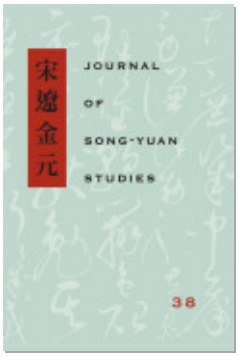
Out of the Cloister: Literati Perspectives on Buddhism in Sung China, 960–1279 (review)



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Journal of Song-Yuan Studies, Volume 38, 2008, pp. 277-285 (Review)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/sys.2008.a380510

approach and is confident that her choice of the concept *zhong* for her study leads "to a better understanding of a world long buried under the accretions of centuries of moralizing historiography" (p. 185). Her book is in the first place a valuable contribution to the tenth-century Qidan Liao history which contains most useful materials, indispensable for future research. It offers an insightful perspective on the Han-Chinese/alien regime border relations and borderland biographies of officials involved. Standen's *Unbounded Loyalty* will certainly become a standard work on Chinese history of the tenth century.

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Mark Halperin. *Out of the Cloister: Literati Perspectives on Buddhism in Sung China, 960–1279*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006. Pp. 364. $49.95 (hardcover). ISBN-13: 978-0-674-02265-2.

Out of the Cloister offers an informative and insightful reading of carefully selected commemorative inscriptions (*chi* 記) on temple buildings from literary collections, gazetteers, and inscription collections. The author reads these documents as evidence of a new and distinctively Sung discourse on Buddhism. He discusses the inscriptions in terms of four central themes: the shared understanding of Buddhism and its place and history in China (Chapter 2 "Protecting the Dharma"), the relationship between Buddhism and the Sung state (Chapter 3 "Imperial Shrines"), contrasting attitudes toward temple restoration (Chapter 4 "Deplorable Displays and Edifying Examples"), and concern over familial ties and personal reminiscences (Chapter 5 "Personal Matters"). Each section begins with a learned and sensitive essay on the larger significance of its theme. Halperin carefully notes what is known about the life of the author of the inscription and the context of its composition. He brings to the analysis of the inscriptions a wealth of knowledge about the period, making each section a richly textured study of certain aspects of Sung Buddhism. To me it is these illuminating commentaries that make this book particularly important and of lasting value. It takes some effort to work through these subtle, and sometimes complex, commentaries, but those who take the time will be amply rewarded. A remarkably lively and sophisticated picture of Sung literati engagement with Buddhism emerges from this close reading of temple inscriptions. In what

follows, I offer some examples of the inscriptions and Halperin's comments on their significance.

The chapter on "Protecting the Dharma" begins by noting how much the new style of literati discourse on Buddhism was shaped by the dominant place Ch'an had come to occupy. The history of Buddhism in China came to be understood in the light of Ch'an lineage discourse, which accorded to Bodhidharma and Hui-neng places of prominence. Ch'an rhetoric challenges all forms of mediation ("skill in means"), and yet this rhetoric paradoxically cleared ample discursive space for literati who were writing commemorations for buildings and images, external and material objects that typically were understood as such forms of mediation. Halperin notes that "Ch'an's radical attitude toward the Buddhist heritage provided them with some 'leverage' with which to judge the clergy, in the course of protecting the dharma," and that consequently, "[W]hat in the T'ang had been strictly ecclesiastical matters now was the business of the literati" (p. 83). Perhaps somewhat ironically, writers also used this "leverage" to criticize the more radically iconoclastic views held by some followers of Ch'an. Their commemorations explicitly noted the impermanence of buildings, unfavorably contrasted book learning with mind transmission, and told stories of Ch'an monks who deliberately destroyed images. Yet, they then turned away from such extreme positions and composed these commemorations for temple buildings, scripture halls, and images.

Halperin proceeds to a discussion of Sung apologetics. He begins with an examination of how writers treated history, the appeal to which "went to the core of the scholar-official's calling" (p. 93). This necessitated confronting past catastrophes in which Buddhism was implicated. By contrast, for Buddhism, "a religion engaged in apprehending the absolute, historical truth offered at best a supplementary aid, helpful but by no means essential" (p. 94). In an insightful reading of the commemoration Huang T'ing-chien wrote for a Kiangsi Ch'an cloister, the charge that the Hui-ch'ang persecution and the Huang Ch'ao Rebellion "were nothing less than the karmic retribution for the *sangha*'s misdeeds" (p. 95) is answered by Hsing-yin, the monk who had requested the commemoration. Having first noted that these disasters resulted from "the collective misdeeds of the entire population, not from the excesses of the clergy," Hsing-yin argued more fundamentally that "Buddhism's opponents mistook evanescent, nonsubstantial beings for ultimate realities. . . . When

compared with the infinite proportions of the Buddha-realm (*dharmadhatu*), Han Yü's venom and Huang Ch'ao's plunder appeared inconsequential. In the end, history recorded only a sequence of unstable causes and conditions and offered little purchase on the ultimate truth" (pp. 96–97).[1]

Another notable apologetic strategy was to call attention to the points of identity between Buddhist and Confucian teachings. In a commemoration for a cloister in present-day T'ai-chou, Chekiang, Lü Pen-chung compared the formula found in the Great Learning about knowing "what to abide in," "being calm," "being tranquil," and "having peaceful repose" to Buddhist teachings. Buddhists taught that "from discipline arises concentration" and "from concentration arises wisdom." There is no difference between this Buddhist teaching and the formula of the Great Learning (p. 103). As in the Ch'an teaching of patriarch transmission, this teaching of the Great Learning was transmitted from Confucius, though Tseng-tzu and Tzu-ssu to Mencius. Lü criticized literati who failed to recognize this identity and "fixed on petty differences and slandered Buddhists." He also censured Buddhists who "completely reject and do not engage in chanting to themselves the Buddha's name, working in meditation, or upholding the *vinaya*" (p. 104).[2]

In his second section, Halperin groups together Buddhist monasteries built in former battlefields, monastic spaces used to mark imperial birthdays and death days, and repositories of imperial calligraphy and portraits in Buddhist monasteries under the heading "Imperial Shrines." Commemorative inscriptions for these buildings are examined in an effort to understand changing representations of the relationship between the state and the Buddhist *sangha*.

Buddhist monasteries built at former battlefields formed a remarkable contrast to the ancient Chinese practice of *ching-kuan* 京觀, burial mounds in which remains of dead enemy soldiers were gathered and mixed into an anonymous pile so that their relatives would not be able to identify the bones of their loved ones. In contrast, Buddhist rulers such as Sui Wen-ti and T'ang T'ai-tsung built monasteries specifically to serve the souls of the war dead. In Sung inscriptions for monasteries built on battlefields, Halperin carefully

1. Huang T'ing-chien 黃庭堅, "Nan-k'ang chün k'ai-hsien ch'an-yüan hsiu-tsao chi" 南康軍開先禪院修造記, in *Huang T'ing-chien ch'uan-chi* (Ch'eng-tu: Pa-shu ch'u-pan-she, 2001), 442–444.

2. Lü Pen-chung 呂本中, "Ching-fan yüan chi" 淨梵院記, in *Chia-ting Ch'ih-ch'eng chih* 嘉定赤城志 (Sung-Yüan ti-fang-chih san-shih-ch'i chung ed.), 29.4a–5a.

traces the subtle relationships between the state and the *sangha* negotiated by their authors. In the inscriptions for the Yang-chou monastery Chien-lung ssu, Wang Yü-ch'eng, who was generally known to be anti-Buddhist, highlighted the Buddhist teaching of reincarnation, suggesting that the monks' devotion performed at the monastery would free the unfortunate ghosts of the war dead and offer them rebirth in higher realms. Thus, "the inscription did not so much commemorate the monastery as present a case for the place of Buddhism in the imperial cult and ask that the reader accept the writer's complicity in this relationship" (p. 118). In Liu Pin's inscription for Tzu-sheng ch'an-yüan 資聖禪院, which had served as a field headquarters for Sung T'ai-tsung's campaign against Northern Han, the monastery comes to represent dynastic authority as well as Buddhist teaching and practice. The monastery "bound together conquerors and conquered. . . . Whatever the universalist aspects of Buddhist practice, Tzu-sheng ch'an-yüan bore the mark of the Sung dynastic house, and worshipping the Buddha involved worshipping Sung T'ai-tsung" (p. 122).[3] In inscriptions written after 1127, Halperin observes that subtle shifts occurred: "Unlike the courts of the Sui, T'ang, and Northern Sung, the Southern Sung court did not wait for the conflict's end to issue order to the *sangha* to help inter the dead" (p. 123). In an 1131 inscription Yeh Meng-te "expected that state burial would result in battlefield success. . . . Yeh's vision also reversed earlier depictions of imperial might, where the Sung first appeared as vanquishers of demons and later as dispensers of mercy. As the dynasty's political fortunes shifted, so did its vision of Buddhist power" (p. 124).[4] In 1172 Wang Hsi-lü commemorated a temple near Lin-an's West Lake. This temple had originally been built on the order of the court in 1146 to oversee a burial ground for slain Sung soldiers, but it had long been neglected. In Wang's inscription the abbot who oversaw the project is represented as a "stalwart loyalist, in stark contrast to negligent, apathetic officials" (p. 125). The court's benevolence is praised, and the six armies are presented in idyllic light, as enjoying the emperor's grace. Yet, the inscription concludes with a message that those who benefit from this generosity must repay it: "Now for those who enter this temple and read this text, they will clearly know the emperor's immense virtue while imperceptibly they will have what develops their loyal and generous hearts and

3. Liu Pin 劉攽, "T'ai-yüan fu tzu-sheng ch'an-yüan" 太原府資聖禪院, in *P'eng-ch'eng chi* 彭城集 (Wu-ying tien chü chen-pan shu ed.), 32.14b–17a.

4. Yeh Meng-te 葉夢得, "Chien-k'ang yan-ge chi" 建康掩骼記, in *Ching-ting Chien-k'ang chih* 景定建康志 (Sung-Yüan ti-fang-chih san-shih-ch'i chung ed.), 43.44a–45b.

what deepens their righteous sense of reciprocity" (from the inscription, p. 126). Here Wang places "the monastery in a larger discourse involving defense policy and the construction of Han Chinese political order" (p. 126).[5]

During the Sung Buddhist monasteries served as centers for public ceremonies on imperial birthdays and death days. They thus "helped articulate the son of Heaven's apotheosis" (p. 131). But again after 1127 "fulsome tributes to emperors and eminent clerics disappeared in commemorations for temples linked to the imperial birthday" (p. 135). "Writers in the Southern Sung chose to underscore not the glory of the ruling house but the duty of its subjects" (p. 136). In discussing imperial calligraphy, Halperin contrasts the 1025 commemoration by Sung Ch'i for a hall displaying pieces of T'ai-tsung's calligraphy at a Ch'an cloister in Fu-chou, Hupei, with inscriptions written after 1127, by Han Yüan-chi and Lu Yu. Sung's earlier inscription "paid no heed to the reception from the subjects and concentrated fully on the imperial house and its glory. . . . Southern Sung commemorations endowed imperial calligraphy with a similar aura . . . however, in the wake of the new political circumstances after 1127, they highlighted the obligations inherent in these bestowals" (p. 141).[6] Halls housing royal likenesses were called *shen-yü-tien* 神御殿 during the Sung, and placed in Buddhist monasteries they "reflected the Buddhification of the imperial cult" (p. 149).

In the chapter designated "Deplorable Displays and Edifying Examples," Halperin examines commemorative writings that expressed a wide range of Sung literati attitudes toward Buddhist buildings. Remarkably, some inscriptions, such as the one written by Su Shun-ch'in in 1042 for a basilica in a K'ai-feng Buddhist monastery and those Tseng Kung composed around the same time, were openly hostile to Buddhism. Through these inscriptions age-old hostilities to Buddhism were brought inside the *sangha*. "For Tseng, a repaired monastery did not represent the solution of a local problem but the persistence of a serious, intractable cultural disorder" (p. 165).[7] Buddhists were accused not only of enjoying parasitic existence but also of destroying ancient Chinese values. Critics were particularly troubled by "the ubiquity of Buddhist

5. Wang Hsi-lü 王希呂, "P'u-hsiang yüan chi" 普向院記, in *Hsien-ch'un Lin-an chih* 咸淳臨安志 (Sung-Yüan ti-fang-chih san-shih-ch'i chung ed.), 79.22b-c.

6. Sung Ch'i 宋祁, "Fu-chou kuang-chiao ch'an-yüan yü-shu-ko pei" 復州廣教禪院御書閣碑, in *Ching-wen chi* 景文集 (Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng ed.), 753–754.

7. Tseng Kung 曾鞏, "Tou-shuai yüan chi" 兜率院記, in *Tseng Kung chi* 曾鞏集 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1984), 289–290.

funeral rituals" (p. 166). Some writers attacked Buddhists for not living up to their own monastic ideals. Some, like Hu Yin, attacked Buddhist monks both for their immoral ideals and for failing to uphold them in their own lives.

In other inscriptions Buddhism is presented much more favorably. Despite his anti-Buddhist stand, Ou-yang Hsiu in his well-known inscription for the Yao-shih cloister in Hsiang-t'an county presents the wealthy local merchant Li Ch'ien-chih; this commoner explains how, in order to repay the protection provided by the ruler above, he chose to pay for the restoration of the temple buildings and images housed in them.[8] Chang Fang-p'ing's inscription described how local elders, responding to the "intentions of the prefectural lords," renovated a monastery for the purpose of the celebration of the imperial birthday (p. 178).[9] Halperin observes that charity became "an essential feature of humanity and a virtue expected of Sung subjects," but "in the classical tradition no institution truly managed the social space between the family and the state," while "Buddhist temples incorporated all into a universal system and were tied with the state in explicit ways" (p. 179). Temples became sites where heroic generosity was displayed. In a 1190 inscription the eminent statesman Shih Hao presented the dedication of the monastery as commemorating an act that ensured the family's long term welfare: "Converting the Chang estate into a Buddhist monastery removed it from this merciless cycle of prosperity and decline; the family legacy achieved a permanent loftiness, both literal and figurative" (p. 184).[10] Sometimes the monastic ties that bind masters with their disciples are presented as models for lay society. In several inscriptions commemorating newly completed buildings the discipline and vigor of Buddhist leaders are compared to the lethargy among literati. Not only writers known for their Buddhist sympathies, such as Su Shih and Wang An-shih, but also classicists like Tseng Kung and Sun Ying-shih, who showed no interest in Buddhism or Taoism, and Li Hsin-ch'uan, known for his hostility to Buddhism, expressed admiration for the single-minded dedication of Buddhists in carrying out their projects.

8. Ou-yang Hsiu 歐陽修, "Hsiang-t'an hsien hsiu yao-shih yüan fo-tien chi" 湘潭縣修藥師院佛殿記, in *Ou-yang Hsiu ch'uan-chi* 歐陽修全集 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 2001), 937–938.

9. Chang Fang-p'ing 張方平, "Shu-chou hsiu-chien t'ien-mu ssu chi" 蜀州修建天目寺記, in *Lo-ch'üan chi* 樂全集 (Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu ed.), 33.8b–11a.

10. Shih Hao 史浩, "Sung Kuang-shou hui-yün ch'an-ssu pei" 宋廣壽慧雲禪寺碑, in *Liang-che chin-shih chih* 兩浙金石志 (Shih-k'o shih-liao hsin-pien ed.), 10.35a–37b.

In the chapter titled "Personal Matters," Halperin examines two kinds of inscriptions: those that present the construction work as an expression of filial piety and those that contain extended memoirs of the authors, recalling their personal connection with monks. In Halperin's words, "Buddhist clergymen and temples assisted literati in affirming their bonds with deceased ancestors" (p. 205). Hu Su's 1027 commemoration for a rebuilt monastery in Kiangsu had asked his kinsmen to help him restore the nearby monastery. Here the propagation of Buddhism is tied to addressing the uncertainties of the Five Dynasties era: "At present the nation's destiny remains unsettled," but the monastery "will be an assembly of devotion, and I hope it will end the disasters of war" (from the inscription translated on p. 206). The second part of the inscription describes a more recent restoration by Hu family descendants. This part of the inscription does not make any reference to Buddhist soteriology. Halperin comments, "Rather than from a hope to better the world, their efforts drew from a sense of filial duty" (p. 207).[11] Liu K'o-chuang's inscription describes how a prominent Fang family in Fukien restored a local cloister, turned it into a public institution, and founded a gravesite temple. The ties between the Fang, living and dead, were strengthened.[12] The 1070 commemoration for a Kuan-yin image by Hou P'u tells a remarkable story. His father, who lacked an heir, prayed to Kuan-yin and received a response in a dream. The father immediately had an artist paint his vision and the son Hou P'u was born. The father instructed the son to revere all Kuan-yin images and commemorate one when he could, but the father died before Hou could do so. Hou finally performed this duty by writing a commemoration to a cloister in Ch'eng-tu, where a Kuan-yin image was restored. This was the image that the great pilgrim Hsüan-tsang worshipped before he set forth on his journey to India. The bodhisattva had appeared to him and "assured him [ie., Hsüan-tsang] that recitation of the *Heart Sutra* would always protect him" (p. 211). Here the Kuan-yin who appeared to Hou's father is overlaid on the bodhisattva who appeared to Hsüan-tsang. In the remaining part of the commemoration, Hou reports that the monks had told him that the restored image was not the image worshipped by Hsüan-tsang. Hsüan-tsang's image had been damaged

11. Hu Su 胡宿, "Ch'ang-chou hsing-hua ssu-chi" 常州興化寺記, *Wen-kung chi* 文恭集 (Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu ed.), 34.4b–6a.

12. Liu K'o-chuang 劉克莊, "Chien-fu yüan fang-shih tz'u-t'ang" 薦福院方氏祠堂, in *Hou-ts'un hsien-sheng ta-ch'üan-chi* 後村先生大全集 (Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an ed.), 93.8a–11a.

and buried. Hou is incensed. Again, this last part of the inscription illustrates the remarkable freedom that Sung commemoration writers displayed in composing these inscriptions.[13]

Lo Shih recalled how he had received his classical, Confucian learning from monks. This is not an isolated example of monks sharing their classical erudition with young students.[14] In the 1115 commemoration that Yang Shih, a student of the Ch'eng brothers, composed for the image of monk Ch'ing-chen, he recalled that he talked about classics with this monk and as he matured in his own learning came to appreciate the monk's worthiness (p. 219).[15] Yeh Shih in his 1181 commemoration for a sutra treasury recalled his childhood. Little is said of the cloister itself, for which the commemoration was written. It is this turn to the personal that Halperin highlights in this group of inscriptions.[16]

Halperin argues convincingly that these inscriptions with their diverse emphases constitute a unique resource for understanding the T'ang-Sung transition (pp. 5–12). To a large extent their importance lies in their attention to mundane details and in the wide range of attitudes that they express. Halperin notes, "few T'ang inscriptions supply many particulars about the physical setting, construction process, or the words and deeds of the main actors. It was these very mundane matters that so occupied the attentions of Sung writers" (p. 59). Scholarship on Ch'an Buddhism, particularly in North America, has for some time emphasized its development during the Sung.[17] Griffith Foulk, in his seminal and influential studies, called attention to institutional developments that occurred during the Sung and shaped this tradition's practices and self-presentation. Carl Bielefeldt, in his study of Dōgen's meditation manuals, noted that it was the new circumstances during the Sung that forced Ch'an monasteries to open their doors to the outside world and produce practically minded manuals for Ch'an meditation. More recently Albert Welter has discussed the "political ascendancy of Chan Buddhism." Halperin's many-sided

13. Hou P'u 侯僕, "Sheng-shou ssu ch'ung-chuang ling-kan Kuan-yin chi" 聖壽寺重裝靈感觀音記, in *Ch'eng-tu wen-lei* 成都文類 (Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu ed.), 38.10b–13b.

14. Lo Shih 羅適, "Yung-lo yüan chi" 永樂院記, in *Chia-ting Ch'ih-ch'eng chih*, 29.10a–11a.

15. Yang Shih 楊時, "Han-yün ssu chen-tz'u i-hsiang chi" 含雲寺眞祠遺像記, in *Kui-shan ji* 龜山集 (Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu ed.), 24.18b–19b.

16. Yeh Shih 葉適, "Pai-shih Ching-hui yüan ching-tsang chi" 白石淨慧院淨藏記, in *Yeh Shih chi* 葉適集 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1961), 137–138.

17. See, for example, *Buddhism in the Sung*, ed. Peter N. Gregory and Daniel A. Getz, Jr. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999).

investigation of Sung literati writings on Buddhism adds a new dimension to this growing body of scholarship on the centrality of Sung Buddhism. It is an impressive and important accomplishment.

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Hugh R. Clark. *Portrait of a Community: Society, Culture, and the Structures of Kinship in the Mulan River Valley (Fujian) from the Late Tang through the Song*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2007. Pp. 473. $49.00 (hardcover). ISBN-13: 978-962-996-227-2.

In this wonderful new book, Hugh Clark shows us the possibilities of a historical source that has not yet been fully exploited by Western students of Chinese society, namely the lineage genealogy. It has been used to some extent for studies of demographic history, but to my knowledge no one has used it to describe the history of local elites as a larger socio-historical phenomenon. On the basis of this remarkable resource in combination with local gazetteers, collected works, inscriptions and collected notes, Clark presents us with a detailed and fascinating description and analysis of the ways in which local families in one sub-region of southern Fujian from the late ninth to mid-thirteenth centuries used kinship constructed around ancestral worship and genealogies to form lasting social networks. A crucial aim of the author is to establish the local nature of kinship networks, even when elites established regional or court-level careers. Since this is an important question in itself and has drawn considerable scholarly attention in the field of Song studies, focusing on kinship issues is indeed fully justified. Here I wish to raise some supplementary questions and suggestions from another angle, not so much as criticism as in the spirit of taking the project further.

The focus of the book on the kinship networks of the Mulan River 木蘭溪 Valley in southern Fujian grew more or less naturally out of the author's research, since the most informative sources tended to deal with that particular area. This itself is also an important piece of information, since it implies that other regions around the valley not only provided less evidence on the issue of kinship networks but most likely also produced fewer such networks, since according to the author the production of genealogies was an important element of constructing lineages. The absence of information is a relevant