Buddhist Impact on the Creation of New Fictional Figures and Images in the You ming lu

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**ABSTRACT**

The *You ming lu* played an important role in the creation of fictional figures and images related to Buddhism. The portrayal of monks in this collection was among the earliest portrayals of monks in Chinese literature. Besides a direct influence upon literary works and historical texts, it played an important role in the development of Chinese Buddhism by exerting influence upon Buddhist hagiography. The portrayal of Buddhist nuns reveals that in the minds of people, nuns, resembling monks, were taken as figures who had unusual talent (e.g., the magical power of self-autotomy) and thus became objects of worship. The presence of Buddhist demons, such as *raksasa* and Ox-Head, in this collection signifies that Buddhist demons began to enter the realm of Chinese literature. Besides enriching the gallery of fictional images in the history of Chinese literature, these images had an important influence on Chinese culture as well. Today the names of some Buddhist demons have become idioms in Chinese and widespread throughout Chinese society.

**Keywords:** Buddhism, Fictional figure, Buddhist imagery, Chinese tale, *You ming lu*

As one of the most important collections of *zhiguai* (accounts of anomalies) in the Six Dynasties period (222-589) and in the history of Chinese fictional narrative literature, the *You ming lu* (*Records of the Hidden and Visible [Worlds]*) is distinguished by its varied contents, its elegant style of writing, and the fact that it is among the earliest of the collections that were heavily influenced by Buddhism. In the *You ming lu*, along with evident thematic changes under the impact of Buddhist beliefs, there are many new images closely related to, or directly derived from, Buddhist culture. These include images of Buddhist monks, nuns, and demons. The presence of Buddhist demons, such as *yaksa*, *raksasa*, and Ox-Head, signifies that Buddhist demons began to enter the realm of Chinese literature. The portrayal of monks and nuns in this collection was among the earliest ones and had exerted influence upon literary works, historical texts, and Buddhist hagiography in later times. This study observes the creation of new fictional figures and images in the *You ming lu* under the impact of Buddhist culture by examining the portrayal of these images and its characteristics, tracing the origins and evolution of the images, and revealing the influence upon literary works as well as religious and historical texts of later times.

Important prior studies of Buddhist imagery include Mu-chou Poo’s “The Images of Immortals and Eminent Monks” and John Kieschnick’s *The Eminent Monk: Buddhist Ideals in Medieval Chinese Hagiography* (Honolulu: University of...
Li Jianguo comments that the diversity in content and the elegance in writing of the *You ming lu* match or even surpass those of *Soushen ji* (In Search of the Spirits). See his *Tang qian zhiguai xiaoshuo shi* (History of Pre-Tang *zhiguai* Fiction) (Tianjin: Nankai daxue chubanshe, 1984), 356. The exquisite literary depictions that evident in some of the tales in the *You ming lu*, such as the “Mai hufen nuki” (The Girl Who Sold Face Powder), are the best in the *zhiguai* tales of the Six Dynasties.


5 See Zhi Pan (d.1270), *Fozu tongji* (Comprehensive Record of Buddha and the Patriarchs) (Nanjing: Jiangsu Guangling guji keyinshe, 1991), 3a-b.

6 A source of the Tang Dynasty furnished the following figures concerning the growth of the monastic community in Southern dynasties:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dynasty</th>
<th>Number of Temples</th>
<th>Number of Monks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Jin</td>
<td>1,768</td>
<td>24,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liu Song</td>
<td>1,913</td>
<td>36,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qi</td>
<td>2,015</td>
<td>32,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liang</td>
<td>2,846</td>
<td>82,700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

gradually there, and Buddhist monks became more and more numerous. Huijiao's *Gaoseng zhuan* included biographies of 257 prominent monks spanning the period from the tenth year of Yongping to the eighteenth year of Tianjian (519), and stories of 243 more monks are attached to these biographies. Prior to the *Gaoseng zhuan*, however, depictions of monks could be found in collections of supernatural tales, and *You ming lu* was among them.

Buddhist monks first appeared in collections of tales during the Jin dynasty, such as *Zhenyi zhuan* (Selected Anomaly Accounts) by Dai Zuo (fl. Late Jin), the *Linggui zhi* (A Treatise on Spirits and Ghosts) by Mr. Xun, and the *Soushen ji* (In Search of the Spirits) by Gan Bao (fl. 335-349). Unlike the majority of monks in Chinese history, who translated Buddhist scriptures and spread Buddhist dharma, monks in tales are mostly noted for their supernatural powers or magical arts. They are often anonymous. Among the three stories concerning Buddhist monks in the recompiled collection of *Linggui zhi*, for example, one describes the unusual talent of a monk who could communicate with ghosts, while the other two stories focus on the magical arts of anonymous foreign Taoists. In the *Soushen ji* the man from India has strange abilities, such as cutting off his tongue and then re-attaching it and ejecting fire from his mouth.

*You ming lu* inherited the characteristics of monk depictions from the collections that appeared in previous times. As in the *Linggui zhi*, there are also anonymous monks with supernatural power in the *You ming lu*. The “foreign monk” in tale 262 has comprehensive knowledge about the universe. In tale 152, a non-Chinese Buddhist monk can foresee the results of battles:

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9 Lu Xun, Ibid., 316-7.


11 Lu Xun, Ibid., 433-4; Zheng Wanqing, ed., *You ming lu* (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 1988), 1. 22. In the Southern and Northern Dynasties period, Hu seng (foreign monks) referred to monks from the West, including India, Parthia, etc.
When Yao Hong's (r.415-417) uncle Shao,12 the General-in-chief, was in charge of all the military affairs, he summoned a foreign Buddhist monk and inquired if [his future] would be auspicious or not. Thus the monk made [something] with flour shaped like a large pancake, which was ten feet in diameter. The monk sat on it, ate the western side first, then the northern side, then the southern side, and then rolled up the rest and swallowed it. When he finished the monk got up and left without a single word. In the fifth month of that year, Yang Sheng (r. 395-425) defeated Yao's troops at Qingshui.13 In the ninth month, Jin troops launched an expedition northwards, recovered and pacified Ying and Luo.14 Finally they swept the Feng and Gao,15 and captured Yao Hong alive there.

In this tale, the monk does not say a single word. But it seems that he has the ability to make predictions and each of his actions is meaningful. The pancake may suggest that the territory Yao Hong held would be eaten up as easily as the monk consumes the pancake. Rolling up the pancake symbolizes the defeat of Yao Hong and Jin troops' sweeping the Feng and Gao.

A prominent feature of the depiction of Buddhist monks in You ming lu is the inclusion of noted historical figures, such as An Qing (fl. 148-171),17 Fotu Cheng (233-348),18 and Zhu Falan.19 Portrayals of these figures are among the earliest depictions of such prominent people.

“Fotu Cheng” (tale 89) depicts Fotu's capacity for prognostication:

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12 Yao Hong (388-417) was the last emperor of the Qiang state Later Qin. After Later Qin was conquered by the Jin general Liu Yu (363-422), he was delivered to the Jin capital Jiankang and executed. See his biography in Fang Xuanling (578-648), Jin shu [Jin History] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 119. 3007. Yao Shao was the brother of Yao Hong's father, Yao Xing (366-416).

13 Yang Sheng was the Lord of Qiuchi, a state in modern Gansu. Qingshui was a city northwest of modern Qingshui in Gansu. See Tan Qixiang, Zhongguo lishi ditu ji [The Historical Atlas of China] (Beijing: Ditu chubanshe, 1982) 3, 43-4.

14 The Ying River rises at southwest of Mount Song in Henan and enters into the sea at Shouyang, Anhui; The Luo River originates at Mount Hua and flows through Luoyang (Tan Qixiang, Zhongguo lishi ditu ji [The Historical Atlas of China] (Beijing: Ditu chubanshe, 1982) 3, 43-4. Ying and Luo here refer to the area of central China south of the Yellow River.


16 Lu Xun, Guoxiaoshuo gouchen, 397; Zheng Wanqing, You ming lu 5, 175. The number of tale mentions here is based on Lu Xun's Guoxiaoshuo gouchen version.

17 A detailed account of An Qing will be given below.

18 Fotu Cheng was a famous Indian monk of the Jin, noted for his magical arts. He came to Luoyang in the fourth year of Yongjia (307-12) of the Jin, and was trusted by Shi Le, emperor of the Later Zhao. Fotu Cheng had a large number of disciples who were devoted to Buddhist dharma. Owing to him and Shi Le, Buddhism flourished in Luoyang, and 893 Buddhist monasteries were built. His biography is found in Jin shu 95, 2484.

19 Zhu Falan was one of the Indian monks mentioned above, who entered China together with Chinese envoys sent by Emperor Ming, carrying the Buddhist scriptures on the back of a white horse in the tenth year of Yongping (67) of the Han. According to Huijiao's Gaoseng zhuan, the foreign Taoist in tale 262 of You ming lu was Zhu Falan. See Huijiao, Gaoseng zhuan 1, 4.
Shi Le (r. 319-332) asked Fotu Cheng, “Can Liu Yao (d. 329) be caught? Is there any portent in which that can be seen?” Cheng ordered his servant boy to practice abstinence [from meat and wine] for seven days. Then [he] put some sesame oil in his palm, rubbed it, set a piece of sandalwood on fire, and chanted incantations. After a while, he raised his palm toward the boy, and in it was something distinctly unusual. Cheng asked, “Did you see anything?” The boy replied, “I only saw a military man who was tall, large, and white, with an unusual appearance. His arms were tied up with a red silk thread.” Cheng said, “This was none other than Liu Yao.” In that very year, [Shi Le] captured Liu Yao alive as expected.

As a noted Buddhist monk in the Jin dynasty, Fotu Cheng was said to have mastered many magical arts. This tale reflects one of the earliest legends about him. It is also found in Huijiao’s Gaoseng zhuan:

Fotu Cheng was a native of the West, and his original surname was Bo. When he was young, he became a monk. He purified his mind, devoted to learning, and could chant several millions of words of sutras. In the fourth year of Yongjia reign of Emperor Huai of the Jin (311), he came to Luoyang, intending to carry forward the grand dharma. He was good at chanting incantations and able to enslave demons. When he mixed sesame oil and rouge and put them in his palm, events that occurred one thousand miles away could be seen clearly within his palm, as if they occurred in front of you. He could also allow those who practiced abstinence to see them. In addition, he could foretell events by listening to the sound of bells and none of his predictions was failed.

Unlike the story from You ming lu, here the statement that “events that occurred one thousand miles away could be seen clearly within his palm” describes one of Fotu’s talents, but that talent is not one of prediction, such as listening to the sound of bells. The detailed depiction below shows this more clearly:

Until the eleventh year of Guangchu (328), [Liu] Yao himself led troops to attack Luoyang.

20 Shi Le was the founder of the Later Zhao in the Sixteen States period (303-436), as mentioned in footnote 17 above. His biography is found in the Jin shu 104, 2707-33; 105, 2733-59.
21 Liu Yao was the founder of Qian Zhao (Former Zhao, 318-29) in the Sixteen States period.
22 Lu Xun, Guxiaoshuo gouchen, 378; Zheng Wanqing, You ming lu 5, 174.
23 Xi yu (areas of the West) refers to India and some small states between China and India, such as Guizi, Shule, and Yutian.
24 Huijiao, Gaoseng zhuan 9, 63.
... At that moment Cheng painted his palm with something, looked at it, and found that there was a mass of people. Among the people there was a man whose neck was surrounded by a red silk thread. Therefore he told [Yao] Hong at the very time. It was just the time when [Liu] Yao was seized.

The story of Fotu Cheng in You ming lu had a direct influence upon historical writing, since the biography of Fotu Cheng in Jin shu (Jin History) copied You ming lu almost word for word:

When [Liu] Yao attacked Luoyang himself and [Shi] Le was about to save it, the subjects under him all remonstrated with him that they considered it not feasible. With this problem Le visited Cheng. Cheng said, “.... after your troops were sent out you would catch Yao.” Furthermore, Cheng ordered his servant boy to practice abstinence for seven days. He fetched some sesame oil, mixed with rouge, and personally rubbed them in his palm. When he raised his palm to show the boy, there was a bright light. Startled, the boy exclaimed, “There were many soldiers and horses. I saw a man who was tall, large, and white. His arms were tied up with a red silk thread.” Cheng said, “This was none other than [Liu] Yao.” Le was very happy. Finally he went to Luoyang to defend against Yao, and captured Yao alive.

Just like the author of the story in You ming lu, here the author considers the ability to make distant events visible in one’s palm as one of the means of foreseeing important events. This is obviously following the You ming lu. The depiction of Buddhist monks here reflects the understanding people held at that time of Buddhism and what Buddhist monks were or should be like. Worship of miraculous power is a religious behavior, and as a result, monks who possess miraculous powers became the objects of worship. This might be the reason why so many monks with miraculous powers appear in tales, religious biographies, and even formal histories.

“The Prince of Anxi” (tale 254) describes the prince’s unusual actions and his three lives. It stands out among the biographies of monks. This story had a great influence on later religious biographies. The entry about “An Qing” in Huijiao’s Gaoseng zhuan, for instance, was directly derived from this story. Below is a detailed
comparison of “the Prince of Anxi” in You ming lu and the biography of An Qing in Huijiao’s Gaoseng zhuang.

You ming lu

An Shigao, the marquis, was the prince of Anxi State (Parthia). He became a monk together with the son of a great patron and studied the way [of enlightenment] in a city in Shewei (an old state in India). Every time when a host refused to help them, the son of the great patron would become angry. Shigao always admonished him.

Having roamed around for twenty-eight years, [Shigao] said that he should go to Guangzhou. It happened that there was a chaos. A man met Gao and easily drew his knife out, saying, “I have truly gotten you!” Gao replied with a laugh, “I owed you a debt in previous life, thus I came from afar to repay you.” Then the man killed him. A teenager said, “This stranger, who came from a state far away, could speak our language, and did not show any sign of reluctance. Should he be a deity?” The people all laughed in astonishment.

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<th>You ming lu</th>
<th>Gaoseng zhuang</th>
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An Qing, styled Shigao, was the heir of the King of Anxi State. ...In a previous life he had already become a monk, and he had a classmate who lost his temper easily. While begging for food, each time when a patron refused him, he would then become angry. Gao remonstrated with him from time to time, [yet] in the end he never corrected his errors.

It had been so for more than twenty years, thus he bid farewell to his classmate, saying, “I should go to Guangzhou to finish paying a debt from a previous life. You are devoted and diligent in learning the sutras, and have never been left behind me. But by nature you had too much anger, thus you are destined to receive an ugly form. If I achieve the Way [of enlightenment], I would certainly save you.” Not long afterwards, he went to Guangzhou. There was just a chaos caused by robbers. While walking he ran across a teenager, who easily drew his knife out and said, “I have truly gotten you!” Gao replied with a laugh, “I owed you a debt in my previous life, and owing to that I came to repay you. Your anger is of course from the consciousness of a previous life.” Then he stuck his head out to receive the knife, without a sign of fear on his face. Thus the robber killed him. Those who were watching filled the passes, and all were shocked at his marvel.

### Notes

28 Lu Xun, Guxiaoshuo gouchen, 430-01; Zheng Wanqing, You ming lu 5, 166.

29 Huijiao, Gaoseng zhuang 1, 4.
The spirit of Shigao returned and was reborn in the State of Anxi, becoming the son of the prince again with the name of Gao. At the age of twenty, the Marquis of An discarded the lordship again so as to learn the Way [of enlightenment]. Ten and several more years later, he said to those who studied together with him, “I shall go to Kuaiji [Commandery] to repay my debt.”

According to Tan Qixiang, the modern southeastern part of Jiangsu and western part of Zhejiang covered modern southeastern part of Jiangsu and western part of Zhejiang.

Gao arrived at Guangzhou again to look for the teenager who had killed him in a previous life. At that time the teenager was still alive. Gao went directly to his home, talked about the matter about repaying the debt, and chatted about the predestined lot in the previous life. He was happy toward him, saying, “I still have a debt left. Now I should go to Kuaiji to finish repaying the debt.” The man of Guangzhou realized that Gao was not a common man, and suddenly he understood all. He regretted the previous grudge, provided handsome support, and accompanied Gao to travel eastward. Finally they reached Kuaiji.

As he passed by Mount Lu, he visited his friends; and then he passed by Guangzhou. Seeing that the previous teenager was still alive, he went to his home directly and talked about the events in the past with him. [The young man] was greatly delighted, and he then followed him to Kuaiji.

Afterwards his soul returned and became the heir of prince of the Anxi, it is none other than the body of Shigao in this life. Gao traveled throughout China in order to transform its people. After he finished the affairs of promoting the sutras, it was just the end of the reign of Emperor Ling, and the area within the [Hangju] Pass and Luoyang was in chaos. Thus he went to the south of the Yangzi River, saying, “I should pass by Mount Lu to save my previous classmate.”

Gao reached Qiuting Lake Monastery, which previously had numinous power. ... Gao, with the people from more than thirty boats that journeyed together with him, offered sacrifices to request good fortune. The god then passed down its words through the temple attendant, saying, “If there is a monk on the boats, you may summon him up.” The guests were all shocked, and they asked Gao to enter the monastery... The god popped its head from behind the bed. It turned out that it was a big python, and none knew the

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30 Kuaiji Commandery covered modern southeastern part of Jiangsu and western part of Zhejiang. See Tan Qixiang, Zhongguo lishi ditu ji 3, 26-27

31 Hangju Pass is northwest of Luoyang. See Tan Qixiang, Ibid. 3, 5-6.

32 Originally Guangzhou ke (the man from Guangzhou), it is corrected here according to a hand-copy edition of the Ming.
An Shigao was a famous foreign monk in the Han period. According to the conventional viewpoint, he was a crown prince of Parthia who abandoned his rights to the throne in order to devote himself to religious life, even though he “has never been successfully identified with any Parthian prince figuring in occidental sources.”33 Tang Yongtong says that at the end of the Han, An Qing was the most productive Buddhist scripture translator, and a great master of Buddhism.34 Erik Zürcher considers him “the earliest and most famous among these masters.... who is the first undoubtedly historical


34 Tang Yongtong, Han Wei Liang Jin Nanbeichao Fojiao shi (History of Buddhism in Han Wei Western and Eastern Jin and Northern and Southern Dynasties) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1955), 54.
personality in Chinese Buddhism. It was probably he who initiated the systematic translation of Buddhist texts and who organized the first translation team. However, the biography in Gaoseng zhuàn does not focus on the facts in history, but follows the story in You ming lu. Both the biography’s structure and plot are taken directly from the former text. Many words and even sentences are almost the same in both pieces of work. This shows that the You ming lu was copied not only by the compilers of the Jin shu, but also by religious biographers.

The influence of stories about Buddhist monks extended beyond the domain of religion. These depictions not only provided the Gaoseng zhuàn with important materials, but also opened the path for the type of novel that takes the numinous monk as its central hero. Examples include the Da Tang Sanzang qijing shihua (Storytelling of the Grand Tang Sanzang Seeking Buddhist Scriptures), Jigong zhuàn (Biography of Mr. Ji), etc. The idea and depiction of sanshi (three periods) in the story about An Shigao had a heavy influence upon fiction and drama in later times. The fact that the reincarnation became a narrative model in fiction and drama is clear evidence of this influence.

The Image of Buddhist Nun
As Buddhism spread throughout China, women began to join the devotees of Buddhist dharma. Jingjian of the Jin, a Buddhist nun of Zhulin si (Zhulin Monastery) in Luoyang, is considered the first Bhikshuni. During the time of the Southern dynasties, there were many eminent nuns who had close connections with the court. They exerted enormous influence on society by preaching to the imperial household and the nobility. The Biqiqi zhuan (Bhikshuni Biographies) by Baochang (fl.465) is the first book in Chinese history that deals exclusively with female devotees of Buddhism – the nuns. Prior to the Bhikshuni Biographies, stories about nuns had also been recorded in some collections of tales.

Compared with Buddhist monks, Buddhist nuns in You ming lu are few and far between. The only formal depiction of a nun is found in tale 107, which depicts

35 E. Zurcher, Buddhist Conquest of China, 32.
36 Literary works with reincarnation as the basis of their narrative structure include “Sanguo zhi pinghua” (Storytelling of the Record of the Three Kingdoms), Jigong zhuàn, “Wujie chanshi si Honglian ji” (The Five-Precept Chan Master Lured by Honglian) in Jingu qiguan (Marvels Old and New), Xu jingping mei (Sequel to the Plum in the Golden Vase), etc.
37 Her biography is in Baochang (fl.465), Biqiquan zhuàn (Bhikshuni Biographies); see Huijiao, Gaoseng zhuàn heji, 963.
the figure’s ability to recover from the extraction of her five internal organs and the amputation of her feet, hands, and head:

Huan Wen (312-373) harbored the mind of a usurper.40 At that time, a Buddhist nun came from afar. It was in summer, the fifth month [of the year]. The nun was bathing in another room. Wen spied on her stealthily and saw the naked nun cut her belly with a knife and get her five internal organs (the viscera) out first, and next she severed her two legs, head, and hands as well. After a long while she finished bathing. Wen asked her, “Previously I saw you. How could you mutilate yourself like that?” The nun replied, “When you become the Son of Heaven, you should also be like that.” Wen felt disconsolate.

Unlike the Bhikshuni Biographies, which selects those nuns who “had set their minds on ascetic practices and meditational achievements, who were pure and strong and known far and wide”41 this tale depicts the magical art of the nun, and the magical art is obviously used to warn Huan Wen. This kind of warning is probably insignificant, but the image of the Buddhist nun in this story is significant because: 1) it shows that in the minds of people at that time, nuns, resembling monks, were taken as figures who had unusual talent and thus became objects of worship; and 2) the means the Buddhist nun uses, self-autotomy and self-recovery, are noteworthy.

A variant of this story is also found in Soushen houji; it reads:

Huan Wen, the Commander-in-chief of the Jin, styled Yuanzi. In his late year an anonymous Buddhist nun from afar suddenly went to Wen and took him as a benefactor. The nun’s talent and behaviors were outstanding. Wen treated her with much respect, and allowed her to live inside his inner gate. Each time the nun bathed, it would certainly last to the change of time.43 With suspicion Wen peeped at her. He saw that the nun was naked, cut open her belly with a knife, and took out her viscera; then she cut her head off her body, divided them all into parts and sliced them up. Being shocked and fearful, Wen went back. When the nun got out of the bathroom, her body was as usual. Wen asked her what was going on. The nun replied, “If you remove or bully the supreme ruler, your body should be like that.” At that time, 155

40 Huan Wen was the Son-in-law of Emperor Ming 明帝 of the Jin. At first he was the Governor of Jingzhou, later he wielded power arbitrarily as the Da sima (Commander-in-chief). He schemed to replace the Jin himself, but died before he succeeded. His biography can be found in Jin shu 98, 2568-83.
41 Lu Xun, Guxiaoshuo gouchen, 384; Zheng wanqing, You ming lu 5, 156.
42 Baochang, Biqiuni zhuan xu (Preface to the Bhikshuni Biographies), in Huijiao, Gaoseng zhuan heji, 962.
43 In ancient China time was recorded by the system of Tiangan (Heavenly Stems) and Dizhi (Earthly Branches). A day was divided into twelve periods which were matched with the twelve Earthly Branches: 子 (23:00-1:00), 丑 (1:00-3:00), 寅 (3:00-5:00), 卯 (5:00-7:00), 辰 (7:00-9:00), 巳 (9:00-11:00), 午 (11:00-13:00), 未 (13:00-15:00), 申 (15:00-17:00), 酉 (17:00-19:00), 戌 (19:00-21:00), and 亥 (21:00-23:00). Change of time period indicates more than two hours.
Huan] Wen was about to inquire the tripods. Hearing that, he felt very unhappy. Owing to this, Wen was alert and fearful, and he kept the integrity as a subject [without usurping the throne] in the end. Later the nun bid farewell and left, nobody knew where she went.

Here the story provides more details, and its narration is clearer. This is likely a later piece of work developed on the basis of the tale in You ming lu. Of course, it could also be a variant in records of the same story.

Similar stories of the recovery of a mutilated body are found in You ming lu. A noted one (tale 140) describes Jia Bizhi, a canjun (Adjutant) who dreamed of a man with an ugly face who asked to exchange heads with him. The next morning, people fled from him in surprise. Getting a mirror to look at himself, he found that his face had become that of the man in his dream:

Jia Bizhi of Hedong, his childhood name was Yier. Both of these names have been checked against his family genealogy. During the Yixi reign period (405-418) he was an adjutant in the Prefecture of Langye. One night he dreamed of a man who had an acne face with whiskers, a big nose, and upward-looking eyes. The man asked him, “I admire your appearance, and want to exchange my head with you. Is that okay?” Bi replied, “Each person has his own head and face. How could one tolerate such an outrage?” The following night he had the same dream again, and he was disgusted with it. Thus he promised to exchange heads in his dream. When he got up the next morning, he himself did not realize what had happened. But people all ran away and hid in surprise, saying, “Where does this man come from?” Being frightened, the Prince of Langye sent someone to summon the man to have a look. When Bi arrived, the Prince of Langye saw him at a distance, stood up, and went back to the inner court. Bi did not realize anything was strange until he found a mirror to look into it himself. Thus he returned home. All the members of his family went inside the room in panic, and women ran away to hide themselves, saying, “Where does this strange man come from?” Bi sat down and talked about the story himself for a long time, and sent someone to inquire at the prefecture, and then they believed him. Later he could cry with half a face while the other half smiled. His two legs, hands, and mouth each held a pen and wrote at the same time. The meanings of the words were all good. This was really marvelous. The rest were all the same as before.

The Ding vessel or tripod is a symbol of the power of a country. Wending (inquire the tripods) is a metaphor of usurping.

Wang Genlin, Han Wei Liuchao biji xiaoshuo daguan (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1999), 447.

As stated above, the date of Soushen houji is still unclear. The conventional view, which attributes this collection to Tao Qian, is doubtful. See Wang Guoliang, “Soushen houji yanjiu” 搜神後記研究, in his Liuchao zhigui xiaoshuo kaolun, 113-56.

The area centered around modern Xia County and north of the city of Sanmen xia, Henan. See Tan Qixiang, Zhongguo lishi dituji 3, 35.
Records of magical arts in China can be traced back to as early as the Warring States period. But this type of recovery from a mutilated body, or exchange of organs, is not found in previous Chinese texts. On the contrary, in the Buddhist canon such stories are not rare. For example, in the *Daming du wuji jing* (Āstasahasrika-prajā-pāramitā), translated by Zhi Qian (fl. third century), a person’s hands, feet, ears, and nose have been cut off. Later his younger brother connects them together through divine power, and the body recovers its original form. In *Da zhi du lun* (Mahāprajāpāramitā Sastra or Great Treatise on the Perfection of Wisdom), one person’s hands and feet are exchanged with another’s. Obviously, the stories in *You ming lu* are influenced by this motif found in the Buddhist canon.

This motif influenced later literature, but scholars have not paid much attention to the connection. While Chen Hong contributed to the understanding of the origin of the motif, his conclusion that this motif had little influence on later Chinese literature is doubtful. Chen’s dubious statement is based on the chauvinistic sentiment that Chinese culture could not accept such cruelty. Tai Jingnong raised a similar argument in his discussion of the literary development of Buddhist hells. Tai argues that the reason why the literati in the Six Dynasties did not accept the Buddhist concept of hells was that the cruelty in the hells was contrary to Confucius’ humanity, Laozi’s kindness, and even Buddhist mercy. Yet he does not explain why Chinese people accepted it during the time of the Tang dynasty. If the Chinese finally accepted Buddhist hells of physical torture, why could they not accept a motif involving the exchange of body parts?

Actually, stories of recovery through borrowing a part from another’s body never stopped spreading. They can be found in the tales of the Tang, Song, and the Qing as well. Li Rong’s (9th century) *Duyi zhi* (Unique Records of the Marvels) retells...
the story about Jia Bizhi in You ming lu. Hong Mai’s (1123-1202) “Sun Guinao” in Yi jian zhi (Records by Yijian) volume three tells a similar story: Sun Siwen, a scholar of Shu (modern Sichuan), admired fondly the statue of the lady in the Lingxian wang, Temple which he had just visited. Then Sun dreamed of someone holding a saw who cut off his head and planted another head on his neck. After awakening he felt horrified, so he summoned his wife to hold a candle to look at him, and his wife was shocked and horrified, and died right away. This is a horrible story. Sun was punished with the replacement of his head just because of his adoration of the deity, and even worse, his wife died of horror.

Unlike the above story, “Lu Pan” in Pu Songling’s (1640-1715) Liaozhai zhiyi (Strange Tales from Make-do Studio) is not horrible, but comic. It tells about Zhu Erdan, a young man who was unrestrained. One day when he drank with friends at a literary gathering, someone made fun of him, saying: “Tonight if you venture to shoulder the statue of the Judge in the Ten Kings Temple back here, we'll raise money to treat you with a feast.” The Ten Kings Temple was a temple of Yama and other kings of the hells, and the curved wooden statues of the kings and spirits were all vivid. In the eastern hall there was a standing judge with a green face and red moustache, and its appearance was ferocious and hideous. When people entered the hall they were all horrified, and that was why people bet with Erdan to embarrass him. Beyond everyone’s expectation, Erdan left with a smile, and in a little while he came back with the statue of the judge on his shoulders. That very night the judge visited Erdan’s home. He did not blame him. On the contrary, he became a close friend of his. In order to let Erdan become talented in writing, the judge replaced his heart. Later when Erdan asked him to replace his wife's face with a more beautiful one, the judge did it. Then Erdan’s wife became a beautiful young girl.

As for the repair of a damaged body, the famous story about Sun Wukong competing with the National Tutors of Chechi State to recover from damage to his head and belly in Xiyou ji (Journey to the West) is a good later example:

The Grand Sage directly reached the execution ground, was seized, tied up, and pressed against the top of an execution mound by the executioner. When hearing the order of “Beheading,” the knife whizzed and cut off his head, which, kicked by the executioner, rolled thirty to forty steps away like a watermelon. No blood poured out of the cavity. A voice from his belly shouted, “Come back, my head!” (The Immortal of Deer Power then chanted an incantation to request that the local Earth Deity hold down the head) ....The monk felt anxious. He clenched his fist tightly, struggled to get free, and shook off all the ropes that tied him. He shouted, “Grow!” A head suddenly grew out of the cavity.... The monk walked with faltering steps directly to the execution ground. He leaned his body against the big stake, undressed, and exposed his belly. Tying up his neck, legs and feet with a rope, the executioner waved an ox-ear knife, cut toward his belly, and stabbed a hole. The monk opened his belly with two hands, pulled the intestines

55 See Li Rong, Duyi zhi, in Ding Ruming et al. ed., Tang wudai biji xiaoshuo daguan (A Magnificent Spectacle of biji Stories of Tang and the Five Dynasties) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1999), 908.
56 Hong Mai, Yi jian zhi (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 393.
57 Pu Songling, Liaozhai zhiyi (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1979), 58-61.
Buddhist Impact on the Creation of New Fictional Figures and Images in the *You ming lu*

All of these are good examples of the recovery of a mutilated body. There is no reason to conclude that the motif, which appears first in *You ming lu*, "had little influence on later Chinese literature." The difference between these later works and the story in *You ming lu* is that all the people concerned in these later works are men, no women or nuns. This phenomenon awaits further study.

**Images of Buddhist Demons**

Along with the introduction of the Buddhist canon, images of Buddhist demons were also transmitted into China. The following passage, which describes what Mulian saw when he went to the hell to save his mother, contains a typical depiction of Buddhist demons in Chinese literature:

In a short moment, he arrived at the Avicinaraka Hell. In the air he saw fifty Ox-Heads, Horse-Faces, rakṣasas, and yaksas, whose teeth were like sword trees, mouths were like blood tubs, voices were like thunder, and eyes were like lightning.

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須臾之間卻至阿鼻地獄。空中見五十箇牛頭馬腦，羅刹夜叉，牙如劍樹，口似血盆，聲如雷鳴，眼如掣電。
All the demons in this hell, such as the Ox-Head, Horse-Face, yaksa, and raksasa, are not indigenous Chinese ghosts, but figures from Buddhism. The yaksa and raksasa are among the most important demons in Buddhist culture.

Among these Buddhist demons, yecha (yaksa or yaksha, Japanese yasha) was probably the first to appear in Chinese literature. This demon was originally part of a class of nature ghosts or demons in Hindu mythology. In Kalidasa's Meghaduta, a long lyric poem of medieval India, a yaksa is depicted as a husband filled with tender feelings for his wife, from whom he is separated. In Buddhist scripture, however, yaksa is depicted as one of the eight classes of supernatural beings (the Lotus Sutra), i.e. the deva, naga, yaksa, gandharva, asura, garuda, kinnara, and mahoraga. It also belongs to the eight groups of demon-followers of the four maharajas, i.e. the gandharva, pisacas, kumbhandas, pretas, nagas, putanas, yaksas, and raksasas. In the second group, yaksas are demons of the earth, of the air, or of the lower heavens; they are malignant and violent, and devourers of human flesh.

Another Buddhist ghost, raksasa (male), or raksasi (female), first appears in You ming lu. Raksasa means “evil and fearful” and refers to evil ghosts. This figure was first found in the Indian classic the Rgveda, and was believed to be the name of a native tribe. After Aryan conquered India, it became the name of evil demons. Raksasa in Hindu mythology is a type of demon or goblin. “These demons are ‘night prowlers’; they have the greatest power after ‘the first forty seconds of gray twilight preceding nightfall’. They travel faster than the wind, and go through the air; they have also power to change their shape. Sometimes they appear in the guise of tigers, bears, or great monkeys; and their hues vary from yellow to red, and blue to green.” In the Buddhist canon, raksasas are evil demons. The Yiqiejing yinyi (Pronunciation and Meaning of All the Scriptures) says, “Raksasas are evil demons. They eat the flesh of people. Some of them fly in the air while some walk on the ground. Both types are nimble, quick, and terrible.” It also says, “Raksasa is the name of violent and evil demons, which are extremely ugly as males and extremely beautiful as females. But both of them eat people. In addition, there is a state of female raksasas that is located on an

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62 In the mythology of India, yaksa is “a class of generally benevolent nature spirits who are the custodians of treasures that are hidden in the earth and in the roots of trees... Yakshas were often given homage as tutelary deities of a city, district, lake, or well. Their worship, together with popular belief in nagas (serpent deities), feminine fertility deities, and mother goddesses, probably had its origin among the early Dravidian peoples of India. The yaksha cult coexisted with the priest-conducted sacrifices of the Vedic period, and continued to flourish during the Kusana period.” See Encyclopaedia Britannica (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 1998) 12, 806.


64 Li Jianguo said that this is perhaps the first time that a Buddhist demon appeared in Chinese literature (Li Jianguo, Tangan zhiguai xiaoshuo shi, 362), but he missed the yaksas in Shiyi ji, which he himself considers to be prior to the You ming lu.


66 Huilin (fl. 5 century), Yiqiejing yinyi (Taipei: Datong shuju, 1970) 25, 510; Cf. Taisho Tripitaka 54, 464.
island in the ocean” 罗刹婆 … …此乃暴恶鬼名也, 男卽極醜, 女卽甚姝美, 她皆食啖於人。別有羅剎女國居海島之中。” “The Pumen pin” (“Universal Gate”) of Fahua jing (Lotus Sutra) says, “After entering into the great ocean, if the black wind blows their boat up, they will drift and fall down to the demon state of raksasas” 入於大海, 假使黑風吹其船舫, 漂堕羅剎鬼國。” In You ming lu, raksasas are described as demons who are devourers of human beings. A story (tale 253) about raksasas says:

In the Song reign there was a state that was near to the raksasas. The raksasas entered into its territory several times, eating infinite people. The king of the state made a treaty with the raksasas, which says, “From today the families in this state each will be in charge of only one day. Each of the families should send [a boy] to you. Please do not kill people randomly anymore.”

宋有一國，與羅剎相近。羅剎數入境，食人無度。王與羅剎約言。自今以後，國中人家各專一日，當分送往，勿復枉殺。

As they are in Buddhist scriptures, raksasas are described here as devouring human beings.

Tale one of Xuanyan ji, another collection recompiled by Lu Xun, is also a story concerning a raksasa. But it mainly emphasizes swiftness, another characteristic of raksasas:

Zhang Rong was a native of Bohai, styled Meiyu. During the Xianming reign of the Jin (275-279), his son’s wife gave birth to a boy. At first they did not feel there was anything abnormal. At the age of seven, the boy was much cleverer than others. Rong once brought him to watch people shooting. When Rong asked others to bring the arrows back, he was always annoyed by their slowness. Rong’s grandson said, “I’ll pick them up for you myself.” Later, immediately after Rong shot, the boy started to run. Thus both he and the arrow reached the target, and in just a moment he had already returned with the arrow in hand. All the people present were shocked. On the second day after their return, his grandson suddenly fell gravely ill and died. Rong summoned several monks and burned joss sticks. A foreign Taoist said, “Please quickly collect this grandson. He is a ghost of raksasa, and he would eat and harm people.” Having seen the episode with his bringing back arrows, they closed the coffin in a hurry. In a short moment, they heard the sound of moving up and down from the coffin. All of them stopped their sadness and became shocked. They hurriedly sent the coffin away and buried it. Later his shape appeared several times. Rong performed the baguan zhai [ceremony], thus it left.”

67 Huilin, Ibid. 7, 130.
69 Lu Xun, Guxiaoshuo gouchen, 430; Zheng Wanqing, You ming lu 5, 165.
70 Also called Ba jiezhai (Eight Commandments), refers to the first eight of the ten commandments: “do not kill; do not take things not given; no ignoble (i.e. sexual) conduct; do not speak falsely; do not drink wine; do not indulge in cosmetics, personal adornments, dancing, or music; do not sleep on fine beds, but on a mat on the ground; and do not eat out of regulation hours, i.e. after noon. Another group divides the sixth into two – against cosmetics and adornments and against dancing and music; the first eight are then called the eight prohibitory commands and the last the zhai or fasting commandment.” Cf. Soothil and Hodous, A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms, 36b-7a.

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The story tells of a raksasa who, as a boy, could run as quickly as an arrow. These depictions set the tone for the image of Buddhist ghosts in medieval Chinese literature.

Ox-Head is another Buddhist demon that appears in You ming lu. In tale 82, Shu Li was sent to receive the punishment of being tortured on an iron grill:

There the shaman saw a creature with the head of an ox and the body of a man who held an iron prong. He skewered Shu on it and tossed him onto an iron grill upon which he was turned until his body was thoroughly scorched. [The shaman] pleaded in vain for death. He was subjected to this torture for two days and one night, experiencing the most intolerable sufferings.

It is clear that the ox-head is a demon that serves in hell. According to the Buddhist scripture Tiecheng nili jing (Iron City Nili Hell Sutra), the ox-headed demon was called Abang. When he was a man he was not filial to his parents, and thus, after death, he became a demon with an ox head and a human body, working as a policeman. The Leng yan jing says, “Holding spears and lances, the Ox-Head turnkey and Horse-Head raksasa whipped them inside the city toward the Ceaseless Hell.” Later, Horse-Face was created to be a partner of Ox-Head.

As in the case of the yaksas’ appearance in the Shiyi ji, the significance of the appearance of raksasas and Ox-Heads in You ming lu and Xuanyan ji goes beyond the depictions themselves. Their presence signifies that Buddhist demons began to enter Chinese literature. Afterwards, Buddhist demons began to appear frequently in fictional works. Yaksas in many collections of the Tang period are described as malignant and violent demons, and they completely fill two volumes (v. 356-57) in the noted Taiping guangji. The image of yaksas has been gradually changed in Chinese tales, and it becomes an important image in Chinese fictional narratives. In
Pu Songling’s *Liaozhai zhiyi*, for example, a *yaksa* on an island tries to become the wife of a man from the mainland, and thus the *yaksa* figure begins to possess the feelings of human beings.77

It is also in Pu Songling’s *Liaozhai zhiyi*, a female ghost lures men through a *raksasa*’s bone, which can change into gold and then cut out the hearts and livers of the men who touch it;78 another piece in *Liaozhai zhiyi* creates a marvelous sarcastic tale through the customs of the *raksasa* state, in which people see ugliness as beauty while they see beauty as ugliness. Ma Ji, for example, was a handsome young man, but all the people in that state kept avoiding him, and even the emperor refused to receive him. Once he was drunk, he smeared coal ash on his face and became a man like ugly Zhang Fei in the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. To his surprise, people all praised him as a handsome man.79 This depiction is obviously social satire.

Ox-Heads and Horse-Faces have been very popular in folklore and fiction. In Feng Menglong’s (1574-1646) *Gujin xiaoshuo* (Stories Old and New), they are depicted as follows: “At the foot of the dais stood about a hundred attendants, among them were the fearsome Ox-Heads and Horse-Faces, with their long muzzles and red hair” 80 Even though they look ferocious, in some literary works they are full of compassion. A story about an Ox-head in “Xi ziheche,” Volume 5 of Yuan Mei’s (1716-1797) *Zi buyu* (The Master does Not Say), is a good example.81

At the same time, the names of the Buddhist demons have become idioms in Chinese. *Raksasa* has been used to refer to evil people. For example, tale 6 of Aina jushi’s *Doupeng xianhua* (Chatting under the Bean Arbor) says, “The monks in the monastery, two to three dozen in total, are all *raksasas*” 82 Here *rakasasas* refer to evil men. The term *yaksas* often related to women. For example, Wang Xifeng was referred to as “*yecha xing*,” the star of *yaksa*, by her husband Jia Lian;83 and *mu yecha*, female *yaksa*, has already become the synonym for ferocious women.

**Conclusion**

In summation, the *You ming lu* played an important role in the creation of fictional figures and images related to Buddhism. The portrayal of monks in this collection was among the earliest portrayals of monks in Chinese literature. While inheriting the characteristics and techniques of depicting monks from prior collections of tales,

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78 Ibid., 67-70.
79 Ibid., 193-99.
80 “You Fengdu Humu Di yin shi” (Humu Di Intones Poems and Visits the Nether World), in Feng Menglong (1574-1646), ed., *Gujin xiaoshuo* (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1989), 480.
82 Aina jushi, *Doupeng xianhua* (Taibei: Tianyi chubanshe, nd.), 71.
depictions which focus on describing anonymous monks who possess supernatural powers, what was new in the *You ming lu* was the inclusion of noted historical figures. Besides a direct influence upon Chinese literature and history, this portrayal also played an important role in the development of Chinese Buddhism by exerting influence upon Buddhist hagiography.

There is only one tale that describes a Buddhist nun in the *You ming lu*, but it is significant for at least two reasons: First, it shows that in the minds of people at that time nuns, resembling monks, were taken as figures who had unusual talent and thus became objects of worship; second, her magical power of self-autotomy had a heavy influence upon literature in later times.

The images of Buddhist demons that appear in this collection, such as *raksasa* and Horse-Faces, were directly derived from Buddhist scriptures. The presence of these Buddhist demons signifies that Buddhist demons began to enter the realm of Chinese literature. *Raksasa* first appear in the *You ming lu*, and this adds to the significance of this collection in the cultural history of Chinese popular Buddhism. Besides enriching the gallery of fictional images in the history of Chinese literature, these images had an important influence on Chinese culture as well. The names of some Buddhist demons have become idioms in Chinese and widespread throughout Chinese society.

**GLOSSARY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Abang</td>
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Huilin 慧琳  Shule 疏勒
Jia Bizhi 賈弼之 Soughen ji 捲神記
Jia Lian 賈璽 Sichao Gaoseng zhuang 四朝高僧傳
Jiangsu guji chubanshe 江蘇古籍出版社 Sun Guinao 孫鬼腦
Jigong zhuang 濟公傳 Sun Siwen 孫斯文
Jingu qiguan 今古奇觀 Sun Wukong 孫悟空
Jin shu 僧書 Tai Jingnong 臺靜農
Jingjian 靜檢 Tan Qixiang 譚其驥
Jingli yixiang 經律異相 Tang Yongtong 湯用彤
Kaşyapa Matanga 迦協摩騰 Tianjian 天監
Leng yan jing 楞巖經 Tiecheng nili jing 鐵城泥犁經
Li Jianguo 李劍國 Wang Chongmin 王重民
Li Rong 李冗 Wang Genlin 王根林
Liao zhai zhiyi 聊齋志異 Wang Guoliang 王國良
Ling gui zhi 靈鬼志 Wang Jia 王嘉
Lingxian wang 靈顯王 Wang Xifeng 王熙鳳
Linyi 臨沂 Wang Yingzhi 王英志
Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 Wending 間鼎
Liu Yu 劉裕 Wenhua yishu chubanshe 文化藝術出版社
Lu Pan 陸判 Wen shi zhe chubanshe 文史哲出版社
Lu Xun 魯迅 Wu Cheng'en 吳承恩
Lu Xun quanji 魯迅全集 Xia 夏
luocha 羅剎 Xiyou ji 西遊記
Ma Ji 馬驥 Xi ziche 洗聖河車
Ma Shutian 馬書田 Xu Gaoseng zhuang 緣高僧傳
mu yecha 母夜叉 Xu Jinping mei 緣金瓶梅
Pumen pin 蒲松齡 Xun 筍
Pu Songling 蒲松齡 Yao Xing 姚興
Qiuchi 仇池 yecha 夜叉
Renmin wenxue chubanshe 人民文學出版社 yecha xing 夜叉星
Ruxing 如惺 Yi jian zhi 夷堅志
Sanguo zhi pinghua 三國志平話 Yiqiejing yinyi 一切經音義
Sanmen xia 三門峽 Yongjia 永嘉
sanshi 三世 Yongping 永平
Shanghai guji chubanshe 上海古籍出版社 You ming lu 幽明錄
Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館 Yuan Mei 袁枚
Shenxian zhuang 神仙傳 Yutian 于闐
Shi Le 石勒 Zanning 贊寧
Shi Sengmin 釋僧旻 Zhang Fei 張飛
Shiyi ji 拾遺記 Zhang Mantao 張曼濤
Shouyang 壽陽 Zhonghua shuju 中華書局
Shu 蜀 Zhenni zhuang 甄異傳

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