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# MING DYNASTY LITERATI REVERENCE FOR COPYING THE HUAYAN SUTRA IN BLOOD

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This project takes as its subject commemorative prefaces and postfaces written by late Ming literati in praise of monks who copied out the Huayan Sutra in their own blood. The centerpiece of this study is one very famous copy by the late Yuan dynasty monk Shanji (1286-1357) who was thought to be a reincarnation of the eminent monk Yongming Yanshou (904-975), the purported progenitor of this project. However, the copy was believed to have been completed only after Yongming's second reincarnation as the great early Ming statesman Song Lian (1310-1381). This intergenerational artifact was venerated among late Ming literati who not only praised this work, but elevated other blood scriptures through association with this copy. Yet despite their reverence, determining who was a reincarnation of whom consumed late Ming literati, many of whom espoused a uniquely Buddhist method of historical proof premised on assessments of reincarnation, karmic connections, dream encounters, and personal realization.

This exploration of blood-writing and literati belief in reincarnation, ritual reverence for blood scriptures, and connoisseurship will analyze prefaces and postfaces by a number of literati including but not limited to Song Lian, the Huizhou scholar Xie Bi (1547-1615), the wealthy collector Wang Daokun (1525-1593), the famous literatus Qian Qianyi (1582-1664), and the Ming loyalist Tao Ru'nai (1601-1683). The historical reconstruction of the provenance of the Shanji copy evinces a uniquely Buddhist method of historical proof, while the many texts linked to that artifact shed light on the devotional status of blood scriptures during the late Ming to early Qing.

