yet other miracles which happen to convince her of her assiduousness — she relentlessly confesses her sins and does not stop until she receives good omens which are another demonstration of the working of *ganying*. All these miracles are very close in nature to the signs testifying that there is a resolution to become a Bodhisattva and which actually transforms the person into a Bodhisattva.⁷⁸ In both cases she is the receiver of the miracles but in the second case she is an active part in bringing forth the miracles, which happen to her through her strict moral cultivation. Although she does not cause the flowers to rain and it is *her* who sees the Buddha image, hears voices or has auspicious dreams, through her own actions and diligence in meditation she reaches the point where these miraculous happenings are possible, they occur to her and signal her enlightened state:

If she happened to commit a minor fault, she would confess it several mornings in a row, ceasing only after she received a sign or a good omen. Sometimes as a good omen she saw flowers rain

⁷⁷ Robert Campany has defined the recitation of Sūtras as one type of the devotional uses of Sūtra texts. The other types are the collection of Sūtras, their use as amulets and the miraculous punishment for their desecration. Robert F. Campany, “Notes on the Devotional Uses and Symbolic Functions of *Sūtra* Texts as Depicted in Early Chinese Buddhist Miracle Tales and Hagiographies,” *JLABS (Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies)* 14/1 (1991): 28-72.

⁷⁸ Diana Y. Paul, *Women in Buddhism: Images of the Feminine in Mahāyāna Tradition*, p. 168. These external evidences are: 1. A desire to become a Buddha in order to save others; 2. A good friend who teaches the Buddha’s dharma; 3. Recitation of ten Bodhisattva vows; 4. A visualization and appearance of a Buddha with a subsequent conversation between the Bodhisattva-to-be and the Buddha; 5. Miracles such as flowers falling from heaven, gods singing praises, earth quaking.

down from the sky or she heard a voice in the sky or she saw a Buddha image or she had auspicious dreams. (p. 25)

脫有小犯，輒累晨懺悔，要見瑞相，然後乃休。或見雨花，或聞空聲，或觀佛像，或夜善夢。(頁 15)

I think this is a case of a “ritual of truth” where these magic appearances are realized only after the person is very close to or already enlightened. The narrative line is straightforward despite the miraculous elements as these appear to be imbedded logically in her life, and there are no “imaginative flights”. The *time/space* components follow this uninterrupted line of narration.

In the *Lingzong's* biography there is an account of her hardships before she becomes a nun. She is forced out of her home by nomadic tribes and encounters numerous disasters but by chanting the *Guanyin Sūtra* and with the help of a white deer she manages to find the way back home. Upon returning home she becomes a nun (*ru dao* 入道), and devotes her heart and mind to the teaching not only in its theoretical aspects but also actively participating in relieving other people's pain and suffering:

With sincere heart and profound scholarship her study and practice were the essence of earnestness; she was widely read in the scriptures, and her deep comprehension entered the realm of the divine. [.....] Later on, during a time when the people suffered a plague and the destitute were numerous, Ling-tsung unstintingly helped, begging everywhere for alms. (p. 32)

誠心冥詣，學行精懇，開覽經法，深義入神。[.....] 後百姓

遇疾，貧困者眾，宗傾資賑給，告乞人間。(頁 33)

The end of her biography recounts a dream of Mount Sumeru,⁷⁹ with beautiful ornaments and peaks where the law of Buddha is venerated. It could be considered an auspicious dream predicting her near death because shortly after that she dies. In Lingzong's life the expression of *gantong* could be found in the details of her life both before and after she becomes a nun — before that she is assiduous in reciting Sūtras this having beneficial consequences for her; after that she uses her knowledge and skills acquired after long practice to help others considered as an accumulation of virtues which are transformed into a possibility of being reborn in a kind of a Buddhist paradise as described in her dream. Both levels function as a “response” to her efforts both before and after her religious practice. The narrative line is straightforward and there are no imaginative leaps.

In the *gantong* section we also see the example of **Fasheng** 法盛 the miracle in whose life is the descent of *Tathāgata* Buddha to preach the teaching of the Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhism. This biography is an example of the veneration of the Pure Land teaching as Fasheng herself states “I have devoted myself to following the [Buddhist] Way, and my will is fixed in the Western Paradise.” (吾立身行道，志在西方) (p. 38 ; 頁 48), which explains the later inclusions of it in different compendia related to Pure Land (see table 1). This detail corresponds closely to the vision of *Tathāgata* Buddha – it happens after she has stated her will to go to the Western Paradise, the place from which no further rebirth is possible, and the attainment of which is considered one

⁷⁹ The central axis of the cosmos in Indian and Buddhist cosmology. Tsai, *Lives*, p. 125, note 94.

of the highest stages of religious cultivation. The vision before she dies is an eloquent demonstration of her diligent efforts, which are reciprocated with an answer from the divine realm, and is a very strong expression of *ganying*. Although in general there are no transgressions in time and space, the visit from the *Tathāgata* Buddha could be considered an intervention of another space into the ordinary flow of this world. Again, this happens in the element, which we perceive as a miracle.

Comparing the different versions of the biography of *Huiyu* 慧玉 we see that Baochang adds many more details about her ability to recite Sūtras (extraordinary), her inner determination to receive a sign from Buddha for her assiduousness, thus directing our attention to more facts about her life and dedication. It is important to note that the other two sources, *Mingxiang ji* and *Ji shenzhou sanbao gantong lu* 集神州三寶感通錄 (compiled by Daoxuan during the Tang Dynasty), are very close to *Biqiuni zhuan* time-wise and could therefore have also known the rest of her life details. However, they are not included in these two collections. This particular attention to the nun's abilities and devotion is a sign of a specific attitude of respect and glorification, which goes beyond the mere recording of miracles in her biography. It sets her out as a unique practitioner who is able to evoke miracles efficiently in her religious practice and to acquire a certain communion with the Buddha. This observation is further proved by the fact that the "ritual of truth" episode is explicitly stated only in *Biqiuni zhuan*:

In the fourteenth year of the *yüan-chia* reign period (437 A.D.) in the tenth month, Hui-yü first carried out a seven-day austerity fast and then made a vow, saying, "If truly the fast I have just

completed has its effect so that after I abandon my body in death I will assuredly see the Buddha in his paradise, then may I see, as proof, the radiant light of the Buddha manifest within seven days.” During the night of the fifth day after making the vow, a supernatural light glowed among the trees east of the convent. (pp. 39-40)

元嘉十四年十月為苦行，齋七日，乃立誓言：「若誠齋有感，捨身之後，必見佛者。願於七日之內，見佛光明。」五日中宵，寺東林樹，靈光赫然。(頁 53，emphasis mine)

Here the formula of the “ritual of truth” act “if I am truly x, let y occur” is obvious and her abilities provoke the miraculous appearance of the light. The *Mingxiang ji* version simply says: “At night during the twelfth month of the fourteenth year of the *yuanjia* reign period [she] saw a soft purple light [near] the tree to the east of the monastery, which shone on the whole forest, and told the nun Miaoguang about it but no one had seen it.” (元嘉十四年十月夜，見寺東樹有紫光爛起，暉映一林，以告同學妙光等，而悉弗之見也。) The second miracle is recorded thus: “The Song nun Huiyu was from Chang’an. She was diligent in her practice and was fluent in Sūtras and monastic rules. When [she] was still in Chang’an, [she] saw a red and white light at the temple of Secretary Xue.” (宋尼釋慧玉，長安人也。行業勤修，經戒通備。嘗於長安薛尚書寺見紅白光。) ⁸⁰

The wording in *Ji shenzhou sanbao gantong lu* is almost the same:

⁸⁰ Lu Xun 魯迅, *Lu Xun jilu guji congbian* 魯迅輯錄古籍叢編, vol. 1, *Gu xiaoshuo gouchen, xiaoshuo bei jiao* 古小說鈎沈, 小說備校 (Beijing: Remnin wenxue chubanshe, 1999), p. 396. All references to *Mingxiang ji* are from this edition.

“When [she] lived in Jiangling, [she] saw a purple light [near] the tree to the east of the monastery, which shone on the whole forest, and told everyone about it. No one had seen it.” (及住江陵見寺東樹有紫光起暉映一林。以告餘人，並云不見。) The other miracle in the same source is recorded in this way: “Nun Huiyu from the Changling Lingmu Monastery was very diligent in practicing. Once, in Chang’an [she] saw a red and white light at the temple of Secretary Xue” (江陵靈牧寺尼慧玉，行業精勤人也。昔於長安薛尚書寺見紅白光。) ⁸¹

It seems that for Baochang this emphasis on the efficacy of her demand is vital for the depiction of her as an assiduous and even enlightened person who receives miraculous response for her actions. It is also an evident example of how *ganying* works in the nun’s life in which her actions result in a miraculous response (*lingyan*), which matches her efforts.

In addition to this main difference between the three versions, only in the *Biqiuni zhuan* do we find details as to Huiyu’s impressive skills at memorizing and reciting Sūtras, and about her active Sūtra preaching. This brings her close to the scholar-monk ideal described as an important type of monastic ideal⁸² and again confirms the role of the biography as a genre vital in the spread of the Buddhist teaching. The short scope of the text presupposes an ordinary account of certain moments in her life without transgression in time/space dimensions; its *literary mode* is a straightforward narration of events.

The biography of **Daoshou** 道壽 is recorded in several other

⁸¹ Daoxuan 道宣, *Ji shenzhou sanbao gantong lu* 集神州三寶感通錄, *juan* 2, T. 52, No. 2106, p. 418b07-8, CBETA.

⁸² John Kieschnik, *The Eminent Monk*, pp. 112-138.

sources with minor differences in detail. One fact, however, calls for attention. Baochang's use of literary tools when it concerns placing the biography in an exact chronological frame (the time the nun was born, when she died, etc.) can be explained with the requirements of the genre. In this case we find information neither about her birthplace, nor the time when she was born. The only exact date in her biography is the ending. This date is more than a mere recording of an event because it accompanies and is related to the miracle episode — a jeweled canopy, *baogai* 寶蓋, appears over her head one night as a result of her assiduous chanting of the *Flower of the Law Scripture* 法華經: “[.....] in the middle of the night on the seventh day, ninth month, of the sixteenth year of the *yüan-chia* reign period (439), a jeweled canopy [.....] descended and hovered over her.” (元嘉十六年九月七日夜中，寶蓋垂覆其上云。) (p. 41 ; 頁 60). By pointing the exact date on which this event happened against the background of the scarcity of any other exact dates, the author emphasizes its significance in the life of the nun. Attaching a precise date to a miracle is a technique of rhetoric aimed at supplying an indisputable proof for the actual occurrence of the miracle, and hence at eulogizing the person. The only other source which gives the same date is *Hong zan fahua zhuan* 弘贊法華傳.⁸³ I think by this means Baochang wished to present the miracle as real and the nun as both a real person and as a performer of miracles whose miraculous acts can be verified and therefore are also real. By means of this religiously significant detail Baochang inscribes her character in the real life, and this is the only

⁸³ Hui xiang 惠詳, *Hong zan fahua zhuan* 弘贊法華傳, *juan* 6, T. 51, No. 2067, 28a01-03, CBETA.

“historical” fact that justifies the account of her life.

Another important fact in her biography is the insistence on her holiness and extraordinary character in a double way according to two traditions — the Confucian and the Buddhist. Baochang inserts a detail on her filial piety toward her deceased father and regardless of the short text of her biography, this fact still occupies almost half of it:

Of pure and gentle character, she was commended for her reverence and filial piety. When she was yet a child, she accepted the five fundamental precepts of a Buddhist householder, and not once did she commit an offence against them. In the *yüan-chia* reign period (424-453 A.D.) of Sung, Tao-shou was in mourning for her father, and as a result she grieved herself sick but felt no pain or discomfort. For several years she remained sickly and skeletal, not responding to any medical treatment. Therefore she vowed that, if she were cured, she would leave the household life to become a nun. After making the vow, she gradually recovered, and in fulfillment of her vow she left the household life and became a nun [.....]. (p. 41)

清和恬寂，以恭孝見稱。幼受五戒，未嘗起犯。元嘉中遭父憂，因毀遵疾，自無痛癢，唯黃瘠骨立，經歷年歲，諸治不瘳。因爾發願，願疾愈，得出家。立誓之後，漸得平復，如願出俗 [.....]。(頁 60)

This episode is very crucial for her biography — she becomes ordained as a result of her vow but the primary reason is that she mourns for her father so much that she becomes sick and needs to be cured in a

miraculous way. It is a very subtle implication of the way in which some Confucian values and Buddhist practices can be reconciled and co-exist in a person's life. This strategy corresponds to Baochang's intentions stated in the preface to eulogize exemplary women, and functions as a two-way proof that a person who respects the Confucian rules will also be a good Buddhist practitioner. On another level, it shows the way in which *ganying* functions — the divine realm is moved (*gan*) by Daoshou's filial attitude and responds (*ying*) by curing her from sickness. Thus, although the account of this nun is short in scope and looks too "reductive" as it concentrates only on the nun's virtues, the miracle element in it gives it a more subtle meaning of a person whose heart and mind are so truly devoted to the practice of religion that this fact marginalizes anything else that could be mentioned about her. The text is time/space specific despite the lack of abundant details as to time and place, and its *literary mode* is a concrete linear narration.

The center in *Xuanzao's* 玄藻 biography is her illness and how she is cured with the power of her religious belief and practice. Her biography resembles the stories of miraculous retribution connected with the cult of Guanyin, and she becomes a nun as a result of this "miraculous" recovery seen as a *lingyan*, a miraculous response after she has observed "an abstinence ceremony"⁸⁴ for Guanyin: "Because of this miraculous cure she sought to enter the life of a Buddhist nun." (既靈驗在躬，遂求出家。) (p. 42; 頁 63) The expression of *ganying* here is very obvious and direct — only after seven days of religious observances her

⁸⁴ Using this term for rendering *zhai* 齋, I refer to Robert F. Campany's translation and discussion, *Sings from the Unseen Realm: Buddhist Miracle Tales from Early Medieval China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012), pp. 51-55.

efforts evoke the vision of a gold image, which cures her immediately with a divine power. Importantly, her sickness is considered by the Buddhist master to be a result of deeds done in a past life (*ye* 業), and instructs her into some basic Buddhist principles. Prior to her illness Xuanzao has not received any instructions into the Buddhist practice, nor does she practice. Although she is cured later as a result of her assiduousness in venerating Guanyin, after seven days she is still considered a beginner, but what counts, however, is that her efforts *are truthful* and enough to evoke benevolent response. This is probably the reason why her biography corresponds so well to the *gantong* type. Not only is her illness believed to be a result of karma, but, by implication, becoming a nun is also a result of karmic consequences. This represents one indirect, still very powerful and eloquent example, of how Buddhism would claim the right of women to engage in religious practice — it is karmic relatedness that bounds them to Buddhism providing an alternative to the destiny allotted traditionally to women in Chinese society. As the biography is concentrated mainly on the episode with the illness and the subsequent recovery, it is a straightforward narration without leaps in time.

The miracle in the biography of *Puzhao* 普照 is her revival. The episode is recounted as a dream and is accompanied by an exact date. In terms of storyline the biography recounts this experience of revival in retrospection – she comes to life and after that follows her account of what she has experienced. This biography is very close in rhetoric to other Buddhist tales from the *lingyan* genre. Many of them are recorded in *Mingxiang ji* — for example, Zhi Faheng 支法衡 (pp. 320-321), Li Qing 李清 (pp. 339-341), Tang Zun 唐遵 (pp. 343-344), Cheng Daohui

程道惠 (pp. 349-350), Huida 惠達 (pp. 351-354), Shi Changhe 石長和 (pp. 359-361), Seng Gui 僧規 (pp. 367-368), Zhi Da 智達 (pp. 400-402), Yuan Kuo 袁廓 (pp. 420-404). The similarity is striking and it is not difficult to see the influence of this type of narration on the religious biography genre. It is, however, a similarity more on the formal level than on the conceptual as the main characters in these stories are mainly lay people or *shamans* who either do not believe in the Buddhist teaching or else are not very diligent in the practice. They are, therefore, sent to hell after they die where they come to realize the power of Buddhism. Taking this fact into consideration, this similarity is yet another confirmation of the implied diversity of narration styles which Baochang used under the format of a religious biography. What *Puzhao* experiences is in another dimension of existence, therefore in terms of *time/space specifics* there is a transgression of space and time; the *literary mode* is characterized by a retrospective narration of the events in her death.

The biography of *Huimu* 慧木 has three different versions with *Jingtu shengxian lu* 淨土聖賢錄 being the shortest one (it only records a dream and the episode where she has a vision of the Pure Land).⁸⁵ The two versions in *Biqiuni zhuan* and *Mingxiang ji* differ from each other — the first is shorter giving only two miracles (see table 1) while the second one keeps the principal line but adds three more miracles two of which are included in *Jingtu shengxian lu* (the dream of the lotus pond and the vision during the meditation). *Mingxiang ji*, however, omits the moment

⁸⁵ K.Tsai (*Lives*, p. 109) says that this biography has two versions but I think the version in *Jingtu shengxian lu* 淨土聖賢錄 is also different from the other two, therefore I accept it as another separate version.

from *Biqiuni zhuan* with her dream before the ordination ceremony when someone reads the book of monastic rules to her and she easily memorizes it thereafter. The fact that this biography has quite different versions means that perhaps there was an oral transmission of these miracles connected to her from which both Wang Yan (the author of *Mingxiang ji*) and Baochang made an extensive use. The choice of Baochang for the inclusion of these two specific miracles is important as it reveals his motivation — he believes it is important to point out the place of the miracle in the nun's life just before she is ordained which functions as a sign, an answer from the other realm, a kind of *ganying*. Again, unlike *Mingxiang ji*, Baochang gives details on her origin and includes miracles only at the most crucial moments in her life — when she still was not ordained but was determined to do so and the vision appears as a proof that she is on the right path (she later uses this as an argument in refusing to get married),⁸⁶ and shortly before she received full ordination. In both cases she is the recipient of the miracles but she is active in their occurrence as they confirm the chosen path and add some features to her portrait as a practitioner. Baochang found it logical and reasonable that these miraculous moments be part of her life. They follow neatly in the narrative and explain subsequent events in her life, thus not allowing for other narrative elements. In her biography we also see details about the filial piety towards her old mother. In terms of

⁸⁶ For a lot of (mostly aristocrat) women at the time becoming a nun was not so much a religious choice as a social decision to avoid re-marrying after the death of a husband, some of whom committed suicide refusing to re-marry. See Li Yuzhen's discussion: Li Yuzhen 李玉珍, *Tangdai de biqiuni 唐代的比丘尼* (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1989), pp. 73-84. For Huimu, however, the religious vocation itself seems to be of utmost importance which distinguishes her from other women.

time/space specifics the biography develops coherently.⁸⁷

Fasheng 法勝 is an example of a miracle which happens during a state of sickness. At that time she is already sixty years old and has practiced for the whole of her life. In one episode we see how she saves the widow Mrs. Shan 山氏 her from her illness, and when she succeeds and Mrs. Shan is cured, everybody starts to venerate her. This is a direct indication of the effectiveness of Fasheng's efforts, and speaks of her virtuousness. The text further indicates her selflessness and whole-hearted devotion to helping others: "When acting she did not seek personal gain; when in repose she did not seek fame. In her diligent and complete observation of all her duties, she could not but save living beings." (動不徇利，靜不求名，殷勤周至，莫非濟物。) (p.49；頁76)

The miracle in her biography is connected with a vision of a Buddha on a lotus flower while Fasheng is sick and who radiates a strong light on her, which she interprets as a sign for her imminent death. As a result, she asks someone to chant the *Flower of the Law Scripture*. In one of the other records in *Jingtu lun* 淨土論 even her death is accompanied by a strong light which the Buddha shines on her (see table 1). These two brief

⁸⁷ Analyzing the same biography from the *Mingxiang ji* version, Liu Yuan-ju has pointed out that chanting Sūtras means evoking the spirits with which the believer can communicate. Likewise, by chanting 大品 *Dapin* (the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā sūtra*) Huimu also enters a spiritual realm, a logical result of her religious practice. Even ordinary nuns like Huimu can be brought closer to a religious and spiritual existence making the Buddhist religion a sacred part of their lives. See Liu Yuan-ju, "Zhongsheng ru fogue, shen ling jiang renjian – 'Mingxiang ji' de kongjian yu yuwang quanshi" 眾生入佛國，神靈降人間——《冥祥記》的空間與欲望詮釋, in *Chaoxiang shenghuo shijie de wenxue quanshi – Liuchao zongjiao xushu de shenti shijian yu kongjian shuxie*, pp. 278-280, 283.

episodes — one illustrating her behavior toward the widow and one during her own illness — within the biography function as a premise and a consequence — saving the widow is just one of her numerous virtuous accumulated during her life as a nun. Her vision (probably not the only one in her life) is the expression of *ganying* — a confirmation from the divine realm that she has accomplished herself as a practitioner to such a high extent that she may even be reborn as a bodhisattva (suggested by the appearance of the Buddha himself), and is therefore a benevolent response for all her efforts. In terms of narration this is a straightforward storyline without imaginative leaps in time or space.

Sengduan's 僧端 biography is an eloquent example of how miracles work in everyday life evoked by the diligence in chanting of Sūtras. The betrothal arranged by her parents provokes a strong reaction and makes her take refuge in a Buddhist monastery. There on the instructions of the Buddhist master to read the *Guanyin Sūtra* only after three days she has a vision of a Buddha who says her husband-to-be will die. On the next day he really does. This allows her to become a nun and to devote herself to Buddhism. The straight connection here is more than obvious and once again the benevolent response coming just at the right time confirms “miraculously” that there could be another alternative to her life choice, which moreover brings her the respect and veneration of the people: “In managing the affairs of the community she treated everyone the same with equal affection for all. Great and humble happily submitted to her authority, and, with the passing of time, she was even more respected.” (綱紀眾務，均愛等接，大小悅服，久而彌敬。) (p. 50; 頁 79) In a sense, this is an affirmation of her choice brought about by the principles of *ganying*. Her biography is short and does not provide

any transgressions in time or space.

The biography of *Jingxiu* 淨秀 (or parts of it) is recorded in two other compendia with some differences but most of the miracles figure in all of them — these are *Guang hongming ji* 廣弘明集 and *Gu jin tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成. The versions in *Guang hongming ji* and *Gu jin tushu jicheng* are almost identical and are both longer than Baochang’s account. Details about her life are also found in *Doulü guijing ji* 兜率龜鏡集, *Fozu tongji* (see table 1) but only the first one of these latter sources describes the miracles. Her biography seems to be extensively quoted. Jingxiu appears to be an extraordinary nun both in her life before and after she becomes ordained. She excels at meditation with miracles happening while meditating, and even visualizes monks.⁸⁸ Her name is related to many political figures and Buddhist monks. In the account of her, however, despite this strong historical background and the reference by Baochang himself that he had used Shen Yue’s eulogy as a basic source for her, we feel the intensity of the miracles which are present all throughout her life and hence in the recorded biography. The historical facts and dates give “support” to the narrative and frame it but it is the parts with the miracle episodes which give flesh to her story. This fact is very important, especially having in mind that the possible original

⁸⁸ In Daoism meditation and the visualization (of one’s body) is usually with the purpose of cultivating one’s *qi* 氣, and thus prolonging one’s lifespan achieving longevity. On the discussion of this practice as related to the understanding of *ming* 命 (fate), see Stephen R. Bokenkamp, “Simple Twists of Fate: The Daoist Body and Its *Ming*,” in Christopher Lupke, ed., *The Magnitude of Ming: Command, Allotment, and Fate in Chinese Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005), pp. 157-162. In the case of the Buddhist practitioners, meditation is a method by means of which to forget the existence of one’s own bodily existence, and, transcending it, to reach the idea of the illusory nature of everything.

source was written by Shen Yue. There are a number of miracles which Shen Yue writes about and which are included in *Guang hongming ji* and *Gu jin tushu jicheng* but are not part of the biography in *Biqiuni zhuan*. The fact that Shen Yue himself recorded such a long biography (there are not many nuns which he wrote about; apart from the inscription on Sengjing, this is the other record devoted to a nun) abundant with miraculous events means that this was a way to eulogize her. To him all these events must have been more than pure imagination or oral transmission as he was her contemporary. The fact worth noting is that Baochang did not mention this part in *Biqiuni zhuan* but it was mentioned in other sources. The text is historically defined with the help of the many historical figures which appear in her biography. On the one hand, the emphasized historical significance of her biography by the inclusion of many historical facts, and the presence of numerous miracles on the other hand gives the account a meaning of the importance of the nun as defined *both* in her life as a practitioner and as an active social person. Although Baochang did not include some of the miracles as Shen Yue did, his text is no less significant in showing the nun as a diverse and multidimensional personality who does not identify herself only through her practice. Just as with the case of Daorong, Jingxiu creates her sanctity through her social significance as well. The nature of the miracles happening to her is a proof of her religious capacity and dedication. The intensity with which they happen is a result of the active, not passive, ability to “evoke” miracles — she stimulates a kind of *ganying* response. In this sense she could be defined as the active subject in them even in cases where she might be considered a passive recipient of the miracle. As to *literary modes* the account is dotted by numerous miraculous events

some of which are related to other worlds or worlds existent only in a state of mediation, and therefore, there are certain imaginative leaps.

As we can see, for some of the nuns in the *gantong* group the auspicious signs happen before they become nuns and are a pre-condition, which binds them to or confirms their later dedication to Buddhism. In other examples, the miracles happen toward the end of their lives or after they have become nuns. On the one hand, by means of the benevolent sings these women provoke with their diligence they prove that religious choice is also a possible path to follow in life, and on the other, already as nuns, they prove that they can become enlightened and are capable of spiritual accomplishments just as monks are.

2. *Shen li* 神力, **divine power.**

In this group I discuss four biographies that are all characterized by some divine or unusual powers of the nuns. Although none of these powers correspond strictly to the definition of Buddhist divine powers as seen above, these examples are special as they emphasize their importance in the nuns' lives as a result of virtuousness or assiduous religious practice.

The biography of *Jingjian* 淨檢 is the first in all the collection and records some important facts about the history of Chinese Buddhism, especially about the rules and ordination of nuns. It even states that the beginning of the nuns in Jin starts with Jingjian: "Ching-chien is thus the first of the Buddhist nuns in China." (晉土有比丘尼，亦檢為始也。) (p. 19 ; 頁 2)⁸⁹ She herself is active in receiving full ordination. Her

⁸⁹ Tsai translates Jin 晉 as China but probably it is more correct to imply the state of Jin.

diligence and whole-hearted devotion to Buddhism, as well as her desire to be ordained according to the rules and strict observances endow her with unique powers, the expression of which is seen in the aroma emitted around her when she receives ordination by the Assembly of Monks, and especially in the way she leaves this world — a woman with flowers comes to take her away and they just soar high in the sky.⁹⁰

On the day of that ritual, remarkable fragrance and perfume [filled the air]. Everyone smelled it, and there was no one who did not rejoice and marvel; respect for her increased all the more. Ching-chien well cultivated the monastic rules and resolutely studied without ceasing. [.....] At the end of the *sheng-p'ing* reign period (357-361 A.D.) Ching-chien once again smelled the same fragrance, and she saw a red, misty cloud. Out of that cloud a woman holding a five-colored flower in her hands descended from the sky. [.....] Clasp[ing] her hands she bid them farewell and then rose up into the air. (p. 19)

當其羯磨之日，殊香芬馥，闔眾同聞，莫不欣歎，加其敬仰。善修戒行，志學不休。[……]到升平末，忽復聞前香，並見赤氣，有一女人，手把五色花，自空而下，[……]執手辭別，騰空而上。(頁 2)

⁹⁰ This detail resembles very much the way in which Taoist transcendents leave the ordinary world – ascension to the sky in broad daylight is considered the utmost confirmation for their achievements in religious practice. See biographies of Qi Xuanfu 戚玄符, Yang Zhengjian 楊正見, Wang Fajin 王法進, Xie Ziran 謝自然, in Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850-933 A.D.), *Yongcheng jixian lu* 壩城集仙錄, in Zhang Junfang 張君房, ed., *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003).

In her case the moments with the fragrance and her ascent follow very logically in the narration after the description of her efforts to learn more about the rules and practices of the nuns, just as if it is another normal episode in her life, this more than any other miraculous detail emphasizes her unique skills and achievements as a nun. In an implied way her biography also justifies her, and by extension any other woman's, choice to join the Buddhist teaching as this would only not be punished or condemned but, as the biography shows, deserves appreciation.

The two miracles in the biography of *Daorong* are special as they also involve emperors, thus this could be a side proof for their originality and truthfulness from a historical point of view. In both she is the performer of the miracles. In this case again, as in the previous biography, the performance of the miracles is an expression of the “ritual of truth” — if she is holy, she will then be able to drive away the evil spirits and the flowers will not die. Her biography has four versions two of which are found in two different sources in *Fayuan zhulin* (*Jin Nanjing si ji* and *Mingxiang ji*) which retell the two miracles separately, the other one is in *Fozu tongji* which combines both miracles but in a way different from *Biqiuni zhuan*. All of them mention the episodes with the miracles but are shorter than the version in *Biqiuni zhuan*. Baochang's story is more detailed as to personal details about the nun — for example, he specifies that the nun is from Liyang 歷陽, *Mingxiang ji* does not; *Mingxiang ji* also does not mention the fact that she is good at divination. In *Biqiuni zhuan* version we see Daorong's life reduced to and described in relation to several emperors (emperor Ming of Jin 晉明帝, emperor Jianwen 簡文帝, emperor Xiaowu 孝武帝) (although she is mentioned in neither), hence the strong historical flavor of the account and the straight narration

plotline. We are told several times that she is highly respected by these emperors and that even the respect for Buddhism in *Jin* was due to her: “That people of the Chin Dynasty in subsequent years respected the Way of the Buddha was because of Tao-jung’s strong influence.” (後晉顯尚佛，道容之力也。) (p.31 ; 頁 28) In her biography it is clear how the historical and the miraculous explain each other to the extent that if we remove the miracles, a very meaningful part of her life would be missing and on the textual level the account of her life would be impossible. At the same time, a parallel with similar biographies in *Gaoseng zhuan* shows that similar miracles in the monks’ lives (for example, healing the sick or improving people’s life by different means) are considered as an ability which is not a pre-condition for their recognition as divine beings but rather as a skill which enhances the reverence for the monk, hence the respect for Buddhism.⁹¹ While the extraordinary powers of monks seem matter-of-fact events, nuns have to prove that their extraordinary abilities are a guarantee for their pre-destined lives as Buddhist followers — only after they pass the test could they be accepted by society as such. I attribute this fact to the more difficult path the nuns had to follow. On the other hand, the impression that Daorong has a secondary role to play in her own biography giving priority to the events happening to the emperors is in fact another strong didactic tool in the hands of Baochang — Daorong versus the emperors is the same relation as enlightened versus unenlightened person. The mere fact that she is able to intervene with her skills on such a high social level is eloquent enough to

⁹¹ See the biography of He Luojie 訶羅竭, An Huize 安慧則, Bei Du 杯度 in scroll 10 of *Gaoseng zhuan*.

make her praiseworthy. Judging by the fact that her biography in *Biqiuni zhuan* is richer in details as to her other personal characteristics and provides further details of her as a person with a role in a specific historical period negates the “reductive portrait” of a sacred biography within which a lot of female believers were supposed to fit. Not only is she active in society, but her personality is also highly esteemed and with a definite social significance. As her biography underlines the historical events in her life, the *time specifics* are not marked by transgression in time; in terms of *literary modes* there are no imaginative flights with the plotline keeping to the simple narration of specific events.

The biography of *Jingcheng* 靜稱 is quite short and the element that corresponds to the characteristics of the group is the fact that she is accompanied by a tiger in the monastery. However, in comparison with the above mentioned examples in which tigers save the nun’s life, here the tiger is shown as an animal which could be either kind or ferocious to the other nuns depending on whether they repent for their sins or not: “If one of the nuns in the convent did not make a timely confession of an offense she had committed against the rules, the tiger would be angry, but, after she confessed, the tiger would be pleased.” (寺內諸尼，若犯罪失，不時懺悔，虎即大怒，悔罪便悅。) (p. 55 ; 頁 92) The only exception is *Jingcheng*. This fact is preceded by an explanation of her qualities as a practitioner: “Besides Ching-ch’eng’s stringent practice of the monastic rules, she was also able to chant 450,000 words of scripture.” (戒業精苦，誦經四十五萬言。) (p. 55 ; 頁 92) Compared to the rest of the nuns, she seems impeccable in her practice and religious behavior. Harmonious co-existence with fierce animals or subduing such animals, as well as receiving help from them, is considered a possession of divine powers

usually a result of diligent practice. A similar instance of a tiger accompanying a monk during his meditation to which the monk even expounds the Dharma is recorded in *Mingxiang ji* in the biography of Fa'an.⁹² The almost identical situations in both speak of the lack of differentiation between monks and nuns when it comes to performing such miracles, thus also to evoking such a response for their religious cultivation, which indirectly equates the religious achievements of both. The biography is a straightforward narration.

All versions of *Fayuan* 法緣's biography are almost identical. The whole story about the sisters' lives is an account of the incredible transgression of space and time dimensions where they encounter the Buddha himself and during which they progress toward an understanding of the Buddhist teaching finally becoming nuns.⁹³ They are also the reason for local people to embrace Buddhism: "Because of this all the people in the region served the True Law of the Buddha" (因是土人皆事正法。)(p. 68; 頁 119) Although in this case the sisters are the objects of the miracles — they are literally pulled into the Pure Land space — this is a very inspirational tale because at the very beginning neither of them is a believer and understands Buddhist scriptures and teaching (*weishi jingfa* 未識經法). They are an example to follow as shows the ending of

⁹² Lu Xun, *Lu Xun jilu guji congbian*, p. 358, also translated in Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, pp. 162-163.

⁹³ Direct encounters with the Buddha are done necessarily by transgressing different worlds. The experience from the "other realm" creates an effect of wonder through the text, its aim being the affirmation of the belief in the Buddhist teaching. This mysticism is very prominent at a time when Buddhism and Taoism strived for dominance in medieval China. See Liu Yuan-ju, "Shen yu: lun 'Lüxiang ganying zhuan' zhong qianshi jinsheng de kuajie shuxie" 神遇：論《律相感應傳》中前世今生的跨界書寫, *Qinghua xuebao* 清華學報 43/1 (Mar. 2013): 130.

the biography — “The provincial governors Wei Lang and K’ung Mo both humbly made offerings, and, when they heard the two sisters’ speech, they even more deeply honored the nuns’ unusual quality.” (p. 68) This is an excellent case where a nun’s biography reads like a hagiography. The miracles in their lives are very crucial as they would not have become nuns if they were not taken to otherworldly places (the celestial palace in the Pure Land 淨土天宮 where they see the Buddha) — it is in the otherworldly space of the miracle that they are converted into Buddhism and acquire extraordinary skills of reciting long texts just within days or speaking effortlessly a foreign language. The miraculous episodes are supported by exact dates — the eighth day of the second month of the ninth year of the *yuanjia* 元嘉 period, the fifteenth day of the ninth month, and so on.⁹⁴ The dates have both a historical and religious significance — by their logic they are circumscribed in the historical flow of time, but because of the importance these dates have for the Buddhist rituals, it also justifies their religious value. This is the reason for the inspirational value of the miracles. The biography is quite different from the rest in *Biqiuni zhuan* — the formal structure of a biography is still obvious because of the narrative support from the historical dates but the contents are highly hagiographical, i.e. it violates the conventions of normal existence in order to eulogize the religious life of the characters. The transgression in space is necessary for them to pass from one state (of ignorance) to another state (of enlightened existence). This transcendence of space recalls the myth of Buddha’s birth where he took seven steps to the North as soon as he was born which could symbolize

⁹⁴ For the meaning of these dates refer to my article, *Feminine Paradigms of Buddha’s Life*, p. 57.

the transgression of space (and time) towards the “summit of the world’ by mounting the seven cosmic storeys that correspond [.....] to the seven planetary heavens.”⁹⁵ The same paradigm in this “religious movement” is repeated in these two nuns’ lives although with a less messianic context. It is not coincidental that they meet the Buddha himself and upon their return start building a temple to venerate the Buddhist teaching as well as serve as an example for people. Their experience defines their characters as religious people but because of its specificity the portrait thus created is not one-sided but rather multi-dimensional. The fact that this biography also includes details about the early unenlightened state of the nuns allows for a milder and less “reductive” approach to their personalities. Although they are the objects of the miracles, the nuns function as centers of their own religious experience. The transgression in *time/space dimensions* presupposes the non-linear narration as a *literary mode*.

As we can see from the biographies in this group,⁹⁶ the miracles happening to or performed by the nuns include fragrance, driving away of evil spirits (crows), peaceful co-existence with fierce animals, flying to other worlds. These miracles are by no means typical for nuns only, monks perform them too. But it is because of this that they appear as important as they are in the monks’ biographies, thus proving once more the capability of nuns to excel in practice as much as the monks, and be able to achieve the same results on the path of enlightenment. It is

⁹⁵ The symbolism of this account to the notions of space and time are discussed in Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 76.

⁹⁶ I have omitted one biography, the nun Dele, where the divine powers consist in her being able to see in the dark without using light.

probably no coincidence that these divine powers in most of the biographies of this group are accompanied by statements about the influence of the nuns in paving the way for the spread of the Buddhist teaching (for example, Jingjian, Daorong, Fayuan). This is also one of the strongest proofs for the way in which *ganying* operates in their lives. Just as the monks are credited with convincing the people to follow them in the Buddhist religion by performing miracles, so do nuns are capable of doing the same thanks to their excellence in practice, and to evoke benevolent responses.

3. *Chanshi* 禪師.

The last group to discuss is that of masters of meditation. In this group the miracles are in close relation to the meditation practices of the nuns.

In the first example of the nun *Guangjing* 光靜 fragrance fills the air shortly before she dies just like Jingjian's biography: "[.....] until the night of the fourth month and eighth day, [.....] when, in the presence of unusual fragrance and good omens appearing in the sky, she died." (至四月十八日夜，殊香異相，滿虛空中，其夜命過焉。) (p. 51 ; 頁 81-82). The only difference here is that *Guangjing* excels at meditation practices and serves as an example for a lot of followers:

Kuang-ching cultivated a diligent zeal in her religious practices while still a young girl, and, when she grew up, she undertook in particular the practice of meditation. [.....] [s]he doubled her heroic efforts, studying single-mindedly without growing weary. Those who practiced contemplation under her tutelage always

numbered over one hundred. (p. 51)

靜少而勵行，長而習禪思，〔……〕倍加勇猛，精學不倦。從學觀行者，常百許人。(頁 81)

Her efforts and achievements are all affirmed by an auspicious event or sign, which is also a confirmation for the rightness of her choice to be a Buddhist practitioner.

Fabian 法辯 is the other meditation master who manages to evoke a response from the divine realm by means of her diligent practice. In her case this is a dream of the master of the Law Chaobian 超辯, which happens the day before she dies:

The day before her death, the master of the Law Ch'ao-pien (420-492 A.D.) of Upper Grove of Concentration Monastery dreamed of a palace that was beautifully decorated, everything down to the last trifle glowed in an aura not of this world. Men and women dressed in fine array filled this palace, but no lord was to be seen. When in the dream the monk Ch'ao-pien asked why no lord was to be seen, he received the reply, the nun Fa-pien of Luminous Blessings Convent is shortly going to be born here; she should arrive tomorrow. (p. 59)

先是一日，上定林寺超辯法師夢一宮城，莊嚴顯麗，服玩光赫，非世所有，男女裝飾，充滿其中。唯不見有主，即問其故。答曰，景福法辯，當來生此，明日應到。(頁 101)

Even though this dream is not strictly speaking a miracle performed by the nun and it is another person who dreams it, nevertheless it is

perceived as an evidence of her achievement in meditation. A significant point to be noted is also the fact that the dream happens to a monk, which further emphasizes the exceptional religious qualities of Fabian and the recognition she receives under the form of his auspicious dream. In terms of narration specifics this biography is particular because the dream is told after her death, thus employing the narration in retrospect.

Tanhui's biography has two versions with the one coming from *Mingxiang ji* (and quoted in *Fayuan zhulin*) being shorter.⁹⁷ Baochang's version is richer in details about her life as a nun; the *Fayuan zhulin* version is shorter and does not include any miracles.

The important aspect is that she is sometimes the object and sometimes the subject in the different miracles in her biography. This is explained with the acquisition of powers as a result of her devotion to Buddhism. In the first one, while meditating, she sees the lights and can determine what they symbolize — she is sent these lights and discerns them correctly. This miracle directly signifies her holiness and exceptional character as a nun as the omens and miracles received during meditation are a special sign for the high spiritual level of the practitioner. In this episode the “ritual of truth” is displayed as well:

[.....] one time near the end of a meditation period she entered into a state of *samādhi*, or deep mental concentration, in which she saw two rays of light in the east, one bright like the sun and the other darker like the moon. While still in that state of concentration she had the thought, “The bright light must symbolize the way of the bodhisattva and the darker one the way

⁹⁷ Translated also in Campany, *Sings from the Unseen Realm*, pp. 223-225.

of the hearer. If this is truly so, then the darker ray should fade away and the white one should blaze forth even brighter.” Then in response to her thought the darker ray vanished and the bright ray shone in full splendor. (p. 93)

即於座末便得入定，見東方有二光明，其一如日而白，其一如月而青，即於定中立念云：「白者必是菩薩道，青者聲聞法。若審然者，當令青者銷，而白光熾。」即應此念，青光遂滅，白光熾滿。(頁 182, emphasis mine)

Although in this case she is the object of the miracle, this miraculous response is possible because she has already reached an enlightened state of mind at which she can efficiently bring about miraculous events, a part of the definition of a perfected practitioner able to enter the divine spiritual realm.

The second miracle testifies to her abilities to build pagodas and temples very quickly as if with a divine help, because of which everybody thinks that there is divine force involved (「稱有神力焉」), and to provide food for hundreds of guests miraculously fast. She also disposes of amounts of money which is never exhausted though she herself does not know where it comes from. In this case she is the performer (subject) of the miracles. There is also one important detail in her biography — in the process of meditation she realizes the Buddha nature, certain meanings and truths of the Greater Vehicle (Mahayana) without being taught by a master: “Later in meditation she herself came to understand the immutability of the Buddha nature and other doctrines of the Mahāyāna, or Great Vehicle, of Buddhism, none of which she had learned from her teacher.” (後於禪中自解佛性，常住大乘等義，並非

師受。)(p. 93; 頁 183) Kathryn Ann Tsai believes this is a sign of holiness and that she could have been taught by the Buddha himself. A relation to the Taoist revelations of scriptures at the time should also be noted.⁹⁸ The rhetoric of Baochang is strong and points to her extraordinary abilities through these miracles. Again, exact dates are given and a number of historical figures are referred to (see table 1). Interestingly, she is not mentioned in any of the biographies recorded in dynastic history texts. There is no transgression in time and space, all events unfold logically and the miracle episodes are presented as real occurrences in such moments in the whole biography as to strengthen even further the logic behind her destiny as a nun.

Other examples of the *chanshi* group include the nun Seng'guo 僧果, Faxiang 法相, Seng'gai 僧蓋, Daogui 道貴, who are all assiduous practitioners, excel at meditation, and are renowned for their achievements, and for one of them, Faxiang, it is even stated that because of her accomplishment in mediation, she has cultivated a profound insight of recognizing the spiritual capacities of others.

In the *chanshi* group we witness nuns excelling in their meditation practice to the extent that they seem to fall in a trance during which their minds and spirits enter the divine realm, which can be considered an accomplishment in their religious cultivation. The fragrance, the appearance of ominous lights, the extraordinary skills are all responses to this exceptional practice (functioning as stimulus) which is a proof (response) sent by the divine realm of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas affirming their efforts as practitioners.

⁹⁸ Tsai, *Lives*, p. 144-145, note 32.

To summarize all the biographies, we see that they are mostly a straightforward narration of events in the nun's life whose credibility can be supported very often by reference to a concurrent historical figure or event. We have details about the nun's birthplace or family, and sometimes about her demise. Except for two biographies (Fayuan and Jingxiu) there are no imaginative leaps or transgressions in time and space. On the one hand, I believe this straightforward "historical" narration functions as an implied didactic tool — it confirms the religious aspirations of the nuns, describes them as something quite possible to achieve, and by the claim that they are all historical figures they also serve as a credible example to follow. On the other hand, this is a distinct difference with the *avādāna* stories which are characterized by a non-linear narration and inclusion of past time experiences. This claim of Baochang's biographies towards a more secular presentation of the nuns could also imply a move away from the "reductive" portrait usually assigned to female religious practitioners. These nuns are mostly, but not only, defined through their religious devotion — they are also socially active and demonstrate diverse abilities.

In the miraculous episodes the women can be both the subjects and the objects of the miracles. These miracles, however, do not represent any of the six superknowledges as defined above. I believe that because their popular character is confirmed, and the fact that these miracles are performed by the nuns, implies their potential to be part of the religious life of *any* practitioner, thus making the belief in their attainment more intense and real. From another perspective, the fact that these miraculous events happen to the nuns (i.e., the nuns are objects of the miracles) is a powerful and eloquent manifestation of the principles of *ganying*. Their

devotion, suffering and outstanding religious practice is matched by a miraculous “response” which confirms not only their will and the right to be in the monastic community venerated by all, but also validates this alternative as their choice for a life different from the one prescribed by societal norms.

Another observation bears on the fact that in some cases in (later) collections where parts of the biographies can be found the preserved elements connected to nuns are concentrated on the miracle, for example, Daoshou in *Fozu tongji*, scroll 36 (T. 49, no. 2035, p. 345, b16-17); Huimu in *Jingtu shengxian lu* (CBETA, X78, no. 1549, p. 283, a10-16); Tanhui in *Fayuan zhulin*, scroll 22 (T. 53, p. 453, a19-b5) taken from *Mingxiang ji*; Faxuan in *Fozu tongji*, scroll 37 (CBETA, T49, no. 2035, p. 350, c1-4). This could mean that the nature of these “miracle” elements in some of the biographies is the most important part. Miracles are an indispensable part of the whole narration of facts in the lives of the nuns, and by creating paradigms of religious virtues (to a great extent also due to the expression of *ganying*), I think this establishes certain individuality for them as well.⁹⁹ In general, writers of female religious biographies had

⁹⁹ My opinion does not contradict, however, this of Gail Ashton who says: “That all subjectivity or identity is elided in all saints’ lives in preference to a holy identity is not a question, but where this becomes particularly problematic is in the case of female hagiography; representations of saintliness become inextricably mingled with representations of ideal womanliness. Thus, what it means to be a female saint is not quite the same as what it means to be a male saint, for the code of sanctity which the hagiographer must incorporate into his story is subject to different expectation.” See Gail Ashton, *The Generation of Identity in Late Medieval Hagiography: Speaking the Saint*, p. 2. On the way the Buddhist nuns in *Biqiuni zhuan* combined both traditional society virtues and religious model behavior which transformed them into saints, see Yü Chünfang, Yu Shuhui, tr., “Biqiuni he yi shensheng?,” pp. 169-190; and Bret Hinsch, “Confucian Filial Piety and the Construction of the Ideal Chinese Buddhist Woman,” *Journal of*

a “double” agenda — to extol the religious *and* womanly virtues of their subjects of description. This also holds true for the Chinese case where biographers had a long tradition to follow and Confucian norms of conduct to reflect and represent. This could explain why Baochang described aspects of the nuns’ personalities such as their filial piety. The other significance of the fact that the lives of these nuns preserved in later collections mention mostly their miracles means that there is a process of “mythologizing”. The fact that very rarely nuns are mentioned in dynastic history records facilitated this process as their images go further away from the “historical” and into the “popular” stream of imagination. Judging by the sources Baochang used, this process of mythologizing could have been started by *Mingxiang ji* or other earlier source(s), but it might as well be due to Baochang’s collection that the accounts became to spread in later times. In this I see one of the important aspects of *Biqiuni zhuan*. The process of borrowing between different texts shows some literary characteristics of the religious biography genre — on the one hand, the focus in description, the pertaining to the formal narrative requirements of the genre, the emphasis on historical details, but on the other hand also the enriching the content with details coming from the miracle tale genre, which, on a broader level, outlines the development of religious literature during this period.

A brief reference to the way of depiction of Buddhist monks will help to emphasize clearer the attitude of Baochang to the nuns. Therefore, I will discuss briefly the types of miracles in *Mingseng zhuan chao*. *Mingseng zhuan* is a work on monks coming from the same author, and

so elements of similarity or difference in representation and types of miracles can be researched. The work on *Mingseng zhuan* was started around 510 and was finished around 514.¹⁰⁰ It survives as a table of contents and a few excerpts from the monk copy and two quotations in Daoxuan's biography of Baochang. From the 257 major biographies in *Gaoseng zhuan* 216 were already subjects in the *Mingseng zhuan*.¹⁰¹ By the contents preserved and by surviving evidence in bibliographical compendia we can judge that in the original work there were 30 *juan*. Every *juan* bears a subtitle according to a different principle organized in 18 sections, such as *Zhongguo fashi* 中國法師, *Waiguo fashi* 外國法師, *Lüshi* 律師, *Waiguo chanshi* 外國禪師, *Zhongguo chanshi* 中國禪師, *Shen li* 神力, *Ku jie* 苦節, *Daoshi* 導師, *Jingshi* 經師. It spans the time from the Han dynasty during Emperor Ming (ruled 58-75 A.D.) until the beginning of the Liang dynasty (502-557 A.D.), including 435 biographies.¹⁰² What survives nowadays of *Mingseng zhuan* is the manuscript copy made by the 13th century Japanese monk, Zong Xing 宗性 (Shūshō, 1202-? A.D.), known as *Meisōden shō* 名僧傳抄. He selected 39 articles and placed them in the section related to the Maitreya cult, entitled *Mile rulai ganying chao di si · Mingseng zhuan* 彌勒如來感應抄第四 · 名僧傳, which could explain why there are so many

¹⁰⁰ Lin Fufang 林傳芳, *Zhongguo fojiao shiji yao shuo* 中國佛教史籍要說, vol. 1 (Kyoto: Yontian wenchang tang, 1979), pp. 57-58.

¹⁰¹ Arthur F. Wright, *Studies in Chinese Buddhism*, p. 95-97. For another discussion on *Mingseng zhuan* see also Cao Shibang, *Zhongguo fojiao shixue shi – Dong Jin zhi Wudai* 中國佛教史學史——東晉至五代 (Taipei: Fagu wenhua gongsi, 1999), pp. 47-58; Lin Fufang, *Zhongguo fojiao shiji yao shuo*, pp. 47-60.

¹⁰² Zhou Shujia 周叔迦, *Zhou Shujia foxue lunzhu ji* 周叔迦佛學論著集, vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), p. 1102.

elements in the biographies which refer directly to this cult. It is not by chance that precisely this type of biographies survived — obviously the miracle element in them was more important than the mere recording of events with hagiographical nature.¹⁰³

Table 2 summarizes some specifics in these biographies. As the data show, some kinds of miracles (the dreams, the Sūtra recitation abilities, the driving away of evil spirits, the omens before death) are in the nuns' biographies as well. The significant thing is that the biographies in *Mingseng zhuan* do not present as much a full account of the monks' lives as *Biqiuni zhuan* does for the nuns. The monks are represented mainly in the context of the miracles; the nuns are very often inscribed in a context that includes their social activities as well. Taking into account the fact that *Mingseng zhuan* has survived in part only and other of its biographies could contain other details as well, this comparison nevertheless reveals a slightly different approach in the process of literary creation. Another observation bears on the *subject-object* relation in the miracles. We have five cases where the monk is a subject and five cases where they are objects (some biographies have more than one miracle). In *Biqiuni zhuan* we observe a ratio between the subjects and the objects in the miracles of *subjects 6 - objects 14*. In some cases one nun can be both the subject and the object of different miracles. The apparent difference as to these criteria could be explained with the specificity of the miracles in the nuns' lives — they are not mere expressions of inexplicable

¹⁰³ I admit the fact that we have no way of knowing how much of the original material reached the Japanese monk; it is probable that he did not have much to choose from as the work might have been lost in its greater part already upon arrival in Japan. However, the words of Zong Xing himself are an argument in point for the elements that were worth his attention.

supernatural powers. Rather, it is because the nuns are objects of such miraculous auspicious events that the principle of *ganying* is proven in their lives, and where the miracles find their meaning. Before becoming the objects of the miracles, their excellence in religious practice and virtuousness makes them subjects in creating their own remarkable destiny as women devoted to Buddhism.

Final Remarks and Conclusion

Based on all biographies in *Biqiuni zhuan* several observations could be made. First, in almost all the cases where there is an additional story about the nun in another source, Baochang's version is more detailed as to information other than the miracle — it stresses the nun's extraordinary abilities, worldly life (family) or inspirational activities. The rest of the sources are confined to the miracle episode. Second, Kathryn Ann Tsai has observed that the closer in time the biographies come, the fuller of historical facts and seemingly true to reality they become.¹⁰⁴ It is worth noting that most of the sources for Baochang seem to come from *Mingxiang ji* which itself is a Buddhist miracle story collection.¹⁰⁵ Unlike the biographies closer to him in terms of time which could have been heard personally by him, for the ones that he did not have first-hand material, Baochang used whatever he could find in sources of different character, including miracle stories collections, and obviously this did not

¹⁰⁴ Kathryn A. Tsai, "The Chinese Buddhist Monastic Order for Women: The First Two Centuries," in Richard W. Guisso and Stanley Johannesen, eds., *Women in China: Current Directions in Historical Scholarship (Historical Reflections, Directions Series)* 8/3 (1981): 4-5.

¹⁰⁵ Tsai, *Lives*, p. 108.

pose a major obstacle to his overall inclination to present the biographies as true-to-life. Third, the similarity of many of the miracles in *Biqiuni zhuan* to the nature of miracles in the *lingyan* religious tales is an evidence of the degree to which Buddhism can be assimilated on local soil. Fourth, comparing the definition of the power to perform miracles and the superknowledge of a Buddhist saint, we see that rarely, if at all, the nuns display such powers. However, they create their own divine image in another way. Their efforts in religious practice and the accumulation of merit through benevolent actions evoke “a divine response” and render them capable of performing miracles. Fifth, the differences between *Biqiuni zhuan* and the *avādana* literature (as analyzed through the *time-space* and *literary mode* aspects) can be explained with the different social and cultural background of the receiving culture (the Chinese), and hence the different religious needs it is designed to respond to. In the *avādana* stories the accent is on Buddha himself, his actions and miraculous deeds. In *Biqiuni zhuan* the center is the nun with her religious qualities. Finally, the representation of the nuns (as seen through the analysis of the miracles) proves that in many aspects they were considered equal to monks and as capable of spiritual attainment as monks.

These observations show that the portrait of the Chinese nuns might be seemingly “reductive” but the descriptions include many other aspects of the lives of the nuns. In fact, their abilities to evoke a miraculous response are as much a result of their assiduousness as religious practitioners as it is a consequence of their social engagement. For this reason the implication of the concept of *ganying* proves so useful in the hands of Baochang — by virtue of the fact that they receive a response

from the divine realm for their religious practice and efforts in society, it shows them as perfect examples in many aspects and confirms their position in traditional Chinese society even as nuns. It defines them as “subjects”, as centers, of their miracles although they do not strictly pertain to the understanding of *shentong* and although the nuns sometimes are the objects of the miracles happening to them. However, this is precisely what broadens the meaning of the miracles in their case. Thus, the nun as a focus in the biographies is a major difference from the *avādāna* literature, not only in form as evidenced by the *time-space* and *literary mode* analysis, but also in meaning as seen in this particular expression of *ganying*. In her work on women and miracle stories Anne Marie-Korte says: “It is the act of telling which constructs the miracle as such. The miracle has an impact through its telling and interpreting. The effect of a miracle is closely related to the way in which it is understood. A miracle cannot be separated from the discourse in which it is told.”¹⁰⁶ The difference between *shentong* and how it is expressed in *Biqiuni zhuan* is a difference in discourse made necessary by the requirements of the time. Chinese Buddhism acquired more and more local features, explaining the shift away from the traditional *avādāna* form. During the Liang Dynasty Buddhism was thriving and was protected by the emperor. Buddhism needed as many religious examples as possible, and *Biqiuni zhuan* responded to this need. This, in its turn, represents one feature of the process where Chinese religious literature creates some of its own specifics.

(責任校對：趙家琦)

¹⁰⁶ Anne-Marie Korte, ed., *Women and Miracle Stories: A Multidisciplinary Exploration* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), p. 13.

APPENDIX

Table 1:¹⁰⁷ *Biqiuni zhuan* 比丘尼傳

Name	(Buddhist) <i>lingyanji</i> or <i>zhiguai</i> tales	Dynastic histories, religious history collections, monks' biographies	Remarks	Miracles
[晉] 康明感	[清] 觀音慈林集，卷 2 (CBETA, X88, no. 1644, p. 89a8-15)		The detail with the tiger is not central but is important for the development of the story as it informs us how she returned home where she eventually became a nun. Possible cross reference to a historical figure — He Chong 何充 (<i>Jin shu</i> , scroll 77). <i>Guanyin cilin ji</i> 觀音慈林集 only records the episode with the tiger.	A tiger leads her home after she has practiced chanting the Guanshiyin scripture for a long time. She receives good omens as signs that her minor faults are pardoned — a flower rain, a voice in the sky, a Buddha image or auspicious dreams. Note: she is the object of the miracle.
[晉] 令宗	觀音慈林集，卷中 (續藏經，卷 88)		Possible cross reference to a historical figure — the Jin emperor Xiaowu 孝武帝 who respected her.	Escapes from the bandits because she chants Guanshiyin scripture; a white deer in the river leads her on the way; her auspicious dream of Mount Sumeru. Note: she is the object of the miracles.
[宋] 法盛 (368-439 A.D.)	淨土往生傳，卷上 (T. 51, 112.b.8-23); 淨土聖賢錄，卷 6 (續藏經，	佛祖統紀，卷 28 淨土立教志第十二之三，往生高尼傳 (T. 49,	The important fact is that the light can be <i>seen</i> by all the people in the convent. Also, the	While sick, she dreams of <i>Tathāgata</i> Buddha and two Bodhisattvas who

¹⁰⁷ The notes on the sources and the citations in the analysis are according to Shi Baochang; Wang Rutong, annotated, *Biqiuni zhuan jiao zhu*, and Tsai, *Lives*.

	卷 78)；新修淨土往生傳，卷上 14 (續藏經，卷 78)；往生西方淨土瑞應傳尼法藏，第 22 (T. 51, 106.b.23-27)；淨土論，卷下第六引現得往生人相貌 (T. 47, 96.c.2-10)	281.c.17)	miracle is accompanied by a detailed account of the time when it happened.	shine a strong light on her; she dies shortly after that. Note: she is the object of the miracle.
〔宋〕慧玉	法苑珠林，卷 16 (T. 53, 407.b.15)；〔唐〕道宣，集神州三寶感通錄，卷中 (T. 52, 418.b.7-12)；〔南宋〕宗曉，法華經顯應錄 (高尼傳，卷 2) (CBETA, X78, no. 1540, p. 54b2-7)；〔清〕歷朝法華持驗紀，卷 1 (CBETA, X78, no. 1541, p. 68a18-21).		Her biography has 3 versions — <i>Biqiuni zhuan</i> , <i>Mingxiang ji</i> (as in <i>Fayuan zhulin</i> - 407.b.15), <i>Ji shenzhou sanbao gantong lu</i> 集神州三寶感通錄 — this version omits some details. The order of the two miracles is reversed and is a shorter version of <i>Mingxiang ji</i> .	She asks for a Buddha light and she indeed receives a bright red light; sees another white-red light and finds a Maitreya image in the spot where the light appeared. In the <i>Mingxiang ji</i> version on the spot of the second miracle they build a meditation site and find a golden Buddha image. Note: she is the subject of the miracle.
〔宋〕道壽	〔唐〕惠詳，弘贊法華傳，卷 6 (CBETA, T51, no. 2067, p. 28a1-7)；法華經顯應錄 (高尼傳，卷 2) (CBETA, X78, no. 1540, p. 54a19-24)；歷朝法華持驗紀，卷 1 (CBETA, X78, no. 1541, p. 68a22-23). These versions resemble more <i>Biqiuni zhuan</i> as they include other	佛祖統紀，卷 36 (T. 49, 345. b)；佛祖統紀，卷 53 歷代會要志十九之三，神尼異行 (T. 49, 467.b.27)	In comparison with <i>Fozu tongji</i> , scroll 36 where the narrative is very short (only the miracle), in Baochang's version we find details about her <i>xiao</i> 孝, filial piety, attitude toward her deceased father.	She reads the <i>Lotus Sūtra</i> three thousand times and there is an auspicious (<i>rui</i> 瑞) light. Then there is a “precious cover/jeweled canopy” <i>baogai</i> 寶蓋 over her head. Note: she is the object of the miracle.

	details as well.			
〔宋〕玄藻	兜率龜鏡集，卷中（續藏經，卷88）；觀音慈林集，卷中（續藏經，卷88）			She is sick and gets cured with the miraculous help of worshipping Guanyin. She also excels at chanting the <i>Flower of the Law Scripture</i> . Note: she is the object of the miracle.
〔宋〕普照			In terms of story plot the miraculous revival happens after the chanting of the <i>Flower of the Law Scripture</i> , <i>Fahua jing</i> 法華經.	She revives. Recites the <i>Flower of the Law Scripture</i> unusually fast — unique and exceptional ability. Note: she is the subject of the miracle.
〔宋〕慧木 (374-437 A.D.)	法苑珠林，卷15 (T. 53, 400.a.9)；〔清〕淨土聖賢錄卷6 (CBETA, X78, no. 1549, p. 283, a10-16)		Her biography has 3 versions — <i>Biqiuni zhuan</i> , <i>Mingxiang ji</i> (as in <i>Fayuan zhulin</i> - 400.a.9). The version in <i>Fayuan zhulin</i> is a little longer, with more details. The version in <i>Jingtu shengxian lu</i> 淨土聖賢錄 is much shorter and the miracle details are different — first the dream with the lotus in the pond, then the meditation trance where she listens to Buddha.	1. She sees a figure in golden color and a person all around the ceremonial platform for accepting monastic rules. 2. A dream before her full admission again with relation to the monastic rules. In the <i>Mingxiang ji</i> version of the biography there are two more details with miracles — one floating monk in the scripture hall and one more dream before she is ordained (with a lotus pond). Note: she is the object of the miracles.

〔宋〕法勝	往生西方淨土瑞應傳 (T. 51, 104.c.9-13); 淨土論, 卷下第六 (T. 47, 96.c.11-14)		The versions in the other two sources are much shorter.	She sees Buddha on a lotus flower shedding light on her when she is sick. In the <i>Jingtu lun</i> 淨土論 version before she dies there is a light at the time of her death. Note: she is the object of the miracle.
〔宋〕僧端 (ca. 378-448 A.D.)	觀音慈林集, 卷中 (續藏經, 卷 88)			The moment with the “miracle” happens when she is about to marry but against her will to become a nun. She chants the Guanshiyin scripture, sees a Buddha image, which tells her what will happen; her husband-to-be dies shortly after. Note: she is the object of the miracle.
〔梁〕淨秀 (418-506 A.D.)	〔唐〕道宣, 廣弘明集, 卷 23 (T. 52, 270.b-272.a);〔清〕兜率龜鏡集, 卷 2 (CBETA, X88, no. 1643, p. 62, c3-p. 63, a16)	佛祖統紀, 卷 36 (T. 49, 346.b.12-18)	Her biography has 3 versions — <i>Biqiuni zhuan</i> , <i>Guang hongming ji</i> 廣弘明集; <i>Gu jin tushu jicheng</i> 古今圖書集成, 博物彙編神異典, 卷 205 尼部, pp. 61896-61897. Reference to the monk Faying 法穎, <i>Gaoseng zhuan</i> , scroll 11, pp. 436-437. She is not mentioned in his biography. The versions in the	There are a number of miraculous events in her life while she meditates with the other nuns. Dreams. The Dragon Kings leave their traces in her support. She visualizes monks. She foresees her death by means of a dream. Note: She is the subject and object of the miracles.

			latter two sources mention a number of other miracles not included in Bochang's version.	
[晉]淨檢 (ca.292-361 A.D.)		佛祖統紀，卷 36 法運通塞志 (T. 49, 340.a.11); 佛祖統紀，卷 53 歷代會要志十九之三，神尼異行 (T. 49, 467.b.19-21); 大宋僧史略，卷上 (T. 54, 238.c.3), 下 (T.54, 253.b.12-15)	The biography is abundant with historical facts all throughout and it is just at the end that Baochang mentions two miraculous moments.	The miraculous details with the fragrance at her death and her ascent into the sky; the moment with the fragrance is also important as it is recorded at the time of her ordination. Note: she is the object of the miracles.
[晉]道容 ¹⁰⁸	法苑珠林，卷 42 (T. 53, 616.b.5) (《冥祥記》) [唐]道世。(感應錄, 799 條)	佛祖統紀，卷 36 (T. 49, 340.b.29ff); 佛祖統紀，卷 53 歷代會要志十九之三，神尼異行 (T. 49, 467.b.22-23)	There are four versions of her biography — <i>Biqiuni zhuan</i> , <i>Mingxiang ji</i> (<i>Fayuan zhulin</i> 法苑珠林, scroll 42, T. 53,616.b.5), <i>Jin nanjing siji</i> (法苑珠林-526.b.17), <i>Fozu tongji</i> - 340.b.29ff. In comparison, the version in <i>Fozu tongji</i> is shorter — it only mentions the miracles briefly. This biography is also	She can predict fortune and misfortune; emperor Jianwen 簡文帝 summons her to drive away crows; she succeeds and then starts to respect her. Earlier in the story Jin Ming di 晉明帝 (<i>Jin shu</i> , scroll 6; <i>Wei shu</i> , scroll 96) tests her holiness (<i>sheng</i> 聖) by putting flowers under the threshold and they do not wither.

¹⁰⁸ K.A. Tsai says this biography could be a case where the contents of a nun's life has its origins in legends around Taoist or shamanist women which were appropriated by Buddhism to serve a new audience. Kathryn A. Tsai, "The Chinese Buddhist Monastic Order for Women: The First Two Centuries," p. 5. I think her connection to a shamanist tradition can also be proved by the fact that she is good at divination. This is a very interesting point, which, if proved, can give us further insights about the methods, sources and motivation of Baochang, and about the interaction between the two religions at the time.

			<p>recorded in the section <i>Yaoguai pian</i> 妖怪篇 of the <i>Fayuan zhulin</i> which points to the importance of the miracle element to the compiler of <i>Fayuan zhulin</i>. <i>Fayuan zhulin</i> in its two different sources records separately the two miracles. The whole biography reads like a story about the emperor — the account of her life is as if to frame this story. The version in <i>Mingxiang ji</i> does not mention the episode with the crows.</p>	<p>Note: she is the subject of the miracles.</p>
[宋] 靜稱	法苑珠林，卷 15 (T. 53, 400.a)			<p>A tiger accompanies her in the convent — a sign of holiness. Note: she is the subject of the miracle.</p>
[齊] 法緣 (421-477 A.D.)	法苑珠林，卷五 (T. 55, 304.a.24)；卷二十二，(T. 55, 453.b.12)；集神州三寶感通錄，卷下 (T. 52, 433.c)		<p>Her biography has 2 versions — <i>Biqiuni zhuan</i>, <i>Mingxiang ji</i> (as in <i>Fayuan zhulin</i>). The version in <i>Ji shenzhou sanbao gantong lu</i> (T. 52, 433.c) is almost the identical.</p>	<p>Both sisters are lost, come back, say she has been to the Pure Land heaven and seen Buddha; lost again, come back and can suddenly recite Sūtras (before that they could not); fly to Heaven. There is also light when she recites Sūtras. Note: they are the object of the miracle.</p>

〔宋〕光靜	兜率龜鏡集，卷中（續藏經，卷88）：淨土論，卷下第六引現得往生人相貌 (T. 47, 96.c.15-18)			Fragrance fills the air shortly before she dies. It is a sign of holiness. Note: she is the object of the miracle.
〔宋〕法辯 (ca. 403-463 A.D.)			The master of law Chao Pian 超辯 has a biography in <i>Gaoseng zhuan</i> (scroll 12, vol. 2, pp. 267-268) but she is not mentioned in it.	In a dream to <i>him</i> she is seen as predestined to be reborn in a kind of Buddhist paradise. She dies on the next day. Note: she is the object of the miracle.
〔梁〕曇暉 (422-504 A.D.)	法苑珠林，卷 22 (T. 53, 453.a.19-b.5) (《冥祥記》)		The version in <i>Fayuan zhulin</i> does not mention the light episode and is much shorter — only mentions the moment with the trance, with Kālayashas and her refusal to marry. Cross reference to the monk Kālayashas 薑良耶舍 (fl. 424-442/432) (<i>Gaoseng zhuan</i> , scroll 3, vol. 1, pp. 128-129) from whom she learns meditation but she is not mentioned in his biography; to Zhen Fachong 甄法崇 (<i>Song shu</i>	While meditating, she sees two lights, one is for the Bodhisattva, and one for the hearer. She explains what it means. As if to her request the brighter light starts shining more. She realized some supreme truths through meditation which is a sign of holiness. ¹⁰⁹ She manages to supply food miraculously fast for her guests which can be cross-referenced to historical accounts. Note: she is the subject and object of the miracles.

¹⁰⁹ K.A. Tsai suggests that the realization of truths during meditation could be revelation, hence it could have a direct Taoist influence. Kathryn A. Tsai, “The Chinese Buddhist Monastic Order for Women: The First Two Centuries,” p. 16, note 51.

			宋書, scroll 78 ; <i>Nan shi</i> 南史, scroll 70); also to historical figures — Zhang Jun 張峻 (<i>Nan Qi shu</i> 南齊書, scroll 32 ; <i>Nan shi</i> , scroll 31); Liu Quan 劉 俊 (<i>Nan Qi shu</i> , scroll 37 ; <i>Nan shi</i> , scroll 39); Liang prince Xuanwu 梁 宣武王 (<i>Liang shu</i> 梁書, scroll 23, <i>Nan shi</i> , scroll 51).	
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Table 2: *Mingseng zhuan chao* 名僧傳抄 : ¹¹⁰

Name	Miracle	Remarks
1. Gunabhadra 求那跋陀 (394-468 A.D.) Other sources: 1. <i>Huayan jing zhuanji</i> 華嚴經傳記, scroll 2 (T. 2073, 158b11-14, CBETA); 2. <i>Chu sanzang ji ji</i> 出三藏記 集, ¹¹¹ 3. <i>Gaoseng zhuan</i> , scroll 3, vol. 1, pp. 210-224. Of all the three the one in <i>Huayan jing zhuanji</i> is the shortest.	Miracle 1: The version in <i>Huayan jing zhuanji</i> 華嚴經傳記: He dreams of a man who cuts off his head and replaces it with another when Gunabhadra doubts his knowledge in the <i>Avatamsaka Sūtra</i> ; waking up, he can already lecture on the Sūtra. The version in the <i>Mingseng zhuan</i> is roughly the same but the element with the replacement is missing; otherwise, the wording is entirely the same. ¹¹² Miracle 2: in a monastery every night there is noise as if someone is pushing open the door but no one is in sight. He prays, then one night several people dream together the same dream of thousands of ghosts who go away; this	Note: he is the object (miracle 1) and subject of the rest.

¹¹⁰ Shi Baochang 寶唱, *Mingseng zhuan chao* 名僧傳抄, in *Wan xu cang jing* 卍續藏經, vol. 134
(Taipei: Xinwenfeng chubanshe, 1975), pp. 1-35.

¹¹¹ Shi Sengyou 釋僧祐, *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集 (Beijing: Zhinghua shuju, 1995), pp.
547-550.

¹¹² This could mean that Fa Zang borrowed the story from Baochang as the *Mingseng zhuan* existed
during the early Tang dynasty. The later omission of certain elements in Baochang's version could
be due to the copying done by the Japanese monk centuries later.

	restores the peace in the monastery. Miracle 3: he is asked by Xiao Wudi 孝武帝 to pray for rain; he does so efficiently.	
2. Tanyi 曇翼 His biography is also in <i>Gaoseng zhuan</i> , scroll 5, vol. 1, pp. 311-314, but this episode is not recorded in the same way.	He talks about the <i>dharma</i> to snakes which obstruct the way and they move away. During his life he builds a lot of monasteries, Buddha images and pagodas.	Note: he is the subject of the miracle.
3. Tanbin 曇斌 His biography is also in <i>Gaoseng zhuan</i> , scroll 7, vol. 2, pp. 46-47. The nun (Zhisheng 智勝) is not mentioned here.	He dreams of a man in white color with clear features, who looks like Maitreya, and tells him that he has understood the Sūtras he had doubts about.	Note: he is the object of the miracle.
4. Daoshao 道韶	Miracle 1. He meditates beneath a tree, there is a thunder storm and beasts around him but he remains undisturbed. Later it turns out that there was no rain and storm at all. Miracle 2. While he meditates in the room, his body becomes cold except for his heart. Later he says that he encountered King Yama who showed him hell and tells him that he is the chosen one to instruct people into the teaching. He pulls his right arm to be longer than the left.	Note: he is the subject (miracle 1) and the object (miracle 2).
5. Huijing 惠精 (known also as Tanjie 曇戒) His biography is also found in <i>Gaoseng zhuan</i> , scroll 5, vol. 1, p. 318-319.	He is a student of Dao'an. Before he dies, he wishes to be reborn in Tushita Heaven like eight other monks. Right after that there is a strong light shining on him and he dies.	Note: he is the subject of the miracle.
6. Huiguo 慧果 The same biography is recorded in <i>Gaoseng zhuan</i> , scroll 12 but only the episode with the miracle (<i>Gaoseng zhuan</i> , vol. 2, pp. 262-263).	He is skilled at reciting the <i>Lotus Sūtra</i> . Suddenly there is a man who appears to him and says that he used to be a shaman at the same monastery but is now a ghost because he has committed a crime. He asks Huiguo to accumulate more merit and help him escape this fate, also tells him about money hidden beneath a tree. Disappears suddenly. Huiguo finds the money, makes one copy of the <i>Lotus Sūtra</i> , and sets a Buddhist ceremony. The ghost appears again in a dream and says his life has been changed.	Note: the object of the miracle.
7. Tanfu 曇副	He is very virtuous, makes copies of Vinaya texts, and spreads the Buddhist teaching. In a dream a person tells him that his mission is already finished. Then again dreams Meitreyā who touches his head, and different omens appear.	Note: He is the object of the miracles.

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寶唱《比丘尼傳》中對奇蹟的運用—— 以「感應」爲主的考察

謝薇娜*

摘要

本論文以寶唱（活躍於 495-516 A.D.）所撰的第一部中國比丘尼傳記集《比丘尼傳》爲主，以「感應」此傳統概念爲出發點，分析十一篇描寫奇蹟的比丘尼傳記。因書中感應的表達與奇蹟之間存有密切的關係，故一般認爲聖人創造神聖形象的方式之一即通過神蹟。在描寫比丘尼作爲賢惠與具有模範性質的女人同時，亦強調其不同於其它聖神傳記中所呈現的「被限制的身份描述」。本文亦對屬同作者的《名僧傳》（所用為《名僧傳抄》版本）進行比較，以探討二書中詞藻的區別與其呈現方式。透過對《比丘尼傳》敘事結構分析與文本探源，不僅可論證中國宗教傳記與阿波陀那（*avādana*）類傳記之差異，亦可指出宗教傳記與宗教靈驗記之間的密切互動。另據上述論點，於結尾處再提出六朝時期（220-589 A.D.）宗教文學的若干特點。

關鍵詞：《比丘尼傳》、宗教傳記、感應、奇蹟、靈驗記、女修行者

* 國立清華大學中國文學系博士後研究員。