similar portrayals. It is unlikely that there would not have been
two hundred gods painted during the period between the Ming pantheon and
present scroll, showing gods from the three religions. The philoso-
philosophical belief in the need for an effective protection against the evil
eras, and a belief in the invaluable assistance that the gods could
bow in the achievement of prosperity and happiness in this life. The
usual beliefs of gods in a pantheon was hence in accordance
the idea of the user had formed in his immediate local
riment. The pictures do not represent the special philosophies
religious traditions of the individual religions, but they show a wide
lifeful world of ideas that the average Chinese considered relevant

Introduction
During the second half of the T'ang Dynasty (618–906 A.D.) Ch'an
Buddhism was one of the most dominating and vital forces on the
religious scene of China. By the time of the Five Dynasties Period
(906–960 A.D.) five major Ch'an schools (Ch. wu-chiao) had arisen;
they were the Kuei-yang School, the Lin-chi School, the Ts'ao-tung
School, the Fa-yen School, and finally the Yün-men School, the foun-
der of which is the topic of the present article. In later Ch'an chronicles
Ch'an master Yün-men Wen-yen is revered as one of the most capable
and dynamic teachers of the entire tradition, whose brand of Ch'an
combined the use of “live words” (Ch. sheng-hua) with a radical
directness in the teaching situation. One of the pedagogical devices said
to have been employed by him during the customary exchange of
questions and answers (Ch. wen-tu) between master and disciple was
the use of abrupt one-syllable words, the so-called “one word barrier”
(Ch. i-tzu-kuan). While his public sermons were full of eloquence and
humour, like the majority of T'ang Ch'an masters his approach to the
goal of the Buddhist teaching was basically trans-intellectual. He was
not opposed to the scriptural teaching, however. Wen-yen is known to
have made full use of older cases and themes from the Ch'an Buddhist

1 For general information on the Five Ch'an Schools, see Isshu Miura & R. F. Sasaki,
2 Named after the mountain in present day northwestern Kuangtung Province where his
temple was situated.
3 “Live words” are words and expressions which reveal or point to the absolute reality.
4 For a discussion of i-tzu kuan see Miura & Sasaki, Zen Dust, p. 161. For examples of
Wen-yen's use of this “one word barrier”, see Ching-ye ch'uan-teng lu (Taihō Shinshū
Duizōden) (hereafter T.) 2076), Ch. 19, p. 358c.
history, the so-called kung-an, and it appears that together with his master Hsüeh-feng I-ts' un (822-908) he was among the pioneers in using the examples of former masters in his public discourses. Eventually this practice developed into the kung-an system which became prominent in the Lin-chi School during the Sung Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.) 1. Except for a handful of poems, the most lengthy of which are the two different songs both entitled, shih-erh shih ko (Song of the Twelve Periods), he left no other written works behind.

Despite the relative importance of Wen-yen and the Yün-men School for an understanding of Buddhism of the Five Dynasties Period as well as the Sung Dynasty, surprisingly little research has centered on this Ch'an master and virtually none exists in a Western language. 2 Hence, the primary purpose of this article is to throw light on the life of Wen-yen along historical lines, that is, to attempt to present a picture of the man divorced from later hagiographies and myths. Secondly, we will try to show how important the master's connection to the rulers of the Southern Han Dynasty (918-978) 3 to his success in establishing his monastery and subsequent tradition.

1. The sources and the problems they present

There exists a number of biographical sources on the life of Wen-yen, among which the following are the most important: the Yu-fang i-lu (Bequeathed Record of Pilgrimage) 4 (hereafter YFIL), an entry in the Yün-men Kuang-chen Ch'an-shih kuang-lu (The Extensive Record of Ch'an-master Kuang-chen), and the Yün-men Shan Kuang-tai Ch' an-yuan K'uang-chen Ta-shirts hsing-lu (Record of the Deeds of the Great Master Kuang-chen from Kuang-tai Ch'an Monastery on Mt. Yün-men) 5 (hereafter YKCKK), the Korean work Chodang chip (Collection of the Patriarch's Hall) 6 (hereafter CDC), as well as the two stele inscriptions, the Ta Han Shao-chou Yün-men Shan Kuang-tai Ch' an-yuan ku K'uang-chen Ta-shirts shih-hsing pei (The Stele of the Venerable Kuang-chen, the Great Master shih-hsing from Kuang-tai Ch'an Monastery in Shao-chou of the Great Han) 7 (hereafter TSYKK), and the Ta Han Shao-chou Yün-men Shan Ta-chüeh Ch' an-shih shih-hsingpei (Kung-tai Chan Monastery on Mt. Yün-men in Shao-chou of the Great Han) 8 (hereafter TSTYHK). All these biographical records are here considered primary sources as they were composed within a period of fifty years after the master's death. Other useful biographical information can be found in such works as Ching-te ch' an-teng lu (The Transmission of the Lamp from...
the Ching-te Reign)\textsuperscript{16} (hereafter CTL), and the Ch'\textsuperscript{17} an-lin seng pao-chuan (The Precious Transmission of the Monks from the Ch'\textsuperscript{17} an Forest).\textsuperscript{17} Useful secondary sources are the Yi\textsuperscript{18} men Shan chih (The Record of Mt. Yun-men)\textsuperscript{18} and the study by Tokiwa Daijo.\textsuperscript{19}

As is to be expected many of these biographies include hagiographical elements, a phenomenon which becomes increasingly evident in the later sources. Despite this most of early biographical accounts seem relatively reliable from a historical point of view, that is, they contain a fair amount of verifiable data which not only correspond with other information but also give a reasonably coherent picture of Wen-yen. That is not to say that discrepancies in these sources are absent, but to a large extent they combine to present us with a useful outline of the master's life and times. Among the primary sources the YKCKK, TSYKK and the TSTYH are by far the most important, and consequently our attention shall focus on these three inscriptions.

2. Early years

All the biographies under consideration here agree that Wen-yen was born into the Chang family in the Chia-hsing Prefecture near Su-chou. None of our sources state directly the date of his birth, but from the stele inscriptions we learn that Wen-yen was 86 years old at the time of his death, which took place in the 7th year of the Ch'ien-ho reign period, a date corresponding to 949 A.D. Consequently we can ascertain that he was born in the year 864 A.D.\textsuperscript{20}

Nothing much is mentioned about his childhood except that he showed the usual signs of a "great being" at an early age, a stereotype found in most Buddhist biographical accounts. There is some uncertainty as to which year he left his parents' home to embark on the career of a Buddhist monk. In the TSYKK it is stated that the master's dharma age (Ch. fa-ling) was 72 years and that he had been a monk for 66 years. This would mean that he received the traditional ten precepts (Ch. shih-chieh) of a novice and his religious name (Ch. fa-ming) at the age of fourteen in the year 878 A.D. We may presume that he had left his parents' home shortly before that time. The YKCKK, which is our earliest source, states that he already wished to leave his parents' home at an early age, but that he did not do so before coming of age.\textsuperscript{21}

Wen-yen entered the K'ung-wang Temple, a local temple situated not very far from his home town, under the tutelage of the monk Chih-ch'\textsuperscript{22} eng (d.u.), who is variously said to have been a vinaya master or a Ch'an master. Wen-yen served as his teacher's attendant for several years during which time he perused the Buddhist vinaya and in addition is said to have mastered the doctrines of the Middle Way, i.e. m\textsuperscript{23}dhyamika (Ch. chung-tao).\textsuperscript{22} At the age of twenty Wen-yen received the complete ordination as a monk on the ordination platform set up in Chang-chou, the regional capital.\textsuperscript{23} This important event in the master's life took place in the year corresponding to 883 A.D., according to the TSYKK.\textsuperscript{24} It is not known how long Wen-yen stayed with Chih-ch'\textsuperscript{22} eng after having become a monk. The biographies insofar as they mention it, say "several years". However, a period of 4 or 5 years after his ordination would seem probable.

\textsuperscript{16} T. 207b.
\textsuperscript{17} Hsi\textsuperscript{18} ta\textsuperscript{19} ang-ching (hereafter HTC) (Lung-men reprint, Hong Kong, 1967), Vol. 118. The section on Wen-yen can be found on pp. 439a-443a.
\textsuperscript{18} See note 13. Although not a scholarly work this compilation on the history and rebuilding of Wen-yen's old temple on Mt. Yun-men contains a wealth of information. It is especially useful for its fine punctuated recensions of the TSYKK and the TSTYH.
\textsuperscript{19} See note 8.
\textsuperscript{20} TSYKK, p. 184 and TSTYH, p. 190.
3. Enlightenment and Ch'an pilgrimage

Sometime around 888–889 A.D., Wen-yen had become disillusioned with his study of the Buddhist scriptures and was encouraged by Chih-ch'eng to pay a visit to a famous Ch'an master residing in Mu-chou in order to further his understanding of the higher truth of Buddhism. That year Wen-yen, now in his late twenties, left K'un-wang Temple and journeyed south. We may presume that he arrived in Mu-chou around 889 A.D. and immediately went to Lung-hsing Temple, an old abandoned temple where master Tsao-tsong (d.u.), also known as Chen Ts'un-su (Old Rev. Chen), lived. Tsao-tsong was a disciple in direct line of descent from the celebrated Chan master Huang-po Hsi-yün (d. ca. 849), and a teacher and dharma brother to the illustrious Lin-chi I-hsüan (d. 867).

Wen-yen's meeting with Tsao-tsong and subsequent awakening has been one of the most celebrated enlightenment cases in later Ch'an literature. The earliest accounts, however, are singularly terse, offering very little information beyond indicating that Wen-yen attained enlightenment under the old master. Having arrived at Tsao-tsong's temple Wen-yen was denied an interview twice before he could meet the Chan master. The TSYKK gives the following account of Wen-yen's meeting with the old Ch'an master:

The Ch'an master asked (from behind the locked door): "Who are you?" The master (i.e. Wen-yen) said: "Wen-yen". The Ch'an master opened the door and said: "What have you come here for?" The master said: "The personal affair of this practitioner has not been solved (i.e. I am still unenlightened)." The Ch'an master said: "An old drill from Ch'in." With his hand he pushed him out of the door, and in consequence of this treatment the master attained an awakening.

Following his awakening Wen-yen was given free access to the instructions of Tsao-tsong. The length or nature of Wen-yen's stay with Tsao-tsong is not known. The early sources do not make much out of the relationship between the two, which probably is an indication that the young monk did not attain a complete awakening while in Mu-chou. Later records have him stay a couple of years there during which time he is said to have befriended the local magistrate Ch'en Ts'ao (d.u.), a lay disciple of Tsao-tsong.

Accordingly the young pilgrim left Mu-chou and went to Hsiieh-feng's temple on Mt. Hsiao-kua. A later record, the Hsiieh-feng yü-lu, mentions in its nien-p'u section in the entry under I-ts'un's rd'a section for the year 890, that Wen-yen "became a disciple together with I-ts'un in that very year. It is highly likely that he became disciples of I-ts'un in that very year, it is highly

26 Present-day Chien-te in the western part of Chekiang Province.
27 Biography in CDC, Ch. 19, pp. 365b–367a and CTL, Ch. 12, pp. 291a–292b. For his recorded sayings see Mu-chou yü-lu in HTC Vol. 118, pp. 112a–114b.
28 According to the popular account in the Wuteng hui-yuan, (hereafter WTHY) the young monk having arrived in Mu-chou sought an interview with Tsao-tsong, but in vain. Twice he went to knock on his door without getting an answer, and when he knocked a third time the old master suddenly opened the door, took hold of him and demanded that he speak up. As the young monk fumbled for an answer the old Ch'an master pushed him out and slammed the door on his leg which broke. From the surprise and pain caused by this rough treatment Wen-yen is said to have attained enlightenment. See WTHY (Peking ed. 3 vols., 1984), Ch. 15, p. 922. Some scholars consider this incident a later fabrication as it does not occur in the early accounts of Wen-yen's life. However, a reference by Wen-yen in the early yü-lu material to "having one's leg broken in the Ch'an master's door" would seem to lend some credence to the story. See KL (T. 1988), Ch. 1, p. 547a, CTL (T. 2076), Ch. 19, p. 357b as well as the later Wu-chia-yü-lu (Zengaku gyoshu) 3, Kyoto, 1983, Ch. 5, p. 164b.
29 Meaning a useless tool.
30 TSYKK, p. 182.
31 Another possibility for the stress in the later Ch'an tradition on Wen-yen's connection to Tsao-tsong could be a wish to "imitate" Lin-chi I-hsüan's earlier enlightenment under the same master.
32 For biographical information see note 6.
33 Biography in CDC, Ch. 10, pp. 189a–192a. Together with Wen-yen, Hsia-sha is considered the greatest among Hsiieh-feng's disciples.
34 Ibid., Ch. 10, pp. 203a–208b.
35 Ibid., Ch. 10, pp. 199b–200b. This information is given in Hsiieh-feng yü-lu, p. 286ab.
probable that Wen-yen joined the master’s congregation around that
time.

Concerning Wen-yen’s relationship with I-ts’un the information in
the early sources is almost as scanty as was the case of his relationship
with Tao-tsung. All we are told is that I-ts’un was expecting Wen-yen
and that the latter continued his Ch’an training under him. Eventually
he attained the full fruits of the Way and was given the seal of approval,
thus becoming an heir to I-ts’un’s dharma. The TSTYH elaborates
somewhat on this, trying to show that Wen-yen was the most able of all
the disciples, however we may rule out much of this as pious embellish-
ment, for the simple reason that Wen-yen did not succeed to the
position of abbot in that monastery after the demise of I-ts’un. Again,
the later records go into much detail concerning Wen-yen’s training
under I-ts’un, giving their supposed dialogues. However, none of this
can be found in the early material. In any case Wen-yen’s stay with his
master does not appear to have lasted more than four or five years.35

At an unspecified date Wen-yen, now a recognized master of Ch’an,
continued on his “Ch’an pilgrimage” with the purpose of visiting fa-
mous masters and testing their insight against his own. The early
sources mention this pilgrimage, but do not give any details to speak of.
The later records devote much attention to this period of the master’s
life, and the Yü-fang i-lu section of the KL specifically deals with
Wen-yen’s interviews with famous masters of Ch’an.36

According to the Yü-fang i-lu the master visited the following Ch’an
masters: First he journeyed to Ch’ang-ch’ing Monastery to see master
Hui-leng (854-932), who was also a disciple of I-ts’un. Next he went to
Tung-yen K’o-hstü (d.u.), also a dharma brother, whose temple was
situated in Yueh-chou in present-day southern Chekiang Province.
From Yiieh-chou he went to visit Ch’an master Shu-shan Kuang-jen
(837-909) in present-day northeastern Kiangsi Province. Kuang-jen
was a disciple of the famous Tung-shan Liang-chieh (807-869), the
founder of the Ts’ao-tung School. Another of Liang-chieh’s disciples
with whom Wen-yen is said to have had an exchange of questions and
answers (Ch. wen-ta) was Ts’ao-shan Pen-chi (840-901), later consid-
ered the co-founder of the Ts’ao-tung School. Other masters whom
Wen-yen is said to have met include T’ien-t’ung Hsien-ch’i (d.u.) and
O-hu Chih-fu (d.u.), Kuci-tsung Tan-chüan (d.u.), Kan-ming Kan-feng
(d.u.), and a certain Lao Su about whom nothing is known. The
Yü-fang i-lu also has the master meet Ch’ien Ts’ao, who at that time is
said to have held the post as magistrate in Chiu-chou, present day
Chiu-chiang in Kiangsi Province on the shore of Lake P’o-yang.37

We may assume that Wen-yen cemented his reputation as a Ch’an
master during these years of wandering, which probably lasted from
sometime in the late 890s to 911 A.D. At this time Wen-yen’s peregri-
nation had carried him down to Ling-ling, more precisely Shao-chou in
present-day northern Kwantung Province, where he went to the Pao-
lin Temple at Ts’ao-ch’ü to worship the stūpa of the Sixth Patriarch,
Hui-neng.38 The Ta-shih i-piao section of the KL mentions that Wen-
yen’s pilgrimage lasted 17 years which probably indicates the period
from when he left Tao-tsung until he settled in Ling-shu in 911.39 If we
count back 17 years from 911 we arrive precisely at 894, the year
Wen-yen is said to have become a disciple under Hsüeh-feng I-ts’un
according to the Hsüeh-feng nien-p’u.40

4. Sojourn at Ling-shu

Having arrived in Shao-chou, then a main trade center and important
strategic town, Wen-yen went to stay at the Ling-shu Temple on Mt.
Ling-shu.41 This probably happened after his alleged visit to Ts’ao-ch’ü.
The YKCKK as well as the two later stele inscriptions all relate that the
resident Ch’an master on Mt. Ling-shu, Chih-sheng, also known as
Ling-shu Ju-min (d. 918),42 in accordance with his own prophecy had

35 The Pi-yen lu (T. 2003), p. 145c mentions that Wen-yen’s stay with I-ts’un only lasted
three years.
36 According to the study of Shinya Koyü “Unmon kordku toso no shoroku bun no
keito,” pp. 192-195, this section of the KL is a later addition which does not appear
until 1267 as part of the work Ku ts’un-su yü-lu.
37 KL, Ch. 3, pp. 573b-575a.
38 TSYKK, p. 182. In Wen-yen’s time Hui-neng was undoubtedly the most important
Ch’an patriarch as all the current lines of transmission traced their ancestry back to
him.
39 KL, Ch. 3, p. 575a.
40 Hsüeh-feng yü-lu, p. 286ab.
41 The exact location of this temple is no longer known. Presumably it was situated in or
near the town of Shao-chou proper. Very brief information can be found in the local
gazeteer Shao-chou fu-chih, Ch. 24, p. 536b.
42 Biography in CDC, Ch. 19, pp. 367ab and in CTL, Ch. 11, pp. 286c.
43 Acta Orientalia XLIX
patiently been waiting for Wen-yen to come and fill the position as head monk (Ch. shou-tso) in the meditation hall. The accounts of the relationship between the older and younger Ch'an master are quite brief. However, Chih-sheng posthumously appointed Wen-yen as his dharma successor, thereby making him the heir of yet another important transmission line in Chinese Ch'an. Although clear evidence is lacking, it appears that Chih-sheng had entertained a close relationship with the Liu clan, the de facto rulers of the area, and Wen-yen, as the successor of the old master, inevitably came to enjoy their favours too. In fact, the actual founder of the state of Southern Han, Liu Yen, who ruled as Kao-tsu Ti from 917-942, took part in the installation of Wen-yen as abbot of Ling-shu Monastery. According to the three early accounts Chih-sheng had written a spiritual testament in which he appointed Wen-yen as his successor and which he then placed in a box. After the old abbot's death his disciples presented the king with the testament which said that "The eye of men and gods is the head monk in the [Ch'an] hall." The TSTYH describes the incident as follows:

In the year 918 Kao-tsu Tien-huang Ta-ti (i.e. Liu Yen) went on an Imperial Tour of Inspection of Shao-shih. When he arrived at Ling-shu, Chih-sheng had already passed away after having written down his aforementioned wishes (i.e. that Wen-yen become abbot of the monastery after his death). By imperial command the body was cremated and the sarira collected. A statue (in the likeness of Chih-sheng) made out of clay was placed in the abbot's room. At that time Wen-yen was given an imperial audience, and special favours were conferred upon him. Wen-yen, now 54 years old, had become abbot of one of the most important Ch'an centers in the region, and the following year he was summoned by imperial command to the capital Kuang-wang Fu, present day Kuang-chou, to preside at the opening of a memorial hall for those fallen in the wars in which Southern Han was engaged at that time. The military commander of Shao-chou together with the Prime Minister Ho Hsi-fan (d.u.), who is also mentioned as a royal prince, came to Ling-shu together with the minor local officials to convey the wish of Liu Yen to see the master in the capital for the opening of the memorial hall. The "Ch'ing-shu" section of the Kuang-lu mentions Ho as a disciple of the master, which claim also seems to be supported by the two stele inscriptions. In the TSYKK following brief dialogue between Wen-yen and the Prime Minister is recorded:

The Regional Protector (Ch. chiun-shou) Ho Kung Hsi-fan ceremoniously stepped forward and said: "I beg you to instruct me." The master said: "There is no divergent path before you!"

The master's answer is normally interpreted as a token of warning to Ho, who supposedly was planning to rebel against his king, Liu Yen. Following the summons to court the master left for the capital where he gave lectures at the opening of the memorial hall for the war victims. At court Wen-yen made the acquaintance of several high ministers and influential officials. As part of the expanded records on Wen-yen's life a number of wen-ta supposedly took place between the master and some of these officials.

5. On Mt. Yun-men: Later years

As the master's reputation increased Ch'an monks and pilgrims from all over China as well as from Korea began to arrive in great numbers at Ling-shu. The temple was transformed into a bustling religious center which was not conducive for the training of Ch'an monks. Consequently Wen-yen began to look for a more suitable place to carry on the dharma.
out his work, and he sent his disciples on tours of inspection in order to locate such a place. Wen-yen eventually decided to settle on Mt. Yün-men in the northern part of the Ju-yüan district northwest of Shao-chou. The sources reveal no details concerning the choosing of Mt. Yün-men as the location for Wen-yen’s new monastery, but the YKCKK seems to indicate that there were some dilapidated buildings on the site before the monastery was constructed.54

In 923 the master received royal approval to have a monastery built on Mt. Yün-men, and in the same year clearing of the grounds commenced (Ch. k'ai-shan). The master moved to the mountain before the monastery was finished in order to supervise the work of construction which was completed after several years. After the monastery had been finished the king bestowed the plaque giving the monastery’s name as K‘uang-t’ai Ch’an Monastery written in his own hand.*

Wen-yen, who now became known as Ch’an master Yün-men, remained in his new temple for the next decade training his many disciples, who are said to have numbered more than one thousand. It is presumed that the majority of the master’s great disciples joined his assembly during this time. All three inscriptions agree that Pai-yün Shih-hsing (d.u.)** was considered the main heir among the master’s disciples, and he set up his own temple, Tzu-kuang Yüan on Mt. Pai-yün while Wen-yen was still alive.57 In addition, it is thought that the bulk of the master’s recorded sayings (Ch. yü-lv) were compiled from discourses given during his stay on Mt. Yün-men.*

In 938 Wen-yen was again invited to give teachings in the royal palace. During his stay the king questioned the master about Budd-

The king asked: “What is Ch’an?” The master answered: “His Majesty has a question. This monk has the answer!” The king said: “What gives birth to this answer?” The master said: “Invited to the royal audience I am scrutinized in front of His Majesty!” The king said: “The wise master is self-confident. Shall I pay my respects at this morning audience?”59

On this occasion Wen-yen received the title, K‘uang-ch’en Ta-shih, and was requested to stay on as a palace monk. He was furthermore given the authority as royal sangha supervisor in charge of the monks from two quarters of the capital. Liu Yen did his very best to keep the master in the palace, and not until the passing of one month was he finally absolved from his duties and allowed to return to Mt. Yün-men.

In 942 the king passed away and it appears that Wen-yen’s relations with the Southern Han court decreased considerably. This coincided with the political disturbances surrounding the power struggle between the two following rulers, Liu Pin (reigned 942-943) and Liu Sheng (reigned 943-958). In addition, Southern Han had to fight off invasions from its neighbours. During these violent years the master remained at peace on his secluded mountain guiding his followers.

6. The Master’s death and indestructible body

During the year 948 Wen-yen’s health began to deteriorate and he had premonitions of his approaching passing. At the beginning of the following year he made a general announcement to the disciples of his imminent death and made his last will known. Having seated himself in the full lotus posture in the abbot’s room he answered questions from the disciples. Then he said: “Coming and going is continuous. I must be on my way!”60 The TSTYH states:

See appendix p. 127.

** TSYKK, p. 183. For information on this temple see YMSC, pp. 1-2, 8-10, and Tokiwa Dajo, Chuokoku bunkan shiseki kaisetsu, pp. 88-98. According to recent reports from visitors to the temple, it is now functioning again as a center of Ch’an.

65 Also known as Pai-yün Tzu-hsiang. Biography in CTL, Ch. 22, p. 384bc and WTHY, Ch. 15, pp. 934-935. It would seem that Shih-hsing still was considered the foremost among Wen-yen’s disciples in Nan Han when the texts of the two steles were composed in 958 and 964, respectively.

66 TSYKK, p. 184 and appendix p. 127. Shih-hsing’s temple was also situated in the northwestern part of Kuangtung. It is no longer extant.

56 The CDC is undoubtedly the earliest published work containing teachings of Wen-yen, and like the CTL, the section on him was compiled – or based on material compiled – before his death in 949. This can be ascertained since neither compilation mentions his death, but both record his move to Mt. Yün-men, which we know took place during the early 920s.
When the time of his death came, he crossed his legs (in the lotus posture) and with a cheerful expression on his face he passed away.\(^{61}\)

This took place on the tenth day of the fourth moon in the year 949, the age of the master being 86 years, his dharma age 72 years, and his age as an ordained monk 66 years.\(^{62}\) The TSTYH also includes the master’s last words to the king, Liu Sheng:

> After I have passed away you should not take any trouble considering worldly customs such as wearing mourning garments, lamenting or providing a funeral carriage for my body. Otherwise you will go against the Buddhist regulations and bring confusion to the Ch’an School.\(^{63}\)

This interesting passage shows that the master feared that the sovereign would make a “worldly” show out of his death and thereby upset the usual proceedings after the passing away of a Ch’an master. It is highly likely that Wen-yen otherwise would have been subjected to a state funeral, becoming for a deceased minister, since he had been closely associated with the forebears of the present king and had rendered spiritual service to the state on several occasions.

Memorial services were held on Mt. Yün-men, in the Southern Han capital and in several of the major temples of the kingdom. In Kunming, government officials and lay people alike attended the services in large numbers. Two weeks after Wen-yen’s death his body, still sitting in the lotus posture, was placed in a stūpa in the abbot’s room on Mt. Yün-men.\(^{64}\) It is said that the corpse looked fresh as if the master was still alive. During the following summer the palace official Lei Yüeh completed a short biography of Wen-yen. This is the YKCCK that we have referred to throughout the present study.

As for the heir to Yün-men Ch’ān, all three inscriptions agree that Pai-yün Shih-hsing was the chosen successor among the master’s many disciples. In fact the YKCCK stresses that Shih-hsing already had been appointed an heir long before Wen-yen’s death and was already leading his own congregation on Mt. Pai-yün. Consequently a monk from the community on Mt. Yün-men, one Fa-ch’iu (d.u.),\(^{65}\) was chosen to carry on the founder’s work there.\(^{66}\) However, there is little doubt that Shih-hsing ranked as the most important among Wen-yen’s followers by the time of the master’s death. To this effect the TSYKK states that:

> He (i.e. Wen-yen) handed down the dharma to the Great Master Shih-hsing of Mt. Pai-yün, the True Master Chih-hsing, whose assembly constituted an extensive crowd.\(^{57}\)

In this regard it is interesting to note that neither Shih-hsing nor Fa-ch’iu had left any extensive records behind, and that in comparison with other younger disciples of Wen-yen, the status of their transmission lines has been negligible in the later history of the Yün-men School.

However, our account of Yün-men Wen-yen’s life does not end here. The master’s immense popularity and obvious charisma did not allow him to be forgotten so soon and continued to exercise quite an influence for several years after his passing. In 958 almost ten years after the death of the master the stele inscription by Lei Yüeh was completed, engraved on stone and set up in the monastery on Mt. Yün-men. Then there is a lapse of six years before we hear about the master again.\(^{67}\) In the eighth month of the sixth year of Ta-pao, i.e. 963, the magistrate of Shao-chou, a certain Juan Shao-chuang (d.u.), saw the master in a dream. According to this dream Wen-yen was sitting on his seat in the Buddha Hall of his monastery and told the official that he had already been long enough inside the stūpa, and that Juan should inform the royal palace attendant Li T’o (d.u.),\(^{68}\) so that his body could be taken

\(^{61}\) Ibid, p. 190.
\(^{62}\) TSYKK, p. 184 and TSTYH, p. 190.
\(^{63}\) Ibid, p. 190.
\(^{64}\) Ibid, p. 190.
Hai (modern Kuangtung). Among these were Liu Yin (d. 911), the chief-magistrate of Feng-chou, who with the help of his two brothers Liu Yen and Liu T’ai (d. u.) successfully had taken possession of several counties by 905. Liu Yin died in 911 and his titles and power were transferred to the younger brother, Liu Yen, an able warrior and crafty statesman. Between 911 and 917 most of Nan Hai was in a perpetual state of war between the local war lords. Eventually Liu Yen’s army prevailed and in 917 after the conquest of Shao-chou, he founded the state of Ta Yüeh and ascended the throne as Kao Tsu with Kuang-wang Fu (Kuang-chou) as his capital.

The year following his meeting with Wen-yen, he renamed his dynasty the Great Han (Ta Han). In 928 war broke out between Southern Han and the newly founded neighboring state of Ch’u (927-953). In 930-931 the realm was disturbed by internal troubles, and throughout Liu Yen’s reign the political relations to the neighbouring states of Wu (902-938 A.D.) and Min (909-946 A.D.), which bordered on Southern Han to the north, were strained. Hence, the rulers of Southern Han sought in all possible ways to secure their position through military strategy as well as divine protection.

That Liu Yen already had Buddhist leanings is indicated by the fact that he was on intimate terms with Chih-sheng of the Lingshu Monastery in Shao-chou. The exact nature of their relationship is not known, but we may infer on the basis of the available material that Liu Yen, if not a disciple of Chih-sheng, then at least sought his counsel in spiritual and possible political matters. This may also account for the readiness with which he later accepts Wen-yen. That Liu Yen did indeed find the master to his liking is obvious from the fact that he wanted to keep him as his personal advisor in the royal palace. The inscriptions which all originated in government circles indicate that the master was highly regarded by the Southern Han rulers. To them he guaranteed that the

7. Wen-yen’s relationship with the Southern Han court

In order to understand fully the nature of the relationship between Wen-yen and the rulers of Southern Han, which in many ways was of mutual benefit, it is necessary to briefly review the political situation prevailing in southern China around the end of the 9th century and the collapse of the Tang Dynasty.

The aftermath of the Huang Ch’ao Rebellion in 878 paved the way for the rise of a series of semi-independent military-governors in Nan Hai (modern Kuangtung). Among these were Liu Yin (d. 911), the chief-magistrate of Feng-chou, who with the help of his two brothers Liu Yen and Liu T’ai (d. u.) successfully had taken possession of several counties by 905. Liu Yin died in 911 and his titles and power were transferred to the younger brother, Liu Yen, an able warrior and crafty statesman. Between 911 and 917 most of Nan Hai was in a perpetual state of war between the local war lords. Eventually Liu Yen’s army prevailed and in 917 after the conquest of Shao-chou, he founded the state of Ta Yüeh and ascended the throne as Kao Tsu with Kuang-wang Fu (Kuang-chou) as his capital.

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7 This prefecture is identical with present-day Chiang k’ou (also known as Feng-k’ai) on the upper Li River in Kuangtung.
8 The phenomena of eminent Buddhist monks functioning as political/spiritual advisors has a long precedence in Chinese and East Asian history. However, it appears that it was a particularly widespread practice during the late Tang - Five Dynasties Period. As an example of this we can refer to the close relationship between King Chung-i of Wu-Yüeh (907-978) and T’ien-t’ai Te-shao (897-972), an influential master of the Fa-yen Ch’an School. See CTL, Ch. 25, p. 407c, Sung kuo-seng chuan (T. 2061), Ch. 7, p. 752b, and Fo-tsu l’ang-chie (T. 2035), Ch. 8, p. 190c; Ch. 10, p. 206c.
Heavenly Mandate (Ch. fien-ming) belonged to the dynasty and in various ways foresaw that they would prevail in the wars with the neighbouring states as well as in internal power struggles. In addition to the accounts of the master’s relationship to the Southern Han court, already given in the account of his life above, various passages in his recorded sayings contain information – albeit sometimes cryptic – on Wen-yen’s views on the fortunes of Southern Han. Below follows a number of the more interesting of these passages:

Someone asked: “When turning our back to Chu, we face Wu. In such a situation, what shall we do?” The master said: “By facing south you will see the Dipper!” The other asked again: “As the six countries are still not at peace, what should be done?” The master said: “For a thousand li, how bright it is!” The other asked further: “But as it is not bright, then how about it?” The master said: “Trust that it has now occurred that the Way has been accomplished!”

Another dialogue goes:

Someone asked: “When you are in the private room in the lofty palace, how is it then?” The master said: “Upside down!” The other pressed further saying: “How do you go about the affairs of the palace?” The master said: “With importance.”

In yet another dialogue we find the theme of the six countries repeated. It goes as follows:

Despite the fact that Wen-yen’s answers are extremely ambiguous, there can be little doubt that to the rulers of Southern Han they were interpreted as both auspicious and indicative of Heaven’s favourable disposition toward the realm. In addition, the master’s readiness to travel to the capital to teach as well as to participate in ceremonies for the war dead amply proved his loyalty to the cause of the ruling house.

The abundance of honours and more concrete favours which were heaped upon Wen-yen and disciples clearly shows that the master was considered a saint by the Southern Han monarchs, and although Ou-yang Hsiu’s account of the state of Southern Han in his Wu-tai shih (History of the Five Kingdoms) makes no mention of Wen-yen, it does essentially nothing to change this view.

8. Conclusion

As an example of a Buddhist monk, who was highly successful both spiritually and politically, Yün-men Wen-yen stands out among the majority of the contemporary Ch’än masters. Not only was his life a dedicated struggle for spiritual clarification and preservation of the Ch’àn tradition, but also one of an ongoing relationship with the secular world, in this case represented by the rulers of Southern Han. For this reason Wen-yen personified the ideal of a Ch’àn master, who while preserving the essence and wisdom of the Way, did not hesitate to let it function for the benefit of his fellow men.

Wen-yen’s religious career followed along the traditional path trodden by most of the eminent Ch’àn masters during the T’ang Dynasty. Showing a deep and sincere spiritual longing at an early age, he single-mindedly sought the great awakening offered by the Ch’àn tradition. Studying under both Tao-tsung and Hsüeh-feng he became heir to

76 “To face south” is what a Chinese ruler traditionally does in his hall of state. The Dipper or Seven Star is the constellation which controls the changes of the seasons. Hence the master’s remark is a poetic but still clear expression of support to the mandate of Southern Han.

77 I.e. the future is bright for Southern Han.

78 KL, p. 549b.

79 Referring to the master’s dialogues with Liu Yen.

80 KL, p. 549b.
the two most powerful Ch'an lineages of the time, namely the Nan-yüeh Line and the Ch'ing-yüan Line, both considered as having come down from Hui-neng, the Sixth Patriarch. In addition he succeeded Ling-shu Chih-sheng, who also belonged to the Nan-yüeh Line, thus uniting in his own person the mainstream of T'ang Dynasty Ch'an. The originality of his own interpretation and teaching of Ch'an, although not the subject of the present study, lent a vitality and strength to the tradition which in time became part of the Ch'an heritage that has come down to us today.

That Wen-yen did not shrink from an active participation in government affairs shows another side of his personality. For him there was no separation between the "spiritual realm" and the "worldly realm", and he accepted his role as advisor to the kings of Southern Han as a natural duty. The idea of a ruler taking an eminent monk as imperial or royal advisor in times of national need has a long history in East Asia, and although the primary concern of the Southern Han rulers was no doubt to secure divine protection through the spiritual power of Wen-yen, there can be little doubt that a deep respect for the master as well as pious concerns and a belief in religious merit (Ch. te) played important roles as well. On the other hand we should not be blind to the possibility that the sources, which after all were produced by government officials, may have exaggerated Liu Yen's interest in Ch'an Buddhism as a means of flattery.

Where the state benefited spiritually and was guaranteed divine protection of Buddhism as well as dynastic legitimation, Wen-yen and his successors could rely on official goodwill and support as well as an economic basis on which to found their temples. That the support received from the government and also from local magnates was considerable, is borne out by the fact that the Yün-men School flourished greatly a few decades after the passing of the founder. Numerous temples were built and adherents of the school could be found all over South China. The Sung unification which brought the territories of Southern Han under the control of the new dynasty in 971 A.D. did not hinder the expansion of the Yün-men School. On the contrary a series of Yün-men masters worked in K'ai-feng, the Sung capital, where they enjoyed imperial favours. By the early 11th century the Yün-men School had attained the status of one of the most influential Ch'an schools in China.

Appendix

Yün-men Sh'an Kuang-t'ai Ch'ân-Yüan
K'uang-Chen Ta-Shih Hsing Lu
YKCKK, T.

1988, pp. 575c-576a

Recorded by Lei Yueh of the Chi-hsien tien

The master's given name was Wen-yen and his family name was Chang. His family had for generations been natives of Yung-hsing in Su-chou. In fact he was a descendant in the 13th generation of [Chang] Han, an advisor of the Eastern Office to the Chin Prince Ssu-ma Chiung. The master showed signs of spiritual ability at an early age in accordance with circumstances. While still very young he turned his back on the world and consequently left his home to become a disciple under the Vinaya master Chih-ch'eng of K'ung-wang Temple. Through his intelligent disposition he acquired wisdom, and his prajna eloquence was bestowed by Heaven. In general when he recited the various scriptures he never thought it troublesome to read them more than once, and Ch'eng esteemed him highly.

Coming of age he shaved his head and received the complete precepts on the ordination platform. Later he returned to Ch'eng and lectured there for several years mastering the meaning of the Fourfold Vinaya as well as the discipline according to the Sūrayāgama Sūtra. As his capacity for enlightenment was issuing forth from deep inside him he then took his leave of Ch'eng and went to Ch'an master Tao-tsung in Mu-chou.

Tsung was a [direct] descendant of Huang-po. Knowing the Way he did not dwell in the world, but lived by himself in retirement in an old temple. Even though he had said farewell to the world, still he was highly revered. When he received those who came to meet him he let the opportunity to discuss with vigorous wit, and no one was permitted to stand and deliberate. When the master (i.e. Wen-yen) first came for an interview he had to knock three times on his [Tsung's] door. Tsung then opened the door but when the master wanted to enter, Tsung took a hold of him saying: "A drill from Ch'in times!" With this he [Wen-yen] suddenly had a vivid enlightenment. After this he had interviews [with the Ch'an master] for several years and penetrated deeply into the profound and the subtle. Tsung knew that his spiritual capacity was extensive and as a vehicle of enlightenment he was qualified for a
position [as a teacher of Ch'an]. Consequently he addressed [Wen-yen] saying: "I am not your [real] master. At present there is the Ch'an master Hsieh-feng I-tsun. You should go to his place and call on him. There is no further reason for you to stay here!"

Complying with his (i.e. Tao-tsung's) wishes the master entered Ling and went to Hsieh-feng where he deepened his study [of Ch'an]. His way tallied with Ts’un's and consequently the transmission of the school was secretly given to him. Having completed his training the master left Ling and visited the masters everywhere in all directions, examining them carefully according to his own outstanding norm. With his sharp eloquence he became known throughout the realm.

Later he went to the bodhimanda of Ch'an-master Ling-shu Chih-sheng. Chih-sheng already knew of his coming and suddenly beat the drum calling the assembly together and requesting them to go and bid the head monk welcome. At that time the master (i.e. Wen-yen) really arrived. Prior to this Chih-sheng had stayed at Ling-shu for several decades, but the head monk’s place in the [Ch'an] hall had been empty. The assembly had repeatedly questioned the abbot on this matter, but Chih-sheng had not complied. He once said: "The head monk is now travelling around!" When the master arrived, a head monk was appointed for the first time.

When Chih-sheng was approaching death, he wanted the master to take his place. Placing a private letter in a box he addressed his disciples saying: "After my demise his majesty may come here, and I request that you give this to him." It actually came to pass that the king went to visit the mountain [on which the temple was situated]. However, when the royal carriage arrived, Chih-sheng, who had already foreseen this, had taken his seat in the hall and passed away while sitting in the full lotus posture. When the king arrived he was already dead. The king asked for the master's will and accordingly the disciples brought out the box and handed it respectfully to him. The sovereign opened the box and took out the letter which said: "The eye of men and gods is the head monk in the [Ch'an] hall!" The king thereupon ordered the prefect Ho Hsi-fan with full ceremonies to request the master to continue [as the head of the Dharma Assembly]. The sovereign admired him and invited him several times to come to the court to stay. Each time he consulted him [the master], his answers were always fitting like an echo. The sovereign furthermore bowed to him and bestowed upon the master the purple robe and a [honorific] name.

Later [the master] moved his abode to Mt. Yun-men. Clearing away the ruins [of a former temple?], he had large new halls established. The master personally supervised the construction of the Patriarchs' Hall, and for twenty-five years his influence reached the four directions [causing] the dharma to flower greatly. The followers of Ch'an flocked to him and those who entered the gate of his house were countless. At the time the great master Shih-hsing of Mt. Pai-yün was the chief disciple.

In 949 on the 10th day of the 4th month he (i.e. Wen-yen) entered the silence. At dawn he wrote a letter in which he bade the sovereign good-bye, and expressed his last will. After this he seated himself in the lotus posture and passed away. Subsequently by royal order he was granted a stūpa and a stele inscription. In accordance with the master's will it was ordered that they place his intact body in the abbot's room. The sovereign himself wrote the inscription for the stūpa and hung it in the abbot's room, and there were to be no further activities. The disciples then, in accordance with the custom, enshrined the master in the stūpa in the abbot's room.

The master first transmitted his dharma to the disciple Shih-hsing so that he could continue the work of enlightenment. All acknowledge (?) that Shih-hsing already was transmitting the Way and bringing up his followers, and therefore they transferred the authority to the other disciple from the assembly, Fa-ch'iu, to carry on in the master's place.

Alas! The World Teacher spoke about nirvāṇa, so that we may practice the abstruse. I, Yüeh, saw the results of the master's teachings and know a general outline of his activity. How dare I not write about it in order to transmit it to posterity.

Recorded by Lei Yüeh of the Chi-hsien Hall on the 25th day of the 4th month in the year 949.
List of characters

Ch’an  禪
Ch’an-lin seng pao-chuan  禪林僧寶傳
Chang  張
Ch’ang-ch’ing Szü  長慶寺
Ch’en Ts’ao  陳操
Ch’en Shou-chung  陳守中
Ch’en Ts’un-su  陳尊宿
Chia-hsing  嘉興
Ch’ien-ho  乾和
Chih-ch’eng  志澄
Chih-hsing  志庠
Chih-sheng  知聖
Chin-kang shen  金剛身
Ch’in  秦
Ching-te ch’uan-teng lu  景德傳燈錄
Ch’ing-leng  慶棱
Ch’ing-shu  講疏
Chi-chiang  九江
Chiou-chou  九州
Chodang chip  祖堂集
Chün-shou  郡守
Chung-tao  中道
Fa-ch’ü  法球
Fa-ling  法齡
Fa-ming  法名
Fa-yen Tsung  法眼宗
Feng-chou  封州
Ho Hsi-fan  何希範
Hsiang-ku Shan  象骨山
Hsüan-sha  玄沙
Hsüeh-feng I-ts’ un  雪峰義存

Hsüeh-feng yü-lu 雪峰語錄
Huang-po Hsi-yün 黃檗希運
Hui-leng 慧棱
Hui-neng 慧能
I-tzu kuan  一子關
Ju-yüan hsien  乳源縣
Juan Shao-chuang 阮紹莊
K’ai-shan  開山
Kan-ming Kan-feng  乾明乾峰
Kao-tsu Ti  體祖帝
Kao-tsu T’ien-huang Ta-ti  體祖天皇大帝
Ku-shan  鼓山
Kuang-chou  廣州
Kuang-wang Fu  光王府
K’uang-chen Ta-shih  匡真大師
K’uang-t’ai Ch’ an-yüan  匡泰禪院
Kuei-tsung Tan-chüan  観宗禪院
Kuei-yang Tsung  極仰宗
Kung-an  公案
K’ung-wang Ssu  空王寺
Lao Su  老宿
Lei Yüeh  雷岳
Li T’o  李托
Liang Yen-o  梁延鄂
Lin-chi Tsung  臨濟宗
Ling-ling  靈羚
Ling-shu  靈樹
Ling-shu Ju-min  靈樹如敏
Liu  劉
Liu Ch’ang 劉銓
Liu Pin 劉pins
Liu Sheng 劉晟
Liu T’ai 劉台
THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE CH’AN MASTER YUN-MEN WEN-YEN

Tung-shan Liang-chich 洞山良价
Tung-yen K’o-hsiu 洞巖可休
Tz’u-kuang Yuan 慈光院
wen-ta 間答
wù-chia 五家
Wu-tai shih 五代史
Yu-fang i-u 遊方遺錄
yü-lu 語錄
Yüeh-chou 越州
Yün-men K’uang-ch’en Ch’án-shih kwang-lu 雲門匡真禪師
廣錄
Yün-men Shan 雲門山
Yün-men Shan chih 雲門山志
Yün-men Shan K’uang-t’ai Ch’án-yuan K’uang-ch’en Ta-shih hsing-lu
雲門山光泰禪院匡真大師行錄
Yün-men Tsung 雲門宗
Yün-men Wen-yen 雲門文偃

T’a Han Shao-chou Yün-men Shan Kuang-t’ai Ch’án-yuan ku K’uang-
chen Ta-shih shih-hsing pei 大漢詔州雲門山光泰禪
院故匡真大師實性碑
T’a Han Shao-chou Yün-men Shan Ta-chüeh Ch’án-su Ku-tz’u Yün-
k’uang Shen Hung-ming Ta-shih pei 大漢詔州雲門山
大覺禪寺大慈雲匡聖弘明大師碑
Tz’u Yün-k’uang Sheng Hung-ming 大慈雲匡聖弘明
T’a Yüeh 大越
T’ang-chou 常州
Tao-tsung 道蹟
t’ien-ming 天命
T’ien-t’ung Hsien-ch’i 天重咸啟
Tokiwa Dajo 常盤大定
Ts’ao-ch’i 曹溪
Ts’ao-shan Pen-ch’i 曹山本寂
Ts’ao-tung Tsung 曹洞宗

Liu Yen 劉鎬
Liu Yin 劉隱
Mu-chou 睦州
Nan Hai 南海
Nan Han 南漢
nièn-p’u 年譜
O-hu Chih-fu 鴨湖智孚
Pai-yün Shan 白雲山
Pai-yün Shih-hsing 白雲實性
Pao-lin Ssu 寳林寺
P’o-yang Hu 鄱陽湖
Shao-chou 闕州
sheng-hua 生話
shih-chieh 十戒
Shih-erh shih ko 十二時歌
shou-tso 首座
Shu-shan Kuang-jen 疏山光仁

Ta Yiieh 達州
T’ang-chou 常州
Tao-tsung 道蹟
t’ien-ming 天命
T’ien-t’ung Hsien-ch’i 天重咸啟
Tokiwa Dajo 常盤大定
Ts’ao-ch’i 曹溪
Ts’ao-shan Pen-ch’i 曹山本寂
Ts’ao-tung Tsung 曹洞宗