

# The Buddhist community on Mount Lu during early medieval China

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Entry tags: Yellow and Yangzi Rivers Region, Chinese Buddhism, Buddhist Traditions, Chinese Buddhist Traditions, Religious Group

Mount Lu (Lu Shan 廬山), located in present-day Jiangxi province of China, rose to become an important center of Buddhist scholarship and practice in early medieval China under the leadership of the scholar-monk Huiyuan 慧遠 (334 CE–416 CE). Huiyuan came to Mount Lu with his disciples, associates, and his brother Huichi 慧持 (337–412) in 381 CE following the disintegration of the monastic community of Xiangyang 襄陽 during the war between the Former Qin (Qian Qin 前秦; 351–394) and the Eastern Jin (Dong Jin 東晉; 317–420). With the help of his former colleague Huiyong 慧永 (332–414), who had settled on the mountain a few years earlier, and the financial support from the local governor Huan Yi 桓伊 (d.u.; Governor of Jiangzhou 江州 since 384), Huiyuan's community soon grew into one of the most important centers of Buddhism in South China. The community drew such influential Buddhist scholar-monks of the time as Huiguan 慧觀 (d.u.), Huirui 慧叡 (d.u.), and Daosheng 道生 (355–434), as well as such lay intellectuals of renown as Zhou Xuzhi 周續之 (d. 423), Liu Yimin 劉遺民 (354–410), Lei Cizong 雷次宗 (386–448), and Zong Bing 宗炳 (375–443). Mount Lu also was the site of a few important translation workshops during this time. In the early 390s, Saṅghadeva (fl. 383–397) translated two important Abhidharma texts, the *\_Apitan xin lun\_* 阿毘曇心論 (T1550) and the *\_San fadu lun\_* 三法度論 (T1506), and in the early 410s, Buddhahadra (359–429) translated the meditation text *\_Damoduoluo chan jing\_* 達摩多羅禪經 (T 618). In this animated intellectual environment, Huiyuan authored such representative Buddhist treatises of the time as the *\_Shamen bujing wangzhe lun\_* 沙門不敬王者論 and the *\_Ming baoying lun\_* 明報應論, where he articulated his theory of the imperishability of the soul (*\_shen bumie\_* 神不滅) that was to exert lasting influence on Chinese Buddhists' understanding of the mind. In terms of Buddhist practice, the Buddhist community of Mount Lu is where some of the earliest examples of the cult of Amitabha and the belief in the rebirth in Amitabha's Western Pure Land are associated with. For example, in 402, the 123 members community took a collective vow to be reborn in the Western Pure Land before a statue of Amitabha Buddha. Another important example of Buddhist art created by this group was the Buddha-image (Foying 佛影) Grotto. The renowned grotto was constructed in 413 relying on the oral reports about the Buddha-image cave of the Indian city of Nagarahāra and enshrined a painting of the Buddha, whose excellence in turn inspired its own copies to be made and circulated. In this way, the Buddhist community of Mount Lu during early medieval China developed a rich and lively religious culture involving scholarship, devotionism, and art and architecture.



Date Range: 350 CE - 450 CE

Region: Mount Lu

Region tags: Asia, East Asia, China, South Central China

Mount Lu (Lu shan), one of the main centers of Buddhism and Daoism in China

## Status of Participants:

✓ Elite    ✓ Religious Specialists

## Sources

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### Print sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1: Zürcher, Erik. 1959. "The Centres at Hsian-yang, Chiang-ling and Lu-shan, and the Influence of Northern Buddhism." Chap. 4 in *The Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- Source 2: Tsukamoto Zenryū. 1985. "Hui-yüan and His Circle." Chap. 8 in *A History of Early Chinese Buddhism: From Its Introduction to the Death of Hui-yüan*. Translated by Leon Hurvitz. New York: Kodansha International.
- Source 3: Lee, Sangyop. 2019. "Lushan Huiyuan." In *Brill's Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, vol. 2, edited by Jonathan A. Silk, Vincent Eltschinger, Richard Bowring, and Michael Radich, 711-21. Leiden: Brill.
- Source 1: Kimura Eiichi 木村英一, ed. 1960. *Eon kenkyū: Ibum hen 慧遠研究: 遺文篇*. Tokyo: Sōbunsha.
- Source 2: Li Xingling 李幸玲. 2007. *Lushan Huiyuan yanjiu 廬山慧遠研究*. Taipei: Wanjuanlou, 2007.
- Source 3: Li Qinhe 李勤合. 2016. *Lushan Huiyuan jiaotuan yanjiu 廬山慧遠教團研究*. Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe.

### Online sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1 URL: [https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopedia-of-buddhism/lushan-huiyuan-COM\\_2101?lang=de](https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopedia-of-buddhism/lushan-huiyuan-COM_2101?lang=de)
- Source 1 Description: Brill's Encyclopedia Entry on Lushan Huiyuan (廬山慧遠; 334-416), who led the Mount Lu Buddhist community in the late 4th and the early 5th century.

### Relevant online primary textual corpora (original languages and/or translations):

- Source 1 URL: [https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/zh/T2059\\_001](https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/zh/T2059_001)
- Source 1 Description: *Gaoseng zhuan 高僧傳*, a collection of monastic biographies compiled by Huijiao 慧皎 (497-554) in the early sixth century, in which biographies of many central members of the Mount Lu community can be found.
- Source 2 URL: [https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/zh/T2145\\_001](https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/zh/T2145_001)
- Source 2 Description: *Chu sanzang ji ji 出三藏記集*, a collection of bibliographical sources related to the translation of Buddhist texts (chronological catalogue, prefaces and colophons, biographies of translators, etc.) compiled by Sengyou 僧祐 (445-518) in the early sixth century, in which texts written by the members of Mount Lu community survive.
- Source 3 URL: [https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/zh/T2102\\_001](https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/zh/T2102_001)
- Source 3 Description: *Hong ming ji 弘明集*, a collection of apologetical and propagandistic texts compiled by Sengyou 僧祐 (445-518) in the early sixth century, in which texts written by the members of the Mount Lu community survive.

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## General Variables

### Membership/Group Interactions

Are other religious groups in cultural contact with target religion:

- Yes

Notes: Mount Lu was also an important center of Daoism in early medieval China. However, no record survives of the interactions between Huiyuan's community and Daoist practitioners of the region.

Reference: Guofu 国富 Wu 吴. Lu shan Daojiao shi 庐山道教史. Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe. isbn: 9787210048558.

↳ Is the cultural contact competitive:  
– Yes

↳ Is the cultural contact accommodating/pluralistic:  
– Yes

↳ Is the cultural contact neutral:  
– Yes

↳ Is there violent conflict (within sample region):  
– No

↳ Is there violent conflict (with groups outside the sample region):  
– No

Does the religious group have a general process/system for assigning religious affiliation:

– Yes

Notes: Although no record about such a process for this particular group survives, we can infer that they would have followed the ritual norms of contemporary Chinese Buddhists, where taking up a certain set of precepts signified becoming a lay or a monastic member of the Buddhist community.

↳ Assigned at birth (membership is default for this society):  
– No

↳ Assigned by personal choice:  
– Yes

↳ Assigned by class:  
– No

↳ Assigned at a specific age:  
– No

↳ Assigned by gender:

– Yes

↳ Assigned by participation in a particular ritual:

– Yes

↳ Assigned by some other factor:

– No

Does the religious group actively proselytize and recruit new members:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: There are records of its members inviting other Buddhists to join them (e.g. T 2059.50:329a8-13), but there is not enough evidence to tell if recruitment of new members was a distinguishing and meaningful characteristic of this community.

Does the religion have official political support

– Yes

Notes: The Mount Lu community is known to have received favorable treatments from the central figures of the Eastern Jin court. Also, like many other Buddhist communities of medieval times, they depended on the donation and support from the members of the political elite. The central monastery of this community, Eastern Grove Monastery (Donglin si 東林寺), for example, was established by the Inspector of Jiangzhou Huan Yi 桓伊 (?-391) ca. 386 (T 2059.50:358a29-b3; T 2095:51:1039b2-3). Also, a translation workshop was carried out with the support from the Inspector of Jiangzhou Wang Ningzhi 王凝之 (334-399; successor of Huan Yi) and the Governor of Xiyang Ren Guzhi 任固之 (d.u.) between the years 391 and 392 (T 2145.55:72b21-28). It should also be noted that Xunyang 尋陽 (corresponding roughly to present-day Jiujiang city 九江市), the provincial capital of Jiangzhou, was right next to Mount Lu, which would have facilitated the interaction and collaboration between the Buddhist community and the political elite. However, for this time period, it is difficult to decide whether such support implied official ties with the government or was merely seen as private matters of the persons who happen to hold government offices.

Reference: Erik Zürcher. *The Buddhist Conquest of China*. BRILL. isbn: 9789004156043. p.211-17.

↳ Are the priests paid by polity:

– No

Notes: Although they were not directly paid by the polity, the Buddhist clergy would have relied largely on the donation from the members of the political elite.

↳ Is religious infrastructure paid for by the polity:

– No

Notes: Although they were not directly paid by the polity, Buddhist construction projects would have relied largely on the donation from the members of the political elite.

↳ Are the head of the polity and the head of the religion the same figure:

– No

↳ Are political officials equivalent to religious officials:

– No

↳ Is religious observance enforced by the polity:

– No

Notes: However, there was an attempt by the central government in 402 to single out and expel monks who were not capable of upholding the precepts and observing seclusion from secular society. The head of the Mount Lu community, Huiyuan 慧遠 (334–416), famously argued for relaxing the standards for excommunication of monks in an epistolary correspondence with Huan Xuan 桓玄 (369–404; this correspondence survives in T 2102.52:85a12–c5) and also succeeded in exempting the Mount Lu community from the investigation.

Reference: Erik Zürcher. *The Buddhist Conquest of China*. BRILL. isbn: 9789004156043. p.236–37.

↳ Polity legal code is roughly coterminous with religious code:

– No

↳ Polity provides preferential economic treatment (e.g. tax, exemption)

– Yes

Notes: The members of the Buddhist monastic community were exempted from tax and corvée labor duties in medieval China.

Is there a conception of apostasy in the religious group:

– No

## Size and Structure

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (estimated population, numerical):

– Estimated population, numeric: 123

Notes: The exact number of this community must have changed constantly over time. However, one record written by Liu Yimin 劉遺民 (a central lay member of the community; 354–410) in the year 402 mentions 123 lay and monastic participants being present at a votive ritual carried out at the "Prajñā Terrace" on the mountain (T 2059.50:358c24–26). Yet another record produced by this community around the year 391 reports that 80 monastics participated at a translation workshop carried out on the mountain (T 2145.55:72b25–28; according to some records, this workshop also took place at the "Prajñā Terrace"; T 2145.55: 99c17–20; T 2059.50:329 a10–13). Finally, the biography of the monk

Huiyong 慧永 reports that the entourage of Huiyuan, the leader of the Mount Lu community, consisted of "one hundred monks" (T 2059.50:362a28-b1).

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (% of sample region population, numerical):

– Field doesn't know

Nature of religious group [please select one]:

– Small religious group (seen as being part of a related larger religious group)

– Small religious group (one of many small religious groups in sample region)

Are there recognized leaders in the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: Huiyuan (334-416) is known to have represented the Buddhist community on Mount Lu while he resided at Eastern Grove Monastery (Donglin si) from 386 to 416. However, this was more likely due to his personal charisma rather than there being an institutionally recognized position of the head of the Mount Lu community. This can be inferred from the fact that after Huiyuan's death, no single monk of the community seems to have taken over the representative role he used to assume.



Is there a hierarchy among these leaders:

– Field doesn't know



Are leaders believed to possess supernatural powers or qualities:

– Yes

Notes: There are a number of miracles stories attributed to the leader of this community, Huiyuan (334-416). Refer to his biographies in the *\_Chu sanzang ji ji\_* and the *\_Gaoseng zhuan\_*.



Powers are acquired by individual deeds carried out in past lives:

– Yes

Notes: Although the miracles stories associated with Huiyuan do not offer an explicit explanation of the provenance of his supernatural powers, it is likely that people at the time believed them to have resulted from his engagement in Buddhist practices, either in his current life or during his previous lives.



Powers are acquired by individual deeds carried out in the current life:

– Yes



Powers are inherited:

– No

↳ Powers are culturally transmitted from a supernatural being:

– No

↳ Powers are culturally transmitted from another human (e.g. teacher):

– No

↳ Powers are associated with leadership office they assume:

– No

↳ Are religious leaders chosen:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Are leaders considered fallible:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Are close followers or disciples of a religious leader required to obediently and unquestionably accept the leader's pronouncements on all matters:

– Field doesn't know

## Scripture

Does the religious group have scriptures:

Scripture is a generic term used to designate revered texts that are considered particularly authoritative and sacred relative to other texts. Strictly speaking, it refers to written texts, but there are also “oral scriptures” (e.g. the Vedas of India).

– Yes

Notes: There is no reason to believe that the group had a distinctive notion of their own religious canon. It is more likely that they would have followed the received notion of the Buddhist canon among contemporary Chinese Buddhists. The group did contribute to the formation of the Chinese Buddhist canon by producing a number of new translations (\_Apitan xin lun\_ 阿毘曇心論 [T no. 1550]; \_San fadu lun\_ 三法度論 [T no. 1506]; \_Damoduoluo chan jing\_ 達摩多羅禪經 [T no. 618]) by collaborating with Indian monks such as Saṅghadeva (fl. 383–397) and Buddhabhadra (359–429), who resided on Mount Lu respectively during the 390s and around 410. The circumstances of the translations of these texts can be found in the records written by the participants at the workshops (preserved in the \_Chusanzang jiji\_; T. 2145.55:65b22–66a23; 72b16–28; 72b29–73a1; 73a2–29).

↳ Are they written:

– Yes

↳ Are they oral:

– Yes

↳ Is there a story (or a set of stories) associated with the origin of scripture:

– Yes

↳ Revealed by a high god:

– No

↳ Revealed by other supernatural being:

– Yes

Notes: If we consider the Buddha as a supernatural being, then the Buddhist belief would be that the Buddhist sūtras are indeed revealed by a supernatural being.

↳ Inspired by high god:

– No

↳ Inspired by other supernatural being:

– No

↳ Originated from divine or semi-divine human beings:

– Yes

Notes: If we define the Buddha as a semi-divine human being, then the Buddhist belief would be that Buddhist sūtras indeed have originated from a semi-divine human being.

↳ Originated from non-divine human being:

– Yes

Notes: If we consider the Buddha as a non-divine human being, then the Buddhist belief would be that the Buddhist sūtras are indeed revealed by a non-divine human being.

↳ Are the scriptures alterable:

– Yes

Notes: If we see translation as a kind of alteration, Buddhist scriptures are indeed alterable.

↳ Are there formal institutions (i.e. institutions that are authorized by the religious community or political leaders) for interpreting the scriptures:

– No



↳ Is there a select group of people trained in transmitting the scriptures:

– No

↳ Is there a codified canon of scriptures:

– No

Notes: However, there were multiple attempts at creating a comprehensive catalogue of available Buddhist texts around this time, notably now-lost *\_Zongli zhongjing mulu\_ 綜理衆經目錄* by Dao'an 道安 (312/314–385), which is reproduced in the *\_Chu sanzang ji ji\_ 出三藏記集*.

## Architecture, Geography

Is monumental religious architecture present:

– Yes

Notes: Mount Lu during this period was home to a number of important Buddhist establishments. 1) Eastern Grove Monastery (Donglin si 東林寺) was donated to Huiyuan by the Inspector of Jiangzhou Huan Yi 桓伊 (?–391) (T 2059.50:358a29–b3; T 2095.51:1039b2–3). Its construction began in 384 and was completed in 386. Huiyuan resided here until his death in 416. 2) Western Grove Monastery (Xilin si 西林寺) was donated to Huiyong 慧永 by Tao Fan 陶範 (d.u., but likely one of the sons of the Eastern Jin general Tao Kan 陶侃 [259–334]; he had ties with this region and Fan 範 is listed among the names of his sons in the *\_Jin shu\_ 晉書* fasc. 66; T 2059.50:362a14–15). According to later records, Tao Fan was the Inspector of Jiangzhou (T 2035.49:265b21–23; T 2095.51:1040b18–20). If these records are reliable, he must have occupied this office before Huan Yi (who assumed the same office in 384). A stele erected in 617 specifies the year of the establishment of this monastery to 367 (T 2095.51:1029b2–10). 3) Prajñā Platform (Bore tai 般若臺; alternatively, 波若臺 Bore tai): This was the place where the members of the community gathered in 402 to make the vow to be reborn together in the Western Pure Land (the votive text recited at this occasion is preserved in T 55.2145:109c12–110a9). Also, according to some records, this was where Saṃghadeva translated the *\_Apitan xin lun\_ 阿毘曇心論* (T no. 1550) and the *\_San fadu lun\_ 三法度論* (T no. 1506) around 391 (T 2059.50:329a10–13; T 2145.55:99c17–20). This structure was under construction when Baoyun 寶雲 visited Mount Lu in 389 (X 1523.77:358c7–9). 4) Buddha-image (Foying 佛影) Grotto, also known later as the Buddha-image Platform (Foying tai 佛影臺): Inspired by oral reports about the Buddha-image cave in the Indian city of Nagarahāra, and relying on the details described by Buddhahadra when he was visiting the mountain around 410 (Chen 2011), Huiyuan led the construction of this grotto in 412 (T 2103.52:198b5–8), wherein a painting that depicted the Buddha-image in the Nagarahāra cave was enshrined. Huiyuan's also wrote a eulogy (ming 銘) of the Buddha-image, which survives together with its preface and postscript (T 2103.52:197c7–198b13; cf. T 2059.50:358b14–c3). Among these establishments, Eastern Grove Monastery and Western Grove Monastery still remain, although none of the current architectural structures dates back to this period. Also, although stūpas were not uncommon in contemporary Buddhist monasteries in China, no record about a stūpa in this community survives.

Reference: Jinhua Chen. Buddhahadra's (359–429) Collaboration with Huiyuan (334–416) in Transplanting the Nagarahāra Image-cave to China: A Reexamination. (Tōru 徹 Funayama 船山 undefined, Ed.), *Chūgoku Indo shūkyōshi, tokuni Bukkyō shi ni okeru shomotsu no ryūtsū denpa to jinbutsu idō no chiiki tokusei 中国印度宗教史とくに仏教史における書物の流通伝播と人物移動の地域特性*. Kyoto: Kyōto Daigaku Jinbun Kagaku Kenkyūjo.

↳ In the average settlement, what percentage of area is taken up by all religious

monuments:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Size of largest single religious monument, square meters:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Height of largest single religious monument, meters:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Size of average monument, square meters:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Height of average monument, meters:

– Field doesn't know

↳ In the largest settlement, what percentage of area is taken up by all religious monuments:

– Field doesn't know

Are there different types of religious monumental architecture:

– Yes

↳ Tombs:

– Yes

Notes: There is only one mention about burial practices in the records related to this group: When Huiyuan died, his disciples first exposed his body in the wild and later collected his remains and buried at the western ridge of Mount Lu. A stele and a structure to house the stele were also established. (T 2059.50:361b6-10.)

↳ Cemeteries:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Temples:

– Yes

Notes: See the above discussion of Eastern Grove Monastery and Western Grove Monastery. Although they were principally monasteries, many of them would have functioned also as places for making offerings to Buddhist deities.

↳ Altars:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Although there is no specific mention about an altar, it is likely that the monasteries of this community as well as places like the Prajñā Platform and the Buddha-image Grotto would have had altar-like structures.

↳ Devotional markers:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Mass gathering point [plazas, courtyard, square. Places permanently demarcated using visible objects or structures]:

– Yes

Notes: See the discussion above. The Prajñā Platform seems to have been often used for large communal gatherings.

↳ Other type of religious monumental architecture:

– Yes [specify]: See the discussion above.

Is iconography present:

– Yes

↳ Where is iconography present [select all that apply]:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Other than the records related to the Buddha-image Grotto, we do not have records describing the group's iconographic practices.

↳ Are there distinct features in the religious group's iconography:

– Yes

Notes: The anecdote that copies of the painting of the Buddha-image enshrined in the Buddha-image Grotto were transmitted as far as the southern capital (T. 2145.55:109c6-11) suggests that their iconography had distinctive and appealing features.

↳ Eyes (stylized or not):

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural beings (zoomorphic):

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural beings (geomorphic):

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural beings (anthropomorphic):

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural beings (abstract symbol):

– Field doesn't know

↳ Portrayals of afterlife:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Aspects of doctrine (e.g. cross, trinity, Mithraic symbols):

– Field doesn't know

↳ Humans:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Other features of iconography:

– Yes

Are there specific sites dedicated to sacred practice or considered sacred:

– Yes

↳ Are sacred site oriented to environmental features:

"Environmental features" refers to features in the landscape, mountains, rivers, cardinal directions etc...

– Yes

Are pilgrimages present:

– Field doesn't know

## Beliefs

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### Burial and Afterlife

Is a spirit-body distinction present:

Answer "no" only if personhood (or consciousness) is extinguished with death of the physical body.

Answering yes does not necessarily imply the existence of Cartesian mind/body dualism, merely that

some element of personhood (or consciousness) survives the death of the body.

– Yes

Notes: Huiyuan was one of the leading theorists of the doctrine of the imperishability of the soul (shen bumie 神不滅), authoring a number of important treatises on this topic such as the *Elucidation of Retribution* (Ming baoying lun 明報應論; T 2102. 52:33b9–34b2) and *A Monk Does Not Revere the King* (Shamen bujing wangzhe lun 沙門不敬王者論; T 2102.52:29c19–32b11). His lay disciple Zong Bing authored the *Elucidation of Buddhism* (Ming Fo lun 明佛論; T 2102.52:9b5–16a24), which also contains a rich discussion of the idea of the imperishable soul. For recent attempts to understand this doctrinal deviation, see Park 2012 and Radich 2017. While Park sees it as a result of mistranslation and misunderstanding of Indian Buddhism, Radich sees it as a theoretical continuation of Indian Buddhist notions of consciousness.

Reference: Jungnok Park. *How Buddhism Acquired a Soul on the Way to China*. Equinox.

↳ Spirit-mind is conceived of as having qualitatively different powers or properties than other body parts:

– Yes

Notes: Huiyuan claimed that our sentience (i.e. the ability to perceive objects through the sense organs) was the result of the soul's entrapment in the body. Thus according to Huiyuan, the body on its own would lack the ability to sense or perceive objects, like other material elements of the world. See T 2012:34a3–5.

↳ Spirit-mind is conceived of as non-material, ontologically distinct from body:

– Yes

Notes: Arguing against the mainstream Daoist metaphysics of his time, Huiyuan claimed that while the body is made of the physical energy (qi 氣), the soul was not reducible into a form of this physical energy and thus was imperishable. See T 2102.52:31b11–c14. The same understanding of the soul can be found in his disciple Zong Bing's thought. See T 2102.52:9c26–10a4, 10a15–18, 10a28b–2, 13a24–26.

↳ Other spirit-body relationship:

– Yes [specify]: Huiyuan had a distinctively negative view about the body.

Notes: Huiyuan describes the bodily life as the "fettters and manacles" that bind the soul in the material world, and he claims that Buddhist nirvana is achieved by freeing the soul from the fettters of the bodily life. See T 2102.52:30c10–17. Zong Bing similarly thought that bodily desires were responsible for the sentient being's degeneration and that the Buddhist ideal was achieved by realizing an immaterial state of being in which the soul existed without a body. See T 2102.52:10b10–12, c7–10. This belief of the group was used to provide a theoretical justification of the self-immolation practice of the time. See T 2102.52:14a20–22 for Zong Bing's justification of the practice, and T 2059.50:405a10–11 for an example of this practice by one of the monks of the Mount Lu community, Sengyu 僧瑜 (d.u.).

Belief in afterlife:

– Yes

Notes: This group is associated with some of the earliest examples of the cult of Amitabha Buddha in

China. According to this cult, one can achieve a rebirth in the Buddha-realm of Amitabha in the west (commonly referred to as the Western Pure Land) simply by taking refuge in Amitabha Buddha. For examples of the group's practice of this cult, see the following sources: 1) A votive text written in 402 by Huiyuan's lay disciple Liu Yimin 劉遺民 (354–410) for the occasion of a collective vow by the 123 lay and monastic members of the group to be reborn in the Western Pure Land together. (T 2059.50:358c23–359a20; an English translation is given in Zürcher 1959, 244–45). 2) The death-bed story of Huiyuan's monastic colleague Huiyong 慧永 (d. 414), where he reports seeing Amitabha Buddha just before passing away. (T. 2059.50:362b5–10.) 3) The death-bed story of Huiyuan's disciple Sengji 僧濟 (d.u.), where he sees Amitabha Buddha in a dream at the night of his death. (T. 2059.50:362b16–27.) See Zürcher (1959, 219–23) and Jones (2008, 187–88) for further discussions of these sources.

Reference: Charles Jones B.. Was Lushan Huiyuan a Pure Land Buddhist? Evidence from His Correspondence with Kumārajīva about Nianfo Practice.

Reference: Erik Zürcher. The Buddhist Conquest of China. BRILL. isbn: 9789004156043.

↳ Is the spatial location of the afterlife specified or described by the religious group:

– Yes

↳ Afterlife in specified realm of space beyond this world:

– Yes

↳ Afterlife in vaguely defined “above” space:

– Yes

Notes: In the mainstream Buddhist cosmology, the realms of deities and semi-deities are believed to exist above the realm of humans.

↳ Afterlife in vaguely defined “below” space:

– Yes

Notes: In the mainstream Buddhist cosmology, the various hells are believed to be located below the realm of humans.

↳ Afterlife in vaguely defined horizontal space:

– Yes

Notes: The Western Pure Land is believed to exist in the west.

↳ Afterlife located in "other" space:

– Yes [specify]: According to the mainstream Buddhist cosmology there are numerous cosmoses.

Reincarnation in this world:

– Yes

↳ In a human form:

– Yes

↳ In animal/plant form:

– Yes

Notes: Buddhists in general believe that sentient beings can be reborn as animals, but not plants.

↳ In form of an inanimate object(s):

– No

↳ In non-individual form (i.e. some form of corporate rebirth, tribe, lineage. etc.):

– No

↳ Reincarnation linked to notion of life-transcending causality (e.g. karma):

– Yes

↳ Other form of reincarnation in this world:

– Yes [specify]: Other than animals and humans, it is believed that sentient beings can be reborn as semi-gods, gods, hungry ghosts, and the denizens of hells.

Are there special treatments for adherents' corpses:

– Yes

Notes: There is only one mention about burial practices in the records related to this group: When Huiyuan died, his disciples first exposed his body in the wild and later collected his remains and buried at the western ridge of Mount Lu. A stele and a structure to house the stele were also established. See T 2059.50:361b6-10.

↳ Cremation:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Mummification:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Interment:

– Yes

↳ Cannibalism:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Exposure to elements (e.g. air drying):

– Yes

↳ Feeding to animals:

– Yes

↳ Secondary burial:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Re-treatment of corpse:

– Yes

↳ Other intensive (in terms of time or resources expended) treatment of corpse :

– Field doesn't know

Are co-sacrifices present in tomb/burial:

– Field doesn't know

Are grave goods present:

– Field doesn't know

Are formal burials present:

– Yes

Notes: There is only one mention about burial practices in the records related to this group: When Huiyuan died, his disciples first exposed his body in the wild and later collected his remains and buried at the western ridge of Mount Lu. A stele and a structure to house the stele were also established. See T 2059.50:361b6-10.

↳ As cenotaphs:

– Yes

Notes: See the note above.

↳ In cemetery:

– Field doesn't know



↳ Family tomb-crypt:  
– Field doesn't know

↳ Domestic (individuals interred beneath house, or in areas used for normal domestic activities):  
– Field doesn't know

↳ Other formal burial type:  
– Field doesn't know

## Supernatural Beings

Are supernatural beings present:

– Yes

↳ A supreme high god is present:  
– Field doesn't know

Notes: In the surviving writings of the group, we find no evidence of a belief in a deified version of the Buddha.

↳ Previously human spirits are present:  
– Field doesn't know

↳ Non-human supernatural beings are present:  
– Yes

Notes: There are two miracle stories set in Mount Lu of this period (i.e. 350CE–450CE) that involve supernatural beings, although we do not know if these stories were known to the Mount Lu community members of this period, and if they were, how much significance they had. 1) When the Xunyang 潯陽 region (where Mount Lu is located) was being affected by draught, Huiyuan recited the \_Hai longwang jing\_ 海龍王經 (The Sūtra of the Dragon King of the Ocean) near a pond, upon which a snake (she 蛇) appeared from the pond and ascended to the sky. Soon after it started to rain, alleviating the draught. (T 2059.50:358a25–a28.) 2) Huiyuan's disciple Tanyong 曇邕 (d.u.) is reported to have imparted Buddhist precepts to a local mountain deity (shan shen 山神) and its twenty servants. (T 2059.50:362c26–363a2.)

↳ These supernatural beings can be seen:  
– Yes

↳ These supernatural beings can be physically felt:  
– Field doesn't know

- ↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge of this world:
  - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Non-human supernatural beings have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:
  - Field doesn't know
- ↳ These supernatural beings have indirect causal efficacy in the world:
  - Field doesn't know
- ↳ These supernatural beings exhibit positive emotion:
  - Yes
  - Notes: In the story involving Tanyong and the mountain deity discussed above, the deity expresses his wish to be ordained with Buddhist precepts.
- ↳ These supernatural beings exhibit negative emotion:
  - Field doesn't know
- ↳ These supernatural beings possess hunger:
  - Field doesn't know
- ↳ These supernatural beings possess/exhibit some other feature:
  - Yes [specify]: The mountain deity in Tanyong's miracle story appears donning a formal garment (dan yi 單衣) and with twenty servants.
- ↳ Mixed human-divine beings are present:
  - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Does the religious group possess a variety of supernatural beings:
  - Field doesn't know

## Supernatural Monitoring

Is supernatural monitoring present:

This refers to surveillance by supernatural beings of humans' behaviour and/or thought particularly as it relates to social norms or potential norm violations.

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Within the surviving literatures produced by and related to this group, there is no clear indication that supernatural monitoring was a meaningful element of the group's belief or practice.

None of the miracle stories associated with the group seems to presuppose a mechanism of supernatural monitoring.

Do supernatural beings mete out punishment:

– Field doesn't know

Do supernatural beings bestow rewards:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: In the miracle story concerning Tanyong and the mountain deity, the deity rewards Tanyong with "utensils from a foreign region" (waiguo bijin 外國匕筋). But there aren't enough examples to decide if such a belief was a meaningful aspect of this group.

## Messianism/Eschatology

Are messianic beliefs present:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Although the future Buddha Maitreya was an important Buddhist deity in some Buddhist communities in this period (e.g. Dao'an's community where Huiyuan started his monastic career), we do not have any record of this cult being practiced by the members of the Mount Lu community.

Is an eschatology present:

– Field doesn't know

## Norms and Moral Realism

Are general social norms prescribed by the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: Like other Buddhist communities in early medieval China, the members of the Lu Shan community would have taken up the five precepts for lay Buddhists whose content bears on general social norms: 1) not killing, 2) not stealing, 3) no sexual misconduct, 4) no false speech, 5) no consumption of alcohol.

Is there a conventional vs. moral distinction in the religious group:

– Field doesn't know

## Practices

### Membership Costs and Practices

Does membership in this religious group require celibacy (full sexual abstinence):

– No

Notes: The group consisted of both lay and monastic members.

Does membership in this religious group require constraints on sexual activity (partial sexual abstinence):

– Yes

Notes: The monastics of the group would have been expected to maintain celibacy. The lay members, if we assume that they accepted the five lay precepts, would have been expected not to engage in adultery. Also, taking up the eight observances (ba guan 八關) on certain days of a month was an established practice in early Chinese Buddhism, one of the observances of which was abstinence from sex. But note that there is no record that members the Lu shan community carried out this practice.



Monogamy (males):

– Field doesn't know



Monogamy (females):

– Field doesn't know



Other sexual constraints (males):

– Yes

Notes: The lay members, if we assume that they received the five lay precepts, would have been expected not to engage in adultery.



Other sexual constraints (females):

– Yes

Notes: The lay members, if we assume that they received the five lay precepts, would have been expected not to engage in adultery. But note that there is no record of a female lay member of this community.

Does membership in this religious group require castration:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require fasting:

– Yes

Notes: Although there is no record that the Mount Lu community also carried out this practice, taking up the eight observances (ba guan) on certain days of a month was a common Buddhist practice in early medieval China, one of the observances of which was to fast after noon.

Does membership in this religious group require forgone food opportunities (taboos on desired foods):

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require permanent scarring or painful bodily alterations:

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require painful physical positions or transitory painful wounds:

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of adults:

"Adults" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition of a human who is 18-years-old or older and who is legally responsible for his/her actions, then please specify that difference in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of children:

"Children" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition, please specify that different in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Does membership in this religious group require self-sacrifice (suicide):

– No

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of property/valuable items:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of time (e.g., attendance at meetings or services, regular prayer, etc.):

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require physical risk taking:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require accepting ethical precepts:

– Yes

Notes: The monastics would have been expected to be ordained with the full precepts (for more details about these precepts, see the note on "Does the religious group in question have a formal legal code?"), and the lay members would have been expected to be ordained with the five precepts. They

would furthermore would likely have carried out the eight observances, although there is no record of this that survives.

Does membership in this religious group require marginalization by out-group members:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require participation in small-scale rituals (private, household):

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require participation in large-scale rituals:

I.e. involving two or more households; includes large-scale “ceremonies” and “festivals.”

– Field doesn't know

Are extra-ritual in-group markers present:

E.g. special changes to appearance such as circumcision, tattoos, scarification, etc.

– Field doesn't know

Does the group employ fictive kinship terminology:

– Field doesn't know

## Society and Institutions

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### Levels of Social Complexity

The society to which the religious group belongs is best characterized as (please choose one):

– An empire

### Welfare

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized famine relief:

– Field doesn't know

Is famine relief available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized poverty relief:

– Field doesn't know

Is poverty relief available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized care for the elderly and infirm:

– Field doesn't know

Is institutionalized care for the elderly and infirm available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

## Education

Does the religious group provide formal education to its adherents:

– Yes

Notes: Although no detailed record about this group's educational practices survives, Buddhist monastic communities in medieval China are in general believed to have offered various types of education to its members. Many monks who studied on this mountain went on to become well-known scholar-monks of the time (e.g. Huiguan 慧觀 [375?-445?], Huirui 慧叡 [355-459], and Daosheng 道生 [355-434]). The Mount Lu community is also known for having offered an environment to lay intellectuals for focusing on their study while exchanging ideas with scholar-monks. For example, Lei Cizong 雷次宗 (386-448), who later became one of the teachers of the imperial crown prince of the Liu Song dynasty, is reported to have refined his expertise in Confucian ritual texts while studying on the mountain and learning from the lectures by Huiyuan (T 2059:50:361a22-27).



Is formal education restricted to religious professionals:

– No



Is such education open to both males and females:

– Yes

Notes: The fact that a formal bhikṣuṇī saṃgha (community of Buddhist nuns) was very likely present on Mount Lu, receiving guidance from Huiyuan (T 2145.55:84a6-7), suggests that some form of education would have been available at least to female monastics.

Is formal education available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group:

– Field doesn't know

## Bureaucracy

Do the group's adherents interact with a formal bureaucracy within their group:

– Field doesn't know

Do the group's adherents interact with other institutional bureaucracies:

– Yes

Notes: Although we do not know if it was an official function of the Mount Lu community, many individual members of the community maintained relationships with important government officials. See the note on "Does the religion have official political support?" above.

## Public Works

Does the religious group in question provide public food storage:

– Field doesn't know

Is public food storage provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question provide water management (irrigation, flood control):

– Field doesn't know

Notes: There survives an anecdote in which the community's leader Huiyuan is reported to have started a rain by reciting the *\_Hai longwang jing\_ 海龍王經* when the region was affected by a drought; T 2059.50:358a25-28.

Is water management provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question provide transportation infrastructure:

– Field doesn't know

Is transportation infrastructure provided for the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

## Taxation



Does the religious group in question levy taxes or tithes:

– Field doesn't know

Are taxes levied on the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

Notes: It is generally believed that Buddhist monastic institutions were exempt from tax duties in early medieval China.

## Enforcement

Does the religious group in question provide an institutionalized police force:

– Field doesn't know

Do the group's adherents interact with an institutionalized police force provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized judges:

– Field doesn't know

Do the group's adherents interact with an institutionalized judicial system provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question enforce institutionalized punishment:

– Yes

Notes: It is highly probably that the codes of conduct employed by this community (see below for details) detailed disciplinary measures against various transgressions.



Do the institutionalized punishments include execution:

– No



Do the institutionalized punishments include exile:

– Field doesn't know



Do the institutionalized punishments include corporal punishments:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Do the institutionalized punishments include ostracism:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Do the institutionalized punishments include seizure of property:

– Field doesn't know

Are the group's adherents subject to institutionalized punishment enforced by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question have a formal legal code:

– Yes

Notes: Huiyuan is known to have developed several sets of regulations governing his religious community (T 2126.54:241b8-9; T 2035.49:319a8). Although the details of these regulations do not survive, their titles do (T. 2145.55:84a3-6): *\_Fashe jiedu\_ 法社節度*, *\_Waisi seng jiedu\_ 外寺僧節度*, *\_Jiedu\_ 節度*, and *\_Biqiuni jiedu\_ 比丘尼節度*. It has been suggested that these four codes respectively dealt with the entirety of the Mount Lu community (consisting of lay and monastic members and visitors), the community of monks visiting from other monasteries, the community of resident monks, and lastly, the community of resident nuns.

Reference: Zenryū Tsukamoto, Leon Hurvitz undefined. *A History of Early Chinese Buddhism: From Its Introduction to the Death of Hui-yüan*. New York: Kodansha International. p.p.835-36.

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Reference: Xingling 幸玲 Li李. *Lushan Huiyuan yanjiu 廬山慧遠研究*. Taipei: Wanjuanlou. p.282-83.

Are the group's adherents subject to a formal legal code provided by institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

## Warfare

Does religious group in question possess an institutionalized military:

– Field doesn't know

Do the group's adherents participate in an institutionalized military provided by institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Are the group's adherents protected by or subject to an institutionalized military provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

### Written Language

Does the religious group in question possess its own distinct written language:

– No

Is a non-religion-specific written language available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Is a non-religion-specific written language used by the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

### Calendar

Does the religious group in question possess a formal calendar:

– No

Is a formal calendar provided for the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: They would have used the calendar set by the imperial court in Jiankang 建康.

### Food Production

Does the religious group in question provide food for themselves:

– Field doesn't know

Is food provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

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Reference: Charles Jones B.. *Was Lushan Huiyuan a Pure Land Buddhist? Evidence from His Correspondence with Kumārajīva about Nianfo Practice*.

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