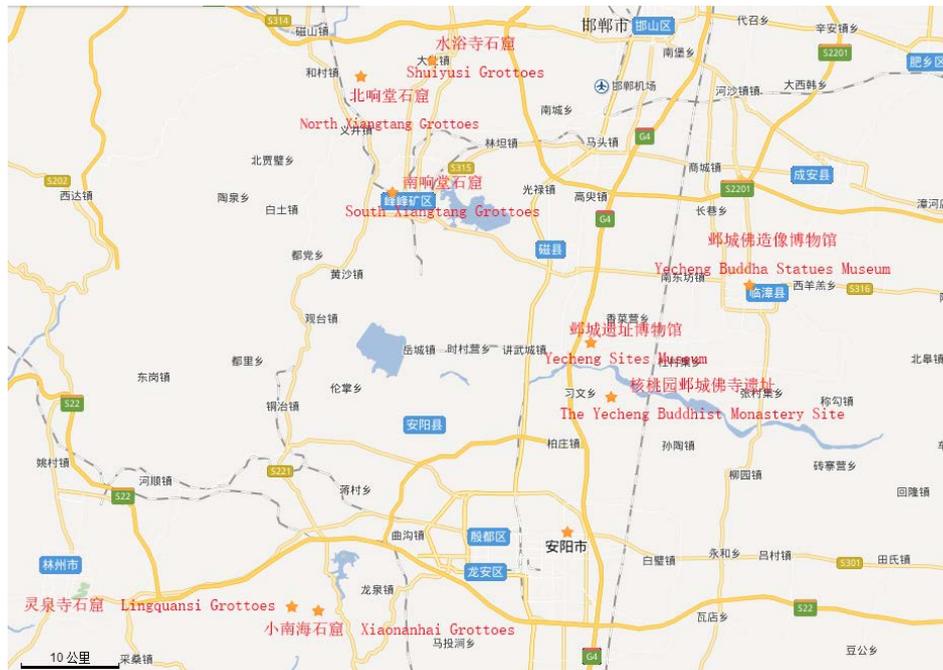


Cluster 3.2 Field Visit Report

Written by Lan Li, Yue Wang, Yi Zhang

Cluster 3.2 “Historical Reality through the Reflections between Image and Text: Northern Dynasties Buddhism and Beyond” took place in the Yecheng 鄴城 area from July 16 to 22, 2018. The research team consists of eighteen scholars and students from various institutions, including the Princeton University, Tsinghua University, Peking University, University of Alberta, University of Virginia, University of Winnepeg, Harvard Divinity School, Institute of Chinese History of CASS, Institute of Buddhist Culture of China, Longmen Grottoes Academy, and Beijing Buddhist Cultural Institute.

Our principle purpose was conducting field research on Xiangtangshan cave-temple complex, archeological sites and nearby museums. Major sites visited include the North and South Xiangtangshan Grottoes 南北響堂山石窟, Shuiyusi Grottoes 水浴寺石窟, Xiaonanhai Grottoes 小南海石窟, Lingquansi Grottoes 靈泉寺石窟, Hetaoyuan Archaeological site 核桃園基址, and the Buddhist Statues Museum in Linzhang 臨漳佛造像博物館.



Map of the visited destinations of Cluster 3.2 (By Lan LI)

Scholars and students were involved in all phases of this fieldwork, either through direct participation in recording and processing of finds, assistance of photography crews, or sharing insights on how to interpret historical sources on site. In addition, one day (July 16) was dedicated to presenting the historical background of the Yecheng area, introducing detailed schedules, and assigning tasks to team members. The team was divided into three groups: the first two were in charge of recording, measuring, and taking photos of stelae found at the backyard of the Changle Monastery 常樂寺 located at the foot of the mountain as well as inscriptions from various grottoes; the third team investigated the top of Mount Xiangtang and discovered many sites that had been largely neglected by previous scholarship.



Seminar before the field visit (By Yi Zhang)

On July 17, our team first visited the remaining ruins of the Changle Monastery 常樂寺遺址 and the North Xiangtang Grottoes 北響堂石窟 in the morning. The team was quite productive, both in documenting more than thirty stelae dated from the Jin Dynasty (1115-1234) to the Qing Dynasty (1636-1912) and exploring local temples. It is regretful that we could not take complete pictures of the inscriptions on the cave walls due to the dim light in the caves and the railings built to prevent rockfalls. It is also noteworthy that a stone tower 石塔 on the top of the mountain was virtually on the verge of collapse, yet it was still alive,

functioning as a small temple dedicated to local gods. A Tang stela was placed at the back of the shabby temple, whose existence had gone unnoticed even by the staff of the Cultural Heritage Bureau.



A bird view of the Layout of the Changle Monastery (By Lan Li)



Stelae forest at the back of the Changle Monastery (By Yi Zhang)



Team 1 is recording inscriptions (By Yi Zhang)



Team 3 is measuring the height of the stele (By Yi Zhang)



The Façade of the North Xiangtang Grottoes (By Lan Li)



The Buddhist sūtra carved on the front wall of the No. 3 cave of North Xiangtang Mountain (By Jinchao Zhao)



The Buddhist sūtra carved on the cliffs of the front chamber of the No. 3 cave of North Xiangtang Mountain (By Jinchao Zhao)

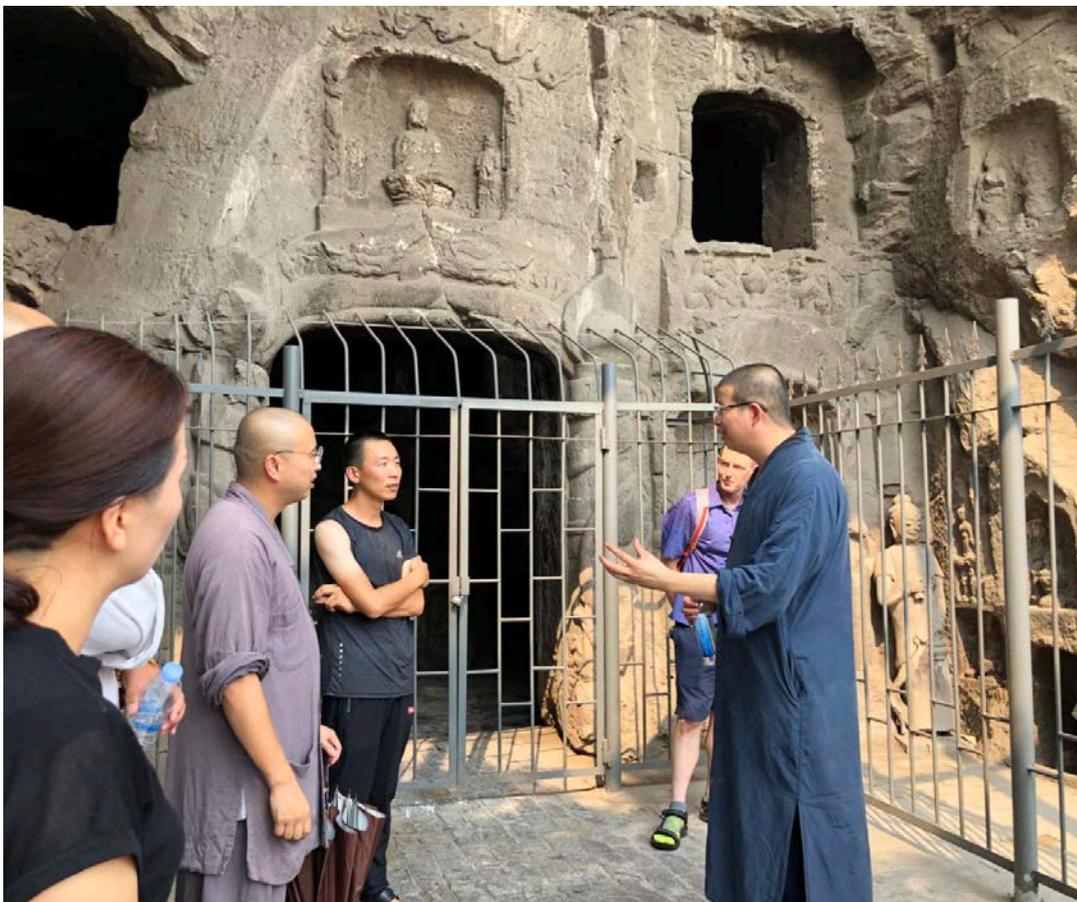


The collapsed Stone Tower (By Yi Zhang)

In the afternoon, the team visited the South Xiangtang Grottoes 南響堂石窟 and the Shuiyusi Grottoes 水浴寺石窟, both first established during the Northern Qi Dynasty (500-577). Professor Sheng Kai led the team and explained on site how the material evidence of the *Dilun* 地論 (*Shidi jinglun* 十地經論, T no. 1522, 6th century translation of the *Daśabhūmi-vyākhyāna-śāstra*) during the Northern Dynasties which can be reflected by the cave layouts and features of statues. The long list(s) of patrons on the front wall of the Shuiyusi Cave was particularly helpful for us to reimagine the grand scene of constructing such a huge cave-temple complex.



Group photo in front of the gate of South Xiangtang Grottoes



The cluster leader Professor Sheng Kai is discussing some academic questions with a researcher of the South Xiangtang Grottoes Museum (By Yi Zhang)



Team members are trying to confirm the identities of the donors of the Shuiyusi Grotto (By Yi Zhang)

On July 18, our team visited the No.2 Site of the Walnut Garden 核桃園 2 號基址 excavated by the Institute of Archaeology of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences., also known as ruins of the Great Solemnity Monastery—the imperial Buddhist monastery of the Northern Qi. The technological staff of the institute Cunjin Wang introduced the historical background and excavation procedures to us. All the team members had the chance to see the rammed earth foundation with a symmetrical layout in close range. After that we visited the Yecheng Sites Museum (鄴城博物館) to gain a better understanding of the local history, especially the intricate network between monks and local officials in the Northern Dynasties and its crucial influence on the history of Chinese Buddhism.



Visiting the No.2 Site of the Walnut Garden under the guidance with the staff from the Institute of Archaeology, CASS (By Yi Zhang)



The interpreter from the Yecheng Museum is showing a reconstructed miniature model of the Yecheng City in the Northern Qi Dynasty to the research team (By Yi Zhang)



Group photo at the Yecheng Museum

Our team arrived at Yecheng Buddha Statues Museum 鄴城佛造像博物館 in the afternoon. Most Buddhist statues unearthed from a pit in Beiwuzhuang 北吳莊 were displayed inside. The periods of the statues center on the Northern Dynasties, with a few exceptions belonging to the Tang Dynasty (618-907). Our team discussed the reason why more than 2000 pieces of Buddhist sculptures had been buried in such a tiny pit, and the relationship between religious architecture (i.e., temples and grottoes) and those buried statues.

On July 19, our team continued to visit two Buddhist sites in Anyang: Xiaonanhai Grottoes 小南海石窟 and the Lingquansi Grottoes 靈泉寺石窟. Besides documenting inscriptions and images of various caves built to memorize the eminent monk Sengchou 僧稠 in Xiaonanhai, and the Dazusheng Cave 大住聖窟 in Lingquansi, our team also paid attention to other Buddhist cultural relics, such as the burial stūpa of Daoping 道憑 of the Northern Qi Dynasty, the large scale of the niches of the stūpa on the cliff, namely the Huishen Stūpa 灰身塔, and the carvings of the Avatamsaka sūtra of the Huayan school 大方廣華嚴經 of the Northern Qi Dynasty.



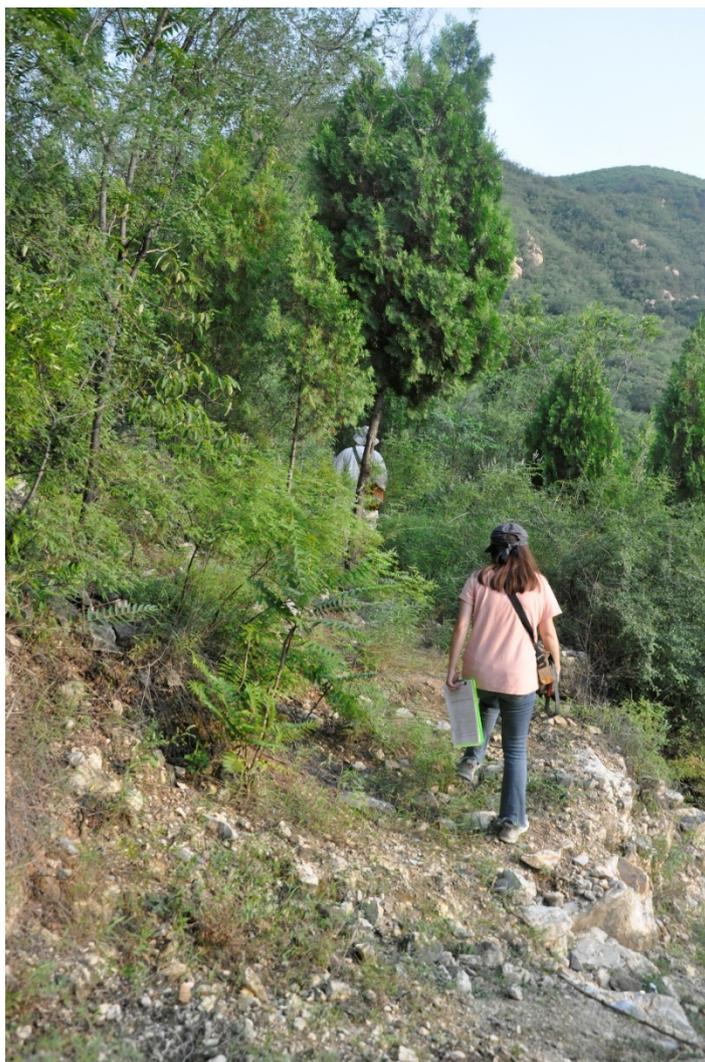
Team 2 is taking photos of the inscriptions carved on the façade of the Middle Xiaonanhai Grotto (By Yi Zhang)



Reading the inscriptions carved on the burial stūpa of the eminent monk Daoping of the Norther Qi Dynasty (By Yi Zhang)



The stele of the carved sūtra of the *Avatamsaka sūtra of the Huayan school* 大方廣華嚴經 of the Northern Qi Dynasty (By Lan Li)



Team members are walking through the rugged mountain road to find the Daliusheng Grotto 大留聖窟
(By Lan Li)

From July 20 to 21, the team joined the opening ceremony of the symposium on "The Shaolin Temple and Buddhism in the Sui and Tang Dynasties" at the Shaolin Temple. Two of our team members, Yang Jianxiao 楊劍霄 and Park Bumkeun 朴范根, presented their papers on the conference.



The opening ceremony of the symposium on "The Shaolin Temple and Buddhism in the Sui and Tang Dynasties" (By Lan Li)

The fieldtrip was certainly successful in terms of gaining firsthand experience of various Buddhist grottoes, reimagining the local past, and recording better versions of historical sources. Although few would disregard inscriptions, statues, and images as historical evidence, our fieldtrip has demonstrated that re-locating/reliving the physical location of historical sources on site still matters to historians of China.