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Buddhist kingship and governance in the Dali Kingdom, 1140s to 1200

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Like coeval classical kingdoms of Southeast Asia, the Dali Kingdom (937–1253 CE) of Yunnan adopted politico-religious ideologies for Buddhist kingship. Understanding Buddhist kingship as a medium for bolstering both spiritual and temporal authority, this article investigates if relations between twelfth-century Duan monarchs and their Gao ministers of state were the same as those depicted in post-thirteenth-century sources and scrutinises the argument for the eighteenth monarch Duan Zhixing (r.1173–1200) promoting himself as a dharmarāja to assert superiority over his Gao ministers. I reframe Duan-Gao relations from one of tension and conflict to one of collaboration, and postulate twelfth-century Duan-Gao relations then changing before the 1250s, when thirteenth century sources mention Gao domination. I argue for a working hypothesis of the dissemination of Duan Zhixing’s politico-religious ideology dovetailing with administration at the kingdom’s core areas. Dissemination was implemented by Gao ministers of state and monks from the royal Chongsheng Temple, and the process reveals a collaborative rather than confrontational relationship between Duan monarchs and the Gao clan.

Historians assume that the administrative structure of the Dali Kingdom founded by Duan Siping 段思平 (r. 937–44 CE) resembled that of the expansive and vigorous Nanzhao Kingdom (c.738–902). Nanzhao governance combined Sinitic bureaucracy with Southeast Asian-style ties of allegiance to local leaders,¹ but the Duan monarchs’ roles in administration remain understudied due to the lack of indigenous sources and evidence from coeval Song dynasty records. Compared to the vitality of Nanzhao monarchs, twelfth-century Duan kings appeared reclusive, leaving matters more earthly than divine to the elite Gao family 高氏. Mongol-Yuan and Ming sources recorded Duan-Gao relations as antagonistic. The *Yuan History* (a compilation completed in 1370) emphasised the Duan monarchs’ political ineptitude: ‘two brothers,

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1 Christian Daniels, ‘Nanzhao as a Southeast Asian kingdom, c.738–902’, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 52, 2 (2021): 188–213.

Gao Xiang 高祥 and Gao He 高和, decided all affairs of state'.² According to *Nanzhao yeshi* (hereafter *NY*), a post-fifteenth-century unofficial history, 'the Duan only held nominal rank' after the death of the usurper Gao Shengtai 高昇太 (reigned c.1094–96), insinuating that Duan monarchs were puppets of their Gao ministers.³ It labels the Gao 'masters of the realm' 國主, a cognomen referring to Gao hereditary succession to the top administrative position of 'minister of state' 相國.⁴ However, twelfth-century epigraphical sources record Duan monarchs as emperors 皇帝, confirming their status at the apex of political power.⁵ Certain historians uncritically accept the *NY*'s account of them as titular rulers⁶ without investigating the nature of Duan kingship. The eighteenth monarch Duan Zhixing 段智興 (r.1172/73–1200) commissioned his court painter Zhang Shengwen 張勝溫 to draw a handscroll depicting images of rulers, arhats, buddhas, bodhisattvas, and dharma guardians. Completed in c.1180, this handscroll known as the *Fanxiang juan* 梵像卷 (hereafter *FXJ*) is both a masterpiece of Dali-kingdom Buddhist art and an important contemporary historical source for Zhixing's reign period. Drawing on evidence from this handscroll, Megan Bryson argues that Duan Zhixing projected himself as a *dharmarāja/cakravartin* to 'elevate his position above the Gao officials whose real political and military power exceeded his own'.⁷ This article investigates if twelfth century Duan-Gao relations were the same as those depicted in post-thirteenth-century sources and scrutinises the argument for Duan Zhixing promoting himself as a *dharmarāja* to assert superiority over his Gao ministers. Questions addressed include: Did the Gao truly arrogate political and military authority from the Duan for 150 years after 1096? Were Duan monarchs merely figureheads excluded from governance?

Contemporary epigraphical, Buddhist scriptural and visual sources mostly date from the tenth to twelfth centuries and concern royal and elite families. After the

2 Song Lian 宋濂 et al., *Yuan shi* 元史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), chap. 4, p. 59.

3 *NY*, p. 786. According to Fang Guoyu 方國瑜, the multiple versions contain many old texts from the Nanzhao/Dali periods supplemented with divine and miraculous accounts (*shenqi zhi shuo* 神奇之說) by religionists (*zongjiaotu* 宗教徒) and embellished by lyricists (*cizhangjia* 詞章家): Fang Guoyu, *Yunnan shiliao mulu gaishuo* 雲南史料目錄概說 [An annotated catalogue of historical sources concerning Yunnan] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), p. 383. Hou Chong 侯冲 argues that *NY* incorporates numerous legends created after the Ming: Hou Chong, *Baizu xinshi: Bai gu tong ji yanjiu* 白族心史, 白古通記研究 [History of Bai nationality mentalities: Studies on the *Baigu Tongji*] (Kunming: Yunnan minzu chubanshe, 2002), pp. 439, 443. Yet historians often rely on *NY* due to the shortage of contemporaneous sources. Names of 12th century monarchs and ministers of state roughly accord with stela data, stupa bricks, *FXJ* religious texts, and archaeological evidence.

4 *YSC*, vol. 4, p. 787. Duan Zhengchun 段正淳 (1096–?) reportedly 'assigned governance to the Gao clan 以國柄付高氏', and appointed Gao leaders as ministers of state, thereby creating a precedent for Gao 'monopolisation of political affairs 專政' (*YSC* vol. 4, p. 786). The *NY*'s format from Duan Zhengchun onwards confirms Gao ascendancy. It lists the names of Gao ministers of state and major events under the reigns of each Duan emperor, dubbing them 'masters of the realm'. This text format underscores Gao prominence in 12th century administration.

5 Stupa bricks mould-stamped 'Emperor of Dabao reign period 大寶皇帝' refer to Duan Zhengxing 段正興 (r. 1148–72), *DCJP*, vol. 8, p. 56.

6 Fang Guoyu, 'Gao shi shixi shiji 高氏世襲事迹 [Achievements of the Gao clan's hereditary succession]', in Fang Guoyu *wenji*, ed. Fang Guoyu and Lin Chaomin 林超民 (Kunming: Yunnan jiaoyu chubanshe, 2003), vol. 2, p. 470; Duan Yuming 段玉明, *Dali Guo shi* 大理國史 [A history of the Dali Kingdom] (Kunming: Yunnan minzu chubanshe, 2003), p. 47.

7 'Images of humane kings: Rulers in the Dali-kingdom painting of Buddhist images', in *Buddhist statecraft in East Asia*, ed. Stephanie Balkwill and James Benn (Leiden: Brill, 2022), p. 114.

death of Duan Zhengxing 段正興, his son Duan Zhixing ascended the throne, later assuming the title ‘Lizhen emperor 利貞皇帝’.⁸ Behind the regnal change lies a hitherto little-studied aspect of royal governance. Zhixing’s succession stands at the crossroads between two different kings and marks the appearance of firmer evidence for rulers as Buddhist monarchs and the dissemination of their politico-religious ideology. Bryson’s argument for Zhixing projecting himself as a *dharmarāja/cakravartin* raises the issue of Buddhist kingship (discussed below), and I understand the deification of monarchs as a politico-religious ideology for governance, not as a philosophical or religious façade for insulating the monarch from the running of the polity. I investigate the reasons behind the promotion of Zhixing as a Buddhist monarch and analyse Duan-Gao relations within the context of the ‘internal struggles and external rebellions’ from the 1140s, and the succession wrangles among the Gao for the title Minister of State from c.1172.⁹ I begin by discussing the nature of Dali kingship within the framework of Southeast Asian historical experience. Next, I verify the typology of Buddhist monarchy promoted by Zhixing and elucidate the mechanism employed for spreading the court’s politico-religious ideology. Finally, to connect ideological dissemination with governance in a turbulent age, I demonstrate how the Gao clan’s temple-building projects were a stabilising influence on local society.

Dali Kingdom and Southeast Asia

Nanzhao court elite projected their kingdom’s image as a small Sinitic state following classical Chinese tradition in the 766 Dehua Stele. However, by the ninth century it had grown into a major regional power no longer dependent on outside protection from the Tang and Tibetans. Nanzhao and Dali-kingdom monarchs embraced Confucian notions of governance, indicating its practice alongside Buddhist kingship.¹⁰ Dali-kingdom authors drew on Confucian texts to write scriptural and epigraphical texts demonstrating great familiarity with Sinitic ethics and values. Given the need to train bureaucrats it is hardly surprising that the Dali kingdom imported Sinitic texts from the Southern Song through the horse trade. The 1173 list of books ranged from Chinese classics, to works on history, rhyming, and medicine in addition to *sūtras*.¹¹ Little information concerning Confucianism in Dali Kingdom governance is available, but the continuation of a Nanzhao-style bureaucracy confirms its practice, suggesting ideological hybridity.

The self-representation of Nanzhao kingship changed with the eleventh monarch Shilong 世隆 (r. 859–77) declaring himself ‘emperor’ (*huangdi* 皇帝) and a new orientation towards Buddhism as a ruling ideology. Evidence for the Nanzhao kings’ adoption of Buddhism appears in 899 *Nanzhao tuzhuan* 南詔圖傳 (hereafter *NZTZ*), a visual and textual account of the bodhisattva Acuoye Guanyin 阿嵯耶觀音

8 *FXJ*, p. 79 frame six.

9 *NY*, p. 786; Mu Qin 木芹 et al., *Nanzhao yeshi huizheng* 南詔野史會證 [Collected evidence on the *Nanzhao yeshi*] (Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 1990), pp. 299–300; *YSC*, vol. 4, pp. 786–7. Evidence discussed in Fang, ‘Gao shi shixi shiji’, pp. 480–82.

10 Megan Bryson, ‘The Great Kingdom of Eternal Peace: Buddhist kingship in tenth-century Dali’, *Asia Major* 32, 1 (2019): 101–2.

11 *DCJP*, vol. 10, p. 11; Megan Bryson, ‘Southwestern Chan: Lineage in texts and art of the Dali Kingdom (937–1253)’, *Pacific World*, 3rd ser., 18 (2016): 85.

(*Ajaya Avalokiteśvara*, ‘Invincible’ *Avalokiteśvara*) who reputedly helped found the kingdom.¹² The practice of esoteric Buddhist kingship adopted from Tang China during the late Nanzhao period continued at the Changhe 長和 (903–27), Tianxing 天興 (927–28), Yining 義寧 (928–37) and Dali 大理 courts. The evidence for esoteric Buddhism comes from a text found only in Yunnan, Xuanjian’s 玄鑿 908 sub-commentary on Amoghavajra’s (Ch. Bukong 不空; 705–74), a translation of the *Renwang huguo boreboluomiduo jing* 仁王護國般若波羅蜜多經 (Prajñāpāramitā Scripture for Humane Kings to Protect Their States) known as *Huguo sinan chao* 護國司南抄 (*Compass to Protecting the State Sub-commentary*, hereafter *Sub-commentary*).¹³ This scripture justified kings ruling as Buddhist monarchs; the Dali court promoted Buddhism as an ideology, and practised associated rituals represented in *dhāraṇī* ‘State-Protecting Precious Pillars 護國瑤幢’.¹⁴ An early thirteenth-century *dhāraṇī* pillar erected at Kunming’s Kṣitigarbha Temple 地藏寺 to honour the prominent Gao male, Mingsheng 高明生, corroborates the elite practice of esoteric Buddhism.¹⁵ Hou Chong’s studies trace the scriptural origins of Nanzhao/Dali kingdom exoteric and esoteric Buddhism to medieval China.¹⁶

Yet Dali political organisation fits models of early Southeast Asian mandala states better than the centralised bureaucracy of the Tang-Song eras. A mandala is a sacred diagram of the cosmos geometrically constructed with encompassed circles and rectangles in the Hindu-Buddhist tradition. Models of mandala states encompassed a cosmological core at Mount Meru, the residence of gods and the buddhas, surrounded by continents on four sides. Therefore, kings established states by positioning subordinate populations around the court and invoked links with celestial power to justify their authority over subordinate peoples. The definition of political power through centres rather than peripheries inhibited the administrative integration of subordinate populations.¹⁷

The Duan kings incorporated leaders of important clans like the Gao, Yang and Dong into the mandala’s centre by issuing Sinitic-style official appointments, while

12 Megan Bryson, ‘Tsenpo Chung, Yunnan Wang, Mahārāja: Royal titles in narratives of Nanzhao kingship between Tibet and Tang China’, *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 24, (2015): 59–76.

13 Hou Chong 侯冲, ed., *Huguo sinan chao* 護國司南抄, in *Zangwai fojiao wenxian* 藏外佛教文獻 vol. 7, ed. Fang Guangchang 方廣錫 (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2000), pp. 68–113; Hou Chong, ‘Dali guo xiejing Huguo sinan chao jiqi xueshu jiazhi’ 大理國寫經‘護國司南抄’及其學術價值 [Writing the *sūtra* *Huguo sinan chao* in the Dali Kingdom and its academic value], *Yunnan shehui kexue* 4 (1999): 103–10; Hou Chong, ‘Dali guo xiejing yanjiu’ 大理國寫經研究 [Studies of writing *sūtras* in the Dali Kingdom], *Minzu xuebao* 民族學報 4 (2006): 11–60; Bryson, ‘Great kingdom’.

14 Bryson, ‘Great kingdom’, pp. 110–11; Bryson, ‘Images’, pp. 99–110.

15 Angela F. Howard, ‘The Dhāraṇī Pillar of Kunming, Yunnan: A legacy of esoteric Buddhism and burial rites of the Bai People in the Kingdom of Dali (937–1253)’, *Artibus Asiae* 57, 1–2 (1997): 36; Walter Liebenhal, ‘Sanskrit inscriptions from Yunnan I (and the dates of foundation of the main pagodas in that province)’, *Monumenta Serica* 12, (1947): 36–7.

16 Hou ‘Dali guo xiejing yanjiu’; Hou Chong, ‘The Chinese origins of Dali esoteric Buddhism’, in *Chinese and Tibetan esoteric Buddhism*, ed. Yael Bentor and Meir Shahar (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 389–401.

17 Stanley Tambiah, *World conqueror and world renouncer: A study of Buddhism and polity in Thailand against a historical background* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 102–31; Jan Wisseman Christie, ‘Negara: Mandala and despotic state: Images of early Java’, in *Southeast Asia in the ninth to fourteenth centuries*, ed. David G. Marr and A.C. Milner (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), pp. 65–93; Kenneth R. Hall, *A history of Southeast Asia: Maritime trade and societal development, 100–1500* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), pp. 17–18.

subordinating leaders of diverse ethnic groups at the peripheries through alliances. Clan leaders administered 'semi-autonomous militarized administrative units', only loosely allied with the centre.¹⁸ This twelfth-century system of political organisation experienced instability at both its centre and periphery. For instance, the Thirty-Seven Tribes in northeast Yunnan allied with Duan monarchs since 971¹⁹ revolted during the first half of the twelfth century and rebellions broke out in Yongchang 永昌 and Tengchong 騰衝 at the southwestern periphery in c.1150, followed by intra-Gao warfare at the centre in the 1170s. These disturbances demonstrate the limitations of royal authority and formed the backdrop to the promotion of Duan Zhixing as a Buddhist monarch.

Apart from commonalities of political organisation, the transmission of iconographic styles is another rationale for understanding Dali history within the framework of Southeast Asia. Art historians Moritaka Matsumoto and Li Yü-min argue that the Dali Kingdom's Buddhist sculpture and painting styles adhered to Tang-Song models,²⁰ while Hou Chong attributes Dali religious art's origins to Chinese rather than Indian and Southeast Asian sources.²¹ Yet, Buddhist images of the Dali era include iconography not found in China. Art historians hold divergent views concerning the ultimate source of the iconography of Acuoye Guanyin, proposing various places of origin from India to Southeast Asia, but concur on its introduction to Nanzhao from Southeast Asia.²² Bryson maintains that Dali monarchs adopted Mahākāla 大黑天神 as a tutelary deity from China, and represented it as 'Indian to align themselves with Buddhism's source'.²³ Dali Buddhism relied on

18 James A. Anderson, 'Man and Mongols, the Dali and Đại Việt kingdoms in the face of the northern invasions', in *China's encounters on the South and Southwest: Reforging the fiery frontier over two millennia*, ed. James A. Anderson and John K. Whitmore (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 109–10.

19 *Duan shi yu sanshiqi bu huimeng bei* 段氏與三十七部會盟碑 [Stele on the Alliance of the Duan Clan with the Thirty-Seven Tribes, 971]; see *DCJP*, vol. 10, p. 6.

20 Moritaka Matsumoto 松本守隆, 'Chang Sheng-wen's Long roll of Buddhist images: A reconstruction and iconology' (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1976); Li Yü-min 李玉珉, 'Zhang Shengwen Fanxiang Juan zhi Guanyin yanjiu' 張勝溫梵像卷之觀音研究 [Research on Guanyin in the *Fanxiang Juan* of Zhang Shengwen], *Dongwu daxue Zhongguo yishushi jikan* 15: 227–64; Li Yü-min, 'Fanxiang Juan shijia fohui luohan ji zushi xiang zhi yanjiu' 梵像卷釋迦佛會、羅漢及祖師像之研究 [A study of the Long Roll of Buddhist Images: Śākyamuni, arhats, and patriarchs], *Zhonghua Minguo jianguo bashi nian yishu wenwu taolunhui* (Taipei: Guoli gugong bowuyuan, 1992), pp. 195–219.

21 Hou, 'Nanzhao Dali hanchuan fojiao huihua yishu: Zhang Shengwen hui "Fanxiang Juan" yanjiu' 南詔大理漢傳佛教繪畫藝術——張勝溫 繪《梵像卷》研究 [Painting arts of the Nanzhao/Dali hanchuan Buddhism: Studies on the *Fanxiang Juan* painted by Zhang Shengwen], *Minzu yishu yanjiu* (Feb. 1995): 64–7.

22 Both Chapin and De Mallmann viewed Dali-Kingdom Acuoye Guanyin iconography as originating in India and postulated the arrival of Indian images in Yunnan via Southeast Asia. Chapin traced its origin to the northeastern Pala dynasty and De Mallmann to the central-western region of Mahārāṣṭra or the southern port region of Mahabalipuram. Helen Chapin, 'Yünnanese images of Avalokiteśvara', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 8, 2 (1944): 182; Marie Thérèse De Mallmann, 'Notes sur les bronzes du Yunnan représentant Avalokiteśvara', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 14, 3–4 (1951): 572. Chapin postulated transmission through Śrīvijaya, while Angela Howard has attributed the origin of Acuoye Guanyin to eighth or ninth-century Champa; Angela F. Howard, 'Buddhist monuments of Yunnan: Eclectic art of a frontier kingdom', in *Arts of the Sung and Yüan*, ed. Maxwell K. Hearn and Judith G. Smith (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996), p. 233.

23 Bryson, 'Between China and Tibet: Mahākāla worship and esoteric Buddhism in the Dali Kingdom', in Bentor and Meir, *Chinese and Tibetan esoteric Buddhism*, p. 403.

Chinese scriptures and visual materials to represent religious networks linking Yunnan to India, and perpetuated legends of Acuoye Guanyin arriving through ‘multiple channels’. Bryson explains this incongruence by arguing that Nanzhao-Dali elites adopted a politico-religious ideology attributing the ultimate authority of Buddhist emperors as coming ‘from the Buddha’s birthplace’ and not from authorisation by China.²⁴

Angela Howard hypothesises the stylistic transmission of Acuoye Guanyin images from Champa to Yunnan during the eighth to ninth centuries based on similar traits, including slender waists, a frontal and rigid stance, and the arrangement of clothing and ornaments.²⁵ Nanzhao-Dali kingdom sources do not document communication with Southeast Asia, however, other than military campaigns against the Pyü in 832, and Minuo Guo 彌諾國, Michen Guo 彌臣國, Kunlun Guo 崑崙國, Water Zhenla Guo 水真臘國 and Land Zhenla Guo 陸真臘國.²⁶ Evidence for the possible transmission of Acuoye Guanyin worship from Southeast Asia appears in 899 in *NZTZ*. In this account, Acuoye Guanyin in the guise of a wonder-working, proselytising Indian monk 梵僧 makes seven transformations to convert the Nanzhao people to Buddhism. The fourth to sixth transformations recount proselytisation at the Nanzhao mandala’s southern periphery administered from the walled-city of Kainan 開南城. In the fourth transformation, the Indian monk ‘came from beyond the Lancang [Upper Mekong] River, which lies west of Kainan prefecture 開南郡, arriving in Qiongshi village 窮石村 in Shou Dan 獸蹏 [Wild Animal Area] when Luo Sheng 羅盛 reigned as King Xingzong 興宗王.’²⁷ At Qiongshi, and in the first village visited in the fifth transformation, local people lacked the good karmic roots necessary for embracing Buddhism, and even attempted to murder the Indian monk. The subjects of Song Linze 宋林則, the Great Leader of the Heni 和涅大首領, had better karmic connections. In the sixth transformation, the Indian monk manifests himself as Acuoye Guanyin among the Mang Man 茫蠻 peoples in the ‘Circuit of the Mang [kings]’ 忙道 governed by the Great Leader Li Mangling 大首領李忙靈, and transforms himself into an old man who casts an Acuoye Guanyin statue by melting down the bronze drum beaten by Li Mangling to assemble his people. *NZTZ* illustrates the statue and the bronze drum separately placed on mountain ledges, with the statue of Acuoye Guanyin positioned higher than the drum, which is deliberately turned on its side to symbolise the triumph of Buddhism. Li Mangqiu 李忙求, a late-ninth-century Mang Man leader, memorialised Emperor Longshun 隆舜 (r. 877–97) in 897, reporting that the Acuoye Guanyin bronze image cast by the Indian monk and Li Mangling’s drum roughly 200 years earlier still lay on the mountain.²⁸

24 Megan Bryson, ‘Nation founder and universal saviour: Guanyin and Buddhist networks in the Nanzhao and Dali Kingdoms’, in *Buddhist encounters and identities across East Asia*, ed. Ann Heirman, Carmen Meinert and Christoph Anderl (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 106–7.

25 Howard, ‘Buddhist monuments’, pp. 233–4.

26 863 *Yunnan zhi* 雲南志 (Yunnan Gazetteer), YSC, vol. 2, pp. 78–80.

27 *NZTZ*, p. 142: ‘興宗王蒙邏盛時，有一梵僧來自南開郡西瀾滄江外獸蹏窮石村中，...’ 南開 is a mistake for 開南. Bryson, ‘Tsenpo’, p. 72, describes the Indian monk travelling ‘to tribal areas west of Dali’, but *NZTZ* states that it is the Lancang (Upper Mekong) River, which lies west of Kainan prefecture.

28 *NZTZ*, pp. 143–7, 133–5.

Other sources do not corroborate Acuoye Guanyin worship as early as the second Nanzhao monarch Luosheng who established a walled-city at Yongchang c.712–28, but the 897 report which confirms the Acuoye Guanyin bronze image on a mountain in the southern periphery bears credibility because of its proximity to the 899 commissioning of the *NZTZ*. Kainan administered the Upper Mekong area through walled-cities at Liuzhuihe 柳追和, Weiyuan 威遠, Fengyi 奉逸 and Lirun 利潤. The last three governed ‘ten tribes of the Heichi [Black Teeth] and other stock 黑齒等類十部落’ whose distribution reputedly extended south to Mueang Sat, Chiang Rai and Luang Phrabang.²⁹ According to the text on the front of the Dehua Stele, Nanzhao established ‘a city (*du* 都) to block the strategic point at Yinsheng 銀生 in the territory of the Heizui [Black Mouths] 黑嘴之鄉’, and the general-in-charge recorded on the back of the stele verifies administration of Kainan before c.766.³⁰ Nanzhao constructed walled-cities at Yinsheng and Kainan to defend the Lake Erhai centre against attacks from the Upper Mekong region. I have argued that peoples south of Kainan known as Heizui 黑嘴, Heichi 黑齒 and Mang Man were northern Mon-Khmer speakers.³¹ Melting down a bronze drum to cast a statue of Acuoye Guanyin probably symbolises the Mang Man abandoning their former political and religious organisations to integrate with the centre through Acuoye Guanyin worship. Apart from the fourth, fifth and sixth, all other sections of the *NZTZ* text mention the Indian monk active at the Lake Erhai centre, suggesting Acuoye Guanyin worship entered from the Upper Mekong area. Given the wide distribution of Mon-Khmer speakers over mainland Southeast Asia and their political prominence in Laos and Thailand before thirteenth-century polity building by Tai speakers, the *NZTZ* account supports Howard’s hypothesis for the transmission of Acuoye Guanyin iconography from Southeast Asia.

Another commonality with coeval Southeast Asian classical kingdoms was politico-religious ideologies for deifying monarchs as Buddha-kings (*Buddharāja* 佛王). Buddhist kingship in Dali, Angkor (802/889–c.1440) and Pagan (c.950–1300) originated from Indic concepts of monarchs ruling as *cakravartins* (universal rulers/wheel-turning kings), *devarāja* (God-kings) and *dharma-rājas* 護法法王 / 法王 (righteous rulers). These concepts deified and legitimatised the Pagan kings, forming the politico-religious and moral ideology for royal succession and settlement of disputes. Michael Aung-Thwin emphasised the Buddha-kings’ role as charismatic *min laung* (immanent kings) emerging to save people by restoring order to society in times of disruption.³² The terms *cakravartin* and *devarāja* appeared in ninth-century Angkor inscriptions, and Buddha-king c.1190.³³ Art historian Ku Cheng-mei 古正美 argues that Mahāyāna Buddhist kingship appeared earlier in Dvāravatī polity/ies

29 *Yunnan Zhi*, YSC, vol. 2, p. 57; Daniels, ‘Nanzhao’, pp. 202–11.

30 *DCJP*, pp. 4–5.

31 Daniels, ‘Nanzhao’, pp. 207–11.

32 Michael Aung-Thwin, *Pagan: The origins of modern Burma* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1985), pp. 47–68; Michael Aung-Thwin and Matrii Aung-Thwin, *A history of Myanmar since ancient times: Traditions and transformations* (London: Reaktion, 2012), pp. 82–3.

33 David P. Chandler, *A history of Cambodia* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm, 1994), pp. 34–49; George Coedès, *The Indianized states of Southeast Asia*, ed. Walter F. Vella, trans. Susan Brown Cowing (Canberra: Australian National University, 1975), p. 175. *Devarāja* dates to ‘Indianisation’ in pre-Angkor Cambodia and Michael Vickery discusses the validity of equating *raja* with rule over a unified polity.

(c.550–900),³⁴ showing that small dynasts practised Hindu-Buddhist kingship before the emergence of classical kingdoms. George Coedès conceptualised the Indianisation of ancient Southeast Asia ‘as the expansion of an organised culture founded upon the Indian conception of royalty’, ‘characterised by Hinduist or Buddhist cults’, and he identified the Cambodian king Jayavarman VII (1181–1218) as ruling Angkor as both Buddha-king and *cakravartin*.³⁵ Despite differences in transmission routes to the Dali state via China and Pagan or Angkor from South Asia, all shared the concomitant politico-religious ideology of Buddhist kingship during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Duan Zhixing's kingship

The Nanzhao-Dali practice of esoteric Buddhism including *Renwang huguo bore boluomiduo jing*-style state protection rites was confined to the court, but its application for governance remains unclear. Bryson identifies the Nanzhao monarch Longshun as ‘embodying an esoteric form of Buddhist kingship’, but she does not discuss administration.³⁶ To establish that Buddhist kingship functioned as an institution for governance it is necessary to prove dissemination of concomitant politico-religious ideology from the centre to the periphery. In examining Duan Zhixing's reign, I attempt to go beyond monastics and officials equating rulers with buddhas and bodhisattvas to investigate if bolstering the ruler as a Buddhist monarch dovetailed with the Gao-led administration. Clarifying the monarch's role in administration will deepen our understanding of Buddhist kingship as an institution for governance in both Sinitic and non-Sinitic classical Southeast Asian kingdoms. Below I investigate evidence for Duan Zhixing as a Buddhist monarch and examine his relationship with Gao ministers of state in the following section.

Buddhist kingship conceptualised monarchs as human reincarnations of buddhas and bodhisattvas descending from the *Tuṣita* heavens to propagate the religion. One benchmark for identifying Buddha-kings was their dual role as *cakravartins* and *dharma-rājas*, or protectors of the faith. Buddha-king was not merely a royal honorific; its concomitant ideology held monarchs as the fount of all moral conduct, and moral exemplars for their subjects by governing according to the Ten Wholesome Practices (*shishan* 十善).³⁷ Like lay Buddhists, Buddha-kings had to follow the rules of moral conduct (*śīla*) prescribed for bodhisattvas, and only qualified to rule

Michael Vickery, *Society, economics, and politics in pre-Angkor Cambodia: The 7th–8th centuries* (Tokyo: Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies for UNESCO, Toyo Bunko, 1998), pp. 177–80.

34 According to Ku, Dvāravati kings ruled as reincarnations of Bodhisattva Maitreya 彌勒菩薩 following Hindu/Buddhist beliefs, ‘Gudai Xianluo Zhuiheluo Wangguo de Dacheng Fojiao Jianguo Xinyang 古代暹羅墜和羅王國的大乘佛教建國信仰 [Dvāravati's Mahāyāna Buddhist conception of royalty]’, *Rao Zongyi Guoxueyuan Yuankan* 3 (2016): 245. Ku's term the Buddhist conception of royalty (*fojiao diwang jianguo xinyang* 佛教帝王建國信仰) rewords George Coedès' ‘the Indian conception of royalty’.

35 Coedès, *Indianized states*, pp. 15–16, 175.

36 Bryson, ‘Tsenpo’, p. 74. Bryson notes the ‘king-buddha identification’ in Dali-era scriptures. Megan Bryson, *Goddess on the frontier: Religion, ethnicity and gender in southwest China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017), pp. 46–7.

37 April D. Hughes, *Worldly saviors and imperial authority in medieval Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2021), p. 10.

as monarchs after undergoing the *Bodhisattva pratimokṣa* 菩薩戒 rite,³⁸ possibly included in the esoteric rites related to state protection performed at the Dali court from its foundation.³⁹

The second benchmark is the construction and worship of *caitya*. Although this term refers to funerary mounds or *stūpas* in India,⁴⁰ in Buddhist kingship *caityas* conveyed buddhas or bodhisattvas who have come down from the *Tuṣita* heavens to rule as Buddha-kings and save people. For this reason, their adulation constituted an essential element of buddha-king worship. China knew these different functions of *caitya* (*zhiti* 支提/枝提) and *stūpa* (浮圖/浮屠/佛圖/塔) through Chinese translations.⁴¹ Past scholars have not investigated *caitya* worship in Yunnan,⁴² and Ku Cheng-mei is the first and only scholar to hypothesise its practice by Duan Zhixing. Because bricks mould-stamped with *stupa* images datable to the Dali and Ming eras have been discovered, I briefly discuss her hypothesis. Ku traces *caitya* construction to Nāgārjuna's doctrine of kings ruling as human incarnations of the Buddha in a *cakravartin's* body, thereby justifying adulation of their images as Buddha-kings.⁴³ Ku postulates the Chongsheng Temple functioning as the royal temple, therefore the temple's Three Pagodas represent *caitya*, not *stūpas*. She classifies the ninth-century 69-metre-tall Thousand League Pagoda (Qianxun ta 千尋塔) as a *Mahācaitya*, akin to Amarāvati in Andhra Pradesh, India, and Borobudur in Central Java, Indonesia. Archaeologists have recovered 153 Buddha images, *sūtras* and other artefacts from the Thousand League Pagoda,⁴⁴ but only one Buddha

38 *Brahmajāla-sūtra* 梵網經 mentions the requirement for undergoing this rite. See Kathy Cheng-mei Ku, 'The *Buddharāja* image of Emperor Wu of Liang', in *Philosophy and religion in early medieval China*, ed. Alan K.L. Chan and Yuet-Keung Lo (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2010), p. 274.

39 Bryson, 'Images', pp. 87–95. Ku claims that scenes of Mañjuśrī visiting Vimalakīrti in *FXJ* frames 59–62 represent Duan Zhixing receiving the *Bodhisattva Pratimokṣa* 菩薩戒 (*bodhisattva-sīla*) rite, but she provides no evidence to identify Duan Zhixing and does not explain the monastic figure bowing on the mat before Vimalakīrti. See *NZTZ*, pp. 96–8; Ku, *Zhang*, pp. 106–13.

40 *Caitya* also referred to a 'pyramidal column containing the ashes of a deceased person, a sacred tree (especially a religious fig-tree) growing on a hall, temple, or place of worship', Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English dictionary* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass; Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), p. 402; Tracy Miller, 'Of palaces and pagodas: Palatial symbolism in the Buddhist architecture of early Medieval China', *Frontiers of History in China* 10, 2 (2015): 242.

41 *Mahasangha-vinaya* 摩訶僧祇律 translated by Buddhahadra and Faxian 法顯 (317–420) explains: 'Those that have relics are named stupas. Those without relics are named *caityas* 有舍利者名塔, 無舍利者名枝提.' Another passage reads: 'These various *caityas* can store Buddhas, canopies and objects for making offerings 此諸枝提得安佛、華蓋、供養之具', see Ku, *Zhang*, pp. 21–2, 46.

42 *Caitya* worship is not mentioned in Helen B. Chapin and Alexander C. Soper, *A long roll of Buddhist images* (Ascona: Artibus Asiae, 1972).

43 Ku, *Zhang*, pp. 1–33. According to Ku, Nāgārjuna's version of *caitya* worship emerged with the 3rd century *Gaṇḍavyūha* 入法界品 (The Excellent Manifestation Sūtra), and gained popularity from Eastern Wei (534–50) to Northern Qi (550–77). *Cakravartins* were reincarnations of Maitreya and Vairocana Buddhas transported to earth by *caitya*, and Ku cites Tang emperor Gaozong 唐高宗 (r. 649–83) constructing the Buddha *Vairocana* image at Fengxian Temple 奉先寺 and the *Maitreya* Buddha-king image at Huijian Cave 惠簡洞 near Luoyang as evidence for Chinese monarchs simultaneously constructing images of multiple Buddhas.

44 Qiu Xuanchong 邱宣充, 'Nanzhao Dali de ta cang wenwu 南詔大理的塔藏文物 [Cultural artefacts stored in Nanzhao and Dali pagodas]', in *Nanzhao Dali wenwu 南詔大理文物 [Cultural artefacts from the Nanzhao and Dali kingdoms]*, ed. Yunnan sheng wenwu guanli weiyuanhui (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1992), pp. 123, 130; and Jiang Huaixiang 姜懷襄 and Qiu Xuanchong 邱宣充, *Dali*

image from the two smaller 42-metre-tall northern and southern pagodas.⁴⁵ Ku cites *FXJ* frame 81 labelled ‘Precious pagoda with Buddha relics 舍利寶塔’ to prove *caitya* worship during Duan Zhixing’s reign. She interprets the *stūpa*-shaped building elevated in the air as a *caitya* because it emits rays from both sides, even radiating a golden glow from its finial. The monarch, monks, military generals, female attendants, and laity assembled reverently in a circle beneath signify *caitya* worship by all people within the realm. In the Sinitic cultural sphere pagodas 塔 doubled as *caitya* and *stūpa*.⁴⁶ Though evidence for the Three Pagodas as *caitya* remains weak, late Nanzhao Buddhist kings undoubtedly sponsored large-scale architectural projects for building *caityas*, *stūpas* and temples.

The third benchmark is the ancient Indian coronation rite of *abhiṣeka* (*guanding* 灌頂), which identifies kings with Buddhas in the Indian esoteric Buddhist system.⁴⁷ This initiation rite consecrates individual disciples and transforms monarchs into *mahārājas*, ritually justifying their human incarnation as Buddha-kings, thereby authenticating their investiture as secular rulers.⁴⁸ The *abhiṣeka* constituted part of the state-protecting system of esoteric Buddhism promoted by the Indian monk Amoghavajra 不空 in Tang China,⁴⁹ and Dali monarchs modelled their esoteric Buddhist kingship on Amoghavajra’s version.⁵⁰

Chinese Buddhists knew the need for *cakravartins* to undergo the *abhiṣeka* rite through the early-sixth-century translation of *Dasazhe niganzi suo shuo jing* 大薩遮尼乾子所說經 (*Mahāsatya-nigrathaputra-vyākaraṇa sūtra*):⁵¹

One type of *cakravartin* known as a *guanding chali* 灌頂刹利 rules the four quarters, and [he] alone is the blessed one [referring to Buddha], the all-conquering *dharmarāja*. He is a *cakravartin* replete with *the sapta ratna* [seven precious jewels].

NZTZ and *FXJ* include three visual representations of *guanding chali* or ‘consecrated *kṣatriya*’ (*chali* partially transliterates *kṣatriya*). In two instances, texts accompanying *abhiṣeka* rite illustrations label the monarch *mahārāja* 摩訶羅嗟. Ku concludes that Nanzhao embraced Avalokiteśvara worship as its state religion because the first and earliest illustration portrays its twelfth monarch Longshun barefoot with his hair in a topknot about to receive purification water and be pronounced *mahārāja* before

Chongsheng si santa 大理崇聖寺三塔 [The Three Pagodas at the Chongsheng Temple, Dali] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1998), pp. 69–70.

45 Jiang and Qiu, *Dali*, pp. 23, 70.

46 According to Tracy Miller, they perform overlapping functions as repositories/relics (‘Palaces’, pp. 225–7); see also Tracy Miller, ‘Translating the *ta*: Pagoda, tumulus and ritualized Mahāyāna in seventh-century China’, *Tang Studies* 36, 1 (2018): 82–120.

47 Ronald Davidson, *Indian esoteric Buddhism: A social history of the tantric movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 123–31.

48 *Ibid.*, pp. 126–7; Ku, *Zhang*, pp. 96–8.

49 Charles D. Orzech, ‘On the subject of *abhiṣeka*’, *Pacific World: Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies*, 3rd ser., 13 (2011): 113.

50 Bryson, ‘Southwestern’, pp. 75–6.

51 Translated by the Indian scholar Bodhiruci 菩提留支 at Luoyang in 508: ‘轉輪王者，有一種轉輪王，謂灌頂刹利統四邊畔，獨尊最勝護法法王，彼轉輪王七寶具足。’, in *Taishō Shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經 [The Tripitaka in Chinese], ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭, 100 vols. (Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1922–34), T9 (272) 330a 23–b10. Cited in Ku, *Zhang*, p. 97.

an Avalokiteśvara statue.⁵² Her identification of FXJ frame 55 *Mahārāja* as Duan Zhixing performing the *abhiṣeka* rite is novel. Moritaka Matsumoto, Li Lincan and Li Yü-min identify this figure as Longshun, whose name appears in frame 103.⁵³ Ku presents no evidence to support her claim for Duan Zhixing,⁵⁴ though this frame could be interpreted as invoking *mahārāja* models of kingship embodied in images of Longshun or Duan Zhixing as FXJ's sponsor. Ku identifies the third unlabelled instance (FXJ frames 39–41) as a 'consecrated *kṣatriya* 灌頂刹利'.⁵⁵ More concrete evidence for royal association appears in the Buddhist talisman 符 drawn in gold ink on the chest of a Buddha and over all petals of the giant lotus flower surrounding him in frames 39–41. This talisman is also mould-stamped on *stūpa* bricks from the Hulushan Pagoda 葫蘆山塔 in Eryuan County 洱源縣 and bears three *bija* characters (possibly including *āṃḥ* and *sthṛim*),⁵⁶

52 The label identified Longshun 隆順 as '*mahārāja*', but the wording 土輪王 擔界謙[慊]賤, 四方請為一家 is enigmatic. Ku cites Jiang Yibin 蔣義斌 who surmises that the hitherto unknown term *tu lunwang* 土輪王 refers to a *cakravartin* and interprets 擔界謙賤 to mean 'takes responsibility for protecting the common people', and 四方請為一家 to mean 'advocates that all countries are equal and maintain brotherly relationships' (NZTZ, pp. 54, 137, 152; and Ku, *Zhang*, pp. 96–7). Bryson ('Tsenpo', p. 74), suggests that it was a transliteration of *Bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan*, a Tibetan Buddhist term meaning 'victory banner of the teachings'. A more literal translation would be: 'the *mahārāja*, the local *cakravartin* (*tu lunwang* 土輪王) accepts responsibility for the good and the mean, and requests all four quarters come together as one family 擔界謙[慊]賤, 四方請為一家'. According to Alexander Soper (*Long roll*, p. 32), both titles 'seem to have been intended to ascribe to the Nan Chao rulers several of the attributes of a Universal Monarch, *cakravartin*', indicating that Longshun turned himself into a *cakravartin*. Ku (*Zhang*, pp. 96–7) argues that it shows first, that Longshun underwent the *abhiṣeka* rite before investiture, and second, *cakravartins* had various appellations.

53 Li Lincan, *Nanzhao*, p. 40; Matsumoto 'Chang Sheng-wen', pp. 194–8; Li Yü-min, 'Fanxiang', pp. 195–219; Bryson, 'Southwestern', pp. 67–96.

54 FXJ frame 55, p. 96; Ku, *Zhang*, pp. 92, 112–13.

55 FXJ, pp. 91, 96; identification as *mahārāja* is based on the portrayal of both figures half-naked in frames 41 and 55. See Ku, *Zhang*, pp. 92, 98.

56 I am grateful to Sanskrit scholar Dr Bill Mak 麥文彪 (pers. comm., 14 May 2022) for deciphering the three *bija* characters (from left to right ABC) at the top of the brick in fig. 1. Mak reading from left to right suggests *im* (possibly *sthṛim*) for A on the left, *āṃḥ* for B in the centre and *iḥ* for C on the right. An anonymous reviewer suggests *ṣlīm* for A and *ṣliḥ* for C. Mak explains *im* for A as follows: 'based on comparison with other similar *bijas* forwarded to me by Christian Daniels in 2021, the character appears to be *sthṛim*'. It may be related to a similar *bija* letter transcribed as *sideli* 斯得利 in the Chinese *Yujiayankou* 瑜伽焰口. The anonymous reviewer justified his/her suggested reading of A saying, 'there also appears to be a subscribed *l* in the center, but the marking above it is unclear'. In response, Mak commented 'the character formation is imperfect. What appears to be 'l' is in fact the lower part of a conjunct consonant: *thr*', with the 'r' represented by an upward slant at the bottom like in many older varieties of pre-*nāgarī* scripts.' Therefore '*ṣlīm*' seems an unlikely reading. Regarding the central character B, Mak stated, 'though also unclear, [it] appears to be *āṃḥ*'. This is an impossible Sanskrit character with doctrinal significance in Esoteric Buddhism and is sometimes referred to as *goten gusoku a ji* 五點具足阿字 ('a' possessing five points/dots) in the Japanese *Siddham* tradition, as one of the five manifestations of the basic letter 'a', representing Vairocana 大日如來 in the Vajradhātu 金剛界 (Diamond Realm), one of the two Maṇḍala systems. See Ōno Shunran 大野俊覽 'Ajikan no kenkyū 阿字觀の研究 [Research on Ajikan]', *Mikkyō bunka* 密教文化 85 (1968): 19; Fabio Rambelli, *A Buddhist theory of semiotics: Signs, ontology, and salvation in Japanese esoteric Buddhism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 147; Lucia Dolce, 'The embryonic generation of the perfect body: Ritual embryology from Japanese Tantric sources', in *Transforming the void: Embryological discourse and reproductive imagery in East Asian religions*, ed. Anna Andreeva and Dominic Steavu (Leiden: Brill, 2016), p. 257. Esoteric Chinese Buddhists knew of this Sanskrit character by the 8th century CE. Amoghavajra described *āṃḥ* as 惡字(引聲) in his Chinese translation of the *Bodhicitta Śāstra*, *Jingang Ding Yujia Zhong Fa Anouduoluo Sanmiao*

two lines in Chinese, and a *dhāraṇī* in Sanskrit (fig. 1).⁵⁷ The Chinese reads:

The fifteenth day, first month, seventh year of Dabao/
 大寶七年歲次乙亥正月十五日/
 The Dabao emperor and benefactors, sentient beings in the *dharmadhātu*.
 大寶皇帝及施主法界有情

The date 18 February 1155 proves the brick's firing in Duan Zhengxing's reign, thereby refuting Ku's postulation of the talisman's invention during Duan Zhixing's reign for writing the word *dharmā* (*fofa* 佛法 or *fa*法).⁵⁸ A similar dedication to sentient beings in the *dharmadhātu* appears in *FXJ* frame 78. The Hulushan brick's dating to the reign of Duan Zhixing's father verifies earlier usage, but its association with the *abhiṣeka* rite remains unclear. The shape of Hulushan Pagoda closely resembles that of Chongsheng Temple's two small pagodas,⁵⁹ so if this talisman concerns coronation rites, Hulushan Pagoda may have been related to Chongsheng Temple's Buddha-king worship.

No evidence exists to verify that a new version of Buddhist kingship centred on Maitreya and Vairocana replaced Avalokiteśvara worship after the reins of power passed from Duan Zhengxing to Duan Zhixing c.1172/73.⁶⁰ According to Ku, this new version derived from the Yangqi faction (Linji sect) 臨濟宗 楊岐派 around the reign of the first Southern Song emperor, Zhao Gou 趙構 (1127–62). Though *FXJ* frames 9, 78, 79 and 80 corroborate Ku's identification of the central figure in cave 4 Shibao shan 石寶山 as a royal Maitreya,⁶¹ no scriptural evidence substantiates her assertion for the Yangqi faction grouping Maitreya, Mañjuśrī, and Samantabhadra as a set in cave 4.⁶² Nevertheless, the numerous Avalokiteśvara images in *FXJ* underline this deity's popularity during Duan Zhixing's reign.⁶³ There is insufficient evidence to prove that a shift from Avalokiteśvara toward Maitreya and Vairocana worship accompanied the transition from Duan

Sanputi Xin Lun 金剛頂瑜伽中發阿耨多羅三藐三菩提心論, *Taishō* (1665), 32.574a. Gudrun Bühnemann has pointed out that the letter *amḥ* is used to represent Gaṇeśa in some Hindu tantric material. Although the combination of *m* and *ḥ* is not possible according to Pāṇini, all kinds of unusual combinations of letters are found in tantra, including the *kūṭākṣara* combinations of syllables (lit. piled-up letter), which are impossible to pronounce (pers. comm., Bill Mak, 14 May 2022). Also, for *bija* characters on a brick from the Sheli ta 舍利塔 see Liebethal, 'Sanskrit inscriptions', p. 33, plate VI. 57 *DCJP*, vol. 8, p. 56; Yang Ren 楊韜, 'Dali guo Huoyanshan ta 大理國火焰山塔 [The Huoyanshan Pagoda of the Dali Kingdom]', *Maoqinxuan sanyi guzhi zhanggu* 懋勤軒三逸故紙掌故 2 (2016): 2. Hulushan Pagoda is also known as Huoyanshan Pagoda.

58 Ku, *Zhang*, p. 103.

59 Li Chaozhen 李朝真, 'Nanzhao Dali de guta 南詔大理的古塔 [Ancient pagodas in the Nanzhao and Dali periods]', in *Nanzhao Dali Wenwu*, p. 125.

60 Duan Zhixing ascended the throne c.1172 and reigned for 28 years until 1200; Mu, *Nanzhao*, pp. 300–301.

61 Ku, *Zhang*, pp. 81–9.

62 According to Ku, this set of three deities derive from the Zhuanlun jingcang caves 轉輪經藏窟 at Dazu, Sichuan, and represent Yang Qi faction beliefs; Ku, *Zhang*, pp. 135–8.

63 Avalokiteśvara is the most popular figure in *FXJ*; a total of 21 frames are connected to this deity. See Li Yü-min, 'Zhang Shengwen', p. 228.

Zhixing invoked a diversity of deities, perhaps even emphasising Maitreya worship, but it was not the sole one.

In 1180, the Dali monk Miaoguang 妙光 celebrated Duan Zhixing's reign as marking the emergence of a Buddha intent on 'painstakingly saving' sentient beings,⁶⁴ insinuating that by commissioning the *FXJ* Zhixing sponsored a large-scale project to bolster his identity as a Buddhist monarch. 'Painstakingly saving' sentient beings alludes to Zhixing as an incarnation of the saviour deity Maitreya in an age of declining dharma.⁶⁵ Miaoguang possibly refers to Zhixing as a saviour striving to restore stability because of intermittent unrest in the kingdom since the 1140s. Given the precedent of the first Sui emperor Yang Jian using his position as *cakravartin* to justify military action to reunite China and propagate Buddhism,⁶⁶ likewise Duan Zhixing's mobilisation of Gao ministers of state to quell disorder and propagate Maitreya worship accorded with Sinitic Buddha-kingship.

Dissemination of Buddhist kingship

If Duan Zhixing created a politico-religious ideology to restore stable governance, how did he disseminate it? The process was complex, requiring repackaging of the doctrine by Chan masters, training monks, and building temples to function as bases for proselytisation. Its success depended on coordination with Gao ministers of state and royal temple monks. Because the Chongsheng Temple served as the headquarters for Buddha-kingship Ku Cheng-mei postulates its renovation by successive post-ninth-century monarchs, even suggesting that Zhang Shengwen painted the *FXJ* there.⁶⁷ In this section, I draw on epigraphical sources to clarify this temple's function in disseminating Duan Zhixing's ideology and to investigate the role of Chan masters in proselytisation.

Headquarters of state Buddhism

Given its history of royal patronage, it is hard to believe that the Chongsheng Temple was not the headquarters for state-sponsored Buddhism, but it was a headquarters with a muted voice, and echoes of it remain elusive due to the loss of records.

64 *FXJ* frame 135, p. 123. Miaoguang's short essay, dated 8 Feb. 1180, begins by explaining the origin of the universe according to Daoist doctrine, then describes Duan Zhixing descending to earth to save all sentient beings as a Buddha-king:

'Brightness generated the single vital force, and the single vital force in turn created the universe which gave birth to sentient beings, and buddhas appeared. Sentient beings are infinite, and the realm of the Buddha as boundless as the sea. Each sentient being has a form in the Buddha-vehicle, and [Buddhas] painstakingly save them. Although knowing that everything is [as illusory as] shadows, by [conveying beings] to salvation [the monarch] really resembles a divinity.'

明相生一氣，一氣成大千，有眾生焉，有佛出矣。眾生無量，佛海無邊。一一乘形，苦苦濟拔，知則皆影像，濟也實如神。

65 The Sui/Tang Buddha-kings Yang Jian 楊堅 (r. 581–604), and Wu Zhao 武曩 (r. 690–702), associated themselves with worldly saviours such as Maitreya Buddhas and Prince Moonlight 月光童子 to support their claims to rule as incarnations of buddhas/bodhisattvas. Hughes, *Worldly saviors*, pp. 25–60.

66 *Ibid.*, pp. 61–79, 112.

67 Ku, *Zhang*, pp. 140, 148–51.

However, if the Three Pagodas in the Chongsheng functioned as *caitya* for transporting Buddha-kings, then this fact alone would verify royal benefaction. Table 1 assembles the epigraphical evidence for Chongsheng as the headquarters for state Buddhism and for housing monks who placed Buddhist politico-religious ideology at the service of governance.

Table 1 verifies state management c.908–1194. Records on paper (no. 2), silk (no. 3), bronze (nos. 1, 4 and 6) and iron (no. 5) demonstrate court issuance of official titles to monks and the deployment of craftsmen for repairs and restoration. In the earliest case, the monk Xuanjian (active 903–927), author of *Sub-commentary*, held the titles ‘Recipient of the Purple Robe, Master of Exegesis, Abbot of the Chongsheng Temple, and Monk of Inner Offerings’ (no. 1) manifesting close connections with royalty. Xuanjian’s appointment as head of esoteric Buddhism probably indicates royal sponsorship of Avalokiteśvara worship. The second case dated 16 July 1000, involves Shi Zhen, and his title, ‘Erudite at the Chongsheng Temple’, and appellation *tongtianren* (a wise and far-sighted person) indicates association with the court (no. 2). The third case of two master craftsmen surnamed Li who played a role in the 1141 renovations bespeaks the court’s mobilisation of artisans. Li Zhucai held the title of Metallurgical Master (*jinshi* 金師) and *yanbi* 彥賁 (literally ‘the worthy decorator’), while Li Shenglong oversaw construction of four new iron pillars and repair of a canopy; and was a departmental clerk (*shengshi* 省事) who superintended the repairs (no. 4). Given the capacity to mobilise artisans, I conjecture that the Bronze Avalokiteśvara image dedicated to princes of the blood by Duan Zhengxing 1147–72 now held by the San Diego Museum of Art (no. 6) must have been cast by artisans serving the state.

Table 1 also demonstrates Gao administration of state-sponsored twelfth-century Buddhism. First, Gao Shengtai’s son Taiming 高泰明 (d.u.) presented a copy of the *Vimalakirti Sūtra* to Song envoys on 14 January 1119 ‘to wish them well on their return [journey] to court’. Yin Huifu, abbot of the Foding Temple, hand-copied this *sutra* demonstrating that monks aided diplomacy with the Song (no. 3). Second, Gao Taiming, in his capacity as Duke Pingguo, issued orders to the departmental clerk to commence renovations in 1141 (no. 4). Third, no. 5 indicates the association of Gao Liangcheng 高量成 (d.u.), the Dharma-Protecting Duke 護法公 and Minister of State c.1141–50, with this temple in 1154.

Role of monks in dissemination

The Chongsheng Temple monks Xuanning 玄凝 and Jiaoyuan 皎淵 played a leading role in repackaging and disseminating Buddhist doctrine. As a disciple of State Preceptor Daowu 道悟國師, Xuanning took charge of promoting Duan Zhixing as Buddha-king.⁶⁸ The stele dated 13 February 1198 provides evidence:⁶⁹

68 Daowu was a Chan monk adept of the Avalokiteśvara school. Identifying him as Faguang heshang 法光和尚 in *FXJ* frame 55, Ku (*Zhang*, pp. 145–8) surmises his deep involvement with Buddha-kingship worship of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* tradition.

69 The stele is named ‘Dali guo shi shi jieing jianhui Gao Xing lanre zhuanzhu bei bing zu 大理國釋氏戒淨建繪高興蘭若篆燭碑並序 [Seal Script Candle-shaped Stele with Preface to the Construction and Painting of Gao Xing’s Monastery by the Dali Kingdom Monk Jiejing]’; *DCJP*, vol. 10, p. 9: ‘奉福天王皞信，冢宰國公。禪師釋玄凝，慮欲德高天險，威挫地平，帝里則恒顯飛龍之勢，....’. I follow the interpretation in Ku, *Zhang*, pp. 147–8.

Table 1 Inscriptions concerning Buddhism, 1000–c.1172

No.	Date	Type/Material	Location	Donor's name	Supervising officials	English translation and original
1	16 July 1000	Tablet BRONZE 銅片	Qianxun Ta 千尋塔 (1978)	Unknown	Shi Zhen 史真, Erudite of this Temple	'13th Day, 6th month in the <i>gengzi</i> year of Mingzhi 6, appointed as <i>tongtianren</i> (A wise and farsighted person, Shi Zhen, Erudite of this Temple' recorded by a total of 8 people 明治四(1000)年庚子歲六/月十三日授通天人當/寺院博士史真在□智/馬左奴永富卞斤智口惠/藥師惠埤八人記之。 ^a
2	894–1124 ^b	Sutra <i>Huguo sinan chao</i> 護國司南鈔 PAPER	Chong-sheng Temple	Unknown	Xuan Jian 玄鑒, Monk on Duty within the Palace, Abbot of the Chongsheng Temple and Head of the Mi sect	'compiled by the Buddhist monk Xuan Jian, Monk on Duty within the Palace, the Abbot of the Chongsheng Temple and Head of the Mi sect, a recipient of the Purple Robe. 內供奉僧崇聖寺主密宗教主賜紫少[沙]門玄鑒集.' ^c
3	1119	<i>Vimalakirti Sutra</i> 維摩詰經 SILK 絹	Foding Temple	Gao Taiming Minister of State	Yin HuiFu 尹輝富, Abbot of Foding Temple 佛頂寺	'Gao Taiming, the Minister of State of the Dali kingdom, has diligently copied one section of the <i>Vimalakirti Sutra</i> for Zhong Zhen 鐘震 and Huang Jian 黃漸, the Envoys from the Great Song Kingdom, to show respect and wish them well on their return to court after completing their appointed tasks. I hope that they will receive the utmost in good happiness and emoluments, and travel over mountains and perilous terrain without fear or worry. Receiving the emperor's benediction, may China and this distant land continue [to maintain good relations] for millions and millions of years in the future, never becoming isolated at any time. Recorded on the 2nd day,

Continued

Table 1 Continued

No.	Date	Type/Material	Location	Donor's name	Supervising officials	English translation and original
4	1141	Tablet BRONZE銅片	Qianxun Ta	Duke Pingguo (Gao Tai-ming)	The Manager of Xiao (Dianxiao 典校) of Chengdu, the Metallurgical Masters 金師) the Yanbi ^c Li Zhucai 彥賁李珠睬 and Li Shenglong 李勝隆	<p>3rd Winter month of the 9th year in the Wenzhi reign period, a <i>wuxu</i> (dog) year [14 Jan. 1119]. Made by Monk Yin Huifu, Abbot of Foding Temple.'《維摩詰經》題跋：大理囿相囿公高泰明致心為大宋國奉使鐘震、黃漸造此《維摩經》壹部，贊祝將命還朝，福祿絕嘏，登山步險，無所驚虞。蒙被上澤，願中國遐邦從茲億萬斯年而永無隔絕也。文治九年戊戌季冬旦日記 佛頂寺主僧尹輝富建造。^d</p> <p>'In a <i>xinyou</i> year [1141 CE], Duke Pingguo directed the Departmental Clerk to renovate again the original storied [pagoda]. To undertake the repairs foremen were summoned to examine carefully, study and personally prepare vessels for ritual offerings. The Examining Manager of Chengdu,^f the Metallurgical Masters and the Yanbis Li Zhucai and Li Shenglong who were picked from among the wisdom gate children 智門拈 (故) to newly construct four iron pillars, and Lin Zhi supervised□□□at the foot of the canopy over the image erecting and making it firm ...' '時辛酉（1141）歲，平囿公示省事，再修元重，修（信）招校治/親手作俎。成都典校金師彥賁李珠睬智門拈子女其/李勝隆新建鐵柱四，林治□□□佑蓋足豎固□□人/世永人萬代流名，賢婦保十春茶勝，孝男當君寵臣敬者□之。'^g</p>
5	1154	Tablet IRON 鐵片	Qianxun Ta (1978)	Gao Liangcheng 高量成	No record	This inscription contains many indecipherable characters, and cannot be read coherently, but it reveals the reign year 1154 (Dabao 6) and the name Gao Liangcheng. It falls within the reign

6	1147–72	Avalo-kiteśvara image BRONZE銅	Unknown	Duan Zhengxing 段政興	No record	of Duan Zhengxing 段正興 (1148–71), and Gao Liangcheng was his minister of state (<i>xianguo</i> 相國): \ ‘大寶六 [1154] 年□□□□/高量成春信立□/塔齊保 (得) 州□□生/□□之記錄□□□ ^h ‘Duan Zhengxing, the emperor and piaoxin 饜信, records that he financed the casting [of this image] for the princes Duan Yichangsheng, Duan Yichangxing and others. He hopes that the benefits will become as innumerable as dust and sand, and that the blessings will be guaranteed for a thousand Springs, and passed down from one descendant to another for ten thousand generations by the workings of Heaven and Earth.’ 皇帝饜信段政興資為太子段易長生、段易長興等造記。願祿筭塵沙為喻，保慶千春，孫嗣天地標機，相承萬世。 ⁱ
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Notes and sources

^a Jiang and Qiu, *Dali Chongsheng Temple Santa*, p. 83, and photo no. 165 TD 上 : 62.

^b Cyclical characters indicating the year of copying are difficult to date. The handwritten note 手記 records: ‘Copied in the summer months of Shengzhi 6, a *jiayin* year at the time of Anguo’ (時安國聖治六載甲寅歲朱夏之月抄). Anguo lasted from 903 until 909, but the closest *jiayin* year is 894; then, 954, 1014, 1064, 1124, 1194, 1254. The Shengzhi reign remains uncorroborated with other sources. See Yunnan Sheng Wenshi Yanjiuguan 雲南省文史研究館, ed., *Yunnan Shufa Shi Tulu* 雲南書法史圖錄 (Kunming: Yunnan meishu chubanshe, 2014), vol. 2, p. 95.

^c The superscription 題款 on the hand-copy of *Huguo sinan chao*. I read *shao* 少 as a mistake for *sha* 沙; *ibid.*

^d The original is held by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Text from Li Lincan, *Nanzhao Daliguo de xinziliao zonghe yanjiu* (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1982), plate I (B) (p. 69), and pp. 19–21.

^e Yanbi 彥賁, literally ‘the worthy decorator’, is an official title. An inscription records Zhang Xingming 趙興明 with the title Yanbi erecting a commemorative Vijaya Pillar for his deceased mother in 1195 (Yuanheng 元亨 11); see *DCJP*, vol. 10, p. 9 middle section.

^f The archaeological report interprets Chengdu 成都 as a toponym; see Jiang and Qiu, *Dali Chongsheng Temple Santa*, p. 84. An alternative interpretation is to take *du* 都 as meaning elegant or magnificent, ‘and personally prepare vessels for the ritual offerings (*zuo zu* 作俎) and make it magnificent’. It is used in this sense in the *Odes of Zheng* in the *Shijing* 詩經《詩經·鄭風》: ‘有女同車，顏如舜華。將翱將翔，佩玉瓊琚。彼美孟姜，洵美且都’ ‘There is the lady in the carriage [with him], with a countenance like the flower of the ephemeral hedge-tree. As they move about, the beautiful *qiong*-gems of her girdle-pendant appear. That beautiful eldest Jiang is truly admirable and elegant.’ English trans. slightly revised from CC, vol. 4, pp. 136–7.

^g Jiang and Qiu, *Dali Chongsheng Temple Santa*, p. 83, and photo no. 166. TD 外 1.

^h *Ibid.*, p. 84.

ⁱ Text from Li Lincan, *Nanzhao*, plate II (G) pp. 73, and p. 26.

Blessings to the mahārāja-*devas* and *piaoxin* 驃信,⁷⁰ and to the Minister of State, Duke of the Country (*zhongzai guogong* 冢宰國公). The moral achievements of Chan master monk Xuanning rise as high as towering natural barriers, his overpowering majesty ensures peace throughout the land, and the imperial capital eternally manifests the power of a flying dragon

Piaoxin 驃信 denotes Duan Zhixing, and Bryson identifies ‘the Minister of State’ as Gao Miaoyin Hu 高妙音護.⁷¹ Ku claims this stele substantiates the Chongsheng Temple as the headquarters for Xuanning’s promotion of Duan Zhixing’s synthesised version of Chan and Huayan 華嚴 (Flower Garland school) Buddhism, and postulates reliance on Sichuanese Chan masters for training Yunnan monks in proselytisation, temple construction, *caitya* erection, and buddha image manufacture.⁷²

Chan Master Jiaoyuan (1149–1214; monastic name: Zhixuan 智玄, style: Jiaoyuan; hereafter Jiaoyuan) assisted Xuanning. According to the 1220 stele erected by royal order, Jiaoyuan, née Gao Chengzhong/zong 高成忠/高成宗, was the son of Gao Liangcheng. He was posthumously named the ‘Chan Master of Sudden Awakening’ 頓覺禪師. As a nephew of Duan Zhixing through his mother, a princess, Jiaoyuan possessed the social status and political connections to promote his ‘uncle the Lizhen emperor 利貞皇叔’ as a Buddhist monarch.⁷³ Having entered the monkhood at the age of 21 and residing at the Chongsheng Temple from c.1172 to 1200 throughout Duan Zhixing’s entire reign, he devoted 27 prime years of his life to supporting the monarch’s politico-religious ideology. The fact that Jiaoyuan parted company with Xuanning only to take up residence at Shuimu Mountain 水目山 in the year of Zhixing’s demise insinuates an association between his relationship with this monarch and long service at the headquarters.⁷⁴

Strong ties with royalty suggest that Jiaoyuan’s residence at the Shuimu Mountain Temple bolstered Zhixing’s successor as a Buddhist monarch. After arriving at Shuimu Mountain during the winter of 1200, Jiaoyuan practised Chan-Huayan

70 The character 驃 has two readings, *piào* and *miào*. Read *bjiaw^h* in the reconstructed pronunciation of early middle Chinese in Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Lexicon of reconstructed pronunciation in early middle Chinese, late middle Chinese, and early Mandarin* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1991), p. 239. Therefore, it is interchangeable with the *piào* 驃 in ‘*piaoxin* Menglonghao 驃信蒙隆昊’, *NZTZ*, p. 137. Yet according to the *Guangyun* 廣韻 (Expanded Rhymes) of 1008, *piào* 驃 is also read as *miào* and means ‘white’; see Ding Du 丁度 et al., compilers, *Guangyun* (Siku Quanshu: Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), vol. 8, 15a, pp. 236–688: 卷八, 去聲下, 笑三十五曰: ‘妙 弥笑切... 白色.’

71 Bryson, ‘Southwestern’, p. 85 n45. Bryson notes that Gao Miaoyin Hu 高妙音護 was Duan Zhixing’s brother-in-law, being married to Duan Zhixing’s sister, Duan Yizhang Shun 段易長順. See *Dali guo gu Gao Ji muming bing xu* 大理國故高姬墓銘並序 in *DCJP*, vol. 10, p. 11.

72 Ku, *Zhang*, pp. 135–50.

73 This account is based on ‘*Dali guo yuangong ta zhi bei ming bing xu* 大理國淵公塔之碑銘並序 [Stele inscription with preface to the pagoda of Duke (Jiao) yuan of the Dali kingdom]’, written by Zhao You 趙佑 from Chuzhou 楚州 and dated 13 Sept. 1220, *DCJP*, vol. 10, pp. 10–11. It records Gao Guanyin Zheng 高觀音政 sending ‘a memorial [about Jiaoyuan’s deeds] to the king for consideration’, which resulted in ‘the dressing of a stone and its erection as a memorial. [The king] ordered his minister [Zhao] You to write a general account [of Jiaoyuan’s life and contributions for carving on the stone]: ‘孫高太明, 姪高善祐, 雖妙年而義誘其衷, 謂開國以來一人而已, 可以將示來者。故俾公弟高觀音政檢校措意, 如公弟扶危撫弱, 防禦之義深者, 因申奏上聞, 琢石立碑, 命臣佑輒書其大略也。’. Bryson, ‘Southwestern’, pp. 67–8, 87–8.

74 Ku, *Zhang*, pp. 138, 145, 159.

synthesised teachings until his death on 27 November 1214. A brick mould-stamped with a *stūpa* found on Shuimu Mountain refers to Jiaoyuan by his monastic name Zhixuan.⁷⁵

諸法因緣生， All *dharma*s arise from a cause

我說是因緣。 I have explained their cause.

因緣盡故滅， The cause [of these *dharma*s] exhausts and ceases,

我作如是說。 I make this explanation.

[Dedication at base] 追為頭陀釋智玄 ‘Posthumously for the ascetic (*dhūta*) Monk Zhixuan.

This dependent-origination formula (*jiyan* 偈言) derives from the *Foshuo zaota gongde jing* 佛說造塔功德經 (‘Sūtra on the Merit of Dedicating Stūpas’), translated by Dipoheluo 地婆訶羅 (Divākara, 613–87) c.680. It attests to Jiaoyuan’s advocacy of accumulating merit through *stūpa* building; in addition to extolling their construction, the use of causation verse stresses the importance of proper Buddhist practice.⁷⁶ Other monks, including Gao family members, had proselytised at Shuimu Mountain before Jiaoyuan,⁷⁷ but none boasted as illustrious a pedigree as Jiaoyuan. His mentor Xuanning succeeded Daowu, who espoused the doctrine of ‘the original heart of Mañjuśrī, the practice [one missing character] of Samantabhadra, and the perfect Buddha-enlightenment of Maitreya’.⁷⁸ This evidence may lend credence to Ku’s claim that Shuimu Mountain monks followed the teachings embodied in the

75 This causation verse appears on the *stūpa* image’s upper half, and the dedication runs along the brick’s base; *DCJP*, vol. 8, p. 64. (I read *ru* 汝 in the third line as *gu* 故 following the *Taishō Shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經 T. 699, 16: 801b 10–11.) The text records Jiaoyuan as the dedicatee, so the brick must date from after his demise in 1214, earlier than the attribution to the Yuan period in *ibid*. According to the ‘Dali guo Yuangong ta’ stele, ‘the disciples who succeeded him in the dharma erected a *stūpa* on the mountain treating him as a *Tathāgata*. The Emperor commanded that for worship the *stūpa* be known as “the region of reality”’, *DCJP*, vol. 10, p. 11: ‘其嗣法弟子起塔與山，辦事如法已。帝命禮號塔曰實際。

76 For more on the dependent-origination formula, see Dorothy C. Wong, *Buddhist pilgrim-monks as agents of cultural and artistic transmission: The international Buddhist art style in East Asia, ca. 645–770* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2018), pp. 36, 46.

77 Ku identifies two other Yunnanese Chan masters who played a vital role in this temple between the 9th and 12th centuries in the undated stele, ‘Shuimu shan zhu zuyuanqi beiji 水目山諸祖緣起碑記 [A Record of the History of Various Patriarchs of Shuimu Mountain]’, *DCJP*, vol. 10, p. 141. The first is the Chan Master Puji Qingguang 普濟慶光禪師 from Yao’an 姚安 who ‘requested the opening of this mountain for all the ministers 為諸大臣請開此山’ in 813 (Yuanhe 8). Later, after the Area Command 都督府 at Yao prefecture 姚郡 invited him to open up the Xingbao 興寶 and Miaoguang 妙光 temples, he died shortly after returning to Shuimu Mountain. The second is Chan Master Jingmiao Cheng 淨妙澄禪師 (née Gao 高). He was the father of Empress Dowager Renyi 仁懿 太后 and served in governance for over ten years. He entered the monkhood and resided at Shuimu Mountain until his death on 30 Aug. 1211. Judging from its wording and anachronistic information this stele dates from the post-Dali period. It cites a record compiled by Hanlin academician Su Da 翰林學士蘇達 to date the death of Jingmiao Cheng. This ‘record’ was reputedly composed at the command of Duan Zhengchun 段正淳 (r. 1096–1108 文安皇帝), therefore it predates Jingmiao Cheng’s death in 1211 by over a century.

78 ‘*Daliguo yuangong ta*’, *DCJP*, vol. 10, pp. 10–11: ‘如此觀之，則文殊初心，普賢行，彌勒極果矣。其家譜宗系者，自觀音傳於施氏，施氏傳於道悟國師，道悟國師傳於玄凝，玄凝傳於公。’. Another undated and less reliable account appears in ‘Shuimu shan zhu zu yuanqi beiji’, *DCJP*, vol. 10, p. 141.

Maitreya Buddha-king image in Jianchuan cave no. 4. In any case, the role of high-ranking Gao monks in its dissemination demonstrates Gao support of state-sponsored Buddhism during Duan Zhixing's reign, suggesting Duan-Gao collaboration in promoting Buddhist kingship.

Temple building and governance in the uplands

As an enthusiast of monasteries, Duan Zhixing reputedly 'built sixteen temples in 1190'.⁷⁹ Given his association with dissemination centres, it is not surprising that the royal family sponsored Buddhism. However, early Mongol-Yuan epigraphic evidence equally reveals the Gao as prominent temple builders:⁸⁰

Because the Gao rendered distinguished meritorious service, [the Duan] appointed their descendants to all the prefectures, commanderies, sub-prefectures, and counties, and the Gao built all the great monasteries on famous scenic mountains.

Leading members of the Gao family erected temples 'on famous scenic mountains' because Duan monarchs had appointed them to govern provincial areas. An undated stele at Zixi Mountain 紫溪山 in today's Chuxiong praises Gao Liangcheng's fondness for 'constructing monasteries' and his devotion to 'fully providing for all the temples on the various mountains'. In recognition of Liangcheng's proselytisation, the Duan monarch conferred on him the title 'Dharma-Protecting Bright Duke 護法明公'.⁸¹ This case verifies the practice of temple building for the state within the framework of Duan-Gao relations *before* Duan Zhixing.

Dissent and tensions from the late 1140s unsettled the peripheries of the Dali Kingdom. The Thirty-Seven Tribes in the northeast revolted early in Duan Zhengyan's 段正嚴 reign (r. 1117–41), killed a senior Gao official at Shanchan 善闡 in their large-scale rebellion c.1147, and rose up yet again in 1154. Further unrest ensued with the 1147 revolt by ethnic groups and 1150 disturbances in the two Gao-administered southwestern prefectures of Yongchang and Tengchong, which Gao Mingqing 高明清 eventually quelled.⁸² In this section, I investigate the building

79 Mu, *Nanzhao*, p. 301. Fang Guoyu, 'Dali Zhang Shengwen fan hua chang juan 大理張勝溫梵書長卷 [Scroll of Buddhist images by Zhang Shengwen of Dali]', in *Fang Guoyu Wenji*, vol. 2, p. 623.

80 'Chongjian Yangpai Xingbao si xuzhi changzhu ji 重建陽派興寶寺續置常住記 [Record of the reconstruction of the Xingbao Temple at Yangpai and additional establishment of endowment property]', 8 May 1376: '雲南自蒙氏十三世，歷鄭趙楊三姓，未幾而復至段思平，有國以來好神武王，以高氏為大有功，而府郡州縣皆封高氏子孫，而名山大刹皆其所創也', *DCJP*, vol. 10, p. 8.

81 'Hufa Minggong deyun bei moya 護法明公德運碑摩崖 [Cliff-stele of the Destiny of the Moral Virtue of the Dharma-Protecting Bright Duke]', *DCJP*, vol. 10, p. 7, Top section lines 8–16.

82 Two passages in *NY* record these events:

1. 'In 1147 (dingmao year), the ministers of the state established the son of Pingguo 平國 [=Gao Shengtai 高升泰 son Gao Liangcheng 高量成] who possessed moral virtue [as Master of the State]. He yielded his position to Gao Shouzhen 高壽貞 who called himself the China Duke 中國公, and resided at Chuxiong 楚雄. When old, there were internal struggles among his sons and external rebellions, and he stepped down [as Master of the State] and went into the monkhood. He served as [Master of the State] for 40 years before his demise.' 丁卯 [1147] 年...郡臣以平國 [高升泰] 子 [高量成] 有德，立之。又讓高壽貞，自號中國公，居楚雄。年老，諸子內爭外叛，禪位為僧，在位四十年薨。', *YSC*, vol. 4, p. 786.

2. '[Zhengkang emperor 正康皇帝 (r. 1147–71)] ascended the throne in 1147 When Gao Liangcheng succeeded as [Master of the State], the reign year was changed to Taibao. In Taibao 2 Teng/Yong [Tengchong and Yongchang] rebelled, and Gao Mingqing quelled it. In [Taibao] 6, [Gao

of temples and administrative offices to restore order at Yao prefecture 姚府 in central Yunnan.

The need for stable governance arose due to clashes between two branches of the Gao for the coveted position of Minister of State. Therefore, I must make a digression to put temple building within the perspective of Duan-Gao relations. The two branches of the Gao family each had their own power bases. The Yucheng branch 踰城派 (descendants of Gao Taiming) controlled the west and simultaneously inherited the position of Yao prefecture Yanxi 姚府演習. The Guanyin branch 觀音派 (descendants of Gao Guanyin 高觀音) administered Shanchan in the east and possessed an appanage at Baiya 白崖 in the west, strategically positioned on communication routes leading to the Upper Mekong river basin. Fang Guoyu traces the origins of this split to the usurper Gao Zhisheng (r. 1094–96), who assigned his eldest son Gao Shengtai 高昇泰 to reside at Dali and another son Gao Shengxiang 高昇祥 to reside at Shanchan. Succession to the post of minister of state devolved on the eldest male issue, so starting from Gao Taiming (Shengtai's eldest son) the position passed down through this line, which Fang Guoyu dubs the 'Yucheng branch'.⁸³ In 1174, the Guanyin branch deposed the incumbent Yucheng branch minister of state, replaced him with their own Gao Zhenming 高貞明, causing the two factions to fight one another.⁸⁴

Intra-Gao warfare subsided by the mid-1180s. According to the 1186 stele documenting the renovation of the Xingbao Temple (Temple of Flourishing Treasure) by Gao Yucheng Guang 高踰城光, the Superior Duke (*shanggong* 上公) and administrator of Yao prefecture, monasteries functioned as the 'foundations of moral power' (*deji* 德基), aiding the maintenance of social order.⁸⁵ This royally sanctioned stele authored by Yang Caizhao 楊才照, the Vice Director of the Fentuan 粉團侍郎 at the imperial capital's 皇都 Chongsheng Temple, endorses Gao patronage of Buddhism. Yang Caizhao held positions as Monk Confucian 釋儒 and *ācārya* on the Buddhist register 僧錄閣梨, demonstrating close connections with royalty and esoteric Buddhism.⁸⁶ This stele records the restoration of Buddhist temples

Liangcheng] suppressed the rebellious barbarians of the Thirty-Seven Tribes. On the 17th day, the Master of the State [=Gao Liangcheng] yielded his position to his nephew Shouzhen and retired to live at Chuxiong. After succession, Shouzhen was called the Chinese Buxie 中國布燮...宋紹興十七 [1147] 年即位, 改元永貞。高量成繼立, 改元太寶。二年, 騰永叛, 高明清平之。六年討三十七部叛夷。十七日, 國主讓位與姪壽貞, 退居楚雄。壽貞立, 號中國布燮。十五年, 改龍興, 又改聖明, 建德。' YSC, vol. 4, p. 787.

83 Fang, *Yunnan shiliao*, pp. 993–4.

84 Yang Shen 楊慎, ed. Hu Weixian 胡蔚羨, *Zengding Nanzhao yeshi* 增訂南詔野史 [Enlarged edition of the *Unofficial History of Nanzhao*], no date of publication, postscript by Yuan Jiagu 袁嘉穀 dated 1916, *Shang juan* 42a; YSC, vol. 4, p. 787.

85 *Xingbao si dehua ming bing xu* 興寶寺德化銘 並序 [Inscription of the transformation (of the populace) through moral power at the Xingbao Temple with a preface]. Xingbao Temple 興寶寺 was located at Dacun 大村, Guantun xiang 官屯 鄉 in Yao'an county 姚安縣. The lyrics/song-word poem (*ci* 辭) reads: 'This temple is magnificent. Starting from Yang Zhen who losing his heart to the Dharma 法 completed it exhausting his wholehearted loyalty. This foundation of moral power has been constructed but has unexpectedly become severely dilapidated': '偉哉此寺, 肇自楊公。心亡於法, 事竭於忠 (其七)。創此德基, 忽遭燬燬。' *DCJS* vol. 10, p. 8 lines 30–31.

86 Yang Caizhao's full title was: '皇都崇聖寺粉團侍郎賞米黃繡手披釋儒才照僧錄閣梨楊才照奉命撰'. The Yang family were associated with esoteric ritual. Bryson ('Images', p. 102, n 49), points out that

dovetailing with local governance, praises meritorious service rendered by senior Gao officials, and stresses their cooperation and support for royalty.

Reputedly first established by a Nanzhao official named Yang Zhen 楊楨 some-time after 860, the Xingbao Temple ‘fell into ruin’ before 1186. The stele elaborates Gao Yucheng Guang’s motives for restoration:⁸⁷

In his spare time from governance (*qili* 緝理), he profoundly refreshed his moral power (*zaode* 澡德).⁸⁸ ... The severe dilapidation of this monastery (*lan* 藍) saddened him [because it manifested] the harm done to the root of beneficial influence (*deben* 德本) before it flourished. Waiting for people to gather in numbers, he collected artisans with hearts as pure as mirrors⁸⁹ and [rebuilt the monastery] ingeniously by creating a new model following the plan of the old design. He was delighted once the ridgepole was placed on top and rafters positioned below the beams [completing the basic structure], which exactly accorded with the proper [meaning] of the *dazhuang* 大壯 hexagram.⁹⁰ With a [design as accurate] as an arrow speedily [flying towards its mark] and with [eaves] resembling a large bird with beautiful feathers soaring with its wings spread, the force of its majesty escalated it to the rank of the [palace in] the *Sigan* 斯干ode. It exhausted the secluded elegance and uniqueness of the landscape and brimmed with the intriguing flavour of fogs and mists.

Greater than its eulogistic tone is the stele’s emphasis on repairing the temple to restore the ‘foundations of moral power’ and facilitate administration. Couched in language with strong Buddhist undertones and filled with allusions to the Confucian classics, the stele records patronage of Buddhism as both a mark of devoutness and a contribution to governance. It describes the temple’s dereliction as ‘harm done to the root of beneficial influence before it flourished’, analogising the decline of social order. The stele also stresses renovation as a means of reinvigorating

in 1136 the court monk Shi Zhaoming 釋照明 (d.u.), née Yang Yilong 楊義隆, copied a text on the rituals for inviting buddhas, bodhisattvas, vajra beings and others found only in Dali.

87 *DCJS*, vol. 10, p. 8, lines 14–16: ‘緝理之暇，澡德玄源。恨不手布黃金，幸齊肩於善施；日用留心白馬，庶接武於漢明。傷德本之未滋，痛斯藍之燼燬。遂乃（二十五行）俟子來之眾，鳩心竟之工。妙啓新模，式仍舊貫。喜得上棟下宇，盡合大壯之宜；矢棘翬飛，崛起斯干之勢。窮山水之幽致，溢煙霞之（二十六行）佳趣。’

88 *Zaode* 澡德 refers to the phrase *zao shen er yu de* 澡身而浴德 (lit. ‘Washing the body and bathing in moral virtue’), meaning to cultivate the mind and body to cleanse and purify the person. It appears in the *Ruxing* 儒行 [Conduct of the Scholar] chapter of the *Liji* 禮記. See James Legge, trans., Li Chi, *Book of rites: An encyclopedia of ancient ceremonial usages, religious creeds, and social institutions* (New York: University Books, 1967), vol. 2, p. 407.

89 *Jing* 竟 interchangeable with *jing* 鏡 in the Buddhist term *xinjing* 心鏡 (heart mirror, or heart of the mind).

90 *Dazhuang* 大壯 (Great Strength), the 34th hexagram in the *Yijing* [Book of Changes], is composed of thunder and rain above and a heaven-like round canopy for protection against rain. The phrase ‘putting a ridgepole at the top and rafters below the beams’ (*shang dong xia yu* 上棟下宇) refers to the edifice’s basic structure. *The commentary on appended phrases* in the *Yijing* explains: ‘In remote antiquity, caves were dwellings, and the open country was a place to stay. The sages of later ages had these exchanged for proper houses, putting a ridgepole at the top and rafters below the beams in order to protect against the wind and rain. They probably got the idea for this from the hexagram *Dazhuang* [Great Strength].’ Translation from Richard John Lynn, *The classic of changes: A new translation of the I Ching as interpreted by Wang Bi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 346.

politico-religious ideology when stating, it ‘transforms [the populace] through moral power and honesty 德化清廉’.⁹¹ First, the restoration was marked by frugality. The line ‘ingeniously by creating a new model following the plan of the old design’ alludes to Min Ziqian 閔子騫 counselling against inappropriate expenditure when rebuilding the treasury in the ancient State of Lu 魯國.⁹² Second, the refurbished monastery served as a centre for promoting state-sponsored Buddhism. The fine design of the edifice, replete with eaves resembling beautifully coloured bird feathers, put it on par with a Western Zhou monarch’s palace,⁹³ implying that Gao Yucheng Guang possessed an edifice suitable for governance. The restoration heralds the rejuvenation of Buddhism, bringing order to chaos.

The meritorious service rendered by three generations of Gao males preceding Gao Yucheng Guang underscores the family’s cooperation and support for Duan monarchs. Yucheng Guang’s great grandfather Taiming served as Minister of State. His grandfather Mingqing served as General for Pacifying Faraway Lands 定遠將軍 from c.1147,⁹⁴ and the stele praised his father Yucheng Sheng 高踰城生, eldest son of Mingqing, for ‘accumulating pure moral power from the firm and flexible 剛柔之粹德, and embodying the latent spirits of the [five] peaks and [four] ditches 岳瀆’.⁹⁵

As the second son of Yucheng Sheng and succeeding his elder brother, as Yanxi of Yao prefecture, the stele confirmed the legitimacy of Yucheng Guang’s appointment:⁹⁶

After receiving the king’s edict, his reputation for benevolence already harmonised with [the hearts of the people],⁹⁷ and whenever he alighted from his carriage, the pure breeze awakened him [reminding him of the king’s fine character]. Coming to greet him with baskets of rice and vessels of soup,⁹⁸ people sang, recovering their vigour and filling the

91 *DCJS*, vol. 10, p. 8, line 34–5.

92 An allusion to the *Lunyu* 論語: ‘Some parties in [the State of] Lu were going to take down and rebuild the Chang treasury. Min Ziqian said, ‘Suppose it were to be repaired after its old style; —why must it be altered and made anew?’ The Master said, ‘This man seldom speaks; when he does, he is sure to hit the point.’ Translation slightly modified from *CC*, vol. 1, p. 241.

93 *Shici huifei* 矢棘翬飛 comes from an ode titled *Sigan* 斯干 probably composed to celebrate the completion of a Western Zhou dynasty palace recorded in *Shijing* 詩經 [Book of Poetry], *CC*, vol. 4, p. 305. *Huifei* 翬飛 (a big bird flying displaying the magnificence of its feathers) refers to the ‘flying eaves and circle angle’ (*feiyan yi jiao* 飛檐翼角) of traditional Chinese architecture, emphasising the monastery’s majestic appearance.

94 *NY*, pp. 786–7.

95 *Xingbao si dehua ming bing xu DCJP*, vol. 10, p. 7, bottom section, lines 22–3: ‘有公子高踰城光者，曾祖相囿明公高泰明，祖定遠將軍高明清，已備囿史。考牧公高踰城生者，定遠將軍之長子也。積剛柔之粹德，鍾岳瀆之休靈。’

96 *Xingbao si dehua min bing xu, DCJP*, vol. 10, p. 8, lines 9–13. This stele describes the monarch as ‘selecting and entrusting [Gao Yucheng Guang] with the fiefdom’s administration 百成之命’, alluding to *Lunyu*. ‘Line 22/ 居謙。鬱其千里之才，擢以百成之命。奉旨則仁聲已洽，下車則清風載興。簞食壺漿，歌來甦而滿路；逸民傲吏，輟考盤以登朝。乃煦（二十三行）/ 以秋陽，威以夏日。坐甘棠而聽訟，設庭燎以思賢。振平惠而字小人，弘義讓以勗君子。’ For the English translation, see *CC*, vol. 1, p. 210.

97 ‘Reputation for benevolence 仁聲’ appears in *Mengzi* 孟子, *CC*, vol. 2, p. 455. It implies that Yucheng Guang was well-known for exercising benevolent moral power 仁德, and that he transformed the customs of the people through instruction 教化.

98 *Dan shi hu jiang* 簞食壺漿 alludes to local people welcoming a conquering king’s army, see *Mengzi*, *CC*, vol. 2, pp. 169–70.

roads. Former subjects and officials with the strength of character not to flatter and be toady came out of seclusion to serve as officials. They warmed [the new administration] like the autumn sunlight and their might [radiated as strong as] the summer sun. Sitting underneath a sweet pear-tree hearing court cases [he gained a reputation for good governance]⁹⁹ and setting up courtyard torches to see men of worth, he thought of [matching them].¹⁰⁰ He promoted equal benefits 平惠 in administering the people, broadened righteousness, and gave precedence to encourage superior men 君子.¹⁰¹

The stele stresses Yucheng Guang's personal role in the restitution of good governance, his recalling of capable officials forced to hide during the unrest and his promotion of 'equal benefits' in administration. Duan Zhixing's worship of the worldly saviour Maitreya may have been motivated by the decline of the dharma epitomised in the Xingbao Temple's disrepair. If so, Yucheng Guang's efforts possibly comprised part of Duan-Gao attempts to restore social order through Buddhism. In addition, the stele recorded putting monks to state service:¹⁰²

A fox when [dying] still adjusts its head in the direction of the mound [where it was whelped; manifesting thereby that it shares in the feeling of benevolence 仁].¹⁰³ Sunflowers can protect their roots [by shading them with their leaves],¹⁰⁴ thereby not forgetting the source from which they came. For the time being they will not quickly perish! Therefore, to sue for peace with China, the king's court separately promoted a strategy. From this time onwards, we used monks to maintain the equilibrium, drawing back our armies and stopping wars. This was achieved because the elder and younger brother Dukes were capable.

Enlisting monks for diplomacy was not novel; the Tang deployed them in negotiations with Nanzhao in 876.¹⁰⁵ The stele invokes Confucian notions of benevolence and

99 This alludes to the good governance of the Duke of Shao, Lord of Yan 燕召公, who 'decided lawsuits and administrative affairs' sitting underneath a sweet pear-tree (甘棠 *Pyrus betulaefolia*). See Sima Qian 司馬遷 *Shiji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2014), p. 1876; English translation in William H. Nienhauser, Jr. *The Grand Scribe's Records, vol. 1 The hereditary houses of pre-Han China*, part I (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 171.

100 'Men of worth' 思賢 refers to the *Lunyu* 里仁 chapter: 子曰: 見賢思齊焉, 見不賢而內自省也。'The Master said, "When we see men of worth, we should think of equalling them; when we see men of a contrary character, we should turn inwards and examine ourselves."' Translation from CC, vol. 1, p. 170.

101 From Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513 CE), *Qi Gu Anlu Zhao Wang Bei* 齊故安陸昭王碑, Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501–31), *Wenxuan* 文選 (Anthology of literature) (Hong Kong: Xianggang shangwu yinshuguan, 1960), p. 1282.

102 *DCJP*, vol. 10, p. 8, lines 6–8: '然狐猶首丘, 葵 (二十一行) 能衛足, 不忘本也, 姑可忽諸! 乃與中園行成, 獨興廟計。自此散從釋衡, 縮甲抑戰, 公兄弟之力也。'

103 Reference to the *Li Ji* 禮記: 'Dagong 大公 was invested with his state, [and had his capital] in Yingqiu 營丘; but for five generations [his descendants] were all taken back and buried in Zhou. A superior man has said, 'For music, we use that of him from whom we sprang; in ceremonies, we do not forget the one to whom we trace our root'. The ancients had a saying, that a fox, when dying, adjusts its head in the direction of the mound [where it was whelped]; manifesting thereby [how it shares in the feeling of] humanity.' Legge, *Li Chi: Book of Rites*, vol. 1, p. 131.

104 *Kui neng wei zu* 葵能衛足 alludes to the *Zuozhuan* 左傳: 'Zhongni said, 'The wisdom of Bao Zhuangzi was not equal to that of a sunflower. Though but a flower, it can protect its roots!' Translation modified from CC, vol. 5, p. 404.

105 Bryson, 'Tsenpo', p. 71.

remembering one's origins as background to the 'strategy' of mobilising monks for peace talks with the Southern Song. Monks played a role by hand-copying *sūtras* for Song envoys, but the stele mentions more direct participation in diplomacy.

Unrest could have led to the court's portraying Duan Zhixing as a Buddhist monarch. Apocalyptic Maitreya scriptures assign rulers the task of governing and converting 治化 populations when the *dharma* declines and society falls into chaos.¹⁰⁶ April Hughes argues that Buddha-kingship legitimised Sui and Tang emperors because association with a buddha or bodhisattva validated imperial authority, making monarchs 'the highest role in the religious realm—a buddha—along with the supreme role in the political sphere—an emperor.'¹⁰⁷ Buddha-kingship may have facilitated administrative integration in areas with high concentrations of ethnic diversity, such as Yunnan and upland Southeast Asia. This would lend credence to Tateishi Kenji's assertion that Avalokiteśvara worship by monarchs aided the integration of different ethnic peoples into the Nanzhao and Dali kingdoms.¹⁰⁸

Extension of governance into the uplands

History in Yunnan, as in mainland Southeast Asia, unfolded within the topographical and ecological framework of the lowland/upland dichotomy.¹⁰⁹ Uplanders raided lowland basins for the wealth generated by permanent agriculture and trade. Protected by precipitous terrain, ethnically diverse upland communities remained outside the ambit of state power. The Ming dynasty succeeded in establishing governance over the autonomous internal frontier (*neibian* 內邊) in the uplands centred on Iron Chain Gorge 鐵鎖箐 after two hundred years of warfare.¹¹⁰ This frontier included the western parts of twelfth-century Yao prefecture. In this section, I demonstrate how the Gao extended administration to upland communities.

Evidence for this comes from the commemorative stele *Hufa Minggong deyun bei moyu* which records Gao Liangcheng settling Southern Song refugees to prevent upland raiding.¹¹¹ Though Liangcheng's term in office as Minister of State coincided with a peaceful period in Southern Song and Jin relations,¹¹² this stele documents people fleeing from Guangxi into Dali Kingdom territory c.1141–50. Though the author's name remains undecipherable, his title was: 'Metropolitan Graduate in the Jianwu Army of the Great Song State' 大宋國建武軍進士, and he was stationed in

106 Hughes, *Worldly saviors*, pp. 6–9.

107 Ibid., pp. 25–60.

108 Tateishi Kenji 立石謙次, 'Nanshōkoku kōhanki no ōken sisō no kenkyū: "Nanshō zuden" no saikaishaku' 南詔國後半期の王権思想の研究—『南詔圖傳』の再解釋 [The ideology of royal power in the latter half of the Nanzhao period: A re-interpretation of the *Nanzhao Tuzhuan*], *Tōyō gaku* 85, 2 (2003): 51–85.

109 James C. Scott, *The art of not being governed: An anarchist history of upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 1–63.

110 The Ming army eradicated nearly 200 years of resistance by these 'bandits' 賊 in 1574. Christian Daniels, 'Upland leaders of the internal frontier and Ming governance of western Yunnan, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries', in *The transformation of Yunnan in Ming China: From the Dali Kingdom to imperial province*, ed. Christian Daniels and Ma Jianxiong (London: Routledge, 2020), pp. 137–77.

111 *DCJP*, vol. 10, p. 7.

112 Tao Jing-shen, 'The move to the south and the reign of Kao-Tsung (1127–1162)', in *The Cambridge history of China, vol. 5, part 1: The Sung dynasty and its precursors, 907–1279*, ed. Denis Twitchett and Paul Jakov Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 704.

today's Guangxi province. The author had resided 'in the Southern State [Dali Kingdom] for sixteen years □□南國，十有六年，and gratefully acknowledged his close association with Liangcheng: 'the Duke genuinely treated [me] as member of his lineage 蒙公清照如族□人'.¹¹³ This personal relationship suggests stele text composition c.1150s–60s, while the title 'Metropolitan Graduate' reveals the author as a Southern Song *literatus*. The Dali rulers, like their Nanzhao predecessors, utilised Song captives for composing steles.

The stele outlines governance of refugees in Yao prefecture uplands:¹¹⁴

Suddenly the four *yi* 夷 and eight *man* 蠻 rebelled against China, and displaced people crowded the roads. ... Thereupon the Duke led righteous troops and local braves to eliminate the beacon fires, open the territory of the Dali Kingdom, and assuage the prefectures after the displacements caused by the disturbances. He assembled those who survived the perilous and dangerous circumstances, making all within the four seas quiet and respectful. ... taking ceremonies and rites (*yili* 儀禮) as his clothes, personal integrity and trustworthiness (*zhongxin* 忠信) as his armour, and intelligence and courage as his sense of justice 心肝, the Duke granted land and enfeoffed those coming from afar, raising armies and sending punitive expeditions against those not submitting. From this time onwards, the state's realm was greatly transformed. ... the Duke's feudal estate 爵地 at Shisangnong, Mouzhou lay at the western corner of Weichu prefecture fifty *li* from the prefectural seat. Bandits lurked in the luxuriant forests on the mountains and harmed people gathering wood and cutting grass. The Duke returned [one missing character] and established a residence, building a palace and chambers [thereby causing] the bandits 賊 to scatter and leave for places several thousand *li* away. With sweet water in the springs and exuberant mountains, the Duke's residence was, as Confucius said, a place for 'the benevolent and the wise'.¹¹⁵ Barbarians from the four quarters 四夷八蠻 continuously gathered here, and herdsmen (*qunmu* 群牧) from the eight quarters continuously [one missing character] here. When they reached this place, moral goodness returned to their minds, and evil conduct vanished in due course, despite deep-seated hatred by the barbarians and the animosity of the dependants (*buqu* 部曲).¹¹⁶

113 *DCJP*, vol. 10, p. 7, middle section: line 8.

114 'Hufa Minggong deyun bei moyā', *DCJP*, vol.10, p. 7, top section, lines 3–28: '俄然，四夷八蠻叛逆中國，途路如蝟毛，百姓離散，天不早命公，斯民墜矣。公於時領義兵，鄉勇，掃除烽燧，開拓乾坤（二行），安州府於亂離之後，收遺民於虎口之殘，四海清肅，路不拾遺，...公（七行）以禮儀為衣服，以忠信為甲冑，以智勇為心肝，遠之來者，割地而封之，不歸化者興兵而討之，自是天下大化。...公爵地威楚府牟州石桑弄，地處威楚府西隅，去府五十里，地名徽溪。山林茂盛，是賊巢穴，採樵刈草，皆為賊所殘。公歸創居處，建（十一行）宮室，賊散去不知其幾千里也。泉甘而山茂，公之居處。仲尼有云，仁智者也。四夷八蠻，累會於此。八方群牧，累於此。雖（十二行）夷狄之深仇，部曲之怨恨，到此善歸方寸，惡竟冰釋。'[Q]

115 Refers to *Lunyu*: 'The Master said: 'The wise find pleasure in water; the virtuous find pleasure in hills. The wise are active; the virtuous are tranquil. The wise are joyful, the virtuous are long-lived.' English translation from *CC*, vol. 1, p. 192.

116 By the 3rd century, the original meaning of *buqu* as 'military divisions and regiments' had shifted to denote guest households 客戶 and other dependents who commended themselves to elite landowning families to evade taxation. See Rafé de Crespigny, 'Wei', in *The Cambridge History of China, vol. 2: The six dynasties 220–589*, ed. Albert E. Dien and Keith N. Knapp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 41–2; and Charles Holcombe, 'Eastern Jin', *ibid.*, p. 107.

Liangcheng stabilised the uplands by ‘granting land and enfeoffing’ the refugees, settling them as his own vassals, and mobilising them as warriors to evict the ‘bandits’. Located at strategic points on vital transportation routes to Dali in the west, Shanchan in the east and Sichuan in the north, lowland basins in Weichu prefecture were prime targets for plundering by uplanders. Vassals afforded protection for Liangcheng’s upland administrative base. The term *qunmu* (herdsmen) underscores the stabilising effect of his measures. It alludes to the mythical emperor Shun giving ‘audience to the nobles of the empire and confirming them in their fiefs’.¹¹⁷ Here, it refers to Gao Liangcheng verifying the allegiance sworn by the herdsmen (local leaders) and ‘barbarians from the four quarters’. The term ‘Commissioner of the Herds’ (*Qunmu Dashi* 群牧大使) appears on the back (*beiyin* 碑陰) of the Dehua Stele of c.766 in the title of the general Yang Cuobai Qi 楊瑳白奇.¹¹⁸ This term does not appear in Tang and later Chinese sources; however, the text suggests the Commissioner of the Herds administered local leaders near Liangcheng’s mountainous fief. The stele credits Liangcheng with successfully handling the uplands, recording him transforming ‘the state’s realm’ by converting unadministered ‘bandits’ into governed upland communities, thereby eradicating ‘evil conduct’ and causing ‘moral goodness to return to [peoples] minds’.

By classifying unadministered peoples as ‘barbarians’, and invoking terms like ‘*yili*’, and ‘*zhongxin*’, the Dali kings applied Confucian civilisation narratives to morally justify upland governance in the same way that Nanzhao legitimised expansion into the Upper Ayeyarwaddy and Upper Mekong.¹¹⁹ Building an official residence-cum-office and settling refugees in the uplands resembles the Ming tactic of eradicating raiding by constructing administrative infrastructures and populating the internal frontier with non-local peoples.¹²⁰

Conclusion

I began by asking if the Gao arrogated political and military authority from twelfth-century Duan monarchs, and whether Duan Zhixing promoted himself as a Buddhist king for the purpose of asserting superiority over the Gao. I have clarified the collaborative nature of Duan-Gao relations and shown that the *FXJ* represented Duan Zhixing as a Buddhist monarch in the esoteric Buddhist tradition. Based on extant evidence, I hypothesise his melding of political and religious ideology for the purpose of administration. Though this ideology’s contents remain unclear, the court clearly possessed mechanisms for propagating it. The need to disseminate Buddhist ideology must have intensified during intra-Gao conflicts early in his

117 ‘All the herdsmen (*qunmu* 群牧)’ alludes to the *Shujing* 書經 [Book of history], translation from CC, vol. 3, pp. 34–5.

118 Dehua Stele, back: ‘忙湊軍將群牧大使小銀告身賞紫袍金帶楊瑳白奇’, YSC, vol. 2, p. 383. Dazong guan qunmun dashi 大惣管羣牧大使 (Superior Area Command Commissioner of the Herds) is included in: Ruan Fu 阮福, *Diannan gu jinshi lu* 滇南古金石錄 [Record of ancient metal-and-stone engravings in Yunnan] (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1936), p. 70.

119 Daniels, ‘Nanzhao’, pp. 198–203.

120 Lian Ruizhi 連瑞枝, ‘Tuqiu, daofei yu bianmin: yi Yunnan shanxiang yimin wei hexin de taolun 土酋, 盜匪與編民—以雲南山鄉夷民為核心的討論 [Ethnic leaders, bandits and registered populations: A discussion centred on the upland non-registered people of Yunnan]’, *Lishi Renleixue Xuekan* 13, 1 (2015): 46–51; and Daniels, ‘Upland leaders’, pp. 150–55.

reign, perhaps prompting him to commission the court painter Zhang Shengwen to visually record it. Gao-sponsorship of temples at Shuimu Mountain and Yao prefecture must have enjoyed Duan approval because Chongsheng Temple monks composed stele texts for the Duan kings. Therefore, we can surmise connections between Duan monarchs deploying tantric Buddhism to legitimate politico-religious ideology and Gao administrators disseminating it beyond the court.

Dissemination proceeded within the framework of Duan-Gao relations and temples functioned as the ‘foundations of moral power’. Confucian notions of rulers transforming their subjects through moral power lay behind dissemination through temples, indicating a melding of Confucian concepts of governance with Buddhist politico-religious ideology. The high-ranking position of ‘Monk Confucian’ 釋儒 suggests a hybridity of Confucian and Buddhist political ideology, which did not contradict the roles of Duan kings as *cakravartins* promoting Buddhist teachings and performing almsgiving 大檀越. I hypothesise Duan Zhixing infusing new vitality into the long-standing tradition of Buddhist monarchy by adjusting ideological contents to restore social order.

Duan monarchs and the offspring of Gao ministers of state mobilised monks at the capital to disseminate the ruling ideology. Epigraphic evidence for building and renovating temples bespeaks firm Gao support for Duan monarchs during ‘internal struggles and external rebellions’. Even at the height of the succession wrangles, the Gao never attempted to usurp the throne as in 1094–96. These circumstances must be borne in mind as constant background to the promotion of Duan Zhixing as a Buddhist monarch. I hypothesise that the promotion of Buddhist monarchy from the 1170s aimed to revitalise a politico-religious ideology to aid the restoration of social order in the wake of unrest in the kingdom, as evidenced in the Xingbao Temple’s renovation. Duan Zhixing fulfilled his duty as Buddha-king and sovereign by stabilising society, upholding the *dharma*, and saving his subjects from chaos, like Pagan’s charismatic *min laung*.

The dissemination process reveals the Duan-Gao relationship as collaborative and not fundamentally confrontational. Therefore, we can postulate twelfth-century Duan-Gao relations changing before the 1250s when sources mention Gao domination. The Mongol-Yuan restored the politico-religious authority of former Duan monarchs as *mahārāja* in 1255, and later appointed them as native officials 土官 to administer local society.¹²¹ The Duan successfully governed local society in western Yunnan without the Gao during the Mongol-Yuan period, revealing that the source of the Dali Kingdom’s politico-religious authority ultimately resided in its Duan monarchs, and not Gao ministers of state. Their restoration as *mahārājas* suggests that Duan native officials promoted Dali Buddhism until the 1382 Ming conquest. Twelfth-century Duan monarchs had no need to elevate themselves ‘above the Gao officials’ as suggested by Megan Bryson because the ultimate source of political authority lay with the monarch, even when the Gao handled day-to-day affairs.

Comparing the Dali and Dai-Viet kingdoms on the eve of the Mongol-Yuan invasions (1253–66), James Anderson argues that unlike Dai-Viet, the Dali

121 Christian Daniels, ‘The Mongol-Yuan in Yunnan and protoTai/Tai’, *Journal of the Siam Society* 106 (2018): 204–43.

Kingdom ‘never achieved the conditions necessary for a transition to a new political order’ radically different from Nanzhao.¹²² Citing instability of regional alliances in eastern and northeastern Yunnan, Anderson concludes that the Dali Kingdom possessed a ‘more fluid mandala structure’ than coeval Dai-Viet.¹²³ Rebellions arising at the mandala’s furthest reaches did not threaten the constancy of Duan rule. In the long run, Gao governance of local society protected the monarchy, and their power bases facilitated the mobilisation of political and military resources to quell uprisings at the margins. Despite Gao ministers of state handling day-to-day governance, the notion of a state united around Duan Buddhist monarchs was not hollow, and its structure proved firm enough to moderate fluidity within the mandala for 150 years.

Three distinctive features of the Dali Kingdom provide points of reference for further investigation of Buddhist kingship in coeval classical Southeast Asian states. The first is the dissemination of Buddhist kingship’s politico-religious ideology through state officials and monks, thereby supporting governance in strategically located communities outside royal centres. The second is the repackaging of the monarch’s politico-religious ideologies to adjust to changes in society. Lastly, Buddhist kingship was a stabiliser of dynastic succession. The death of kings heralded instability. Deification deterred contenders from usurping the throne facilitating smooth succession by heirs because it divided responsibilities for governance between the monarchy and ministers of state. Indeed, no usurpations occurred in the Dali Kingdom after 1096, only armed conflict between claimants for the Minister of State title. Buddha-kingship functioned as an integrating force because the onus for oppressive interference lay with ministers of state. Deification made Buddha-kings appear infallible and aided integration because transcendence over day-to-day governance could turn them into a rallying point for diverse ethnic groups within the kingdom’s mandala. Buddhist kingship in Southeast Asian classical kingdoms may have similarly strengthened mandalas by extending politico-religious ideology beyond royal centres.

Appendix: Abbreviations

CC	James Legge, <i>The Chinese Classics: with a translation, critical and exegetical notes, prolegomena and copious indexes</i> , 5 vols. (Taipei: SMC, 1992).
DCJP	<i>Dali congshu jinshi pian</i> 大理叢書金石篇 [Collected sources on Dali: Epigraphy], ed. Yang Shiyu 楊世鈺 and Zhang Shufang 張樹芳 (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 1993), vols. 8 and 10.
FXJ	<i>Fanxiang juan</i> 梵像卷 [Painting of Buddhist images], in Li Lincan 李霖燦, <i>Nanzhao Daliguo de xinziliao zonghe yanjiu</i> 南詔大理國新資料的綜合研究 [A study of the Nanzhao and Dali kingdoms in light of art materials housed in various museums] (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1982), pp. 74–127.

122 Anderson, ‘Man and Mongols’, pp. 111.

123 Anderson cites *Duan shi yu shiqi bu huimeng bei* of 971 as evidence; see *ibid.*, pp. 110–11.

- NY *Nanzhao yeshi* 南詔野史 [Informal history of Nanzhao], in YSC, vol. 4.
- NZTZ *Nanzhao tuzhuan* 南詔圖傳 in Li Lincan, *Nanzhao Daliguo de xinziliao zonghe yanjiu*, pp. 128–50.
- YSC *Yunnan shiliao congkan* 雲南史料叢刊 [Collection of printed historical sources concerning Yunnan], ed. Fang Guoyu 方國瑜, comp. and coll. Xu Wende 徐文德 and Mu Qin 木芹, 10 vols. (Kunming: Yunnan daxue chubanshe, 1998).