

HUALIN SERIES ON BUDDHIST STUDIES II

Tones from the Stones:

*Production, Preservation and Perusal of
Buddhist Epigraphy in Central and East Asia*

Edited by Ru ZHAN, Jinhua CHEN, Ji Yun



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Hualin Series on Buddhist Studies:

Preface

釋迦文佛捨世迄今，已逾兩千餘載，余生也晚，宿世障重，徒嘆世間失此昏衢之明燈，度世之慈航。然每思佛陀駐世之際，龍象並出，未嘗不神馳心往，恨不得親炙之祚。是以雖自惟駑鈍無擬，猶且遠慕半偈捨身之喻，不憚疲極，志求寂定，故每於禪關戒守之餘，奮力於學，潛跡經藏，務窮至教。以鈍根之器，對深幽渺遠之學，雖如火中求蓮，欲以漸門熏習，冀僥得悟其萬一也。

Since Buddha passed into *nirvana*, more than two millennia has elapsed. Heavy with past karma, I was borne too late and could only lament the loss, in the present world, of the bright lamp that once illuminated the murky path, and the ark of compassion that ferried the sentient beings. Still, each time I envisage a world where Buddha was living and great masters abounded, I could not help but pine for it and moan for the blessing that eluded me to hear Buddha's teaching in the flesh. Hence, though my ignorance monstrous, I aspire to the example of Buddha who, in a past life, sacrificed his body in exchange for half a verse. So, unremittingly, I am resolved to persevere. In whatever time allowed to me outside meditation and observance of precepts, I dedicate myself to learning. I vanish into the ocean of scriptures, striving to approach the supreme teaching. With my retarded faculty, I pursue a teaching profound and subtle—this is not unlike beseeching a lotus in a blaze of fire, but I hope, by the perfuming of the gradualist path, I could somehow fathom a one-millionth of it.

僕不敏於思，未敢妄言上續慧命，下作津梁，然法運興衰，實繫乎人。故匪敢徒求乎自證，尚且望能襄助群倫，得超生死。剎土纖塵，往還古今，法門開闢，應幾擇人。若且大道難行，則化教導，拯世情，移易風俗，亦為濟世之一方。故廿載之初，余糾集群好，以華林嘉名，槧版為刊，期以翹誠渴仰，搜綴貝經；虔心佇望，撮採樞要。務使明解達源，三界無明，一時得頓盡於前；能仁古道，永世免斯淪沒。匪空綴翰墨，抑亦為世發顯圓教。今值學報重刊之際，又藉此新辟《華林佛學研究書系》，期以暢百世之凝滯，通永惑之迷情。

I, unwieldly in mind, do not dare to claim to be the bearer of the *dharmā* past and the guide for the generations ensuing. And yet, the rise and fall of the *dharmā* is incumbent on me. So, how could I seek only self-realization? It is my hope rather to assist beings of all kinds to be liberated from the cycle of life and death. In all lands, and across all times, the gate of the *dharmā* closes and opens contingent on the capacity of the practitioner. Such rarity of chances parallels the difficulty for the Great Path to gain currency. Yet, by teaching, by elevating the spirit of the world, and by transmuting the propensity of the epoch, we are benefiting the world. Hence, with some cordial fellows, we convened; under the name of *Hualin*, we created the journal. Earnestly, we collected and edited *pattra* scriptures; devotedly, we polished their essence. So that their clear insights could evoke the truth, thus rendering the ignorance in all Three Realms instantly apparent and preventing the ancient way of Buddha from receding to oblivion. Such is not eloquent frill nor vain erudition: it is for revealing the Round Teaching. In this occasion of the reprint of the journal, we created the 'Hualin Series on Buddhist Studies'. We hope it could remove the stagnancy encumbering the future generations and rectify the bewitching doubts that forever confuse men.

當今東西學界，限於時地，各拘一方，執見參差，自闡其旨，疑端莫決。故本書系務以會通為基，力求東亞佛教研究之諸多領域，如佛教文學、史學、哲學、社會學、人類學、宗教學、藝術學等皆能兼包，斯堪參校於異同，決疑而釋滯。直旨趣歸，免其局狹之惑。

我佛金口一音，弟子隨類各解。法無偏執，因機設教，故天台淨土、相性二宗，漸頓二門，禪講顯密，萬法歸趣，皆離生死而得涅槃。佛門廣大，未許有我他之見，而為涅槃深解之障。佛門亦以斷除二障，五明洞達為尚。所謂先諳於內，兼令知外。務使偏知，以辯巧而利弘化故。本書系亦大闢四攝之門，廣納於諸有，容受無厭。凡各東亞佛教相關各領域之研究，尤以宗教史、佛教義理、佛教制度、敦煌學等，皆為吾等之所樂取，圖為東亞、歐美各地學者設一溝通之津樑，濟度之舟筏。

Nowadays, the academics in the East and the West are each bounded by their own province. Each preaches their own tenets, yielding doubts that are left un-resolved. Thus, this book series sets out to bridge the gap by encompassing in itself a multitude of disciplines in the East Asian Buddhist Studies—Buddhist literature, history, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, religious studies, arts, et cetera, so as to measure how they diverge and how they converge, and to sever doubts and release blockage. It points to the kernel of an issue, unaffected by the confusing delimitation of disciplines.

The Buddha adapted his sacred utterance to the diverse composition of his disciples, for the *dharma* is not petty-minded but remains flexible in response to the individual. For this reason, we have both Tiantai and Jingtu, both Madhyamaka and Yogācāra, both gradualist and suddenist approach, and both exoteric and esoteric Chan Buddhism. Because ten million teachings coincide in the same cause: to be liberated from *samsāra* to enter Nirvana. The gate of the *dharma*, being so vast, dissolves any egotistical preference and reveals it to be the hindrance to the profound attainment. Buddhism seeks the removal of the Two Hindrances and honours broad knowledge across Five Sciences. One shall, therefore, be deeply versed

in the Internal (Buddhist) Teachings, all the while cognisant of the External (non-Buddhist) learnings, for it is by extensive knowledge that one could be agile in benefiting all beings. This book series opens broadly its vast gate, welcoming all and shunning nothing. It takes delight in drawing from all disciplines of the East Asian Buddhist Studies. For instance, the religious history, Buddhist doctrines, Buddhist institutions and Dunhuang Studies. It aspires to be a bridge of communication for scholars from East Asia, Europe, North America and all places, and be a ferry that carries us to another shore.

本叢書由北京大學藝術與典籍研究中心督辦，英屬哥倫比亞大學之佛教與東亞宗教研究項目 (<https://frogbear.org/>) 襄助，而惠陽良井楊公釗為大檀越，諸方共相勸助而興立焉。旭日諸善士，皆弘道之人，雅以曠濟為懷，欲拯滯溺於沈流，救迷塗於失性。吾亦願法燈長耀，佛光永暉。鷲峰之音再傳，竹林之風更暢。後來賢哲，睹斯文不絕於今！

The Book Series is hosted by the Research Center for Buddhist Texts and Arts at the Peking University, administered by the Frogbear project at the University of British Columbia (https://frogbear.org). It is generously sponsored by His Honorable Yang Zhao of Liangjing in Huiyang, and helped by numerous others. Gracious ones of the Glorious Sun Group are those knowing and promoting the *dharma*. Bearing in heart the desire to benefit all, they extricate stagnant souls from viscous quagmire, and salvage confused beings from losing true nature. I share their desire: may the lamp of the *dharma* beam perennially and the light of Buddhism shine evermore. May the sound of the Vulture

愚辭乏清麗，道無可揚，
恐世君子未知其緣由，姑
聊記鄙懷，兼序其始末云
爾。

會稽龍華衲子湛如
庚子歲辜月序於京師

Peak resound again and may the wind
blow from the Bamboo Grove circulate
ever more freely. May the savants who
come after us, upon reading this, feel
the affinity with us today.

My humble words lack clarity and
grace and contains no profundity
worth showing. And yet, fearing that
people in the world would not know
the circumstances that gave rise to this
Book Series, I wrote down this preface,
recounting its origination and develop-
ment.

Ru Zhan of the Longhua Monastery,
Kuaiji
December 2020, Beijing

Foreword

CHEN JINHUA 陳金華

The University of British Columbia

Buddhism originated in India, but due to the emphasis on the oral transmission in the Indian religious environment,¹ and the unique Indian conception of history that is distinct from that in China,² it is often difficult to arrive at a precise historical understanding of key figures and events. Facing this challenge, inscriptions and other archaeological sources prove to be sources with irreplaceable values. Among the inscriptions discovered in the Indian subcontinent, a great many are related to Buddhism, the study of which has provided the foundation for studying the history, philosophy, society and various other aspects of Indian and South Asian Buddhism.³ For in-

¹ Numerous publications have investigated the tradition of oral transmission in India. Latest publications include Scharfe, 'The Oral Tradition,' in Scharfe, *Education in Ancient India*, 8-37. Naturally, this Indian tradition has influenced Buddhism. See Allon, 'The Oral Composition and Transmission of Early Buddhist Texts'; Wynne, 'The Oral Transmission of the Early Buddhist Literature'; Anālayo, 'The Vicissitudes of Memory and Early Buddhist Oral Transmission'; Ji, 'Cong koutou dao shumian'; Anālayo, 'Early Buddhist Oral Transmission and the Problem of Accurate Source Monitoring'.

² Ge, 'Gudai Yindu de shijian guannian fang'ai le lishi xue de fazhan'.

³ An earlier important reference work is Shizutani, *Indo bukk'yō himet mokuroku*. This work has had several editions; the one just cited is the latest. In the Western scholarship, an exemplary work that used inscriptions to study the

stance, it is thanks to inscriptions that scholars came to determine the year of consecration of the king Aśoka (r. 268-232) which, in turn, became the basis to estimate the century that Buddha Śakyāmini lived in.

Situation ameliorates when it comes to the study of the Chinese history because, by and large, Chinese culture values written records and, unlike India, used to have a ‘culture of court historians’.⁴ Ever since the Qin Dynasty (221-206 B.C.E), there have been historical records recounting a great number of historical figures and events in minute details.⁵ But even then, inscriptions still play a fundamental role in various fields in Buddhist Studies; and Buddhist inscriptions have been amply studied by scholars from various countries with numerous important outcomes already published.⁶ Deserving our special attentions are the research teams and databases established in several reputed academic institutions, such as the project Buddhism-

history of Indian Buddhism is Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks*. But note that several arguments in this book have been strongly challenged by the more recent research. Another work that studies the early Indian Buddhist history by systematically examining inscriptions is Hazra, *Buddhism and Buddhist Literature in Early Indian Epigraphy*. For an overview of Indian epigraphy, see Salomon, ‘Buddhism’, in his *Indian Epigraphy*, 241-242. Just as Saloman said in the introduction, his work relied on previous works, notably including an earlier masterpiece—Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy* and his *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*.

⁴ Chen, *Zhongguo shiguan wenhua yu Shiji*.

⁵ Some fairly recent and frequently used compilations of Buddhist inscriptions include Zhang, *Gansu Fojiao shike zaoxiang*; *Fojiao taben yandu xiaozu*, *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo cang Beiwei jinian Fojiao shike taben mulu*; Long, *Bashu Fojiao betwen jicheng*; Yan, *Beichao Fojiao shike tapian baipin*; Wang, *Henan Fojiao shike zaoxiang*; Pan, *Shanghai Fojiao beike ziliao ji*; Zheng, *Fujian zongjiao beiming huibian*; Zhao, *Wutai shan beiwen*; Li, *Luoyang Fojiao beike jicui*.

⁶ Such as Kegasawa, *Chūgoku Bukkyō sekkyō no kenkyū*; and Kegasawa, *Shinpen Tōdai boshi shozai sōgō mokuroku*; Kuramoto, *Hokuchō Bukkyō zōzōmei kenkyū*.

tische Steininschriften in Nordchina (Buddhist Stone Inscriptions in North China) led by Lothar Ledderose in the Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften (Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities). Since its foundation, the project has made remarkable contributions, including its monographs published in six volumes.⁷ It also has an online database with open access, where scholars could access the transcription,⁸ the English translation and other data of the inscriptions found in more than 20 locations in Shandong Province, such as Mount Yi 嶧山 or Mount Jian 尖山, as well as those in various locations in Sichuan Province, such as the Wofo Monastery 臥佛院 in Anyue 安岳. Similarly, Academia Sinica in Taiwan created a database of Buddhist rubbings, based on the rubbing collection in the Fu Ssu-nian Library in Academia Sinica.⁹ It comprises mostly the inscriptions in northern dynasties and the Sichuan area from the fifth century to the Republic of China (1912-1949). Inscriptions contain various types of prayers among other data. By studying the demography and the social organization related to these inscriptions, we could glean important information about the social religious history of the medieval period.¹⁰ Likewise, the Dunhuang inscriptions are also precious sources. By collecting and studying

⁷ Wang and Ledderose, eds., *Zhongguo Fojiao shijing: Shandong Sheng diyi juan*; Wang and Wenzel, eds., *Zhongguo Fojiao shijing: Shandong Sheng di'er juan*; Wang and Tsai, eds., *Zhongguo Fojiao shijing: Shandong Sheng di-san juan*; Ledderose and Sun, eds., *Zhongguo Fojiao shijing: Sichuan Sheng diyi juan*; Tsai and Sun, eds., *Zhongguo Fojiao shijing: Sichuan Sheng di'er juan*; Wenzel and Sun, eds., *Zhongguo Fojiao shijing: Sichuan Sheng di-san juan*.

⁸ Website (accessed on December 12, 2020): <https://www.stonesutras.org/exist/apps/stonesutras/start.html>.

⁹ Website (accessed on December 12, 2020): <http://rub.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/~buddhism/>.

¹⁰ Some exemplary works include Liu, 'Wu zhi liu shiji Huabei xiangcun de Fojiao Xinyang'; and Liu, 'Cong zaoxiang bei kan Nanbei chao Fojiao de jige mi-anxiang: Shixiang, yiyi he Zhongguo zhuan-shu jing-dian'; Hou, *Wu liu shiji beifang mingzhong Fojiao xinyang*.

them in a systematic fashion, we may procure a similar benefit for our research.¹¹

Comparing to the systematized Buddhist documents that are conducive to transmission, Buddhist inscriptions present information that is sporadic and unsystematic. But it is precisely because such information has not been edited nor copied in numerous rounds that Buddhist inscriptions may retain important raw data that could enable us to glimpse the disorderly and yet rich and authentic religious social life of the past. In addition, Buddhist texts were often written by middle or upper-class elites or by literati, whereas the inscriptions bore a closer rapport with the middle or lower class. In certain sense, we could consider inscriptions as representing a marginal culture that contrasts the dominant culture of elites, for they reflect the everyday life lived by the populace. For this reason, we could hardly overemphasize the importance of inscriptions as historical sources.

Motivated by the considerations above, we hosted, from August 20th to 21st, 2019, a conference titled ‘Manufacturing, Preservation and Interpretation of Buddhist Metal and Stone Epitaphs in Central and East Asia’ in St Anne’s College at the University of Oxford, in our efforts to promote the academic research of Buddhist inscriptions. This conference was hosted by the Glorisun Global Network of Buddhist Studies (www.glorisunglobalnetwork.org) and co-hosted by the Buddhist Classics and Arts Research Centre at the Peking University, the From the Ground Up project (www.frogbear.org) at the University of British Columbia and the Longmen Grotto Research Institute. In this conference, twenty-two scholars from Europe, North America and East Asia engaged in fruitful exchanges in such disciplines as archaeology, history and sociology.

The introduction above foretells the contents of this anthology. The anthology comprises essays that interpret the stone inscriptions in terms of their codicology and historical contexts, as a means to

¹¹ Zheng, *Dunhuang beiming zan jishi*; and Zheng, *Dunhuang beiming zan jishi* (*zengding dingben*).

investigate, both widely and deeply, the Buddhist elements that have permeated the cultures in East Asia and even the South East Asian cultures that have come under the East Asian influence. The importance of Buddhist inscriptions as historical sources lies precisely in their numerous diverging features in regard to Buddhist documents: the background of fabrication, the audience, the particularities in ways that they are preserved, transmitted and discovered. They could thus provide valuable and necessary supplements and revisions to the information preserved in Buddhist documents; and a precious alternative perspective to studying Buddhist philosophy and practice, the history of various Buddhist lineages, the relationship between the secular and the sacred, and the interaction between politics and religions, etc.

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1

**Sacred Network
Reflected on Stone**

Imprinting the Living Rock with Buddhist Texts: On the Creation of a Regional Sacred Geography in Shandong in the Second Half of the Sixth Century^{*}

CLAUDIA WENZEL

Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities

Abstract: During the earliest phase of the production of stone-carved Buddhist texts in China, only selected passages were carved. Most scholars understand these text selections as forerunners of much longer texts carved from the Northern Qi dynasty (550–577) onwards under the open sky on cliff surfaces as well as inside of caves. This paper explores another aspect of the carving of selected *sūtra* passages prominent in Shandong Province during the second half of the sixth century by arguing that the repeated carving of the same short text in a variety of layouts helped to establish a regional network of sacred sites, where the words of the Buddha were imprinted on the living rock. Behind this network of sites was a social network of donors with a related doctrinal background. This early network of sites and selected texts was not restricted to Shandong Province, but also reached out to the border region of Hebei and Henan, in particular to the cave temples of Northern and Southern Xiangtangshan. Finally, the prominence of certain carved passages culled from the *Sūtra on the Great Perfection of Wisdom Spoken by Mañjuśrī*

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(*T* no. 232) within this network was fundamental for the emergence of Mañjuśrī veneration on Mount Wutai in Shanxi.

Keywords: Stone *sūtras*, sacred topography, Mañjuśrī veneration, Buddhist cave-temples, Buddhist mountains

Introduction

Stone inscriptions appear to be ubiquitous in China, where they fall into two main categories: inscriptions carved on stone slabs (*beiwén* 碑文, *beiming* 碑銘) in the form of horizontal tablets or upright steles; and inscriptions carved in the living rock, either under the open sky as *moya* 摩崖 cliff inscriptions, or on the inner walls of caves hewn from bedrock. The *moya* cliff inscriptions first peaked in the second half of the sixth century under the northern Qi dynasty (550–577), which established the capital Ye 鄴 in the south of today's Hebei Province. During this time, the Northern Qi ruling house of Gao patronized Buddhism.¹ The first ruler, Gao Yang (Emperor Wenxuan 文宣, r. 550–559), founded Cave Temple Monastery 石窟寺 on Mount Xiangtang 響堂山 close to the capital. This is the site known today as Northern Mount Xiangtang.² Gao Yang appointed the eminent monk Sengchou 僧稠 (480–560) as abbot of this monastery. Before this appointment, in 552, Gao Yang had Yunmen Monastery 雲門寺 built on Mount Long, located eighty Chinese miles to the southwest of the capital, as a residence for this famous monk.³

¹ For an outline of Buddhism under the Northern Qi, see Chen, 'Buddhism under the Northern Qi'.

² The site is located on the western slope of Tiangu Summit 天鼓峰 of Mount Gu 鼓山, east of He Village 和村 in Fengfeng mining area 峰峰礦區, Handan City 邯鄲市, Hebei. Comprehensive publications are Zhang, *Xiangtang Shan*, and Tsiang et al., *Echoes*.

During the last years of his life, from 555 onwards, Sengchou engaged in the renovation of a small meditation cave, which eventually became his memorial chapel.⁴ This is the middle cave of today's Xiaonanhai 小南海 complex in Anyang County 安陽縣, Anyang City, Henan.⁵ The selection of *jātakas* and accompanying cartouches carved inside the cave, as well as the *sūtra* excerpts carved on its external walls, bespeaks the enormous impact the Mahāyāna *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* had not only on the meditation practice of Sengchou, but also on the cave's iconographic program.⁶ Particularly striking among the cave's materials are repeated references to the practice of carving canonical texts into stone. Inside the cave this topic is illustrated by a story in which the bodhisattva receives a Dharma verse in exchange for his mortal body; before sacrificing himself, he wrote this verse everywhere, notably carving it in stone and on cliffs.⁷ This funda-

³ *Xu Gaoseng zhuan*, T no. 2060, 50: 554b14–17: 天保三年下勅於鄴城西南八十里, 龍山之陽, 為構精舍, 名雲門寺, 請以居之, 兼為石窟大寺主.

⁴ The votive inscription for the Xiaonanhai middle cave, carved on the outside wall above the entrance, was composed by his disciples, who report on his death in 560, and who write that the *sūtra* passages were carved after his death.

⁵ The decoration of this cave and its connection with Sengchou's preferred meditation practice was extensively studied by Jan Yün-hua [Ran Yunhua] 冉雲華 (Jan, 'Seng-ch'ou's Method of Dhyāna'; 'Chou chanshi yi'; and 'Dunhuang wenxian'), Yen Chuan-ying [Yan Juanying] 顏娟英 (Yen, 'Bei Qi Xiaonan hai shiku' and 'Bei Qi changuanku'), and Inamoto, 'Shōnankai'. See also Tsiang, 'Monumentalization', 234–36, 251–53, and Wenzel, 'Sengchous (480–560) religiöses Vermächtnis'.

⁶ Radich, 'Reading the Writing on the Wall'.

⁷ After the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, at T no. 374, 12: 451a5–6: '然後處處, 若石、若壁、若樹、若道, 書寫此偈'. The verse for which the bodhisattva sacrifices his life (T no. 7, 1: 204c23–24; T no. 374, 12: 450a16, 451a1, 497b9–10) was also carved on the lintel of cave 6 at Southern Mount Xiangtang, and on the now destroyed Mount Jian 尖山 in Zoucheng 鄒城 (JS 16.1; see Wang and Tsai, *Shandong Volume 3*, 48–49, 128–34). As Radich, 'Reading the Writing on the Wall', 566–67, observes: 'the allusions to the MPNMS ... in the *jātakas* and accompanying cartouches seem almost like a *de facto* manifesto for some aspects of the

mental message of Xiaonanhai Cave was well understood during the following decades, which saw the proliferation of projects, small and large, to carve selected texts on cliffs and in caves.

The most extensive *sūtra* carving project under the Northern Qi was that of the powerful politician Tang Yong 唐邕 (?–581), which he arranged during the years 568–572. Tang Yong served as Minister under all rulers of the Northern Qi and was eventually declared Prince of Jinchang 晉昌王 in 572. Before this appointment, he had four Mahāyāna *sūtras*⁸ carved on a surface of about 65 m² inside and outside the so-called southern cave of the imperial caves of Northern Mount Xiangtang. Tang Yong recorded his project in a stele text placed next to his stone *sūtras*. Explaining his motivation, he writes that ‘silk scrolls can be spoiled, bamboo documents do not last long, metal tablets are difficult to preserve, and parchment and paper are easily destroyed, therefore ... the trace of the silver chisel has been ordered’ 縑緇有壞, 簡策非久, 金牒難求, 皮紙易滅。於是.....命銀鉤之跡。⁹ Although the four *sūtras* named in Tang Yong’s stele inscription must have formed the core of his carving project, some additional

practice of carving canonical texts into cave walls (and other stone surfaces) in subsequent decades and even centuries’.

⁸ These four *sūtras* are: *Sūtra Spoken by Vimalakīrti* (*Weimojie suoshuo jing* 維摩詰所說經), T no. 475; *Śrīmālā-sūtra* (*Śrīmālādevī-siṃha-nāda-sūtra*; *Shengman shizibou yicheng da fangbian Fangguang jing* 勝鬘師子吼一乘大方便方廣經), T no. 353; *Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on Maitreya’s Rebirth Below and Accomplishing Buddhahood* (*Mile chengfo jing* 彌勒成佛經; i.e. *Foshuo Mile xiasheng chengfo jing* 佛說彌勒下生成佛經, T no. 454); and *Sūtra Spoken by Buddha on Bo [Pushya?]* (*Foshuo Bo jing* 佛說孛經, T no. 790). The last text may be a revision by Zhi Qian of a text previous translation by Lokakṣema, see Nattier, *A Guide*, 133.

⁹ Translation by Tsiang, ‘Monumentalization’, 237. A similar formulation was used seven years later in the text of the *Stone Hymn* 石頌 at Mount Tie (Tie 2), which is dated to September 23, 579: ‘Silk and bamboo are easily ruined, but metal and stone are hard to destroy; entrusting [the texts] to a high mountain, they will last forever without end’. 縑竹易銷, 金石難滅; 託以高山, 永留不絕. Wang and Wenzel, *Shandong Volume 2*, 166.

short text passages and Buddha-names were carved on the stone walls inside and outside the southern cave. The same Buddha-names are also found at Southern Mount Xiangtang 南響堂山.¹⁰

It is remarkable that the short *sūtra* passages and Buddha-names carved in the caves at both the Northern and Southern Mount Xiangtang connect these imperial cave temples to inscription sites on the periphery of the empire in today's Shandong Province. Tang Yong's initiative appears to have prompted other, more modest, *sūtra* carving projects farther from the capital. Although he himself appears as a donor only at Northern Mount Xiangtang, we know that his wife, Lady Zhao 趙氏, was active at Mount Jian 尖山 in Zoucheng 鄒城, where she led a group of ladies who donated *sūtras* 經主 in 575.¹¹ Lady Zhao died in either the same or following year that the Mount Jian carvings were completed. A votive inscription by her mother at Mount Zhonghuang 中皇山 in She County 涉縣 mentions her sudden death.¹² Mount Zhonghuang is located a mere fifty kilometres from the capital at Ye. It is an impressive site with more than 150 m² of Buddhist texts carved inside two caves and on the adjacent cliffs. Today this site is known as Palace of Empress Nüwa (Wahuanggong 媧皇宮). Since no other votive inscriptions are found at this site, it is possible that Lady Zhao and her husband were somehow involved in this project as well.

The project 'Buddhist Stone Sutras in China', hosted by the Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, documented a total of twenty-one sites in Shandong with *moya* cliff inscriptions (Figure 1).¹³ Votive inscriptions were found at many of these sites, which reveal a

¹⁰ Located on the southern slope of Mount Gu 鼓山, northwest of Zhifang Village 紙坊村, Linshui Community 臨水鎮, at the northern banks of Fuyang River 滏陽河, Hebei.

¹¹ Wang and Tsai, *Shandong Volume 3*, 41.

¹² Wahuanggong 媧皇宮: Mount Fenghuang 鳳凰山, Suobao Community 索堡鎮, She County 涉縣, Handan City 邯鄲市, Hebei.

¹³ Wang and Ledderose, *Shandong Volume 1*; Wang and Wenzel, *Shandong Volume 2*; Wang and Tsai, *Shandong Volume 3*. Two more volumes in this province are planned.

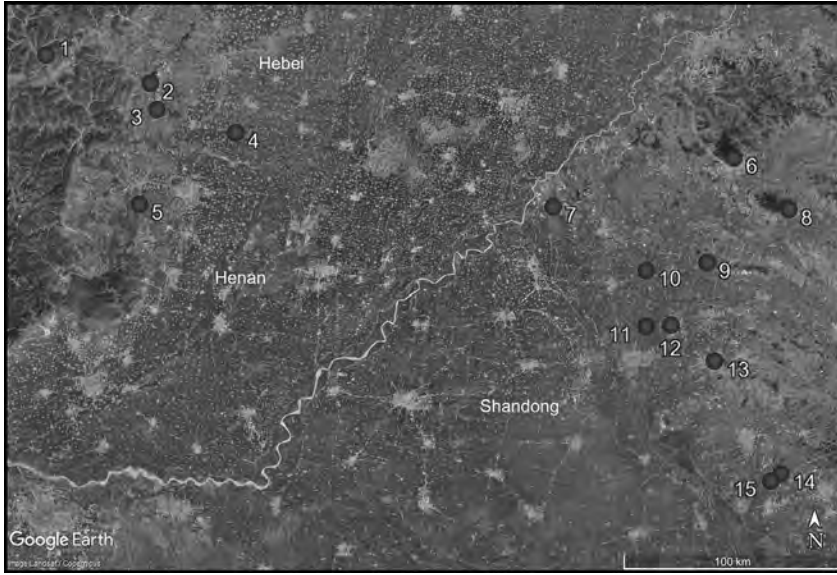


FIG. 1 Map (provided by Google™Earth) of Northern Qi and Northern Zhou stone inscription sites. 1: Mount Zhonghuang in Shexian, Hebei. 2: Northern Mount Xiangtang, Handan, Hebei. 3: Southern Mount Xiangtang, Linshui, Hebei. 4: Capital Ye. 5: Xiaonanhai, Anyang, Henan. 6: Mount Tai, Tai'an, Shandong. 7: Dongping Lake (Mount Tianchi, East Mount Shuyuan, Mount Ergu, Mount Hongding, Mount Dazhai, Mount Sili, Mount Yuncui, Mount Yin), Shandong. 8: Mount Culai, Xintai, Shandong. 9: Mount Fenghuang, Ningyang, Shandong. 10: Mount Shuiniu, Wenshang, Shandong. 11: Mount Ziyang, Ziyang, Shandong. 12: Yanzhou, Shandong. 13: Zoucheng (Mount Yang, Mount Yi, Mount Tie, Mount Gang, Mount Ge, Mount Jian), Shandong. 14: Mount Tao, Tengzhou, Shandong. 15: Mount Long, Tengzhou, Shandong.

social network of wealthy gentry donors and Buddhist clerics, some of which must have had connections with the court at Ye. This was the case with Lady Zhao and her two co-donors, who were all married to statesmen recorded in the dynastic histories. Aside from this type of social network, the Shandong *sūtra* carvings can also be described as a network of sites with similar doctrinal and soteriological intent, as well as a network of calligraphy samples written in a similar style. In what follows, I will describe this network of inscriptions in greater detail, discuss what is known about the logistics behind their

distribution over the Shandong hills, and demonstrate the impact of this regional network upon the course of Buddhist practice during the seventh century.

A General Overview

Only one Shandong cliff inscription pre-dates the Northern Qi dynasty. This inscription survived only in a rubbing and is no longer visible on the rock. It was once part of the carvings at Yellow Stone Cliff 黃石崖 in the southern outskirts of the provincial capital Ji'nan. The text has no date, but it is thought to have been originally placed below a votive inscription to a Maitreya figure dated 526. Rather than presenting a coherent *sūtra* passage, the text combines two verses from the *Great Parinirvāṇa Sūtra*, and one passage from the *Lotus Sūtra* on the name of Bodhisattva Guanshiyin.¹⁴

Aside from this early inscription, all other Shandong cliff inscriptions date to the Northern Qi (550–577) or Northern Zhou (557–581) dynasties. We have secure dates for those inscriptions carved within the years 560 (HT 2),¹⁵ 562 (EG 3), 564 (HDS 18, Yi 2), 570 (CLS 4, CLS 8), and 575 (JS 2), and even more specific dates indicating the year, month, and day such as the following: May 20, 575 (JS 7), June 24, 575 (JS 4), September 23, 579 (Tie 2), March 27, 580 (Ge 2), and July 29, 580 (GS E).

¹⁴ Wang and Tsai, *Shandong Volume 3*, 165, 171–72, 176–81. Note that this text combination quotes the same verse from the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* (*T* no. 7, 1: 204c23–24 ; *T* no. 374, 12: 450a16, 451a1, 497b9–10) that was also illustrated later in Sengchou's memorial chapel at Xiaonanzhai, and is found among the carvings on Mount Jian (JS 16.1), which date to 575, see Wang and Tsai, *Shandong Volume 3*, 48–49, 128–34.

¹⁵ This refers to the date of the votive inscription on the rear of a stele, which was found in the ruins of former Haitan Monastery 海檀寺 in Dongping County 東平縣. The *Guanshiyin Sūtra* 觀世音經 is carved on the stele's front side. The stele is documented in Wang and Ledderose, *Shandong Volume 1*, 464–89. In the meantime, it has disappeared and is no longer in its original location.

However, some Shandong cliff inscriptions may have been carved even earlier than these secure dates. The surviving fragment of a *sūtra* passage (Sili 1) on Mount Sili 司里山 was damaged by a votive inscription which dates to 561. In addition, some colophons on Mount Hongding 洪頂山 do not utilize reign eras, but refer to a Buddhist calendar, thus dating the respective inscriptions ‘to the year such and such after Śākyamuni [entered into nirvāṇa] under the twin trees’. If the underlying Buddhist calendar is identical with the one used by Master Huisi 慧思 (515–577), then the inscriptions on Mount Hongding would date to the years 553 (HDS 15) and 556 (HDS 7).

In sum, it is relatively safe to claim that the majority of the Shandong cliff inscriptions were carved during the years 553 to 580. Not even the Buddhist persecution under Emperor Wu 武帝 (r. 559–578) of the Northern Zhou dynasty seems to have significantly affected the *sūtra* carving projects. Immediately following the persecution, in 579 and 580, three of the largest inscription sites were created at Mount Tie 鐵山 (579), Mount Ge 葛山 (March 27, 580), and Mount Gang 崗山 (July 29, 580).

The following table arranges the twenty-one inscription sites in Shandong, dating to the Northern Qi and Northern Zhou dynasties, according to their total carved surface areas. They are sorted into sizes XS (0.2–2.2 m²), S (4–9.1 m²), M (31–<100 m²), L (132–175 m²), XL (> 500 m²), and XXL (>1,000 m²). The sites indicated with underline contain evidence for the involvement of monk Seng'an Daoyi 僧安道壹 (to be discussed below):

TABLE 1 Inscription sites in Shandong according to size

XS 0.2–2.2 m ²	S 4–9.1 m ²	M 31– <100 m ²	L 132–175 m ²	XL > 500 m ²	XXL > 1,000 m ²
Mount Tianchi 天池山 (Dongping Lake) (undated) ~0.2 m ²	Mount Yang 陽山 (Zoucheng) (undated) destroyed ~ 4 m ²	Mount Yi 嶧山 (Zoucheng) (564, 570–572) ~31 m ²	Mount Hongding 洪頂山 (Dongping Lake) (553?, 556?, 564) ~132 m ²	Mount Tie 鐵山 (Zoucheng) (579) ~560 m ²	Mount Tai 泰山 (Tai'an) (undated) ~1300 m ²

XS 0.2–2.2 m ²	S 4–9.1 m ²	M 31– <100 m ²	L 132–175 m ²	XL > 500 m ²	XXL > 1,000 m ²
Mount Dazhai 大寨山 (Dongping Lake) (undated) ~0.3 m ²	Mount Shuiniu 水 牛山 (Wenshang xian) (undated) ~ 4 m ²	Mount Sili 司里山 (Dongping Lake) (before 561) ~31–35 m ²	Mount Ge 葛山 (Zoucheng) (March 27, 580) ~175 m ²		
Mount Yuncui 雲翠山 (Dongping Lake) (undated) ~0.6 m ²	Mount Ziyang 嵒陽山 (Ziyang xian) (undated) destroyed ~7 m ²	Mount Gang 崗山 (Zoucheng) (July 29, 580) partly lost > 64.4 m ²			
East Mount Shuyuan 書院東山 (Dongping Lake) (undated) ~0.95 m ²	Mount Yin 銀山 (Dongping Lake) (undated) ~8.2 m ²	<u>Mount Jian</u> 尖山 (Zoucheng) (575) destroyed >89 m ²			
Mount Fenghuang 鳳凰山 (Ningyang xian) (undated) ~1 m ²	<u>Mount Ergu</u> 二鼓山 (Dongping Lake) (562) ~9 m ²				
Mount Long 龍山 (Tengzhou) (undated) partly lost ~ 1.2 m ²	Mount Culai 徂徠山 (Xintai) (570) ~9.1 m ²				
Mount Tao 陶山 (Tengzhou) (undated) ~2.2 m ²					

As this table shows, carved surface areas of the inscription sites vary considerably in size. This table does not show the fact that the total number of individual inscriptions at each site also varies. This does not necessarily mean, however, that smaller sites always host lesser inscriptions than larger sites. In general, three different types of inscription sites may be distinguished:

1. Small sites with a single carved Buddha-name or *sūtra* passage, occasionally accompanied by one or more colophons.
2. Cluster sites of various sizes hosting several inscriptions, usually a mixture of Buddha-names, *sūtra* passages, and historical inscriptions.
3. Sites with large walk-over surfaces which feature an extended *sūtra* passage or *sūtra* chapter in several hundred characters, with or without accompanying votive inscriptions or colophons.

Inscription sites with the smallest carved surface area, below one square metre, usually consist of a single Buddha-name, as is the case with the ‘Buddha King of Great Emptiness’ 大空王佛 on Mount Tianchi 天池山 (undated) or the ‘Buddha Amitābha’ on Mount Dazhai 大寨山 (undated). Sometimes this single Buddha-name is accompanied by one or more colophons, like on Mount Yuncui 雲翠山 (undated), where the names of five monks are recorded next to ‘Buddha King of Great Emptiness’. The slightly larger Buddha-name carved on East Mount Shuyuan still covers less than one square metre. On Mount Long 龍山 (undated), one single passage in ninety-eight characters was carved, on slightly more than one square metre. Next, we find combinations of Buddha-names in modest sizes, like the five names carved on Mount Fenghuang 鳳凰山 (undated). Mount Tao 陶山 (undated) also combines three Buddha-names and adds one ‘Perfection of Wisdom’ 般若波羅蜜 to this group of invocations.

Single *sūtra* passages without colophons on Mount Yang 陽山 (undated) and Mount Shuiniu 水牛山 (undated) cover around four square metres of cliff surface. Next in size are single, large Buddha-names with a total height of five to six metres, accompanied by much smaller colophons or votive inscriptions, like the ‘Buddha

King of Great Emptiness' on Mount Ziyang 嵚陽山 (undated) and on Mount Ergu 二鼓山 (562).

A special case is Mount Yin. Here we find a single carving which reads: 'Great Perfection of Wisdom Spoken by the Buddha' 佛說摩訶般若波羅蜜. Although this reads like a *sūtra* title, no *sūtra* text was carved in or around the area. The final site in this list of extra small and small sites is Mount Culai 徂徠山 (dated 570), with a carved surface area of about nine square metres. However, Mount Culai is more a combination of two small sites, one on Radiant Buddha Cliff 映佛巖 (Figure 2), with a carved surface area of about 6.3 m², and one on a single boulder the size of a man, with a total carved surface area of about 2.8 m².

Medium sized sites begin at a total carved surface area of around thirty-one square metres on Mount Yi 嶧山 (dated 564, 570–572). However, just like Mount Culai, Mount Yi is not a coherent site, but rather a combination of two small sites. We find two *sūtra* passages with colophons carved separately, one on the Summit of the Five Flowers 五華峰, covering twenty-three square metres, and another one next to the Cave of the Bewitching Fairy 妖精洞 (Figures 3 and 4), covering only eight square metres.

The other three medium sized sites are coherent; they may be best described as clusters of a varying number of inscriptions, including Buddha-names, *sūtra* passages, and historical colophons. Mount Sili 司里山 (begun before 561), with a total carved surface area of thirty-one to thirty-five square metres, features three short *sūtra* passages, but unfortunately there are no colophons that directly relate to them. The passages are also heavily damaged and therefore difficult to reconstruct.

The inscriptions on Mount Gang 崗山 (colophon dated to July 29, 580) are unique in Shandong. Single segments of a *sūtra* passage (Figures 10 and 11) are spread in varying sizes over cliffs and boulders along a pilgrim path leading uphill. Because some text segments can no longer be located, the total carved surface area can only be estimated as between 64.4 m² and no more than one hundred square metres. Mount Gang features two different *sūtra* passages, one of them carved twice, as well as Buddha-names, and one colophon by donors dated to 580. The surface carved on Mount Jian 尖山 (dated to 575)



FIG. 2 Radiant Buddha Cliff 映佛巖 on Mount Culai, with ninety-eight-character passage (CLS 1) carved on the lower part of the boulder. Photograph taken in 2007 by Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities.



FIG. 3 Cliff with carving of the ninety-eight-character passage next to the Cave of the Bewitching Fairy 妖精洞 on Mount Yi. Photograph taken in 2008 by Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities.



FIG. 4 Rubbing of the ninety-eight-character passage next to the Cave of the Bewitching Fairy 妖精洞 on Mount Yi. H. 343 cm x W. 232 cm. Collection of the former Shandong Stone Carving Art Museum 山東省石刻藝術博物館 in Ji'nan. Photograph taken in 2005 by Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

is of comparable size. With the exception of one verse carved on Pot Stand Rocks 支鍋石 nearby, all inscriptions—two *sūtra* passages, one large Buddha-name and numerous colophons—were arranged on a single sloping boulder. Mount Jian was used to quarry stones in the 1960s, thus only rubbings of the inscriptions survived. A reconstruction of the original inscriptions yields a total surface area of no less than eighty-nine square metres.

Among the large sites with a total surface area of at least one hundred square metres, we find Mount Hongding 洪頂山 (553?, 556?, 564), which is of the cluster type, and hosts twenty-three individual inscriptions lined up along the cliffs of the northern and southern slope of the valley. It is notable that the *sūtra* passages, Buddha-names, and colophons on the northern slope, covering an area of about 115 square metres compared to only eighteen square metres on the southern slope, may have been carved earlier than those on the southern slope, which have a secure date of 564.

The large site of Mount Ge 葛山 (dated by colophon to March 27, 580) features a long *sūtra* passage from chapter twelve of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra* 維摩詰所說經 (*T* no. 475, 14: 554c28–555a24) covering about 175 square metres of a coherent surface, which may be assigned to the category of ‘giant stele’. One year earlier, a wealthy local clan together with a Buddhist association donated the carving on Mount Tie 鐵山 (579). The donors carved a long passage from the ‘Chapter on the Bodhisattva of Oceanlike Wisdom’ (‘Haiyi pusa pin’ 海慧菩薩品) of the *Vast and Universal Great Compilation Sūtra* (*Da fangguang daji jing* 大方等大集經; *T* no. 397, 13: 50a16–c13) on a surface measuring around 560 square metres. In addition, they carved the outline of a giant stele out of the sloping boulder, complete with soaring dragons above, and a pair of supporting turtles below. The *sūtra* text is accompanied by a fine piece of literature entitled *Stone Hymn*, which, among other things, indicates the date of the donation, September 23, 579.

The only stone carving in Shandong larger than this giant stele on Mount Tie is the *Diamond Sūtra* carving in Sūtra Stone Valley on Mount Tai 泰山. This carving covers a surface area close to 1,300 square metres, and was either never dated, or the original colophon has completely worn away.

Theories about the Evolution of Shandong Cliff Inscriptions

Lists and tables like the one I present here have tempted scholars to draw some general conclusions about the evolution of stone *sūtra* carvings in Shandong Province. For example, smaller inscription sites are taken to be earlier than larger sites. In addition, because the Buddha-names carved on Mount Yuncui and Ergu have colophons indicating names of *bhikṣus* 比丘, it is generally assumed that single carvings of the 'Buddha King of Great Emptiness' Buddha-name such as these were mainly sponsored by small 'brotherhoods' of monks. These 'brotherhoods' may have even been linked. The name of one monk, *bhikṣu* Sengtai 僧太, is found at both sites.¹⁶ Consequently, speculations arose about the activities of a group of monks from the former Chongfan Monastery 崇梵寺 in the area of today's Pingyin County 平陰縣, where the inscriptions are located.¹⁷

Scholars also postulated that the length of the carved texts increase over time: The shortest inscriptions are Buddha-names which consist of just a few characters; next are *sūtra* passages of ever increasing length, in fifty-two or ninety-eight characters for example; up to the *sūtra* passage carved on Mount Tie in 930 characters, and on Mount Tai in originally 2,748 characters.

However, these observations, in my opinion, over-simplify the evolutionary process of the Shandong inscriptions. Apart from the Buddha-name on Mount Ergu, dated to 562, all small or very small sites are undated. In addition, the large site on Mount Hongding (at least the carvings on its northern slope) may have been established even earlier than the secure date of 562 found on the southern slope. Further, the three fragmented *sūtra* passages on Mount Sili may have been carved before 561. On the other hand, it is true that three of the largest carving projects, the 'giant stele' type sites on Mount Tie and Mount Ge, as well as the pilgrim path on Mount Gang, were established rather late. These carvings were created after the Buddhist persecution under Zhou Wudi. However, we need not forget that the

¹⁶ Wang and Ledderose, *Shandong Volume 1*, 343, 352–54, 365.

¹⁷ Kiriya, 'Bei Qi da shamen An Daoyi', 51, 74; Lai, 'Seng'an kejing', 107.

largest carving of all, on Mount Tai, provides no clue of its date, and thus cannot be included into this grouping of large and late sites.

Modern academic research on the Shandong *moya* cliff inscriptions began after the sensational discovery of the inscription valley on Mount Hongding during the 1980s. Most of the larger sites in Shandong—Mount Tai, Mount Tie, Mount Ge, but also Mount Culai—are long known and have been noted in epigraphic literature since the end of the eighteenth century. The first research that went beyond listings of sites and inscription titles were investigations into the family history of some of the identified donors: The Kuang 匡 family at Mount Tie, the Wei 韋 family at Mount Jian, and Wang Zichun 王子椿 at Mount Culai. The first scholar to connect two Shandong sites was Nie Wen 聶鉞 (courtesy name Jianguang 劍光; 1711–1796), who noticed that the clerical script at Mount Culai was similar to that of the *Diamond Sūtra* engraving on Mount Tai, and thus concluded that the inscriptions at both sites must be from the same hand.¹⁸ Epigraphers before the invention of photography were prone to many misidentifications due to the shortcomings of their materials—collections of rubbings, often incorrectly ascribed to certain sites. Their attempts to connect individual inscription sites were random, as in the case of the eminent scholar Ruan Yuan, who—by mere studies of literal sources—proposed a connection between the inscriptions on Mount Jian (575) and the *sūtra* carving project of Tang Yong at Northern Mount Xiangtang. Although Ruan Yuan noted the similarity of the calligraphy of the inscriptions on Mount Jian and Mount Tai, he remains vague and does not draw any preliminary conclusions.¹⁹

¹⁸ Manuel Sassmann in Wang and Tsai, *Shandong Volume 3*, 251.

¹⁹ Ruan Yuan (1764–1849) writes in his *Shanzuo jinshi zhi* on Mount Tai: ‘Nie Jianguang (Nie Wen 聶鉞, 1711–1796) says in his *Itinerary of Mount Tai* that the inscription was written by Wang Zichun. He notes that Wu Shanfu (Wu Yujun 吳玉搢, 1699–1774) records in his *Extant Writings on Metal and Stone*: ‘Among the *sūtras* that Tang Yong had carved under the Northern Qi dynasty was the *Vimalakīrti* and other *sūtras*; the scope was not limited to one kind of *sūtra*. Now, the polished cliff inscriptions on Mount Jian in Zou County also include a colophon by Tang Yong, Prince of Jinchang; its calligraphy is the same

The situation improved when individual scholars left their studios and paid personal visits to the inscription sites, an activity known as ‘seeking out ancient steles’ (*fang gubei* 訪古碑). During their travels, they not only collected more rubbings, but completed the partial transcriptions of earlier publications, thereby correcting earlier mistakes. These extensive travels allowed for the discovery of interconnections between single sites and their respective donors.

The foremost travel destination for scholars of epigraphy was Mount Tai. In his *Eulogy on Sūtra Stone Valley on Mount Dai* (*Dai-shan Jingshi yu ge* 岱山經石峪歌), Wei Yuan 魏源 (1794–1857) writes:

The stone carving in Sūtra Stone Valley on Mount Tai is the *Diamond [Perfection of] Wisdom Sūtra*. It was carved in clerical script, with characters as large as a peck, powerful and unrestrained, elegant and simple. This inscription seems to be from the same hand as the *Mañjuśrī Wisdom Sūtra* carved at Mount Culai, at Shuiniu Cave,²⁰ and Mount Gang [i.e. Mount Tie] in Zoucheng, which were all written by Seng’an Daoyi (僧安道壹 or 僧安道一) of the Northern Qi dynasty....²¹

Although Wei Yuan confuses the giant stele carved at Mount Tie with nearby Mount Gang, he is to be credited with the first identification of major Shandong sites as works by Seng’an Daoyi. The slightly younger Li Zuoxian 李佐賢 (1807–1876) went one step further and suggested that the giant stele on Mount Tie, the *Diamond*

as this one. However, it can no longer be known if the characters were written by [Tang] Yong’. 聶劍光《泰山道里記》以爲北齊王子椿書。元案吳山夫《金石存》載：‘北齊唐邕寫經有《維摩詰》諸經，不止一種’。今鄒縣尖山摩崖，亦有晉昌王唐邕題字，筆法與此相同，或出邕書，未可知也。Ruan, *Shanzuo jinshi zhi*, 14483–14484.

²⁰ This probably refers to the Mount Shuiniu Stele (558–561?), which has an extended passage of the *Mañjuśrī Wisdom Sūtra*.

²¹ 魏源《岱山經石峪歌》：‘泰山經石峪摩崖，隸書《金剛般若經》，字大於斗，雄逸高古，與徂徠山水牛洞及鄒縣岡山之《文殊般若經》如出一手，皆北齊僧安道一所書。Wei Yuan, *Wei Yuan ji*, 732–33.

Sūtra on Mount Tai, and the large inscription on Mount Ge were all written by the same person, namely the monk An Daoyi,²² who is also mentioned in a colophon on Mount Jian.²³

Despite their merits, the conclusions drawn by Wei Yuan and Li Zuoxian should be accepted only with caution. The underlying assumption of these arguments is that the calligraphy of anonymous

²² The correct reading of the name of this monk, Seng'an Daoyi versus An Daoyi, is still subject to dispute. Zhang, 'Shandong beiya kejing', 65–67, first proposed to read 'Seng'an Daoyi' as a personal name composed of four characters, and explained that names of monks consist of two parts: The first is called *ming* 名, the second *zi* 字. Therefore, 'Seng'an' has to be the monk's name, which could be abbreviated by only using the second character. Lai, 'Seng'an kejing', 98–100; and Xu, 'Seng'an Daoyi', 242–45, followed him thereafter. Other authors continue to read the phrase as 'Monk [with family name] An [and personal name] Daoyi', see Yang, 'Seng'an Daoyi chukao', 51–52, and Kiriya in all his publications. This reading goes back to Duan Songling 段松苓 (1745–1800), *Shanzuo beimu*, 14844a, who created a precedent for reading 'seng' as a title and 'An' as a family name. In this article, I adopt the reading Seng'an Daoyi. As this monk calls himself *śramaṇa* Seng'an Daoyi, his title is '*śramaṇa*' 沙門, and I see no need to read the character *seng* 僧 as yet another title with the meaning 'monk'. In my opinion, *seng* 僧 is an integral part of a personal name.

²³ Li Zuoxian 李佐賢 (1807–1876), *Shiquan shuwu*, 14194: 'I come to the conclusion that [the *sūtra* at Mount Tai] is not in the slightest amount different from the calligraphy, composition, and size of the *sūtra* characters of the *sūtra* at Mount Ge and the carved *sūtra* at Minor Mount Tie in Zou County, and must have been written by the same person. The calligrapher of Mount Ge can no longer be identified. An examination of the *sūtra* on Minor Mount Tie connected it with the calligraphy of the monk An Daoyi; therefore, the characters of *Sūtra* Stone Valley also belong without doubt to the calligraphy of An Daoyi. The inscriptions carved under the Qi on Mount Jian also include a colophon by An Daoyi. Therefore, whether the *sūtra* inscription on Mount Tai was carved under the Qi or the Zhou cannot be decided quickly'. 余按鄒縣小鐵山刻經及葛山經，經字大小結構筆法與此絲毫無異，斷爲一人之筆。葛山之經，書人已不可考。鐵山之經，考係僧安道壹書，則經石峪字亦屬安道壹書，應無可疑。尖山齊刻經亦有安道壹題名，則泰山此刻，或齊或周末可遽定。

inscriptions without any signature or accompanying colophon is so close in style to inscriptions signed by Seng'an Daoyi that they must be from the same hand. However, the name of the monk Seng'an Daoyi is found only at three sites, Mount Jian, Mount Tie (Figure 5), and Mount Hongding (Figure 6). On Mount Ergu, we find the three-characters signature 'Seng Anyi' 僧安一 written after two monk's names and in front of the name of a lay donor, but the identification of this name with the longer 'Seng'an Daoyi' is still debated.

One of the mountains that features signatures by 'the great *śramaṇa* Seng'an Daoyi', Mount Hongding, was not yet known to the late Qing epigraphers. The inscriptions of Mount Hongding were long unnoticed by travelling scholars. Only when a local shepherd reported his rediscovery of the site to the authorities during the 1980s, an official survey was finally initiated. In 1998, the responsible authority, the Shandong Stone Carving Art Museum 山東省石刻藝術博物館 in Ji'nan, produced rubbings of all the inscriptions at the site, and set out to investigate them thoroughly via a series of publications and international conferences. The anthology, *Research on Cliff Inscriptions of the Northern Dynasties* (*Beichao moya kejing yanjiu* 北朝摩崖刻經研究), published in 1991 before Mount Hongding was properly surveyed, was consequently followed by two more volumes in 2003 and 2006, which published the ongoing academic research of Chinese and Japanese scholars alike. The relentless Lai Fei 賴非 of the Shandong Stone Carving Art Museum compiled volume twelve of the *Complete Collection of Chinese Calligraphy* (*Zhongguo shufa quanji* 中國書法全集) series, entitled *Beichao moya kejing* in 2000. This book laid the foundation for a deeper understanding of the Shandong *moya* cliff inscriptions.

Since the earliest examinations of these materials, scholars have been puzzled by how suddenly the cliff inscriptions emerged around the middle of the sixth century, and how abruptly they were discontinued during the seventh century. The clearly drawn spatial and temporal boundaries of the cliff inscription phenomenon turned out to be particularly thought-provoking, and the resulting scholarship produced some remarkable results. Once all the materials of the *moya* inscriptions carved under the Northern Qi and Northern Zhou dynasties in Hebei, Henan, and Shandong Provinces became



FIG. 5 Rubbing of the central text column of the votive inscription Tie 3 at the foot of the giant stele carving on Mount Tie, reading 'Seng'an Daoyi of the Eastern Range wrote the calligraphy for the sutra'. H. 330 cm x W. 51 cm. Collection of the former Shandong Stone Carving Art Museum 山東省石刻藝術博物館 in Ji'nan. Photograph taken in 2005 by Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities.



FIG. 6 Rubbing of the signature of Seng'an Daoyi next to the carving of the ninety-eight-character passage on the northern slope on Mount Hongding (HDS 16.1). H. 51 cm x W. 17 cm. Collection of the former Shandong Stone Carving Art Museum 山東省石刻藝術博物館 in Ji'nan. Photograph taken in 2008 by Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

available to scholars, comparative studies intensified, and ever more parallels between single sites were discovered. Because of the distinctive calligraphy of many of the engraved Buddha-names and *sūtra* passages, calligraphy experts like Lai Fei considered them not simply as works executed in a particular style or school, but as works left behind by a single person, the brilliant calligrapher monk Seng'an Daoyi. In an article published in 2003, Lai Fei ascribes the majority of the unsigned Buddha-names and *sūtra* passages to Seng'an Daoyi, purely on stylistic grounds. He considered Seng'an Daoyi as master calligrapher of almost all inscription sites, as well as the mastermind behind their planning. Utilizing the secure dates obtained from some sites, Lai Fei set out to construct a hypothetical biography of this monk, about whom all other historical sources are silent. He establishes a chronology of sites visited by Seng'an, with Mount Hongding and the XS and S sites as points of departure. Lai Fei goes so far as to say that because of the extreme inclination of the cliff, the calligrapher monk could not have been older than forty years when he wrote his giant 'Buddha King of Great Emptiness' on the northern slope of Mount Hongding. Based on distinctions concerning size, content, collaborators, calligraphic style, and intention of each inscription site, Lai Fei deduces two phases in the biography of Seng'an: before and after 575, the year in which the monk participated in the Mount Jian carvings. Lai Fei assumes that Seng'an travelled west towards the capital of Ye during the years 572–574, and wrote *sūtra* passages and more Buddha-names on both the Northern and Southern Mount Xiangtang. After he was introduced to the eminent official Tang Yong, the monk allegedly returned to today's Shandong Province in the entourage of the latter's wife, Lady Zhao, and began his most impressive projects, the carvings at Mount Jian, Mount Tai, Mount Tie, and finally on Mount Ge. Shortly thereafter, according to Lai Fei, Seng'an supposedly died, because the inscriptions on Mount Gang, dated 580, were written in someone else's calligraphy.²⁴ The

²⁴ Lai, 'Seng'an kejing', 120–31, provides a table that lists inscriptions by Seng'an at the Shandong sites (and on steles) and at Northern and Southern Mount Xiangtang. He indicates which passages were carved, how Seng'an's signatures read,

hypothetical construction of the *śramaṇa* Seng'an Daoyi's biography came to a head in an article by Kiriya Seiichi 桐谷征一, who divided the life of the monk into seven distinct phases. Kiriya claims to have found traces of Seng'an Daoyi at almost every inscription site in Hebei, Henan, and Shandong, and believes that the monk actively took part in Tang Yong's carving project, even writing the dedication text of the so-called Tang Yong stele with his own brush.²⁵

The research of Lai Fei and Kiriya Seiichi led to the canonization of the previously unknown monk Seng'an Daoyi among the most celebrated Chinese calligraphers. A larger than life-size statue was erected for him in public space, and his dates are now specified as ?–580, or even 504–580. His portrait graces the entrance to Mount Hongding, in which he is depicted with facial traits not unlike those seen in portraits of Chinese *Chan* masters; probably a reflection of the research done by Kiriya Seiichi, himself a Zen follower, who elsewhere advocated the idea that Seng'an practiced 'wall contemplation' 壁觀 on Mount Hongding.²⁶

The name Seng'an Daoyi is found on Mount Hongding (564; Figure 6), Mount Jian (575) and Mount Tie (579; Figure 5). The identity of the name in three characters 'Seng Anyi' 僧安一 next to the early 'Buddha King of Great Emptiness' inscription on Mount Ergu, dated 562, is not conclusive, but most probably refers to the same person. During his earlier years Seng'an Daoyi appears to have collaborated on Mount Hongding with another monk by the name of Fahong (法洪, as in HDS 18, 21.2, 23.2, or 法鴻 as in HDS 9.16), probably of Indian origin.²⁷ From 575 onwards, he enjoyed the

and provides the names of Seng'an's alleged collaborators. On this basis, he explains the distinctions concerning size, contents, collaborators, calligraphic style, and intention within two phases, before and after 575.

²⁵ Kiriya, 'Bei Qi da shamen An Daoyi', on the basis of his other articles, Kiriya, 'Sekiheki kokukyō no seiritsu'; Kiriya, 'Sentaku kara kettōyō he'; Kiriya, 'Daruma no hekikan'; Kiriya, 'Sekkōkukyō no ranshō'; Kiriya, 'Hokusei daishamon An Dōitsu'; and further developed in Kiriya, 'Tai Shan, Tie Shan kejing'.

²⁶ Kiriya, 'Daruma no hekikan', 143–50.

²⁷ Zhang, 'Shandong beiya kejing jingyi neihan suotan'.

support of wealthy laymen and laywomen from local clans. His area of activity then shifted from today's Dongping County near Lake Dongping to the city of Zoucheng, about one hundred kilometres to the south east of Dongping County. In Zoucheng, his name appears next to those of three male donors of the local Wei clan, who proudly claim descent from a famous Great Minister of the Han dynasty, Wei Xian 韋賢 (148–60 BCE): 'The great *śramaṇa* Seng'an Daoyi carved *sūtra* passages and a Buddha-name together with ... Wei Zishen, his wife, née Xu, and his sons, Wei Qinzhi and Wei Fu'er' 大沙門僧安與.....韋.....子深, 妻徐, 息欽之、伏兒等同刊經佛. The colophon (JS 4) is dated June 24, 575.²⁸ In another colophon (JS 11), 'the great chief donor of *sūtras* and the Buddha-name, Seng'an Daoyi' 大都經佛主大沙門僧安道壹, appears again in connection with a vow to conceive an aspiration for *bodhi* 大發心. This vow was taken by the two sons of Wei Zishen, Wei Qinzhi and Wei Fu'er, probably after the death of their father. Mount Jian also features separate colophons by female donors, most significantly that of the wife of Wei Zishen, Xu Faxian. She appears proudly as 'Donor of *Sūtras*, Xu Faxian, wife of Wei Zishen' 經主韋子深妻徐法仙 (JS 5) next to one of the two carved *sūtra* passages. Her name is found again in another colophon (JS 8) next to the carved Buddha-name, following that of three other ladies: Lady Zhao 趙, wife of Tang Yong 唐邕; Lady Dong 董, wife of Chen Dexin 陳德信; Lady [...], wife of Chen Demao 陳德茂. The ladies' husbands commemorated in this inscription were active at the court. Like Tang Yong, Chen Dexin is known from the dynastic histories as one of the advisors of Emperor Houzhu (r. 565–576).²⁹ Chen Demao was probably a younger relative of Chen Dexin. The names of five *bhikṣuṇīs* were carved next to the names of these three court ladies. This arrangement agrees with the custom of grouping donors' names or portraits according to gender, often to the left and right of their donation. It is also common that groups of lay believers were

²⁸ Wang and Tsai, *Shandong Volume 3*, 63–71.

²⁹ For the biography of Tang Yong, see *Beiqi shu*, *juan* 40: 530–52. Chen Dexin is mentioned in *Beiqi shu*, *juan* 8: 111–12; *juan* 11: 145; *juan* 42: 556; *juan* 50: 692–93.

joined or led by clerics, with monks preceding laymen, and nuns preceding laywomen. This also holds true for the inscriptions on Mount Jian. The selection of *sūtra* passages (Figure 9) and the name ‘Buddha King of Great Emptiness’ further suggests that Seng’an Daoyi, whom we have seen previously at Mount Hongding, acted as general spiritual leader of the carving project. The six characters carved on top of the long stretch of boulder, reading ‘*śramaṇa* Seng’an Daoyi’ 沙門僧安道壹, support this assumption.

It is worth noting that the male donors, father and sons of the Wei family, despite their celebrated ancestors, held posts only on the sub-prefectural level. By contrast, the female donors enjoyed higher social standing thanks to marriage ties. However, there is no indication that Tang Yong or the other two court gentleman were involved in the *sūtra* carving project at Mount Jian. Rather, evidence points to a network of female donors, into which the wife of Wei Zishen, Lady Xu, was embedded.

The most prestigious project in which Seng’an Daoyi was involved was the carving of the giant stele at Mount Tie. Below the stele text and its accompanying colophon, the *Stone Hymn*, is a votive inscription (Tie 3) in which the central text column reads: ‘Seng’an Daoyi of the Eastern Range wrote the calligraphy for the *sūtra* 東嶺僧安道壹書經 (Figure 5). To the left and right are the names and ranks of two lay donors, namely the ‘donor of the *sūtra*, Sun Qia, General who Calms the North, Great Commander in Chief, and Magistrate of Rencheng Commandery’, as well as that of the ‘Great Chief Overseer, Lü Changsong, the Qi dynasty Recruiter of Good Men, and General who Pacifies Yue; the Zhou dynasty Recorder of Rencheng Commandery’.³⁰ However, the main patrons of this sumptuous carving project were two brothers of the local clan of the Kuang 匡 family, as well as Li Tao 李桃, who led more unnamed members of a Buddhist association. Again, we see a carving project planned and executed by members of a local elite in the Zoucheng region. In this case, Seng’an Daoyi’s role seems to have been restricted to calligrapher of the selected *sūtra* text. The eulogy entitled *Stone Hymn* praises the

³⁰ Wang and Wenzel, *Shandong Volume 2*, 112, 175–84.

virtues of the donors, who donated their property to ‘paint the rock and picture a stele’, and to carve the dragons above and the tortoises below the stele text.³¹ But the eulogy also draws attention to Seng’an Daoyi’s excellent calligraphy, which is considered to be a result of his spiritual achievements: ‘And there was the great *śramaṇa*, Dharma Master An of the Qi, whose way has illuminated non-duality, whose virtue has awakened to the One Origin. Not only does he grasp all the mysteries—his calligraphic skill is of the very highest order’.³² The calligraphy of this Dharma Master is praised as even surpassing that of Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303–361).³³ Writing the *sūtra* text of the giant stele on Mount Tie can arguably be considered the climax of Seng’an’s career.

There is no doubt that a monk named Seng’an Daoyi was involved in the cliff carvings on the mountains Hongding (553?–564), Jian (575), and Tie (579), under both the Northern Qi and the Northern Zhou dynasties. It is equally undisputed that Seng’an favored a certain doctrinal program, which is manifested most clearly on Mount Hongding and Mount Jian (see below). At the latter site, he succeeded in attracting the support of the wealthy local Wei clan for the realization of his project. His growing fame likely secured him collaboration in the creation of the giant stele on Mount Tie, a project launched after the Buddhist persecution under Zhou Wudi came to an end. Moreover, the Mount Tie stele merited him a place in the pantheon of immortal Chinese calligraphers. However, there is no hard evidence that he himself entertained any connection with the court at Ye. The most serious point of criticism against Lai Fei and

³¹ Zhang, ‘Shandong beiya kejing jingyi neihan suotan’, 103.

³² 於是有人參大沙門安法師者，道鑒不二，德悟一原，匪直秘相咸韜，書工尤最。Wang and Wenzel, *Shandong Volume 2*, 156, 161, 164.

³³ Wang and Wenzel, *Shandong Volume 2*, 166: ‘Seeking the master’s treasured brushwork, in all regions [. . .] [. . .] high; its refinement surpasses [Wang] Xi[zhi] and [Wei] Dan, its marvels exceed [Zhang Bo]ying and [Zhong] You ...’ 尋師瑤翰區區高。精跨義誕，妙越英繇；.... For Wang Xizhi as an exemplary model under the Northern dynasties, see Bi, ‘The *Stone Hymn* and Art Criticism’, 35–40.

Kiriya Seiichi's suggested extension of the monk's biography is the fact that his signature is found nowhere at the Hebei or Henan inscription sites. The Buddha-names and *sūtra* passages carved there are at best written in his style, but not necessarily by his own hands. In addition, the names of female donors on Mount Jian suggest that it was a social network of female elite members which extended beyond Shandong Province right into the capital at Ye in southern Hebei.

A Network of Sites in a Sacred Geography

There is certainly a variety of interconnections between all the cliff inscription sites created under the Northern Qi and Zhou dynasties, but their correlations cannot be explained by simply assigning all of them to the same genius calligrapher-monk. To shed some light on this rather short-lived phenomenon (and the reasons for its short life span), we need to take a closer look on the nature of the network these inscription sites constitute.

In his introduction to the first volume of the series on *Buddhist Stone Sutras in Shandong*, Ledderose characterized the Shandong inscription sites as 'a sacred geography with meaningful topographies', where 'monks transformed the mountains of Shandong with their texts [and] ... also imbued the landscape with an aesthetic dimension'.³⁴ The idea of 'a great net of texts cast upon the mountains of this region' was picked up by Birnbaum, who wonders if this 'net of scripture had been cast upon them, or had emerged from within', why the carving projects stopped, and 'why in later centuries did this region not become a major pilgrimage center or site for significant long-term practice'.³⁵

The answer lies, I believe, in a closer analysis of the type of network that these inscription sites form.

³⁴ Ledderose, 'Buddhist Stone Sutras in Shandong', 43, 46.

³⁵ Birnbaum, 'Highland Inscriptions', 269–70.

A Network of Sites: Doctrinal Coherence

Apart from the repeated occurrence of Seng'an Daoyi's name, discussed in detail above, there are also repetitions of carved phrases. Several core doctrinal themes can be inferred from these repetitions. The most obvious case is the name 'Buddha King of Great Emptiness'. There are more than a dozen carvings of this Buddha-name in all sizes. The smallest, carved at Mount Tianchi, measures 70 x 33 cm. The largest is a giant carving on the northern slope of Mount Hongding, measuring 920 x 340 cm; it can be seen even from far across the valley. The majority of 'Buddha King of Great Emptiness' names have a height between one and two metres; the names on Mount Jian and Mount Ergu are close to six metres in height. Their most distinctive calligraphic feature is the particularly long and drawn out final stroke of the character for 'Buddha', 佛 *fó*.

The three largest 'Buddha King of Great Emptiness' carvings on Mount Hongding, Mount Jian, and Mount Ergu were written by Seng'an Daoyi. The votive inscription next to the large Buddha-name (HDS 7) on Mount Hongding announces that 'One thousand six hundred twenty three years after Śākyamuni [entered into nirvāṇa] under the twin trees [556], the Great *śramaṇa* Seng'an Daoyi wrote and carved: Buddha King of Great Emptiness, seven [...] [...] [...] [...] [...] [...] [...] [...] 釋迦雙林後一千六百廿三年, 大沙門僧安道壹書刊大空王佛七□□□□□□□□.³⁶ The donors of the Buddha-name on Mount Jian are identified in the nearby inscription (JS 4) as Seng'an and Wei Zishen, including the latter's family. The name on Mount Ergu was donated by 'Seng Anyi'. On the basis of these examples, scholars defined Seng'an's personal style of calligraphy as featuring a

³⁶ Wang and Ledderose, *Shandong Volume 1*, 137–44. The number 'seven' is generally understood as referring to the number of Buddha-names written by Seng'an, and scholars have pointed to the names found on Mount Hongding, six in total, and the nearby smaller sites in Pingyin County, Mount Ergu, Yuncui, Tianchi, and East Mount Shuyuan, see Zhang Zong, 'Shandong beiya kejing jingyi neihan suotan', 14; Lai, 'Seng'an kejing', 96; Wang and Ledderose, *Shandong Volume 1*, 92.

long, drawn-out final stroke of the character *fo*, and characters written with double outlines 雙鉤, which gives them the impression of having been left unfinished.

In addition to the presence of votive inscriptions that confirm Seng'an Daoyi as calligrapher of the three largest Buddha-names in Shandong, the calligraphic style of these carvings is indeed quite close. They share a peculiar stylistic feature in which the top ends of the last two vertical strokes of the character *fo* 佛 are shaped in a way which has been described as 'hands of the Buddha'.³⁷ However, ascribing the smaller and unsigned 'Buddha King of Great Emptiness' carvings to Seng'an Daoyi may stretch the stylistic argument too far. Colophons next to the Buddha-names carved on Mount Yuncui and on the now destroyed Mount Ziyang give different donor names, and do not mention Seng'an. The names on Mount Culai, Mount Fenghuang, East Mount Shuyuan, Mount Tainchi and Southern Mount Xiangtang are unsigned. These Buddha-names may well have been written in the style of Seng'an, by his disciples, or by other Buddhist believers who were simply following the latest fancy, veneration of the 'Buddha King of Great Emptiness', a Buddha-name which is unique for this time and region, and is also not found in any canonical scripture.³⁸ The 'Buddha King of Great Emptiness' appears at many of the inscription sites, even on Mount Gang, which has arguably no connection to Seng'an Daoyi. Its calligraphic expression may have been originally created by the calligrapher monk, but the idea that it represents must have been current in the region at that time and was likely preached by nearby clerics.

The 'Buddha King of Great Emptiness' is the epitome of Mahāyāna teachings on emptiness, or rather, great emptiness, which is regarded as the foundation and only source of Buddhahood. It was considered

³⁷ Kiriya, 'Bei Qi da shamen An Daoyi', 71; Kitajima, 'Shujingren An Daoyi', 281.

³⁸ Only a 'Buddha King of Emptiness' 空王佛 (Dharmagaganābhyudgatarāja) is found in Buddhist scriptures. In the distant past, he used to be one of the teachers of the historical Buddha Śākyamuni, see Sueyling Tsai in Wang and Ledderose, *Shandong Volume 1*, 82–84.

essential for a bodhisattva to strive to correctly understand the meaning of emptiness. According to the *Buddha-treasury Sūtra* 佛藏經 (T no. 653):

[Buddha Śākyamuni] walked the path cultivated by nine billion, six-hundred million, two hundred and sixty-three Buddhas. He made offerings to the Buddhas, but because he had not obtained an understanding of emptiness, he could not get a Buddha to give him a prediction [of future Buddhahood]. Finally, he laid eyes on the Buddha Light of Emptiness, attained the forbearance [born of] non-arising, and only then attained a prediction bestowed [by a Buddha].³⁹

Emptiness is indeed the central feature of the doctrinal frame that brackets the entirety of Shandong inscriptions. Two lists enumerating eighteen or seventeen kinds of emptiness were carved, respectively, on Mount Hongding, and on Mount Culai. On Mount Hongding, a passage probably taken from the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* (**Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sāstra*, *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論; T no. 1509, 25: 393c1–5) on eighteen kinds of emptiness was carved in the shape of a stele which rests on a single tortoise with an uplifted head. Unfortunately, the text remains unfinished, and thus it is not possible to reliably reconstruct the exact wording.⁴⁰ The title given to the carved passage reads, ‘Mahāyāna Sūtra’ 摩訶衍經, an alternative title of the *Da zhidu lun* often found in manuscripts. The

³⁹ This paraphrase of T no. 653, 15: 797a1–b29 is found in the scripture *Elucidation of the Shallow and Profound Teachings, Matched to Faculties, on Conceiving an Aspiration for Bodhi [as found] in the Sūtras* (*Ming zhujiing zhong duigen qianshen fa puti xinfa* 明諸經中對根淺深發菩提心法) by Xinxing 信行 (540–594), founder of the Three Levels Teaching 三階教. This particular scripture by Xinxing is preserved in a Dunhuang manuscript in Japan (now in the possession of the Kyo-U Library—Kyōu Shooku 杏雨書屋—in Osaka) and in a stone version, carved during the years 662–670 on the inner walls of a cave at Jinchuanwan 金川灣, Chunhua County 淳化縣, in Shaanxi Province; see Zhao and Ledderose, *Shaanxi Volume 1*, 525, 601.

⁴⁰ Wang and Ledderose, *Shandong Volume 1*, 89, 125–30.

large man-sized boulder on Mount Culai (CLS 5) presents a well-preserved text passage enumerating only seventeen kinds of emptiness. The phrasing of the carved text is unique. Closest matches to this carving are *T* no. 1509, 25: 661b3–6 (corresponding to *T* no. 223, 8: 383a26–29, where eighteen kinds of emptiness are enumerated, one is dropped in the carved text), and an Ishiyamadera 石山寺 manuscript of the *Da zhidu lun* (referenced in *T* no. 1509, 25: 655, notes 2 and 3), where only seventeen kinds of emptiness appear.⁴¹ One of the enumerated kinds of emptiness is the ‘great emptiness’ praised in the Buddha-name of ‘Buddha King of Great Emptiness’.

Emptiness is also the ultimate message of the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* passage carved on Mount Sili (Sili 4).⁴² In this passage (*T* no. 374, 12: 603b20–c9; *T* no. 375, 12: 851c25–852a16), the Buddha instructs his last convert, the 120 year-old Subhadra, to ‘cut off all existents’ 斷一切諸有 by practicing the Contemplation on the Real Attributes 觀實相. The selected passage is totally unrelated to all the other doctrines for which the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* is famous. Instead, the general tone of the passage is similar to *Prajñāpāramitā* scriptures as a whole, particularly the section in which it explains that all *dharma*s without exception are empty and provisional (一切諸法皆是虛假), and that understanding this truth is named Utmost Knowledge, Ultimate Truth, and Ultimate Emptiness (名畢竟智, 名第一義諦, 名第一義空).

The set of six perfections that a bodhisattva is supposed to master was another doctrinal feature popular among the donors of the Shandong inscriptions. Explanations of these six perfections were carved at four Shandong sites. The carved text passages were, however, selected from two different *sūtras*. The first is the *Sūtra of the Questions of Viśeṣacintibrahma* 思益梵天所問經 (*T* no. 586, 15: 46a26–46b1), which provided the source for the respective inscription on Mount Jian (JS 12),⁴³ and for the text of the so-called Pingyin Stele.⁴⁴ The second text source is the *Chapter on the Bodhisattva*

⁴¹ Wang and Tsai, *Shandong Volume 3*, 260–62, 296–304.

⁴² Wang and Ledderose, *Shandong Volume 1*, 406, 427–32.

⁴³ Wang and Tsai, *Shandong Volume 3*, 112–18.

of *Ocean-like Wisdom* 海慧菩薩品 in the *Great Sūtra Collection* (T no. 397, 13: 50b15–18). A quote drawn from this source was carved on Mount Hongding (HDS 2), and on Mount Tie, as part of Tie 1.⁴⁵ The passage carved on Mount Jian (JS 12) and the fragmentary stele found in Pingyin County refers to the six perfections (*pāramitās*) of a bodhisattva by their Sanskrit names: *dānapāramitā*, *śīlapāramitā*, *kṣāntipāramitā*, *vīryapāramitā*, *dhyānapāramitā*, and *prajñāpāramitā*. Each of these perfections are here defined in negative terms. For example, perfection of generosity, *dānapāramitā*, dictates that a bodhisattva is to give up all marks (若菩薩能捨諸相, 名為檀波羅蜜); perfection of discipline, *śīlapāramitā*, means he is to extinguish all that he has received and held on to (能滅諸所受持, 名為尸波羅蜜); and the perfection of wisdom, *prajñāpāramitā*, equals the knowledge that all *dharma*s are without inborn nature (知諸法无生性, 名為般若波羅蜜). By contrast, the passage taken from the *Great Sūtra Collection* (T no. 397, 13: 50b15–18), on which the inscriptions on Mount Hongding (HDS 2)⁴⁶ and on Mount Tie (Tie 1) depend, gives all but one⁴⁷ of the six perfections in Chinese translation as *shi* 施, *jie* 戒, *ren* 忍, *jingjin* 精進, and *zhibui* 智慧, and explains each of them by means of affirmative actions. For example: Generosity means to actively ‘harmonize one’s mind’ (能調心者, 名之為施); while discipline means to ‘keep body and mind clear and cool’ (身心清涼, 名之為戒); finally, perfection of wisdom here means to ‘contemplate true reality’ (觀真實故, 名為智慧). This definition of the six perfections constitutes just one small part of the entire carved passage (T no. 397, 13: 50a16–c13) on Mount Tie, in which the Buddha unfolds the path to awakening from beginning

⁴⁴ Wang and Ledderose, *Shandong Volume 1*, 453–58.

⁴⁵ The last passage is probably also carved at Mount Zhonghuang in Shexian, Hebei province, where the entire *Sūtra of the Questions of Viśeṣacintibrahma* was carved in stone. However, the cliff inscriptions at this site still await an encompassing documentation, including transcriptions in full.

⁴⁶ Wang and Ledderose, *Shandong Volume 1*, 103–107.

⁴⁷ The fifth perfection, *samādhi*, is not translated, but transliterated as *sanmei* 三昧.

to end, from the moment the practitioner conceives an aspiration for bodhi mind 發菩提心 until his bodhisattva practice is completed.

The donors of the Shandong sites venerated the sixth and last of the bodhisattva perfections, *prajñāpāramitā* 般若波羅蜜, the Perfection of Wisdom, in particular. On Mount Yin, ‘Great Perfection of Wisdom Spoken by the Buddha’ 佛說摩訶般若波羅蜜 was carved on a steep cliff in large characters. Each character measures up to one metre in height. Although this phrase reads like a *sūtra* title, no *sūtra* text was carved in the area. Therefore, this expression then pays homage to the ‘*mahā-prajñāpāramitā* spoken by the Buddha’.

Prajñāpāramitā is likewise exalted at other sites. These five characters form an independent carving on Mount Culai, which is followed by its own votive inscription. On Mount Tao, the same *prajñāpāramitā* is grouped together in a rare combination with two Buddha-names, Amitābha and Buddha Guanshiyin 觀世音佛, forming the donation of a single individual donor.⁴⁸ *Prajñāpāramitā*, therefore, may have been evoked like a Buddha-name. The unusual ‘Buddha Guanshiyin’ appears besides Mount Tao two more times on the Shandong mountains, on Mount Culai (CLS 9)⁴⁹ and Mount Hongding, where he is in the company of his successor, Buddha Dashizhi 大勢至佛. The figure of Guanshiyin as a fully accomplished Buddha is also found in a scripture classified as apocryphal by Sui and later catalogs, which survived via quotations in the Buddhist canon, and in two stone cut versions: the *Sūtra on the Ten Great Vows taken by Guanshiyin* (*Guanshiyin shi dayuan jing* 觀世音十大願經).⁵⁰ This small apocryphal scripture narrates how

⁴⁸ Wang and Tsai, *Shandong Volume 3*, 477–79, 480–83.

⁴⁹ Wang and Tsai, *Shandong Volume 3*, 256–58, 323–28.

⁵⁰ For the version carved on a stele at Mujing Monastery 木井寺 in She County 涉縣, Hebei (dated 573), see Ma, ‘Handan Beichao moya’, 43; Kuramoto ‘Hokuchō zōzōmei kenkyū’, 229, 232; Kuramoto, ‘Chūgoku ni okeru Kannon shinkō’, 11–12, and Kuramoto, *Hokuchō bukkyō zōzōmei kenkyū*, 464, 467. For the version carved at Bahui Monastery 八會寺 in Quyang County 曲陽縣, Hebei (dated by colophon to 593), see Kegasawa, ‘Kahoku Kyokuyō no Hachieji bukkyō sekkei’; Zhao, ‘Hebei Sheng Quyang Xian Bahui Si shijing

Prince Shanguang 善光 receives his prophecy of future Buddhahood from ‘Buddha Guanshiyin, King of Emptiness’ 空王觀世音佛, and thus vows to completely awakening himself as ‘Buddha Guanshiyin’. Included in the ten vows of Shanguang are two explicit references to *prajñāpāramitā*.⁵¹ In this way, the carvings of ‘Buddha Guanshiyin’ are connected to the general doctrinal themes that connect all inscription sites, *prajñāpāramitā* and the ‘Buddha King of Emptiness’.

The independence of the *prajñāpāramitā* 般若波羅蜜 carvings and the possibility that they were evoked like Buddha-names may provide an answer for why the inscriptions were carved in the first place. Part of them, at least, may have been considered to be endowed with an almost magical quality and functioned like spells. Inscription HDS 6 on Mount Hongding⁵² quotes from the *Perfection of Wisdom for Humane Kings* (*Foshuo Renwang boreboluomi jing* 佛說仁王般若波羅蜜經; T no. 245, 8: 832c23–26), an apocryphal scripture probably compiled in China during the 470s. The quoted text section invokes *prajñāpāramitā* and likens it to a series of talismanic objects:

The Buddha told King Prasenajit: This Perfection of Wisdom is the spiritual root of the consciousness of all Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and all beings. It is the father and mother of all kings. It is also named the Spiritual Talisman, the Demon-Exorcising Pearl, the Wish-Fulfilling Pearl, the State-Protecting Pearl, the Mirror of Heaven and Earth, and the Dragon-Jewel Spirit King.⁵³

While this enumeration of talismans has a Daoist flavor, another passage carved on Mount Sili (Sili 3)⁵⁴ praises the Perfection of Wisdom in a more familiar Mahāyāna manner. Here, *prajñāpāramitā* is named the Great Illuminating Spell, the Unsurpassed Spell, and the

kan’, 22; Kuramoto, ‘Hokuchō zōzōmei kenkyū’, 228, 232; Kuramoto, *Hokuchō bukkuyō zōzōmei kenkyū*, 460, 467–68.

⁵¹ Wang and Tsai, *Shandong Volume 3*, 477.

⁵² Wang and Ledderose, *Shandong Volume 1*, 89–90, 131–35.

⁵³ Translation by Orzech, *Politics and Transcendent Wisdom*, 85.

⁵⁴ Wang and Ledderose, *Shandong Volume 1*, 403–5.

Unequalled Spell, which caused in the past, causes in the present, and will cause in the future all Buddhas to attain supreme enlightenment. The inscribed text of Sili 3 is a modified quotation taken from the *Shorter Version of the Great Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* (*Aṣṭasāhas-rikāprajñāpāramitā*, *Xiaopin bore boluomi jing* 小品般若波羅蜜經, *T* no. 227, 8: 543b25–c5). The original quotation was shortened in order to adjust it to the space available on the rock. However, the reconstruction of the text that was actually carved has to remain an approximation, because later carvings of sculptures damaged the lower part of the original inscription.⁵⁵

Two of the most frequently carved passages were drawn from the same *sūtra*, the *Sūtra on the Great Perfection of Wisdom Spoken by Mañjuśrī* (*Wenshshili suoshuo mohe boreboluomi jing* 文殊師利所說摩訶般若波羅蜜經) in *Mandra[sena]’s translation (*T* no. 232). The two passages were carved repeatedly on the Northern Qi territory. The first passage of fifty-two characters was carved two times, on Mount Hongding (HDS 1),⁵⁶ where it is preceded by the authorizing words ‘the Buddha said’ 佛言, and on Mount Shuiniu (SNS 1).⁵⁷ The same passage was perhaps also part of a longer text carved on the lintel over caves four and five at Southern Mount Xiangtang.⁵⁸ The fifty-two-character text answers two questions asked by Śāriputra: ‘What is named “Buddha”? And how does one contemplate the “Buddha”? 云何名佛? 云何觀佛? Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī elaborates: ‘Not produced, not extinguished, not come, not gone; not a name, not a mark—this is called “Buddha”. In the same way one contemplates the real marks of one’s own body, just so one contemplates the “Buddha”. Only those with wisdom can understand this. This is called “Buddha contemplation”’.

The selection of this fifty-two-character passage is most remarkable due to its definition of Buddha contemplation, which

⁵⁵ Reconstruction after Takuma, ‘Beichao moya kejing’, 205.

⁵⁶ Wang and Ledderose, *Shandong Volume 1*, 87–88, 97–101.

⁵⁷ Wang and Tsai, *Shandong Volume 3*, 417–19, 424–30.

⁵⁸ Ma, ‘Handan Beichao moya’, 51, writes that the characters are severely eroded, but he still counts more than eighty characters in total.

is said to be practiced ‘in the same way as one contemplates the real marks of one’s own body’ 如自觀身實相觀佛亦然. This formulation is not unique to the *Sūtra on the Great Perfection of Wisdom Spoken by Mañjuśrī*; it is also found in the twelfth ‘Chapter on the Vision of Akṣobhya Buddha’ 見阿閼佛品 (‘Jian Achuo pin’) in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra* (*Weimojie suosho jing* 維摩詰所說經; T no. 475, 14: 554c29–555a1). All Chinese editions of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra* contain this phrase, while it is missing from the extant Sanskrit manuscript of this *sūtra*.⁵⁹ This phrase, which indicates a particular type of contemplation, seems to have been important to the donors of the Shandong inscriptions. The passage from the *Chapter on the Vision of Akṣobhya Buddha* that contains this phrase was carved two more times in Shandong, once on the boulder on Mount Ge, and a second time on a stele of which only rubbings survived.⁶⁰ In this way, three inscription sites, Mount Hongding, Mount Shuiniu, and Mount Ge (and one stele), are interlinked by the phrase: ‘in the same way as one contemplates the real marks of one’s own body, just so one contemplates the “Buddha”’ 如自觀身實相, 觀佛亦然.

The second passage taken from the *Sūtra on the Great Perfection of Wisdom Spoken by Mañjuśrī* comprises ninety-eight characters (T no. 232, 8: 731a15–21). It was carved on cliffs at six different inscription sites, eight times in total. That means that two sites, Mount Hongding and Mount Yi, present this passage twice. In addition, the ninety-eight-character passage was also carved on an as yet unknown number of stone steles. Three ninety-eight-character carvings were provided with a short *sūtra* title in four characters, reading *Wenshubore* 文殊般若, *Mañjuśrī Prajñā* or *Mañjuśrī’s Wisdom* (Figure 7).

⁵⁹ Wang and Tsai, *Shandong Volume 3*, 418, note 883.

⁶⁰ The *Stele of the Great Qi Dynasty about Juan Xiuluo Recommended as Filial and Righteous by the Community Elders* (*Da Qi xianglao ju xiaoyi juan xiuluo zhi bei* 大齊鄉老舉孝義雋修羅之碑) is dated January 21, 561. The stele is lost, but was originally located in Tianming Monastery 天明寺, Sishui County 泗水縣. Rubbings are kept in Beijing tushuguan jinshizu, *Beijing tushuguan cang taben*, 7: 103–4.



FIG. 7 Rubbing of the title of the lost ninety-eight-character passage originally carved on Mount Jian, reading *Wenshu bore* 文殊般若, *Mañjuśrī Prajñā* or *Mañjuśrī's Wisdom*. H. 175 cm x W. 228 cm. Collection of the Shandong Museum 山東博物館 in Ji'nan. Photograph taken in 2005 by Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

This abbreviated title is also used in Buddhist catalogs for the full title, *Great Perfection of Wisdom Spoken by Mañjuśrī*. On the Summit of Five Flowers 五華峰 on Mount Yi 嶧山 (Yi 1),⁶¹ the abbreviated title was simply added in front of the carved text. Yet on Mount Jian, the four characters of the title were written in a much larger size than the *sūtra* text, which is located about seven metres below the title. The abbreviated title also appears on the undated Mount Shuiniu 水牛山 stele (SNS 2).⁶²

The ninety-eight-character passage is about how *prajñāpāramitā* should be practiced by the aspiring bodhisattva. Mañjuśrī inquires of the Buddha what *prajñāpāramitā* is, and the Buddha answers with an enumeration of negations that first define what *prajñāpāramitā* is not. *Prajñāpāramitā* is then equated with the site of bodhisattva-mahāsattva practice, which is neither a site of practice nor a site of non-practice, because ‘it is unthought and unconditioned’ 無念無作.

⁶¹ Wang and Wenzel, *Shandong Volume 2*, 60, 63–68.

⁶² Wang and Tsai, *Shandong Volume 3*, 419–22, 431–41.

Prajñāpāramitā as the foremost bodhisattva practice is the central doctrine of the cliff carvings. The carefully arranged four characters on the Mount Shuiniu stele head or atop the Mount Jian *sūtra* passage are much more than a simplified *sūtra* title; *Mañjuśrī Prajñā* 文殊般若 rather emblemizes the teachings of the *moya* cliff carvings as a whole. The patrons of the carving projects were equally obsessed with the ninety-eight-character passage, which they presented in various layouts, but always in identical wording. They arranged the ninety-eight characters either in portrait or in landscape format. In portrait format—represented by inscriptions HDS 22 (Figure 8), Yi 3 (Figures 3 and 4), and JS 6 (Figure 9)—each of the seven vertical columns comprise fourteen characters. The landscape format either arranges fourteen columns with seven characters (CLS 1; Figure 2), or ten columns with ten characters, which provides an even more unified look.⁶³ However, the latter layout, represented by inscriptions HDS 16.2 and Yi 1, leaves two blank spaces in the last column, which thus contains only eight characters.

With a small trick, the patrons further individualized those inscriptions which share the same layout, like HDS 16.2 and Yi 1 (in landscape format), and HDS 22, Yi 3, and JS 6 (in portrait format): They alternated between the complex form of the character *wu* 無 (Figure 8 and Figure 9) and its simplified form 无 (Figure 3). The otherwise identical inscriptions JS 6 (Figure 9) and HDS 22 (Figure 8) are further differentiated by providing HDS 22 with double grid lines between the characters.

In sum, the so-called ninety-eight-character passage provides strong evidence for the cohesiveness between all Shandong sites. As there is absolutely no variation in the wording, all carvings may have been based on the same prototype or even manuscript.

The same passage is also found among stone carvings outside of Shandong. On Southern Mount Xiangtang it was combined with

⁶³ The first recognition of this vertical and horizontal type of composition of the ninety-eight-character passage is credited to Lu and Lu, ‘Eastern Shaiqu Nunnery’, 280–83. However, the authors did not see these carvings as a network of inscription, but as calligraphy samples by Seng’an Daoyi.



FIG. 8 Rubbing of the ninety-eight-character passage on the southern slope on Mount Hongding (HDS 22). H. 389 cm x W. 250 cm. Collection of the former Shandong Stone Carving Art Museum 山東省石刻藝術博物館 in Ji'nan. Photograph taken in 2008 by Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities.



FIG. 9 Reconstruction of the lost ninety-eight-character passage originally carved on Mount Jian (JS 6), combining thirty-six sheets of rubbings in the collection of the Shandong Museum in Ji'nan and twenty-seven sheets of rubbings as published in Wang & A, *Si Shan moya kejing*, 3–11. H. 685 cm x W. 340 cm.

a short quote taken from the *Chapter on Bodhisattva Ocean-like Wisdom* of the *Great Sūtra Collection* (*T* no. 397, 13: 50b19–21), a quote also carved at Mount Tie (Tie 1). The quote enumerates the Four Immeasurable States of Mind (*si wuliangxin* 四無量心; *catvāri apramāṇāni*), namely Loving Kindness (*ci* 慈), Compassion (*bei* 悲), Joy (*xi* 喜) and Relinquishment (*she* 捨).

An expansion of the ninety-eight characters to a passage of 297 characters (*T* no. 232, 8: 731a1–21) was carved on the Mount Shuiniu stele, which originally stood on Mount Shuiniu,⁶⁴ and is now kept in the Wenshang County 汶上縣 museum.⁶⁵ The final section of the stele text features the ninety-eight-character passage. It is preceded by a passage that offers some context on soteriological aims: When Mañjuśrī wonders how to study the unfathomable *prajñāpāramitā*, the Buddha ensures him that his study of *prajñāpāramitā* is well under way, because he was able to pose the question about its study in the first place. What he needs to do now is to perfect the Samādhi of *Bodhi* Sovereignty 菩提自在三昧. This kind of *samādhi* will make him illuminate all the exceedingly deep Buddha *dharmas*, and know all Buddha-names without exception, and it will enable him to fathom thoroughly all Buddha worlds (i.e., will fully awaken him).⁶⁶ A votive inscription (SNS 3),⁶⁷ carved on both narrow sides of the Mount Shuiniu stele, names the donors responsible for carving this promising outlook. Nearly all donors belong either to a Yang 羊 or a Shu 束 family. The names of five members of this Yang family are still legible. Yang Zhong 羊鍾 ranks highest among them, and he is one of three individuals styled ‘*sūtra* donor’ 經主. He must have been a leading figure in carving the stele.⁶⁸ As Yang Zhong is said to be from Mount Tai 太山羊鍾, he may have

⁶⁴ Wang and Tsai, *Shandong Volume 3*, 419–22, 431–41.

⁶⁵ Lai, ‘Chuban shuoming’, 33. Lai, ‘Shandong Beichao Fojiao moya kejing’, 167–69.

⁶⁶ ‘得是三昧已，照明一切甚/7/ 深佛法，及知一切諸佛名字，亦悉了達諸佛世界’.

⁶⁷ Wang and Tsai, *Shandong Volume 3*, 422, 442–47.

⁶⁸ Wang and Tsai, *Shandong Volume 3*, 422.

been related to the famous General Yang Lie 羊烈 (513–586), who is mentioned in the *History of the Northern Qi Dynasty* (*Beiqi shu* 北齊書) as Governor of Yangping 陽平 during the years 558–561. Yangping is the region where Mount Shuiniu is located. The votive inscription also names more than eleven clerics who were involved in carving the stele. The clerics are affiliated with five different monasteries, but most of them came from the former Baishi Monastery 白石寺 near Baishi Village, which lies at a distance of about three kilometres from Mount Shuiniu.⁶⁹

At the Node of the Network: Yanzhou

The final piece in the puzzle is the city of Yanzhou 兗州. In 1994, numerous steles and stele fragments were unearthed at the Jinkou embankment 金口壩, among them an as yet unknown number of steles featuring the ninety-eight-character passage.⁷⁰ Part of these steles are now on display in the local museum. They can be reconstructed into inscriptions which follow the landscape format of ten columns with ten characters, or the portrait format of seven columns with fourteen characters.⁷¹ The material has not yet been properly published, but I have counted the fragments of at least nine such steles.

One limestone fragment of an image base was unearthed close to the Jinkou embankment stele fragments, in the southeastern quarter of modern Yanzhou on the banks of River Si 泗河 at Zhutiansi Village 諸天寺村. The fragment carries a votive inscription, which reveals that the stone was originally the base of an Amitābha triad, which has not survived. The image was donated in 564 by members of a Buddhist association 邑義人 led by Buddhist nuns and laywomen of the nunnery inside Eastern Shaiqi 沙丘東城尼寺.⁷² This nunnery

⁶⁹ Wang and Tsai, *Shandong Volume 3*, 412–13.

⁷⁰ Lai, 'Beichao kejing de qiyuan', 13. Lai, *Shandong Beichao Fojiao moyao kejing diaocha*, 165–67. Shandong shike yishu bowuguan, *Shandong Fojiao kejing quanji*, vol. 1: 67–72.

⁷¹ Lu and Lu, 'Eastern Shaiqi Nunnery', 281.

⁷² For transcription and English translation of the *Eastern Shaiqi Nunnery*

was allegedly founded by the powerful Yang clan of Mount Tai in Yanzhou,⁷³ whom we already met as donors of the Mount Shuiniu stele. A passage in the biography of the above-mentioned Yang Lie in the *History of the Northern Qi Dynasty* describes the Yang clan's commitment to sending widows, childless and unmarried women to a nunnery the family founded during the *taihe* 泰和 era of the Northern Wei 北魏 dynasty (477–499) at the end of the fifth century.⁷⁴

The Eastern Shaqiu Nunnery in Yanzhou may have been the center of all carving activities in Shandong. It is located conveniently at the center of the inscription sites, and it was founded by the Yang clan of Mount Tai 太山羊, who donated the Mount Shuiniu stele text featuring the soteriological context of the ninety-eight-character passage. This passage, the most crucial text of all carving activities, was carved on steles erected inside the nunnery, but also spread to cliffs on the Shandong hills each time a new carving project was sponsored. It is important that this passage does not exhibit any text variation whatsoever, as if it were repeatedly copied from the same manuscript. Therefore, the ninety-eight-character passage is strong evidence for the claim that the cliff inscriptions and *sūtra* passages carved on steles under the Northern Qi and Northern Zhou dynasties formed a network of sacred sites which connected to a regional sacred geography. This sacred geography reaches from

Sculpture Inscription (Shaqiu Dongcheng nisi xiang ji 沙丘東城尼寺像記), see Lu and Lu, 'Eastern Shaqiu Nunnery', 272.

⁷³ Fan, 'Yanzhou faxian Bei Qi zaoxiangji'; Lai, *Shandong Beichao Fojiao moya kejing diaocha*, 202–3; Liu, *Tai Shan*, 160; and Lu and Lu, 'Eastern Shaqiu Nunnery', 276.

⁷⁴ *Beiqishu*, juan 43: 576: 'The family of [General Yang] Lie transmitted a vocation of embellishment of the inner chambers, which was praised in the world: Their female members did not remarry. During the *taihe* era (477–499) of the [Northern] Wei dynasty (386–534), [the family] founded a nunnery in Yanzhou, where the widows lived. Childless women [also] renounced secular life and became nuns. In their comportment, they all preserved the precepts'. 烈家傳素業，閨門修飾，為世所稱，一門女不再醮。魏太和中，於兗州造一尼寺女寡居。無子者並出家為尼，咸存戒行。 Translation by the author.

Mount Xiangtang, close to the capital Ye, to the large Mount Tai region in the west, and to today's Tengzhou City 滕州市 in the south. The repeated imprinting of the same text passage on the living rock, although arranged in individualized layouts, suggests a high degree of organization, and a well-considered strategy for the establishment of this regional sacred geography.

People Behind the Network

Finally, this leads us to the question of to what degree the composition of inscription sites was orchestrated, and which person or group of persons were responsible for their configuration. The 'great *śramaṇa* Seng'an Daoyi', a man totally unknown and unmentioned in historical sources, was pushed to the fore, to the point of being held personally responsible for the execution of almost all inscription sites within this regional network. However, only three sites provide hard evidence for his presence: Mount Hongding, Mount Jian, and Mount Tie. The earlier sites, Mount Hongding and Mount Jian, clearly indicate Seng'an's doctrinal preferences, the veneration of the 'Buddha King of Great Emptiness', an elucidation of the six *pāramitā* practices of a bodhisattva, and a focus on two passages drawn from the *Sūtra on the Great Perfection of Wisdom Spoken by Mañjuśrī*, one in fifty-two and one in ninety-eight characters. The ninety-eight-character passage exalts *prajñāpāramitā*, while the fifty-two-character passage recommends contemplating the Buddha as one contemplates one's own body.

On Mount Jian, where Seng'an was supported by the local Wei clan, we see the very core of his doctrinal program: Veneration of the 'Buddha King of Great Emptiness' is at the center, preceded by the ninety-eight-character passage on *Mañjuśrī's Prajñā*, followed by an explanation of the six perfections of the bodhisattva, here taken from the *Sūtra of the Questions of Viśeṣacintibrahma*. We may well assume that the doctrinal program of Mount Jian was selected by Seng'an alone, not only because he proudly left his name above the carvings, but also because his name is mentioned in the colophon JS 11 in connection with the ritual of conceiving an aspiration for *bodhi*, which implies that the two donors, Wei Qinzhi and Wei Fu'er, took

a vow in the presence of Seng'an.⁷⁵ The planning and execution of the giant stele on Mount Tie was accomplished by a large team, and Seng'an's role seems to have differed from his role in the construction of Mount Jian. Although he is praised beyond compare for his spiritual achievements and his calligraphy, which go hand in hand, the text passage carved at Mount Tie seems to have been selected by the local Buddhist association which was led by the wealthy Kuang brothers. This group then invited the famous monk Seng'an Daoyi, and 'requested that this Divine Brush ... inscribe with veneration the 930 characters of the Piercing the *Bodhi* Chapter of the *Great Sūtra Collection*' 乃請神豪於四顯之中, 敬寫大集經穿菩提品九百卅字.⁷⁶

There is no doubt that Seng'an Daoyi's calligraphy was held in high esteem during this time, and the Buddhist teachings he adhered to and preached fell on fertile ground. By implication, this means that his ideas were spread among his followers, that his calligraphy was copied by his admirers, and thus probably taken to places where he himself has not necessarily visited. The Summit of the Five Flowers on Mount Yi in Zoucheng provides an interesting example for this alleged multiplication of ideas and carvings. The ninety-eight-character passage on this summit (Yi 1) constitutes the earliest *moya* cliff inscription in the region of Zoucheng, as the colophon next to it (Yi 2) is dated to the year 564. However, Seng'an does not appear in the list of donors. Instead, the colophon mentions a *śramaṇa* Sengwan 僧万, as well as eight lay-donors, among them a person by the name of Lü Jiufei 呂九斐 from Dongping 東平. As we have seen, the layout of the inscription at the Summit of the Five Flowers is identical to that on the northern slope of Mount Hongding (HDS 16.2), located in Dongping. Thus, it is likely that donor Lü Jiufei knew about the Mount Hongding carvings in his home district, and that he introduced the idea and the blueprint for the carving of this key passage to Mount Yi. In this way, Mount Hongding may have inspired the carving on Mount Yi, which was then executed by a different group.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Wang and Tsai, *Shandong Volume 3*, 41.

⁷⁶ Wang and Tsai, *Shandong Volume 3*, 161, 164.

Several years later, between 570 and 572, a second ninety-eight-character passage was carved at the Cave of the Bewitching Fairy 妖精洞 (Yi 3) further down the mountain (Figures 3 and 4),⁷⁸ adopting the format of the second ninety-eight-character passage on Mount Hongding (HDS 22; Figure 8). Again, the donor was not Seng'an, but Dong Zhentuo 董玠隄, who calls himself 'Household Retainer of the Grand Guardian Hulü' 斛律太保家客. The Grand Guardian Hulü probably refers to Hulü Wudu 斛律武都 (?–572), the son of Hulü Guang 斛律光 (515–572).⁷⁹ Donors like Dong Zhentuo may have been in the possession of paper calligraphies by Seng'an, which were then transferred to the cliffs by carvers when a new donation was made. Alternatively, they may have ordered the writing of the *sūtra* passage, which was then executed in the style of the master calligrapher.

Social contacts like those maintained by the layman Lü Jiufei with his home district, or those fostered by Xu Faxian, the wife of Wei Zishen, to ladies closer to the imperial court than herself—including Lady Zhao, the wife of the powerful Tang Yong—were instrumental in the spread of particular teachings, as well as in the dissemination of a celebrated style of calligraphy. They paint a more diverse picture of the network of stone *sūtras* than those theories which ascribe the emergence and the fate of this network to the destiny of a single man.

In sum, the Shandong cliff inscriptions present a regional network of sacred sites initially launched by the otherwise unknown monk Seng'an Daoyi. Seng'an Daoyi secured the support of at least two powerful local families in the region of Zoucheng, the Wei and the Kuang families, and won fame for his celebrated calligraphy. However, he is not to be credited with the invention of cliff inscriptions *per se*. Rather, the eminent monk Sengchou, when he oversaw his own carving project at Xiaonanhai, understood the signs of the times and emphasized the need to carve Buddhist texts in stone.

Thanks to the Shandong carvings with Seng'an Daoyi's signature, and to the eulogies written in stone for Master An,⁸⁰ we have an idea

⁷⁷ Wang and Wenzel, *Shandong Volume 2*, 55.

⁷⁸ Wang and Wenzel, *Shandong Volume 2*, 60, 75–83.

⁷⁹ Wang and Wenzel, *Shandong Volume 2*, 55–57.

of the Buddhist doctrines he valued. These doctrines are heavily indebted to *prajñāpāramitā* thought, and bodhisattva practice. As a result of his local success, Seng'an's most favored texts and his calligraphy were copied and spread along a social network with strong connections to the uppermost classes of society. Yanzhou may have been the hub of activities from where the network of inscription sites was expanded. In Eastern Shaqiu Nunnery, female members of the upper classes cultivated Buddhist doctrines that were similar to the content of the texts carved on cliffs. The wording of the *Eastern Shaqiu Nunnery Sculpture Inscription* resounds with phrases (六度, 三空, 一道一原) also found on the southern cliff at Mount Hongding in the *Encomium to Fahong* (HDS18),⁸¹ and on Mount Tie in the *sūtra* passage (Tie 1) as well as the accompanying *Stone Hymn* (Tie 2).⁸² Although the possibility that this votive inscription was written by the hands of Seng'an Daoyi himself and thus presents a small-scale example of his calligraphy cannot be ruled out,⁸³ it is more important to note the doctrinal connections between the Eastern Shaqiu Nunnery votive inscription and the *moya* cliff carvings, as well as the fact that numerous steles with the ninety-eight-character passage were unearthed at the same site.

The Shandong inscription sites are connected by obvious doctrinal similarities, and passages selected from the *sūtra* abbreviated as *Mañjuśrī's Prajñā*, as well as the name of the omnipresent 'Buddha King of Great Emptiness', were circulated as far as the imperial cave temples of Mount Xiangtang. Carvings in the calligraphy of Seng'an are

⁸⁰ Apart from the *Stone Hymn* on Mount Tie which praises his accomplishments, an inscription entitled *Stele of Sire Serenity* 安公之碑 was carved on Mount Hongding (HDS 15), see Wang and Ledderose, *Shandong Volume 1*, 42, 74, 92, 243–49.

⁸¹ Wang and Ledderose, *Shandong Volume 1*, 93, 267–73.

⁸² Lu and Lu, 'Eastern Shaqiu Nunnery', 273–75.

⁸³ Not even Lu and Lu, 'Eastern Shaqiu Nunnery', dare to identify the inscription beyond doubt as the calligraphy of Seng'an Daoyi. Despite their careful stylistic analysis, they have to admit that it might as well have been written in the style of Seng'an by an admirer.

also found at Mount Xiangtang, yet none are signed and they appear rather modestly on remaining wall surfaces next to much larger donations, like the grand *sūtra* carving project conducted by Tang Yong.

Discontinuation of the Carvings and Rise of Mañjuśrī Veneration

The *moya* cliff carvings of the Northern Qi and Northern Zhou dynasties constitute a network of sacred sites which form a sacred geography, at least on a regional level. Initiatives like the cave-chapel by Sengchou or the carving project by Tang Yong were taken up by local figures like Seng'an and his followers, and then multiplied and spread across an ever-expanding region. Furthermore, the network of cliff carvings should be considered an indigenous Chinese phenomenon, which evolved from three non-Buddhist precedents; namely the inscriptions of the First Chinese Emperor, the Confucian stone classics, and Daoist inscriptions on polished cliffs.⁸⁴ The carvings from the second half of the sixth century thus constitute an indigenous form of a regional sacred geography, something not previously encountered in Buddhism.⁸⁵

Why, then, was all carving activity discontinued at the end of the Northern Zhou, and why did many inscription sites fall into oblivion during the centuries that followed? Birnbaum suggested that the answer to this question can be found in the nature of the carvings themselves: They are words—not images—of the Buddha, which implies that they cannot fulfill certain soteriological needs that otherwise may have qualified them for continuation.⁸⁶ There is some truth to this observation. At many inscription sites, also those outside of Shandong and of later date, texts carved inside and outside of caves

⁸⁴ Ledderose, 'Buddhist Stone Sutras in Shandong', 37–39.

⁸⁵ Robson, 'Buddhist Sacred Geography', 1357, suggested that in the Six Dynasties (222–589) 'a well-organized Chinese Buddhist sacred geography did not exist', and that 'Chinese Buddhists did not develop a uniquely indigenous form of sacred geography or establish sacred sites on uncharted terrain'.

⁸⁶ Birnbaum, 'Highland Inscriptions', 270.

were often damaged and replaced by images, as though donors were more interested in Buddhist imagery than the written words of the Buddha's teaching. However, this is only half the truth.

In his book, *Building a Sacred Mountain: The Buddhist Architecture of China's Mount Wutai*, Lin Wei-cheng analyses the distribution of stone carvings, which he groups into stone images and carved texts. On the territory of the Northern Qi, he identifies four regions in total, which are linked to three types of carvings. The largest region in the northern periphery is characterized by carvings of images only. Both *sūtra* texts and images were carved in the central region around the capital Ye. In two different regions in the periphery only stone *sūtras* were carved; the first of these contains the *sūtras* carved on Mount Zhonghuang in She County in Hebei, and the second comprises all Shandong *moya* inscription sites. Lin explains that the spread of devotional images and *sūtra* texts were motivated by eschatological concerns about the decline of the Dharma. He then examines the establishment of Five Terrace Mountain (Mount Wutai) as the most important Buddhist pilgrimage center, a process which is said to have begun also under the Northern Qi.⁸⁷ The identification of Mount Wutai as the abode of Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī was essential to establish the cult surrounding this most sacred of all Chinese Buddhist mountains. Lin argues that regional circumstances played a seminal role in the making of a formerly unknown mountain into the sacred locus of a new divinity. The stone *sūtras* carved under the Northern Qi dynasty must have driven this process, as Mañjuśrī figures prominently among them.

Mañjuśrī plays a seminal part in the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra*, which contains the prophecy that the bodhisattva resides on Mountain Clear and Cool 清涼山, a name that happens to be another designation for Mount Wutai.⁸⁸ The *Avataṃsaka-sūtra's Treatise on the Ten*

⁸⁷ Lin, *Building a Sacred Mountain*, 63–64.

⁸⁸ T no. 278, 9: 590a3–5, in Buddhahadra's (359–429) translation of the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra*, albeit the passage is generally considered a later interpolation: '東北方有菩薩住處, 名清涼山, 過去諸菩薩常於中住; 彼現有菩薩, 名文殊師利, 有一萬菩薩眷屬, 常為說法'.

Stages (*Shidi lun* 十地論) outlines the ten *bhumis* which a bodhisattva must master on his way to Buddhahood. Here, Mañjuśrī is introduced as a very advanced bodhisattva of the tenth *bhumi*. Notably, the *Shidi lun* was engraved on Mount Zhonghuang in She County. Mañjuśrī is also the dominant figure in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra*, which Tang Yong carved on Northern Mount Xiangtang. Moreover, as I demonstrated, the Shandong *moya* cliff inscriptions provide overwhelming evidence for Mañjuśrī veneration.⁸⁹ Considering Mount Wutai's position to the north of the sacred Northern Qi geography, it is clear that Mount Wutai was associated with Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. Already in pre-Tang times, pilgrims travelled to Mount Wutai in hopes of gaining a vision of the great bodhisattva. Later, from the second half of the seventh century onward, foreign monks also made pilgrimages to Mount Wutai in the hope of a personal encounter with Mañjuśrī.

There is an obvious connection between the *moya* inscriptions and the cult of Mañjuśrī. However, I suggest that the Shandong sites made an even larger contribution to the rise of Mount Wutai as a pilgrim destination. The key site in this contribution is Mount Gang, which differs from all other sites with stone inscriptions. As we have seen, most sites belong to the cluster type and feature groups of inscriptions distributed over cliffs; the largest inscriptions are located on huge walk-over surfaces and imitate the form of a stele; and, finally, *sūtras* were usually carved inside and outside of caves, either as pure text or in combination with images. The inscriptions on Mount Gang do not fit into any of these categories.

On Mount Gang, a *sūtra* passage of 188 characters is broken down in segments of varying length, and distributed along a pilgrim path leading uphill. Visitors can read just a few characters of the *sūtra* at a time, before they have to move on to the next text segment located further up the mountain. The path begins at the foot of the mountain, and ends on the mountain's plateau, where the visitor can enjoy a view of the surrounding landscape. The chosen text passage is actually engraved twice: Once along a short route (A) of only five

⁸⁹ Lin, *Building a Sacred Mountain*, 60–87.

text segments, and a second time along a much longer route (B) of at least thirty-one segments, some of which were lost over the centuries. It is assumed that the shorter route A was created first, and the longer route B later. In accordance with the natural topography of this mountain, the text segments of route B were carved on steep cliffs in the lower region of Mount Gang, in the middle region on a waterfall of medium-sized or small stones, and on the more level western plateau they are carved on free-standing large boulders atop the mountain.

When climbing the mountain, the visitor not only follows the text segments, but passes stones on which Buddha-names are carved, and halfway up the mountain he encounters Chicken Beak Rock 雞嘴石, on which a different text passage is found. The opening passage of the *Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on the Contemplation of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life* (*Foshuo guan Wuliangshou Fo jing* 佛說觀無量壽佛經; *T* no. 365, 12: 340c29–341a10) is carved on two sides of this imposing bolder. This passage tells the story of King Bimbisāra, who was imprisoned by his unfilial son, Ajātaśatru. Thanks to Queen Vaidehī's unwavering loyalty and faith, the king was able to survive until he took refuge in the Buddha and accepted the Eight Precepts. At this point, the carved passage ends. We can assume that lay people climbing Mount Gang were encouraged to accept bodhisattva precepts at this point of their journey.⁹⁰ The original intention for starting out on this journey is revealed by the contents of the text segmented along the pilgrim's path: It is the beginning of the introduction to *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* (*Ru Lengqie jing* 入楞伽經) in Bodhiruci's translation (*T* no. 671, 16: 514c7–18). Compared to the introduction of the earlier translation by Guṇabhadra (Qiunabatuoluo 求那跋陀羅; 394–468),⁹¹ Bodhiruci's introduction is more detailed and elaborate. It names the place where the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* was preached—by the shore of the southern ocean on the peak of Mount Laṅkā—as well as the members of the assembly—the great *bhikṣu-saṅgha*, and a great multitude of bodhisattvas—and

⁹⁰ Wang and Wenzel, *Shandong Volume 2*, 254.

⁹¹ Located at *T* no. 670, 16: 479a–514b.

it embarks on a lyrical description of a landscape populated by ‘transcendents, worthies and saints of old’, who ‘pondered the true Dharma’ in ‘numinous abodes, innumerable grottoes and caves formed of masses of gems’. This lyrical description adds a strong Chinese flavor to Bodhiruci’s introduction, and because it is not found in Guṇabhadra’s earlier translation, nor in Śikṣānanda’s later revision (*T* no. 672), it is suspected to be an interpolation. Bodhiruci’s text is best characterized as a presentation of an idealized, paradisiacal landscape with flower gardens, fragrant trees, light breezes and wondrous tones, where the Buddha preaches to an assembly of saintly beings. The text segmented in its lower and middle part of the longer pilgrim’s path describes the features of this paradisiacal landscape (Figure 10), echoing the Chinese translations of Pure Land texts, such as the longer and shorter *Sukhāvatīvyūha-sūtras*. When the pilgrim finally reaches the upper plateau, the text arrives at the description of the members of the assembly, the ‘great *bhikṣu-saṅgha*, and the great multitude of bodhisattvas, all of whom had arrived together from the various kinds of Buddhalands in the other quarters [of the cosmos], and gathered into an assembly’. Before the carved text ends, it praises the achievements of the *bodhisattva-mahāsattvas*, who ‘are completely endowed with incalculable *samādhis* of mastery [providing them with] supernatural power with which they swiftly go around converting’. On top of the plateau of Mount Gang (Figure 11), the pilgrim thus finds himself among the assembly to whom the Buddha preaches, and he is ensured that countless bodhisattvas are at work to usher him along his own ardent way to awakening.⁹²

In this way, Mount Gang, the youngest of all Shandong inscription sites, introduces the possibility of pilgrimage whereby the pilgrim who ascends Mount Gang up to its peak is rewarded by the presence of bodhisattvas of numerous Buddha-lands. Endowed with supernatural powers as a result of their mastery of *samādhi*, and eager to convert and liberate beings, these bodhisattvas are manifest in front of the pilgrim. The pilgrim himself is well prepared: While

⁹² For a complete transcription and translation of the text passage carved at Mount Gang, see Wang and Wenzel, *Shandong Volume 2*, 289–91.



FIG. 10 Rubbing of the carved text segment numbered B8 of the beginning of the introduction to the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* 入楞伽經 in Bodhiruci's translation (T no. 671, 16: 514c7–18) on Mount Gang. Height 231 cm, width 291 cm. The segment reads: 'Further, there are countless flower gardens and fragrant trees, veritable gems in fragrant groves, where light breezes blow, rustling the branches and moving the leaves. Hundreds and thousands of wondrous...' Collection of the former Shandong Stone Carving Art Museum 山東省石刻藝術博物館 in Ji'nan. Photograph taken in 2005 by Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities.



FIG. 11 Text segment numbered B 26, reading 'a multitude [of bodhisattvas] all of whom, from the various...', carved on a boulder of the western plateau on Mount Gang. Photograph taken in 2005 by Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

climbing the mountain, he reads the text segments and visualizes the gems, fragrant groves, wondrous fragrances and tones, spread throughout the layered cliffs that twist and turn, where immortals, worthies and saints of old have pondered the true Dharma. Following the model of King Bimbisāra, he himself may have taken or renewed the bodhisattva precepts at Chicken Beak Rock. When he finally reaches the top of the mountain, his visualizations and vows will have produced a state of mind in which he awaits his personal encounter with one of the bodhisattvas who ‘go around converting’ 遊化.

The pilgrim path on Mount Gang is a ground-breaking innovation that determined the fate of the *moya* cliff inscriptions. It paved the way for a new conception of mountains as sites where one could encounter saintly figures like Mañjuśrī. The network of sacred topographies formed by the Shandong cliff inscriptions was eventually superseded by the new pilgrim center on Mount Wutai, which grew into an international destination. The mystical residence of bodhisattva Mañjuśrī thus gradually overshadowed the earlier dedications to *Mañjuśrī’s Prajñā* which fostered Mount Wutai’s success.

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Abbreviations

- SSX* *Shike shiliao xinbian* 石刻史料新編. See Bibliography, Secondary Sources, Xinwenfeng chuban gongsi bianjibu.
- T* *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. See Bibliography, Secondary Sources, Takakusu and Watanabe, eds.

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A Study on the Images of Treasure Birds as Shown in the Transformation Tableaux of *Western Pure Land Sūtras* in Sichuan from the Tang and Five Dynasties*

MINGLI SUN 孫明利

The University of British Columbia

Translated by Gina Yang

Abstract: The world of Western Pure Land is the ideal world for departed saints to rebirth. It is also named paradise because that all sentient beings only have happiness but no sufferings and numerous treasures consist the material spaces in this world. There are colorful treasure birds in Pure Land, namely white cranes, parrots, peacocks, relic birds, kalavinka and life-shared birds, etc. In the transformation tableaux of *Western Pure Land Sūtras* under the Tang and Five Dynasties in Sichuan, the birds are perched on the lotus branches, roofs, treasure trees, treasure pillars, arch bridges, treasure lands, as well as on the empty space on the top of the niche. All fantastic variegated birds are creations of Amitābha in order to proclaim the sounds of dharma. Their subtle voices not only broadcast the sounds of dharma but also make the sentient beings who listen to their sounds would praise the three jewels, namely, the Buddha, the Dharma and

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the Sangha with intention to be reborn in the Western Pure Land. This article analyzes the images of ‘treasure birds’ (*baoniao* 寶鳥) and tries to clarify their representations and meanings in the transformation tableaux of *Western Pure Land Sūtras* in Sichuan from the Tang and Five Dynasties. It also discusses the Pure Land practice and the Pure Land-related networks as reflected by this genre of image.

Keywords: Sichuan, Tang and Five Dynasties, cliff reliefs, transformation tableaux of *Western Pure Land Sūtras*, treasure birds

Introduction

Transformation tableaux of the Western Pure Land were constructed based on *Western Pure Land Sūtras*. They are images that illustrate scenes from the world of the Western Pure Land, which was the mainstream genre for Buddhist art during the Tang period. Their stunning visual representations reflect the popularity of belief in Amitābha’s Pure Land at the time.¹

¹ The Pure Land scriptures in circulation can be summarized into three categories, namely: the *Wuliangshou jing* category, represented by the *Wuliangshou jing* 無量壽經 [*Sūtra* on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life], translated by Kang Sengkai (active during the middle of the third century, Three Kingdoms, Wei); the *Amituo jing* category, represented by the *Amituo jing* 阿彌陀經 [*Amitābha Sūtra*], translated by Kumārajīva (344–413, Sixteen Kingdom, Later Qin); and the *Guan Wuliangshou fo jing* 觀無量壽佛經 [*Sūtra* on the Visualisation of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life], translated by Kālayaśas (383–443, Southern Dynasties, Song).

The *Wuliangshou jing* narrates events during the causal phase of practice of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life when he was Dharmākara Bhikṣu in a past life, making forty-eight great vows and cultivating the deeds of Bodhisattva, as well as describing the environment of the Western Pure Land. The *Amituo jing*’s focus is in describing the blissful environment of the Western Pure Land. The intro-

Sichuan 四川 was a key area for transformation tableaux of the Western Pure Land represented in the Tang Dynasty. There are a great number of these transformation tableaux, spread throughout a vast region, rich in illustrated content and possessing a high level of carving craftsmanship. They are comparable with the Tang Western Pure Land transformation tableaux of Dunhuang 敦煌. Of these two places, one is in the south and the other in the north. One has cliff reliefs and the other has murals in caves. They provide great case studies of Western Pure Land transformation tableaux in the two capitals (the western capital of Chang'an 長安 and the eastern capital of Luoyang 洛陽) during the Tang period, which are almost no longer extant and can now only be seen in texts.²

Western Pure Land images in Sichuan from the Tang and Five Dynasties have three sub-genres, which are, respectively, 'Amitābha Buddha with fifty Bodhisattvas', 'transformation tableaux of *Western*

duction of the *Guan Wuliangshou fo jing* explains the story of the 'enemy before birth', when King Ajātaśatru killed his father and imprisoned his mother. The main body of the text describes how Śākyamuni Buddha taught Queen Vaidehī the sixteen kinds of visualisation practice (abbreviated to the 'sixteen visualisations') used to attain rebirth in the Western Pure Land. The conclusion tells of how Queen Vaidehī and her 500 serving maids attained rebirth in the Western Pure Land. The Buddha of Immeasurable Life and Amitābha Buddha are the same Buddha, just with different names. The *Wuliangshou jing* has the name Buddha of Immeasurable Life (Amitāyus), the *Amituo jing* has Amitābha Buddha, and the *Guan Wuliangshou fo jing* uses both names.

In the text of this present article, when material from a particular scripture is used, the specific name will be given, whereas other cases will use Amitābha Buddha as a standard name.

² *Fozu tongji*, fascicle 53, 'Lidai hui yaozhi' 歷代會要志 [Historical Records], T no. 2035, vol. 49, 469b:

Venerable Shandao (Early Tang) went to the capital where he transcribed over 100,000 fascicles of the *Amituo jing* and painted over 300 wall murals with Pure Land transformation tableaux. Chang'an was filled with those he taught. (初唐)善導法師至京師，造《彌陀經》十餘萬卷，畫淨土變相三百餘壁。滿長安中，並從其化。

Pure Land Sūtras’ and ‘transformation tableaux of *The Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*’ (hereafter ‘*Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux*’). The images of Amitābha Buddha with fifty Bodhisattvas are represented as a main Buddha figure with two flanking-attendant Bodhisattvas, as well as fifty (numbers can differ) smaller Bodhisattvas in various postures. This sub-genre was prominent during the early and High Tang Dynasty. It first appeared in Northern Sichuan. Later, one branch spread to the south along the Jialing 嘉陵 River regions and another branch developed in regions around Chengdu 成都. During the High Tang period, taking the image of Amitābha Buddha with fifty Bodhisattvas as the foundation, elements of the environment such as pavilions, birds, treasure trees and so on depicted in the world of the Western Pure Land were added to become the transformation tableaux of *Western Pure Land Sūtras*. This sub-genre was prominent from the High Tang to the Late Tang period. It appeared in regions where images of Amitābha Buddha with fifty Bodhisattvas were present and followed their routes of development, spreading down to the south. Its distribution was concentrated in Eastern and Central Sichuan, close to Northern Sichuan. During the Middle Tang period, taking the transformation tableaux of *Western Pure Land Sūtras* as the foundation, images of the ‘enemy before birth’ or the ‘sixteen visualisations’ from the content of the *Guan Wuliangshou fo jing* were added to become the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux*. This sub-genre was prominent in Central and Eastern Sichuan during the middle and Late Tang and Five Dynasties periods.³

³ Textual sources for the images of Amitābha Buddha with fifty Bodhisattvas were based on Buddhist stories composed in Central Asia rather than Western Pure Land scriptures. Since the central figure is Amitābha Buddha, they possess characteristics of Western Pure Land belief, and hence we have included them as part of Western Pure Land images. Influenced by elements in Western Pure Land scriptures, both *Amituo jing* transformation tableaux and *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* fall under the category of Western Pure Land transformation tableaux. In order to conduct further analysis, in this article, images with ‘enemy before birth’ and ‘sixteen visualisations’ are referred to as *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux*, those without are referred to as *Amituo jing* transformation tableaux.

The Western Pure Land is also known as the Land of Ultimate Bliss. It is made up of a material world composed from precious treasures together with living beings who do not experience any suffering.⁴ It is what Tanluan 曇鸞 (476–542) called the purity of the receptacle world and the purity of the world of living beings.⁵ The transformation tableaux of the Western Pure Land depict the scene of Amitābha Buddha teaching the Dharma in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. The contents displayed in these transformation tableaux can be categorised

Also, the present article refers to Central Sichuan as regions north of the Yangtze River, the line south of Mianyang 綿陽 including the two banks of the Min 岷 River and western regions of the Tuo 沱 River. The region east of the Tuo River and the two banks of the Jialing River are referred to as the Eastern Sichuan. The Northern Sichuan includes the upper reaches of the Min River, Tuo River, Fu 涪 River and Jialing River.

⁴ *Amituo jing*, T no. 366, vol. 12, 346c:

Śāriputra, why is that land called Ultimate Bliss? The living beings in that country have no suffering, but only experience happiness. Therefore, it is called Ultimate Bliss. Also, Śāriputra, the Land of Ultimate Bliss has seven tiers of railings, seven tiers of netting, and seven tiers of rows of trees, all of which are surrounded by the four treasures. Therefore, that country is called Ultimate Bliss. 舍利弗，彼土何故名為極樂？其國眾生無有眾苦，但受諸樂，故名極樂。又舍利弗，極樂國土七重欄楯、七重羅網、七重行樹，皆是四寶周匝圍繞，是故彼國名曰‘極樂’。

⁵ *Lüclun Anle Jingtu yi*, T no. 1957, vol. 47, 1a:

Question: How many kinds of adornments does the Land of Peace and Happiness have to be called a Pure Land? Answer: If we take the evidence in the scriptures, this matter is just the forty-eight vows of Dharmākara Bodhisattva. This can be known from the praise, and does not need to be explained again. If we take the *Wuliangshou lun* 無量壽論 [Treatise on Immeasurable Life], there are two types of purity, which include the accomplishment of twenty-nine kinds of adornment. The two types of purity are, one, purity of the receptacle world, and two, purity of the world of living beings. 問曰，‘安樂國有幾種莊嚴，名為淨土？’答曰，‘若依經據義，法藏菩薩四十八願即是其事。尋贊可知，不復重序。若依《無量壽論》，以二種清淨，攝二十九種莊嚴成就。二種清淨者：一器世間清淨、二是眾生世間清淨。’

into two types: scenes and characters. Among them, treasure birds of various kinds constitute an important part of the natural scene. They can be found in various places in the transformation tableaux of *Western Pure Land Sūtras*. They chirp elegantly and sing the marvellous Dharma, embellishing the dignified scene of the Pure Land Dharma assembly. Those living beings who hear this wondrous sound aspire to recite the Three Jewels. This article is centred on the images of treasure birds in the transformation tableaux of *Western Pure Land Sūtras* in Sichuan from the Tang and Five Dynasties. It will first identify the characteristics of these treasure bird motifs, then analyse the threads of development and dissemination of the sketches (*fenben* 粉本), followed by a discussion of their meaning and significance.

1. Treasure Birds in *Western Pure Land Sūtras*

Of the three categories of Pure Land *Sūtras*, only the categories of the *Foshuo Amituo jing* 佛說阿彌陀經 and *Foshuo Guan Wuliangshou fo jing* 佛說觀無量壽佛經 mention treasure birds, the category of *Foshuo Wuliangshou jing* 佛說無量壽經 does not. Among them, the *Amituo jing* category has the most detailed description of treasure birds. The *Foshuo Amituo jing* 佛說阿彌陀經 records six types of treasure birds, which are white swan 白鵠, peacock 孔雀, parrot 鸚鵡, *śārī* 舍利, *kalavinka* 迦陵頻伽 and two-headed birds (*jīvajīva*) 共命鳥. They sing the teachings of the five faculties, five powers, seven factors of awakening, noble eight-fold path and so on.⁶ The *Chengzan jingtu*

⁶ *Amituo jing*, T no. 366, vol. 12, 347a:

That land always has birds of many exotic colours: white swans, peacocks, parrots, *śārīs*, *kalavīṅkas* and two-headed birds. These many birds produce graceful and harmonious sounds in the six times of day and night. Their calls proclaim the five faculties, five powers, seven factors of awakening, noble eight-fold path and other such teachings. When the living beings in that land hear these, they all recollect the Buddha, recollect the Dharma and recollect the Sangha. Śāriputra, do not say: 'These birds are in fact born as a result of transgressions'. Why? That Buddha land does not

fo sheshou jing 稱贊淨土佛攝受經 [*Sūtra in Praise of the Pure Land*], translated by Xuan Zang 玄奘 (602?–664), belongs to the *Amituo jing* category. The seven kinds of treasure birds mentioned in this text are goose 鵝鴈, black drongo 鷲鷲, crane 鴻鶴, peacock, parrot, *kalavinka* 羯羅頻迦 and two-headed birds (*jīvajīva*) 命命鳥. These treasure birds proclaim the profound grounds of mindfulness, right abandonments, psychic powers, faculties, powers, factors of awakening, limbs of the path and other immeasurable, wonderful teachings.⁷

have the three lower destinies. Śāriputra, that Buddha land does not even have the names of the three lower destinies, let alone do they in fact exist there. These many birds are all the transformed creations of Amitābha Buddha, as he wishes to let the sound of the Dharma be proclaimed and propagated. Śāriputra, in that Buddha land, when the gentle breeze blows, the rows of treasure trees and treasure nets produce marvellous sounds. It is like one hundred thousand musical instruments all playing simultaneously. Those who hear this sound all naturally have the intention to recollect the Buddha, recollect the Dharma and recollect the Sangha. Śāriputra, that Buddha land has accomplished such virtuous adornments. 彼國常有種種奇妙雜色之鳥：白鵠、孔雀、鸚鵡、舍利、迦陵頻伽、共命之鳥。是諸眾鳥，晝夜六時，出和雅音。其音演暢五根、五力、七菩提分、八聖道分如是等法。其土眾生聞是音已，皆悉念佛、念法、念僧。舍利弗！汝勿謂：‘此鳥實是罪報所生。’所以者何？彼佛國土無三惡趣。舍利弗！其佛國土尚無三惡道之名，何況有實？是諸眾鳥，皆是阿彌陀佛欲令法音宣流、變化所作。舍利弗！彼佛國土，微風吹動，諸寶行樹及寶羅網出微妙音，譬如百千種樂同時具作，聞是音者皆自然生念佛、念法、念僧之心。舍利弗！其佛國土成就如是功德莊嚴。

⁷ *Chengzan jingtu fo sheshou jing*, T no. 367, vol. 12, 349b:

The Land of Ultimate Bliss Pure Buddha Land always has many kinds of wonderful, adorable and exotic-coloured birds. That is, geese, orioles, cranes, peacocks, parrots, *kalavinkas*, two-headed birds and so forth. These many birds always gather together and produce graceful and harmonious sounds in the six times of day and night. They proclaim the wonderful Dharma according the kinds of sounds. That is, the profound grounds of mindfulness, right abandonments, psychic powers, faculties, powers, factors of awakening, limbs of the path and other immeasurable wonderful teachings. When the living beings of that land hear these sounds, they

Both texts indicate that the treasure birds in the Land of Ultimate Bliss are manifested by Amitābha Buddha to proclaim the Dharma teachings, and living beings who hear their wondrous sounds naturally aspire to recite the Three Jewels. However, the two texts differ in the types and number of types of treasure birds as well as the content of the teachings proclaimed by the treasure birds. The *Foshuo Guan Wuliangshou fo jing* 佛說觀無量壽佛經 states the origin of the treasure birds, that the birds are the colours of a hundred treasures and are manifested from the marvellous golden light which springs forth from a wish-fulfilling king of jewels. Only two kinds of treasure birds are mentioned in the text, swan goose 鳧鴈 and mandarin duck 鴛鴦, which are both water birds. There is no mention of flying birds. Furthermore, the text only describes the treasure birds proclaiming the wondrous teachings and praising the Three Jewels. No concrete details on the Dharma proclaimed are mentioned in the text.⁸ From

each recollect the Buddha, recollect the Dharma and recollect the Sangha, with immeasurable virtues permeating their bodies. What do you think, Śāriputra? Are the many birds of that land considered to be animals of the lower destinies? Do not have such a view. Why? In that Buddha's Pure Land there are no three lower destinies. One cannot even hear the names of the three lower destinies, let alone could there really exist birds which are animals caused by transgressive actions. One should know that they are all the transformed creations of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life, in order to proclaim and propagate the words of immeasurable teachings, for the benefit and happiness of living beings. Śāriputra, in that Buddha land there are many such marvellous ornamentations and virtuous adornments which are most delightful. Therefore, it is called the 'Land of Ultimate Bliss. 極樂世界淨佛土中，常有種種奇妙、可愛、雜色眾鳥，所謂鵝鴈、鶯鷺、鴻鶴、孔雀、鸚鵡、羯羅頻迦、命命鳥等。如是眾鳥，晝夜六時，恆共集會，出和雅聲。隨其類音，宣揚妙法，所謂甚深念住、正斷、神足、根、力、覺、道支等無量妙法。彼土眾生，聞是聲已，各得念佛、念法、念僧，無量功德熏修其身。汝舍利子，於意云何？彼土眾鳥，豈是傍生惡趣攝耶？勿作是見。所以者何？彼佛淨土，無三惡道。尚不聞有三惡趣名，何況有實？罪業所招傍生眾鳥，當知皆是無量壽佛變化所作，令其宣暢無量法音，作諸有情利益安樂。舍利子！彼佛土中有如是等眾妙綺飾，功德莊嚴，甚可愛樂，是故名為‘極樂世界’。

the above, we can deduce that images of treasure birds represented in the transformation tableaux of *Western Pure Land Sūtras* were created under the influence of both *Amituo jing* and *Foshuo Guan Wuliangshou fo jing* type *Sūtras*.

In addition, Fazhao's 法照 (746–838) *Jingtu wuhui nianfo song-jing guan xingyi* 淨土五會念佛誦經觀行儀 [Pure Land Five-Session Buddha's Name and *Sūtra* Recitation Visualisation Practice Rite] specifies that when conducting the five-session recitation of the Buddha's name Dharma service rite, one first recites the *Amituo jing*, then recites forty-six praises in verse. Of these, the 'Praise of the Treasure Birds' is situated as the first praise. The text lists seven types of treasure birds, which are geese, mandarin ducks, parrots, white cranes, peacocks, two-headed birds and *kalaviṅkas*.⁹ It adopts

⁸ *Guan Wuliangshou fo jing*, T no. 366, vol. 12, 342c:

Moreover, there are those that praise the physical marks of the Buddhas. From the wish-fulfilling king of jewels stream forth wondrous golden-coloured rays. These rays transform into birds with colours of a hundred jewels, that sing out harmonious notes, ever praising recollection of the Buddha, recollection of the Dharma and recollection of the Sangha. 復有贊嘆諸佛相好者，從如意珠王踊出金色微妙光明。其光化為百寶色鳥，和鳴哀雅，常贊念佛、念法、念僧。

Guan Wuliangshou fo jing, T no. 366, vol. 12, 343b:

When this contemplation has been accomplished, the practitioner will hear the wonderful Dharma preached by streams of water, rays of light, treasure trees, ducks, geese and swans. Whether he is out of meditation or in meditation, he will always hear the wonderful Dharma. 此想成時，行者當聞水流、光明及諸寶樹、鳧鴈、鴛鴦皆說妙法，出定、入定恆聞妙法。

Guan Wuliangshou fo jing, T no. 366, vol. 12, 344b:

When the lotus flower opens, there is the contemplation of rays of light of five hundred colours coming to shine upon the body. When contemplating opening your eyes, you will see the sky filled with Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The sound produced from the water birds, forests of trees and the Buddhas will all proclaim the wonderful Dharma, in accordance with the twelve divisions of scriptures. 蓮華開時，有五百色光來照身想。眼目開想，見佛菩薩滿虛空中。水鳥、樹林及與諸佛，所出音聲，皆演妙法，與十二部經合。

the two explanations that the origin of the treasure birds is that they are manifested by Amitābha Buddha and the precious wish-fulfilling jewel.¹⁰ Regarding the content of the Dharma proclaimed by the

⁹ *Jingtu wuhui nianfo songjing guan xingyi*, T no. 2827, vol. 85, 1247b:

The water birds and forests of tree recite in five sessions. The mournful notes of kindness praise the Dharma King. The two-headed birds, pairs of mandarin ducks, parrots and *kalaviṅkas* all teach the wonderful Dharma. 水鳥樹林念五會，哀婉慈聲贊法王。共命鳥對鴛鴦，鸚鵡頻伽說妙法。

Jingtu wuhui nianfo songjing guan xingyi, T no. 2827, vol. 85, 1247c:

The various birds of the Western Land are infinite in number. White cranes, peacocks, *kalas*, parrots and *viṅkas* all teach the wonderful Dharma, their calls proclaiming the principles of the Mahāyāna. 西方異鳥數無窮，白鶴孔雀及迦陵。鸚鵡頻伽說妙法，聲中演出大乘宗。

Jingtu wuhui nianfo songjing guan xingyi, T no. 2827, vol. 85, 1262b:

The *kalaviṅkas* have the most exceptional colours, and also the peacocks, kings of birds. Their song continues uninterrupted through day and night, constantly lamenting for living beings in the world of pain. 迦陵頻伽色特最，復有孔雀鳥中王。晝夜連聲不休息，恆嘆眾生苦。

Jingtu wuhui nianfo songjing guan xingyi, T no. 2827, vol. 85, 1262c:

Lotus flowers and water lilies fill up the Western Land, with ponds of geese and mandarin ducks. Each and every one of their sounds teaches the Dharma. From each and every flower and stem wafts fragrance. 蓮花菡萏滿西方，池中鳧雁及鴛鴦。一一聲聲皆說法，花花莖莖盡飛香。

Jingtu wuhui nianfo songjing guan xingyi, T no. 2827, vol. 85, 1265b:

In Amitābha's Abode of Ultimate Bliss, treasure birds call and sing. On hearing the meaning of these calls, one proclaims the Dharma and enters the golden city. Peacocks sit in front of the Buddha, mandarin ducks play and sing. White cranes dance in the halls, parrots and pigeons play zithers. 彌陀極樂處，寶鳥作音聲。聽取聲中意，喚法入金城。孔雀佛前坐，鴛鴦遊戲吟。白鶴宮中舞，鸚鵡自彈琴。

¹⁰ *Jingtu wuhui nianfo songjing guan xingyi*, T no. 2827, vol. 85, 1245b:

The many birds sing harmoniously during the six times of day and night, their clear sound proclaiming the marvellous and inconceivable. The five directions, five faculties, seven factors of awakening and the profound eight-fold noble path enter into the unconditioned. The assembly all simultaneously

treasure birds, the ‘Praise of the Treasure Birds’ details that the treasure birds fly in mid-air and extol the Buddha’s assembly. Day and night, they ceaselessly chirp resonantly and elegantly, proclaiming the Dharma of the five faculties, seven factors of awakening, noble eight-fold path, lower realms of other worlds, hells, wholesome behaviour even in a state of distraction, meditation, wisdom and others.¹¹

listen to the sound of the Dharma, and those who hear form the intention to recite the Buddha’s name. The created birds were never from the three lower destinies, and Amitābha proclaims the Dharma which deeply flows forth. The gentle breeze blows and moves the pure treasure trees, and the resonance of this zephyr is like the sound of a divine orchestra. None of them promulgate any other teaching, but everywhere one only hears the recitation of the Buddha’s name. 眾鳥和鳴應六時，清音演法妙難思。五方五根並七覺，甚深八聖入無為。眾等同時聽法音，聞者皆生念佛心。化鳥本非三惡趣，彌陀宣暢法流深。微風吹動寶林清，響颺如天奏樂聲。一一更無宣別法，處處唯聞念佛名。

Jingtu wuhui nianfo songjing guan xingyi, T no. 2827, vol. 85, 1249b:

The golden sands shine through the water, the jade leaves brightly fill the branches, the birds are born within jewels, and people are only reborn within flowers. 金沙澈水照，玉葉滿枝明。鳥本珠中生，人唯花上生。

Jingtu wuhui nianfo songjing guan xingyi, T no. 2827, vol. 85, 1249c:

Pearl-jewels manifest the colourful birds, the wonderful Dharma fills the sound of the breeze. 真珠變鳥色，妙法滿風音。

¹¹ *Jingtu wuhui nianfo songjing guan xingyi*, T no. 2827, vol. 85, 1244b–c:

‘Praise of the Treasure Birds’ (according to the *Amituo jing*): ‘The adornment of the Land of Ultimate Bliss is interlaced with treasures (Amitābha Buddha!). It is truly rare, hearing what has never been heard before (Amitābha Buddha! Amitābha Buddha!). The treasure birds flying in the sky praising the Buddha’s assembly (Amitābha Buddha!). Mournfully and sincerely moving the hearts of the people (Amitābha Buddha! Amitābha Buddha!). The continuous sound, day and night, goes unabated (Amitābha Buddha!). Each word and every sentence alike in principle and characteristic (Amitābha Buddha! Amitābha Buddha!). They may teach the five faculties, the seven factors of awakening (in harmony with the preceding). They may teach the eight-fold path and practices of loving kindness and compassion (in har-

The teachings of the five faculties, seven factors of awakening and noble eight-fold path proclaimed by the treasure birds in this text correspond to the description in the *Amituo jing*. The teachings of lower realms of other worlds, hells, wholesome behaviour even in a state of distraction, meditation and wisdom are identical to those mentioned in the *Guan Wuliangshou fo jing*. According to the *Guan Wuliangshou fo jing shu* 觀無量壽佛經疏 [Commentary on the *Sūtra* on the Visualization of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life] annotated by Shandao 善導 (613–681) during the Tang period, meditative wholesome states are the first to thirteenth of the sixteen visualisations described in the *Guan Wuliangshou fo jing*. Wholesome behaviour even in a state of distraction are the nine grades of rebirth, namely, the content of the fourteenth to sixteenth of the

mony with the preceding). They may teach the mixed lower destinies of other worlds. They may teach about the hells compared to the human and divine worlds. They may teach wholesome [behavior, even in a] state of distraction and the *pāramitās*. They may teach concentration, wisdom and entering deep *dhyāna*. They may teach about the long period of cultivating ascetic practices. They may teach the causes of supreme *bodhi*. When Bodhisattvas and disciples hear this Dharma, they manifest bodies everywhere to turn the Dharma Wheel. They vow that this Dharma Wheel will continue to be turned, that living beings in the place of cultivation will be have increased longevity. May the community turn their minds to rebirth in the Pure Land, holding aloft incense and flowers as they go to the Western Land.’ After the community recites the *Amituo jing* they immediately recite the ‘Praise of the Treasure Birds’. After the ‘Praise’ has been recited, they make vows, and after the ‘Praise’ they then leave. 《寶鳥贊》(依阿彌陀經)：極樂莊嚴間雜寶(彌陀佛)，實是希有聞未聞(彌陀佛彌陀佛)。寶鳥臨空贊佛會(彌陀佛)，哀怨雅亮發人心(彌陀佛彌陀佛)。晝夜連聲無有息(彌陀佛)，文文句句理相同(彌陀佛彌陀佛)。或說五根七覺分(下已准前和)，或說八聖慈悲門(已下准前和)。或說他方雜惡道，或說地獄對人天。或說散善波羅蜜，或說定慧入深禪。或說長時修苦行，或說無上菩提因。菩薩聲聞聞此法，處處分身轉法輪。願此法輪相續轉，道場眾生等益長年。眾等回心生淨土，手執香花往西方。眾等誦彌陀經了，即誦《寶鳥贊》。誦諸贊了，發願，具在贊後即散。

sixteen visualisations. Content about the lower realms and hells of other worlds appear in the lower grade of the nine grades of rebirth.¹² In addition, the text also states that the treasure birds, together with the Buddha, Bodhisattvas and forests of trees in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, engage in five-session recitation of the Buddha's name and *sūtra*.¹³ Hence, it is clear that descriptions of treasure birds in *Jingtu wuhui nianfo songjing guan xingyi* are an integration of contents from *Amituo jing* type scriptures and *Guan Wuliangshou fo jing*, as well as combining as needed with additional treasure bird content in the five-session recitation of the Buddha's name and *sūtra* itself.

From the analysis of descriptions of treasure birds in Pure Land scriptures, we can see that the Tang period had the greatest variety of treasure birds, including types of both water and flying birds. A great number of treasure birds proclaim the marvellous Dharma day and night ceaselessly. They adorn the Dharma assembly, and living beings who hear their sound aspire to recite the Three Jewels.

2. Characteristics of Treasure Bird Images and Their Threads of Development

After comprehensively analysing the treasure bird pictures of Western Pure Land images in Sichuan from the Tang and Five

¹² *Guan Wuliangshou fo jing shu*, fascicle 1, 'Guan jing xuanyi fen' 觀經玄義分, T no. 1753, vol. 37, 247b:

Question: 'What are meditative wholesome states? What are wholesome behaviour even in a state of distraction?' Answer: 'From the visualisation of the sun to the thirteenth visualisation are called meditative wholesome states. The three merits and nine grades are wholesome behaviour even in a state of distraction.' 問曰: '云何名定善? 云何名散善?' 答曰: '從日觀下至十三觀已來名為定善, 三福九品名為散善'。

¹³ *Jingtu wuhui nianfo songjing guan xingyi*, T no. 2827, vol. 85, 1253a & 1254c: The Buddha, Bodhisattva assembly, water birds and forests of trees in that Buddha land all perform the five-session recitation of the Buddha's name and *sūtra*. 彼佛國界、佛、菩薩眾、水鳥、樹林皆悉五會念佛誦經。

Dynasties, their threads of development can be summarised as follows. In terms of development through periods of time, images of Amitābha Buddha with fifty Bodhisattvas during the Early and High Tang period do not depict images of treasure birds. Through the High Tang to Late Tang period, images of treasure birds were depicted in transformation tableaux of *Western Pure Land Sūtras*. However, only a few types and smaller number of treasure birds were depicted in any single transformation tableau. During the Middle to Late Tang and Five Dynasties, depictions of treasure birds in *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* gradually became richer. Hence, it is clear that images of treasure birds are only found in complete Western Pure Land transformation tableaux. They were depicted as part of the natural environment of the Pure Land. In terms of geographical distribution, most of the Western Pure Land transformation tableaux with treasure bird representations are found in the central and eastern regions of Sichuan. With the exception of one case found in Chongxiang 冲相 Monastery in Guang'an 廣安, which is situated east of the Jialing River, all other cases are concentrated in regions south of Chengdu and west of the Fu River (Figure 1). Combining the thread of development in terms of periods of time and locations, we can summarise that the overall trend of development for treasure bird images proceeds from north to south and then from west to east.

The types of treasure birds represented in the Tang and Five Dynasties Sichuan Western Pure Land transformation tableaux correspond to the content of the Pure Land scriptures. There are white cranes, peacocks, parrots, *kalavinkas*, two-headed birds, water birds and so on. This indicates that treasure bird images were constructed based on Pure Land scriptures. Though there is a diverse range of positions for the representation of treasure birds, common patterns can still be traced. We have closely analysed images of treasure birds represented in various positions and compared them with similar images from the Hexi 河西 region in order to identify the characteristics of treasure bird images found in Tang and Five Dynasties Sichuan Western Pure Land transformation tableaux, their threads of development, as well as the dissemination of their sketches.

Two distinct characteristics of treasure bird images can be concluded.



FIG.1 A map showing the distribution of the transformation tableaux of *Western Pure Land Sūtras* with 'treasure birds' (寶鳥) in the Sichuan area, from the Tang and Five Dynasties period.

First, representations of treasure birds were emphasised in the central axis, with other treasure birds positioned symmetrically on both sides. Second, treasure birds were either represented in the natural environment or appeared in reception for rebirth scenes. Depictions of treasure birds in the reception for rebirth scenes are especially prominent. The following section analyses treasure bird representations in niche carvings. The analysis is conducted according to their positions in the images, from top to bottom, and from the centre to the two sides.

(1) Images of Treasure Birds on the Central Axis

A. External Niche Lintels

External niche lintels with relief sculptures of treasure birds include the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* of the tenth niche from the Late Tang period in Nanjiawan 南家灣, Tongnan 潼南, and the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* of the fifteenth niche from the Late Tang period at Qianfo Cliff in Gaosheng 高昇, Anyue 安岳. They



FIG. 2 A part of the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, Niche 10 at Nanjiawan 南家灣 in Tongnan 潼南, from the Late Tang Dynasty. Photography by Qi Qingyuan 齊慶媛.

are situated on the west bank of the Fu River in the eastern region of Sichuan. The former depicts three treasure birds standing on auspicious clouds, carved in the middle of the niche lintel (Figure 2). Sculptures of the Buddhas of the ten directions sitting on auspicious clouds are carved symmetrically on both sides. The central treasure bird is standing and facing forward. It appears to be a *kalaviṅka*, featuring a human upper body with a carving of a human head and two hands that appear to have joined palms before the chest. Its lower body features a bird body with wings spread upwards on both sides. Two treasure birds are carved symmetrically to both sides of the *kalaviṅka*, facing three quarters forward, and are more severely weathered in comparison. The latter depicts an image of a treasure bird similar to the former at the centre of the niche lintel. It is also standing and facing forward. However, its upper body is damaged, with only its spread wings and standing claws remaining. This particular type of representation appears in case studies from the Late Tang period in the eastern region of Sichuan. The locations of the above two case studies are situated close to each other. It is possible that such repre-

sentations are only regional. We did not find similar representations in corresponding transformation tableaux from the Hexi region.

B. Internal Niche Vault

Internal niche vaults typically feature treasure birds flying in the sky, praising the Buddha, and musical instruments that float in mid-air making music by themselves without being played. They embellish the ambience of the heavenly music that lingers throughout the Pure Land. Some transformation tableaux also feature heavenly palaces and pavilions. There are a total of six cases of niche vaults that feature treasure birds, namely: the *Amituo jing* transformation tableau of the Late Tang period at Qianfo Cliff in Jianbing 尖兵, Renshou 仁壽; the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* of the tenth niche from the Late Tang period in Nanjiawan, Tongnan; the *Amituo jing* transformation tableau from the Late Tang period at Putuo Cliff in Qingxi 清溪, Neijiang 內江; the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* of the twenty-third niche from the Late Tang period at Erfo 二佛 Monastery in Rong 榮 County; the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* of the 245th niche from the Late Tang period in Beishan 北山, Dazu 大足; and the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* of the twenty-first niche from the Five Dynasties at Antang 庵堂 Monastery in Anyue 安岳. These six cases are situated in the region from the west bank of the Tuo River to the west bank of the Fu River.

The Renshou case study features relief sculptures of two white cranes carved symmetrically on the niche vault near the opening of the niche. The two white cranes are depicted with necks extended, both wings spread, both claws drawn in and flying towards the centre. Relief sculptures with five musical instruments are carved on the niche vault near the internal niche. Three out of the five instruments have streamers tied onto them (Figure 3). The Tongnan case study presents the niche vault filled with relief sculptures of treasure birds surrounded by auspicious clouds (Figure 2). They are arranged symmetrically on both sides and three levels. The two birds featured in the centre are also white cranes, similar to those found in the Renshou case study. It is likely to have been influenced by the case study from the Mid-Late Tang period, in the Renshou area near Chengdu.

The Neijiang case study features relief sculptures of three



FIG. 3 The ceiling of the transformation tableau of *Amitābha sūtras*, Niche 10 on the Qianfo Cliff 千佛岩 at Jianbing County 尖兵村 in Renshou 仁壽, from the Middle-Late Tang Dynasty.

heavenly palaces residing on top of auspicious clouds carved at the centre of the niche vault. Musical instruments also residing on top of auspicious clouds are carved between the palaces. Some of the musical instruments are tied with streamers. Carvings of *kalaviṅkas* are found on each side of the heavenly palaces (Figure 4). It is worth noting that the *kalaviṅkas* depicted here clearly display human upper bodies, wearing inverted triangular headdresses and with palms joined together before their chests. They have a sets of wings on their backs that are spread open. Their lower bodies appear to be wrapped in long skirts, with their feet not visible, and hence we do not know if they possess human feet or bird claws. Usually, *kalaviṅkas* are depicted as possessing human upper bodies with lower bodies of birds. The *kalaviṅka* images found here are clearly different. Furthermore, we have not yet found similar styles to this in other Sichuan Pure Land transformation tableaux from the Tang and Five Dynasties. However, the *kalaviṅka* images in the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* of the Southern Song period from the eighteenth niche at Mount Baoding 寶頂 in Dazu does display similar features.

The last three case studies all feature treasure birds and musical instruments tied with streamers carved on the niche vaults, and also



FIG. 4 The *kalavinka* on the ceiling of the transformation tableau of *Amitābha sūtras* at Putuo Cliff 普陀岩 in Qingxi 清溪 County, Neijiang 内江 City. Photography by Li Jingjie 李静杰.

each feature a two-headed bird on the central axis. They only differ in some minor details.

The Rong County case study features a relief sculpture of a two-headed bird carved at the centre of the niche vault. It has two heads joined to one body, with wings spread downwards and streamers tied to its body. The remaining space is filled with carvings of various types of musical instruments, all of which are tied with streamers. All the streamers flow in a downward direction (Figure 5). The Dazu case study features relief sculptures of seven treasure birds carved on the niche vault. Among them, a two-headed bird is positioned at the top point of the central axis, with the other six treasure birds symmetrically positioned to the two sides of the two-headed bird (Figure 6). The four birds on the two sides below the two-headed bird appear to be white cranes. Their heads are facing toward the two sides and they have slender and graceful figures. The two white cranes on the lower level have long streamers tied to their necks. The other two birds on the two sides have their heads turned towards the internal niche. They have short and plump figures, indicating that they are likely to be parrots. Also, a large, round lotus flower is found at the centre of the niche vault. Four flying celestials are depicted surrounding the lotus flower. A large auspicious cloud is floating on either side of the lotus flower. The auspicious clouds are filled with various kinds of musical instruments that have streamers tied to them. The Anyue case study features five treasure birds and various musical instruments carved on the niche vault (Figure 7). A two-headed bird standing on an auspicious cloud is carved at the centre. Its wings are spread out and upwards. Two sets of treasure birds are depicted symmetrically on either side of it. The set closest to the two-headed bird is also of white cranes.

The above three case studies depict two-headed birds, all of which have their heads facing inward, with their two beaks facing one another. Looking at the two-headed birds tied with streamers depicted at the centre of the niche vault, it is clear that the Dazu case study from the eastern region of Sichuan was influenced by the Rong County case study from the central region of Sichuan. Their layouts are meticulously designed and the carving shows exquisite technique. Looking at the layout and presentation of the treasure birds and the



FIG. 5 The ceiling of the transformation tableau of The *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, Niche 23 at the Erfo Temple 二佛寺 in Rong County 荣县, from the Late Tang Dynasty. Photography by Qi Qingyuan 齊慶媛.



FIG. 6 The ceiling of the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, Niche 245 at Beishan 北山 in Dazu 大足, from the Late Tang Dynasty.



FIG. 7 The ceiling of the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, Niche 21 at the Antang Temple 庵堂寺 in Anyue 安岳, from the Five Dynasties. Photography by Li Jingjie 李静杰.

musical instruments as a whole, it is clear that the Anyue case study from the Five Dynasties was influenced by the Dazu case study from the Late Tang period. However, the carving of the former is coarser. Hence, we propose that images of treasure birds depicted on niche vaults indicate a trend of development from the central region to the eastern region of Sichuan. Furthermore, transformation tableaux of the same type from the Hexi region only feature musical instruments that make music without being played in mid-air on the niche vault, but there are no depictions of treasure birds accompanied by musical instruments that are found at the centre of the vault. Hence, we can deduce that illustrations of treasure birds on niche vaults may indicate regional features of Sichuan Western Pure Land transformation tableaux from the Tang and Five Dynasties.

In general, tying streamers to the necks of birds is regarded as part of the Persian Sassanian cultural system.¹⁴ But of all the treasure bird images in the Western Pure Land transformation tableaux discussed above, only the Rong County and Dazu niche vault case studies feature treasure birds with streamers tied on their necks, the others do not. In addition, among the six case studies mentioned above, with the exception of the Neijiang case study, the other five all feature

¹⁴ Jin, 'Bosi sashan shi niaoque tuxiang zai silu yanxian de chuanbo yu fazhan', 180–208.

musical instruments that float in mid-air making music by themselves without being played. According to the *Guan Wuliangshou fo jing*, the rays of light that are emitted from the lapis lazuli treasure ground form a platform of light in the sky. On the platform are pavilions composed of one hundred treasures, the two sides of which have immeasurable musical instruments. A fresh breeze is produced from the rays of light which strikes the musical instruments, causing them to hang high in the sky and make music without being played. They proclaim the teachings of suffering, emptiness, impermanence and no self.¹⁵ The depictions of pavilions and musical instruments found on the

¹⁵ *Guan Wuliangshou fo jing*, T no. 360, vol. 12, 342a:

Over that ground of lapis lazuli there are golden ropes which criss-cross one another, with distinct and clear divisions of the seven treasures. Each of the treasures has rays of five hundred colours, and those rays look like flowers, or like the moon and stars. They hang high in the sky and form a platform of rays of light, with pavilions of ten million stories composed of a hundred treasures. Both sides of the tower are adorned with ten billion floral banners and immeasurable musical instruments. Eight kinds of fresh breeze are emitted from the rays of light and play those musical instruments, which then proclaim the teachings of suffering, emptiness, impermanence and not self. This is the contemplation of water, which is the second visualisation. 琉璃地上，以黃金繩維廁間錯，以七寶界分齊分明。一一寶中有五百色光，其光如花，又似星月，懸處虛空，成光明台，樓閣千萬百寶合成。於台兩邊兩邊各有百億花幢，無量樂器，以為莊嚴。八種清風從光明出，鼓此樂器，演說苦、空、無常、無我之音，是為水想，名第二觀。

Guan Wuliangshou fo jing, T no. 360, vol. 12, 342c:

The Buddha said to Ānanda and Vaidehī: 'In this land of many treasures, each area has towers of fifty billion treasures, and each tower has immeasurable divine musicians playing music. Also, there are musical instruments which hang in the sky like divine treasure banners, which make music by themselves without being played. All these sounds teach recollection of the Buddha, recollection of the Dharma and recollection of the Sangha'. 佛告阿難及韋提希：「眾寶國土，一一界上有五百億寶樓，其樓閣中有無量諸天，作天伎樂。又有樂器懸處虛空，如天寶幢不鼓自鳴。此眾音中，皆說念佛、念法、念比丘僧」。

Neijiang niche vault case study correspond to the descriptions in this passage. Therefore, we are inclined to believe that the depictions of treasure birds tied with streamers on the niche vaults was influenced by the depictions of musical instruments tied with streamers. Both the treasure birds and the musical instruments have long streamers tied onto them, the streamers flutter in mid-air, and appear to be blown by the cool breeze. Together, they illustrate vividly the ambience of the Pure Land: the gentle breeze blows, the treasure birds sing harmoniously. Together with musical instruments that produce music without being played, they simultaneously perform hundreds and thousands of kinds of music, making beautiful sounding tunes.

C. Middle to Upper Section of the Main Wall of the Internal Niche

The *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* in the 245th niche from the Late Tang period at Beishan, Dazu, is most representative in the depiction of treasure birds on the central axis of the middle to upper section of the main wall.

Two treasure birds are positioned on the upper central axis of this niche (Figures 8-1 and 8-2). One of them is a *kalaviṅka*, flying on top of the eaves of the projecting portico, at the lower level of the central pavilion situated on the main wall's upper section. It is facing forward, with palms joined before its chest and tail feathers pointing upwards. The other treasure bird is a peacock, positioned upside down below the *kalaviṅka*, in front of the projecting portico. Its head is pointing downward, its beak is holding on to Amitābha Buddha's treasure canopy, its wings are spread, its tail is erect upwards, and its tail feathers are spread open into a semi-circular shape, displaying an elegant pose. It strives to spread its wings, exhibiting its solid upper body and the tautness of its body. These details display the sculptors' excellent craftsmanship. The depictions of these two treasure birds and their positions in the transformation tableaux are very unique. We do not see similar characteristics in other works of the same period.

In the same niche, taking the above two treasure birds as the centre point, at the centre of the upper section of the main wall, there are three pairs of the same type of treasure birds distributed vertically and symmetrically on either side of the main pavilion. All



FIG. 8-1 The upper part of the front side of the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, Niche 245 at Beishan 北山 in Dazu 大足, from the Late Tang Dynasty.



FIG. 8-2 A part of the upper part on the front side of the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, Niche 245 at Beishan 北山 in Dazu 大足, from the Late Tang Dynasty



FIG. 9 The upper part of the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, Niche 137 at Qianfo Cliff 千佛岩 in Jiajiang 夾江 from the Late Tang Dynasty. *Jiajiang Qianfoyan* 夾江千佛岩 plate 155.

of them are facing toward the centre (Figure 8-1). This might be influenced by similar depictions in Western Pure Land transformation tableaux of the Middle to Late Tang period from the central region of Sichuan. In the central region of Sichuan, the Middle to Late Tang period *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* in the third niche at Pantuo 盤陀 Monastery in Qionglai 邛崃 in the Min River basin, as well as the Tang period *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* in the 115th, 132nd and 137th niches at Qianfo Cliff, Jiajiang 夾江 (Figure 9), all position a pair of treasure birds symmetrically on either side of the central pavilion with their heads facing toward the centre.

On the central axis, on two sides below the upside down peacock, on the left and right sides of Amitābha Buddha's treasure canopy, a pair of *kalaviṅkas* holding musical instruments are depicted (Figure 8-1). On one hand, the position of these two *kalaviṅkas* forms a straight line with the three treasure birds on the same side on the upper section of the main wall. On the other hand, they also make up a group of treasure birds together with the upside down peacock on the upper part. This set of treasure birds surrounds Amitābha Buddha's treasure canopy on three sides and occupies the key position at the centre of the middle to upper section. Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva are positioned on either side. Taking the set of treasure birds above the central treasure canopy of Amitābha Buddha as the centre point, above their treasure

canopies is a set of treasure bird images made up of an upside down peacock and two *kalavīṅkas* playing musical instruments are carved on either side (Figure 10). These six *kalavīṅkas* are carved on the auspicious clouds. Their upper bodies are wearing Bodhisattva attire, with treasure headdresses on their heads, their necks are adorned with gem necklaces and their hands hold musical instruments. Their lower bodies are bird bodies with wings and tails spread upwards. The silk scarves around their heads and tails float upwards. The middle three hold copper cymbals in their hands while the other two play a flute and *sheng* 笙 [free reed wind instrument]. They perform heavenly music while riding on the clouds. Employing depictions of an upside down peacock above each of the canopies of the Three Sages of the Western Pure Land is not seen in other previous cases. However, positioning *kalavīṅkas* between the canopies of the Three Sages of the Western Pure land is similar to the Late Tang period *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* in the ninety-ninth niche at Qianfo Cliff in Jiajiang in the central region of Sichuan (Figure 11).¹⁶ Both of the *kalavīṅkas* from these two case studies wear Bodhisattva attire on their upper bodies and are covered with rounded silk scarves. They differ in the representations of their lower bodies. The Jiajiang case study features the tail lowered down while the Dazu case study features the tail spread upwards. From this, we deduce that the *kalavīṅka* image from that niche absorbed the earlier constructed image from the central region of Sichuan as its basis and developed additional new characteristics. Its development might be influenced by new cultural elements or new sketches.

D. Middle to Lower Section of the Internal Niche

On the middle to lower section of the main wall of Sichuan Tang and Five Dynasties Pure Land transformation tableaux, below the Three Sages of the Western Pure Land, there are mainly depictions of reception for rebirth scenes. Elements that make up the reception for rebirth scenes include treasure lotus ponds with lotus flowers, lotus

¹⁶ Sichuan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, *Jiajiang Qianfo yan*, 259, Figure 148.



FIG. 10 The *kalavinka*-birds at the two sides of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara's canopy from the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, Niche 245 at Beishan 北山 in Dazu 大足, from the Late Tang Dynasty.



FIG. 11 The Drawing of *kalavinka*-birds at the two sides of one Bodhisattva's canopy from Niche 99 at Qianfo Cliff 千佛岩 in Jiajiang 夾江 from the Middle-Late Tang Dynasty. *Jiajiang Qianfoyan* 夾江千佛岩, figure 148.

leaves, flowing water and transformative reborn boys in the lotus ponds. There are also arched bridges across the lotus ponds, treasure birds, musicians, dancers, receiving Bodhisattvas and empty lotus seats for receiving the deceased. Among these, the treasure birds are often shown prominently in the central position in the reception for rebirth scenes, due to the lively wondrous sounds they produce and their role in proclaiming the marvellous Dharma. Therefore, the treasure birds that are located on the lower section of the central axis and also shown grouped in the reception for rebirth scenes are the most prominent feature of treasure bird images in Tang and Five Dynasties Pure Land transformation tableaux from Sichuan.

Treasure birds that are depicted on the lower part of the central axis are either a single two-headed bird or a pair of *kalaviṅkas*. On this foundation, a trend gradually developed consisting of depicting a front-facing two-headed bird at the centre with a pair of *kalaviṅkas* facing sideways, positioned symmetrically on two sides. In the following, we will analyse the trends of development of the treasure bird images on the lower section of the central axis.

First, there are a total of four case studies that feature a pair of *kalaviṅkas* on the lower section of the main wall. All of these *kalaviṅkas* are holding musical instruments in their hands, and they stand facing towards the centre. The four case studies are the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* of the Middle to Late Tang period in the third niche at Pantuo Monastery in Qionglai (Figure 12); the Tang period *Amituo jing* transformation tableau at Qianfo Cliff in Jianbing, Renshou; the *Amituo jing* transformation tableau from the High Tang period at Chongxiang Monastery in Guang'an (Figure 13) and the transformation tableaux of *Western Pure Land Sūtras* from the High Tang period at Qianfo Cliff in Tongnan. In comparison to other case studies, transformation tableaux from these four case studies are older and located further north. The first two case studies are located in the central region of Sichuan, near Chengdu. They feature *kalaviṅkas* and transformative reborn boys standing on lotus seed pod seats that grow in the lotus ponds. The last two case studies are located in the eastern region right next to the northern region of Sichuan. They feature *kalaviṅkas* on the two sides of the thick lotus stem base that connects to the lotus seat that the



FIG. 12 The lower part of the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, Niche 3 at the Pantuo temple 盤陀寺 in Qionglai 邛崃, under the Middle-Late Tang Dynasty. Photography by Li Jingjie 李靜杰.



FIG. 13 The *kalavinka*-birds at the lower part of the transformation tableau of *Amitābha sūtras*, at the Chongxiang Temple 冲相寺 in Guangan 廣安, from the High Tang Dynasty. Photography by Li Jingjie 李靜杰.

main figure, Amitābha Buddha, stands on. The representations of *kalavinkas* in these four case studies are similar, yet their actual positions in their respective transformation tableaux clearly present two distinct representations specific to the central and eastern regions of Sichuan. This might be related to the use of different sketches when constructing the main images.

In addition, the Late Tang period *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* in the fifteenth niche at Qianfo Cliff in Gaosheng, Anyue, features a pair of *kalavīṅkas* on the two sides of Amitābha Buddha's pedestal (Figures 14-1 and 14-2). This pair of *kalavīṅkas* are depicted in flying postures, their upper human bodies are carved as facing the front toward the viewer. Their legs, wings and tails are pointing upward, with their heads no longer visible. Their two arms are bent in front of the chests as though they are holding musical instruments. In this case study, a pair of musician *kalavīṅkas* are also depicted. However, the *kalavīṅkas* here are presented as facing forward, which is slightly different to the four case studies above featuring *kalavīṅkas* facing sideways. In addition, by depicting them on the two sides of Amitābha Buddha's pedestal, on the central axis, it provides a place for the *kalavīṅkas* to be independently showcased. This case study is from the west bank of the Fu River in the eastern region of Sichuan, near Tongnan. It should have been influenced by the two case studies from Guang'an and Tongnan mentioned above.

In addition, the practice of depicting a front-facing two-headed bird standing on the arched bridge in the middle to lower section of the main wall was very popular in Sichuan Western Pure Land transformation tableaux from the Tang and Five Dynasties. However, this is only seen in Western Pure land transformation tableaux that are in mature form, and is not found in the early stage of *Amituo jing* transformation tableaux. Case studies of this type include the *Amituo jing* transformation tableau from the High Tang to the Middle Tang period in the thirty-ninth niche at Liuzui 劉嘴 in Danling 丹棱 (Figure 15); the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* of the Mid-Tang period in the third and seventh niches at Niujiaozhai 牛角寨 in Renshou; the Late Tang period *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* in the niche at Mount Jigong in Danling; the *Amituo jing* transformation tableau from the Middle to Late Tang period in Niuxian Monastery in Jiajiang (Figure 16); the *Amituo jing* transformation tableau from the Late Tang period in the 220th niche (fragmented) in Niuxian Monastery in Jiajiang; the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* from the Late Tang period in the eleventh niche (fragmented) in Niuxian Monastery in Jiajiang; the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* from the Late Tang period in the 115th, 132nd and 137th niches (fragmented) at Qianfo Cliff in Jiajiang; the *Visu-*

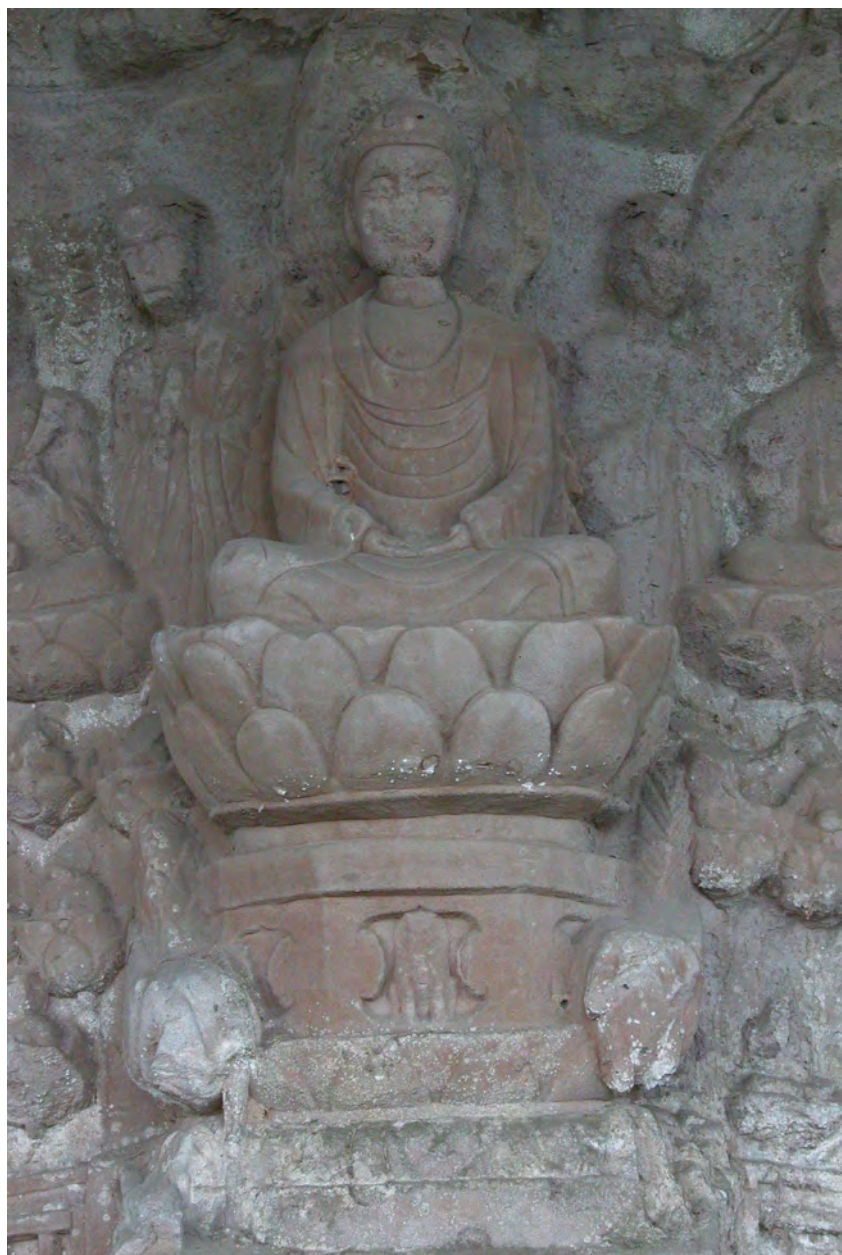


FIG. 14-1 The *kalaviṅka*-birds from the transformation tableau of *Amitābha sūtras*, at the Qianfo 千佛 Cliff in Gaosheng 高升, Anyue 安岳 from the Late Tang Dynasty. Photography by Li Jingjie 李静杰.



FIG. 14-2 The *kalaviṅka*-birds at the right part of the transformation tableau of *Amitābha sūtras*, at the Qianfo 千佛 Cliff in Gaosheng 高升, Anyue 安岳 from the Late Tang Dynasty. Photography by Li Jingjie 李静杰.



FIG. 15 The lower part along the axis of the transformation tableau of *Amitābha sūtras*, Niche 39 at Liuzui 劉嘴 in Danling 丹陵, from the High-Middle Tang Dynasty.



FIG. 16 The lower part along the axis of the transformation tableau of *Amitābha sūtras*, at the Niuxian Temple 牛仙寺 in Jiajiang 夾江, from the Middle-Late Tang Dynasty.



FIG. 17 The lower part of the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, at the Longju Temple 龍居寺 in Suining 遂寧, from the Late Tang Dynasty. Photography by Yang Xiao 楊筱.

alizing Amitāyus Tableaux from the Late Tang period in the 245th niche (fragmented) in Beishan, Dazu; the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* from the Five Dynasties in the twenty-first niche at Antang Monastery in Anyue; the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* from the Late Tang period at Longju Monastery in Suining 遂寧 (Figure 17) and the *Amituo jing* transformation tableau from the Late Tang period at Fanhui Monastery in Suining (fragmented). These case studies are distributed on the two banks of the Min River in the central Sichuan region and on the west bank of the Fu River in the eastern Sichuan region. In summary, case studies from the Middle to Late Tang period are mainly concentrated in the northern Sichuan regions of Renshou, Danling, Jiajiang and Leshan 樂山. Case studies from the Late Tang period to Five Dynasties are mainly concentrated in the eastern Sichuan regions of Dazu, Anyue and Suining. We can thus see the trend of development from the central region to the eastern region of Sichuan.

In these case studies, treasure birds depicted in the lower section of the central axis are generally paired with the arched bridges that are built across the lotus ponds. They are either carved on the surface of the arched bridges or depicted as standing on the arched bridge. Most of the depictions are standing and facing forward with their wings spread out. Though some of the treasure bird carvings are damaged, with only their spread wings and standing claws visible,

completely intact treasure bird carvings are mainly of two-headed birds. There is the exception of the *Amituo jing* transformation tableau from the High Tang period in the forty-fifth niche at Lingyun Monastery in Leshan, which features a single-headed treasure bird on the lower section of the central axis. The treasure bird is standing and facing forward. Based on the fragmented traces of its arms still visible before its chest, we can deduce that it is possibly a *kalaviṅka* (Figure 18). On this basis, we deduce that treasure bird carvings found on the lower section of the central axis that are damaged in their upper parts, are more likely to be two-headed birds. However, we cannot exclude the possibility that they are *kalaviṅkas*.

Interestingly, among the Tang and Five Dynasties Western Pure Land transformation tableaux from the Hexi region, there are also case studies where a standing, front-facing treasure bird is depicted on the lower section of the central axis. However, these treasure birds are either peacocks or *kalaviṅkas*, there are no representations of two-headed birds. Case studies that feature a peacock at the centre include the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* from the High Tang period on the north wall of the sixty-sixth cave at Mogao Caves,¹⁷ the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* from the Mid-Tang period on the south wall of the 360th cave at Mogao Caves¹⁸ and the *Amituo jing* transformation tableau on the south wall of the 237th cave at Mogao Caves (Figure 19).¹⁹ The first two case studies feature peacocks that are facing slightly to the side, and the last case study features the peacock's tail facing forward. Transformation tableaux that depict a standing, front-facing *kalaviṅka* at the centre include the *Amituo jing* transformation tableau from the Five Dynasties on the South wall of the sixty-first cave at Mogao Caves (Figure 20).²⁰ Hence, compared with Dunhuang case studies, treasure birds are depicted more prominently on the lower section of the central axis in the Tang and Five Dynasties Western Pure Land transformation tableaux from Sichuan.

¹⁷ Shi, *Dunhuang shiku quanji* 5, 155, Figure 133.

¹⁸ Liu, *Dunhuang shiku quanji* 19, 125, Figure 108.

¹⁹ Shi, *Dunhuang shiku quanji* 5, 222, Figure 216.

²⁰ Liu, *Dunhuang shiku quanji* 19, 240, Figure 220.



FIG.18 A part of the axle wire from the transformation tableau of *Amitābha sūtras*, at Niche 45 in Lingyun 凌雲 Temple, Leshan 樂山.



FIG. 19 The treasure birds from the transformation tableau of *Amitābha sūtras*, on the south wall of Cave 237 in Mogao Grotto from the Middle Tang Dynasty. *Amituo jing huaquan* 阿彌陀經畫卷, plate 216.



FIG. 20 The *kalavinka*-bird from the transformation tableau of *Amitābha sūtras*, on the south wall of Cave 61 in Mogao Grotto from the Five Dynasties. *Dongwu huajuan* 動物畫卷, plate 220.

Furthermore, the Tang period *Amituo jing* transformation tableau at Shifo Valley in Renshou, near Chengdu in the northern Sichuan region, features a treasure bird facing sideways, positioned directly below the main figure, Amitābha Buddha, on the lower section of the central axis. The positioning of this treasure bird is unique among this kind of Sichuan transformation tableaux. The *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* from the High Tang period on the north wall of the 215th cave at Mogao Caves in Dunhuang features a standing peacock facing sideways directly below Amitābha Buddha.²¹ These two transformation tableaux are similar in this respect. Such similarity in depiction could be explained by similar treasure bird sketches being used during construction.

Lastly, taking the above two arrangements as the basis, transformation tableaux from the Late Tang period in the southern central region of Sichuan further developed, depicting a standing, forward-facing two-headed bird at the centre and positioning a standing pair of sideway-facing *kalavīṅkas* on two sides. Case studies featuring these arrangements include the *Amituo jing* transformation tableau in the niche from Jinjing 金井 and the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* from the Late Tang period in the twelfth niche in the eastern district of Longdong 龍洞 in Rong County (Figure 21). The heads of the treasure birds from the former are damaged, but their bodies are still intact. Even though carvings from the latter are severely weathered, the two-headed bird image in the centre is still vaguely visible, and the treasure birds on the two sides still have traces of their two arms, indicating that they are *kalavīṅkas*. The representation is clearly a combination of the northern region style of depicting a pair of *kalavīṅkas* and the central region style of depicting a front-facing two-headed bird image. Compared with images of these two styles, the present two case studies under discussion are from a slightly later period and they are located more to the south. Hence, this shows the trend of development from the north to the south. In addition, these two case studies also depict treasure birds shown with Bodhisattvas on lotus stalks as a group on the lower to middle section of the main

²¹ Shi, *Dunhuang shiku quanji* 5, 154, Figure 132.



FIG. 21 The lower part along the axis of the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, Niche 12 at the east district of Longdong 龍洞 in Rong County 榮縣, from the Late Tang Dynasty. Photography by Qi Qingyuan 齊慶媛.

wall. These two case studies are relatively close to each other, indicating distinct regional characteristics.

On this basis, Western Pure Land transformation tableaux from the Five Dynasties in eastern Sichuan region developed the representation of three front-facing *kalaviṅkas* on the lower section of the central axis. Case studies of this type include the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* from the Five Dynasties in the first and fifth niches at Baoguo Monastery in Lezhi 樂至 (Figure 22). A front-facing *kalaviṅka* standing in the middle of the arched bridge is situated at the base of the central axis. Its upper body is in Bodhisattva attire, both hands holding a circular-shape streamer, and its wings and tail are spread upwards. Two *kalaviṅkas* riding on clouds are depicted above the arched bridge. They are represented as facing slightly towards the centre, both hands playing musical instruments before their chests, with wings pointing downward but tails upward. The style of representation for the *kalaviṅkas* in these two case studies is a continuation of previous case studies. However, the image of these *kalaviṅkas* is clearly influenced by the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* of the Late Tang period in the 245th niche in Beishan, Dazu (Figure 10). Furthermore, these two *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* are both located at Baoguo Monastery in Lezhi. They are almost identical in their representation of treasure birds and the images as a whole. This clearly indicates that they were constructed based on the same sketch.

(2) Images of Treasure Bird on the Two Sides

Besides the eye-catching treasure bird images depicted on the central axis, treasure bird images represented on the two sides are also equally unique. They reflect regional characteristics and the dissemination circumstances of the sketches. The following section conducts an analysis in two aspects, treasure birds and architecture, and treasure birds and transformative birth in lotus flowers.

First, representing treasure birds and architecture together as a group.

In Western Pure Land transformation tableaux from the Middle to Late Tang period from the Min River basin in the central Sichuan region, images of peacocks grouped with treasure banners are com-



FIG. 22 The lower part along the axis of the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, Niche 5 at Baoguo 報國 temple in Lezhi 樂至. Photography by Li Guanqi 李冠畿.

monly represented. Such arrangement in representation cannot be found in the eastern Sichuan region. Case studies of this type include the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* from the Middle to Late Tang period at the ninety-ninth niche at Qianfo Cliff in Jiajiang (Figure 23); the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* from the Late Tang period in the 115th, 132nd and 137th niches at Qianfo Cliff in Jiajiang

(Figure 24); the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* from the Late Tang period in Guanzimen 關子門, Pujiang 蒲江 and the *Amituo jing* transformation tableau from the Late Tang period in the 220th niche at Niuxian Monastery in Jiajiang (Figure 25). Among them, the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* from the Middle to Late Tang period in the ninety-ninth niche at Qianfo Cliff in Jiajiang is the oldest. It features peacocks and treasure banners on the outer sides of the central Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva figures. Later on, this kind of representation influenced the three *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* from the Late Tang period at Qianfo Cliff in Jiajiang and also the nearby *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* from the Late Tang period in Guanzimen, Pujiang. In these transformation tableaux, the peacocks and treasure banners are moved from the centre to above the two flanking-attendant Bodhisattvas' canopies. Later on, this style of representation further influenced the *Amituo jing* transformation tableau from the Late Tang period in the 220th niche at Niuxian Monastery, which is also located in Jiajiang. It moved the peacocks and treasure banners that were above the canopies of the two flanking-attendant Bodhisattvas to positions side by side with the heavenly palaces and pavilions, on the upper sections of the walls on two sides.

Furthermore, the three *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* from the Late Tang period at Qianfo Cliff in Jiajiang and the *Amituo jing* transformation tableau from the Late Tang period in the 220th niche at Niuxian Monastery in Jiajiang all depict *kalaviṅkas* next to the pavilions on the left and side walls. Such representations are not seen in the eastern Sichuan region. The *kalaviṅkas*' upper bodies wear Bodhisattva attire, they are decorated with streamers and their hands appear to be holding something before their chests. It is difficult to distinguish if their legs are human legs or bird claws. The three *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* from the Late Tang period at Qianfo Cliff feature a pair of *kalaviṅkas* on both sides of the pavilions situated on the left and right walls. The *kalaviṅkas* are depicted as lifting their legs and flying toward the centre (Figure 26). The Niuxian case study features a *kalaviṅka* carved inside each of the pavilions situated on the left and right walls, close to the niche opening. The *kalaviṅkas* represented here are fewer in number and their bodies appear heavy



FIG. 23 The treasure birds from the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, Niche 99 at Qianfo Cliff 千佛岩 in Jiajiang 夾江 from the Middle-Late Tang Dynasty. *Jiajiang Qianfoyan* 夾江千佛岩 figure 106.



FIG. 24 The treasure bird on the Bodhisattva's canopy from the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, Niche 137 at Qianfo Cliff 千佛岩 in Jiajiang 夾江 from the Late Tang Dynasty.



FIG. 25 The right wall of the transformation tableau of *Amitābha sūtras*, Niche 220 at Niuxian 牛仙 Temple in Jiajiang 夾江 from the Late Tang Dynasty.



FIG. 26 The right wall of the transformation tableau of *Amitābha sūtras*, Niche 115 at Qianfo Cliff 千佛岩 in Jiajiang 夾江 from the Late Tang Dynasty.

and weighed down, completely different to the light and graceful depictions found in the earlier three case studies (Figure 25).

From the analysis of peacocks and *kalavinkas* depicted in Western Pure Land transformation tableaux from the Late Tang period in the Jiajiang region, it is clear that the three *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* at Qianfo Cliff in Jiajiang influenced the *Amituo jing* transformation tableau from the Late Tang period in the 220th niche at Niuxian Monastery in Jiajiang. In addition, the style of representation of the treasure birds found in these case studies is not seen in the eastern Sichuan region, and hence it reflects a regional characteristic unique to Jiajiang. Overall, images from the three *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* from the Late Tang period in Qianfo Cliff, Jiajiang, are uniformly represented. Furthermore, the three are distributed across the same cliff face, indicating that they were constructed at the same time, in the same location and based on the same sketch, but funded by different donors. This means that that particular sketch was very popular at the time and was influential in the Jiajiang region. Thus, it is reasonable to deduce that the *Amituo jing* transformation tableau from the Late Tang period in the 220th niche at Niuxian Monastery in Jiajiang was also modelled on that sketch.

Second, representations of treasure birds and transformative birth in lotus flowers as a group should also be categorised as part of the treasure birds and reception for rebirth scenes group. This includes depicting treasure birds with lotus stalk Bodhisattvas and treasure birds with transformative reborn boys.

Case studies that feature treasure birds together with Bodhisattvas on lotus stalks include the Tang Dynasty *Amituo jing* transformation tableau from Shifo Valley in Renshou (Figure 27) and the *Amituo jing* transformation tableau from the High Tang period in the sixth niche at Shisunshan 石筍山 in Qionglai. Both case studies feature many small figures of Bodhisattvas each sitting on the stalk of a lotus flower on the right wall, each of them in different postures. Below Bodhisattvas on lotus stalks, a *kalavinka* is depicted standing on the stalk of a lotus flower with palms joined before its chest and facing out of the niche. The first case study features *kalavinkas* in the centre on the lower section of the right wall. Carvings of their heads are well-preserved, their legs are crossed with one in front and the other



FIG. 27 A part of the right wall from the transformation tableau of *Amitābha sūtras*, Niche 2 at Shifo 石佛 Valley in Renshou 仁壽, dated the sixth year of Yuanhe 元和 Era (811) in Middle Tang Dynasty.

behind, standing on a lotus seed pod facing to one side, with their wings and tails lifted up and back. The second case study features *kalaviṅkas* on the left corner of the right wall. The heads are no longer intact, both legs are apart, and each one stands on the stalk of a lotus seed pod and faces sideways. Their wings are spread behind them, and their tails point upward forming a curve.

Case studies that feature treasure birds together with transformative reborn boys as a group in the middle sections of the left and right sides of a niche image include the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* from the Mid-Tang period at Fabao Monastery in Meishan 眉山 (Figure 28) and the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* from the Late Tang period at Mount Jigong in Danling (Figure 29). The former depicts the long stalk of a lotus bud on the outer side of Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva. The lotus bud has already opened, and inside the bud a transformative reborn person is depicted, showing his upper body with both palms joined in front of his chest. At the same time, a treasure bird is depicted standing



FIG. 28 A part of the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, at the Fabao Temple 法寶寺 in Meishan 眉山, from the Middle Tang Dynasty.

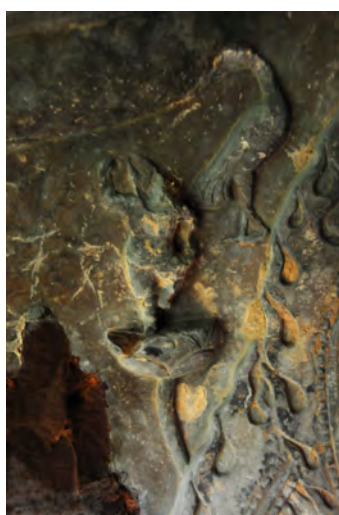


FIG. 29 A part of the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, at Mount Jigong 雞公 in Danling 丹棱, dated the fifth year of the Huichang 會昌 era (845) from the Late Tang Dynasty.

facing the side on top of the lotus bud. It is facing the transformative reborn person, with its neck stretched out and beak pointing up, depicting the image of energetic chirping. This is exactly the strongest evidence showing that treasure birds proclaim the Dharma for the transformative reborn person. The latter depicts a treasure bird standing facing sideways on the outer edges of each of Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattvas' halos. The treasure birds have their heads turned facing toward the spontaneously reborn, who are moving and dancing on the lotus buds. These two case studies are similar in their depiction of the treasure birds with the spontaneously reborn as a group. Both depict treasure bird images in the centres of the left and right niche walls. They are also closely located to each other geographically. It is possible that they were influenced by similar sketches.

Case studies that feature treasure birds with spontaneous rebirth in a lotus flower as a group on the lower section on the left and right sides of the niches include the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* from the Middle to Late Tang period in the third niche at Pantuo Monastery in Qionglai (Figure 30); the *Amituo jing* transformation tableau from the Mid-Tang period in the thirty-ninth niche in Liuzui, Danling; and the *Amituo jing* transformation tableau from the Late Tang period at Fanhui 梵慧 Monastery in Suining. The base sections of all three case studies feature treasure ponds, and treasure birds are positioned on the lower sections of the left and right walls (at the two ends of the treasure ponds). The first case study features a treasure bird standing on a lotus seed pod on the lower section of the right wall. It is facing out of the niche, with its head held high, chest sticking out and chirping energetically. A spontaneously reborn boy sitting on the stalk of a lotus flower is depicted behind the treasure bird. The second case study features a treasure bird on each side of the lower section on the left and right walls. The treasure bird on the right appears to be a peacock while the one on the left appears to be a *kalaviṅka*. They are facing toward the arched bridge above the lotus pond. The third case study features a peacock on the lower section of the left wall. It is standing on a lotus seed pod that grows from the lotus pond. It, too, is depicted chirping energetically. A square seat positioned on the stalk of a lotus flower is found beside the peacock.



FIG. 30 A part of the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, Niche 3 at Pantuo 盤陀 temple in Qionglai 邛崃 from the Middle-Late Tang Dynasty. Photography by Li Jingjie 李靜杰.

It functions as the lotus seat for welcoming the reborn person, which should symbolise the spontaneously reborn boy.

3. Meaning and Significance of Treasure Bird Images

In Sichuan Pure Land transformation tableaux from the Tang and Five Dynasties, images of treasure birds are depicted either as part of the natural environment or in reception for rebirth scenes. Hence, we can conclude that images of treasure birds serve two kinds of functions. First, they are depicted as part of the Pure Land's natural scenery, where the images of treasure birds serve the function of embellishing the majestic atmosphere in the Pure Land and proclaiming the Dharma. Second, depictions of treasure birds in reception for rebirth scenes serve the function of proclaiming various Dharma teachings to the deceased, assisting them to promptly eradicate their transgressions and enter the Pure Land through transformative birth in a lotus flower in a seven-treasure pond, and enter the idealised Pure Land of a Buddha world.

As one of the elements of the natural environment of the Pure Land, treasure birds come in many different species and types, as well as various poses and positions. In Western Pure Land transformation tableaux, they may appear in the sky, near the heavenly palaces and pavilions, as well as on lotus stems and stalks. While they may be distributed in many locations, they mostly appear in the middle to upper section, which corresponds to the treasure birds' natural ability to fly. Treasure birds that fly in the sky praise the assembly where Amitābha Buddha teaches the Dharma. Their mournful and sincere calls inspire the minds of the assembly of devotees to recite the name of the Buddha. Day and night they sing and call without stopping, proclaiming the five faculties, seven factors of awakening, eight-fold noble path, practices of the Bodhisattvas and other such teachings, as well as the content of the Pure Land scriptures. Together with the treasure trees and musical instruments which make music without being played, the treasure birds produce marvellous sounds and sing the wonderful Dharma, thus exhorting devotees to recollect the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Treasure birds grouped in reception for rebirth scenes are usually critically positioned in the centre of those scenes. Even without being stated, their importance is clear. This being the case, what function do the treasure birds actually have in these reception for rebirth scenes? Also, what relationships do they have with the other elements of these scenes? It is necessary to first make a full analysis of reception for rebirth scenes in Pure Land transformation tableaux from Sichuan in the Tang and Five Dynasties, and only then can we make a full and accurate explanation of the significance of these treasure birds.

Rebirth scenes include two parts: the reception of the reborn people and transformative birth in a lotus flower. Reception scenes are made up of Bodhisattvas who either hold long pennants or a treasure pedestal in their hands to meet and guide the deceased; musicians who play various kinds of musical instruments; dancers dancing; treasure birds; other offering Bodhisattvas and so forth. They show the setting of an exciting and vibrant occasion which is majestic and lively with music and dance. Scenes of transformative birth in a lotus flower are made up of lotus ponds of the seven treasures, transformative reborn boys, treasure boats and the like. In general, recep-

tion scenes and spontaneous rebirth scenes are connected together by a central arched bridge, and together they form the whole rebirth scene. Furthermore, the individual elements which comprise the rebirth scenes have relationships in terms of their grouping and mutual correspondence. The hope of the reborn person is to be transformative reborn as a boy in a lotus flower on a seven treasure lotus pond, and from there enter into the majestic Land of Ultimate Bliss, where he will see and venerate Amitābha Buddha. Below, we will analyse the elements of each group of the rebirth scenes, and from these discuss the entire significance of these rebirth scenes. Finally, we will explain the function of the treasure birds within these scenes.

From the bottom to the top along the central axis, rebirth scenes have positioned an arched bridge, treasure birds, empty lotus flower seats or transformative reborn boys, Bodhisattvas, musicians and so forth. Symmetrically to the sides are distributed the musicians, Bodhisattvas, treasure boats, transformative reborn boys and so on.

According to the nine grades of rebirth as recorded in the *Guan Wuliangshou fo jing*, at the moment of death, Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva will together come holding a treasure seat to welcome the deceased. In Sichuan Tang and Five Dynasties Pure Land transformation tableaux, there are four case studies where treasure birds and a lotus seat are shown grouped together directly below the main figure of Amitābha Buddha. They are the *Amituo jing* transformation tableau of the forty-fifth niche at Lingyun Monastery at Leshan, from the High Tang (Figure 18); the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* niche of Mount Jigong in Danling during the Late Tang (Figure 31); and the two Five Dynasties *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* of the first niche and fifth niche at Baoguo Monastery in Lezhi (Figure 22). In the case study from Leshan, directly beneath the main figure of Amitābha Buddha is carved a standing treasure bird facing forward. To the two sides of the treasure bird are carved a pair of kneeling Bodhisattvas facing the centre, holding Amitābha Buddha's lotus seat. The central treasure bird's legs are splayed wide as it stands with its strong and muscular body in a heroic pose. It is speculated that the lotus seat held by the two leading bodhisattvas to welcome the reborn person is combined with the lotus seat of the main figure of Amitābha Buddha. The Danling



FIG. 31 A part of the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, at Mount Jigong 雞公 in Danling 丹陵, dated the fifth year of the Huichang 會昌 era (845) from the Late Tang Dynasty.

case study has a light carving of a two-headed bird on the surface of the arched bridge, and after boarding the arched bridge, the reborn person will face an empty lotus seat, surrounded by musicians all around. In the two case studies from Lezhi, distinctively carved on the arched bridge from bottom to top are a standing *kalaviṅka* facing forward, a pair of Bodhisattvas holding a treasure seat, an empty lotus seat with a backing screen, a pair of kneeling offering figures, a pair of musician *kalaviṅkas* and a pair of dancers. The two Bodhisattvas holding the treasure seat unmistakably represent the scene of two Bodhisattvas holding a treasure seat that come to lead the deceased. Except for the first case study, the empty lotus seats are positioned directly beneath Amitābha Buddha.

Directly beneath Amitābha Buddha, apart from showing the

empty lotus seat which receives the deceased, a transformative reborn boy is shown facing Amitābha Buddha with his back to the viewer. Case studies of this type include the Middle to Late Tang *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* in the ninety-ninth and 132nd niches at Qianfo Cliff, as well as the Late Tang niche with *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* at Xianglongshan 翔龍山 in Neijiang (Figure 32). In the last case study from Neijiang in particular, at each of the two sides of the transformative reborn boy is a treasure bird standing facing the boy. Tang Dynasty Pure Land transformation tableaux from the Hexi region also have case studies where directly below Amitābha Buddha the figure of a transformative birth youth is shown facing Amitābha Buddha with his back to the viewer. For example, the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* from the eastern wall of the 148th cave in the Dunhuang Mogao Caves from the High Tang, from the northern wall of the 197th cave from the Mid-Tang and from the southern wall of the twenty-fifth cave in the Yulin Caves from the Mid-Tang. Furthermore, next to the reborn youth in the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* from the eastern wall of the 148th cave in Mogao Caves from the High Tang is the inscription 'Highest rebirth in the highest grade' 上品上生 (Figure 33).²² From this we can deduce that the reborn figures that appear directly below Amitābha Buddha on the main wall of the Tang Dynasty Sichuan Pure Land transformation tableaux should also be the highest rebirth in the highest grade. That Pure Land transformation tableaux from the two locations in Dunhuang and Sichuan show the same images for the highest rebirth in the highest grade tells us that the Pure Land transformation tableaux from these two regions possibly originated from the same sketch. Also, the text *Fo shuo amituo jiangjing wen* 佛說阿彌陀講經文 [Text on Lectures on the Amitābha *Sūtra*] (Pelliot 3210) records: 'The transformative reborn boy on the golden bridge, five-coloured clouds hold and rock the treasure seat, with palms joined chant only the name of Immeasurable Life, and the root of eight billion aeons of transgressions will be removed' (化生童子 上金橋, 五色雲擎寶座搖。合掌唯稱無量壽, 八十億劫罪根除).²³ By combining the content of the

²² Shi, *Dunhuang shiku quanji* 5, 191, Figure 181.



FIG. 32 A part of the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, at Mount Xianglong 翔龍 in Neijiang 內江, from the Late Tang Dynasty. Photography by Li Jingjie 李靜杰.

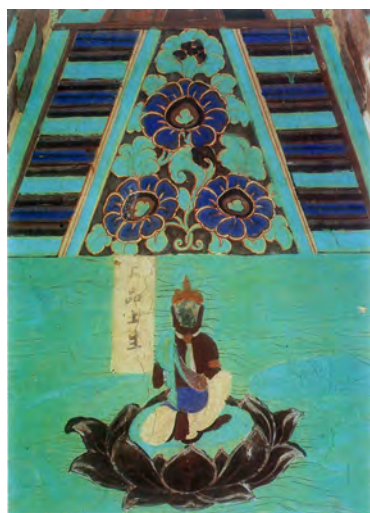


FIG. 33 A part of the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, on the east wall of Cave 148 in Mogao Grotto from the High Tang Dynasty. *Amituo jing huaquan* 阿彌陀經畫卷, plate 181.

textual sources with the images, we can see that the transformative reborn boy on the arched bridge who faces Amitābha Buddha with his back to the viewer represents the deceased after transformative rebirth on a lotus flower as he ascends the golden bridge (arched bridge) and sees Amitābha Buddha. That the transformative reborn boy is located in the position corresponding to the empty lotus seat on one hand shows the two Bodhisattvas holding the treasure seat who come to lead the deceased, and on the other hand the empty lotus seat implies the highest grade of rebirth, showing the donors' hopes and wishes to be reborn in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss.²⁴

Apart from these, also on the central axis we can see treasure pagodas situated directly beneath Amitābha Buddha. Case studies include the Tang *Amituo jing* transformation tableau niche at Niuxian Monastery in Jiajiang (Figure 16) and the Late Tang *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* niche at Xianglongshan in Neijiang (Figure 32). In the former, the treasure pagoda is located above the two-headed bird and arched bridge, and there are two Bodhisattvas kneeling in worship of the treasure pagoda. In the latter, the treasure pagoda is lightly carved above the arched bridge and is situated below the treasure bird and transformative reborn boy of the highest rebirth in the highest grade. In general, pagodas are seen as a symbol of the accumulation of merit. Furthermore, in the three classes of rebirth in the *Guan Wuliangshou jing* it is recorded that the deceased should construct pagodas in order to accumulate merit and make vows to be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.²⁵ In these two case studies,

²³ Huang, *Dunhuang baozang*, 585.

²⁴ Manuscript 306 from the Dunhuang scripture cave, presently held at the Tianjin Museum of Art, has a record from the first year of Yongchun 永淳 Era (682), which states the hopes of the donor: 'May my departed mother, myself and others be born in the Buddha lands, received in a lotus flower on a treasure seat.' 願亡考妣、己身等、生諸佛國、蓮花受形寶座之上。 Shi, *Dunhuang shiku quanji* 5, 93.

²⁵ *Wuliangshou jing*, T no. 366, vol. 12, 272b:

As for the middle grade, the gods and humans of the worlds of the ten

pagodas are situated along the central axis of the rebirth scenes. This emphasises the doctrinal teaching that devotees need to construct and worship pagodas in the present life in order to accumulate merit, so that in afterlife they can be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss and see Amitābha Buddha.

Many Bodhisattvas are distributed throughout the rebirth scenes. Some Bodhisattvas hold long pennants as they come to lead the deceased, some perform with musical instruments and others dance. In some of the rebirth scene case studies, there are a pair of Bodhisattvas that correspond to the transformative reborn boy in a lotus pond that lean upon the railings of the arched bridge and face toward the seven treasure lotus pond. The best representatives of this are the Late Tang *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* of the 245th niche in Beishan, Dazu. We shall therefore use this as a representative case study for analysis.

In this niche there are transformative rebirth scenes in lotus ponds located on the top level of the lower section of the main wall, and also beneath the pavilions on the upper sections of the left and right walls. In addition, each of these three transformative rebirth scenes in lotus ponds has a group featuring a lotus pond, transformative reborn youth in the pond, and an arched bridge over the pond, as well as Bodhisattvas and treasure birds on the bridge. The elements of each group in these images is identical.

An arched bridge is situated in the centre of the lower level of the top section of the main wall and the two sides feature lotus ponds

directions have sincere vows to be reborn in that land. Although they are unable to practice as *śramaṇas*, they cultivate great merit. They should aspire to supreme *bodhi*, constantly focus on recollection of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life, cultivate wholesome things as much as they can, uphold the fast and precepts, erect pagodas and images, offer food to *śramaṇas*, hang streamers and light lamps, offer flowers and burn incense, and dedicate all of this with the vow to be born in that land. 其中輩者。十方世界諸天人民，其有至心願生彼國，雖不能行作沙門、大修功德，當發無上菩提之心，一向專念無量壽佛。多少修善，奉持齋戒；起立塔像，飯食沙門；懸繖然燈，散華燒香，以此回向願生彼國。

(Figure 34-1). In the centre of the arched bridge is a standing treasure bird facing forward. The upper half of its body is fragmented and on the lower section to the two sides are carved standing treasure birds facing the centre (Figure 34-2). The transformative reborn boys in the lotus ponds either sit with their legs crossed and two palms joined together or climb the railing trying to enter the Pure Land (Figure 34-3). There are also two Bodhisattvas standing inside the arched bridge, standing back to back with their bodies leaning on the bridge, with one hand grasping the railing and the other hand holding a string of chanting beads which hang down over the side of the bridge (Figure 34-4). The Dharma practice of chanting the name of Amitābha while holding chanting beads was promoted since the time of Venerable Daochuo 道綽 (562–645) and was extremely prevalent for a time during the Tang.²⁶ From the physical posture of the Bodhisattvas on the bridge we can deduce that these Bodhisattvas seem to correspond to the reborn youth in the lotus pond, and the holding of chanting beads may signify teaching the reborn people to recite the name of the Buddha.

Beneath the pavilions on the top sections of the left and right walls are situated transformative rebirth scenes in lotus ponds (Figures 35-1 and 35-2). Within the lotus ponds, the boys are either

²⁶ *Xu Gaoseng zhuan*, T no. 2060, vol. 50, 594a:

Also encourage people to recite the name of Amitābha, using hemp seeds, beans or other items to count the number. Each time the name was chanted, one seed was moved. Calculating in this manner, millions of pecks can be amassed. A certain amount can be fixed to enable one to focus on the object of meditation. Monastics and laity responded to his gentle guidance, and developed this practice from afar. Also, constantly working on their practice, they would string together seeds of the rain wood tree as a method for counting. His final teaching to the fourfold community was to chant the name. He often manifested auspicious signs and prepared a map for practice. 並勸人念彌陀佛名，或用麻豆等物而為數量。每一稱名，便度一粒。如是率之，乃積數百萬斛者，並以事邀結，令攝慮靜緣。道俗響其綏導，望風而成習矣。又，年常自業，穿諸木樂子以為數法。遺諸四眾，教其稱念。屢呈禎瑞，具敘行圖。



FIG. 34-1 The rebirth scene on the lower part of front wall from the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, Niche 245 at Beishan 北山 in Dazu 大足, from the Late Tang Dynasty.



FIG. 34-2 The arch bridge at the center of front wall's lower part from the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, Niche 245 at Beishan 北山 in Dazu 大足, from the Late Tang Dynasty.



FIG. 34-3 The lotus pond at the front wall's lower part from the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, Niche 245 at Beishan 北山 in Dazu 大足, from the Late Tang Dynasty.



FIG. 34-4 The left side of arch bridge at front wall's lower part from the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, Niche 245 at Beishan 北山 in Dazu 大足, from the Late Tang Dynasty.



FIG. 35-1 The rebirth scene on the upper part of right wall from the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, Niche 245 at Beishan 北山 in Dazu 大足, from the Late Tang Dynasty.



FIG. 35-2 The rebirth scene on the upper part of left wall from the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, Niche 245 at Beishan 北山 in Dazu 大足, from the Late Tang Dynasty.



FIG. 35-3 The treasure ships on the upper part of left wall from the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, Niche 245 at Beishan 北山 in Dazu 大足, from the Late Tang Dynasty.

sitting or standing on lotus flowers and many boys vigorously row boats towards the arched bridge (Figure 35-3). The arched bridge spans over the lotus pond, and carved on the bridge is a bird and several Bodhisattva figures. In the centre of the arched bridge on the left wall is a lightly carved treasure bird swooping down, and in the centre of the arched bridge on the right wall is carved a standing treasure bird. On the top section of the left wall above the arched bridge and near the pavilion is a Bodhisattva figure with one hand grasping the railing, body leaning back and head stretching forward. It seems to be encouraging and cheering the rowing boys. To the Bodhisattva's right are two figures of Bodhisattvas inside the railing on the lower level of the pavilion, both extending their right hands toward the lotus pond, and reaching out to receive the reborn boys.

Representations of treasure boats positioned in the treasure ponds were popular in Pure Land transformation tableaux from Sichuan during the Tang and Five Dynasties. In Middle to Late Tang case studies from the central regions of Sichuan it was popular to have large pavilion-style dragon boats, and in Late Tang and Five Dynasties case studies from the eastern regions of Sichuan it was popular

to have smaller sized dragon boats.²⁷ The prows of eastern Sichuan dragon boats always face toward the centre. The transformative reborn boys on the boats either vigorously row or play noisily, unable to wait until they can ascend the arched bridge and enter the Land of Ultimate Bliss. From the above analysis we know that rebirth scenes in the lower section of Tang and Five Dynasties Pure Land transformation tableaux from Sichuan display a sequence of development from the two sides toward the centre and from the bottom to the top. After the transformative rebirth boys are reborn in lotus flowers in lotus ponds, some of them directly climb the railing above the lotus pond, then climb the lotus stalks, heavenly palace pavilions and so on. They cannot wait to enter into the Land of Ultimate Bliss that they have dreamed about. Some of them ride in dragon-prow treasure boats toward the central arched bridge. In particular, those of highest rebirth in the highest grade want to ascend the arched bridge and directly venerate Amitābha Buddha. At the same time, they also show scenes of musicians making music, dancers dancing and Bodhisattvas holding pennants or lotus seats to lead them.

It is worth noting that within the entire rebirth scenes the treasure birds are carved in the centre of the arched bridge, which is at the centre of the rebirth scene. Furthermore, this is the path that the transformative reborn boys must take as they go up to venerate Amitābha Buddha. We could say that this is the most important of key points. Why is it represented in this way?

First of all, the arched bridge is situated on the central axis directly beneath Amitābha Buddha, with some case studies having it directly connected to Amitābha Buddha's pedestal. This shows how devotees wish to ascend the bridge from this shore as a means to quickly be in the presence of Amitābha Buddha in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.²⁸

²⁷ Sun, 'Sichuan Tang wudai Guan wuliang shou jingbian guangming zhuan yu baochuan yinsu fenxi', 119–31.

²⁸ *Jingtu wuhui nianfo songjing guan xingyi*, T 2827, vol. 85, 1253b–c:

Fazhao was on the Amitābha platform at Nanyue on the fifteenth day of the fourth month of the second year of Yongtai (766). ... Just when reciting the Buddha's name ... he suddenly saw a golden bridge directly before

Therefore, the arched bridge in the centre of the rebirth scene is actually providing a passage for the transformative reborn boys to quickly reach the Pure Land. In the 159th niche of the Mid-Tang period Dunhuang Mogao Cave *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux*, beneath the left and right pavilions are painted scenes of two boys climbing the arched bridge after having been reborn in lotus flowers on the lotus pond (Figure 36).²⁹ After the boy reaches the bridge, he joins palms and chants the name of Amitābha Buddha to eliminate his evil transgressions.

Next, why are the treasure birds, in particular two-headed birds and *kalaviṅkas*, situated in the centre of the arched bridge?

According to records of the nine grades of rebirth in the *Guan Wuliangshou fo jing*, the deceased for each grade of rebirth must listen to the Buddha Dharma while being reborn in a lotus flower. Only after hearing the Dharma for some aeons are they able to receive their appropriate resultant retribution. Also, Pure Land scriptures state that the treasure birds in the Land of Ultimate Bliss are the creations of Amitābha Buddha, for the purpose of proclaiming the Buddha Dharma day and night without stopping, allowing living beings to recollect the Buddha with fully concentrated minds. This being the case, it is without a doubt that situating treasure birds in the centre of the rebirth scenes or grouping treasure birds with the transformative reborn boys in other part of niches are all in order to present treasure birds singing the wonderful Dharma and proclaiming the sound of the Dharma for the deceased.

So, given that all the treasure birds of the Land of Ultimate Bliss can proclaim and sing the wonderful Dharma, why are two-headed birds and *kalaviṅkas* shown in particular?

him, extending into the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss. In an instant he arrived before Amitābha Buddha and prostrated his head before Amitābha Buddha. (法)照以永泰二年(766)四月十五日,於南嶽彌陀台。(中略)正念佛時,忽見一道金橋,從自面前,徹至西方極樂世界,須臾即至阿彌陀佛所,頭面作禮阿彌陀佛所。

²⁹ Shi, *Dunhuang shiku quanji* 5, 219, Figure 212.



FIG. 36 A part of the transformation tableau of the *Sūtra of Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*, on the south wall of Cave 159 in Mogao Grotto from the Middle Tang Dynasty. *Amituo jing huaquan* 阿彌陀經畫卷, plate 212.

According to scriptural records, *kalaviṅkas* are also called ‘wonderful sound birds’ and two-headed birds are also known as ‘life-life birds’ (*jīvajīva*).³⁰ The wonderful call of the *kalaviṅka* is clear and

³⁰ *Fahua jing xuanzan yaoji*, X no. 638, vol. 34, 892b:

The *sūtra* states ‘*kalaviṅka*’. Venerable Ying states: “*Kala*” means good, “*viṅka*” means sound, therefore it is the good sound bird, also known as the wonderful sound bird’. The *sūtra* states ‘life-life’. In Sanskrit it is ‘*jīva* life’, which means life-life, namely the shared-life bird. The *Past Deeds*, 59,

high, and apart from the beautiful voice of the Buddha himself, there is nothing that can compare to it.³¹ Also, the *kalaviṅka* uses its clear and graceful call to proclaim and propagate the teachings of Buddhism, letting living beings enjoy and praise it.³² Therefore, situating the *kalaviṅka*, with its wonderful sound only comparable to the Buddha, directly below Amitābha Buddha in the centre of the rebirth scenes in order to proclaim the Buddha Dharma for the deceased is very reasonable and appropriate.

Two-headed birds [literally: ‘shared life birds’] are so-called because they have two heads on one body and their lives and deaths are thus shared.³³ In Sichuan Pure Land transformation tableaux

tells of how in the distant past the Buddha and Devadatta were each one head of a two-headed bird. 經言迦陵頻伽者。膺法師云：迦陵者云好，頻伽云聲，即好聲鳥，亦云妙音鳥。經言命命者，梵云耆婆身，此云命命，即共命鳥也。本行五十九說，佛與天授。往昔作共命鳥，各為一頭。

³¹ *Zhengfa nianchu jing*, T no. 721, vol. 17, 403b:

The practitioner further contemplates that beyond this ground there is a great mountain named Wilderness, one hundred *yojanas* in height and width. On this mountain are many white elephants and *kalaviṅka* birds which produce a wonderful sound. This beautiful sound is incomparable among gods, humans, *kinnāras* and *asuras*, with the exception of the Tathāgata himself. 行者復觀，過此住處，有一大山，名曰曠野。縱廣一百由旬，於此山中多有白象及迦陵頻伽鳥出妙音聲。如是美音，若天若人；若緊那羅，若阿修羅。無能及者，唯除如來。

Amituo jing yiji, T no. 1755, vol. 37, 306c:

The wonderful sound of the *kalaviṅka* is clear and high, comparable to the voice of the Buddha. 迦陵頻伽，妙音清高，可譬佛聲。

³² *Dafangdeng daji jing: Pusa nianfo sanmei fen*, T no. 415, vol. 13, 856c:

With stringed music and singing voices the sound of the *kalaviṅka* is pure and wonderful. Able to comprehend the principles the community praises it, because it is used to attain *samādhi*. Skilfully emitting a clear, graceful and beautiful sound, it always uses kind words to delight everyone. A deep and wonderful voice and skilful words, their sound is ever present and never stops. 備於弦樂及歌聲，迦陵頻伽音精妙；能會義理令眾嘆，以獲三昧故得然。善出清雅及好聲，多用愛言悅一切；深婉妙音並善語，彼聲常有未曾絕。

from the Tang and Five Dynasties, it was extremely popular for two-headed birds to appear on the central arched bridge. However, the purpose for this particular representation of two-headed birds is still not certain. First, in the opening section, 'Praise of the Treasure Birds', of Fazhao's *Jingtu wuhui nianfo songjing guan xingyi*, it states that the mournful and sincere sound of the treasure birds inspires people's hearts, the birds constantly sing praises of the Buddha's assembly day and night and proclaim the Buddha's words. When Bodhisattvas and disciples hear the Dharma sung by the treasure birds, they all manifest bodies in many locations to proclaim the Buddha Dharma. Devotees sing the text of the 'Praise of the Treasure Birds' and make vows that the Dharma Wheel will continue, that the words of the Buddha will be passed down, and that living beings within the place of cultivation will have increased longevity.³⁴ It is clearly stated in the statue records of the Five Dynasties *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* in the fifth niche at Baoguo Monastery in Lezhi that the patrons who donated for the *Visualizing Amitāyus Tableaux* wished for the blessing of long life.³⁵ We can thus see that

³³ *Amituo jing yiji*, T no. 1755, vol. 37, 306c:

Shared-life. With two heads on one body, their lives and death are joined. Therefore, they are called 'shared-life' birds. 共命, 兩頭而同一體, 生死齊等, 故名共命。

³⁴ *Jingtu wuhui nianfo songjing guan xingyi*, T no. 2827, vol. 85, 1244b–c.

³⁵ 'Shu Baoenyuan Xifang bing Dabeikan ji', 87:

See the characteristics of the myriad phenomena, the three bodies are originally empty. Penetrating the conditioned, no wish will be unfulfilled. Dawn light shines on green mountains, mist parts around the lonely pine. The cliff reveals the shining moon, the ravine draws the fresh breeze. Here now is a gentleman of faith who soon realized the true meaning. Of lofty thought and wonderful merit, he takes this excellent opportunity, engaging in the carving of this transformation scene, that his long life may be protected. Having completed this work, may he forever dwell in the Golden Fields. 萬法視相, 三身本空。有為皆貫, 無願不通。霞明翠岫, 煙霽孤松。岩鋪皓月, 壑引清風。爰有信士, 早悟真詮。思崇妙福, 乃結良緣。遂鑄變相, 保佑壽年。斯設既畢, 永鎮金田。

increased longevity and the blessing of long life were common aims of devotees' recollection of the Buddha and carving of images. Second, Amitābha Buddha is called 'Amitābha' because his light and lifespan are immeasurable.³⁶ Finally, reflecting on the two-headed birds being situated directly beneath Amitābha Buddha, as well as at the critical central position of rebirth scenes, we can see that the function of the two-headed birds is to connect together the transformative reborn youth (the deceased) and Amitābha Buddha. Also, deducing from the name 'shared life', it may further express the devotees' hope that their longevity may also be as immeasurable as the life of Amitābha Buddha.

4. Conclusion

Treasure birds in Tang and Five Dynasties Pure Land transformation tableaux from Sichuan, such as peacocks, parrots, white cranes, *śārīs*, *kalaviṅkas*, two-headed birds, mandarin ducks, geese and so on, are an important part of the natural environment which adorns the Western Pure Land. They use their beautiful and wonderful sounds to proclaim many marvellous Dharma teachings on behalf of Amitābha Buddha in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. These treasure birds of many exotic colours at times spread their wings and fly on the niche vaults together with musical instruments that make music without being played, or move to and fro on the two sides of heavenly palace pavilions, or play upon seven treasure lotus ponds, or are

³⁶ *Amituo jing*, T no. 366, vol. 12, 347a:

Śāriputra, what do you think? Why is that Buddha named Amitābha? Śāriputra, the light rays of that Buddha are immeasurable, illuminating lands in the ten directions without any obstacle. Therefore, he is named Amitābha. Also, Śāriputra, the lifespan of that Buddha and his subjects are immeasurable, boundless, countless aeons. Therefore, he is named Amitābha. 舍利弗！於汝意云何？彼佛何故號阿彌陀？舍利弗！彼佛光明無量，照十方國無所障礙，是故號為阿彌陀。又舍利弗！彼佛壽命及其人民，無量無邊阿僧祇劫，故名阿彌陀。

carved outside the niches. Some of them hold musical instruments and perform heavenly music, thus propagating the wonderful sound of the Buddha Dharma through the auditory sense, rather than merely visually adorning the Buddha land. Furthermore, these treasure birds do not sing their songs without purpose, but appear grouped together with transformative reborn boys or in rebirth scenes, continuously calling harmoniously through day and night, vigorously singing the Dharma for the transformative reborn boys and causing listeners to aspire to chant the names of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. By sincerely chanting the name of Amitābha Buddha, devotees can immediately eliminate transgressions, remove obstacles and be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Images of treasure birds in Tang and Five Dynasties Western Pure Land transformation tableaux from Sichuan on one hand reflect the significance of treasure birds proclaiming the Buddha Dharma for Amitābha Buddha and exhorting devotees to sincerely recite the Three Jewels. On the other hand, representations of treasure birds teaching the Dharma to the transformative reborn boys, and treasure birds being situated in the centre of rebirth scenes, reflect the important status of treasure birds within these entire Western Pure Land reception for rebirth scenes. Do these not fully show the hopes and wishes of devotees to be reborn on the other shore that is the Buddha's Pure Land, take transformative rebirth in a lotus flower, hear the Buddha Dharma and eliminate transgressing obstacles? Western Pure Land transformation tableaux from Sichuan during the Tang and Five Dynasties carry the wholesome wishes of devotees to be born in the Pure Land, and serve as symbols in the present world of the other shore that is the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Treasure birds as numinous spiritual birds not only embellish the majestic atmosphere of the Land of Ultimate Bliss, but more importantly they teach the reborn people the Dharma through their wonderful songs. On one hand they purify the transgressions of the deceased before rebirth, and on the other hand they teach the reborn people many different wonderful Dharma teachings, letting those who hear the Dharma aspire to recite the Three Jewels and realise the deep essence of the Buddha Dharma. In particular, those treasure birds that are situated in the centre of the rebirth scenes directly beneath the main

figure of the Western Pure Land, Amitābha Buddha, construct a bridge between this shore of the Sāhā world and the other shore of the Buddha's Pure Land.

All Sichuan Pure Land transformation tableaux from the Tang and Five Dynasties periods are relief sculptures on cliff faces, either hidden in the deep mountains or carved on precipices. They are not like wall murals painted in caves or portable paintings on scrolls that have the function of pictorially illustrating doctrinal ideas. Furthermore, to commence work on carving a Pure Land transformation tableau niche at that time was quite a large scale project. They were either carried out by individual villages led by monastics with laity providing funding and resources, or undertaken by families with prestigious clans providing sponsorship. Specialist craftsmen would be employed to carry out the carving, and the entire work would take at least several months, thus requiring a substantial amount of human, material and financial resources. Under these circumstances, Pure Land transformation tableaux in the Sichuan region during the Tang and Five Dynasties periods were very popular. First, this shows that Western Pure Land religious faith during that time was exceptionally widespread and prevalent in society. Devotees with religious faith in Amitābha Buddha and the Western Pure Land funded the carving of Western Pure Land transformation tableaux. On one hand they hoped for personal longevity, and on the other hand they wished to be reborn in the idealised Buddha's Pure Land after death. Second, by carving Western Pure Land transformation tableaux, devotees hoped to accumulate merit in the present life, to eliminate transgressions and to clear obstructions along the road to rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Third, the larger the scale and higher the quality of craftsmanship in carving a Western Pure Land transformation tableau niche shows a greater amount of financial expense. At times, on the same cliff face or in the same monastery there are two or more similarly carved niche images. If they were done by the same donor or group of donors, why would they waste so much effort and expense in carving two or more nearly identical niche images in the same place? Also, from the perspective of regional distribution (Figure 1), the distribution of Western Pure Land transformation tableaux that depict treasure birds is quite

tightly concentrated. From an economic point of view, the carving of Western Pure Land transformation tableaux shows the status and financial positions of the donors.³⁷ Therefore, another reason for the popularity of Western Pure Land transformation tableaux in Sichuan during the Tang could have been to highlight the sponsors, in particular those with status and power from prominent local families and clans. From this, treasure birds as an important constituting element also came to be seen as indispensable.

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Abbreviations

- T* *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. See Bibliography, Secondary Sources, Takakusu and Watanabe, eds.
X (*Wan*) *Xuzang jing* (卅). See Bibliography, Secondary Sources, (*Wan*) *Xu zangjing*.

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³⁷ Sun, 'Sichuan tang wudai moya fudiao guan wuliang shou jingbian fenxi', 59–61.

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The ‘Daan Ta Beiming’ 大安塔碑銘 [Daan Pagoda Stele]: Religious and Sociopolitical Networks Woven around the Construction of a Song- dynasty Buddhist Pagoda

FENG GUODONG 馮國棟

University of Zhejiang

Translated by Gabriel Groz, The University of Chicago

Abstract: The ‘Daan ta beiming’ 大安塔碑銘 (Daan Pagoda Stele), composed by Xia Song 夏竦 (985–1051), records the process by which the early Song nuns Miaoshan 妙善 (943–1018) and Daojian 道堅 (dates unknown), a teacher and student pair, constructed the Daan Pagoda 大安塔 and associated temples. Throughout the process of constructing the Daan Pagoda, Miaoshan and Daojian received strong support from the imperial household and high-ranking members of the government; Emperor Zhenzong 宋真宗 (968–1022), Emperor Renzong 宋仁宗 (1010–1063), Empress Dowager Mingde 明德太后 (960–1004), and Empress Zhangxian Mingsu 章獻明肅太后 (969–1033) all participated in the pagoda’s construction, reflecting the interactions between the Imperial Household and Buddhists in the early Song. Through this case, one can examine the relationship between the Song Imperial Household—especially the women of the Household—and Buddhism.

Keywords: Daan Pagoda Stele, Buddhism and the imperial family, Buddhist inscriptions, Song temples

The ‘Daan ta beiming’ 大安塔碑銘 (Daan Pagoda Stele), composed by Xia Song 夏竦 (985–1051) (hereafter referred to as the ‘Pagoda Stele’), records in detail the construction process of the Daan Pagoda and associated temples over the course of more than twenty years, which was initiated by the early Song master and disciple pair of nuns Miaoshan 妙善 (943–1018) and Daojian 道堅 (dates unknown).¹ The Song emperors Zhensong 真宗 (968–1022) and Renzong 仁宗 (1010–1063) both participated in the construction process for the Daan Pagoda, while within the imperial household the Empress Dowager Mingde 明德 (960–1004), Empress Dowager Zhangxian 章獻明肅 (969–1033), and Empress Dowager Zhanghui 章惠 (984–1036), among other palace women, all contributed as well. This event reflects with unusual clarity the interactions between Buddhism and the imperial household in the early Song. This paper delivers a close analysis of the stele text, which reveals the participation of the early Song imperial household in Buddhism, as well as the relationships between the imperial household, high-ranking concubines, and Buddhism.

1. Miaoshan’s Life

According to the pagoda stele, the construction of the Daan Pagoda was coordinated from start to finish by Miaoshan and her disciple Daojian, and received energetic support from the imperial household and high officials. The answer to how Miaoshan and Daojian were able to mobilize such a significant social force is closely related to both women’s backgrounds.

1.1. The Dates of Miaoshan’s Birth and Death

The ‘Pagoda Stele’ writes that in the first year of the Tianxi reign, Miaoshan began to have an inclination towards creating a pagoda,

¹ ‘Daan ta beimin’, *SKQS* 1087: 268–71. A punctuated version is included in the Appendix.

and at that time had just come across the completed Changgan 長干 Pagoda in Jiangning 江寧 Prefecture. Miaoshan and Daojian then referred to the diagrams for Changgan Temple's pagoda and began work on Daan Pagoda, and not long after, Miaoshan passed away. The 'Pagoda Stele' continues: 'Miaoshan lived to the age of 76 *sui*, and spent fifty-five of those years as a nun' 妙善享年七十有六, 尼夏五十有五. This suggests that Miaoshan died not long after the construction of Changgan Pagoda in Jiangning Prefecture. If one knew the date of Changgan Pagoda's construction, then one could also know the dates of Miaoshan's birth and death.

In December 2007, an archaeology team from the Nanjing City Museum 南京市博物館 discovered the base of the Zhenshen 真身 Pagoda from the Northern Song Changgan Temple in the ruins of the Ming Dynasty Da Baoen Temple 大報恩寺, and discovered a text, 'Jinling Changgansi zhenshen ta sheli shihan ji' 金陵長干寺真身塔舍利石函記 [The Record for the Stone Reliquary of the Relics of Zhenshen Pagoda of Changgan Temple in Jinling; hereafter 'Stone Casket Inscription'], and a large quantity of artefacts, which proves that the Changgan pagoda and temple were first constructed in the third or fourth year of the Dazhong Xiangfu 大中祥符 reign era of the emperor Zhenzong 真宗 (1011), although we are unable to identify its date of completion for certain.² According to the 'Pagoda Stele,' in the first year of the Tianxi 天禧 reign era (1017), Miaoshan was interested in building a pagoda, and only after that was the 'pagoda of Changgan Temple in Jiangning Prefecture completed' 江寧府長干寺塔成. Scholars used this to propose that Changgan Temple was completed in the first year of the Tianxi era. But this author holds that this inference is incorrect, and that the completion of the Changgan Temple Pagoda ought to be dated to the second year of the Tianxi era. How can we know this?

First, according to the *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀 [Complete Chronicle

² For the excavation of the Changgan si pagoda, see Nanjingshi kaogu yanjiusuo, 'Nanjing Da Baoensi yizhi taji yu digong fajue jianbao'; Qi and Zhou, 'Nanjing Da Baoensi yizhi taji shidai, xingzhi ji xiangguan wenti yanjiu'; Xia, Yang, and Hu, 'Nanjing Tianxisi de yange'.

of the Buddha and Patriarchs] by Zhipan 志磐 (dates unknown), in the second year of the Tianxi era,

It was ordered by the emperor that the Changgan Temple in Jiangning 江寧 Prefecture (Shengzhou 昇州) changed its name to Tianxi 天禧, and that the pagoda, one of nineteen pagodas in China that store the relics of Aśoka, be named Sheng'gan 聖感.

勅江寧府 (昇州) 長干寺, 改賜天禧, 塔名聖感, 即東土所藏阿育王舍利塔十九所之一也。³

The (*Jingding*) *Jiankang zhi* 景定建康志 [Jingding (era) Gazetteer of Jiankang] also writes:

The present Tianxi temple 天禧寺 was the Great Changgan temple. During the Kaibao 開寶 reign, when Cao Bin 曹彬 (931–999) dispatched troops to Jiangnan and formerly climbed Changgan, facing north towards Jinling 金陵, it was this very location. In the second year of the Tianxi reign, it was changed to be called ‘Tianxi temple.’

今天禧寺乃大長干也。皇朝開寶中曹彬下江南, 先登長干, 北望金陵, 即此地。天禧二年, 改為天禧寺。⁴

According to this we know that in the second year of the Tianxi reign (1018), Zhenzong changed the name of Changgan temple to Tianxi temple, and bestowed upon the pagoda the name Sheng'gan 聖感. From this series of events we can observe that the pagoda of Changgan temple had to be completed before there was the related edit from Zhenzong.

Second, regardless of whether it is the ‘Pagoda Stele’ or the *Fozu tongji*, both sources mention ‘Changgan Temple in Jiangning Prefecture’, while Zhipan specifically notes the place name Shengzhou 昇州 after the word Jiangning. Jiangning Prefecture was originally

³ *Fozu tongzhi* 45.1062.

⁴ (*Jingding*) *Jiankang zhi* 46.2077.

Shengzhou 昇州; but when did Shengzhou become Jiangning Prefecture? According to the record in the *Xu Zizhi Tongjian changbian* 續資治通鑑長編 [Extended Continuation to the *Zizhi tongjian*], in the second lunar month of the second year of the Tianxi reign,

Shengzhou was renamed Jiangning Prefecture, an army was established with the appellation of Jiankang 建康, and ordered the Commander Prince of Shouchun 壽春 to serve as military commissioner (*jiedushi* 節度使), giving him the rank of grand protector (*taibao* 太保) and bestowing upon him the title 'Prince of Sheng' 昇王.

丁卯, 以昇州為江寧府, 置軍曰建康, 命壽春郡王為節度使, 加太保, 封昇王.⁵

We can observe that Shengzhou was renamed Jiangning Prefecture after the second lunar month in the second year of the Tianxi reign (1018). Connecting Zhenzong's series of orders related to the Changgan temple with the fact of the change in name from Shengzhou to Jiangning Prefecture in the second lunar month of the second year of the Tianxi reign, we have reason to believe that the completion of the Sheng'gan Pagoda of Changgan temple in Jiangning occurred after the second lunar month of the second year of the Tianxi reign.

Not long after the construction of Changgan Pagoda in Jiangning, Miaoshan died, having lived to the age of 76 *sui*. Since one can now infer that Sheng'gan Pagoda of Changgan temple was completed in the second year of the Tianxi reign, then it is possible that Miaoshan's death also occurred in this year. The second year of the Tianxi reign is the equivalent of the year 1018 in the Western calendar; thus she would have been born in the 943 CE, the equivalent of the eighth year of Tianfu 天福 reign of the Later Jin; at that time Ma Xifan 馬希範 (899–947), Prince Wenzhao 文昭 of Chu 楚, was on the throne.

⁵ *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian* 91.2098.

1.2. Miaoshan, the Ma Family of Chu, and the Song Imperial Household

Before Miaoshan became a nun, she had extensive contact with the Ma family of the state of Chu and with the Song Imperial Household and high-ranking officials. This was a reason why she was able to mobilize the Song Imperial Household and high ranking officials behind the construction of the Daan Pagoda. According to the records in the 'Pagoda Stele',

Miaoshan was originally from Changsha, and was surnamed Hu 胡; her given name was Xisheng 希聖. While her mother was pregnant, she would consume no meat. As soon as Miaoshan had matured, she aspired to serve Buddha. During the Ma Rebellion, she was taken as a concubine. She experienced slander and encountered Ma's anger; in her deep sorrow, she recited from memory the names of the Universal Gate, and Buddhist relics were seen on her forehead; the Mas thereupon treated her differently, and with courtesy.

妙善，長沙人，姓胡，字希聖。母既孕，不茹葷。妙善勝衣，志求事佛。馬氏之亂，略為姬侍。嘗被毀逢怒，憂在叵測，默誦普門名稱，舍利見於額中，馬氏異而禮之。

This narrative touches upon Miaoshan's connections with the Ma royal household of the state of Chu.

The state of Chu was an independent power established by Ma Yin 馬殷 (852–930), the Tang military commissioner in charge of the Wu'an 武安 Army, and existed from Ma's term as military commissioner in the third year of the Qianning 乾寧 reign of the Tang Emperor Zhaozong 昭宗 (896) until its destruction by the Southern Tang in the ninth year of the Baoda 保大 reign (951), going through five princes in two generations, for a total of 56 years. The 'Pagoda Stele' writes that Miaoshan, originally called Hu Xisheng 胡希聖, had ambitions as a youth to become a nun. But 'amidst the chaos of the Ma clan, she was taken as a concubine' 馬氏之亂，略為姬侍. From this one can know that Miaoshan once served as a concubine to the Ma clan. But there were five Ma princes over

the course of two generations; for which prince was Miaoshan a concubine?

The five princes of the Ma family clan include: Ma Yin 馬殷 (852–930), who installed himself as the Prince of Chu from the first year of the Kaiping 開平 reign of the of the Later Liang (907) and reigned until the fifth year of the Tiancheng 天成 reign of the Later Tang (930); Prince Hengyang 衡陽 of Chu, Ma Xisheng 馬希聲 (898–932), who reigned from the first (930) through the third year of the Changxing 長興 reign of the Later Tang; Prince Wenzhao 文昭 of Chu, Ma Xifan 馬希範 (899–947), on the throne from the third year of the Changxing 長興 reign (932) until the fourth year of the Kaiyun 開運 reign of the Later Jin (947); the ‘Deposed Prince’ of Chu, Ma Xiguang 馬希廣 (d. 951), who reigned from the fourth year of the Kaiyun 開運 reign until the third year of the Qianyou 乾祐 reign of Emperor Yin of the Later Han (950); and the Gongxiao 恭孝 prince, Ma Xi’e 馬希萼 (900–953), on the throne from the third year of the Qianyou reign until the ninth year of the Baoda 保大 reign of the Southern Tang (951). Given the preceding analysis, we can see that Miaoshan was born in 943, the eighth year of Tianfu 天福 reign of the Later Jin, when Ma Xifan was on the throne.

According to the records in the *Sanchu xinlu* 三楚新錄 [A New Record of the Three Chu Kingdoms],

Ma Xifan amused himself without propriety, to the point that he did not refrain from engaging with the concubines of previous princes. He also had nuns make secret searches of the homes of literati and commoners; if there were women to his liking, he had them seized by force, all in all several hundred, but he nonetheless seems to have remained unsatisfied.

希範嫖而無禮，至於先王妾媵無不烝通。又使尼潛搜士庶家，女有容色者，皆強取之，前後約及數百，然猶有不足之色。⁶

Evidently, Ma Xifan sent Buddhist nuns out in search of girls

⁶ *Sanchu xinlu*, juan 1, SKQS 464: 166.

among the commoners, and given Miaoshan's 'desire to serve the Buddha (志求事佛)', it would appear likely that Miaoshan had once been Ma Xifan's concubine. But Ma Xifan died in 947; at that time Miaoshan would have only been 4 *sui*, making this improbable. The 'Pagoda Stele' writes that she 'was taken as a concubine during the chaos of the Ma clan (馬氏之亂·略為姬侍)'. In the twelfth lunar month of the third year of the Qianyou reign of Emperor Yin of the Later Han (950), Ma Xi'e 馬希萼 (900–953) attacked Changsha 長沙, and killed the deposed prince, Ma Xiguang 馬希廣 (?–951), to establish himself as ruler; in the tenth lunar month the following year, his younger brother Ma Xichong 馬希崇 (912–?) imprisoned Ma Xi'e on Mount Heng 衡山, and established himself as Prince of Chu.⁷ Ma Ling's 馬令 (dates unknown) *Nan Tang shu* 南唐書 [History of the Southern Tang] records that, in the tenth lunar month of the ninth year of the Baoda 保大 reign (951),

Xu Wei 徐威, Chen Qian 陳遷, Lu Gongwan 魯公綰, and Lu Mengjun 陸孟俊, all men of Chu, seized their lord Ma Xi'e, and imprisoned him at Mt. Heng 衡山, and enthroned the Prince Xichong 希崇 instead. In the eleventh month, Liao Yan 廖偃 and others recruited barbarians from the south to restore Xi'e as Prince of Chu, and the state of Chu devolved into chaos.

十月，楚人徐威、陳遷、魯公綰、陸孟俊執其君馬希萼，囚于衡山，立王子希崇。十有一月，楚人廖偃等招合蠻獠復立希萼為楚王，楚國大亂。⁸

This would correspond to the 'chaos of the Ma Clan (馬氏之亂)' mentioned in the 'Pagoda Stele'. That disorder occurred between 950 and 951; at the time Miaoshan was 8 or 9 *sui*, and it was at this time that she must have been 'taken as a concubine'. However, the question of whether she was taken by Ma Xi'e or by Ma Xichong

⁷ Lu You 陸遊 (1125–1210), *Nan Tang shu*, *juan* 2, *SKQS* 464: 395: '十二月，馬希萼攻陷潭州，弑其君馬希廣.'

⁸ Ma Ling 馬令, *Nan Tang shu*, *juan* 3, *SKQS* 464: 261.

cannot be resolved with certainty. In brief, Miaoshan former status as a concubine of the Ma clan is a matter of reality; when Miaoshan later became a nun, 'the Taizong emperor, on account of her "being in pepper-painted palace past", bestowed upon her the braw name, and gave her ornate clothing' (太宗皇帝以 '椒塗之舊', 錫以懿名, 被之華服); the reference to her 'in pepper-painted palace past' (椒塗之舊) here thus would signify what was just discussed, namely her former status as a concubine.

After the defeat and destruction of the Ma clan and the state of Chu, Miaoshan joined the Song, and was obtained by the famous early Song general Li Chuyun 李處耘 (920–966). Li Chuyun's second daughter became Taizong's Empress Mingde 明德 (960–1004), and Miaoshan thus developed relationships with the Song Imperial Household and high-ranking officials. The 'Pagoda Stele' relates:

Towards the beginning of the dynasty, Court of Palace Attendants Commissioner and Vice-Military Affairs Commissioner Li Chuyun was setting order to Hunan and Sichuan, he obtained her from Ma's official residence; because her vow all long had not been made, she fasted and pretended to be ill, and had a dream that a strange person said: 'I am Mañjuśrī, you eat securely, good karma is near.' The following year, Li Chuyun died. Thereupon Miaoshan entered the Tianü temple 天女寺 in Luoyang, shaved her hair and became a nun.

國初，宣徽使兼樞密副使李處耘南定湘川，得之郡邸，嘗以素誓未伸，斷穀謝病，夢異人曰，'我文殊也，汝第食，勝緣近矣。' 明年，處耘捐館，遂依洛陽天女寺剃髮受具。

Thus it records Li Chuyun's campaigns to the south in Hunan and Sichuan; he obtained Miaoshan and brought her into his household. After Li Chuyun's death, Miaoshan left to become a nun. Even though the record contains some fantastical details, the basic narrative is still grounded in reality.

Li Chuyun, whose courtesy name was Zhengyuan 正元, was a native of Shangdang 上党 in Luzhou 潞州 (present-day Changzhi 長治 in Shanxi), and was a noted general during the Five Dynasties and early Song. He successively held the offices of Visitors Bureau

Commissioner (*kexing shi* 客省使), Recipient of Edicts in the Bureau of Military Affairs (*shumi chengzhi* 樞密承旨), General of the Right-hand Guard (*Youwei jiangjun* 右衛將軍), Generalissimo of the Armed Escort (*Yulin da jiangjun* 羽林大將軍), Commissioner of the Northern Court of Palace Attendants (*Xuanwei beiyuan shi* 宣徽北院使), Inspector of Military Forces in the Field (*xingying bingma dujian* 行營兵馬都監), Governor (*zhizhou* 知州) for Yangzhou 揚州, Commissioner of the Southern Court of Palace Attendants (*Xuanwei nanyuan shi* 宣徽南院使), and Vice-Military Affairs Commissioner (*shumi fushi* 樞密副使), among other offices. According to the record in the *Xu Zizhi Tongjian changbian*, in the first lunar month of the first year of the Qiande 乾德 reign,

With the military commissioner of the east circuit of Shannan 山南東道 and the director of the Chancellery Murong Yanjian 慕容延釗 (913–963) as the commissioner of the traveling camp for the Hunan circuit (湖南道行營都部署), and Vice-Military Affairs Commissioner Li Chuyun as director in chief, ten envoys were dispatched to have troops sent from An 安, Fu 復, Ying 郢, Chen 陳, Chan 澶, Meng 孟, Song 宋, Bozhou 亳州, Ying 穎, Guangzhou 光州 and other locales to meet at Xiangyang 襄陽 in order to suppress Zhang Wenbiao 張文表.

庚申，以山南東道節度使、兼侍中慕容延釗為湖南道行營都部署，樞密副使李處耘為都監，遣使十一人，發安、復、郢、陳、澶、孟、宋、亳、穎、光等州兵會襄陽，以討張文表。⁹

It can be known that Li Chuyun's campaigns in the Hunan and Sichuan occurred in the first year of the Qiande 乾德 reign, equivalent to the year 963 in the Western calendar. At the time, Miaoshan was 21 *sui*. In addition, according to the 'Biography of Li Chuyun' in the *Song shi* 宋史 [History of Song], 'Li died in the fourth year of the Qiande reign, aged forty-seven *sui* (乾德四年卒，年四十七)'.¹⁰

⁹ *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian* 4.81.

¹⁰ *Song shi* 257.8962.

Knowing that Li's death occurred in the fourth year of the Qiande reign, at that time, Miaoshan was 24 *sui*. From this we can know that Miaoshan belonged to Li Chuyun's household between 963 and 966, a period of four years. It was because of Li Chuyun that Miaoshan came to form relationships with the Song Imperial Household and high-level officials. While Miaoshan was with the Li household, Li Chuyun's daughter, the future Empress Mingde, was at the time aged four through seven *sui*; Li's son, Li Jilong 李繼隆 (950–1005), was at the time aged fourteen through seventeen *sui*. Miaoshan showed regard for them both; and thus the 'Pagoda Stele' writes:

Visiting the emperor in the Wannian 万年 Hall, reception given her was much more than others. Seeing the emperor at court etiquette went extraordinary. Li Jilong, who received secretariat director and Zhongwu gong 忠武公 after his death, treated her with unusual respect because she was his wet nurse ever.

是時萬年中參，恩愛異衆，宸闈進見，禮數踰等。贈中書令忠武公李繼隆每以保阿，尊事尤謹。

After Zhenzong acceded to the throne, Miaoshan presented him with numerous entreating letters, which all appeared in the important nodes in Zhenzong's life. The 'Pagoda Stele' writes: 'when the emperor embarked on an inspection tour of the northern bank of the Yellow River, she presented him with a letter written in blood, and the ruler officially praised her' (皇帝巡狩河朔，刺血上疏，璽書褒嘆). The 'emperor embarking on an inspection tour of the northern bank of the Yellow River' refers to an event in the first year of the Jingde 景德 reign (1004), when Zhenzong took part in an expedition to the Khitan and concluded the Chanyuan 澶淵 Treaty. In the ninth month of the first year of the Jingde reign, Empress Dowager Xiao 蕭 (953–1009) and the Liao Emperor Shengzong 聖宗 (972–1031) invaded.¹¹ At that time, Kou Zhun 寇準 (961–1023) advised Zhenzong

¹¹ *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian* 57.1265: '(景德元年閏九月) 契丹主與其母舉國入寇.'

to personally lead an expedition, while Participant in Determining Government Matters (*canzhi zhengshi* 參知政事) Wang Qinruo 王欽若 (962–1025) and Notary of the Bureau of Military Affairs (*qian shumi yuanshi* 簽樞密院事) Chen Yaosou 陳堯叟 (961–1017) all had different views on the subject.¹²

At the time, with court opinion divided, Miaoshan's 'letter written in blood' was meant to warn Zhenzong against personally taking part in the expedition. During the tenth lunar month of the first year of the Dazhong xiangfu 大中祥符 reign (1008), Zhenzong set out to Taishan to offer sacrifice to Heaven, and

Miaoshan chose a piece of land in the outskirts toward the morning sun, built a Buddhist temple, recited the verses on the Buddha's ambrosial truth, and prayed for the protection from the God of Mount Tai 泰山; the emperor was overjoyed when he became aware of this, and bestowed upon the temple the name Protector of the State (Huguo 護國).'

妙善即朝日之郊，卜布金之地，諷甘露法品，祈東禪靈祐，帝意嘉之，賜名護國。

Miaoshan had newly constructed a temple to pray for blessings for Zhenzong's *fengshan* 封禪 sacrifices, and Zhenzong bestowed a plaque with the phrase 'Huguo yuan' 護國院 in order to demonstrate his favor and praise. Taking part in an expedition to the Khitan and heading east to Mount Tai were all crucial events in Zhenzong's life. As the elder of Zhenzong, Miaoshan's 'letter written in blood' and her 'praying for the efficacious protection of the God of Taishan' are all sufficient evidence of her concern and care for Zhenzong.

¹² Xu Zizhi *tongjian changbian* 57.1267: '先是，寇準已決親征之議，參知政事王欽若以寇深入，密言於上，請幸金陵，簽書樞密院事陳堯叟請幸成都。'

2. Daojian's Life and Family Background

Like her teacher Miaoshan, Daojian also had close relationships with the Song royal household and the Song elite. The 'Pagoda Stele' writes:

Daojian, Secretarial Receptionist (*tongshi sheren* 通事舍人) Du Zhiru's 杜志儒 (dates unknown) daughter, her mother was the paternal aunt of Mingde, remarried to the Commissioner of the Palace Command (*dianqian zhihuishi* 殿前指揮使) and military commissioner of Wucheng Army (*Wucheng jun jiedu* 武成軍節度) Yang Xin 楊信 (?-978), and was conferred the title Lady of Longxi 隴西. Daojian abstained from meat at nine *sui*; at 11 she sought to leave home, in the eighth year of the Xingguo 興國 reign she took the tonsure and became a nun. The following year she was bestowed with a purple cassock. When sixteen *sui*, she was conferred the title of Ciyi 慈懿. Later she became the abbot of the Miaojue 妙覺 nunnery, was given a monthly stipend, was bestowed robes in 'three seasons', and given the prerogative to shave a monk every year and recommend two candidates for purple cassocks. Lady Longxi 隴西夫人 followed her daughter in shaving her head, and died after one month.

道堅，故通事舍人杜志儒之女。母明德從父姨，再適故殿前指揮使武成軍節度楊信，封隴西郡夫人。道堅生九歲即齋素。十有一，求捨家。興國八年，剃度得戒。明年，賜紫伽梨。十有六，授‘慈懿師’名，嗣掌妙覺。月給俸料，三時賜衣。歲度僧、薦紫各二。隴西夫人隨子剃染，期月歸寂。

From this it can be observed that Daojian was Du Zhiru's daughter; the details of his life are unknown. But her mother was 'a paternal aunt of Mingde', who was the abovementioned Empress Dowager Mingde, daughter of Li Chuyun, and the younger sister of Li Jilong. Who is Mingde's uncle? According to the 'Li Jilong muzhi' 李繼隆墓志 [Funeral inscription of Li Jilong], Li Chuyun was one of the three brothers: the eldest was Li Chuchou 李處疇, the next was Chuyun himself, and there was yet another whose name is unknown.¹³ Evidently, Mingde's paternal uncle was none other than Li Chuyun's elder brother Li Chuchou, or else his younger brother

whose name remains unknown. The so-called ‘*chongfu yi*’ 從父姨 (paternal aunt) thus refers to the sister of the wife of Li Chuchou or Li Chuyun’s younger brother, name unknown. In that sense, Daojian, Empress Dowager Mingde, and Li Jilong were, in a broad sense, brothers and sisters.

After Daojian’s father Du Zhiru died, her mother remarried to Yang Xin, who also received Taizong’s care and affection. According to the records in the *Xu Zizhi Tongjian changbian*, in the fifth lunar month of the third year of the Taiping Xingguo reign,

Palace Commander (*Dianqian du zhibuishi* 殿前都指揮使) and Provincial Governor (*jiedu shi* 節度使) of Zhenning 鎮寧 Yang Xin had once been in charge of troops, but had become mute and lost his ability to speak. At that point he was confined to bed with illness, and his muteness had suddenly healed. When Taizong hurried to his mansion to visit him. Describing his own experience with overflowing tears, Yang Xin kowtowed while begging the emperor to defend the country’s borders. The emperor consoled him, and bestowed generous rewards upon him; Xin died on the following day. The emperor bestowed him a posthumous official title.

殿前都指揮使、鎮寧節度使楊信初掌兵，即瘖不能言。至是寢疾，瘖忽愈。上遽幸其第視之，信自叙遭逢，涕泗橫集，且叩頭乞嚴邊備。上慰勉之，賜賚甚厚，翌日信卒。優詔贈侍中。¹⁴

One can observe from the previous analysis that Daojian came from an influential official family; although the details of the life of his father, Du Zhiru, are unclear, his mother was the sister of the wife of one of Li Chuyun’s brothers, and thus Daojian was of the same generation as Empress Dowager Mingde and Li Jilong. His stepfather Yang Xin was Commander-in-Chief of the Palace during Taizong’s reign, and was very much in Taizong’s favor.

¹³ See Li Jilong’s funeral epitaph written by Yang Yi, included in his *Wuyi xinji*, juan 10, SKQS 1086: 472–479.

¹⁴ *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian* 19.429.

Although Daojian was born to an official family, she had already become a vegetarian by the age of nine *sui*, and took the tonsure to become a nun in the eighth year of the Taiping Xingguo reign (983). The following year, she was bestowed a set of purple cassocks by the state, and at the age of 16 *sui* received the two-character title ‘Ciyi’ 慈懿. During the Mingdao reigns of Renzong, she also received the four-character title *Ciyi fuhui* 慈懿福慧. Additionally, her mother, the Lady Longxi, ‘also followed her child in shaving her head’, becoming a nun. The ‘Pagoda Stele’ continues:

Daojian was naturally alert and perceptive, and was provisioned with a rigorous and exact nature. She had the backbone of a man of character. She recited the *Lotus Sutra* thousand scrolls, and recited several hundred times the *Huayan jing* 華嚴經 (Skt. *Avatamsaka Sūtra*), *Shoulengyan jing* 首楞嚴經 (Skt. *Sūrangama Sūtra*), *Jingming jing* 淨名經 (= *Weimo[jie] jing* 維摩[詰]經; Skt. *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa*), *Yuanjue jing* 圓覺經 [*Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment*]; memorializing the Buddhist canon, she understood their broadest meaning. The construction of the pagoda at scale entirely derived from her wisdom and skill. In managing the affairs of the three cloisters, keeping order among a group of several hundred, she controlled anger with mercy, restrained laxity with mastery; thus was she able to make things respond to her ideas; she moved and others followed her.

道堅天機警悟，資性嚴整，有大丈夫風概。嘗誦《法華》千卷、《華嚴》、《首楞》、《淨名》、《圓覺》，皆數百過。記憶教藏，該通大義。塔之規模，盡出智匠。總三院之務，安數百之衆。以慈悲攝嗔恚，以精通攝懈怠。故能念舉而物應，身動而衆隨。

The phrase ‘managing the affairs of the three cloisters’ 總三院之務 refers to Daojian’s taking charge of the construction of the Miaojue 妙覺, Huguo 護國, and Shisheng 實勝 cloisters after Miaoshan’s death. But the completion of Daan Pagoda also was entirely on account of Daojian.

Separately, according to the record in the *Liandeng huiyao* 聯燈會要 [Essential Collection of the Lamplight Connections], by Wuming

悟明 (dates unknown), when Li Zunxu 李遵勗 (988–1038) was approaching death,

His stomach was distempered, and thus the nun Daojian approached his bedside and asked him: ‘Commander, when all living things see the end of the *kalpa* and are burnt by fierce fire, it is extremely important to look after yourself, my sir.’ He replied, ‘May you please boil some medicine for me?’ Daojian was silent. He continued, ‘This master nun won’t even know to boil some medicine for me.’

鬲胃躁熱，因尼道堅就枕問云，‘都尉，眾生見劫盡大火所燒時，切要照管主人公。’公云，‘大師與我煎一服藥來。’堅無語。公云，‘這師姑，藥也不會煎得。’¹⁵

Li Zunxu had the courtesy name of Gongwu 公武, was the grandson of Li Chongju 李崇矩 (924–988), and was a native of Shangdang 上党 in Luzhou 潞州 (present-day Changzhi in Shanxi), and married Taizong’s daughter, Princess Jingguo 荆國. Li Zunxu was close to Yang Yi 楊億 (974–1020), and was a renowned Song Dynasty lay man who wrote the *Tiansheng guangdeng lu* 天聖廣燈錄 [Tiansheng-era Records of the Extensive Transmission of the Light]. The ‘Daan Pagoda Stele Inscription’ was composed in the fifth year of the Jingyou reign of the Song emperor Renzong (1038);¹⁶ at this time Daojian was still alive, while Li Zunxu had coincidentally died that same year. To speak in reference to the timing, when Li Zunxu was approaching death, it is possible that Daojian had a conversation about Chan. Separately, Daojian’s relationship with the Imperial Household was very close, while Li Zunxu was himself Taizong’s

¹⁵ Liandeng huiyao, *juan* 13, *XZJ* 136.644.

¹⁶ The Daan Pagoda inscription says, ‘今上寶元體天法道欽明聰武聖神孝德皇帝在宥之十有七載，詔史臣書其事，’ meaning that the inscription was composed seventeen years after the ‘current emperor’ (*jinsang* 今上) was in throne. The ‘current emperor’ refers to Emperor Renzong, who ascended to the throne in 1023. The seventeenth year of his reign fell in 1038. It is therefore known that the inscription was composed in 1038.

son-in-law. Thus the nun Daojian who had a conversation with Li Zunxu when he was approaching death must have been the one and the same Daojian who constructed the Daan Pagoda.

3. The Construction of the Daan Pagoda and Related Donors

According to the records in the 'Pagoda Stele', in the first year of the Tianxi reign of the Zhenzong Emperor (1017), in a deep ravine in Xiangdong 湘東 district, a boulder was discovered with an appearance like the pagoda. Miaoshan wished to travel to gaze upon it, but Zhenzong thought that she was too advanced in years, and that it was unsuitable for her to travel to Xiangdong, and dissuaded Miaoshan from traveling south. Thereupon Miaoshan came up with a proposal for the construction of a pagoda in Dongjing 東京, obtained Zhenzong's approval, and began the construction of the pagoda. According to the previous analysis, Changgan temple in Jiangning Prefecture 江寧府 was completed in the second year of the Tianxi reign, and thus Miaoshan and Daojian constructed their Daan Pagoda after the Sheng'an Pagoda 聖感塔 of Changgan temple.

3.1. Daan Pagoda and Changgan Temple

The 'Pagoda Stele' records:

When the Changgan Pagoda in Jiangning Prefecture was completed, the drawings were brought to the emperor, who then ordered Miaoshan from the Huguo Hall, and bestowed the plans upon her. Daojian was in the Miaojue Hall, nearby; she appropriately met the imperial order, received the drawings and returned. The very start of plans for construction truly began from this moment.

會江寧府長干塔成，繪圖來上，促召妙善於護國，將賜之。道堅在妙覺，地近先至。訪對稱旨，受圖以歸。首事創規，實始於此。

We can therefore know that the Daan Pagoda was inspired by the pagoda of Changgan temple in Jiangning. In 2007, an archeol-

ogy team from the Nanjing City Museum amidst the ruins of the Ming-era Da Baoen temple discovered a Northern Song foundation from the Zhenshen Pagoda of Changgan temple; they excavated a considerable number of cultural artifacts, and established new proof for a relationship between Daan Pagoda and the pagoda of Changgan temple. In the underground palace of Changgan temple, they excavated the abovementioned ‘Stone Casket Inscription’, written by Deming 德明 (dates unknown), the abbot of the Chengtian 承天 cloister, which records in detail the process by which Master Yanhua 演化 (i.e. Kezheng 可政; dates unknown) constructed the pagoda of Changgan temple with the support of Wang Wen 王文, the teaching assistant (*zhujiao* 助教) for Huazhou 滑州.¹⁷ Towards the end of the ‘Stone Casket Inscription’ there is a list of names of people who aided its fulfilment, among them:

The main builder of the pagoda was Yanhua Master Kezheng, those who assisted construction were Shanlai 善來, who had been bestowed a set of purple cassocks, and young monk Pulun 普倫. The leaders included Wang Wen 王文, Court Gentleman for Ceremonial Service (*daoshou jiangshilang* 導首將仕郎) teaching assistant for Huazhou ... those who made donation to the relic included Shihu 施護, Shouzheng 守正, Chonghang 重航, Shaoyun 紹贇, Zhiwu 智悟, Chongba 重霸, Shouyuan 守願, the nun Miaoshan, and Baoxing 寶性.

塔主演化大師可政、助緣管勾賜紫善來、小師普倫、導首將仕郎、守滑州助教王文.....捨舍利施護、守正、重航、紹贇、智悟、重霸、守願、尼妙善、寶性.....¹⁸

Among those mentioned as those who made donation to the relic is a ‘nun, Miaoshan’. And the ‘Daan Pagoda Stele’ writes of Daojian’s construction of the Daan Pagoda,

¹⁷ Nanjingshi kaogu yanjiusuo, ‘Nanjing Da Baoensi yizhi taji yu digong fajue jianbao’, 14–15.

¹⁸ Nanjingshi kaogu yanjiusuo, ‘Nanjing Da Baoensi yizhi taji yu digong fajue jianbao’, 15.

From start to completion, the imperial clan donated a statue of Amithabha, the princess Dengguo donated an image of Saṃbhoga-kāya.....while Wang Wen from Shouchun 壽春 donated funds.

粵自營創, 逮夫圓成, 則有宗藩施三門洎無量壽像, 鄧國貴主施報身像.....及其季尚繼獻金錄, 壽春王文獻緡錢...

Clearly among those who ‘donated funds’ to Daan Pagoda was ‘Wang Wen from Shouchun’. The text of the Stone Casket Inscription refers to ‘the master craftsman for the construction of the pagoda, Ying Chengyu 應承裕 (dates unknown) and his son Ying Dexing 應德興 (dates unknown)’ (砌塔都料應承裕並男德興), and it is known that the designers and builders of this pagoda were the father and son pair Ying Chengyu and Ying Dexing. Additionally, the ‘Daan Pagoda Stele’ writes:

The monk who is proficient in Buddhist theory, Duanchen 端琛 gave comments on the writings, the monk Weiyao 惟儼 wrote out the records of the pagoda, and Ying Dexing from Wumen 吳門 acted as the stonemason.

義學比丘端琛指教相文字, 比丘惟儼著塔錄, 吳門應德興為匠石。

Integrating the account in the ‘Stone Casket Inscription’ with that of the ‘Pagoda Stele’, we discover that Miaoshan, Wang Wen, and Ying Dexing appear in the construction process for both the pagoda of Changgan temple and Daan Pagoda, which indicates that the two had a significant relationship.¹⁹

3.2. The Construction Process of the Pagoda and Temples, and its Benefactors

As a teacher-student pair, Miaoshan and Daojian devoted their efforts

¹⁹ Gong and Qi, “Jinling Changgansi zhenshenta cang sheli shihan ji” kaoshi ji xiangguan wenti’.

to the construction of the pagoda and temples; apart from the Daan Pagoda. They constructed, in close succession, three cloisters: the Miaojue 妙覺 cloister, Huguo 護國 cloister and Baosheng 寶勝 cloister. Because of the two women's unique backgrounds, in the process of constructing the pagoda and temples they received support from the Imperial Household and high-ranking officials. In sorting out those who provided help as benefactors during the pagoda's construction, one can see the Buddhist activities of the Imperial Household and elites of the period.

The first nunnery that Miaoshan built was the Miaojue cloister. After Li Chuyun died, Miaoshan became a nun, and 'the Taizong emperor, on account of her being in pepper-painted palace past,' bestowed upon her the braw name, and gave her resplendent clothing. A noble, Yuan Pu 袁溥 (dates unknown), donated a mansion for her to build a temple, while the emperor bestowed it the title 'Miaojue cloister'; Miaoshan was given charge over it.

太宗皇帝以椒塗之舊，錫以懿名，被之華服。大姓袁溥捨第起刹，賜額妙覺禪院，令妙善主之。

The details of Yuan Pu's life are unclear; Huang Qijiang 黃啟江 guesses that 'Yuan Pu's donation, if it wasn't prompted by a direct request for help from Taizong, was made with the intention of currying favor with the authorities.'²⁰

The second temple that Miaoshan erected was the Huguo 護國 cloister. In the first year of his Dazhong Xiangfu reign (1008), Zhenzong went to Mount Tai to offer sacrifice to Heaven in the east, and

Miaoshan chose a piece of land toward the morning sun, and built a Buddhist temple, recited the verses on the Buddha's ambrosial truth, and prayed for the protection from the God of Taishan; the emperor was overjoyed when he became aware of this, and bestowed upon her the name Protector of the State (*huguo* 護國).

²⁰ Huang, 'Bei Song Bianjing zhi siyuan yu Fojiao', 106.

妙善即朝日之郊，卜布金之地。諷甘露法品，祈東禪靈祐。帝意嘉之，賜名‘護國’。

From the phrase ‘chose a piece of land,’ it would appear that this temple must have been constructed recently, for the purpose of praying for blessings for Zhenzong’s offering sacrifice to Heaven. From the phrase ‘the land toward the morning sun,’ it ought to be located in the eastern outskirts of Bianjing 汴京, as the direction for the *fengshan* offerings and from which the sun rises. After the temple was completed, Zhenzong bestowed upon it the name ‘Huguo chanyuan’ 護國禪院. These two temples were both constructed by Miaoshan. Between the two of them, the Huguo cloister was located further from the imperial palace, while the Miaojue cloister was located closer to the imperial palace. At the time, Miaoshan dwelled in the Huguo cloister, while Daojian lived in the Miaojue cloister (會江寧府長干塔成，繪圖來上，促召妙善於護國，將賜之。道堅在妙覺，地近先至，訪對稱旨，受圖以歸)。

In the second year of the Tianxi reign (1018), Miaoshan died,

The emperor and all the people in the palace were very sad; her rank was increased after her death, a memorial arch and shrine were constructed her honor, and the temple was granted a plaque with the phrase ‘Baosheng’ 寶勝. Daojian was to administer this temple, as well.

宮闈震嗟，賻贈加品，建坊立刹，賜額寶勝，以道堅兼主之。

This would become the third temple, built to commemorate Miaoshan; at that point the royal household had put funds into its construction. Thus far, Miaoshan and Daojian had, all in all, constructed three nunneries: the Miaojue, Huguo, and Baosheng cloisters. After Miaoshan’s death, Daojian held simultaneous administrative roles for all three nunneries; ‘managing the affairs of the three cloisters, keeping order among a group of several hundred’ (總三院之務，安數百之衆) was indeed an accurate depiction of Daojian’s simultaneous administration of the three cloisters. In the second year of Tiansheng 天聖 reign (1024), for the *daxiang* 大祥

rites for Zhenzong, Renzong ordered the nunneries in the capital to carry out a special ordination of child novices, and the Huguo cloister and Miaojue cloister each was allowed to shave two people.²¹

The construction of Daan Pagoda was begun by Miaoshan. But the credit for its administration and final completion must go to Daojian. Daojian successively received support from numerous members of the royal family, from high-ranking officials, and from senior monks; some contributed funds, while others used their power to contribute other acts of service.

3.2.1. Zhenzong and Renzong

The Daan Pagoda was proposed in the first year of Zhenzong's Tianxi reign (1017), and was at last completed in the fifth year of Renzong's Jingyou reign or in the first year of his Baoyuan 寶元 reign (1038), altogether taking twenty years, and it received not-insignificant support from Zhenzong and Renzong. The 'Pagoda Stele' records:

The former emperor was sorrowful and bestowed upon her precious objects from the former crown prince's residence worth three-thousand myriads, and ordered his eunuchs to supervise the labor. In the spring of the next year, Fajian 法堅 fashioned a golden relics case with the relics which were offered in the inner sanctum, and recited chants for three nights. The emperor set out from the Zifu hall 滋福殿, with the guard of honor that was formed by the monks from both sides of the street, and the emperor offered incense to send away them. On the most auspicious day of the ninth lunar month, they were placed in the stone room. In the fifth year, he further gave a chariot, other objects, and strings of coins worth a myriad *min* 緡, in order to provide for the remaining expenses.

先帝惻然，賜以潛邸珍玩三千萬直，仍命內侍分董其役。明年春，法

²¹ *Song huiyao jigao*, 9986: '仁宗天聖二年二月，以真宗大祥，詔在京寺觀等第特度童行，其經行幸及所過，亦特剃度.....太平興國寺、天清寺.....長慶院、護國院.....妙覺院、上清宮、太一宮、建隆觀、壽寧觀、同真觀、太和宮、崇真觀各二人。

堅製金襴寶函，納前舍利等入奉於內道場，贊唄三夕。兩街威儀導自滋福殿，帝薦香以送之。季商協吉，藏於石室。五年，繼賜乘輿副物貨鎰萬緡，以供餘費。

In the second year of the Tianxi reign, Miaoshan died, and Zhenzong gave precious objects from the former crown prince's palace worth three-thousand myriads to subsidize the construction of the Daan Pagoda. In the ninth lunar month of the third year of the reign, relics were placed in the underground palace of Daan Pagoda, and Zhenzong made offerings in the inner sanctum, and with the guard of honor that was formed by the monks from both sides of the street he processed from the Zifu Palace to the grottoes of the temple's underground palace. In the fifth year of the Tianxi reign (1021), he also granted them ten thousand strings of cash. One can see the value Zhenzong placed on the Daan Pagoda.

After Renzong acceded to the throne, he continued to support the construction of the Daan Pagoda. The 'Pagoda Stele' writes:

The Emperor Renzong inherited his father's wishes and honored his ancestors with Xiao 孝; his heart was very devout and he blessed the ancestors in the Taimiao 太廟 with piety. The images of the four emperors from Zhenzong to Xuanzu 宣祖 were placed above the second floor of the pagoda; Many images of the guards were also placed on left and right to guard them. For everything else about the pagoda, he saved the cost of his clothes and his horses to make it..... He also bestowed violet robes to Tanzan 談贊 and four other nuns, and also gave the official residences neighboring the cloisters for their administration and use. In the second year of the Mingdao reign, he also donated 1,000 taels of silver to subsidize the construction of a presentation hall.

上繼志有嚴，奉先惟孝，宅心凝覺，追福太宮。由二級而上，命奉安禰廟至宣祖皇帝四室神御，並列環衛，拱侍左右。自餘緣塔功德未具者，皆省服御成之。由是賢劫之象，薩埵之容，五佐星緯，八部人天，分次峻層，罔不咸備。七年功畢，詔賜茲額。金榜始嚴，闕軒臨視，談贊五尼，賚紫方袍。并賜近院官舍九十區，餽直充供。明道二載，上給白金五十鎰，俾營獻殿。

'For everything else about the pagoda, he saved the cost of his clothes and his horses to make it' demonstrates that Renzong also offered significant aid to the construction of the Daan Pagoda. In the second year of the Mingdao reign (1033), he also donated 1,000 taels of silver to subsidize the construction of a presentation hall. Apart from the direct contribution of funds, Renzong also ordered to place four images of Zhenzong, Taizong, Taizu, and Xuanzu of Song to the Daan Pagoda, and also personally wrote a horizontal inscribed board for the Daan Pagoda. Separately he also bestowed violet robes to Tanzan and four other nuns of the Sheng'an Buddhist Hall, and also gave the official residences neighboring the cloisters to Daojian and others for their administration and use.

During the Jingyou reign, the emperor has donated countless cash to build two buildings in front of the pagoda. On the right there was placed the Dragon Treasury (龍藏) that had been given per a special order, and a magnificent carriage made in order to transport a thousand book cases; on the left there hung a bell donated by Zhuanghui 莊惠, carved with nine knobs.

景祐中, 上賜錢千萬, 創二樓於塔前. 右安特旨所賜龍藏, 作香輪以轉千函; 左挂莊惠所捨鐘, 樹彫格以維九乳.

This demonstrates that during the Jingyou reign Renzong also granted Daojian and her associates countless taels to be used for the construction of the building for the *tripitaka* and bell tower in front of Daan Pagoda, and also bestowed upon them a set of the Tripitaka and a rotating scripture wheel, to be placed in the scripture repository building on the right-hand side.

From the previous section it is evident that Zhenzong and Renzong were very enthusiastic about the construction of the Daan Pagoda and its associated temple, and did not merely donate substantial assets on several occasions, but they also, through personally welcoming and seeing off with the Buddhist relics (Zhenzong), placing images of four imperial ancestors on the pagoda, a new inscribed board, and a special investiture of violet robes to the various nuns

(Renzong), among other acts, increased the political status and influence of the Daan Pagoda and its associated temples.

3.2.2. Women of the Imperial Household and Upper-Class Women

Due to their unique life experience and their status as nuns, Miaoshan and Daojian were naturally able to maintain relationships with the women of the Imperial Household and with noblewomen. The construction of the temples and pagoda received in succession support from the following women of the Imperial Household and various upper-class women:

3.2.2.1. Empress Dowager Mingde

Empress Mingde, originally surnamed Li, was the consort of Emperor Taizong. She entered the palace in the third year of the Taiping Xingguo reign (978), and became empress in the first year of the Yongxi 雍熙 reign (984). After Zhenzong acceded to the throne, in the fourth lunar month of the third year of the Zhidao 至道 reign (997), she was given the title of Empress Dowager, and lived in the Jiaqing 嘉慶 Hall in the Western Palace. She died in the first year of the Jingde reign (1004), aged 45 *sui*, and was given the posthumous title Mingde. In the third year of Jingde reign she was buried in the Yongxi Tombs 永熙陵. Empress Mingde was the second daughter of Li Chuyun. As a child, she was looked after by Miaoshan. Daojian's mother who was also Empress Mingde's 'paternal aunt,' and thus Empress Mingde was practically sisters with Daojian. It can be said, then, that Empress Mingde had close connections with both Miaoshan and Daojian. One can even go further to guess that the reason why Daojian came to take Miaoshan as her teacher had something to do with Mingde as an intermediary.

Empress Mingde died in the first year of the Jingde reign, unable to see the construction of Daan Pagoda. The 'Pagoda Stele' writes,

In the first year of the Tiansheng reign, the palace took precious objects from Empress Dowager Mingde worth 2,600,000, as well as

10,000,000 paid by Zhuangxian from the treasury, and bought the gold and copper to cast wheels of copper-gold alloy for donation.

天聖改元，內出明德太后寶器價二百六十萬，泊莊獻服用千餘萬付之公帑，易金銅鑄輪蓋以施之。

This demonstrates that, after Renzong acceded to the throne, he donated leftover possessions bequeathed by empress Dowager Mingde worth 2,600,000, to be used for the construction of the Daan Pagoda. Alongside this donation, there were also resources donated by Empress Dowager Zhuangxian 莊獻; thus the donation of Empress Dowager Mingde's estate may have been arranged by Empress Dowager Zhuangxian 莊獻, *née* Liu 劉.

3.2.2.2. Empress Dowager Zhuangxian 莊獻皇后²²

Empress Liu, Zhuangxian Mingsu 莊獻明肅, was the consort of Emperor Zhenzong. She was originally from Taiyuan 太原, and later moved to Huayang 華陽 in Yizhou 益州. Following her time in Huayang, she was taken to the capital by the Sichuanese Gong Mei 龚美 (962–1021). She was found acceptable as a match by Zhenzong at the age of 15 *sui*. After Zhenzong acceded to the throne, she became one of his royal consorts. During the Dazhong Xiangfu reign, she became a Lady of Cultivated Deportment (修儀), and a Concubine of Advanced Virtue (德妃). After Empress Zhangmu 章穆 died, she became empress. The annals record Zhuangxian as being 'by nature keenly alert, with knowledge of books and history' (性警悟, 曉書史); in the latter part of the Zhenzong reign, decisions were mostly made by her. After Zhenzong's death, she was honored as Empress Dowager, and managed important military affairs and affairs of state. In the first year of Renzong's reign, Zhuangxian 'decided affairs from behind the screen' (垂簾決事), and was the real holder

²² I.e. Zhangxian 章獻. See *Song shi* 242. 8611: '真宗章懷潘皇后.....謚莊懷.....舊制, 后謚冠以帝謚, 慶曆中禮官言: 孝字連太祖謚, 德字連太宗謚, 遂改莊為章以連真宗謚云.'

of power. She died aged 65 in the second year of the Mingdao reign (1032), and was given the posthumous title Zhangxian Mingsu 章獻明肅, and was buried in the northwest section of the Yongding Tombs 永定陵.

Of Empress Dowager Zhuangxian Mingsu's involvement with the Daan Pagoda, the 'Pagoda Stele' writes,

When the Changgan Pagoda in Jiangning Prefecture was completed, the drawings were brought to the emperor.....Since then, [the artisans] chose auspicious days and set up the benchmark of the shadow; and laid foundations, structured ditches; and smelted metal and ground stone and made for the underground palace. The *duodu* given by Empress Dowager Zhuangxian Mingsu and Buddha bones obtained by Miaoshan ever would be buried.

會江寧府長干塔成，繪圖來上，.....由是涓日置臬，肇基寶甃，冶金礱石，作於地宮。將秘莊獻明肅太后所賜馱都，逮妙善曩得佛骨。

The *duodu* 馱都 is the transliteration of the Sanskrit *dhātu*, which originally had the sense of boundary or division, the Buddha's relics are the bodily division of Vairocana the Indestructible, thus the term *duodu* is an alternate name for the Buddha's relics. In the construction of the Daan Pagoda, an underground tomb was built first for the storage of Buddhist relics. The relics that were stored away there were those given by Empress Dowager Zhuangxian Mingsu.

3.2.2.3. Empress Dowager Zhuanghui 莊惠皇太后

Empress Dowager Zhuanghui 莊惠 was, in actuality, the Zhenzong Emperor's Pure Consort Yang. Yang was from Pi 郿, in Yizhou, and entered the prince's palace at the age of 12 *sui*. After Zhenzong acceded to the throne, she was appointed as Lady of Talent and Lady of Handsome Fairness (婕妤), and promoted to Lady of Kind Deportment (婉儀). Zhenzong doted heavily on and trusted Yang, and she accompanied him on his trip east to Taishan and west to pray at Fenyin 汾陰. Later she was given the title Pure Consort (淑妃). Upon Zhenzong's death, he posthumously installed her as empress dowager.

ger. Because the palace in which she dwelled was called ‘Baoqing’ 保慶, she was named ‘Empress Dowager Baoqing’. In the third year of the Jingyou reign (1036), she died without illness at the age of 53 *sui*. She was given the posthumous name of Zhuanghui 莊惠,²³ and was buried in the Yong'an Tombs 永安陵.²⁴

The ‘Pagoda Stele’ records:

At the beginning of the Qianxing 乾興 reign, once more a core pillar and ridgepoles were necessary for the pagoda’s completion but there was no way to obtain them, [Daojian] attempted to enlist the emperor’s support for their purchase. The Emperor had on his mind the public matters of the realm, and multiple times went against her request; Empress Dowager Zhuang was, at the time, the Consort Dowager, and she donated five million jewelry cost worth of purchased supplies.

乾興初, 又以塔心殿棟須合抱修幹, 既選未獲, 貫於皇帝. 上方以天下為公, 且重違其請, 莊太后時為皇太妃, 乃以奩金五百萬輸於內府, 市材以施之.

According to the record in the *Xu Zizhi Tongjian changbian*,

(In the second lunar month of the first year Ganxing reign,) the emperor died in the Yanqing 延慶 Palace Hall, and Renzong acceded to the throne as emperor. An order was left behind installing the empress as empress dowager, and Pure Consort Yang as Consort Dowager; military affairs and affairs of state was handled temporarily by the Empress Dowager.

戊午, 上崩於延慶殿, 仁宗即皇帝位. 遺詔尊皇后為皇太后, 淑妃楊氏為皇太妃, 軍國事兼權取皇太后處分.²⁵

²³ See Li Zhongrong 李仲容, ‘Zhuanghui huangtaihou shiyi’ 莊惠皇太后謚議, included in *Song huiyao jigao*, 1463.

²⁴ *Song jiuchao biannian beiyao*, juan 10.221: ‘景祐四年春二月, 葬莊惠皇后, 祔永安陵, 神主祔奉慈廟.’

Clearly the ‘Empress Dowager Zhuang’ referenced in the ‘Pagoda Stele’ actually refers to Pure Consort Yang. To summarize, it can be known that, in the first year of the Qianxing reign (1022), a core pagoda pillar, ridgepoles, and general pillars all were needed for the construction of the Daan Pagoda. At the time, Zhenzong had just died, and Renzong had only recently been enthroned, and may not have had time to pay attention to this matter; the writing politely notes that ‘the emperor had on his mind the public matters of the realm, and multiple times went against her request’. Pure Consort Yang thus donated five hundred thousand taels worth of materials. During the Jingyou years, Renzong donated funds to construct two buildings in front of Daan Pagoda; in the building on the right-hand side there was placed a rotating wheel set with canonical texts written on it, while ‘on the left there hung a bell donated by Zhuanghui, and carved with nine knobs. The murals of *arhats* on the slanting verandas (*xielang* 斜廊) and images of Śākyamuni were also the donation of Zhuanghui’ (左挂莊惠所捨鐘，樹彫格以維九乳。其斜廊壁繪羅漢、迦文像，亦莊惠之施). Evidently, during the Jingyou reign of the Renzong Emperor, Zhuanghui also donated a monastery bell with nine knobs. Additionally, the frescoes of *arhats* and Buddhas on the sides of the monastery cloisters were also donated by Empress Dowager Zhuanghui.

3.2.2.4. Princesses, Ladies-in-waiting in the palace, and noblewomen

In addition to the empress, the list of participants in the construction of the Daan Pagoda also included princesses, ladies in waiting, noblewomen and other women from the elite classes. The ‘Pagoda Stele’ writes:

From commencement to completion, the imperial clan donated a statue of Amitābha, and the princess Dengguo 鄧國 donated an image of Saṃbhogakāya, and a woman surnamed Wu 武 of the *shanggong* 尚宮 donated a symbol of the Dharmakāya, a woman

²⁵ *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian* 98.2271.

surnamed Zhu 朱 donated a statue of the Medicine Buddha, and a woman surnamed He 何 donated a statue of Maitreya in the human realm. Lady Jingguo 晉國 surnamed Zhang 張 donated funds for the painting of murals in the presentation hall, while the Lady of Yingchuan 潁川 surnamed Han 韓 donated a garden in the west, while Du Hang 杜航 from Geshui 戈水 donated land in the east.

粵自營創，逮夫圓成，則有宗藩施三門泊無量壽像，鄧國貴主施報身像，尚宮武氏施法身像，朱氏施藥師像，何氏施下生像。晉國夫人張氏施工繪獻殿壁，潁川郡君韓氏捨園於西，戈水杜航捨地於東。

Among them, the ‘princess Dengguo’ should be Renzong’s second daughter.²⁶ When it comes to the women of the *shanggong* surnamed Wu and Zhu, Huang Qijiang holds that:

‘with respect to the *shanggong* 尚宮, I suspect that it refers to the Dongzhen 洞真 Palace of Renzong’s beloved concubine, the beauty Shang 尚. In the first year of the Jingyou reign, she and Empress Guo 郭 had at the same time become Taoist nuns, and lived in the Dongzhen palace 洞真宮. The woman surnamed Wu 武 and the woman surnamed Zhu in the text below ought to be the palace women who followed her in becoming Taoist nuns.’²⁷

According to the *Song huiyao* 宋會要 [Dynastic Records of Song], *shangguong* 尚宮 was a Song-era official title for women; ‘Taizong established the *shanggong* and *dajian* 大監, both responsible for inner court matters’; the Song Dynasty established two *shangguan*, who were to ‘be the guide of the empress, be in charge of records, speech, account books, and the bedchamber, and were responsible for taking care of the bringing in of objects required for the five necessities, and related matters.’²⁸ From this we know that the Song dynasty

²⁶ Huang, ‘Bei Song Bianjing zhi siyuan yu Fojiao’, 128.

²⁷ Huang, ‘Bei Song Bianjing zhi siyuan yu Fojiao’, 128.

²⁸ *Song huiyao jigao*, 323: ‘太宗置尚宮及大監，並知內省事’，宋代設尚宮二人，掌導引皇后，管司記、司言、司簿、司關，仍總知五尚須物出納等事。

shanggong was the title for a female official responsible for guiding the empress, and for taking care of the objects required to be brought in for the five necessities (*wushang* 五尚) (rites, clothing, food, sleep, merits), and was not the Zhendong Palace of the beauty Shang. From the records in the ‘Pagoda Stele’ we can observe that this sort of palace women and noblewomen, including the ones surnamed Wu, Zhu, and He, all supported the construction of the Daan Pagoda and monastery, donating statues of the Śākyamuni Buddha, Medicine Buddha, and Maitreya.

Apart from the princesses and ladies in waiting, several noblewomen also assisted in the construction of the Daan Pagoda. ‘Lady Jingguo 晉國, surnamed Zhang 張, donated the labor for the painting of murals in the presentation hall, while the Lady of Yingchuan 潁川 surnamed Han 韓 donated a garden in the west’ (晉國夫人張氏施工繪獻殿壁, 潁川郡君韓氏捨園於西). Lady Jingguo, surnamed Zhang, subsidized the murals in the presentation hall, while the Lady of Yingchuan 潁川, surnamed Han 韓, donated a garden plot to the temple. Lady Jingguo 晉國, surnamed Zhang 張 may be the wife of Taizong’s eighth son, Prince Jing Zhao Yuanyan 趙元儼 (985–1044). The *Yuanxian ji* 元憲集 [Collection Of Yuanxian] contain an order ‘Huangshu Jingwang wangqi Zhang shi ke zhuifeng Weiguo furen zhichi’ 皇叔荆王亡妻張氏可追封魏國夫人制敕 [Conferring the posthumous title Lady Weiguo 魏國 on the deceased wife surnamed Zhang of the Prince of Jing 荆, younger brother of the Emperor’s father], which writes: ‘the deceased wife of the Prince of Jing, Lady Jingguo, surnamed Zhang, was splendid in all aspects, warm and fragrant’ (荆王亡妻晉國夫人張氏, 華基茂緒, 淑操芳猷...).²⁹ It is unclear whom the Lady of Yingchuan surnamed Han refers to, but to say that that she was the wife of a high official would not be implausible.

In the early years of the Song Dynasty, over a period of more than twenty years, the teacher-disciple pair Miaoshan and Daojian successively constructed three cloisters: the Miaojue, Huguo, and Baosheng cloisters, and also built the Daan Pagoda, ‘300 *chi* wide, 26 *zhang* 丈 tall, expenditure of ten million taels.’ Due to the two women’s unique

²⁹ *Yuanxian ji*, SKQS 1087: 605.

life experiences and their status as nuns, they enjoyed extremely close relationships with the Song Imperial Household, especially with the empresses, ladies-in-waiting, noblewomen and other elite women, and thus throughout the construction process obtained support and assistance from this group of elite women. This group of elite women formed quite close connections centered on the temples' construction, while the temples in turn also provided space for these elite women's social activities.

4. Concluding Remarks

Xia Song's 'Daan Pagoda Stele' provides vivid historical details of the process by which Miaoshan and Daojian constructed the Daan Pagoda and its three associated nunneries; the construction of Daan Pagoda over twenty years required an expenditure of ten million taels, and was, without a doubt, an extremely important event for its time. We can also ascertain the importance of this event from the unusual length of the tablet inscription Xia Song wrote for the construction of the pagoda and temples. However, what leaves one with both regret and lingering doubts is the following puzzle: that this event, of considerable historical import at the time, did not leave behind any traces whatsoever in the Buddhist or non-Buddhist texts of subsequent generations. Whether or not historical events are recorded and become historical documents is of course a matter of fortune or misfortune; but there must be some reason for the collective silence of Buddhist and non-Buddhist texts.

This author's view on the matter is that the reason lies in the extremely isolated nature of the temple. The temples and group of nuns led by Miaoshan and Daojian were extremely isolated. Miaoshan and Daojian both came from imperial or noble backgrounds, while their status as nuns made them rather distant from Buddhist orders of their day; we can see observe that, with the exception of Miaoshan, who took her orders at Tiannü temple in Luoyang, they had next to no relationship with other contemporary monastic groups. Taking the examples of the emperor's son-in-law, the commander Li Zunxu, discussed previously just like Daojian, it

further illustrates that those whom they had contact with were by-and-large nobles and the imperial family. The sealed-off nature of the temple complex was, on the one hand, a result of the uniqueness of the identities of its supporters and organizers; at the same time, the sealed-off nature of the temple also strengthened the status of its participants. That is to say, these temples provided a place for noblewomen and women of the imperial household to conduct Buddhist rituals where they could feel safe and relax their bodies and minds. This special space had considerable differences with orthodox Buddhist temples, and maintained a characteristic distinctiveness; consequently, even though from the perspective of the elites the construction of the Daan temple was an event with real significance, common laymen had scant knowledge of it; this is likely a reason why these historical events were not recorded in any other Buddhist or non-Buddhist texts. At the same time, this is also an example of the differentiation and subdivision in function among Buddhist temples in the Song Dynasty.³⁰

³⁰ I will discuss the refinement and differentiation of Song dynasty Buddhist temples on another occasion.

Appendix: A Punctuated Version of the Daan Ta Beiming 大安塔碑銘 [Daan Pagoda Stele]

大安塔碑銘

有宋封禪後十祀，建大安塔於左街護國禪院，從尼廣慧大師妙善之請也。今上寶元體天法道欽明聰武聖神孝德皇帝在宥之十有七載，詔史臣書其事，從尼慈懿福慧大師道堅之請也。妙善，長沙人，姓胡，字希聖。母既孕，不茹葷。妙善勝衣，志求事佛。馬氏之亂，略為姬侍。嘗被毀逢怒，憂在叵測，默誦普門名稱，舍利見於額中，馬氏異而禮之。國初，宣徽使兼樞密副使李處耘南定湘川，得之郡邸，嘗以素誓未伸，斷穀謝病，夢異人曰：‘我文殊也，汝第食，勝緣近矣。’明年，處耘捐館，遂依洛陽天女寺剃髮受具，往來兩京，高行著聞。太宗皇帝以椒塗之舊，錫以懿名，被之華服。大姓袁溥捨第起刹，賜額妙覺禪院，令妙善主之。自是肅禪儀，練律學，給瑜珈之會，演華嚴之說。五陟岱山，一汎泗水，皆中貴護送，傳舍供擬。皇帝巡狩河朔，刺血上疏，璽書褒嘆。是時萬年中參，恩愛異衆，宸闈進見，禮數踰等。贈中書令忠武公李繼隆每以保阿，尊事尤謹。洎元符降格，法御上封，妙善即朝日之郊，卜布金之地，諷甘露法品，祈東禪靈祐，帝意嘉之，賜名護國。

天禧元年，湘東邃谷有鉅石，重累數十百丈，屹若浮圖。昔隱今見，詔遣使案視，建寺度僧以旌其異。妙善志往瞻禮，有大弟子道堅以師臘既高，衡陽云遠，懇留不已，先事以聞。翌日，妙善請告南遊，真宗曰：‘汝老矣，何遽遠適？如來性海，隨處現前，儻有至誠，皆可供養。’妙善遂求建今塔，特詔許之。會江寧府長干塔成，繪圖來上，促召妙善於護國，將賜之。道堅在妙覺，地近先至，訪對稱旨，受圖以歸。首事創規，實始於此。由是涓日置泉，肇基寶甃，冶金礪石，作於地宮。將秘莊獻明肅太后所賜馱都，逮妙善曩得佛骨。會妙善示滅，盡以塔事囑累道堅。妙善享年七十有六，尼夏五十有五。宮闈震嗟，賻贈加品，建坊立刹，賜額寶勝，以道堅兼主之。

道堅盡禮蒼皞，入謝扃禁，且陳妙善遺誓云：‘此塔今世不成，來生願就。’先帝惻然，賜以潛邸珍玩三千萬直，仍命內侍分董其役。明年春，法堅製金襴寶函，納前舍利等入奉於內道場，贊唄三夕。兩街威儀導自滋福殿，帝薦香以送之。季商協吉，藏於石室。五年，繼賜乘輿副物貨錙萬緡，以供餘費。乾興初，又以塔心殿棟須合抱修幹，既選未獲，貫於皇帝。上方以天下為公，且重違其請，莊太后時為皇太妃，乃以奩金五百萬輸於內府，市材以施之。天聖改元，內出明德太

后寶器價二百六十萬泊莊獻服用千餘萬付之公帑，易金銅鑄輪蓋以施之。美哉！四門九級，岌岌天中，十盤八繩，晃曜雲際。道堅又以圯墁雖畢，丹采剖剝未完，徧募檀信，獲緡一萬八百，泊法堅稟給餘貲三百二十萬以償其工。

上繼志有嚴，奉先惟孝，宅心凝覺，追福太宮。由二級而上，命奉安禰廟至宣祖皇帝四室神御，並列環衛，拱侍左右。自餘緣塔功德未具者，皆省服御成之。由是賢劫之象，薩埵之容，五佐星緯，八部人天，分次峻層，罔不咸備，七年功畢，詔賜茲額。金榜始嚴，闕輶臨視，談贊五尼，賚紫方袍。并賜近院官舍九十區，僦直充供。明道二載，上給白金五十鎰，俾營獻殿。先有陳元虔捨僧伽像，張延澤施羅漢像，頗極精巧。道堅復建二殿夾峙於塔以奉之，又營諷《法華》《孔雀經》二殿以次之。景祐中，上賜錢千萬，創二樓於塔前。右安特旨所賜龍藏，作香輪以轉千函；左挂莊惠所捨鐘，樹彫格以維九乳。其斜廊壁繪羅漢、迦文像，亦莊惠之施。

粵自營創，逮夫圓成，則有宗藩施三門泊無量壽像，鄧國貴主施報身像，尚宮武氏施法身像，朱氏施藥師像，何氏施下生像。晉國夫人張氏施工繪獻殿壁，潁川郡君韓氏捨圖於西，戈水杜航捨地於東，及其季尚繼獻金錄，壽春王文獻緡錢，義學比丘端琛指教相文字，比丘惟儼著塔錄，吳門應德興為匠石。皆道堅願力所召，共周能事者也。

厥初，妙善嘗夢塔相止於雙足，談者以為上足善繼之祥也。塔成，忽一日遠望如失，靈祇環遶之異也。道堅，故通事舍人杜志儒之女，母明德從父姨，再適故殿前指揮使、武成軍節度楊信，封隴西郡夫人。道堅生九歲即齋素，十有一求捨家，興國八年，剃度得戒。明年，賜紫伽梨。十有六，授慈懿師名。嗣掌妙覺，月給俸料，三時賜衣，歲度僧、薦紫各二。隴西夫人隨子剃染，期月歸寂。道堅天機警悟，資性嚴整，有大丈夫風概。嘗誦《法華》千卷、《華嚴》《首楞》《淨名》《圓覺》皆數百過，記憶教藏，該通大義。塔之規模，盡出智匠。總三院之務，安數百之衆，以慈悲攝嗔恚，以精通攝懈怠。故能念舉而物應，身動而衆隨。羣蠡表異，織鱗示應，作大因緣，終始圓就。明道中，詔加福慧之名。嘗談經於觀文殿，有旨賜尼衆食料。道堅以為出家分行，折伏驕慢，赴請之飯，猶起諸漏。彷徨移晷，切辭仰給。每院但受月廩，作糜米十斛，聞者與之，謂其知分。

夫以柔弱之賦，婉孌之姿，其間具明淑之德，習師傅之訓，不過佩服詩禮，蹈履謙祗，體蘋蘩之柔潔，法山河之容潤而已。其能斷棄愛染，脫離塵垢，以堅固為佛事，以勇猛趨實際，潛發心華，坐空蘊樹者，何其偉歟！古之后族，出入宮掖，憑藉聲勢，狃怙恩澤，外交王

侯，旁出姻援。不期驕而自速，靡羨侈而極懷，載之前聞，為鑒來轍者有矣。其能委遠光寵，杜絕徼望，辭榮於宗屬，等志於貧賤。以喜捨化俗，以高潔自持者，抑為難哉！宜乎萬乘待遇，六宮景慕，成支提之上緣，到無生之彼岸者也。於戲！是塔庀功二十年，規平三百尺，高二引有六丈，經用一億。旁廡佗舍，無慮五百楹。自非景祚和平，累朝信奉，設有大願，烏可成邪！是知諸佛慧命，其待時而興也。夫議者皆以為聖上於是塔大美者四：中出寶幣，形民力也；日就勝因，暢先謨也；敦勸於下，使趨善也；命書厥勞，庸展親也。所宜鬼神潛衛，海域延仰，永集純嘏，施及懷生者焉。

臣早預翻經，嘗更約史，仰被臺札，靡敢固辭。謹按：塔者，梵云窣堵坡，此云靈廟。在於諸天，則藏佛爪、髮、衣、鉢；在於西度，則記佛降生、經行、演說、圓寂之所。一以表人勝，次以生地信，三以報重恩。四果之位，能超三界，故有初級至四級者。如來出十二因緣，故極於十有二級焉。迦葉滅後，婆羅奈王起七寶塔為作銘記，豈非刻石之識，抑有初邪！或問古今哲王之導黎庶，不專講六藝，而參用三乘，豈其大抵同歸於善乎？臣嘗試論之：夫有生之源，本始清淨，寂則絕待於一物，感則資始於萬緣。至靈無方，至虛善應。覺者則圓通罔礙，湛寂自然，內不立於寸心，外無累於羣境，不為世界之所流轉，不為幻妄之所變移。迷者則奔馳萬有，昏翳五欲，習動而不能靜，入業而不能捨，失本明而不知，沉諸趣而不恨。所以能仁愍之，出現於世，法不廣大不能包種性，喻不善巧不能破根蘊。窮理而至命，《象》《繫》之旨也；率性而達道，《中庸》之意也。好生惡殺，仁義之均也；防非致和，禮樂之則也。聖人以為外可以扶世訓，佑生民；內可以澡心源，還妙本。所以崇其塔廟，尊其教戒。自東漢以來，歷世多矣。其間執分別之論，起歸嚮之疑，廢之而逾盛，毀之而逾信，豈非言底乎不誣，理冥乎至當者哉！昔有人云：百家之鄉，一人持戒，則十人淳謹，百人和睦。夫能行一善，則去一惡而息一刑，一刑息於家，則百刑措於國。以此觀之，則斯法之來裨我之治蓋亦多矣！上具大智慧有大威德，神道以設教，文明以化人，晏坐黼帷，鋪觀貝牒，信解出於天縱，悟入自於生知。指曹溪頓門，則言高達摩；覽竺乾半字，則義中悉曇。實玉毫之化身，託金輪而救物，未階鋪砌，孰望清光！而況投筆端闌，屬鞬遠戍，據案受簡，摩盾操觚，但緣外護之仁，少叙重熙之德。謹裁二十有四，頌以勒銘云：……

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Abbreviations

- SKQS* *Yingyin Wenyuange Siku quanshu* 景印文淵閣四庫全書.
See Bibliography, Secondary Sources.
- XZJ* (*Wan*) *Xuzang jing* (卅) 續藏經. See Bibliography,
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**Paper and Stone:
Buddhist Manuscript and
Epigraphical Culture**

The Question of the Dating of Bingling Temple's Cave 169, Niche 6 and its Connection to the Time of the Composition and Dissemination of Several Buddhist Scriptures

WEI ZHENG 韋正

Peking University

Translated by Gabriel Groz, The University of Chicago

Abstract: There is a strong likelihood that the inscription 'First Year of the Jianhong 建弘 Reign' (420) in Cave 169 of Bingling Temple 炳靈寺 should actually be read as 'Fifth Year of the Jianhong Reign'. Nearest to Niche 6 in the cave is not the statue of the Three Sages of the Western Lands, but murals of Śākyamuni Buddha and Maitreya Bodhisattva. Between the statue and the murals of the Śākyamuni Buddha and Maitreya, there is also a mural of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions. It is unlikely that Buddhahadra's translation of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* would have at that point already been disseminated throughout the Hehuang 河湟 region. The date of the statue of the Three Sages of West and that of the translation of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* are also different. The Jianhong inscription mentions a 'Compassionate One,' which corresponds to the murals of Maitreya Bodhisattva. Consequently, the 'fifth year of the Jianhong Reign' inscription should correspond to the murals of Śākyamuni Buddha, Maitreya Bodhisattva, and the Buddhas of the Ten Directions; the dating of Cave 6 must be later, roughly equivalent to the early or middle periods of the Yungang 雲崗 Grottoes. This analysis supports the judgment of modern scholars that identifies the extent 2-juan version of the *Wuliangshou jing* 無量壽經 [Sutra of Immeasurable Life], translated by Kang Sengkai 康僧鎧 (Saṃghavarman) of

Cao Wei 曹魏, as a translation from the early Liu Song Dynasty. The names of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions (十方佛名) are related to the Jin translation of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, and their dissemination into the Hehuang area should be seen as having to do with the maintenance of good relationships between the Eastern Jin and Southern Dynasties and the Tuyuhun 吐谷渾, across the Yizhou 益州 frontier.

Keywords: Niche 6; Cave 169; Bingling Temple; the ‘Jianhong’ name inscription; *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*; *Wuliangshou jing*

1. The Dating of Bingling Temple’s Cave 169, Niche 6

In Niche 6 of Bingling Temple’s Cave 169, there is a triad of statues of the ‘Three Sages of the Pure Land.’ On a nearby wall, there is an inscription of the Western Qin reign name ‘Jianhong’ 建弘. Until recently researchers have uncritically associated this inscription with Niche 6, and the statues of the Three Sages of the Pure Lands in Niche 6 have thus become recognized as a representative Buddhist artwork from the late Sixteen Kingdoms period. However, the aforementioned analysis leaves much to be desired.

Between the inscription of the reign name Jianhong and the statues in Niche 6 there survive murals of considerable scale that depict the Śākyamuni Buddha and the Bodhisattva Maitreya (Figures 1, 2, and 3). According to the standard principles of identification, which hold that inscriptions should be matched with that which is nearest to them, the reign name Jianhong should go together with the murals of the Śākyamuni Buddha and Maitreya Bodhisattva, rather than with Niche 6. The ‘Jianhong’ epigraph contains the phrases: ‘... then a wondrous craftsman was invited to create this revered image, of unearthly posture and wondrous look...[...] to fashion the Compassionate One...some (?) desired’ ‘.....遂請妙匠，容茲尊像，神姿琦茂.....量(?)作慈氏，庶(?)欲.....’. The ‘Compassionate One’ in this case is Maitreya Bodhisattva, signaling a connection between the



FIG.1 Murals in Niche 6 inside Cave 169 of the Binglingsi and on Its Eastern Side. Gansu sheng wenwu gongzuo dui and Bingling si wenwu baoguan suo, *Zhongguo shiku: Yongjing Bingling si*, Plate 17.



FIG.2 Unfolded Murals in Niche 6 inside Cave 169 of the Binglingsi and on Its Eastern Side. Gansu Sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo and Binglingsi Wenwu Baoguan suo, *Bingling si yiliujiu ku*, Plate 8.



FIG. 3 Standing Maitreya depicted on the murals on the Eastern Side of Cave 169, the Binglingsi. Gansu Bingling si wenwu baohu yanjiusuo, *Zhongguo shiku yishu: Bingling si*, Plate 87.

inscription and the Maitreya in the murals rather than the Three Sages of the Pure Land.

Furthermore, even though Niche 6 contains a set of statues, its scale falls short of the mural depictions of the Śākyamuni Buddha and Maitreya Bodhisattva, so the inscription Jianhong fits perfectly with the murals. In addition, the image of Maitreya in standing position and Bodhisattva dress is an earlier one. Images of such styles are often found in Gandhāra, while Northern Liang stupas have both standing and cross-ankled sitting Maitreya Bodhisattva; the Dunhuang 敦煌 Mogao 莫高 Caves 272 and 275 have numerous cross-ankled and seated images of Maitreya dressed as either Buddha or Bodhisattva. Images of Maitreya, in their spread from West to East, underwent a shift from standing to sitting. In terms of the dating of Mogao Caves 272 and 275, even though the Northern Liang is the most widespread explanation, there is no sufficient reason for this, and here we will adopt the time period of the Northern Wei. Even if the image of Mai-

treya in the murals on the side of Niche 6 did not have the inscription of Jianhong, its style still parallels with that of the Northern Liang.

Between the statues in Niche 6 and the murals of the Śākyamuni Buddha and Maitreya Bodhisattva, there is a mural depiction of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions. It is not a stand-alone work; but whether it goes along with the statue in Niche 6 or the murals of the Śākyamuni Buddha and Maitreya Bodhisattva is hard to say. In any event the difference in the subordinate relationships among the works signifies a time difference. Some time ago, Zhang Baoxi 張寶璽 incisively pointed out that the names of the Buddhas of Ten Directions in the murals have the same names as the Ten Buddhas who are mentioned in the chapter 'The Name Tathāgata' of the *Da Fangguangfo Huayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經 (Skt. *Avatamsaka Sūtra*; Garland Sutra), translated by Buddhahadra (Fotuobatuoluo 佛陀跋陀羅; 359–429) in the year 421. Between the two interpretations of the year number attached to the reign name Jianhong, Year 1 and Year 5, I lean towards Year 5. The fifth year of the Jianhong reign is equivalent to 424 CE, three years after Buddhahadra translated the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, enough time for the sutra to be disseminated from Jiankang 建康 to the Hehuang 河湟 Valley and to be depicted pictorially. This increases the probability that the mural of the Buddhas of Ten Directions and the murals of the Śākyamuni Buddha and Maitreya Bodhisattva are artefacts of the same period. The murals of the Śākyamuni Buddha and Maitreya Bodhisattva depict the content of the Lotus Sutra; although the Ten Buddhas come from the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, they are by no means restricted to the world of Huayan 華嚴 Buddhism, and it is certainly not impossible to put the Buddhas of the Ten Directions together with scenes from the Lotus Sutra; take the statement in the chapter 'Expedient Means' in Kumarajiva's translation of the *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經 (Skt. *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*; *Lotus Sutra*) that 'I and the Buddhas of the Ten Directions know these matters....only I and the Buddhas of the Ten Directions know this.'¹ Theoretically, a connec-

¹ *Miaofa lianhua jing*, T no. 262, 9: 1.5c24- 6a20: 我及十方佛, 乃能知是事。.....唯我知是相, 十方佛亦然。

tion between the Buddhas of Ten Directions and the Three Sages of the Western Lands also cannot be ruled out. The chapter ‘Universally Shining Light’ in the *Wuliangshou jing* 無量壽經 [Sutra of Immeasurable Life; i.e., Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha* (*Sukhāvatī-vyūha-sūtra*; **Amitāyuh-sūtra*; **Amitābha-vyūha*)] says: ‘The powerful divine light of Amitābha is the most honored, and the light of all Buddhas does not reach it.’²

Still, it is hard to imagine that the mural of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions is connected to the statue of the Three Sages of the Western Lands; this is because, both in terms of the method by which they were modeled, the characteristics of their composition, and other factors, the statues in Niche 6 all display the features of later periods. Niche 6 holds a clay figure; the back of Guanyin and the escarpment are not joined together. The works in Cave 169 that are of certain early Buddhist provenance are all murals. The mural on the east wall of the south side of the mouth of Cave 169, that is to say, No. 24, is very early (Figure 4).³ Whether one looks at it from the current rock face, or from the fracture at the bottom of the east wall mural, the east wall experienced serious collapse, rendering the current east wall an overhanging rock block. The face of the east wall underwent careful polishing, and the content of the murals includes the Thousand Buddhas and paintings that expound Buddhist teachings, all painted directly on the face of the rock and displaying original characteristics; this is rarely seen in Cave 169. Judging from the situation of the rock face, as well as the traces and the height of the overhang, the possibility that these murals were drawn after the collapse of the east wall is practically non-existent, and could only have been drawn before the collapse of the rock face. The previous mural, located directly located on the rock face beneath the east wall, depicts stupa ornamentations of the chorten style; the rock face where this group of murals is located was renamed as the south wall.

² *Wuliangshou jing*, T no. 360, 12: 1.270a23–24: 無量壽佛, 威神光明最尊第一, 諸佛光明所不能及。

³ The numbering follows that in Gansu Sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo and Binglingsi Wenwu Baoguan suo, *Binglingsi yiliujiu ku*, 1–30.

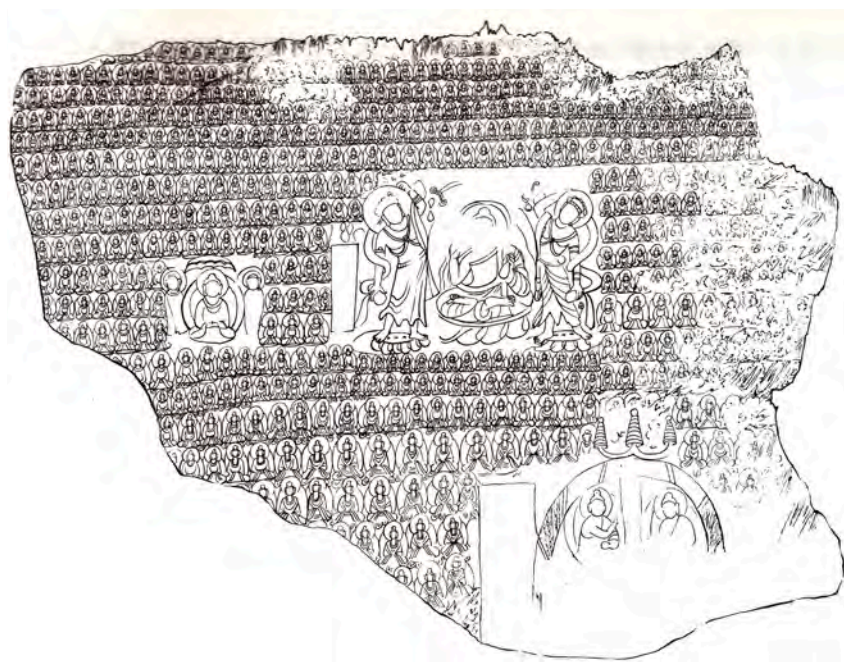


FIG. 4 The murals on the east wall of the south side of the mouth of Cave 169 (i.e., No. 24) Number 24 in Cave 169, the Binglingsi. Gansu Sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo and Binglingsi Wenwu Baoguansuo, *Bingling si yiliujiu ku*, Plate 23.

Here, clay rods and some of the murals of the two stupa murals on the east face are located directly on the lower section of the rock face of mural 24, showing that the stupa murals are extremely likely to have been painted only after rock blocks of mural 24 had completely collapsed. A mural similar to mural 24, of a stupa within which the Śākyamuni and Prabhūtaratna Buddhas are sitting together, is also seen in murals 11–13 in Cave 169, indicating that their periods are all earlier. The dates of the extant statues in Cave 169 are all later than these murals, while the subject matter of the Three Sages of the West that appears in Niche 6 is rarely seen in that cave, suggesting that its period is likely later.

A feature of the statues of the Three Sages that has substantial chronological significance is the *gui* 圭 shaped topknot buns of Guanyin and Mahasthamaprapta (Dashizhi 大勢至) Bodhisattva.

The early murals 24 and 11–13, discussed above, have quite a few images of Bodhisattvas, but they all have oblate buns, without even a single example of a *gui*-shaped bun, which suggests that the *gui*-shaped buns must be dated to a later period. Cave 169 has a considerable number of other Bodhisattva statues with *gui*-shaped buns, which often go along with Buddha images or maharaja-deva images in ruffle-hemmed clothing. For example, in Niche 3 on the north wall of Cave 168 is a grouping of one Buddha, one Bodhisattva, and one *maharāja-deva* (*tianwang* 天王). The Buddha's robe, which covers both shoulders, has a part thrown over the left arm, and its hem is ruffled. The same is the case for the both sides of the *maharāja-deva*'s cape. The Bodhisattva's body is erect, the top of its head is a high *gui*-shaped topknot, its hair draped over the shoulders, its roughly heart-shaped necklaces are also identical to those of Guanyin and Mahasthamaprapta Bodhisattva. *Gui*-shaped buns and ruffled hems are found frequently in the Yungang 雲崗 Grottoes, and are seen often in the Five Tanyao 曇曜 (d.u.) Caves as well. The carvings and clay figurines are distinct; the pleats at Yungang are all traced in the shape of the letter 'Z', with none being more representative than the clothing edges in Cave 20. *Gui*-shaped buns were seen frequently in the second Yungang period, and were not yet eliminated in the third period. As far as this author is aware, among grottoes in the early period, *gui*-shaped buns were only seen in Bingling Temple and Yungang Grottoes. Therefore, the dating of Cave 169, Niche 6 of Bingling Temple should be close to that of the Five Tanyao Caves of Yungang. The Tianti 天梯 Mountain Grottoes at Wuwei 武威 are commonly recognized as grottoes of the Northern Liang 北涼 era. The standing and kneeling Bodhisattvas painted on the pillar in the center of Cave 4 retained their original form from the Northern Liang, whose hair buns are all oblate, instead of being *gui*-shaped (Figure 5). This shows, as well, that the date of Niche 6 is somewhat removed from the Northern Liang, and also suggests that it is appropriate to push the dating of Niche 6 towards the Yungang period.

Several aspects of the figure of the Maitreya Bodhisattva next to the Jianhong name inscription bear similarities with the Bodhisattvas in Cave 4 of the Tianti Mountain Grottoes; the most prominent points of commonality are their earrings and necklaces. Their



FIG. 5 The Northern Liang Bodhisattvas painted on the pillar in the center of Cave 4 on Mount Tianti. Dunhuang yanjiuyuan and Gansu sheng Bowuguan, *Wuwei Tianti shan shiku*, Plate 53.

earrings are all ring shaped, while the necklace is a leaf-shaped piece hanging from a round collar, obviously distinct from the simple, heart-shaped necklaces worn by the Guanyin and Mahasthamaprapta Bodhisattvas, while heart-shaped necklaces are very common in the Yungang Grottoes.

To sum up the previous section, the inscription of the reign title Jianhong ought to be paired with the nearby murals of the Śākyamuni Buddha and Maitreya Bodhisattva; these murals and the nearby murals of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions may constitute a single entity, and have no connection with the statues of the Three Sages of the West in Niche 6. Various properties make clear that the dating of Niche 6 must be later, and should be close to the early or middle period of the [creation of the] Yungang Grottoes.

2. The Periodization of the Translation and Circulation of the *Sutra of Immeasurable Life*

To defer the dating of Niche 6, Cave 169 to the Yungang period reduces the awkwardness of the dating for the appearance of belief in the Pure Land of the West which would otherwise seem too early. Among the positively identified early Buddhist relics are the Tianti Mountain Grottoes of Wuwei, Cave 169 of Bingling Temple, the Northern Liang Stone Pagodas, the Yungang Grottoes, the Mogao Caves, the early or mid-Northern Wei grottoes of Maiji 麥積 Mountain Grottoes, as well as Mogao Caves 268, 272, and 275, which are of disputed date. Among these relics, apart from the isolated case of Niche 6, Cave 169 of Bingling Temple, none possess images of the Pure Land of the West. This phenomenon is by no means coincidental, and is related to the prominence and singular popularity of the ideas of the *Lotus Sutra* in the North. Whether the Tianti Mountain Grottoes of Wuwei, Cave 169 of Bingling Temple, or the Northern Liang Stone Pagodas, all from before the suppression of Buddhism under the Northern Wei Emperor Taiwu 太武 (r. 423–452), or the later Yungang Grottoes, the iconic relics of Buddhism from this period consist of little other than images of the Seven Buddhas, Three Buddhas, Śākyamuni Buddha, Śākyamuni Buddha seated with Prabhūtaratna, and Maitreya. The significance of the Three Buddhas and Seven Buddhas is the same, both symbolizing the permanent endurance of the Dharma. Maitreya is the coming Buddha, possessing immense attractive force to all people, the emperor included. The Śākyamuni Buddha and Śākyamuni Buddha seated with Prabhūtaratna are direct expressions of the *Lotus Sutra*'s content. In the early period, when Buddhism was not yet well understood in China, this content was succinct and easy to understand, and easily spread in popularity.

Using principally records of statue creation, Hou Xudong 侯旭東 discussed popular belief in Buddhism in the fifth and sixth centuries in the North, and his analysis is relevant here. Regarding figures of Maitreya, Hou writes: 'In the 440s, there were already sporadic statues of Maitreya; from the 460s until the end of the Northern Dynasties, statues were spread out evenly across each period.

Throughout these latter 120 years, there were continuously worshippers in society, and it should be considered the main dissemination period for such worship. [...] Worship of and statues devoted to Maitreya expanded considerably. The turning point was somewhere between 460 and 530. Statues of Maitreya account for 10% of the total; its social influence should not be regarded as small'.⁴ Concerning statues of Śākyamuni Buddha, Hou writes: 'From the middle of the fifth century through the end of the 570s, worship of and statues devoted to the Śākyamuni Buddha were relatively popular. [...] Throughout the North as a whole, throughout much of the period 450–597, over 10% of Buddhist devotees were devoted to the worship of the Śākyamuni Buddha'.⁵ On statues of Guanyin, Hou writes: 'Broadly speaking, the roughly hundred years between the year 470 and the end of the Northern Dynasties was the main propagation period of Guanyin worship and statue-making. In the 70 years prior there was only one example of a Guanyin statue; its influence was still weak. [...] Viewed from the vantage point of Guanyin statue-making, worship of Guanyin, from its flourishing beginning in 470 until the late Northern Dynasties, maintained in general a stable contingent of believers; over 10% of devotees worshipped Guanyin'.⁶ Concerning the production of Amitābha statues, Hou writes: 'Broadly speaking, statues of Amitābha were comparatively popular between the year 510 and the end of the Northern Dynasties. In the 110 years prior to this, among the 216 statues that

⁴ Hou, *Wu, liu shiji Beifang minzhong Fojiao Xinyang*, 108–09: 彌勒造像在5世紀40年代就零星存在, 60年代後至北朝末各個時段則均勻分佈, 此後120年間社會上崇拜者不斷, 應該為該崇拜的主要流行期。..... 彌勒造像與崇拜經歷了一個從無到有, 由盛而衰的發展過程, 轉捩點分別在460與530年前後。全部彌勒像占造像總數的10%, 其社會影響不應算小。

⁵ Ibid, 106: 5世紀中葉至6世紀70年代末, 北方釋迦造像及其崇拜較流行。..... 整個北方在450—579年間的大部分時間中約10%以上的釋徒崇奉釋迦牟尼。

⁶ Ibid, 3, 112: 總體上觀世音從470年至北朝末年百餘年間一直不斷, 是該造像及崇拜的主要流行期。此前70年間觀世音造像僅1例, 勢力尚微。..... 從觀世音造像看, 觀世音崇拜自470年盛行以後至北朝末大體保持一支穩定的信徒隊伍, 10%以上的信徒崇奉觀世音。

have survived, only 3 of them are statues of Amitābha, suggesting that the worship of Amitābha had not yet become popular. [...] In sum, worship of Amitābha had long since existed, but its influence was extremely minimal, belonging to the statuary themes and worship objects that emerged in the early 6th century, even though its influence gradually increased; by the end of the Northern Dynasties, there were few worshippers, and its relevance was still minimal'.⁷ The specific circumstances of the three statues of Amitābha that Hou mentioned as existing prior to 510 are as follows: one in the period 460–469 and two between 480–489. Thus it can be observed that for Three Sages of the West to emerge in the Jianhong reign of the Western Qin would be extremely abrupt. Hou further indicates: 'Prior to the year 550, in the records of the statues that were created, worshippers only paid heed to statues of Amitābha, not mentioning flanking figures, even if the statues that were carved were often made in the style of the Three Honored Buddhas. In several monuments, even though they have at the same time engravings of Amitābha and Guanyin, they are put in different places in the niche, with no connection to one another [...] Only after the year 550 did there emerge the formulation of Amitābha with two Bodhisattvas. Among eight such statues, five cases among them further indicate a grouping of Amitābha, Guanyin and Mahasthamaprabhata Bodhisattva, that is, the so-called Three Sages of the West; for the appearance of this appellation one has to wait until after the year 560. Through the evolution of worshippers' terms of address for objects of veneration, it is not difficult to observe that in the early period worshippers only worshipped the main Buddha, not yet taking into consideration the figures flanking him, and later slowly paid attention to the existence of the flanking figures and their functions, but still did not understand the flanking figures' names, finally learning their precise titles, leading to the appearance of the appellation "Three Sages of the West".⁸

⁷ Ibid, 3, 144: 總體上無量壽造像510年以後至北朝結束前較流行。此前110年間傳世216尊造像中僅3尊為無量壽像，崇拜無量壽尚不流行。.....概言之，無量壽崇拜早已存在，但影響極小，屬6世紀初漸興的造像題材與崇拜物件，影響雖漸次擴大，但終北朝之世，信徒無多，勢力尚弱。

Steles paired with statues, much like grottoes, are only able to reflect a certain aspect of the Buddhism in the Sixteen Kingdoms and Northern Dynasties; it is expectable for the characteristics that the two display to be somewhat different, but it is pretty clear that the two share a common trend. The popularity of the Three Sages of the West and Guanyin was at least a half-century later than the date of Niche 6 as had been identified in the past; this point of incongruity suggests that the previous identifications of the dating of Niche 6 are incorrect.

Because near the statue of the Three Sages of the West in Niche 6 there are the names of Amitābha Buddha, Guanyin, Bodhisattva of Compassion, and Mahasthamaprapta Bodhisattva, the Buddhist scriptural basis for this niche might be the *Wuliangshou jing* 無量壽經 (Longer *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra*) or the *Guan Wuliangshou jing* 觀無量壽經 [Skt. **Amitayurdhyana Sutra*; Sutra of the Meditation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life], but bears no connection with the *Amituo jing* 阿彌陀經 [*Amitābha-sūtra*; i.e., Shorter *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra*]. There is also an extant alternate translation, the *Wuliang qingjing pingdeng jing* 無量清淨平等覺經 [Skt. *Amitayurdhyana Sutra*; Infinite Equal Tranquility Sutra], which the various Sui and Tang scriptural indices compiled before the Later Liang *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 [Biographies of Eminent Monks] and the *Kaiyuan Shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄 [Kaiyuan Records of Buddhist Teachings] hold to have been translated by Boyan 帛延 (of the 3rd c.) during the Wei, while the *Kaiyuan Shijiao lu* lists the translator as Lokaksema; contemporary scholars, such as Kagawa Takao 香川孝雄, believe the scripture to have been translated by Dharmarakṣa. The Three Sages of the

⁸ Ibid, 3, 116: 550年以前的造像記中信徒均只稱造無量壽像或阿彌陀像, 未提及脅侍, 雖然雕造出來的像每每為三尊佛式樣。有些碑像中雖然同時雕有阿彌陀、無量壽與觀世音, 卻分龕別處, 不相關聯, 550年以後方出現無量壽二菩薩之類的說法。見於造像的共8例, 其中5例進一步指明所造為‘無量壽(阿彌陀)觀世音大勢至’, 即所謂西方三聖, 這種稱呼出現要到560年以後。由信徒對崇拜物件稱謂的演變不難看出, 早期信徒只崇拜主尊, 未顧及脅侍, 後漸注意到脅侍之存在與作用, 但尚不明了脅侍之名號, 最後才知其確切名號, 出現‘西方三聖’之稱呼。

West in that translated text were denoted as Amitābha, Guanyin, and Mahasthamaprapta. Thus the statue in Niche 6 could not have been sculpted based on the *Wuliang qingjing pingdeng jing*. The *Wuliang qingjing pingdeng jing* was translated in the Yuanjia 元嘉 reign of Liu Song (424–442) by Kālayaśas in Daolin Temple 道林精舍 on Mount Zhong 鐘山, Jiankang; if Niche 6 were sculpted based on the *Wuliang qingjing pingdeng jing*, the dating would be much more appropriate, and can be seen as proof that the Southern Dynasties had a close relationship with the Hehuang 河湟 region. The current 2-chapter *Wuliangshou jing* was translated by Saṃghavarman of Cao Wei 曹魏; the problems involved are extremely complex.

This relates to theory of ‘five extant and seven missing’ (‘五存七欠’ or ‘五存七缺’) regarding the Chinese translations of the *Wuliangshou jing*. The third volume of the Zhongguo Fojiao 中國佛教 [Chinese Buddhism] compiled by the Buddhism Association of China 中國佛教協會, *Zhongguo Fojiao jingji* 中國佛教經籍 [Chinese Buddhist Texts], contains an entry on the *Wuliangshou jing* written by Gao Guanru 高觀如 (1906–1979), and it explains in a straightforward manner the notion of the ‘five extant and seven missing’ and the connections that may have existed between these scriptural editions. Chen Lin’s 陳林 preface to the annotated edition of the *Wuliangshou jing* made use of the aforementioned conclusions; it has a good introduction of the conclusions arrived at by Japanese scholars, which is worth citing directly below:

In the modern period, many historians of Buddhism have had doubts about this explanation, especially a group of Japanese scholars, among them Shun’ei Tsuboi 坪井俊映, Shinkō Mochizuki 望月信亨 (1869–1948), Kōyō Sakaino 境野黃洋, Hajime Nakamura 中村元, and Kagawa Takao, who, by comparing and surveying scriptural records, rare extant copies of translations, Dunhuang documents, Sanskrit sources, and Tibetan-language translations, overturned the traditional view that the *Wuliangshou jing* had twelve different Chinese translations. They instead hold that many of these ‘translations’ were mistakenly classified as individually having multiple translators, and then were incorrectly recorded in the *Lidai Sanbao ji* and other scriptural records. Take Shun’ei Tsuboi, who writes: ‘The extant

[Puti]liuzhi's [菩提]流志 (Bodhiruci, 572?-727) translation of the *Wuliangshou rulai hui* 無量壽如來會 [Tathāgata's Sermon on the Contemplation of the Buddha of Limitless Life] and Faxian's 法賢 (Dharmabhadra, ?-1001) translation of the *Wuliangshou zhuangyan jing* 無量壽莊嚴經 [i.e., *Dacheng Wuliangshou zhuangyan jing* 大乘無量壽莊嚴經 (Great Vehicle Sutra of the Adornment of Immeasurable Life)], are all without controversy. As for the other translations, dissenting views abound; in making a comparison between the so-called "seven lacking" translations and the extant materials, it seems most likely that they were, for the most part, the product of mistakes in the scriptural record or of repeated recordings.⁹ Kōyō Sakaino also holds that 'the so-called "seven lost" translations of the sutra are by no means the original translations, but were instead uncritically lumped into the canons at the time of the compilation of the *Kaiyuan Shijiao lu*, thereby bringing about the appearance of various different scriptural translations.'

後世不少佛教史家對此說法有頗多懷疑，特別是近代以來，坪井俊映、望月信亨、境野黃洋、中村元、香川孝雄等日本學者在對照經錄、現存在藏各譯本、敦煌文書、梵文原本以及藏文譯本等進行勘定，推翻了《無量壽經》的漢文異譯本有十二種的傳統看法，認為許多譯本是誤將一經分屬多位譯者，進而被《歷代三寶記》等經錄誤載所致。如坪井俊映認為：‘如現存的流志所譯《無量壽如來會》，法賢譯《無量壽莊嚴經》，這都是沒有異議的。至於其他諸種譯本，則異說紛紜莫定，所謂七缺與現存相互比較，大概多半是經錄的誤說或重記。’境野黃洋也認為：‘所謂七缺異譯的諸經，並非是原有的翻譯，而是開元錄在經錄製作之時，無批判地納入諸經，而造成了這樣許多的經名譯本。’⁹

Chen continues:

There is no specific record of the extant translation by Saṃghavarman of Cao Wei in the *Chu Sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集 [Collection of Records related to the productions of Buddhist canon] or in the

⁹ Chen, 'Xu'.

Liang Dynasty *Gaoseng zhuan*, while the Sui and Tang scriptural indexes that precede the *Kaiyuan Shijiao lu* all classify that translation as having been done by Dharmarakṣa, and the *Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶記 [Record of the Three Jewels throughout Successive Dynasties] records two translations, one by Saṃghavarman and one by Dharmarakṣa. But the terms used in the translation are extremely similar to those used in Baoyun's Song-era translation *Fo benxing jing* 佛本行經 [Sutra on the Past Activities of the Buddha]. Baoyun's 寶雲 translation is recorded in the second volume of the *Chu Sanzang ji ji*, and it can be known that it was in existence from that point in time on, and only became a lost edition during the Sui Dynasty. The current edition was likely translated by Baoyun, and incorrectly attributed to a Wei translator. [...] Additionally, according to the record in the second volume of the *Chu Sanzang ji ji*, in the second year of the Liu Song Yongchu 永初 reign (421), Buddhabadhra and Baoyun translated two editions of a two-chapter New *Wuliangshou jing* at Daochang Temple 道場寺 in Yangdu (i.e. Jiankang), simultaneously and in the same place, which clearly does not conform to reason; Mochizuki Shinkō believes that it is highly likely that 'initially there were two people involved in the joint translation, which was revised later by Baoyun.'

具體而言，現行的曹魏康僧鎧譯本，在《出三藏記集》和梁《高僧傳》中都沒有記載，《開元釋教錄》以前隋、唐諸經錄中都將該譯本列為法護所譯，《歷代三寶記》則並載僧鎧和法護兩種譯本。但此經的譯語、譯例與宋寶雲所譯的《佛本行經》等卻非常接近。寶雲譯本已見諸《出三藏記集》卷二所載，可見從那時以來一向存在，到隋代才成缺本，今本或即寶雲所譯，被輾轉誤題為魏譯本。..... 又據《出三藏記集》卷二所載，劉宋佛陀跋陀羅和寶雲兩人皆于劉宋永初二年(421)揚都道場寺同時同處譯出同名《新無量壽經》二卷，顯然不合常理，望月信亨認為極有可能‘最初二人共譯，後來寶雲修正’¹⁰

Although the specific date of Niche 6 cannot be stated with certain-

¹⁰ Ibid.

ty, it is quite likely the earliest surviving statues of the Three Sages of the West; its scriptural basis can only be the *Wuliangshou jing* or the *Guan Wuliangshou jing*. Historians of Buddhism believe the *Wuliangshou jing* dates back to the early Liu Song Dynasty, which supports this paper's placing the date of Niche 6 as occurring during the early and middle periods of the Yungang Grottoes. Seemingly, then, the *Wuliangshou jing* was translated early on, but was only gradually noticed by people after some time.

3. The Period of Dissemination of the *Huayan Jing* in the Hehuang Region

The 'Jianhong' reign name inscription that borders Niche 6 of Cave 168 of Bingling Temple has the two readings of 'first year' and 'year five'. Zhang Baoxi 張寶璽, in a 1992 essay published in *Dunhuang Yanjiu*, wrote: "The epigraph reads: "made in the first year of the Jianhong reign, the year in *xuanxiao*, on the 24th day of the third month." If one calculates based on the Xuanxiao 玄枵 title, it ought to be the fifth year of the Jianhong reign(424); but the two characters "yuan nian" [first year] are clear, and one should treat it as the first year of the Jianhong reign."¹¹ Fukuyama Toshio disagrees with the 'first year' explanation, and believes that 'first' is a mistake for 'fifth', while it is difficult to confuse the *xuanxiao* title, and thus one should follow it and treat it as 'the fifth year of the Jianhong reign'.¹² Wang Huimin 王惠民, building on Fukuyama's insight, uses the names of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions as yet additional evidence for the inscription being the fifth year of the Jianhong reign, writing: "This niche contains the Buddhas of the Ten Directions; Zhang Baoxi's essay accurately demonstrates that their names and the names of the Buddha in the chapter "Titles of Tathāgata" of the Jin translation

¹¹ Zhang, 'Jianhong tiji jiqi youguan wenti de kaoshi', 12: 題記尾書 '建弘元年歲在玄枵三月廿四日造'. 若按玄枵紀年推算應為建弘五年 (424 年), '元年' 二字是清楚的, 應以建弘元年為是.

¹² Fukuyama, 'Sekkutsu no Seishin zōzōmei ni tsuite', 33–35.

of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* are in complete accord, and that scripture was translated between 418 and 421. The first year of the Jianhong reign corresponds to the year 420; at this time the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* had not yet been translated, and thus the cave could not have used as scriptural basis a canon that had not been translated until the following year. If the cave were constructed in the fifth year of the Jianhong reign, it is entirely possible that it could have made use of a newly translated scripture.¹³ Here, Wang Huimin may have misunderstood Zhang Baoxi's intentions.

Zhang points out that names of the ten Buddhas on the murals on the upper left side of Niche 6 (taking both sides of the niche itself as his standard) and the names of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions in Buddhābhadra's translation of the *Huayan jing* are entirely the same, namely: 'East [.....] the Fire-of-Knowledge Buddha of the South, the Practiced-Wisdom Buddha of the West, the Acted Wisdom Buddha of the North, the Bright Wisdom Buddha of the Northeast, the Supreme Wisdom Buddha of the Southwest, the Free Wisdom Buddha of the Northwest, the Fan Buddha of the Lower Realms, and the Concealed Blame Buddha of the Upper Realms'¹⁴; this is to his great credit. Zhang is not at all ignorant of the contradiction between the dating of the Jin translation of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* and the 'first year of the Jianhong reign' inscription, and cautiously writes: 'The inscription of the Ten Buddhas of Bingling Temple might be based on the Jin translation of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, which was at that very moment undergoing translation; it also might be based on an edition, now lost, that was widespread at the time. In fact, prior to the Jin translation of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, there were already over ten distinct *Avatamsaka*-type translations circulating in the world,

¹³ Wang, 'Bingling si Jianhong jinian ying wei Jianhong wunian,' 273–74: 此龕有十方諸佛，前揭張寶璽文準確考得其佛名與晉譯《華嚴經·如來名號品》之佛名完全一致，而該經譯於418–421年。建弘元年為420年，此時《華嚴經》尚未譯出，該窟絕不可能採用次年才譯出的佛經為據的。若建弘五年建窟，則完全可能採用新譯之經了。

¹⁴ 東□□□南方智火佛西方習智佛北方行智佛東北方明智佛西南方上智佛西北方自在智佛下方梵智佛上方伏怨智佛。

among them the *Dousha jing* 兜沙經 translated by Lokakṣema of the Eastern Han (equivalent to the current Chapter “The Name Tathagatha” from the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*) which is relatively close to the Buddhas of the Ten Directions, with its ten Buddhas. [...] The translated names are different. Again, for instance, the *Luomojia jing* 羅摩伽經, translated by the Western Qin monk Shengjian 聖堅 (the equivalent of the current “Chapter on Entering the Law” of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*), lacks the term “Buddhas of the Ten Directions”. Without a doubt, there are a number of scattered editions that have already been lost. If the mural of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions at Bingling Temple was not directly drawn from the Jin translation of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, there is a possibility that its basis was a presently lost edition from the *Avataṃsaka* series.¹⁵ If one accepts the notion that the expression ‘Ten Buddhas’ came from a lost translation, that suggests that the names of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions in Buddhahadra’s translation of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* entirely continued the usage of a lost translation; this is a possibility one of course cannot discount. By this reasoning, Niche 6 of Cave 169 has no connection with the South.

We hold that there is a strong probability that the Jianhong epigraph in Cave 169 should be read as ‘Year Five’, and that there is a strong probability that the name inscribed on the Buddhas of the Ten Directions comes from Jin translation of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. This is not only a question of dating the translation of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, but is instead directly connected to the existence of the Henan route of the Silk Road. The possible existence of lost editions of an *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* set is, in the last analysis, only a form of

¹⁵ Zhang, ‘Jianhong tiji jiqi youguan wenti de kaoshi’, 13–14:炳靈寺十佛題名有可能依據正在翻譯中的晉譯《華嚴經》，也可能依據當時已流行的今已佚失的某一散本。其實，在晉譯《華嚴經》之前已有十餘種華嚴系列的散本流傳於世，與十方佛比較接近的如東漢支婁迦讖譯的《兜沙經》（相當於今《華嚴經·如來名號品》），所列十佛為：.....譯名有別。再如，西秦本地僧人聖堅所譯的《羅摩伽經》（相當於今《華嚴經·入法界品》），無十方佛名稱。當然，有一些散本今已佚失。炳靈寺所繪十方佛若不是直接依據晉譯《華嚴經》，則另據今已佚失的華嚴系列某一散本的可能性是有的。

speculation, moreover, the names of the ten Buddhas are extremely refined; in the event that lost editions really did exist, the quality of their translations would be formidable, and would exceed that of the extant *Dousha jing* translated by Lokakṣema. That these excellent translations would be lost is not easily understood. The Henan route of the Silk Road did not only really exist; it also played an enormous role, which supports the conjecture that the Jin translation of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* entered the Hehuang region.

The so-called ‘Henan Route’ of the Silk Road ‘refers to a land transportation route connecting the Eastern Jin and Southern Dynasties with the Western Regions, which existed between the fourth and sixth centuries. From Yizhou 益州 (present-day Chengdu) it passed through northern Sichuan via Mao 茂 and Songpan 松潘 Counties, Gansu’s Lintan 臨潭 County, and Tongren 同仁 and Guide 貴德 counties in Qinghai, before reaching Fusi 伏侯 Town on Qinghai 青海 Lake. At this point in time the rulers of the Gansu area were the Tuyuhun 吐谷渾. The Tuyuhun were a branch of the Xianbei 鮮卑 who, in the beginning of the fourth century, migrated from the northeast to present-day Gansu and Qinghai; the Song granted their rulers the title of “King of Henan”, and thus the transportation route from Yizhou heading northward through Tuyuhun-controlled territory was called the “Henan Route”.¹⁶ The Henan route, starting from Yizhou, arrived at Tuyuhun-controlled Fusi Town, from which one would take the Qinghai Route of the Silk Road before finally arriving at the Western Regions. The so-called ‘Qinghai Route’, that is, the opening of a Qinghai route of the Silk Road, had its origins in the fact that the Hexi Corridor had been obstructed. At that time, one set out from Lanzhou 蘭州 (Jincheng 金城) and did not head through Wuwei (Liangzhou), but instead went west towards Xining

¹⁶ Xu, ‘Xu’: 乃指西元 4 至 6 世紀南北朝時期, 東晉南朝在陸路上與西域交通的一條路線, 它從益州 (四川成都) 經 川北通過茂縣、松潘至甘南的臨潭、青海的同仁、貴德、抵青海湖 的伏侯城。這個時期統治甘肅地區的是吐谷渾。吐谷渾是鮮卑的一支, 4 世紀初從東北遷移至今甘肅、青海間, 南朝宋封為河南王, 故從 益州北上通過吐谷渾統治的區域交通路線, 便稱之為河南道。河南道從益州抵吐谷渾伏侯城, 再接‘絲綢之路’青海道才能抵達西域。

西寧 (Shan 鄯 Town) and eventually Fusi Town, heading north through the Biandukou 扁都口 Pass of Qilian 祁連 Mountain to Zhangye 張掖 (Ganzhou 甘州); or, following the northern shore of Qinghai Lake and the northern edge of the Qaidam Basin, traversed Da Qaidam 大柴旦 and Xiao Qaidam 小柴旦 and headed north, passing through Dangjinkou to arrive at the Southern Pass of the Silk Road at Dunhuang; or heading out from Fusi Town or Dulan 都蘭, went west towards Golmud and Mang'ai 茫崖, passing through Altyn-Tagh, before finally arriving at Ruoqiang 若羌. Historical evidence proves that the points of intersection connecting the Qinghai and Henan routes were Fusi and Dulan.¹⁷

Building on the pioneering research of Tang Zhangru 唐長孺 (1911–1994), Yan Gengwang 嚴耕望 (1910–1996), and Xia Nai 夏鼐 (1910–1985), Chen Liangwei 陳良偉 composed a monograph titled 'Sichou zhilu He'nan dao' 絲綢之路河南道 [The Henan Route of the Silk Road], using both archaeology and historical documents to carry out a systematic study of the Henan Route. The Henan Route of the Silk Road was intermittently in existence and use since remote antiquity; the uninterrupted conflict in the northern regions in the Sixteen Kingdoms period forced the Hexi and Eastern Jin regimes to use the route for communication. After the Tuyuhun regime was established, the Tuyuhun possessed control over the Henan Route and a crucial component of the Qinghai Route. The Tuyuhun government inherited the Former Liang's thirst for power and the methods and strategies of communication with the Southern Dynasties; emissaries, merchant groups, and monks continued to use the Henan Route, and the route's use reached its peak during the late Eastern Jin and early Southern Dynasties. Shulugan 樹洛幹 (a.k.a. Murong Shulugan 慕容樹洛幹; ?–417) acceded to the Tuyuhun throne in the year 400, possessing an ambition 'to command the respect of Liang-

¹⁷ Ibid: '絲綢之路'青海道的開通, 是因河西走廊路線受阻而形成的。當時從蘭州(金城)不走武威(涼州), 而西去西寧(鄯城)至伏俟城, 北穿祁連山扁都口至張掖(甘州); 或沿青海湖北岸和柴達木盆地北緣, 經大小柴旦北上, 穿當金口至陽關、敦煌; 或從伏俟城、都蘭西去格爾木、茫崖鎮, 穿阿爾金山至若羌。史實證明連接青海道和河南道的交點便是伏俟和都蘭。

zhou and Yizhou, to become the hegemon of the Xirong, to parade troops around the Three Qin domains, and to have an audience with the Emperor on far'.¹⁸ Upon Shulugan's death, his younger brother Achai 阿豺 (a.k.a. Murong Achai 慕容阿豺; ?–424) acceded to the throne. The 'Tuyuhun zhuan' 吐谷渾傳 [Chronicle of Tuyuhun] in the *Wei shu* 魏書 [History of Wei] records that Achai was expanding his territory eastward, bordering the Liu Song territory of Yizhou 益州. Achai once climbed Mount Xijiang 西嶺, and looking out upon the Dian 墊 River (the present-day Bailong 白龍 River) said: 'Even water knows it must pay allegiance to its source; though we are but a small country from beyond the Great Wall, how can we alone be without a source to which we pay allegiance?'¹⁹ Zhou Weizhou 周偉洲 writes: 'It would appear that he considered the Eastern Jin and Liu Song to be true representatives of *Huaxia* 華夏; this mode of thought was identical to that of his father Shipi 視羆 (367–400) and elder brother Shulugan.'²⁰

In the second month of the third year of the Jingping reign of the Liu Song (423), Achai dispatched an emissary to the Liu Song; this was the first time the Tuyuhun engaged in direct political relations with the Southern Dynasties, and the Liu Song regime enfeoffed Achai as 'commander of military affairs beyond the Great Wall (*du Saibiao zhu junshi* 督塞表諸軍事), General of Anxi (*Anxi jiangjun* 安西將軍), Governor of Sha Prefecture 沙洲刺史, and Duke of Jiaohe 澆河公'.²¹

Chen Liangwei enumerated the Chinese and foreign monks who traversed the Henan route; during the Eastern Jin period, the list included Shan Daokai 單道開 (of the 3rd–4th c.), Faxian 法顯 (338–423), Faxu 法緒 (317–420), Tanhong 曇弘 (356?–455), Daowang 道汪 (367?–466), and Huirui 慧睿 (355–439); during the Southern Dynasties, the monks Tanwujie 曇無竭 (Dharmodgata; of the 5th c.), Fuduoshi 佛馱什 (Buddhajīva; of the 4th–5th c.), Tanmomiduo 曇摩密多 (Dharmamitra; 356–442), Jiangliangyeshe 薑良耶舍 (Kālayāśas;

¹⁸ *Jin shu*, 97.2541–2542: 振威梁、益，稱霸西戎，觀兵三秦，遠朝天子。

¹⁹ *Wei shu*, 10.2235: 水尚知有歸，吾雖塞表小國，而獨無所歸乎？

²⁰ Zhou, *Tuyuhun shi*, 55: 他似乎是把東晉、劉宋作為華夏正宗，這種思想與其父視羆、兄樹洛幹是一致的。

383–442), Zhimeng 智猛 (of the 5th c.), Sengqiebamo 僧伽跋摩 (Samghavarman;), Huilan 慧覽 (of 5th c.), Juqu Anyang 沮渠安陽 (Juqu Jingsheng 沮渠京聲; ?–464), and Sengyin 僧隱 (of 5th c.), among others, were all known to have traversed the path. Among the Buddha statues discovered on the Henan Route, two statues of Amitābha and Maitreya excavated in Maowen 茂汶, created by the Western Liang monk Xuansong 玄嵩 (d. after 483) in the first year of the Qi Yongming reign (483), are the most famous.

Within the rectangular niche on the front side of the statue there is an image of Maitreya, and on the reverse side there is an image of Amitābha, and on the lateral side there is an inscription that reads:

In the first year of the Yongming reign of Qi, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month of the sixtieth year of the sexagenarian cycle, the Western Liang monk Xuansong, on behalf of the emperor, ministers, and princes, successive generations of teachers and superiors, his parents and brothers, kin and extended family members, and all living things, respectfully creates the images of Amitābha who is to come and Maitreya Enlightened, two Revered Ones of the World.

齊永明元年，歲次癸亥七月十五日，西涼曹比丘釋玄嵩，為帝主臣王累世師長父母兄弟六親眷屬及一切眾生，敬造無量壽當來彌勒成佛二世尊像。²²

Though the period of these statues is Southern Qi at the latest, by engraving Amitābha together with Maitreya, one can say that it incorporates the characteristics of the Northern and Southern Dynasties. Drawing on Hou Xudong's research, the previous section demonstrated the relative weakness of belief in Amitābha in the North, while belief in Amitābha in the south flourished due to Huiyuan's advocacy, and might have facilitated the translation of the *Wuliangshou jing* and the *Guan Wuliangshou jing* during the Late

²¹ *Song shu*, 96.2371: 督塞表諸軍事、安西將軍、沙洲刺史、澆河公。

²² Sichuan Bowu yuan, Chengdu wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, Sichuan daxue bowuguan, *Sichuan chutu Nanchao Fojiao zaoxiang*, 194–95.

Jin or early Southern Dynasties.

The preceding section, based on the characteristics of the statue, surmised that the date of the statue of the Three Sages of the West in Niche 6 is approximately equal to that of the early or middle Yungang periods; if this estimate is not wrong, then the dates of Niche 6 and the Mao County statue made in the first year of the Yongming reign are perhaps close; in this way, setting out from Jiankang, passing through Mao County, and reaching Bingling Temple, the transmission of the Amitābha cult may have nearly followed single thread; this thread is none other than the Henan Route of the Silk Road. In that case, it is very likely that the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* translated in the late Eastern Jin Dynasty passed through the Henan route of the Silk Road before being disseminated at Bingling Temple in present-day Yongjing 永靖 County. Of course, what requires additional explanation is that the site of the Bingling Temple, in present-day Yongjing, did not fall under the area controlled by the Tuyuhun, but instead belonged to the Western Qin; but because this area guards the banks of the Yellow River, and is an extremely strategic location, it can also be classified as part of the Henan Route of the Silk Road. Moreover, religion in and of itself does not have geographical constraints. Despite the tense state of affairs between the Tuyuhun and the Western Qin, the Western Qin even married off a member of the imperial household to Shipi, king of the Tuyuhun; it is thus clear that the relationship between the two was a close one. It is possible to say that the Southern Buddhism that came by the Henan Route of the Silk Road could go nonstop through Western Qin without any obstacles; this most likely was not only the historical context to the Jin translation of names of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions in the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, but can also be seen as the background for the appearance of the Three *Avataṃsaka* Sages statues in Niche 6 of Cave 169.

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Abbreviations

T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. See Bibliography, Modern Studies, Takakusu and Watanabe, eds.

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On the Influence of the *Longkan shoujian* 龍龕手鑑 as a Glossary on *Dhāraṇī* Carved in Stone (and on Metal sheets) in the North Pagoda at Chaoyang and in Manuscripts from 12th Century Japan*

GEORGE A. KEYWORTH
University of Saskatchewan

Abstract: Of the nine *dhāraṇī sūtras* inscribed in stone in the North Pagoda (Beita 北塔) in the city of Chaoyang 朝陽 during the middle of the 11th century when the Khitan 契丹 Liao 遼 (907/916–1125) controlled the region, five are written in Sinitic logographs and four with Sanskrit. Translations attributed to Amoghavajra 金剛不空 (705–774) of the *Sitātapatra-buddhoṣṇīṣa-dhāraṇī*, *Heart Sūtra*, *Great Compassion Dhāraṇī* and the *Mahāpratisāra-dhāraṇī* translated by *Mañicintana (Baosiwei 寶思惟, d. ca. 721) seem to demonstrate that Liao Buddhist patrons sustained veneration of *dhāraṇī sūtras* that were popular during the 8th century in north China under the Tang (618–907). One of the four texts in Sanskrit, what appears to be a back translation into Sanskrit of *Buddhapāla's 佛陀波利 translation of the *Buddhoṣṇīṣavijaya-dhāraṇī*, could be interpreted the same way. But *Maitrībhadra's 慈賢 translation of the **Vajravīdāraṇa-dhāraṇī* 佛說金剛大摧碎延壽陀羅尼 (*T* no. 1416)

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and three other seemingly ‘esoteric’ Buddhist texts in Sanskrit (with Chinese transliterations) inscribed in stone on the third and fourth stories of the North Pagoda at Chaoyang beg the question: where did these texts come from and why did the Khitan patrons have them carved in the pagoda? I also investigate *Maitrībhadra’s translation of the **Vajravidāraṇa-dhāraṇī* from Chaoyang (and the Taishō edition) to see if it corresponds with the extant Tibetan edition (To. No. 750/949 and Pek. No. 406/574 *rdo rje par joms pa shes bya bai gzungs*) or if it seems to reflect Tang or Khitan Liao dynasty transcriptions of Sanskrit sounds to determine the extent to which Liao Buddhist patronage at Chaoyang reflects Sinitic or Tibetan transmission. I explore how terms glossed in the *Longkan shoujian* 龍龕手鑑 [Handy Mirror in the Dragon Shrine] influence *Maitrībhadra’s translation of the **Vajravidāraṇa-dhāraṇī*, in particular. How we understand Liao Buddhist spells during the 11th century has considerable bearing upon how we establish the state of so-called ‘esoteric’ Buddhism on the continent in East Asia when we know that during the 12th century, Tanguts translated many spell texts from Sinitic and Tibetan and in Japan both Shingon 真言宗 and Tendai 天台宗 Buddhists significantly expanded their ritual repertoires.

Keywords: Dhāraṇī Pillars; Chaoyang North Pagoda; *Longkan shoujian*; Old Japanese manuscripts; *Maitrībhadra [Cixian]; *Vajravidāraṇa-dhāraṇī*; *Buddhoṣṇīṣavijaya-dhāraṇī*

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Introduction: On the Implications of a Dictionary and Dedication on a Remarkable *Dhāraṇī* Pillar

It almost goes without saying that much of the material cultural evidence for the Buddhist religion in medieval East Asia does not come from China proper, but instead from the kingdoms that surrounded the Chinese empires on the so-called ‘periphery’. Roughly 40,000 mostly Buddhist manuscripts, for example, were found at the turn of the 20th century in the so-called library cave (*cangjing dong* 藏經洞, no. 17) that was sealed in the early 11th century among the Caves of Unparalleled Heights (Mogao ku 莫高窟, a.k.a. Caves of a Thousand Buddhas, Qianfo dong 千佛洞) near the city of Dunhuang, in Gansu province, China. The earliest dated documents are from the 5th century, but it is well-known that manuscripts in Tibetan were added during the period when the Tibetan empire controlled the region (ca. 755–848) and manuscripts in a wide array of languages—from Khotanese to Old Uighur 回鶻 and even Persian-Hebrew, to name just a few—were preserved in the only sizable discovery of manuscripts anywhere on the East Asian continent.¹ Not quite as old but many in far better condition, 8th century manuscripts from the *sūtra* repository of Tōdaiji 東大寺 in Nara (the Shōgozō 聖語藏),² as well as documents from three, in particular, of the eight 12th century manuscript Buddhist canons (*issaikyō* 一切經) preserved in

¹ S.996, for example, which is roll six of the *Abhidharma-sāra-prakīrṇa-ka-sāstra* (*Za apitan xin lun* 雜阿毘曇心論, Z no. 1080, T no. 1552) listed as having been translated in 434 by Saṅghavarman 僧伽跋摩, is dated 479.10.28. A helpful précis of the contents of Huang and Wu (*Dunhuang yuanwen ji*), which analyzes most of the dedicatory colophons from Dunhuang, is summarized in Jōdai bunken wo yomu kai, ed., *Jōdai shakuyō shikigo chūshaku*, 280–85. Ikeda, *Chūgoku kodai shabon shikigo shūroku* shows that 479 is not the earliest dated Buddhist colophon from Dunhuang; cf. Giles, *Descriptive catalogue*, x. On the Dunhuang cache and the history of this western region border town, see Schmid, ‘Introduction to Tun-Huang and Its Manuscripts’, 964–65; Rong, *Eighteen Lectures on Dunhuang*, 79–108; Galambos and van Schaik, *Manuscripts and Travelers*; van Schaik, ‘The Uses of Implements are Different’.

Japan from Matsuo shrine 松尾大社 (in Kyoto), Nanatsudera 七寺 (in Nagoya), and Amanosan Kongōji 天野山金剛寺 (in Osaka),³ are proof that, when it comes to the study of medieval Buddhist manuscripts written in the Sinitic language,⁴ we must rely upon materials from the so-called ‘margins’ of the Chinese empires (Sui [581–618], Tang [618–907], Song [960–1279]). How much more so the case if we turn to xylographic printed editions of the Chinese Buddhist Canons? Beginning with the first, Song edition (*Shuban da zang-jing* 蜀版大藏經 or *Kaibao zang* 開寶藏, com. 983), parts of which are only preserved because Chōnen 裔然 (983–1016), in China 983–986) returned to Japan in 986 with a copy of the newly printed Kaibao-era Buddhist canon and an additional 40 rolls of newly translated texts (for a total of 5425 texts he brought back to Japan), including an apparently incomplete copy of the Chan lamp or flame history, *Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄 [Jingde-era Record of the Transmission of the Lamp (or flame), *T.* 2076, ca. 1004].⁵ Scholars know that the Taishō Sino-Japanese Buddhist Canon we cite today is based upon the Second Korean Koryō [dynasty 918–1392] printed canon 高麗大藏經 (comp. 1237–1249). One of the reasons why the editors followed the Korean and not later editions printed in China

² Lowe, ‘Buddhist Manuscript Cultures in Premodern Japan’; *idem*, ‘The Discipline of Writing’; *idem*, ‘Contingent and Contested’; *idem*, *Ritualized Writing*.

³ Ochiai, ed., *The Manuscripts of Nanatsu-dera*; Ochiai, Girard, and Kuo, ‘Découverte de manuscrits bouddhiques chinois au Japon’; Keyworth, ‘Apocryphal Chinese books in the Buddhist canon at Matsuo Shintō shrine’; *idem*, ‘Copying for the Kami’.

⁴ On ‘Sinitic’ to refer to the written language of Chinese, rather than Classical or Literary Chinese, see Mair, ‘Buddhism and the Rise of the Written Vernacular in East Asia’; Kornicki, *Languages, Scripts, and Chinese Texts in East Asia*, 19–21.

⁵ Yoritomi, *Nicchū o musunda bukkyōsō*, 420–25. The esteemed statesman Fujiwara no Michinaga 藤原道長 (966–1028) acquired this canon during the early 11th century, when he oversaw the construction of a lavish, private temple for his clan in Kyoto called Hōjōji 法成寺.

is because a Korean scholar-monk named Ŭich'ŏn 義天 (1055–1101) traveled to Hangzhou to meet and study with Jinshui Jingyuan 晉水淨源 (1011–1088) in Song China in 1085—via Khitan 契丹 Liao 遼 (907/916–1126) territory—and later compiled a still extant catalog called *Sinp'yŏn chejong kyojang ch'ongnok* 新編諸宗總錄 [New Catalog of the Teachings of All the Schools].⁶ Ŭich'ŏn's catalog provides a fascinating window into the First Koryŏ printed canon (comp. ca. 991–1101).⁷ We also have the diary of Jŏjin 成尋 (1011–1081, Shanhui dashi, Zenne daishi 善慧大師), who arrived near Hangzhou in 1072 and provides perhaps the best firsthand account of the Northern Song (960–1127) Institute for Transmitting the Dharma (Chuanfayuan 傳法院) on the grounds of the imperially sponsored monastery for Promoting Great Peace for the Nation (Taiping xingguosi 太平興國寺) in the capital of Bianjing 汴京 (Kaifeng).⁸ And I have yet to mention anything about the Tang period after the suppression of the faith during the Huichang 會昌 era (841–846) and its aftermath.⁹

Preservation of Buddhist material culture on the East Asian continent is a different story if we consider the medium of stone-carvings or epigraphy. Not only do we have Fangshan Stone Canon 房山石經 from Yunjusi 雲居寺 where more than 14,000 steles (22.5 million characters) with rock-cut scriptures were first carved during the 7th century, particularly under the guidance of the monk Jingwan 靜琬 (d. 639) during the Sui dynasty, but scriptures were added until the early Qing dynasty (1644–1912). Because the region was admin-

⁶ STGS 1073.2.28 Fujiyoshi, *San Tendai Godaisanki shita*, 280–83. On the *Sinp'yŏn chejong kyojang ch'ongnok*, see Chikusa, ed., *Sō-Gen Bukkyō bunkashi kenkyū*, 69–70, 112–40, 271–92 and Brose, 'Crossing Thousands of Li of Waves', 39–41; McBride, *Doctrine and Practice in Medieval Korean Buddhism*, 4–5.

⁷ Buswell, 'Sugi's Collation Notes'.

⁸ Borgen, 'The Case of the Plagiaristic Journal'; *idem*, 'San Tendai Godai sanki as a Source for the Study of Sung History'; *idem*, 'Jōjin's Travels from Center to Center'; von Verschuer, 'Le voyage de Jōjin au mont Tiantai'; *idem*, 'Jōjin découvre la ville de Hangzhou en 1072'; Keyworth, 'Jōjin on the spot'.

⁹ See, for example, Weinstein, *Buddhism Under the T'ang*; Brose, *Patrons and Patriarchs*, 45–48.

istered by the Khitan Liao kingdom, nearly every Khitan emperor sponsored having scriptures re-carved or new translations added to the degree that there are 22 volumes in the modern facsimile edition of these inscribed scriptures from the Liao and Jurchen 如真 Jin 金代 (1115–1234) dynasties.¹⁰ The Khitan also printed their own Buddhist Canon (*Liao* or *Qidan zang* 契丹藏, comp. ca. 1031–1054), most of which is lost, but evidence of it has been preserved in stone at Yunjusi.

The site with an incredible assortment of epigraphy from the mid-11th century I address in this paper is the North Pagoda 北塔—or *stūpa* (a.k.a. Yanchangsi data 延長寺大塔)—in the city of Chaoyang 朝陽, in Liaoning province. There is a dedication or vow (*yuanwen* 願文) inscribed on the top, fourth tier of a stone *sūtra* pillar (*shi jing-chuang* 是經幢) in the ‘earthly palace’ (*digong* 地宮) or basement or lower relic crypt of the North Pagoda, which reads as follows:¹¹

Homage (*namaḥ* or *namas*) to Śākyamuni Buddha Homage to the Buddha who Joyfully Cares for the Jewel (*maṇi*) in the Eternally Blissful Realm to the north (Mañjuśrī).

¹⁰ On Liao sites, see, for example, Sekino and Takeshima, eds., *Ryō kin dai no kenchiku to sono butsuzō*; Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*. The facsimile set is: *Fangshan shijing: Liao Jin ke jing*. On the Fangshan Stone Canon, see Li, ‘The Stone Scriptures of Fang-shan’; Lancaster, ‘The Rock Cut Canon in China’; He, ‘Fangshan shijing yu Suihan lu Qidanzang Kaiyuanlu de guanxi zhi de tantao’; Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 579 n. 33. Evidence for sponsored carving of scriptures during the Liao is abundant; for examples from 965, 1110, 1117, 1118, a *dhāraṇī* pillar in 1136, and an undated list of newly carved *dhāraṇī* scriptures, see *Yunjusi zhenshi lu*, 80–86.

¹¹ The tail of the inscription (*weiba tiji* 尾巴題記) is transcribed in Wang et al., ‘Liaoning Chaoyang Beita tiangong digong qingli jianbao’, 20; another transcription and facsimile rubbings are provided in Wang et al., eds., *Chaoyang Beita*, 72. There is a partial translation in Shen, ‘Realizing the Buddha’s *Dharma* Body’, 266n.16. Shen also refers to the site as Yanchangsi I and II (1043 and 1044). I am grateful to Kim Youn-mi for sharing her Ph.D. dissertation with me, where she refers to the *digong* as the lower relic crypt throughout; see Kim, ‘Eternal Ritual in an Infinite Cosmos’.

With [the carving] of this one roll of the Great Wheel (**mahā-cakra*) *Dhāraṇī* complete, [we] blissfully ornament the variously kingly buddhas, with special devotion to the Treasured Pupil with the Jewel with Great Luminosity Buddha.

The spell from the *Great Collection Sūtra* says: *Namaḥ Buddhāya buru ru sindhūru chahubha kṛpā siddhāṇi pūruṇi svāhā*.¹²

[We] vow the merit [from copying this or these *dhāraṇī*(s)] to be spread to everyone including us and all sentient beings will [follow] the path to becoming buddhas. [On behalf of] success for [the] Revenue Manager and the emperor, Sanskrit writing(s) was (were) compared with Eastern [editions]. This small record was copied by Zhang Rixin.¹³

Great Khitan Kingdom *Chongxi* 13 (1044) year in the year of *jiashen* fourth lunar month *renchen* new moon eighth day *jihai* around noon (11am–1pm), we completed the reburial [in this basement during the] Semblance Dharma with seven more years until we enter the Final Age.

Stonemason Liu Jike made this head [stone for the top tier], master carver Cheng Yi inscribed it.

南無本釋迦牟尼佛 南無北方常喜世界歡喜藏摩尼積佛
大輪陀羅尼一卷終 歡喜莊嚴諸王佛 諦寶幢[alt. 幢]摩尼勝光佛
大集經呪曰 南无佛陀耶胡嚧嚧悉度嚧 遮賊婆 訖利彼悉檀尼步
嚧尼 娑婆 訶
願以此功德 普及於一切 我等與衆生 皆共成佛道 司戶軒轅亨勘
梵書東班小 底 張日新書
大契丹國重熙十三年歲次甲申四月壬辰朔八日己亥午時再葬訖像
法更有七年入末 法
石匠作頭劉繼克鐫子承裔鐫

¹² I provide the reconstructed Sanskrit for this spell given in Solonin, ‘Yixing Huijue’, 60–62. Note that he follows the Sanskrit reconstructs in Heinemann, *Dictionary of Words and Phrases As Used In Buddhist Dhāraṇī*.

¹³ For Revenue Manager, see no. 5643 in Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*.

This dedication seems to have been carved in the middle of the transliteration of the *Great Wheel Dhāraṇī*. The *dhāraṇī* pillar is 5.26 meters tall, leaving only .78 meters to the ceiling of the ‘underground palace’.¹⁴ Nine *dhāraṇīs*—only the Sanskrit words transliterated into Sinitic characters, not the accompanying narratives from these *dhāraṇī-sūtras*—are inscribed on the four tiers of the eight-sided pillar. Each tier of the stone pillar has an elaborately decorated—with buddhas, bodhisattvas, *apsaras* (*feitian* 飛天) and so forth—base and a lotus throne upon which the flat, eight sides rest. Various auspicious symbols adorn this base. Around the pedestal of the first story the eight ‘great’ bodhisattvas are carved (*bada pusa* 八大菩薩); homages to the seven buddhas of the past are inscribed around the second story with the deity of the Diamond Assembly (jin’gang shenzhong 金剛神衆); around the third story we find the eight great ‘numinous’ *stūpas* (*bada lingta* 八大靈塔, *aṣṭamahāsthānacaitya*) with invocations to an additional set of seven buddhas’ names (called the buddhas’ names of the eight *stūpas*, *bata qi foming* 八塔七佛名); and around the fourth we find the kings of eight kingdoms with *śarīra* (*ba guowang fen sheli* 八國王分舍利).¹⁵

¹⁴ Wang et al., *Chaoyang Beita*, 85. See also Yang and Xiao, eds., *Zhongguo fojiao de sheli chongfeng he Chaoyang Liaodai Beita*. See also Kornicki and Barrett, ‘Buddhist Texts on Gold and Other Metals in East Asia’.

¹⁵ Various sources list eight ‘great’ bodhisattvas, but the list here, in order, is: (1) Avalokiteśvara 觀世音菩薩, (2) Maitreya 弥勒菩薩, (3) Ākāśagarbha 虛空藏菩薩, (4) Samantabhadra 普賢菩薩, (5) Vajrapāṇi 執金剛王菩薩 [var. Vajradhararāja], (6) Mañjuśrī 文殊師利菩薩, (7) Sarvanivāraṇaśāmbhin 止諸障菩薩, and (8) Kṣitigarbha 地藏菩薩. The seven buddhas of the past here include [all beginning with 南无]: (1) Śākyamuni 釋迦牟尼, (2) Kāśyapa 迦葉佛, (3) Kanakamuni 拘那含佛, (4) Krakucchanda 拘留孫佛, (5) Viśvabhū 毗舍浮佛, (6) Śikhin 尸棄佛, and (7) Vipasyin 毗婆尸佛. The eight *stūpas* listed here are [with the homages to the buddhas added]: (1) [Kapilavastu] King Śuddhodhana’s palace, Buddha’s birthplace 淨飯王宮生處寶塔一 [南无金剛賢強消伏壞散佛頭], (2) [Magadha], where he was enlightened *stūpa* 菩提樹下成佛塔二 [南无寶光日殿妙尊音王佛], (3) deer-park in Benares, where he first preached [turned the Dharma-wheel] *stūpa* 鹿野苑中法論塔 [南无根威德佛], (4) Jetavana, where he gained

Dhāraṇīs appear to have been carved in stone on pillars in China almost as soon as they were first translated as separate *sūtras* during the reign—or regulation—of empress/emperor Wu Zhao 武曩 (a.k.a. Wu Zetian 武則天, 624–705, r. 690–705). Using the *Shike shiliao* 石刻史料 (Epigraphical Corpus) as a guide, Kuo Li-ying provides a superb overview of 300 *dhāraṇī* pillars in China proper from the period 697–1285; 64 were erected between 725–891 and only one—dated 974—is from the Song dynasty (960–1279).¹⁶ Even though I am not an art historian like Shen Hsueh-man or Kim Youn-mi, both

fame (through supernatural powers) *stūpa* 給孤都名稱塔園 [南无百億恒沙決定佛], (5) Kanyākubja, site of the jeweled steps *stūpa* 曲女成邊寶塔 [南无寶勝藏佛], (6) Rājagṛha, *prajñā stūpa* 耆闍崛山般若塔 [南无寶王火熾照佛], (7) Vaiśālī, where he met (layman) Vimalakīrti and there is a *stūpa* 菴羅衛林維摩塔 [南无一切香化自在力王佛, and (8) [Kūśinagara], where there in the śāla grove is his death *stūpa* 娑羅林中圓寂塔]. Cf. *Dasheng bensheng xindi guan jing* 大乘本生心地觀經 (Mahāyāna *Sūtra* of Contemplation on the Mind Ground and the Buddha's Previous Lives), T no. 159, 3: 296a15–18, cited in Kim, 'Virtual Pilgrimage and Virtual Geography: Power of Liao Minature Pagodas (907–1125)', 11–14. And the eight kingdoms' kings with relics are: (1) 第一迦毗羅國王, (2) Ajatāśatru in Magadha 第二摩伽陀主阿遮世王, (3) 第三毗離外道名王, (4) 第四阿勒迦羅王, (5) 第五, (6) 第六遮羅伽國王, (7) 第七師伽般國王, and (8) 第八波肩羅外道名國王. I have been unable to find who most of these kings are and do not know the Indic names of the seven buddhas associated with the *stūpas* in India. As Kim notes, op. cit., 13, there are two translations by Dharmabhadra (Faxian 法賢, d. 1000)—in the Northern Song capital, see below—that may be an indication of contemporary recognition of these lists in India at the turn of the 11th century. She studies the sacred Indian sites listed on the outside of Chaoyang Beita; the buddhas' names listed on the iconography on the *dhāraṇī* pillar in the earthly palace are not listed on the outside of the pagoda. Cf. *Ba da lingta fanzan* 八大靈塔梵讚 (*Aṣṭamahāśrīcaitya-stotra* attr. to Śīlādityarāja 戒日王, T no. 1674) and *Ba da lingta minghao jing* 八大靈塔名號經 (*Sūtra* of the names [of the Buddhas] of the Eight 'Numinous' *Stūpas*, T no. 1675), though these specific sites and none of these names are listed in these texts.

For rubbings of these, see Wang et al., *Chaoyang Beita*, 89–94.

¹⁶ Kuo, 'Dhāraṇī Pillars in China', 351–54.

of whom have studied the Chaoyang North Pagoda in depth, the fact that there is an eight-sided *dhāraṇī* pillar in the ‘underground palace’ of the massive (38.7 m) 13-story pagoda with nine *dhāraṇīs* inscribed on it seems striking to me. If we take into account data from the appendix chronicling excavated relic deposits during the Khitan 契丹 Liao 遼 dynasty (907/916–1125) in Shen’s 2001 article in *Artibus Asiae*, which lists 25 occasions at 18 separate sites during the reign of the Yelü clan 耶律氏 across most of the northeast territory once ruled by the Northern Wei (386–534), Sui, and Tang dynasties, then it would appear that the Khitans not only sustained the practice of erecting *dhāraṇī* pillars which had begun during the Tang, but they took this practice to new heights.¹⁷

Why did the Khitan rulers and presumably wealthy members of the [steppe] clans and Buddhist monastics have pagodas reconstructed like the three in the city of Chaoyang (North, East, and South Pagodas) and the other 17 sites? How can we explain that within the ‘heavenly palace’ (*tiangong* 天宮)—or upper crypt—of Chaoyang North Pagoda it looks like ten or twelve *dhāraṇīs* were inscribed or imprinted onto thin sheets of copper inlaid with silver and gold—and these metal sheets were placed inside a gold-inlaid *sūtra-stūpa* (*jīngtǎ* 經塔)? Because there are several additional dedications which record the re-internment (*zaizang* 再葬) of items within the ‘heavenly palace’ on 1043.4.4 and 1043.4.8—and inside the ‘earthly palace’ on 1043.4.8 as we saw above—we know that the donors (*shizhu* 施主, *dānapati*) both dreaded—or were preparing for—the end times (*mofa* 末法) to begin in 1052, and that they apparently regarded *dhāraṇīs* inscribed in Sanskrit Siddham letters and in transliterated Sinitic logographs or characters as the means by which to assuage their fears of impending doom. Or so it would appear.

There is another remarkable source that appears to speak directly to the production of *dhāraṇī* pillars during the Khitan Liao dynasty. We have a dictionary—or glossary—primarily of pronunciations and meanings (*yīnyì shū* 音義書), which was compiled before 997 by the

¹⁷ Shen, ‘Realizing the Buddha’s *Dharma* Body’, 297–98. See also Shen, ‘Pictorial Representations of the Buddha’s Nirvāṇa in Chinese Relic Deposits’.

Khitan Buddhist monk Xingjun 行均 (n.d.), called the *Longkan shoujian* 龍龕手鑑 [Practical Mirror from the Dragon Niche or Buddhist canon or *stūpa*] or more correctly the *Longkan shoujing* 龍龕手鏡, with *jian* changed to *jing* by Song publishers because of an imperial family name taboo (*bihui* 避諱). Reading the preface to *Longkan shoujing* written by the Liao monk Zhiguang 智光, Henrik Sørensen thinks that *Longkan shoujing* reveals an '[i]nterest in Sanskrit, including the mastery of Siddham, necessary for the proper use of mantras and *dhāraṇīs*'. Christoph Anderl suggests that this dictionary was probably composed because 'Dhāraṇī (*sic*) texts, in particular, contain numerous spells which have to be pronounced in the 'correct' way in order to preserve their efficacy, whereas the meaning of the characters are often irrelevant in that context'.¹⁸ Is there a connection

¹⁸ Sørensen, 'Esoteric Buddhism Under the Liao', 459; Anderl, 'Buddhist Terms and Character Variants in the *Lóngkān shōujīng*'. I am indebted to Christoph for both allowing me to cite his unpublished paper and for sharing with me the Waseda University ed. of *Longkan shoujian*. Rolls 1–4 are available here: http://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/ho04/ho04_00789/index.html, accessed on 31, July 2019. Other eds. are in the *Sibu congkan* 四部叢刊 [Collected Facsimiles of Works of the Four Categories, ca. 1681] or *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 [Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature, ca. 1773] or recent editions from Taiwan and the PRC. See Pan, *Longkan shoujian xinbian*; Shi, *Longkan shoujian Gaoli ben*. The *Siku quanshu* ed. is available at: <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&res=527363>, accessed on 30 July 2019. I provide the preface from the Waseda ed. by the Khitan monk Zhiguang 智光 because it illustrates why Sørensen remarks that the *Longkan shoujian* shows a marked interest in Sanskrit phonology. The double slashes reflect the line breaks as follows: 夫聲明著論乃印度之宏綱觀跡成書實支那之令獨 // 印度則始標天語厥號梵文 載彼貫線之花綴以多羅 // 之葉開之以字緣字界分之以男聲女聲支那則創自 // 軒轅制于沮誦代結繩于既往成進牘以相沿辨之以 // 會意象形審之以指事轉注泊乎史籀變古文為大篆 // 程邈變小篆為隸書蔡邕刊定于石經東晉網羅于竹 // 簡九流競驚若百谷之朝宗七畧遞分比衆星之拱極 // 尋源討本備載於埤蒼廣蒼叶律諧聲咸究于韻英韻 // 譜專門則字統說文開闢則方言國語字學于是乎昭 // 矣矧復釋氏之教演于印度澤布支那轉梵及唐雖匪 // 差于性相披教悟理而必正于名言名言不正則性相 // 之義差性相之義差則修斷之路阻矣故祇園高士探 // 學海洪源準的先儒導引後進

between the compilation of the *Longkan shoujian* and the production of *dhāraṇī* pillars by means of Khitan patronage or should we view both as consequences of the prevalence of esoteric (*mijiao* 密教) and perhaps even Tantric Buddhism in Liao territory? We cannot speak with certainty about any tangible connection between the production of *dhāraṇīs* on stone during the Liao with the *Longkan shoujing* without an informative inscription, colophon, or another type of textual evidence. But the *dhāraṇī* pillar and dedicatory inscriptions inside the lower and upper palaces—or relic crypts—in the Chaoyang North Pagoda provide at least circumstantial evidence to demonstrate not only that Khitan Buddhists had more than a passing interest in and knowledge of Sanskrit, but also that some patrons and monastics almost certainly had read key passages from *dhāraṇī-sūtras* translated into Sinitic, which told them that efficacy could be expected by reproducing the Sanskrit sounds in writing—and perhaps even upon the medium of stone.

In the first section of this paper I provide an overview of the nine *dhāraṇīs* inscribed on the *dhāraṇī* pillar in the underground palace and the twelve inlaid on to thin sheets of metal and placed inside the *sūtra-stūpa* inside the upper palace, along with other relics and reliquary objects. Based upon research first conducted by Fujiwara Takoto, in the next section I explain why it appears not only that the donors who had Chaoyang North Pagoda renovated in 1043 and 1044 were either obliged or opted out of their own volition to include several newly translated *dhāraṇī* texts recently completed by

揮以寶燭啓以隨函郭 // 迺但顯于人名香嚴惟標于寺號流傳歲久抄寫時訛 // 寡聞則莫曉是非博古則徒懷惋歎不逢敏達孰為編 // 修有行均上人字廣濟俗姓于氏派演青齊雲飛燕晉 // 善于音韻閑于字書觀香嚴之不精寓金河而載緝九 // 仞功績五變炎涼具辨宮商細分喉齒計二萬六千四 // 百卅餘字注一十六萬三千一百七十餘字并注總一 // 十八萬九千六百一十餘字無勞避席坐奉師資詎假 // 擔簦立袂疑滯沙門智光利非切玉分忝斷金辱彼告 // 成見命序引推讓而寧容閣筆俯仰而強為抽毫矧以 // 新音偏于龍龜猶手持于鸞鏡形容斯鑒妍醜是分故 // 目之曰龍龜手鑑總四卷以平上去八為次隨部復用 // 列之又撰五音圖式附于後庶力功倍垂益于無窮 // 者矣時統和十五年丁酉七月一日癸亥燕臺憫忠 // 寺沙門智光字法炬撰。

*Maitrībhadra (Cixian 慈賢, d.u.), an Indian Buddhist monk in the Khitan kingdom from Magadha (central), India, and his translation team, but also why Khitan Buddhists and their benefactors seem to have paid conspicuous attention to carving *dhāraṇīs* in Sanskrit and in Sinitic characters into stone or stamping them on to metal.

Following the pioneering work of Victor Mair, Peter Kornicki, John Whitman, and other historical linguists and philologists, I argue that Liao *dhāraṇī* pillars are evidence of the ongoing process of the ‘vernacularization’ of East Asian Buddhism. As in Europe during the period roughly spanning 500–1500, when the adoption of Latin as a written church language through the Latin Vulgate [Bible] drove the development of written vernaculars,¹⁹ despite the development of indigenous scripts (e.g., *katakana*, the Khitan large and small scripts,²⁰ Tangut, and Old Uighur) in East and Central Asia, Koreans, Japanese, Uighurs 回鶻, Tanguts 党項, and Khitans who almost certainly did not speak a dialect of Chinese in their daily lives, nevertheless chanted—or read—Buddhist scriptures in their vernacular languages following Sinitic logographs in texts translated from Indic languages into Chinese. Sinitic, therefore, can be considered the *lingua franca* of medieval Central and East Asia. Koreans developed phonetic reading marks or glosses probably as early as the early 8th century; Japanese followed suit with vernacular reading glosses added, for example, to Yijing’s 義淨 (635–713) translation of the *Suvarṇa[pra]bhāsottama-sūtra* (Sūtra of Golden Light; *Jinguang-ming zuishengwang jing/Konkōmyō saishōōkyō* 金光明最勝王經, Z no. 158, T no. 665) from Saidaiji 西大寺 (in Nara) copied in 762.²¹ Manuscripts of Yijing’s translations of the *Suvarṇabhāsottama-sūtra*

¹⁹ Kornicki, *Languages, Scripts, and Chinese Texts in East Asia*, 163. See also Mair, op. cit. and Whitman, ‘The ubiquity of the gloss’; *idem*, ‘Raten-go kyōten no dokuhō to butten no kundoku’.

²⁰ Two recent places to start exploring the research into the mostly undeciphered Khitan small and large scripts and the language are Vovin, ‘Once Again on Khitan Words in Chinese’; Kane, ‘A Note on *Čisdeben’.

²¹ Kornicki, *Languages, Scripts, and Chinese Texts in East Asia*, 168–74, esp. 72; *idem*, ‘The Vernacularization of Buddhist Texts: From the Tangut Empire to

from Dunhuang²² and especially one old Japanese manuscript canon (from Matsuo shrine in Kyoto), and to Yijing's translations of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinayavibhaṅga* (*Genbenshuo yiqie youbu pinaiye/Konponsetsu issaiubu binaiya* 根本說一切有部毗奈耶 [lū, ritsu 律], Z no. 1010, T no. 1442), *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinayakṣudrakavastu* (*Genbenshuo yieiq youbu pinaiye zashi/Konponsetsu issaiubu binaiya zōji* 根本說一切有部毗奈耶雜事, Z no. 1012, T no. 1451) and **Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinayasamgraha* (*Genbensapoduobu lūshe yiqie/Konponsappatabu risshō* 根本薩婆多部律攝, Z no. 1053, T no. 1458) from the Shōgozō, which date to 740.5.1 and means they were part of the manuscript canon copying project sponsored by Empress Kōmyō 光明皇后 (701–760), have transcription or phonetic reading marks or glosses as sound [reading] characters from scriptures (*jingyinzi* 經音字) or sound [reading] characters (*yinzi* 音字 or *yinshi* 音釋).²³ Glossed terms found at the end of manuscripts are also called 'difficult characters' (*nanzi* 難字) in Chinese. Tsukimoto Masayuki and John Whitman refer to these phonetic reading glosses in Japanese as *kanmatsu onshaku* 卷末音釈.²⁴ Not only do we find Tang

Japan'. See also Sōhon Saidaiji et al., *Kokuhō Saidaijihon Konkōmyō saishōōkyō Tenpyōhōji rokunen Kudara no Toyomushi gankyō*.

²² The 8th century Tibetan translation (*'phags pa gser 'od dam pa'i mdo*) gives the Sanskrit title as *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama-sūtra*; cf. Ludvik, 'From Sarasvatī to Benzaiten', 188n.1; Nobel, *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra*, XI-XII. For the Tibetan text, see Herrmann-Pfandt, *Die Lhan Kar Ma Ein früher Katalog der ins Tibetische übersetzten buddhistischen Texte*, *Kritische Neuausgabe mit Einleitung und Materialien*, vol. 59, Beiträge zue Kultur - und Geistesgeschichte Asiens, no. 87, 50–51.

²³ On Dunhuang manuscripts of the *Jingguangming zuishengwang jing* with reading glosses, see Zhang and Li, 'Dunhuang ben *Jingguangming zuishengwang jing yin yanjiu*', 149. For *yinshi*, see Liao, 'Dunhuang P. 2172 *Da bo niepan jing yin fanying* de yuyin xianxiang'.

²⁴ Whitman et al., 'Toward an international vocabulary for research on vernacular readings of Chinese texts (漢文訓讀 Hanwen Xundu)'. See also Nakao Takashi and Honmon Hokkeshū Daihonzan Myōrenji, eds., *Kyōto Myōrenji zō 'Matsuosha issaikyō' chōsa hōkokusho*, 93.

dynasty character variants in these manuscripts (*suzi* 俗字 or *itaiji* 異体字), which can be especially difficult to decipher without the aid of Xingjun's *Longkan shoujing* because it is the earliest resource we have from the East Asian continent (in addition to the much smaller *Shinsen jikyō* 新撰字鏡 [Newly Compiled Mirror of Characters], compiled by the monk Shōjū 昌住 ca. 898–901), but these manuscripts from Dunhuang and Japan speak to a broader context within which the Khitan Liao *dhāraṇī* pillars like the North Pagoda at Chaoyang inform us how ritually reading *sūtras* (*dujing*, *dokyō* 讀經 or *fanbai*, *bonbai* 梵唄) shaped the process of 'vernacularization'. What has previously received little attention is how the process of 'vernacularization' was connected to the veneration of *dhāraṇī-sūtras* in medieval East and Central Asia. Furthermore, is it a coincidence that the only Mahāyāna *sūtra* that I know of with phonetic reading marks from both Dunhuang and Japan, Yijing's translation of the *Suvarṇabhāṣottama-sūtra*, was not only translated from Chinese into Tibetan, Sogdian, Uighur, and Mongolian,²⁵ but the 'Self-Sacrifice' chapter (*sheshin* 捨身, 26, T no. 665.16.450c22–454b27) is one of the most famous narratives extolling laypeople to construct *stūpas*. We should also bear in mind that this *sūtra* is widely known for its many *dhāraṇīs*?²⁶

²⁵ Cf. Kanaoka, *Shinzōban Butten no yomikata*, 186–88.

²⁶ Translated in Conze, *Buddhist Scriptures*, 25; Speyer, *Jātakamālā*, 3–12. Virtually every Mahāyāna *sūtra* extols the idea of constructing *stūpas* and placing copies of each one—independently, it seems—inside. The *Lotus* and *Buddhāvataṃsaka sūtras* in Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan are certainly to be included in this list of influential *sūtras*. See Schopen, 'The Phrase *sa prthivīpradeśaś caityabhūto bhavet* in the *Vajracchedikā*'; *idem*, 'Burial *Ad Sanctos* and the Physical Presence of the Buddha in Early Indian Buddhism'; *idem*, 'The Mahāyāna and the Middle Period in Indian Buddhism'; *idem*, 'The Generalization of an Old Yogic Attainment in Medieval Mahāyāna *Sūtra* Literature'; *idem*, 'The *Bodhgārbhālāṅkāralakṣa* and *Vimaloṣṇīṣa Dhāraṇīs* in Indian Inscriptions'; *idem*, 'The Text of the "Dhāraṇī Stones from Abhayagiriya"'; *idem*, 'Redeeming Bugs, Birds, and Really Bad Sinners in Some Medieval Mahāyāna *Sūtras* and *Dhāraṇīs*'. On how widespread the practice of constructing *stūpas* seems to have

In order to investigate the possible influence of the *Longkan shou-jing* on the production of *dhāraṇīs* on Khitan Liao stone pillars and potential associations with the practice of producing and inscribing them with vows or dedications, as well as subjecting to criticism the conclusion that these texts are evidence of the dissemination of esoteric or Tantric Buddhist practices, I also investigate *Maitrībhadra's translation of the **Vajravidāraṇa-dhāraṇī* from Chaoyang (and the Taishō and Jiaxing Canon 嘉興藏 editions) to determine the extent to which Liao Buddhist patronage at Chaoyang reflects Tang Chinese Sinitic or Tibetan transmission. We have an extant Tibetan edition of **Vajravidāraṇa-dhāraṇī* (T no. 750/949 and Pek. no. 406/574 *rdo rje par joms pa shes bya bai gzungs*) to compare with *Maitrībhadra's translation of the **Vajravidāraṇa-dhāraṇī* to determine if it reflects Tang Chinese or Khitan Liao dynasty transcriptions of Sanskrit sounds. Most of the other *dhāraṇīs* engraved on the pillar in the Chaoyang North Pagoda were translated during the Tang dynasty, and do not exhibit the esoteric or Tantric criteria established by Gregory Schopen, Richard McBride, or Ronald Davidson. Moreover, while several of the *dhāraṇī-sūtras* with their *dhāraṇīs* carved on the pillar at Chaoyang do speak of the merits to be gained from placing copies of them inside *stūpas* and several allude to the Final Age, it is difficult for me to conceive of how secret—or esoteric—rituals to replicate the body, speech, and mind (*sanmi* 三密; **tri-guhya*) of the buddhas to allow practitioners to achieve immediate enlightenment could be affected by the Final Age of the Dharma.²⁷

The final topic addressed in this paper derives from the dedication or vow from the top of the *dhāraṇī* pillar in the underground palace of the Chaoyang North Pagoda. 'Colophonic dedicatory inscriptions'²⁸ (*okugaki ganmon* 奥書願文 or *shikigo* 識語 in Japanese) to instigate a karmic connection (*jiēyuan/kechien* 結緣)²⁹ through the

been in Chinese translations of the monastic codes, see Karashima, 'Stūpas described in the Chinese translations of the *Vinayas*'.

²⁷ See below and McBride, 'Practical Buddhist Thaumaturgy', 39.

²⁸ Lowe, 'Contingent and Contested', 227 and Abe, *Chūsei Nihon no shūkyō tekusuto taikēi*, 177.

act of copying—or inscribing or even editing and proofreading—Buddhist texts can be found on numerous manuscripts from the cache of documents from Dunhuang and on 8th century Buddhist manuscripts from the Shōgozō in Japan, as well as on documents from the 12th century manuscript Buddhist canons from Matsuo, Nanatsudera, and Amanosan Kongōji. Colophons with vows from Dunhuang and Japan are strikingly similar to the vows from the inscriptions found at Chaoyang North Pagoda. These vow texts are markedly different from the myriad examples of esoteric Buddhist ritual manuals preserved in the three 12th–16th century libraries of Amanosan Kongōji mentioned above, where both esoteric (*jisō* 事相) and exoteric or ‘revealed’ doctrinal teachings documents (*kyōsō* 教相 or *kyōgaku* 教学) were cataloged as sacred teachings (*shōgyō* 聖教) documents, Shinpukuji 真福寺 in Nagoya, and Shōmyōji 称名寺 in Yokohama. It is beyond the scope of this paper to address these Japanese esoteric Buddhist libraries in detail. It is also beyond the scope here to address the many recent studies of late Tang Chinese esoteric Buddhism, and particularly those that attempt to link the prevalence of *dhāraṇī-sūtras* in the Dunhuang cache with the pillars that Kuo Li-ying studies to a process of expanding the chronology for the diffusion of esoteric Buddhism within China beyond the extensive sources we have from medieval Japan.³⁰ Because we are dealing with vows within colophons carved in stone and embossed on metal from the Chaoyang North Pagoda during the Liao dynasty, it is important to state the obvious fact that we have no evidence to suggest that Liao and Japanese Buddhists were in close or distant contact with one another. Therefore, it would be a teleological fallacy to suggest that we ought to read the inscriptions or metal texts from Chaoyang North Pagoda through the lens of Japanese esoteric Buddhism. The history

²⁹ See Teiser, *The Scripture on the Ten Kings*, 160–61; Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture*, 158; Nakano, “‘Kechien’ as Religious Praxis in Medieval Japan”, 67–83.

³⁰ See for example, Copp, *The Body Incantory*; *idem*, ‘Manuscript Culture as Ritual Culture in Late Medieval Dunhuang’; *idem*, ‘Anointing Phrases and Narrative Power’.

of the rich material culture of medieval Japanese exoteric-esoteric Buddhism (*kenmitsu* 顯密) tied to the Shingonshū 真言宗 and the putative lineage of Kūkai 空海 (Kōbō daishi 弘法大師, 774–835; in China 804–806) or the Tendaishū 天台宗 with the lineages of Saichō 最澄 (Dengyō daishi 傳教大師, 767–822), Ennin 円仁 (Jikaku daishi 慈覺大師, 794–864), Enchin 円珍 (Chishō daishi 智証大師, 814–891), Annen 安然 (ca. 841–889), and so forth, lies well beyond the scope of any fruitful discussion of Liao Buddhist and history.³¹ Yet there is one point about medieval Japanese Buddhist history that very well may be insightful for interpreting the North Pagoda at Chaoyang: just because esoteric Buddhist ritual masters within the Shingonshū and Tendaishū traditions in Japan performed rituals following the Womb (*taizangjie/taizōkai* 胎藏界, *Mahākaruṇāgarbhadhātu*) and Diamond (*jin'gangjie/kongōkai* 金剛界, *vajradhātu*) *maṇḍalas* from the *Mahāvairocana* (*Dari jing/Dainichikyō* 大日經, T. 848) and *Vajrasekhara* (alt. *Sarvatathāgatātattva-saṃgraha-nāma-mahāyāna*; *Jin'gangding jing/Kongōchōkyō* 金剛頂經, T. 865) *sūtras*, respectively, we cannot conclude that the ritual world of Mahāyāna Buddhist *sūtras* like Yijing's translation of the *Suvarṇabhāsottama-sūtra* or the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*; *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經, Z no. 146, T no. 262) was supplanted or replaced for a variety of purposes. At least two of the teachings explicitly presented in the *Suvarṇabhāsottama-sūtra* and the *Lotus Sūtra*, which predate similar instructions in much later esoteric Buddhist ritual manuals, include obtaining the merits from circumambulating sacred sites (*stūpas*, for example) or chanting or ritually reading *sūtras*.

³¹ On the *kenmitsu taisai* 顯密体制 (exoteric-esoteric [Buddhist] system)—as influential power blocs or elites (*kenmon* 権門) in Heian (794–1185) and Kamakura society (1185–1333), see the excellent synopsis of Kuroda's research in Adolphson, *The Gates of Power*, 10–20. See also the introduction to Breen and Teeuwen, eds., *Shinto in History*, 1–12.

The *Dhāraṇīs* in the Earthly Heavenly Palaces in Chaoyang North Pagoda

What follows is a list of the nine *dhāraṇīs* carved on the four tiers of the elaborate pillar in the basement of Chaoyang North pagoda:³²

1. Tier 1 (bottom): *Da foding rulai fangguang xidabodaluo tuoluoni* 大佛頂如來放光悉怛多鉢怛囉陀羅尼 (*Sitātapatra-dhāraṇī* that emerges from the Great Buddha's Crown and Illuminates, *T* no. 944A), translated³³ by Amoghavajra (Bukong Jin'gang 不空金剛, 705–774) of the **Sarvatathāgata-buddhoṣṇīṣa-sitātapatra-nāmaparājita-lo-(ka)nalokāyām mahā-pratyāṅgirā-dhāraṇī*.³⁴
2. Tier 2: *Da suiqiu tuoluoni* 大隨求陀羅尼 (*Dhāraṇī* Incantation of the Protectress who Grants Freedom, *T* no. 1154, *Z* no. 561), which is *Mañicintana's (or *Ratnacinta, Baosiwei 寶思惟, d.721) translation of the *Mahāpratisarā-vidhārājñī-dhāraṇī*.
3. Tier 3a, faces 4–5: *Fanben bore boluomiduo xin jing* 梵本般若波羅蜜多心經 (*T* no. 256, S.700), which is Amoghavajra's translation of a 'Sanskrit edition' of the *Heart Sūtra* (*Pra-*

³² Comparatively good facsimile rubbings are available in Wang et al., *Chaoyang Beita*, 65–72. See also the discussion in Wang et al., 'Liaoning Chaoyang Beita tiangong digong qingli jianbao', 21–22; Fujiwara, *Kittan bukkyōshi no kenkyū*, 156–58.

³³ There is, of course, a distinction to be made between a translation and a version of a text; Chinese or Tibetan translations 'should not be regarded simply as "a translation" of the text but as "a version" representing a certain stage at which the text developed'. Karashima, *A Critical Edition of Lokakṣema's Translation of the Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, xii; Apple, 'The Phrase *dharmaparyāyo hastagato* in Mahāyāna Buddhist Literature', 27n.4. Furthermore, individual translators did not work alone; they worked often in elaborate teams.

³⁴ On extant Sanskrit editions, and Chinese and Tibetan translations, see Tsukamoto et. al., *Mikkyō kyōtenben*, 96–102 and Wang-Toutain, 'Sitātapatra'; Keyworth, 'Zen and the "Hero's March Spell" of the *Shoulengyan jing*'.

jñāpāramitāhṛdaya-sūtra).³⁵

4. Tier 3b: *Sheng qianshou qianyan guanzizai pusa mohesa guangda yuanman wuai dabeixin tuoluoni* 聖千手千眼觀自在菩薩摩訶薩廣大圓滿無礙大悲心陀羅尼 (Great Compassion-Heart *Dhāraṇī* that is Immense, Successful, and Unimpeded of the Sage with a Thousand Arms and a Thousand Eyes [Sahasrabhuja], Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva Mahāsattva; probably Vajrabodhi's [Jin'gangzhi 金剛智, 671–741) translation, *T* no. 1061, *Z* no. 335), which is the translation of the Great Compassion Spell from the **Nīlakaṇṭha(ka)-sūtra* and attributed to Amoghavajra.
5. Tier 3c: *Jin'gang cuisui tuoluoni* 金剛摧碎陀羅尼 (Adamantine Demolishing *Dhāraṇī*, *T* no. 1416, *J* no. 1001), which is *Maitrībhadra's translation of the *Vajravidāraṇa-dhāraṇī*.
6. Tier 3d: *Dasheng baizi miyu* 大乘百字密語 (One Hundred Characters of Mahāyāna Esoteric or Secret Words that may match *Z* no. 516, *T* no. 866, 18: 238–a12a29, which is from *Jin'gangding yuqie zhong lue chu niansong jing* 金剛頂瑜伽中略出念誦經 [*Sūtra* for Recitation [of mantras and *dhāraṇīs*] Omitted from the *Vajreśekhara-sūtra*], which is attributed to Vajrabodhi), translator not provided. The words—or syllables—are only provided in Siddhaṃ Sanskrit letters.
7. Tier 4a: *Tang fan foding zunsheng tuoluoni* 唐梵佛頂尊勝陀羅尼 (Sinitic and Sanskrit [edition of the] High Victory *Dhāraṇī* [from the] Buddha's Crown, *T* no. 967, *Z* no. 375), which looks like Buddhapāla's (alt. Buddhapālita, Fotuoboli 佛陀波利, ca. 683) translation of the *Sarvatathāgatoṣṇīṣavijaya-* or *Uṣṇīṣavijaya-dhāraṇī*.³⁶

³⁵ On this edition and the possibility that S. (as in Stein number from the British Library Collection of Dunhuang manuscripts) 700 might be correctly attributed to Amoghavajra, see Wan, 'Dunhuang shiwu *Xinjing* yin xie chaoben jiaoshi xushuo'. On the Fangshan Stone Canon edition, see Fukui, *Hannnya shingyō no rekishiteki kenkyū*.

³⁶ On extant Sanskrit editions, and Chinese and Tibetan translations, see Tsukamoto et. al., *Mikkyō kyōtenben*, 100–105. An imperfect but nevertheless

8. Tier 4b: *Tang Fan duifan putichang zhuangyan tuoluoni* 唐梵對翻菩提場莊嚴陀羅尼 (Sinitic and Sanskrit [edition of the] *Dhāraṇī* of Ornamentation from the Enlightenment Platform, **Bodhimāṇḍala-lakṣālaṃkāra-nāma-dhāraṇī*, T no. 1008, Z no. 397), translator not provided but attributed to Amoghavajra in other editions.
9. Tier 4c: *Dalun tuoluoni* 大輪陀羅尼 [Great Wheel [*mahā-cakra?*] *Dhāraṇī*], translator not provided.³⁷

The reinternment of this remarkable *dhāraṇī* pillar in the underground palace followed reburial in the upper relic crypt exactly one year earlier of Sanskrit Siddhaṃ editions of the *Vajravidāraṇa-* (no. 5) and *Uṣṇīṣavijaya-dhāraṇīs* (no. 7) imprinted onto thin copper metal plates inlaid with gold. We have another inscription to mark the occasion:³⁸

During the same occasion when relics (*śarīra*) were reburied on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month of *Chongxi* 12 (1143), one copy each of the *Vajravidāraṇa-* and *Uṣṇīṣavijaya-dhāraṇīs* [were placed inside] this silver *stūpa*. Copied on behalf of success for [the] Revenue Manager of the Revenue Bureau and the emperor. The Sanskrit letters were carved by Facheng. Craftsman Zhang Congdao was in charge of all the [Sinitic] characters [written] in gold [on the outside of the *stūpa*] and oversaw the project.

handy translation and transcription of the Hōryūji 法隆寺 ed. can be found in Müller, ed., *Anecdota Oxoniensia*, vol.1, pt.3, 22–26. See also Sasaki, ‘Butchō sonshō darani gaikan’; Copp, *The Body Incantory*, 142–47, 70–80; Barrett, ‘Review of *The Body Incantory*’; Radich, ‘Review of Copp, *The Body Incantory*’; Wang, *Maṇḍalas in the Making*, chap.1.

³⁷ This appears to be a similar text, but upon inspection, the transliterated Sinitic characters do not match any of the *dhāraṇīs* in T no. 1230. Moreover, the Taishō edition was printed from a 1749 printed edition from Buzan university library (寬延二年刊豐山大學藏本).

³⁸ Wang et al., *Chaoyang Beita*, 40–44, 69.

重熙十二年四月八日與舍利同時葬此銀塔并摧碎小佛頂陀羅尼各一本

守司戶參軍軒轅亨書 梵字依法成造 匠人張從道 鍛字扈全金甄守則

These gold-inlayed sheets were placed inside a miniature *sūtra-stūpa* along with silver-plated sheets imprinted with Sanskrit texts of a smaller-size *Uṣṇīṣavijaya-dhāraṇī*, a *Mantra of the Bodhisattva Maitreya* (*Cishi pusa zhenyan* 慈氏菩薩真言), and a *Mantra of the Principal Image* (*Benzun zhenyan* 本尊真言), which were dedicated to the emperor on 1043.4.4³⁹ The *sūtra-stūpa* also has an inscription which reads: Reburied on 1043.4.8 (*Chongxi* 12) [with the] Semblance Dharma eight years henceforth; recorded [under orders from]

³⁹ I cannot guess which scripture this mantra may have come from without seeing it in a picture or in person. The inscription reads重熙十二年四月四日軒轅亨書 小佛頂 慈氏真言 本尊真言 施主甄守則 provided in Wang et al., *Chaoyang Beita*, 69. This *Cishi pusa zhenyan* probably comes from one these sources: (1) one of two ritual manuals translated by Faquan 法全 (ca. 9th CE) with similar titles of *Da piluzhena chengfo shenbian jiachi jing lianhua taizang beisheng mantuluo dachengjiu yigui* 大毗盧遮那成佛神變加持經蓮華胎藏悲生曼荼羅廣大成就儀軌 (Ritual Manual to Achieve Great *Siddhi* from Cultivating Compassion from the Maṇḍala of the Womb from the Lotus Blossom from the **Mahāvairocana-abhisambodhivikurvītādhiṣṭhāna-vaipulya-sūtra*) and *Da piluzhena chengfo shenbian jiachi jing lianhua taizang puti chuang biao zhi putong zhenyan zang guangda dachengjiu yuqie* 大毘盧遮那成佛神變加持經蓮華胎藏菩提幢標幟普通真言藏廣大成就瑜伽 ([Manual to] achieve Broad, Great *Yoga-Siddhi* with Mantra that has the Distinguishing Mark from the Bodhi-pillar from the Womb [realm] from the Lotus Blossom from the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra*): *T.* 852, 18: 131b1422 and *T.* 853, 18: 148b14–b16, respectively; (2) **Māyājālamahā-tantra* (*Yuqie dajiaowang jing* 瑜伽大教王經) translated by Dharmabhadra: *T.* no. 890, 18: 563a27–b08; and (3) *Dasheng guanxiang mannaluo jing zhu e qu jing* 佛說大乘觀想曼拏羅淨諸惡趣 (likely the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana-tejorājasya*) also translated by Dharmabhadra: *T.* no. 939, 19: 92b07–16. On the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana-tejorājasya*, see Tsukamoto et. al., *Mikkyō kyōtenben*, 212–13.

Great Master Xuanyan 宣演 who was presented with a purple robe and the title of *śramaṇa* Yungui 蘊珪.⁴⁰ Finally, imprinted on thin, copper metal sheets inlaid with silver were ten more *dhāraṇīs*, five in Sanskrit and another five in Sinitic transliteration. Because I have not seen the sheets with the *dhāraṇīs* in Sanskrit, I can only provide the references to what the Chinese archaeologists have catalogued they found on them:⁴¹

- a. **Mahāmaṇivipulavimāna-viśva-supraṭiṣṭhita-guhyaparamarabasya-kalparāja-[nāma]-dhāraṇī* also translated into Chinese by Amoghavajra as *Dabao guangbo louge shanzhu mimi tuoluoni jing* 大寶廣博樓閣善住祕密陀羅尼經 [Sūtra of the Secret, Well-Established *Dhāraṇī* of the Vast, Jewel-Adorned Tower, T no. 1005a, Z no. 496].
- b. *Fa sheli zhenyan* 法舍利真言 [Mantra of the *Dharma*[*kāya*] *śarīra*]; unknown provenance.
- c. *Wu rulai zhenyan* 五如來真言 [Mantra(s) of the Five Tathāgatas] probably from *Miaojixiang pingdeng guanmen dajiaowang lüechu humo yi* 妙吉祥觀門大教王經略出護摩儀 [Homa Ritual from the Contemplation on the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*?], translated by *Maitrībhadra: T no. 1194, 20: 935b19–c01.
- d. Most likely the same one as no. 3 above (from the *dhāraṇī* pillar in the *digong*).
- e. Another *Heart Sūtra*.
The five *dhāraṇīs* on silver sheets in Sinitic transliteration are:
- f. *Uṣṇīṣavijaya*, same as no. 7 above.
- g. No. 8 above.
- h. No. 6 above.
- i. *Aparimitāyur-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra* translated into Chinese by Chos 'grub (Facheng 法成, ca. 820s–840s) as *Dasheng*

⁴⁰ The inscription reads: 重熙十二年四月八日午時葬 像法只八年 提點上京僧錄宣演大師賜紫沙門蘊珪記; see Wang et al., *Chaoyang Beita*, 69; Fujiwara, *Kittan bukk'yōshi no kenkyū*, 150.

⁴¹ Wang et al., *Chaoyang Beita*, 41–46, 69.

wuliang jing 大乘無量經 (T no. 936) and Dharmadeva (Fatian 法天, d. 1001) as *Dasheng sheng wuliang jue ding guangming wang rulai tuoluoni jing* 大乘聖無量決定光明王如來陀羅尼經 [Mahāyāna Sūtra of the Sagely Immeasurable, Fixed, Illuminating-King Tathāgata, T no. 937].⁴²

- j. [Avalokiteśvaragūṇa-] *Kāraṇḍavyūha-sūtra* translated by the Kaśmīri *Devaśanti 天息災 (a.k.a. *Dharmabhadra 法賢, d. 1000) as the *Dasheng zhengyan baowang jing* 大乘莊嚴寶王經 [Mahāyāna Sūtra of the Ornamented Jewel-King-Garlanded Avalokiteśvara, T no. 1050].

It seems evident to me that, whether or not the primary motivation for internment of these *dhāraṇī* in Chaoyang North Pagoda was anxiety about the impending Final Age of the Dharma or some other explanation such as the possibility that the monastics and donors or patrons had read the narrative accounts in *sūtras* extolling the merits of doing so, this very well may be the greatest number of *dhāraṇīs* entombed in a single site anywhere in East Asia. Beyond these *dhāraṇīs*, a vast array of Buddhist material culture was reinterred at the same time. Relics (*śarīra*) in a separate gold three-story *stūpa*, kept within jars made of the seven precious materials, a Persian glass vase, and all manner of ritual paraphernalia (literally hundreds of objects) in addition to numerous inscriptions of the seven buddhas of the past and the eight great bodhisattvas demonstrate not only remarkable investment in the Buddhist religion here during the reign of emperor Xingzong 興宗 (1016–1055, r. 1031–1055), but also what can only be described as enthusiastic piety. Studies by art historians Shen Hsueh-man and Kim Youn-mi provide detailed accounts of the worldview represented on site. For example, Kim argues that miniature pagodas on the outside demonstrates how Liao Buddhists may have been able to perform a virtual pilgrimage to the sacred Buddhist sites in India, and she views the presence of these *Uṣṇīṣavijayā-dhāraṇī*—in the upper relic crypt—as evidence of a miniature esoteric Buddhist ritual altar.⁴³ Like Fujiwara, Kim views the ico-

⁴² Tsukamoto et al., *Mikkyō kyōtenben*, 120–21.

nography of the site—both in terms of the abundance of objects interred in the two palaces and the iconography within each as well as the representations on the outside of the pagoda—through the lens of the Japanese esoteric Buddhist Diamond Realm *maṇḍala* with Mahāvairocana as the cosmic, *dharmakāya* buddha as the focus.⁴⁴

Ten Translations Attributed to *Maitrībhadra

There are four translations attributed to *Maitrībhadra (and presumably his translation team) included in the Sino-Japanese Taishō Buddhist Canon, but nine are attributed to him in the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) comparative catalog of Tibetan and Chinese Buddhist canons, *Zhiyuan fabao kantong zonglu* 至元法寶勘同總錄 (comp. by 1294, *Shōwa hōbō mokuroku* 昭和法寶目錄 II: *T* no. 25, hereafter *Fabao lu*), which was supervised by Qingjixiang 慶吉祥, ‘Phags pa (1235–1280) and a team of Tibetan, Chinese, and Uighur Buddhists.⁴⁵ Here is a list of the ten translations accredited with *Maitrībhadra, almost all of which are represented at the Chaoyang North Pagoda.⁴⁶

⁴³ Kim, ‘The Hidden Link’; *idem*, ‘Virtual Pilgrimage and Virtual Geography’. Cf. Kim, ‘Eternal Ritual in an Infinite Cosmos’, 136–86. If we consider Sasaki, ‘Tonkō-hon Butchō sonshō darani no kenkyū’; *idem*, ‘Butchō sonshō haha jōju-hō no kenkyū’; *idem*, ‘Butchō sonshō darani kyōdō no kenkyū’, 44–51; *idem*, ‘Butchōsonshō darani no kenkyū’; *idem*, ‘Butchō sonshō darani gaikan’; then it would appear that with 214 stone pillars in China alone with primarily Buddhapāla’s translation of the *Buddhoṣṇīṣa-vijaya-dhāraṇī* on them, it might be wise to consider how widespread the concept of an *Uṣṇīṣavijaya-dhāraṇī* ritual altar might have been in medieval China and Japan.

⁴⁴ Kim, ‘Eternal Ritual in an Infinite Cosmos’, 125–30; Fujiwara, *Kittan bukkyōshi no kenkyū*, 153–55.

⁴⁵ Wang-Toutain ‘Circulation du savoir entre la Chine, la Mongolie, et le Tibet au XVIIe siècle’.

⁴⁶ Fujiwara, *Kittan bukkyōshi no kenkyū*, 162–63.

1. *Ruyilun lianhuaxin rulai xiuxing guanmen yi* 如意輪蓮華心如來修行觀門儀 [Ritual Manual to Cultivate and Contemplate the Gate[s] of the Tathāgata[s] in the Wish-Fulfilling Wheel of the Lotus [Realm], dedicated to Cakravartī-cintāmaṇi-Avalokiteśvara bodhisattva?, *T* no. 1090]; no. 870 in *Fabao lu* roll 6: *T* no. 25, 99: 215a5–6.
2. *Miaojixiang pingdeng mimi zuishang guanmen dajiaowang jing* 妙吉祥平等秘密最上觀門大教王經 [Sūtra with the Great Instructions that are Universal, Secret, and Unexcelled about the Contemplations of Mañjuśrī (bodhisattva0, possibly a version of the Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa?, *T* no. 1192); no. 796 in *Fabao lu* 6: *T* no. 25, 99: 212c19–21.
3. *Miaojixiang pingdeng yuqie mimi guanshen chengfo yigui* 妙吉祥平等瑜伽秘密觀身成佛儀軌 [a Yoga-class ritual manual related to the Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa?, *T* no. 1193]; no. 872 in *Fabao lu* 6: *T* no. 25, 99: 215a10–11.
4. *Miaojixiang pingdeng guanmen dajiaowang lüechu humo yi* (*T* no. 1194) and (5) above; no. 871 in *Fabao lu* 6: *T* no. 25, 99: 215a8–9.
Nos. 1, 3, and 4 list *Maitrībhadra as a *trepitaka* from central India who was erroneously in Song China (宋中天竺三藏慈賢).⁴⁷
5. *Heart Sūtra* translated from Sanskrit as found on tier 3a of the *dhāraṇī* pillar in Chaoyang North Pagoda; no. 23 in *Fabao lu* 1: *T* no. 25, 99: 183c1–2; *F* no. 1060.
6. *Uṣṇīṣavijaya-dhāraṇī* as found on tier 4a of the *dhāraṇī* pillar in Chaoyang North Pagoda; no. 586 in *Fabao lu* 4: *T* no. 25, 99: 205c20–21; *F* no. 1062. The editors of the *Fabao lu* note that this is the first catalog to include this translation and refer to *Maitrībhadra as Khitan State Preceptor from Magadha, India (新編入錄契丹國師中天竺摩竭陀國).
7. *Great Compassion Spell* as found on tier 3b of the *dhāraṇī* pillar in Chaoyang North Pagoda; no. 553 in *Fabao lu* 4: *T* no.

⁴⁷ On *trepitakas*, see Forte, ‘The Relativity of the Concept of Orthodoxy in Chinese Buddhism’, 247–48, note 7.

- 25, 99: 204c15; *F* no. 1064.
8. *Sitātapatra-buddhoṣṇīṣa-dhāraṇī* as found on tier 1 of the *dhāraṇī* pillar in Chaoyang North Pagoda; no. 791 in *Fabao lu* 6: *T* no. 25, 99: 212c4–6; *F* no. 1063.
 9. *Mahāpratisarā-dhāraṇī* as found on tier 2 of the *dhāraṇī* pillar in Chaoyang North Pagoda; no. 792 in *Fabao lu* 6: *T* no. 25, 99: 212c8–9; *F* no. 1061.⁴⁸
 10. *Vajravidāraṇa-dhāraṇī*. as found on tier 3c of the *dhāraṇī* pillar in Chaoyang North Pagoda; no. 793 in *Fabao lu* 6: *T* no. 25, 99: 212c12–13; *J*. 1001.

Not only does it appear that the internment of *dhāraṇīs* on the stone pillar in the underground palace and on metal inside the metal *sūtra-stūpa* within the heavenly palace at Chaoyang Pagoda in 1043 and 1044 underscore the translation efforts of *Maitrībhadrā with six of the nine *dhāraṇīs* on the stone pillar and six of the ten in the *sūtra-stūpa*, but Fujiwara's research convincingly demonstrates that the *Mahāpratisarā-dhāraṇī* attributed to *Mañicintana (3a) matches *Maitrībhadrā's translation with eight primary incantations and not those provided in *Mañicintana's translation (*T* no. 1154, 20: 639c22–640b3). It should be noted that *dhāraṇī(s)* of the *Mahāpratisarā* on the stone pillar at Chaoyang almost perfectly match the edition from the Fangshan Stone Canon from Yunjusi.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Also in Zhongguo Fojiao xiehui, *Fangshan shijing: Liao Jin ke jing*, vol. 22: 494–98.

⁴⁹ Fujiwara, *Kittan bukkyōshi no kenkyū*, 160–61. The eight incantations are not back translated into Sanskrit in McBride, 'Wish-Fulfilling Spells and Talismans, Efficacious Resonance, and Trilingual Spell Books', but his discussion of the reasons why this *dhāraṇī*, in particular, was popular are important. The eight incantations as provided in *T* no. 1154 are: (1) fundamental spell (*genben zhou* 根本呪); (2) spell of all the buddhas' minds [of enlightenment] (*yiqie foxin zhou* 一切佛心呪); (3) seal spell of the buddhas' minds (*yiqie foxin yin zhou* 一切佛心印呪); (4) consecration [or *abhiṣeka*] spell (*guanding zhou* 灌頂呪); (5) seal consecration spell (*guanding yin zhou* 灌頂印呪); (6) [ritual] boundary [*sīmābandha*] spell (*jiejie zhou* 結界呪); (7) [another] buddhas' mind spell (*foxin zhou* 佛心呪);

Following Fujiwara, I speculate that each translation—or re-translation—of a popular *dhāraṇī-sūtra* completed during the Tang and especially during the 8th century in Tang China under the auspices of the translation teams led by Śubhakarasiṃha 善無畏 (637–735), Vajrabodhi, and especially Amoghavajra, which the donors who sponsored the reconstruction of Chaoyang North Pagoda wished to be carved on to the stone pillar in the lower relic crypt and on metal in the upper relic crypt were, at the very least, augmented by translations completed by *Maitrībhadra and his team. This includes (1) the translation of the *Sitātapatra-buddhoṣṇīṣa-dhāraṇī* attributed to Amoghavajra, the (2) *Mahāpratisarā* by *Mañicintana, (3) *Buddhoṣṇīṣa-vijayā* by *Buddhapāla, (4) *Great Compassion Spell* by Vajrabodhi, but perhaps mistakenly attributed to Amoghavajra on the stone pillar, and (5) a version of the *Heart Sūtra* that deserves separate attention. Only a close reading of each of the *dhāraṇīs* in Sanskrit and in transliterated Sinitic characters on metal in the heavenly palace would reveal if there, too, we find evidence of sponsorship for *Maitrībhadra’s ‘new’ translations.

and (8) spell of the ‘heart’ of the [buddhas’ enlightened] mind (*xinzhong xinzhou* 心中心呪). According to Fujiwara, op. cit., the eight as listed in *Maitrībhadra’s translation—and on the stone pillar at Chaoyang North Pagoda—are: (1) fundamental *dhāraṇī* (*genben tuoluoni* 根本陀羅尼); (2) spell of all the Tathāgatas’ minds [of enlightenment] (*yiqie rulai xin tuoluoni* 一切如來心陀羅尼); (3) all [the buddhas’ or divine beings’] adamant-armor *dhāraṇī* (*yiqie jin’gang xin yin tuoluoni* 一切金剛被甲陀羅尼); (4) *dhāraṇī* of all the Tathāgatas’ minds (*yiqie rulai xin tuoluoni* 一切如來心陀羅尼) [on Chaoyang stone pillar nos. three and four are switched]; (5) consecration *dhāraṇī* of all the Tathāgatas (*guanding yin zhong* 一切如來灌頂陀羅尼); (6) [ritual] boundary [*śīmābandha*] *dhāraṇī* of all the Tathāgatas (*jiejie zhong* 一切如來結界陀羅尼); (7) [another] *dhāraṇī* with a title that matches no. eight from *T* no. 1154 (*foxin zhong* 一切如來心中陀羅尼); and (8) *dhāraṇī* [of the Protectress who] grants the mind [of the] Tathāgatas (*yiqie rulai suixin tuoluoni* 一切如來隨心陀羅尼) [the eighth spell is unreadable from Chaoyang].

Longkan Shoujing and *Maitribhadra's *Vajravidāraṇa-dhāraṇī*
(T no. 1416 and J no. 1001)

Longkan shoujing is a dictionary which lists 26,430 Sinitic characters with explanations for pronunciation using the *fanqie* 反切 system and meanings. The *fanqie* method in traditional Chinese lexicography indicates the pronunciation of a monosyllabic character by using two other characters, one with the same initial consonant as the target character, and another with the same final sound (and tone). Christoph Anderl notes that *Longkan shoujian* was banned during the Song dynasty because books could not be imported from Liao, and he has tabulated that there are an additional 163,170 characters (total of 189,610) for descriptions.⁵⁰ The dictionary is arranged using a somewhat odd twofold system. The characters are arranged according to their tones as follows: 'level tones' (*pingsheng* 平聲), 'rising tones' (*shangsheng* 上聲), 'falling tones' (*qusheng* 去聲) and 'entering tone' (for final stops -p, -t, -k; *rusheng* 入聲). Then the characters are differentiated by 242 radicals, a first in the step toward the 214 established by Qing emperor Kangxi 康熙 (r. 1661–1722). Anderl summarizes their arrangement as follows:

[T]here does not seem to be an additional criterion for arranging the entries, for example, there is no stroke count within these categories. As such the arrangement is a mixed system of 'sound' (four tones) and 'meaning' (semantic classifiers = determinatives). The system does not follow the organization of the *Shuōwén* [說文解字] and obviously aims at facilitating the retrieval of the entries. As such, it is the first (relatively) 'reader-friendly' dictionary in Chinese history.⁵¹

There are repeated radicals such as, for example, the radical 亠 includes the characters 高 and 亨, which today are considered to be separate radicals. The character 處 is listed under the radical 几, and the character 其 is used as a radical for the characters 基, 碁, or 纂,

⁵⁰ Anderl, 'Lóngkān shǒujīng', 9, 13.

⁵¹ Ibid, 9.

although it is clear that 其 is a phonetic part of these characters, and not a radical.⁵² Where the *Longkan shoujing* excels is with providing variant readings of many Tang-era characters. These are listed as ‘standard’ (*zheng* 正), ‘acceptable’ (*tong* 通), ‘vulgar’ (*su* 俗), ‘contemporary’ (*jin* 今), and ‘archaic’ (*gu* 古).⁵³

Medieval Buddhist texts in Sinitic written on paper, xylographic printed editions, and certainly inscriptions on stone present difficulties with reading variants. To this end, distinct from the 8th century *Ganlu zishu* 干祿字書 [Character Dictionary for the Imperial Examinations] compiled by Yan Yuansun 顏元孫 (d.u.), *Longkan shoujian* is a fruitful resource because it ought to contain many terms found translated and transliterated from India languages into Sinitic in Chinese Buddhist texts.⁵⁴ Here I provide six examples of characters found in *Maitrībhadra’s translation of the *Vajraśāstra-dhāraṇī* and six examples with terms often found in spell texts to show the utility of the *Longkan shoujing*. Although, following Baxter, I provide the Middle Chinese phonetic readings for each character, I am not convinced that using Middle Chinese reconstructions is more effective than using either modern Mandarin *Pinyin* (or Wade-Giles) Romanizations for Chinese or the Revised Hepburn system for Japanese. Therefore, I also provide the Mandarin Chinese Romanizations in parentheses.⁵⁵

- a. The character *ba* (*pó*) 婆 is listed in the explanation of *sa* (*sūo*) and *tsjang* (*jiāng*) 娑娑 but it is not a character defined in the dictionary. Nevertheless, *sa* and *tsjang* have level tones and *ba* has a rising tone; all three have the same meaning of luxuriant vegetation [上音下音娑娑草木盛貌也]. These two characters 娑娑 are both popular and are pronounced like *ba*. Used

⁵² See <http://www.chinaknowledge.de/Literature/Science/longkanshoujian.html>, accessed August, 2019.

⁵³ Anderl, ‘*Lóngkān shōujīng*’, 14–16.

⁵⁴ See, for example, Nishihara, ‘*Longkan shoujing*’; Galambos and Silk, ‘**Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodana*’, 417.

⁵⁵ Baxter, *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*.

- in spells [在呪中]. *Longkan shoujian* 2b: *pingsheng*, Grass radical 草部 no. 8 (103).
- b. *Nrae* (*ná*) 拏 is a popular variant 俗 of *nrae* (*ná*) and *nrae* (*ná*) 拏拏, which are both standard. The character should be pronounced with the onset [nr] from 女 [*nrjoX*] with the final *ae* of *kae* 加, with the same tone as 加 [女加反]. The meaning of both is to lead, draw, be in trouble, or grasp [相牽引也又搦也]. The same meaning is in *Yupian* 玉篇 (Jade Chapters, ca. 543), compiled by Gu Yewang 顧野王 (519–581), but the character is written incorrectly with 反 instead of 又. *Longkan shoujian* 2a: *pingsheng*, Hand radical 手部 no. 1 (98).
- c. In the only entry in roll four to list a Sanskrit term, *nanɡX* and *mu* (*nánɡmó*) 囊膜 (*namaḥ* or *namo* in Sanskrit) [梵語囊膜也], *mu* is pronounced like *maek* (*mò*) and means the membrane (or skin) of flesh (or meat), and should be pronounced like *maek* and *hu* (*hú*) 胡. *Longkan shoujian* 4a: *rusheng*, Flesh radical 肉部 no. 4 (187).
- d. *La* (*lāo*) 囉 is pronounced like *lik* (*lì*) and *haX* (*hé*) [力何反] as in *lju* and *la* 嚟囉; younger people pronounce this as *lik* (*lì*) and *srae* (*shā*) or *lae* [兒語又力沙反]. *Longkan shoujian* 2a: *shangsheng*, Mouth radical 口部 no. 7 (107).
- e. *KjieX* (*zhǐ*) 枳 is pronounced like *tsyeX* (*zhǐ*, meaning paper) from the *muwk-mjieng* (tree) [紙木名] as in *kjo* (*jū*) and *tsyeX* meaning *kjyeX* [居紙反]; the *muwk-mjieng* is similar to the orange (tree) [木名似橘也]. *Longkan shoujian* 3a: *rusheng*, Tree radical 木部 no. 1 (184).
- f. *Swojh* (*sù*) 碎 is pronounced like *su* (*sū*) and *twojh* (*dù*) and means to break apart and ruin into fine pieces [蘇對反散壞也細破也]. *Longkan shoujian* 3a: *rusheng*, Rock radical 石部 no. 9 (192).
- g. Both 陀 are pronounced *tha* (*túo* or *tā*) and are standard characters pronounced as *du* (*tú*) and *haX* (*hé*) [二正徒何反], which means the correct pronunciation ought to be *da*. This *tha* 𪛗 is a popular variant used in spells. *Longkan shoujian* 2a: *rusheng*, mound or abundant radical 阜部 no. 11 (108).
- h. *Tuw* (*dōu*) 𪛗 is pronounced *tu* (*dū*) and *huw* (*hóu*) [都侯反]; responsive masters write this *tuw* for *tuw* as in Tuṣita (兜率

- 天). Used in spells. [應師作兜]. *Longkan shoujian* 4a: *rusheng*, Silk radical 糸部 no. 3 (186).
- i. *Tej* (rèn) 勒 is pronounced like *teng* (dīng) and *hej* (xī) [丁奚反]; responsive masters write this *tej* for *tej*. Used in spells [應師作伍]. *Longkan shoujian* 4a: *rusheng*, Leather radical 革部 no. 10 (193).
 - j. *Hjim* (yín) is the same as *hjim* [鉞同鉞]. *Yupian* says the sound is *hju* (yú) and *kim* (jīn) [于今反]. Used in spells. *Longkan shoujian* 1a: *pingsheng*, Metal radical 金部 no. 1 (1).
 - k. *MjamX* (cōng or zōng) 鏜 is pronounced as *mjang* (wáng) and *kamX* (gǎn) [亡敢反]. Used in spells. *Longkan shoujian* 1a: *pingsheng*, Metal radical no. 1 (1).
 - l. *Dzye* (shí) 𪛗 is a standard character pronounced like *dzyeX* (shì) and *tsye* (zhī) [是支反] and is the sound of a bird call [鳥鳴也]. It sounds like *dijX* in some spells; *dijX* sounds like *duX* (tǔ) and *mijX* (měi) [土美反].

Despite the excellent examples of useful variants for common Buddhist characters given in Anderl's paper, including how the two characters for *pútí* 菩提 (bodhi) and *púsà* 菩薩 (bodhisattva) can be written as 𦵏, which is pronounced *mangX* as in *maek* (mò) and *langX* (lǎng) [莫朗反] and means plants that do not die during the winter (2b: *pingsheng*, Grass radical 草部 no. 8 [103]), there are only seven references to Sanskrit (*fanyu* 梵語) and a few to usage in spells. Xingjun does references 'old canons' (*jiuzang* 舊藏) and (a) 'new canon(s)' (*xinzang* 新藏) and several *sūtras* where terms can be found. But none of the examples I have examined or Anderl discusses have anything to do with esoteric Buddhism.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the *Longkan shoujing* may have been influential in determining, for example, how *Maitrībhadra opted to render 'homage to' (*namaḥ* as 曩膜, c. above) in the translation of the Vajradāraṇa-dhāraṇī.

The reason why the name in Sanskrit name I am using does not match *Vajrasūkṣma-apratibhata-nāma-dhāraṇī*, which is fruitfully provided on the SAT Daizōkyō Text Database (version 2018) is

⁵⁶ Anderl, 'Lóngkān shōujīng', 16–19.

because I follow the extant Tibetan edition (To. No. 750/949 and Pek. No. 406/574 *rdo rje par joms pa shes bya bai gzungs*) where the Sanskrit title is *Badsra bi dā ra ṇā nā ma dhā ra nī*, which confirms that the title is *Vajradāraṇa-dhāraṇī*.⁵⁷ Other than the addition of a *sādhana* ritual to utilize the ritual power of this—adamantine demolishing as in the Chinese title—*dhāraṇī*, overall the sounds of the *dhāraṇī* are similar. The exclusion of this *sādhana* in *Maitrībhadrā's translation, which is summarized, but still not as extensive as in Shes rab dpal's (Shaluoba 沙囉吧 d. 1314) translation completed during the Yuan dynasty (*T* no. 1417), suggests to that *Maitrībhadrā followed East Asian standards and may have even translated this *dhāraṇī* specifically to be inscribed on stone pillars like the one at Chaoyang North Pagoda.

Next, I provide the Chinese translation from *T* no. 1416, 21: 931b7–932a12, which closely matches the Jiaxing canon 嘉興藏 (comp. ca. 1579–1677) J no. 1001 (but is oddly not included in the Fangshan texts currently available on the cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw website), along with a reconstruction of the Sanskrit text. Here again, we find *Maitrībhadrā as a Song-Khitan State Preceptor from Magadha, India, when we know he did not serve both the Song and Khitan Liao emperors.

Namaḥ ratna 曩謨囉怛那(二合) *trayā-* 怛囉(二合) *ya* 夜野(一). *Namaś caṇḍa vajrapānaye* 曩謨室戰二曩謨室戰(二合) 拏嚩日囉(三合) 播拏曳(二) *mahā-yakṣa-* 摩訶藥乞叉(二合) *senāpataye* 細那鉢哆曳(三). *Tadyathā om* 怛嚩也(二合) 他唵(引), *traṭatya traṭatya* 怛囉吒野(四) 怛囉(二合), 吒野(五) *truṭaya truṭaya* 咄嚩(二合) 吒野咄嚩(二合), 吒野(六) *sphoṭa sphoṭa* 娑普(二合) 吒娑普(二合) 吒(七) *sphoṭaya sphoṭaya* 娑醯(二合) 吒野娑醯(二合) 吒野(八) *grbṇa grbṇa* 乞哩(二合) 恨拏(二合) *grbṇāpaya grbṇāpaya* 乞哩(二合) 恨拏(九) 乞哩(二合) 恨拏(二合) *Sarva sattvāni* 跋野乞哩恨拏(二合) 跋野(十) *bodhaya bodhaya* 薩囉嚩(二合) 薩怛嚩(二合) *saṃ-bodhaya saṃ-bodhaya* 嚩(十一) 冒駄野冒駄野(十二) *saṃ-bodhaya saṃ-bodhaya* 三冒駄野三冒駄野(十三) *bhrama* 勃嚩(二合) 麼(十四) *saṃ-bhrama saṃ-bhrama* 三勃嚩(二合) 麼三勃嚩(二合) 麼(十五) *sarva bhūtāni* 薩囉嚩(二合) 部哆

⁵⁷ Tsukamoto and et al., *Mikkyō kyōtenben*, 148

賴(十六) *kutta kutta* 矩吒矩吒(十七) *saṃ-kuttaya saṃ-kuttaya* 僧矩
 吒野僧矩吒野(十八) *sarva śatrūnām* 薩囉嚩(二合)設咄嚩(二合十九)
Ghaṭṭa ghaṭṭa 伽吒伽吒(二十) *saṃ-ghaṭṭaya saṃ-ghaṭṭaya* 僧伽吒野
 僧伽吒野(二十一) *sarva vidyā-vajra* 薩囉嚩(二合)尾爾也(二合)嚩日
 囉(二合二十二) *vajra sphoṭa* 娑醯(二合)吒 *vajra vajta-kāṭa* 嚩日囉(二
 合二十三)嚩日囉(二合)迦吒 *vajra vajra-māṭa* 嚩日囉(二合二十四)嚩
 日囉(二合)麼吒 *vajra vajra māṭha* 嚩日囉(二合二十五)嚩日囉(二合)
 麼他 *vajra vajra-aṭṭahāsa* 嚩日囉(二合二十六)嚩日囉(二合)阿吒賀娑
 (二十七) *nīla-vajra* 賴囉嚩日囉(二合) *su vajraye svāhā* 素(二十八)嚩
 日囉(二合)曳娑嚩(二合) *He bhūrṇi ru* 訶(二十九)呬捕嚩賴哩捕嚩(三
 十) *kṛṇa-kuru* 伽哩(二合)拈短嚩(三十一) *vīri culu* 弭哩粗嚩(三十二)
kuru kuru 矩嚩 *bhur* 矩嚩(三十三) *vajra vi-jayāya svāhā* 嚩日囉(二
 合)尾惹夜耶娑嚩(二合)訶(三十四) *Kīli kīlāya* 枳隸枳擢野 *svāhā* 娑
 嚩(二合)訶(三十五) *Kāṭa-kāṭa* 迦吒迦吒(三十六) *math math* 麼吒麼
 吒(三十七) *raṭ raṭ* 囉吒囉吒(三十八) *moṭana para-moṭanāya* 謨吒曩
 (三十九)跛囉謨吒曩野 *svāhā* 娑嚩(二合)訶(四十) *Calāṇi cala* 左囉
 拈左囉(四十一) *hara hara* 賀囉 賀囉(四十二) *sāra sāra mārāya* 麼囉
 麼囉麼囉野(四十三) *vajra vi-jayā* 嚩日囉(二合)尾惹囉 *naye svāhā* 拏
 野娑 嚩(二合)訶(四十四) *Chida chida* 親那親那 [*bhida bhida bhida*]
mahā-kīli kīlāya 摩訶枳隸枳擢野 *svāhā* 娑 嚩(二合)訶(四十五)
Bandha bandha 滿駄滿駄(四十六) *krodha krodha kilikilāya* 骨嚩駄
 骨嚩駄(四十七)枳隸枳擢野 *svāhā* 娑 嚩(二合)訶(四十八) *Culu culu*
 粗嚩粗嚩 *caṇḍa-kilikilāya svāhā* 贊拏隸(四十九)枳隸枳擢野娑 嚩(
 二合)訶(五十) *Trāsaya trāsaya* 怛囉(二合)娑 野怛囉(二合)娑 野(五
 十一) *vajra-killikilāya svāhā* 嚩日囉(二合)枳哩枳擢野娑 嚩(二合)訶
 (五十二) *Hara hara* 賀囉賀囉 *vajra-dhārāya svāhā* 嚩日囉(二合)駄
 囉野娑 嚩(二合)訶(五十三) *Pra-hāra pra-hāra* 鉢囉(二合)賀囉鉢囉
 (二合)賀囉(五十四) *vajra pra-mardanāya* 嚩日囉(二合)鉢囉(二合)
 跋駄曩野 *svāhā* 娑 嚩(二合)訶(五十五) *Mati-sthira vajra-sūti sthira*
 麼底悉體(二合)囉(五十六)嚩日囉(二合)素底悉體(二合)囉(五十七)
vajra prati-sthira 嚩日囉(二合)鉢囉(二合)底悉體(二合)囉(五十八)
vajra-mahā 嚩日囉(二合)摩訶(五十九) *vajra-apratihata* 嚩日囉(二
 合)阿鉢囉(二合)底賀哆(六十) *vajra-amogha* 嚩日囉(二合)阿謨伽(六
 十一) *vajra ehi* 嚩日囉(二合)噫呬(六十二) *vajra saṃkala vajrāya* 嚩
 日囉(二合)誡伽朗(六十三)嚩日囉(二合)野 *svāhā* 娑 嚩(二合)訶(六
 十四) *Dhara dhara* 駄囉駄囉(六十五) *dhiri dhiri* 地哩地哩(六十六)
dburu dburu 度嚩度嚩(六十七) *sarva vajra-kulam* 薩囉嚩(二合)嚩

日囉(二合)矩囉(六十八)摩 *ā-vartanāya* 嚩哩哆(二合)曩野 *svāhā* 娑
 嚩(二合)訶(六十九) *Amukam mārāya* 阿母劍麼囉野 *phaṭ* 發吒(七
 十) *Namaḥ* 娜麼 *samanta* 三滿 哆 *vajrānām* 嚩日囉(二合)喃(七十一)
Sarva mārā-maṇḍala 薩囉嚩(二合)末囉(七十二)麼嚩哩 *vajraya* 惹
 野(七十三) *mahā-bale kbata* 摩訶末隸迦吒(七十四) *vi-tatale* 尾怛怛
 隸 *a-tare maṇḍala* 阿怛隸(七十五)滿拏囉 *māye ati* 摩曳(七十六)阿底
vajra mahā-bala 嚩日囉(二合)摩賀末囉 *vega* 尾誡(七十七) *raṇa raṇa*
 囉拏囉拏(七十八) *a-jite* 阿嚩帝 *jvāla jvāla* 入嚩(二合)囉入嚩(二合)囉
 (七十九) *tikṣṇe tikṣṇe tikṣṇa* 底致底致(八十)底致孕(二合) *gale* 誡隸(八
 十一) *dāha dāha tejavati* 娜賀娜賀(八十二)帝惹嚩帝(八十三) *tire*
tire 底隸底隸(八十四) *bandha bandha* 滿馱滿馱(八十五) *mahā-bala*
 摩訶嚩日囉(二合) [*vajra-*] *aṅka jvālāya* 迦(八十六)入嚩囉野 *svāhā* 娑
 嚩(二合)訶(八十七) *Namo ratna-tryāya* 娜謨囉怛那(二合)怛囉(二合)
 夜野(八十八) *Namaś caṇḍa vajrapānaye* 娜謨室戰拏(八十九)嚩日囉
 (二合)播拏野(九十) *mahā-yakṣa-senā-pataye* 摩訶藥乞叉(二合)細曩
 鉢哆曳(九十一) *Om* 唵 *hara hara vajra* 賀囉賀囉(九十二)嚩日囉(二
 合) *mātha mātha vajra* 麼他麼他(九十三)嚩日囉(二合) *dhūna dhūna*
vajra 度曩度曩(九十四)嚩日囉(二合) *paca paca vajra* 鉢左鉢左(九十五)
 嚩日囉(二合)馱囉馱囉(九十六)嚩日囉(二合) *dara dara vajra* 馱
 囉野馱囉野(九十七)嚩日囉(二合) *daraya daraya vajra* 馱嚩拏馱嚩
 拏(九十八)嚩日囉(二合) [*dāruṇa dāruṇa vajra*] *chida chida vajra* 親
 娜親娜(九十九)嚩日 *bhida bhida vajra* 囉牝那牝那(一百)嚩日囉(二
 合) *būm phaṭ* 呬發吒(一) *Namaś caṇḍa vajra-krodhāya* 曩謨室戰拏
 (二)嚩日囉(二合)骨嚩(二合)馱野(三) *Huru buru* 護嚩護嚩(四) *dhṛṣṭa*
dhṛṣṭa 底瑟吒(二合)底瑟吒(二合五) *bandha bandha* 滿馱滿馱(六)
hana hana 賀曩賀曩(七) *amṛte* 阿蜜哩(二合)帝(八) *būm phaṭ* 呬發
 吒(半音九). Even though there may be only five characters from this
 transliteration of the *Vajradāraṇa-dhāraṇī* that are listed in *Longkan*
shoujian, 娑 as in *svā-hā*, 拏 or 曩 for the Sanskrit syllables *na* or *ṇa*,
 囉 for *la* or *ra*, and 枳 for *ki* or *kī*, as well as 碎 in the title, and these
 examples are somewhat consistent with the same use in several of the
dhāraṇīs on the stone pillar at Chaoyang North Pagoda that were
 transliterated during the 8th centuries, it seems highly likely that
 *Maitrībhadra or one or more of his assistants was familiar with the
Longkan shoujing.

Esoteric or *Dhāraṇī* Buddhism and the Final Age at Chaoyang North Pagoda during the 11th Century

When I visited the site in July 2019 with a group of researchers, including Kim Youn-mi as the expert guide, I was surprised to find on the outside of the massive pagoda what looks to me like relic caskets floating in mid-air surrounded by *apsaras* (*feitian* 飛天) floating in clouds above each of the miniature pagodas that Kim views as evidence of virtual pilgrimage to the sacred sites in India.⁵⁸ If we ought to take seriously the inscriptions translated above regarding the Final Age of the Dharma that was thought to be seven to eight years away when ritual objects and the *dhāraṇīs* were entombed in 1043 and 1044, then it stands to reason that there ought to be a connection between the *dhāraṇīs* and the iconography of the pagoda—inside and out.

There is considerable evidence from elsewhere in the Khitan kingdom of attention to the Final Age of the Dharma. This refers to the periodization developed to describe the degradation of the Buddha's teachings (*buddhadharma*) after his *parinirvāṇa* and then over time. These periods were separated into the age of the True Dharma (*zhengfa* 正法, *saddharma*), the age of the Semblance Dharma (*xiangfa* 像法), and the age of the Final Dharma (*mofa*). The Final Dharma is also called the age of the decline of the dharma (*moshi* 末世). The most widespread view in medieval China was that True Dharma lasted for the first five hundred years after Śākyamuni's *parinirvāṇa*. The Semblance Dharma lasted for the next thousand years, and the age of the final dharma follows that for the next ten thousand years.⁵⁹ According to Shen, 'The Liao view that *mofa* would come in the year equivalent to 1052 is based on a 2000-year time span for the *zhengfa* and *xiangfa* periods and a new interpretation of the Buddha's death-date, which established the Buddha's death to 949 B.C'.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ An excellent picture of one of these caskets is Figure 2 in Kim, 'Virtual Pilgrimage and Virtual Geography', 5. See also Wang et al., *Chaoyang Beita*, 图版 1–2.

⁵⁹ Nattier, *Once Upon a Future Time*, 95–118.

⁶⁰ Shen, 'Realizing the Buddha's *Dharma* Body', 269, esp. note 20.

Given the sheer investment made by the Liao to re-carve and supplement stone scriptures that were then kept on Stone Scriptures Mountain of Upper Yunjusi, it is doubtless that Liao Buddhists were aware of the idea of the Final Age of the Dharma. Moreover, Jingwan who is credited with instigating the project en masse also proposed his own timeline for the beginning of *mofa* (it had begun in 554).⁶¹ And there is even an inscription now at Lower Yunjusi describing how under Liao auspices, Jingwan was reburied within a funerary *stūpa*.⁶² It seems reasonable to conclude that 11th century Liao Buddhists and patrons in Chaoyang influenced by Jingwan's ideas about the Final Age of the Dharma. But I think it is even more likely that they read several of the *dhāraṇī-sūtras* that were entombed in the underground and heavenly palaces which speak to the coming of the end times and why interring copies of *dhāraṇīs* could mitigate the presumed effects.

Richard McBride has examined the references to *mofa* in the translations of the *Mahāpratisarā-dhāraṇī sūtra* attributed to Mañicintana and Amoghavajra, and Kim Youn-mi has considered the references to it in later ritual manuals and practices associated with the *Uṣṇīṣavijaya-dhāraṇī* in Japan (e.g. *Nyohō sonsbō* 如法尊勝 in the *Kakuzenshō* 覺禪抄 [Notes by Kakuzen, b. 1143]), which she anachronistically links to Chaoyang North Pagoda.⁶³ One of the texts inscribed on the *dhāraṇī* pillar at Chaoyang on (tier 4b), the *dhāraṇī* from the *Dhāraṇī of Ornamentation from the Enlightenment Platform*, also discusses the Final Age (*T* no. 1008, 19: 670b26). But the *Mahāpratisarā*, *Uṣṇīṣavijayā* (all five translations), and the *Dhāraṇī of Ornamentation from the Enlightenment Platform* explicitly mention the benefits to be acquired from circumambulating a *śarīra-stūpa* (pagoda with relics in it) and placing copies of these *dhāraṇī* inside the *stūpa*. In other words, what Gregory Schopen and others

⁶¹ Ibid, 269, note 19.

⁶² Yunjusi wenwu guanli chu et al., *Yunjusi zhenshi lu*, 74–75.

⁶³ McBride, 'Wish-Fulfilling Spells and Talismans, Efficacious Resonance, and Trilingual Spell Books', 42, 45–46; Kim, 'Eternal Ritual in an Infinite Cosmos', esp. 223–24 and 'The Hidden Link'.

call the ‘cult of the book in the Mahāyāna’ generally and equally applies to *dhāraṇī-sūtras*.⁶⁴

In terms of doctrine, these *dhāraṇī-sūtras* fit Schopen’s inimitable description of a body of texts well within the mainstream of Sanskrit Mahāyāna Buddhist literature, which provides ‘blessings’ and ‘benefits’ above all else. Specifically focusing on the attainment of the recollection of *jātismara* across an astonishingly wide array of Mahayana Buddhist literature, Schopen says:

First, we should note that the obtainment of *jātismara*—like rebirth in Sukhāvātī—occurs over and over again in more or less standardized lists of ‘blessings’ or ‘benefits’ stipulated to follow from a wide variety of merit-making activity. In addition to the obtainment of *jātismara* and rebirth in Sukhāvātī, such lists also promise freedom from sickness (*Suvarṇabhāsottama*, *Saptatathāgatapūrvapraṇidhāna*, *Bodhimaṇḍalalakṣa*), avoidance of rebirth in the hells or other unfortunate destinies (*Suvarṇabhāsottama*, *Saptatathāgatapūrvapraṇidhāna*, *Aparimitāyurjñāna*, *Kāraṇḍavyūha*,

⁶⁴ On *stūpas* and *moḥa* cited in these *dhāraṇī-sūtras*, see *Foshuo suiqiu jide dazizai tuoluoni jing*, T no. 1154, 20: 640c13–c22, on *moḥa* see 620c22–23 and 622a27; *Pubian guangming qingjing chisheng ruyi baoyin xin wu nengsheng damingwang da suiqiu tuoluoni jing* 普遍光明清淨熾盛如意寶印心無能勝大明王大隨求陀羅尼經, trans. attributed to Amoghavajra, T no. 1153, 20: 621a10, 621a19, 621b05, 621c14, 621c14, 622a19 [*moḥa* is not raised]; on *moḥa* in the Sinitic translations of the *Uṣṇīṣavijaya-dhāraṇī*, see Kim, ‘Eternal Ritual in an Infinite Cosmos’, for references to *stūpas*, see T no. 967, 19: 351b24, T no. 968, 19: 354b09–12, T no. 969, 19: 356b29, 356c06–08, T no. 970, 19: 360c28, 360b04–08, 360b18–22, T no. 971, 19: 363b21; and *Putichang zhuangyan tuoluoni jing*, T no. 1008, 19: 672c02, 672c05, 672c14–15, 672c26–673a02, 675a21–23; on *moḥa* see 670a26, 673a20.

Updated for the 21st century by Schopen, ‘On the Absence of Urtexts and Otiose Ācāryas’; *idem*, ‘Redeeming Bugs, Birds, and Really Bad Sinners in Some Medieval Mahāyāna Sūtras and Dhāraṇīs’; Drewes, ‘Revisiting the Phrase ‘*sa prthivīpradeśaś caityabhūto bhavet*’ and the Mahāyāna Cult of the Book’; Apple, ‘The Phrase *dharmaparyāyo hastagato* in Mahāyāna Buddhist Literature’.

Samantamukhapraveśa), a favorable rebirth (*Samghāta*, *Buddhabalādhāna*, *Saptabuddhaka*), an auspicious death (*Tathāgatānām-buddhakṣetraguṇokta*, *Mahāyāna-sūtrālamkāra*), the ‘purification’ or ‘exhaustion’ of the obstructions due to past karma (*Saptatathāgatapūrvapraṇidhāna*, *Kāraṇḍavyūha*, *Nārāyaṇaparipṛcchā*, *Bodhimaṇḍalalakṣa*, *Samantamukhapraveśa*, *Prajñāpāramitā-nāma-aṣṭasatikā*), etc., and these lists occur almost everywhere, not just in medieval, but in early Mahāyāna *sūtra* literature as well.⁶⁵

Almost all of these scriptures were known to Buddhist communities across Central and East Asia in translation by the 11th century, during the same epoch when, according to Tibetan sources such as the *Blue Annals* (*Deb ther sngon po*), which was compiled by Gos lo tsā ba gzhon nu dpal (1392–1481), the eminent Bengali Buddhist master Atiśa (982–1054) arrived in the small kingdom of Gu ge in what is today western Tibet and worked with lot sā ba Rin chen bzang po (958–1055) to translate an array of esoteric and Tantric Buddhist works that previously had been unknown outside the Indian subcontinent and the kingdom of Śrīvijaya (650–1377) that once dominated the Indonesian archipelago.⁶⁶ Subsequently, most Buddhist monastics and their patrons in Tibet followed the ‘new’ (*gsar ma*) translations of Indic ritual manuals and what Jacob Dalton has called the ‘doxography’ of Pala dynasty (8th–12th century) Indian Buddhism, traces of which can be found in earlier Tibetan sources from the cache of documents Dunhuang.⁶⁷

During the 10th century in the Institute for Transmitting the Dharma, the Kaśmīri *Devaśanti 天息災 (a.k.a. *Dharmabhadra

⁶⁵ Schopen, ‘The *Bodhgarbhālankāralakṣa* and *Vimaloṣṇīṣa Dhāraṇīs* in Indian Inscriptions’, 337; and *idem*, ‘The Generalization of an Old Yogic Attainment in Medieval Mahāyāna *Sūtra* Literature’, 209–13.

⁶⁶ An English translation of the *Blue Annals* is available: Roerich, *The Blue Annals (Parts I & II)*. On Rin chen bzang po, see Tucci, *Rin-chen-bzan-po and the Renaissance of Buddhism in Tibet around the Millennium*.

⁶⁷ Dalton, ‘A Crisis of Doxography’.

法賢, d. 1000) and his translation team translated the [*Ārya-*] *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* (*Da fangguang pusazang wenshushili genben yigui jing* 大方廣菩薩藏文殊師利根本儀軌經, *T* no. 1191) and the *Kāraṇḍavyūha-sūtra* (*Dasheng zhengyan baowang jing* 大乘莊嚴寶王經, *T* no. 1050), both of which seem to have played a central role in the practice of esoteric or Tantric Buddhist rituals in Tibet during the same period.⁶⁸ Circa 100–1011, Dānapāla 施護 (d. 1017) and his team translated into Sinitic a portion of the *Guhyasamāja-tantra* (*Foshuo yiqie rulai jin'gang sanye mimi dajiao wang jing* 佛說一切如來金剛三業秘密大教王經, *T* no. 885).⁶⁹ By the early- to mid-11th century, Chinese, Tibetan, and other literate Buddhists across central and northeast Asia including Uighurs, Tanguts, Khitans, and probably even the Koreans had access to esoteric Buddhist ritual manuals and some tantric Buddhist religious texts.

Can we, therefore, consider the *dhāraṇīs* inscribed on stone and on metal in Chaoyang North Pagoda to be evidence of esoteric Buddhist consecration or do they suggest a general Mahāyāna *sūtra*-based approach to interring books—and particularly *dhāraṇīs* or spells—in *stūpas* or pagodas? There is another approach taken by Robert Gimello and Kirill Solonin of placing what looks like esoteric Buddhist rites under a doctrinal umbrella of Huayan (*Buddhāvataṃsaka-sūtra*; *Huayan jing* 華嚴經, *T* nos. 278–279) scholasticism following the voluminous commentaries of Qingliang Chengguan

⁶⁸ The *Kāraṇḍavyūha-sūtra*, for example, is the source for the six-syllable mantra (*Guanzizai pusa liuzi daming xinzhou* 觀自在菩薩六字大明心咒) to Avalokiteśvara from the Chinese translation of *Oṃ maṇipadme hūṃ*: *an mani bami hong* 唵嘛呢叭咪吽 (or *an moni boneming hong* 唵麼拞鉢訥銘吽); cf. *T* no. 1955, 46: 994b8–c7 and 1956, 46: 1010c19–1011a11. On the role of both in the history of so-called Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, see Wallis, *Mediating the Power of Buddhas*; Studholme, *The Origins of Oṃ maṇipadme hūṃ*. On the Song translation bureau in terms of the quality and distribution of the translations, see Brough, ‘The Chinese Pseudo-translation of Aryasura’s *Jātakamālā*’; Sen, ‘The Revival and Failure of Buddhist Translations During the Song Dynasty’.

⁶⁹ Takeuchi, ‘Guhyasamāja-tantra no kanyaku nendai’; Matsunaga, *Himitsu shūkai tantora wayaku*.

清涼澄觀 (738–839) and others in this scholastic tradition to view the writings of the Liao monk Daoshen 道殿 (1056?–1114?), who composed his *Xianmi yuantong chengfo xinyao ji* 顯密圓通成佛心要集 [Collection of Essentials for Realization of Buddhahood in the Perfect Penetration of the Exoteric and Secret Teachings, T no. 1955] sometime in the 1080s, as a figure who developed a synthesis between the exoteric teachings of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka-sūtra* and the esoteric rituals from manuals to achieve empowerment from powerful deities to attain liberation in a single lifetime while generating myriad worldly blessings.⁷⁰ Daoshen's text incorporates several of the esoteric Buddhist translations made during the Northern Song dynasty, including the *Kāraṇḍavyūha-sūtra* and the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*.

There have been many excellent studies of the history of esoteric and Tantric Buddhism in China, Tibet, and Japan in recent years. Therefore, I need not redefine either the terms esoteric Buddhism or its reverse, called exoteric Buddhism within the Japanese traditions, in particular, to explain why it is anachronistic to read continental East Asian—or Tibetan, for that matter—historical documents or objects of materials culture through the lens of Japanese esoteric Buddhism. Instead, it ought to suffice here to echo what Robert Sharf, and others, have said about the problem of doing so: 'These works and others undermine confidence in the historical veracity of the Japanese sectarian accounts of the transmission and status of Esotericism in East Asia, as well as the scholarly narratives that were predicated on those accounts'.⁷¹ The goal of this paper has been to uncover another far more broadly conceived explanation to address the magnificent *dhāraṇīs* carved into stone and embossed on to metal during the 11th century by Khitan Liao Buddhists: these *dhāraṇīs* and the *sūtras*—not ritual manuals—they come from are part of the East Asian Mahāyāna Buddhist literature, which was primarily translated into Chinese before the 11th century in China. A common widespread practice by sponsors across Central and East Asia since as early as the 5th century was to vow the copying or du-

⁷⁰ Gimello, 'Icon and Incantation', 235–38.

⁷¹ Sharf, 'Review of *Secrets of the Sacred*', 166–67.

plication of these texts for a variety of this-worldly and other-worldly reasons that are not directly connected to the performance of any esoteric Buddhist ritual regulated by a ritual master. Vowing texts, including *dhāraṇīs*, ought to be associated with teaching proscribed in a rather wide range of Mahāyāna Buddhist literature, including the *Buddhāvataṃsaka*, *Lotus*, *Suvarṇabhāṣottama* and other *sūtras*, that also speak to the problem of the Final Age of the Dharma. There is nothing esoteric to see from the North Pagoda at Chaoyang.

Conclusion: Vowed Canons from Japan and the *Dhāraṇī* Pillar at Chaoyang North Pagoda

Because of the vow inscribed on the top of the *dhāraṇī* pillar in the earthly palace at Chaoyang in 1044, the timing is not quite right to interpret the *dhāraṇīs* inside the North Pagoda through a lens of combined exoteric-esoteric Buddhism on the continent during the mid-11th century. The vow I translated at the outset of this paper speaks to a longstanding tradition of vowing Mahāyāna scriptures, and especially the *Buddhāvataṃsaka-sūtra* and other well-read and long *sūtras*, to produce a karmic connection to engender merit for this worldly benefits such as averting natural disasters, plagues, and so forth that I suspect lie behind the references to the Final Age of the Dharma at Chaoyang (and elsewhere) arriving in 1052.

For example, in Japan, over a period of 23 years (1115 to 1138), father and son shrine priests (*kannushi* 神主) Hata no Chikatō 秦親任 (*kannushi* on 1076/2/20) and Hata no Yorichika 秦頼義 (*kannushi* on 1128/8/12)⁷² vowed and had a manuscript Buddhist canon for Matsuo shrine (*Matsuno'o issaikyō no uchi* 松尾一切經の内) copied with the following dedication: *Ganshu kannushi Hata Sukune no Chikatō* 願主神主秦宿祢親任.⁷³ Eighteen of the 35 titles with this

⁷² On the dates for Matsuo shrine priests, see *Matsuno'o jinja higashimoto keifu* in Matsuno'o taisha shiryōshū henshū iinkai, ed. *Matsuno'o Taisha shiryōshū*, 230–31.

⁷³ Nakao and Honmon Hokkeshū Daihonzan Myōrenji, '*Matsuosha issaikyō*'

dedication also have colophons with the same clan vow (*ichizoku* 一族 *kechien*), which illustrates that Chikatō had the merit accrued from the act of having them copied transferred to his extended family.⁷⁴ We also know that 35 titles from the Nanatsudera canon (copied during

chōsa hōkokusho, 270. According to *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (720), a decree passed in 684 effectively standardized the aristocratic titles clan members could use into a set of 8 (*yakusa no kabane* 八色の姓): (1) Mahito 真; (2) Ason 朝臣; (3) Sukune 宿禰; (4) Imiki 忌寸; (5) Michinoshi 道師; (6) Omi 臣; (7) Muraji 連; and (8) Inagi 稻城. Rank 4 (Imiki) was primarily used to denote immigrants, whereas rank 2 (Ason) was primarily awarded to Fujiwara 藤原 and later Taira 平氏 and Minamoto 源氏 clan members. Note the nearly-Daoist meanings for several of these rank titles.

⁷⁴ The clan vow is translated and an overview of these 18 scriptures is presented in Keyworth, ‘Apocryphal Chinese books in the Buddhist canon at Matsuo Shintō shrine’, 16.

Dear father Hata Sukune no Chikatō 親父秦宿禰賴任

Compassionate mother Ama Myōren 悲母尼妙蓮

Wife Nakatomi clan 妻中臣氏

Mother in Law Ama 外姑尼

Eldest son Gon-kannushi Hata no Yorichika 一男權神主秦賴親

Daughter in Law Hata clan 姪婦秦氏 [Uncle Hata no Yoritsugū's daughter]

Second son Gonnegi Hata no Chikagen 二男權宿宜秦親元

Eldest daughter Hata no Taishi 女子秦太子

Tsukiyomi Negi Hata no Sōgen 聶月讀禰宜秦相真

Second daughter Hata no Nagago 一女子秦中子

Same for my third daughter 同三子

Uncle Hafuri Sukune Sōshin 伯父祝宿禰相真

Next uncle Negi Hata no Yoritsugū 次伯父禰宜秦宿禰賴繼

Youngest brother Tsujiyomi Hafuri Hata Sukune Yorigen 舍弟月讀祝秦宿禰賴元

Next younger brother Gonhafuri Hata Sukune Yorijō 次舍弟權祝秦宿禰賴貞

Mokudai Ono zeyori 目代小野是依:

Vow that the ritual power of copying [this scripture] [as] recorded here makes a bond with all [sentient] beings [living] in the upper, middle, and lower

the 1170s) have colophons that indicate how salvation—or rebirth in the next life—may have been the aspiration for the monastics who vowed both the acts of copying and proofreading certain rolls of specific texts to generate a karmic connection, conceivably with the power of the names of the *kami* these copies of the manuscript Buddhist canon were dedicated to in mind. In just the Nanatsudera manuscript canon I have found 35 separate titles with colophons vowing the acts of copying and proofreading scriptures. Among the 35 titles are less well-known Mahāyāna *sūtras* such as roll 3 of the *Daa'i jing* 大哀經 (**Tathāgatamahākaraṇānirdeśa-sūtra*, Z no. 89, T no. 398),⁷⁵ and others one would expect, such as many rolls of the Huayan jing (80 roll translation).⁷⁶ We also find the merit from copying roll 4 of the *Shizhu jing* 十住經 (**Daśabhūmika-sūtra*, Z no. 128, T no. 286),⁷⁷ and rather curiously an often overlooked translation of the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* in the *Ru Lengqie jing* 入楞伽經 (Z no. 192, T no. 671), translated by Bodhiruci (ca. 513).⁷⁸ Monastic codes (e.g., rolls 39, 52, 54, 55, and 57 of the *Shisonglü* 十誦律, *Sarvāstivādinaya*, trans. by Puṇyatara 弗若多羅 and Kumārajīva [399–413], Z no. 1009, T no. 1435,⁷⁹ and roll 20 of Yijing's translation of the *Mūlasarvās-*

[realms], and including those beyond the Sāha world, will, in this world, have healthy bodies and everything they wish will be accomplished. In the next life they will be reborn in [a] Pure Land where they will together practice with Samantabhadra [bodhisattva].

願以書寫力 上錄并結緣	上中下衆生	惣至沙界外
現世身堅固 所願皆成就	後生清淨土	同修普賢行

⁷⁵ The colophon reads: 為結緣助成一校了 但不正也。Rolls 5, 6, 8 say have colophon, which say that there were problems with the characters (文字惡不及) with the original edition the scribe(s) copied from.

⁷⁶ The colophon to roll 11 reads: roll 11, 1175.9.22 一校了 // 願書寫力 往生安樂國 校格功德力 同生一佛土 // 仁惠之. *Nin'e* could also be read *jinkei*, as in mercy or graciousness, but I expect not for a name during the Heian era.

⁷⁷ The colophon reads: 願以此校力 覺到該法門 自他同證无上道 一校了。

⁷⁸ The colophon reads: 1176.11.12 書寫畢 // 一切經之內 以書寫功德 在報在功利 果報菩薩 // 執筆僧 Chōken 澄賢。

⁷⁹ The colophon to roll 57, for example, reads: copied on 1177.3.10; 中申書

tivāda Bhikṣuṇīvinayavibhaṅga, *Genbenshuo yiqieyoubu bichuni pinaiye* 根本說一切有部苾芻尼毘奈耶, Z no. 1011, T no. 1443),⁸⁰ as well as roll 12 of the *Sifenlü zang* 四分律, *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, trans. Buddayaśas 佛陀耶舍 and Zhu Fonian 竺佛念 [ca. 405 or 408], Z no. 1015, T no. 1428),⁸¹ Abhidharma treatises (e.g., roll 62 of the *Apidamo dapiposha lun* 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論, **Abhidhamamahāvibhāṣā-śāstra*, translated by Xuanzang [656–659], Z no. 1072, T no. 1545 with the colophon copied on 1177.4.10 為結緣一校了), catalogs (e.g., roll 1 of the *Da Zhou kanding zhongjing mulu* 大周刊定衆經目錄 [Catalog of Collected (Buddhist) Scriptures Authorized during the Great Zhou, comp. Mingquan 明詮 695, Z no. 1182, T no. 2153,⁸² and rolls 4, 5, 7, 9, 16, and, of course, 30, of the *Zhenyuan lu*],⁸³ and even rolls 8 – 9 of *Da Tang Ci'ensi sanzang fashi zhuan* 大唐慈恩寺三藏法師傳 [A Biography of the Tripiṭaka master of the Great Ci'en monastery of the Great Tang dynasty, comp. Huili 慧立 and Yancong 彥宗 [688], Z no. 1192, T no. 2053] were all carefully or even meticulously vowed for the Nanatsudera canon.⁸⁴ These vows from 12th century Japan were almost certainly written by monastics—cum-scribes—who were familiar with, to say the least, both the esoteric Buddhist rituals of the Shingonshū and Tendaiśū traditions, which had become institutionally and economically dominant centuries before. The fact that we so almost no trace of esoteric Buddhism here speaks to the concomitant practice of exoteric Buddhism in Japan alongside and within the esoteric traditions (*kyōsō* or *kyōgaku*).

寫了 // 右志者為助成結緣 且者滅罪生善 為佛果證得也 奶勒在狀 執筆僧明心淨心房一校了。

⁸⁰ This colophon reads: 筆六郎房 // 願以此功德 報及於一切 我等與衆生 皆共成佛道 往生極樂 出離生死 // 執筆一校了 Eshun.

⁸¹ The colophon reads: 願我生々不惡此誓 一校了 Eshun.

⁸² The colophon reads: 願我生々不忘此誓 一校了 Eshun.

⁸³ The colophon to roll 30 reads: dated, 1176.10.17 書畢 良幸大法房 同十八日一校畢 筆師 又以清水寺御經藏目錄一校了 with the six-line stamp.

⁸⁴ The colophon to roll 8 reads: dated 1177.7.8, 願以此功德 普及於一切 我等與衆生 皆共成佛道 Beshū 弁宗; roll 9 reads: dated 1177.7.8, 願以此功德 普及於一切 我等與衆生 皆共成佛道 Beshū.

Let me conclude by returning to the spell from the *Great Collection Sūtra* (which says, *Namaḥ Buddhāya huru ru sindhūru chahubha kṛpa siddhāṇi pūruṇi svāhā*) from the dedication on the fourth tier on the *dhāraṇī* pillar at Chaoyang North Pagoda. The only reference I could find using either CBETA or the SAT Daizōkyō databases for the transliterated Sinitic characters for these Sanskrit words was in a compendium of repentance rituals from various *sūtras* (*Ji zhujiing lichan yi* 集諸經禮懺儀) compiled by Zhisheng 智昇 (d.u.). Zhisheng is a shadowy but large figure in the history of East Asian Buddhist canons and catalogs because he compiled the *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄 [Record of Śākyamuni's Teachings, Compiled during the Kaiyuan Era [713–741], *Z* no. 1183, *T* no. 2154, comp. 730], which is the catalog that was followed by almost all continental Buddhist Canons after 730.⁸⁵ I highly doubt that I have the reference

⁸⁵ Tokuno, 'The Evaluation of Indigenous Scriptures in Chinese Buddhist Bibliographical Catalogues', 52–53, 71 nos. 97–98; Storch, *The History of Chinese Buddhist Bibliography*, 116, 28–29; Wu, 'From the 'Cult of the Book' to the 'Cult of the Canon'. Tokuno cites an entry in the thirteenth-century *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀 40, which says that, 'The 5,048 rolls [that the catalog contained] became the established number for the canon': *T* no. 2035, 49: 374c3–5. She also points out that the *Xu Zhenyuan shijiao lu* 續貞元釋教錄 says that *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄 (Record of Śākyamuni's Teachings, Compiled During the Kaiyuan Era [713–741], *Z* no. 1183, *T* no. 2154, comp. 730, *Kaiyuan lu*) circulated widely and continued to do so during the four courts of emperors Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–756), Suzong 肅宗 (r. 756–762), Daizong 代宗 (r. 762–779), and Dezong 德宗 (r. 779–805): *T* no. 2158, 55: 1048.a23–26. There is an edition of the Kaiyuan lu from Nanatsudera copied from a manuscript dated to 735 (Tenpyō 天平 7) and brought back to Japan by Genbō 玄昉 (d. 746) with 1,046 titles in 5,048 rolls, in contrast to the Taishō edition with 1,076 titles in the same number of rolls. See also Abe, *Chūsei Nihon no shūkyō tekusuto taikai*, 199–200. According to Cai, ed., *Ersbiwu zhong zangjing mulu duizhao kaoshi*, 267, printed canons did not include the *Zhenyuan lu* before the [2nd] Koryō ed., but it is mistaken to claim that printed canons were arranged according to the *Kaiyuan lu*: precisely what makes the Taishō a problematical but nonetheless invaluable resource is the fact that it incorporates so many ritual translations (*mikkyōbu*

correctly, but the characters of the spell and the name of the spell provided on the stone pillar at Chaoyang match Zhisheng's text (*T* no. 1982, 47: 458b6–7). I cannot find this spell in the massive *Da-fangguang daji jing* 大方等大集經 (**Mahāvaiṣṭyāmahāsaṃnī-pāṭa*, *Z* no. 68, *T* no. 397) attributed to Sengjiu 僧就 (ca. 586–594) and others.⁸⁶ The same spell can be found imprinted on one of the metal sheets (immediately following the *Heart Sūtra*) which were once inside the *sūtra-stūpa* in the heavenly palace.⁸⁷ But I imagine that Zhisheng knew what he was doing when he wrote it down. I also suspect that the donors who paid for the massive reconstruction of the Chaoyang North Pagoda knew exactly why they had this spell inscribed on the top of the *dhāraṇī* pillar among the nine *dhāraṇīs* discussed in this paper. The fact that I had to read one of Kirill Solonin's papers about a Yuan dynasty Tangut exegete named Yixing Huijue 一行慧覺 (d. 1312) because he recorded the same spell that Zhisheng did and can be found at Chaoyang also tells me something important not only about the permanence of stone as a medium, but also about the history of East Asian Buddhism. When we go looking for innovation or changes over time, sometimes we may be surprised to find that continuity—of tradition, language, religious practices, and customs—can be equally, if not more significant.

section 密教部, vols. 18–21) and ritual manuals translated after the *Kaiyuan lu* was completed, many of which are, of course esoteric or even Tantric. The same can be said for the expansive—though highly edited—inclusion of commentaries from China and Korea (*kyōshobu* 經疏部) in vols. 33–39, and 'sectarian' works (*shoshūbu* 諸宗部) in vols. 45–48. *T* no. 2157 lists an alternative 1258 titles in 5390 rolls.

⁸⁶ See the excellent summary of the contents in Kanaoka, *Shinzōban Butten no yomikata*, 144.

⁸⁷ See footnote 42.

Bibliography

Abbreviations

- F* *Fangshan shijing: Liao Jin ke jing* (Fangshan Stone [Buddhist] Canon: Scriptures Cut during the Liao and Jin Dynasties)
- J* *Mingban Jiaxing da zangjing: Jingshan zangban* (Ming dynasty printed Jiaxing Chinese Buddhist Canon Mount Jing edition)
- T* *Taishō shinsbū daizōkyō*
- Z* *Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu* 貞元新定釋教目錄 (Newly Revised Catalogue of Buddhist Scriptures made during the Zhenyuan-era, *T.* 2157), comp. 799 or 800 by Yuanzhao 圓照 (d.u.). Nos. follow the Nanatsudera MS in Miyabayashi Akihiko and Ochiai Toshinori, ‘Zhengyuan xinding shijiao mulu juandi 29 30’, in *Chūgoku Nihon kyōten shōsho mokuroku*, ed. Makita Tairyō et al., Nanatsudera koitsu kyōten kenkyū sōsho and Gakujutsu Furontia jikkō iinkai, ed., *Nihon genson hasshu issaikyō taishō mokuroku tsuke Tonkō bukkyō bunken*, rather than *T.* 2157.

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Against Epigraphy: Once More a Visit to Zen and History*

T. H. BARRETT

Emeritus

SOAS, London

Abstract: When in 1938 the pioneering Japanese Buddhist historian Ui Hakuju 宇井伯寿 extended his research to investigating the lineage of the eighth century Chan master Weiyan of Yaoshan 藥山惟儼, he rejected the evidence contained in the master's epitaph by Tang Shen 唐伸, on the grounds that this inscription was probably a later forgery. Subsequent scholarship has generally come to the conclusion that the epitaph can only be genuine. Yet even as an indubitable historical document, it still needs to be read carefully with a view to the probable circumstances of its composition, as well as to possible problems in its transmission.

Keywords: Tang Shen, Ui Hakuju, Yaoshan Weiyan, Chinese Buddhist histories, Tang epigraphy

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Ui Hakuju and Zen Studies

The steady recovery of more and more early epigraphy from China has proved an immense boon to historians, and particularly to historians of religion, who have often had to depend in the past on transmitted sources that frequently describe events and personalities of one period through the lens of the preoccupations of one or more later periods in their transmission. The Chinese Chan tradition affords several examples of this. Scholars have therefore gladly looked beyond materials produced within the tradition itself to epigraphic records, even though in many cases such records do not survive to this day on stone and have themselves been transmitted through different stages of copying and recopying. If scrupulously handled, this evidence can, of course, be of great value. But it is still worth thinking about the circumstances that created such evidence before assessing what it might mean. The specific example examined to illustrate this point is an inscription composed by Tang Shen 唐伸 in the ninth century.

That students of Chan and Zen should have problems with the deployment of epigraphic materials should not in itself occasion any surprise. The systematic collection and study of epigraphy in China after all is generally traced back about a millennium, to the Song period, though there are some indications that it had become an adjunct to historical studies as early as the ninth century.¹ It has more broadly been situated within the rise of archaeological studies in China.² The critical study of Zen history, by contrast, is a product of a much more recent period, effectively no earlier than the opening decades of the twentieth century. The best known pioneer in this field, Nukariya Kaiten 忽滑谷快天 (1867–1934), does make use of the inscription by Tang Shen that is in question here, but in a positively eirenic fashion that gives no hint of past controversies, nor yet of their eventual revival in modern form.³ His remarks are in fact

¹ For the general view, see e.g. Kuhn and Stahl, *Annotated Bibliography to the Shike shiliao xinbian*, 14. Note also Schafer, *Mao Shan in T'ang Times*, 38.

² Vinsrygg, 'Time in Archaeological Thought: China and the West', 228.

not without value, and will be addressed below once the considerable problems raised by Tang's evidence have been fully introduced.

As far as I am aware, despite the pre-war efforts by Japanese Buddhists in the field of Chinese epigraphic research as part of broader archaeological survey work, the detailed academic consideration of sources of the Chan tradition in conjunction with those derived from epigraphic records did not begin in earnest in the modern study of Zen until a little later, in the writings of Ui Hakuju 宇井伯寿 (1882–1963). Ui's formidable and exceptionally wide-ranging scholarship has so far resisted ready summary in English, while the only autobiographical note we have from his hand provides but a bare listing of his publications without comment.⁴ Rather than attempt any broader contextualisation of his work, therefore, the focus here is on how his initial efforts at deploying one or two epigraphical sources to supplement his general history of Chinese Chan have not always been endorsed by later scholars, followed by an assessment of the problems his work still raises today.

Ui's work on Chan history and epigraphy may be found in his second volume of Chan studies, published in 1939, a volume that also contains a number of primarily bibliographical essays on the *Platform Sutra* and other sources on Chan Buddhism of the Tang period. The fifth chapter, dated to March 1938 at the end, contains two biographical studies touching on longstanding epigraphic questions.⁵ The last sixteen pages treat the famous case of Daowu of Tianhuang Temple 天皇后悟 (748–807) and his alleged contemporary Daowu of Tianwang Temple 天王后悟, for both of whom epitaphs allegedly dating back to Tang times existed. The simultaneous existence of monks with the same name is not unexpected in China, where any number of such cases has plagued historians over the years. But in this case the issue was complicated by assertions over their spiritual lineages. In general those tracing their Chan transmissions back to the Sixth Patriarch—in other words, virtually every

³ For this 1920s pioneer (and on page 181 a reference to his sole predecessor, though that by a mere four years), see McRae, 'Glimmerings of India'.

⁴ Tsunoda, 'Ui Hakuju hakase jiden shōkai'.

master of note by the end of the eighth century—divided into two main lines going back to two rather obscure disciples of the initially quite obscure Huineng 慧能 (638–713) himself. This division did not, however, prevent some from attempting to rewrite history by transferring some early figures from one line to the other in an effort to unify a common heritage to the benefit of their own position, or alternatively to block such moves. Such had been the sectarian origins of the two Daowus, over whose historicity debate had raged over the centuries in both China and Japan, with the seventeenth century witnessing a particular upsurge in polemics in China.⁶ The consensus of scholarship both pre-modern and modern is that while Tianhuang Daowu did exist, the second of these individuals, Tianwang Daowu, was a fictional character produced by inter-lineage rivalry in the late eleventh or early twelfth century and attested by a fake Tang inscription of that date.⁷ Though dissenting voices may still apparently be heard, in this specific case Ui's verdict may be said to have been entirely in line with the general trend.⁸

But in the other case, his conclusions, while equally not without a certain amount of precedent in pre-modern times, are somewhat different, and they have not stood the test of time so well. Even if during Ui's lifetime Japanese scholars do not seem to have contradicted him directly, this did not last, and by 1984 his arguments in the matter had been completely rejected, as they are by scholars within and beyond Japan today.⁹ In this instance he was dealing with

⁵ Ui, *Dai ni: Zenshūshi kenkyū*, 425–72.

⁶ This phase is admirably summarized in Wu, *Enlightenment in Dispute*, 187–242, and for the longer-term background, 311–32.

⁷ A concise account of the main issues in the case may be found in Chen, *Shishi yinian lu*, 143–44, and in English, Jia, *The Hongzhou School*, 22–26.

⁸ Wu, *Enlightenment in Dispute*, 391, note 42, notes that in this debate at least one Rinzai scholar still resists the conclusions of Nukariya and Ui.

⁹ Suzuki, *Tō, Godai no Zenshū*, 51–65, flatly contradicts Ui in some detail without mentioning him—though he does in note 71 on page 64 mention Nukariya. Jia, *The Hongzhou School*, 29, and note 50 on page 141, does cite Ui but follows more recent scholarship in rejecting his conclusions. Earlier Chen,

a master named Weiyan of Yaoshan 藥山惟儼 (744–827), in Hunan, and once again with a lineage claim that ran count to accepted views within Chan sources as to who his teachers had been, according to a funerary inscription preserved originally in a secular source, attributed to the aforementioned writer of the Tang period, Tang Shen. Ui advances a number of arguments against the authenticity of this document, which differs from later sources not only in its description of his training as a Chan master but also as to some biographical details such as the date of his death. We should note at the outset that Ui did not make use of a very early Chan source that only became available after he wrote his piece, namely the *Chodang chip* or *Zutang ji* 祖堂集, which offers much information from within the Chan tradition dating back to the mid-tenth century that was until the twentieth century only transmitted in Korea.¹⁰ With regard to Weiyan's biography at least, however, this work even if it provides early documentation for stories sometimes not attested until much later, does not offer any startling differences with other Buddhist texts already well known to scholarship in the early twentieth century.¹¹

Shishi yinian lu, 148, adopts the same attitude as Ui but—perhaps inevitably within the compass of a concise reference work—without explaining his own reasons; Abe, *Chūgoku Zenshūshi kenkyū*, 23, note 6, cites Ui, but somewhat non-committally; Yanagida, *Zen goroku*, 485, does not cite Ui but plainly agrees with him in his assessment of the epigraphy concerned.

¹⁰ On this work and its better-known successor in China, see Welter, 'Lineage and Context'.

¹¹ The investigation of the historical value of this text was first undertaken in the post-war period by Yanagida Seizan, publishing initially under his original name of Yokoi 横井. See for the biographical details in the various early texts laid out comparatively by Suzuki, *Tō*, *Godai no zenshū*, 50–51, and for a full accounting of parallels in other materials the annotation provided in Sun, Kinugawa, and Nishiguchi, eds., *Zutang ji*, 223–39.

Ui's Arguments Reconsidered

Ui's criticisms of the authenticity of Tang Shen's piece are based on the version of the text that was to be found in the *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文, a massive thousand fascicle collection of all the literary prose compositions of the Tang period that had been put together in the early nineteenth century on the basis of source materials that were in Ui's day not always at all obvious—and indeed though a very useful index was published in Kyoto in 1960 indicating a very large number of its sources, including the earliest source of Tang Shen's work, which was evidently unknown to him, it still contains many important and apparently Tang period documents of quite obscure origin.¹² Writing in 1938 Ui was no doubt right to be cautious, especially in view of the doubts that had long been entertained about the two Daowus. But his critique of the origins of Tang's funerary inscription, 'Lizhou Yaoshan gu Weiyan dashi beiming, bing xu' 澧州藥山故惟儼大師碑銘并序 does itself require careful scrutiny. His first point, for example, is that Tang Shen—quite improbably improperly in his opinion—compares the Chan master more or less explicitly to Confucius in the beneficent effects of his teaching. But this tells us more about the late 1930s intellectual situation in Japan and the dominant attitude of respect for the sage than it does about the Tang dynasty, during which period the emperor had to intervene in 832 to stop disrespectful representations of Confucius appearing in a court entertainment.¹³ The Tang in general and Tang Shen in particular were probably much more relaxed about calling someone another Confucius than was Ui; by contrast in Song times a forger was perhaps rather less likely to write in such a way.

His next point, that Chongxu 冲虚, the disciple sent to the capital to commission a memorial inscription for his late master, is not

¹² Hiraoka, *Tōdai no sanbun sakuin*, 331, shows that Tang's item, no. 10709, was in the original 1814 Palace Edition of the *Quan Tang wen* at 536.2b, and in the *Sibu congkan* 四部叢刊 edition of the *Tang wen cui* (introduced below), 62.04a. The index is not concerned with cross-referencing Buddhist compendia.

¹³ *Cefu yuangui* 50.15a.

known from any other source is true enough, but the significance of such obscurity need not derive from his being a fabrication of a forger, as we shall see. As for his suggestion that the metropolitan monastery, the Chongjing si 崇敬寺, that Chongxu went to in order to find an intermediary with connections to a literary figure, a monk who is described as the older brother of an aunt of Tang Shen's mother, Ui's assertion that this too was just a figment of a forger's imagination is just not true. It was certainly not the most illustrious religious institution in Chang'an, but though it had at one time during the early Tang been a nunnery, in its later existence it had apparently become a monastery once more.¹⁴ Yet Ui's fundamental objection is that no Tang Shen had ever existed in any case, and this assertion he says he derived from a seventeenth century discussion related to the 'two Daowus' controversy, specifically to a Japanese coda by Tokugan Yōson 徳嚴養存 (1632–1703) to a 1690 reprinting of a Chinese work, the *Famen chugui* 法門鋤究 of 1667.¹⁵ Yōson was aware of Tang's piece, it turns out, not through wide reading in secular literature, but because it had been incorporated in a Buddhist historical chronicle completed in 1341, the *Fozu lidai tongzai* 佛祖歷代通載 [Comprehensive Record of the Buddhas and Patriarchs Through the Ages] of Nianchang 念常 (1282–1341).¹⁶

Most of the points raised by Yōson against Tang Shen's piece are not very convincing, since Tang is mainly belaboured for not having

¹⁴ *Tang huiyao* 48, 990–91.

¹⁵ Ui, *Zenshūshi*, 427. On the *Famen chugui* and its author, Weizhong Jingfu 位中淨符, see Wu, *Enlightenment in Dispute*, 227–28. The text of the work is available online from the *Zoku Zōkyō* edition X no. 1604, vol. 86: 001, with the *Goke benshō* 五家辨正 of Yōson appended; his critique of Tang Shen's inscription may be found in this edition on 0491b07–0492a12.

¹⁶ Here Tang's piece may be found in Nianchang, *Fozu lidai tongzai* 16, T no. 49: 629a8–629c9. In fact Nianchang had incorporated this material into his own work from an earlier chronicle by Zuxiu 祖琇, *Longxing Fojiao tonglun* 隆興編年通論, 24, wherein Tang's piece is explicitly included because it brought into question the accepted account of Weiyan's lineage. On Zuxiu's work of 1163 or 1164, see Cao, *Songdai Fojiao shiji yanjiu*, 73–77.

included in his inscription stories about Weiyan given in later Chan works, such as Weiyan's famous encounter with the Confucian scholar Li Ao 李翱 (772–836), the historicity of which is much more dubious than that of Tang's inscription.¹⁷ As for the allegation that he did not exist, that is nowadays, unlike the seventeenth century, very easily falsifiable, since Googling his name immediately gives the information that he was among those who passed a Tang examination, which means that he is independently recorded on the basis of Tang period secular records in the exhaustive study of such men carried out by the Qing scholar Xu Song 徐松 (1781–1848).¹⁸ Though other records of his achievements, apart from passing this one high level examination brilliantly and writing one inscription, are a complete blank, the former success was evidently well enough recognised that a slightly later graduate still remembered his outstanding ability a generation later.¹⁹ Unlike the second Daowu inscription, moreover, which only emerged at a time when debates over lineage were in full swing in Song dynasty Chan, Tang's piece was anthologised apparently for purely literary reasons as early as 1011, in a compendium of Tang prose put together by Yao Xuan 姚鉉 (968–1020), the *Tang wencui* 唐文粹 [Essence of Tang Prose].²⁰

But before turning to the questions of lineage that form the most striking and—to its Chinese Buddhist readers—most prob-

¹⁷ Cf. Barrett, *Li Ao*, 51–56.

¹⁸ *Dengke ji kao* 20, 722, for the year 825, and for his sources Jia, *The Hongzhou School*, 143, note 52.

¹⁹ *Taiping guangji* 181, 1347, which excerpts this evaluation from Zhao Lin 趙麟 (803–after 868), *Yinhua lu* 因話錄, though the text of that work as transmitted separately mangles Tang's name. For Zhao, who graduated in 832 and wrote with detailed knowledge of the examinations, see Moore, *Rituals of Recruitment in Tang China*, 56–57, 89–90.

²⁰ *Tangwen cui*, 62.4a–5b—the edition used appends collation notes, but not with regard to this piece. This anthology was the source of the *Quan Tang wen* version used by Ui, and also of the version consulted in a Buddhist historical compendium by Yōson. On the significance of Yao's work for the authenticity of Tang's piece, see also Jia, *The Hongzhou School*, 28.

lematic feature of Tang's composition, the less dramatic differences in biographical detail between it and the three Chinese Buddhist sources antedating Yao's anthology also need to be addressed, since a careful accounting of these differences by modern scholars has come to the conclusion that the compilers of all three of these texts were already familiar with Tang's work, even if they modified it in different ways.²¹ Apart from the *Zutang ji*, which has been placed as early as 952 but may be later in part, the other sources are Zanning 贊寧 (919–1001), *Song Gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳 [Song Biographies of Eminent Monks], of 988, and Daoyuan 道原 (d.u.), *Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄 [Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp] of 1004 (revised by Yang Yi 楊億 [974–1020], 1011). Thus of these three, the first of these gives a date of 834 for Weiyan's death and an age of eighty-four *sui*; the second gives the date 828 and an age of seventy; the third gives the same as the first; Tang by contrast gives the date 827 and the age of eighty-four. While an age of seventy is hard to reconcile with other data on Weiyan's career, such as the sixty years as a fully ordained monk agreed by both Tang and the *Jingde chuandeng lu*, and 828 may be a miscalculation for 827, the date of 834 would seem to be derived from the date of the creation of Tang's inscription, which has been muddled with the actual date of Weiyan's decease. Some problems remain: all four texts agree that Weiyan received full ordination in 773, but this does not allow sixty years as a monk. It is also worth noting that Tang has Weiyan moving after an early peripatetic phase to his permanent base in Hunan at some point fairly soon after the mid-780s, yet speaks of him staying there for thirty years. These puzzles need to be borne in mind when examining Tang's assertions concerning Weiyan's Chan lineage.

²¹ The following analysis draws on Jia, *The Hongzhou School*, 29–31, and Suzuki, *Tō*, *Godai no Zenshū*, 50–54. The dependence of the three sources on Tang is clear from the collation notes provided in Sun, Kinugawa and Nishiguchi, ed., *Zutang ji* (see n. 11 above) and also in those given in Fan's edition, *Song Gaoseng zhuan* 17, 423–25 and 429.

Lineage Reconsidered

First, however, it should be explained that the two lineages that later were perceived as constituting the sum of the Sixth Patriarch's spiritual legacy to posterity might best be regarded as not quite what later ages took them to be. By the time that the three early Buddhist sources were compiled, the two lineages had between them generated five distinct branches, and within those five branches or 'families' (*wujia* 五家) everyone seems to have had a very clear idea of their ancestry. But in the time of Weiyan and Tianhuang Daowu there is little sign that such was the case. The Sixth Patriarch was claimed as the teacher of their teacher's teachers, while other contemporaries looked back to other figures linking them back to the first patriarch to reach China from India, the renowned Bodhidharma. That it was the Sixth Patriarch rather than his better-known metropolitan contemporaries who had carried in his humble and obscure person the spiritual future of China was a notion that had been put about widely in the middle of the eighth century, but the idea had only risen to a truly dominant position in the second half of the century, thanks to the emergence of men who claimed his inheritance through one intermediate generation, and of one man in particular. This was Mazu Daoyi 馬祖道一 (709–788).

Mazu lived a provincial life, but not an obscure one like the Sixth Patriarch.²² The sayings attributed to him fill a book; the tally of his known disciples runs to well over a hundred names; he associated not just with local officials but with high level provincial governors, and in 791 shortly after his death he was commemorated by an inscription written by Quan Deyu 權德輿 (759–818), a well-known writer who was by this point already on his way to being employed by the central government in a policy post.²³ The other lineage said to descend from the Sixth Patriarch via an intermediary disciple was represented at

²² As well as Jia, *The Hongzhou School*, it is possible to consult on Mazu in English a number of publications by Mario Poceski, notably *Ordinary Mind*.

²³ The materials on Mazu's life are reviewed in Poceski, *The Records of Mazu and the Making of Classical Chan Literature*, with the inscription by Quan treated on pages 175–94.

this time by Shitou Xiqian 石頭希遷 (700–790), whose biography is much less conspicuous, even if he did contribute one ultimately very famous poem, the *Cantong qi* 參同契, to the emergent Chan tradition.²⁴ In the three texts of that tradition that have been introduced above as establishing Weiyan's place in it, Shitou is unambiguously designated his teacher, even if a number of encounters between Weiyan and Mazu were also passed down within the corpus of Chan sayings, on the basis of Weiyan's stay with Mazu for a period of three years, according to one source.²⁵ By contrast, in Tang Shen's inscription attention is drawn to the good reputation in meditation studies during Weiyan's younger days of Shitou, Mazu, and also of an unknown master named Hong 洪 who lived on Mount Song 嵩山 in Henan, but only in the case of Mazu is Weiyan said to have sought him out, and to have stayed for fully twenty years, making it quite clear that in Tang's view he counted as a disciple. Recent scholarship, indeed, does not resist that conclusion, in view of the undeniable authenticity of Tang's work.²⁶

Now of the two schools of Zen with an abiding strong institutional presence in Japan, the Sōtō school looks back to Weiyan as their link via Shitou to the Sixth Patriarch; the Rinzai school traces its origins to Mazu. Ui Hakuju was a priest of the former school. Historically, then, the doubts raised about Tang's inscription have always had strong sectarian overtones, and to some extent, perhaps, still continue to do so, even if the pattern of acceptance or rejection of its value in the twentieth century did not in fact divide along purely sectarian lines.²⁷ Yet the status of Tang's piece as a genuine example of ninth

²⁴ This work remains important within the tradition to this day: see Shunryu Suzuki, *Branching Streams Flow in the Darkness*, which contains (pages 20–23, and pages 190–91) both the Chinese text and two translations. For an account of Shitou and his legacy that is historically situated, see Robson, *Power of Place*, 281–97.

²⁵ The material in question is translated by Mario Poceski, under the name of Cheng Chien Bikhshu, *Sun Face Buddha*, 81–82.

²⁶ Jia, *The Hongzhou School*, 31.

²⁷ Nukariya Kaiten (see below), was like Ui a member of the Sōtō school,

century epigraphy is, in the light of all the evidence now available at this point, beyond doubt. One might quibble that the text could have suffered interpolation, since clearly we are dealing with epigraphic work that was transmitted solely in manuscript, rather than by any resort to rubbing, and there is no sign that a stone was known to any later writer that might confirm or deny the reference in it to twenty years with Mazu. Perhaps the outcome of Chongxu's efforts was destroyed in the mid-ninth century persecution of Buddhism; perhaps he never raised the funds to erect a memorial at all. This reading is, however, tacitly confirmed by our three early sources themselves, since all three of them plainly draw on Tang's writing, but conspicuously fail to mention the fact, though the endorsement of a monk's standing in the secular world provided by an inscription even if by a less than stellar literary figure is regularly mentioned in early Chan biography. Evidently the compilers of all three Chan works found its content problematic and preferred not to mention it.

The Limits of Epigraphy

But to say that this inscription is not a forgery does not absolve us from the need to interpret the information it contains as carefully as would be the case with any historical document. What follows here, then, is an effort at interpretation. Such an effort is by its very nature unlikely to be definitive, but it does suggest a possible way of resolving the confusions that have long surrounded Tang's composition. We know so little of Tang that it is impossible to discern what background knowledge of the emergent Chan tradition he brought to his task, though his degree result suggests that he was intelligent and widely read, at least in secular materials, and within his wider family circle there was evidently someone who had become a member of

and Suzuki Tetsuo was even teaching at the Sōtō university of Komazawa at the time that he reversed Ui's verdict; by contrast Yanagida Seizan, who in the 1970s at least accepted it (see note 9 above), was attached to the Rinzai university of Hanazono.

the Buddhist clergy. We must assume, however, that his chief object was to cast in literary form the information conveyed to him by his informant, Chongxu. Of Chongxu, while he is clearly depicted as the leader of the group of Weiyan's adherents at the time of his death, we know precisely nothing. This strongly suggests that he was in fact a nonentity, which puts the whole content of the inscription in a perspective very different from that of, say, the inscription Quan Deyu composed for Mazu.

That inscription was produced within three years of Mazu's death. Such writings were not expected like today's newspaper obituaries to appear within weeks of their subject's passing, since commissioning was (we must assume, since our sources are not so vulgar as to reveal unbecoming details) bound to involve a certain amount of negotiation over such matters as fees. The much longer gap that intervened before Chongxu was able to secure an inscription from Tang suggests not simply that the former lacked the connections to enable him to locate a suitable literary talent but also perhaps that his monastic community took some time to raise the finances to embark on the task. The sum spent would no doubt have been a sound investment: a well written memorial would not simply have provided a focus for cultured lay visitors and encouraged more of them to extend their patronage to the community at Yaoshan but also through its wider circulation in manuscript would have raised Weiyan's home from relative provincial obscurity to wider notice.²⁸ Weiyan died at a great age by the standards of the day, and perhaps during his later years his leadership had been less than ideally active, so there may well have been a decline in patronage that Chongxu needed to reverse.

Chongxu would of course have been concerned therefore to present as illustrious a career as possible for his teacher to the public, and though in a context that had strong ritual overtones it might have been unseemly or even considered spiritually dangerous to indulge

²⁸ As Jia notes, *The Hongzhou School*, 30, and earlier Barrett, *Li Ao*, 52, note 80, during his lifetime Weiyan had become the topic of a poem by a visiting junior official, but his group needed more publicity than that.

in blatant falsehoods, the Buddhist concept of expedient means, whereby in the interests of higher truths some compromises on lesser matters were always possible, would have allowed him a certain amount of leeway. During the 820s there was a certain amount of activity promoting the claims of Shitou, but it had not made much progress, with the result that Chongxu would have been particularly concerned to stress instead any link with Mazu, whose disciples had dominated the Chan world of the early ninth century.²⁹ Such might be one obvious explanation for the divergence between Chan tradition and Tang's inscription. Or alternatively, perhaps his master in old age had reminisced over his contacts with Mazu and now considered them of such retrospective significance that in his imagination they did stretch over two decades. Though Chongxu should have had an ordination certificate and records of Weiyan's relative seniority within the clergy to hand, for his master's Chan education he would have had to rely on an old man's memories. The senior students, whom the tradition remembers as part of the lineage whilst forgetting Chongxu himself, would in all likelihood have left the monastery years earlier to pursue their own careers as Chan teachers, and Chongxu himself quite possibly arrived too late to have met them, so corroboration may well have been very hard to come by in any case.

For Weiyan to have studied with Mazu as well as Shitou is at any rate intrinsically entirely unproblematic. Already in 1923, Nukariya Kaiten pointed out that despite the silence on the former connection in the earliest Chan sources, later compilations do in fact—while placing him in Shitou's lineage—make clear his strong links to Mazu; as Nukariya further observes, there are in fact several other examples of well-known contemporaries who likewise seem to have received instruction from both masters.³⁰ The problem lies in the mention of

²⁹ The incipient promotion of Shitou at this period is described by Poceski, *Ordinary Mind*, 98, but in his estimation it had not reached very far, with the true re-evaluation of his role taking place only in the second half of the ninth century.

³⁰ Nukariya, *Zengaku shisōshi*, 479–81. For an example of a key text listing both men in connection with Weiyan, see *Wudeng huiyuan* 5, 247; for an exam-

twenty years, which can only be suspected of being an exaggeration, whether deliberate or not. But as we have noted, all the chronological indications relating to Weiyan's early life in Tang's piece turn out to be problematic in any case, even when they should have been verifiable against documentary evidence. The only possible conclusion of the matter is that while Tang's inscription is authentic, all the numerical information given in it is, for whatever reason, unreliable in the state in which we now have the inscription, and may indeed have been inaccurate from the start. There is at least one example of a piece by a lay contemporary of his in which the independent survival of epigraphic evidence, which in fact comes from a memorial erected twenty years after the composition of the manuscript that was ancestral to the version included in the *Tangwen cui*, clearly indicates that Yao Xuan's work did include accidental errors of chronology.³¹ By contrast Tang's description of the administrative geography of Weiyan's situation seems entirely accurate, whereas all later Chan sources get it wrong.³²

The exclusion of Shitou as a teacher—unless the implication is that Weiyan did visit both him and the long-forgotten Hong of Songshan—must even so be put down to other factors relating to Chongxu's need to emphasize the connections most advantageous to his situation and that of his monastic community at the time of Weiyan's death. In this regard every epigraphic piece must be treated as an occasional piece relating to conditions at a specific time which must be weighed up against other information derived from other sources not necessarily tied to the same circumstances. Tang makes no mention of Li Ao, or indeed of any visiting official. This suggests that in fact the entire story about the clash between the eminent

ple of another well-known figure with a similar dual heritage, see Sasaki, Iriya and Fraser, *The Recorded Sayings of Layman P'ang*, 45–48.

³¹ Cen, *Tangren hangdi lu*, 399. A thorough study by David McMullen of discrepancies between transmitted and epigraphically retrieved epitaphs (*muzhi* 墓誌) concludes that numbers were particularly susceptible to errors of transmission: cf. 'Boats Moored and Unmoored', 108–25.

³² Barrett, *Li Ao*, 52–53.

Confucian and Weiyan found in Chan sources of the tenth century and thereafter is indeed a fiction, but as I have argued elsewhere it is a fiction that is consistent with the reputations of both men, thus at least endorsing the pictures of their characters given elsewhere.³³ In many respects the rather conventional picture of Weiyan provided by Chongxu and summarized by Jinhua Jia certainly rings true.³⁴ But the more heroic image passed down within the tradition does even so represent the impressions of him gathered by his best disciples when he was in his prime as a teacher, so who is to say which was the real Weiyan? It is at least possible that both versions of the man are in their way equally authentic.

Revisiting the issue of the epigraphic Weiyan versus the Weiyan of the 'Recorded Sayings' tradition is ultimately just another facet of the 'Zen and History' controversy, on which I have already reported elsewhere the thoughts of the great Zen scholar Yanagida Seizan 柳田聖山 (1922–2006).³⁵ Though they were occasioned by my provision for him of a copy of an English language review of D. T. Suzuki that he had not had the opportunity to read, the case that I raised with him was not of course Suzuki but Li Ao and Weiyan, so given that context I make no excuse for repeating his response here. He reminded me that while we do not know as much as we might wish about the ninth century in China, we do know a great deal about Japan in the eighteenth century, and therefore about an obscure teacher of the immensely famous Hakuin Ekaku 白隠慧鶴 (1686–1769), who in all that we may discover about him seems to have been no more than a very ordinary country priest. Yet in Hakuin's eyes he was clearly a figure of heroic stature. 'The truths of Zen are more akin to the truths of literature than to the truths of history' was his verdict. Plainly, the assaults on the value of transmitted epigraphy found in some Chan and Zen sources prepared to defend what they perceived as their own lineage against others hostile to the tradition represented by Shitou and Weiyan, and in their

³³ Barrett, *Li Ao*, 57.

³⁴ Jia, *The Hongzhou School*, 30.

³⁵ Barrett, 'Arthur Waley'.

defence determined to declare Tang Shen's work a forgery, show an animus against epigraphy that cannot be endorsed. Yet perhaps a certain sense of proportion concerning the use of epigraphy is still in order.

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Abbreviations

T *Taishō shinsbū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. See Bibliography, Secondary Sources, Takakusu and Watanabe, eds.

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3

Sacred and Secular Seen through Stone

‘A Weeping King’: Glimpses into the Religious and Political Life of a Northern Liang Ruler, as Shed by his Stone-Buddha Project*

TONG LING 童嶺

School of Liberal Arts, Nanjing University

Abstract: Northern Liang (397–439), known for its patronage of Buddhist translation and statuary, is undoubtedly an exceptional ‘Buddhist kingdom’ in the medieval history. On October 9, 2018, *Guangming Ribao* 光明日報 (*Guangming Daily*) published an article claiming that a Buddhist statue recently discovered on Mount Tianti in Wuwei accorded with the recorded ‘Stone Statue Measuring One *Zhang* and Six (*chi*) Created for the Mother’ by the founder of Northern Liang (i.e. Juqu Mengxun 沮渠蒙遜 [r. 401–433]). Juqu’s mother Lady Che 車氏 was perhaps from the Western Regions; and his wife Lady Peng 彭氏 was perhaps a Qiang descendant — both were from ethnicities that, during the medieval time, were predominantly Buddhists. Mount Tianti Grotto 天梯山石窟, also known as the ‘stone grotto of Northern Liang’, is referred to by the modern archaeologist Su Bai 宿白 (1922–2018) as the epitome of the stone grotto of the ‘Northern Liang Model’. Is it certain that the female Buddhist statue in question is the Queen Dowager? (In fact, Juqu has never pro-

* This is a slightly revised version of Ling Tong, ‘Diplomatic relations of the Buddhist kingdom Northern Liang 北涼: A Research on the Time of Juqu Mengxun’s 沮渠蒙遜 (368–433, r. 401–433) Building Stone Buddha for His Mother on Mount Tianti 天梯山’, *Studies in Chinese Religions* 6, no. 3 (2020): 281–306. The author wants to thank *Studies in Chinese Religions* for granting permission to republish this article.

claimed himself as the emperor). In this author's opinion, this attribution is an overinterpretation and is also the result of misunderstanding of a set phrase used in the inscriptions of the statues of the Northern Dynasties (386–577).

Keywords: Juqu Mengxun, Northern Liang, Mount Tianti

1. Preface

I was invited to attend the 'International Symposium on Liangzhou Culture and Silk Road' in Wuwei 武威 in October 2018. My journey started with a flight from Nanjing 南京 to Lanzhou 蘭州 alone, followed by a three-hour ride to Wuwei with some other scholars. After climbing over Wushao Ling 烏鞘嶺, we were overwhelmed by the Tianzhu Mountains 天祝山 on the left side, rolling with unthawed snow (it was summer when I set out from Nanjing, where air-conditioning was a lifesaver).

The Tibetan area, Qiang's 羌 station in Medieval China, was somewhere beyond the mountains and the northbound path to our right led to stretches of desert, then, Inner Mongolia. This area was used as a buffer against invaders from Qiang and Hu 胡 since the Han Dynasty. That is why the Liangzhou *cishi* 涼州刺史 (Regional Inspector of Liangzhou) served concurrently as *Huqiang xiaowei* 護羌校尉 (Commandant-protector of Qiang).

In his *Riben bianzheng kao* 日本變政考 [Japanese Reform Records], statements in response to the Premier Government compiled under the command of the emperor in 1898, Kang Youwei 康有為 noted: 'The area of Japan is about the same as that of Sichuan province in China' 若夫日本, 地域比我四川.¹ Furthering his comparison, we can say the Hexi Corridor 河西走廊, an area of 110,000 square kilometers, equals the whole of the Republic of Bulgaria and outsizes

¹ Kang, *Riben bianzheng kao*, 112.

the Republic of Korea, Hungary, and the Portuguese Republic, all of which covers less than 100,000 square kilometers.

When referring to the Five Liang 五涼 Regimes of Hexi Corridor (i.e., Former Liang 前涼, Later Liang 後涼, Southern Liang 南涼, Western Liang 西涼, and Northern Liang 北涼), chronicles of the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern dynasties use 'five provincial separatist regimes' or 'a regime soon to be annexed by Northern Wei considering its narrow land compared with the then Central Plains'.

These slighting remarks followed earlier examples in the Sui and Tang, two of the unified Chinese empires in history. One is of Li Yan-shou 李延壽 in Section of Literature (*Wenyuan zhuan* 文苑傳) of *Beishi* 北史 [History of the Northern Dynasties], whose wording reflects orthodoxies of upholding the Central Plains in Medieval China,² that states: 'A tiny place like Heyou is equal in the Central Plains in producing scholars' 區區河右, 而學者埒於中原.³

Besides Confucian Classics, the Buddhist scriptures such as *Beishan lu* 北山錄 [Record of the North Mountain] by Shenqing 神清 in Tang dynasty also said: 'Western Qin and Northern Liang were both small countries' 西秦、北涼, 俱微國也, which is a kind of opinion that regarded Northern Liang as a small local regime in the Tang's Buddhist documents.⁴

In Chapter Four of his book, *Goko Jūrokkoku: Chūgokushi jō no minzoku daiidō* 五胡十六國: 中國史上の民族大移動 [Sixteen Kingdoms: The Great National Movement in Chinese history], Misaki Yoshiaki 三崎良章 divided the sixteen kingdoms into two groups: group A includes Former Zhao 前趙, Later Zhao 後趙, Former Yan 前燕, Former Qin 前秦, Later Qin 後秦 and so on, while group B includes Former Liang 前涼, Dai 代, Western Qin 西秦, Southern Liang 南涼, and Northern Liang 北涼. The basis of his distinction was that the kingdoms in the former group had the ambition to dominate

² *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, 685. Huang Kan, in his *Shuowen Duanzhu xiaojian*, said: 'Lei 埒 represents *deng* 等, and is used as *lei* 类'. 埒, 訓等者, 借為類. Huang Kan, *Shuowen jianshi sizhong*, 203.

³ *Beishi*, 83.2778.

⁴ Fu, *Beishan lu jiaozhu*, 207.

China, whereas the latter group did not.⁵ Personally, I think there were some inadequacies in the distinction of group B. The reasons for this misjudgment that they were dependencies might be a continuation of the Central Plains orthodox from the Tang dynasty.

This impression is not just an afterthought of history, but rather the overall feeling of it was edged and small. Even if the Hexi Corridor was looked at as an important traffic route between China and the West Regions, that should still go beyond the sense of transportation of 'people' and 'things', and include the addition of the implications of cultural communication.⁶ In a word, with this depth and breadth of so many studies like culture, history, nation and literature, if one puts the Hexi Corridor, stretching for thousands of miles, into ancient Europe, it may be the subject of a national history.

Later Zhao, the most powerful of the Jie 羯 regime among the Northern China plain, attacked Former Liang with hundreds and thousands of troops led by a famous general, Ma Qiu 麻秋 (?–350), but it did not succeed in the end. Shi Hu 石虎 (295–349), a fierce and ambitious ruler of the Jie tribe in this time, said with emotion:

I occupied Jiuzhou with a small number of soldiers, now all the military forces are trapped in Baohan. Because there are many talented people there, I can't occupy that place.

吾以偏師定九州，今以九州之力困於枹罕。彼有人焉，未可圖也。⁷

There are many interpretations of this sentence, for instance, the idea of literati (士人) gathering in Liangzhou. Particularly, I would like to point out 'Jiuzhou' 九州, corresponding to 'Tianxia' 天下. If there was a 'Da Jiuzhou' 大九州 (大天下) in medieval China considered by Shi Hu, then there also must have been a 'Xiao Jiuzhou' 小九

⁵ Misaki, *Goko Jūrokkoku*, 172–74.

⁶ On this point, see Seo Tatuhiro, *Gurōbaru · hisutorii*, 8.

⁷ *Jin shu*, 86.2242.

州 (小天下) in Hexi Corridor at a certain historical period. Therefore, in regard to the great significance of the Five Liang regimes established in Hexi Corridor, the results and accounts up to date must not be said to be perfect.

2. The Golden Age of the Lushui Hu 盧水胡 in Northern Liang

The sequence of the Five Liang regime change began with the Zhang of the Former Liang 前涼張氏 occupying Hexi in the late Western Jin. Then, the Lü of the Later Liang 後涼呂氏 was destroyed by the Later Qin, followed by the Northern Liang, Southern Liang, and Western Liang. Except that Former Qin had been invaded by the rising period of Former Qin's Fu Jian 苻堅 (338–385, r. 357–385)⁸, at one time, there was the situation of Four Liang 四涼 competing for hegemony, in which the major struggle was between the Southern Liang of Xianbei 鮮卑南涼 and Northern Liang of Lushui Hu 盧水胡北涼. Northern Liang was the last one destroyed among the Five Liang, which not only represented the end of the Five Liang regime, but also the end of the period of Sixteen States of Five Barbarian Peoples (Wuhu Shiliuguo 五胡十六國) in 439.⁹ After that, the Northern and Southern Dynasties were ushered in. The beginning of the Northern and Southern Dynasties of popular misunderstanding is the first year of the Yongchu 永初 era under Emperor Wu of the Song 宋武帝 (363–422, r. 420–422), or the fifth year of Taichang 泰常 era under Emperor Mingyuan of Northern Wei 北魏明元帝 (392–423, r. 409–423), both of which corresponded to 420 CE, because of the ignoring of Da Xia 大夏, Northern Liang, Northern Yan 北燕 and so on, except for North Wei in northern China at that time.

Jin shu 晉書 [Book of Jin], *Wei shu* 魏書 [Book of Wei], and *Song*

⁸ For the latest studies on the military affairs of Di tribe's Former Qin, see Fujii, 'Zenshin seiken niokeru minzoku to gunji'.

⁹ This refers to the regime occupying Liangzhou Guzang, excluding the period of Juqu Wuhui 沮渠無諱, Juqu Anzhou 沮渠安周 separating Gaochang 高昌.

shu 宋書 [Book of Song] have the most detailed account of origin of Northern Liang Juqu Clan 北涼沮渠氏:

Da Juqu Mengxun is Lushui hu lived in Zhangye Linsong. His ancestors held Zuojuqu 左且渠/You Juqu 右且渠, officials set up by Hun in the past. Besides, the leader (*qiuhao* 酋豪) of Qiang named Da. For this reason, Juqu clan took the official title as a surname and added the word 'Da'. They lived in Lushui as *qiuhao* leaders for generations. Mengxun's great-great-grandfather Huizhonggui and great-grandfather Zhe were both heavily built and famous for their bravery. His grandfather, Qifuyan, was conferred King of Di. His father Fahong inherited this title, and was conferred the title of *Zhongtian hujun* 中田護軍 (Protector Commandant of Zhongtian) by (Emperor) Fu.

大且渠蒙遜，張掖臨松盧水胡人也。匈奴有左且渠、右且渠之官，蒙遜之先為此職，羌之酋豪曰大，故且渠以位為氏，而以大冠之。世居盧水為酋豪。蒙遜高祖暉仲歸，曾祖遮，皆雄健有勇名。祖祁復延，封狄地王。父法弘襲爵，苻氏以為中田護軍。¹⁰

Early historians of the six dynasties, such as Zhou Yiliang 周一良 and Tang Changru 唐長孺, primarily focused on the position of Lushui. Instead, two messages in the above historical materials attracted my attention. The first one is 'the leader of Qiang named Da', indicating a Hun tribe that had long contacted Qiang Hu since its entering into Hexi. The second one is 'lived in Lushui as *qiuhao* leaders for generations', especially the two words *qiuhao* 酋豪, which indicate that the Juqu 沮渠氏 was not only the leader (*qiu* 酋) of nomads, but also had the character of ruling class (*hao* 豪) in Han society.

Throughout the whole history of the Sixteen States and Northern

¹⁰ *Song shu*, 98.2412. In the new edition of *Song shu* revised by Ding Fulin (Zhonghua shuju, 2018, 2656), below the sentence 'conferred King of Di' 封狄地王 there are two studies: Cui Hong 崔宏 wrote it as 'King of Beidi' 北地王, Li Yanshou wrote it as 'King of Fudi' 伏地王. For achievements about this new study, see my article, 'Ding Fulin tan *Song shu* de bianzuan dianjiao yu xiuding'.

Dynasty's development, there were many kings compromising the character of '酋' of Hu and the '豪' of Han. However, when we focus on the fourth to fifth century's Hexi area, we could find that Juqu Mengxun's Lushui hu leadership with the character of '酋' and '豪' was really extraordinary, particularly compared with pure military nomadic regimes like the tribe of Di's 氐 Later Liang 後涼 and Xianbei's 鮮卑 Southern Liang.

The coeditors of *Culture and Power in the Reconstitution of the Chinese Realm, 200–600* (from the Harvard University Asia Center in 2001) say in the preface to their book:

Thus, for three centuries the Northern territories of the old empire were dominated by armies that had taken shape in the frontier zones. Although shaped by unidentifiable core groups, these were essentially 'hordes'—not ethnic units *per se*, but confederations built around commonly shared political and military aims.¹¹

The description that confederations built on shared political and military aims is quite appropriate with Northern Liang, while not with Southern Liang. For example, the biography of Tufa Lilugu 秃髮利鹿孤 (?–402) in the *Jin shu* says:

Put Han people (晉人) in cities and encourage agricultural production to support army and the country, while we should study war craft to defeat our enemy.

宜置晉人于諸城，勸課農桑，以供軍國之用，我則習戰法以誅未賓。¹²

The above is what Xianbei's general, Tou Wulun 綏勿論, advised to his monarch, Tufa Lilugu. The aspect that strictly distinguished the Hu and Han was that Tufa clan 秃髮氏 was significantly different from that of Juqu clan.¹³ It is particularly noteworthy that unlike the

¹¹ Pearce, Spiro, and Ebrey, *Culture and Power in the Reconstitution of the Chinese Realm*, 7–8.

¹² *Jin shu*, 126.3145.

Hu's emperors of Western Qin, Southern Liang, who held the two titles of *diwang* 帝王 (emperor) and *chanyu* 單于, Northern Liang's Juqu clan never used the title of Chanyu.¹⁴ Besides, things were correlated considering the fact that Southern Liang, founded by Xianbei Tufa clan, was also one of its greatest enemies before Northern Liang reached its heyday.

Zhongguo lishi ditu ji 中國歷史地圖集 [Historical Atlas of China], compiled by Tan Qixiang 譚其驤, in Volume Four for the Eastern Jin, Sixteen Countries and North and South dynasties period, has only one map marking Northern Liang, which gives people a false impression that this limited territory was sandwiched between Western Liang and Southern Liang, controlling only a few prefectures such as Zhangye 張掖 and Linsong 臨松. But, there is a clear note indicating the ninth year of the Yong'an 永安 era under the Northern Liang (409 CE) below the map.¹⁵

Only about one year later (tenth year of the Northern Liang Yong'an era, 410 CE), Southern Liang's monarch, Tufa Nutan 禿髮儁檀 (365–415, r. 402–414), with stronger military power of Hexi Xianbei than that of Lushui hu, counter-struck the invading Juqu Mengxun. Facing the 50,000 chosen men from Hexi Xianbei, generals of Juqu Mengxun suggested that 'enemies have pitched tents, and we have no chance'.¹⁶ But, Juqu Mengxun insisted on taking advantage of Tufa Nutan's unprepared defensive and had a landslide victory. This battle is called the 'Battle of Qiongquan' 窮泉之戰. On the one side, it was another failure for Southern Liang after being defeated in 'the Battle of Yangwu' 陽武之戰 by Helian Bobo 赫連勃勃 (381–425, r. 418–425) three years prior. On the other side, the

¹³ Tufa Nutan had a son named Tufa Mingdegui 禿髮明德歸, who wrote the *Gaochangdian fu* 高昌殿賦. Certainly, we can't deny the distinction policy of Hu and Han in Southern Liang in general just with the only a few Hanization examples. See *Shiliuguo chunqiu jibu*, 89.625.

¹⁴ Huang Lie was the first person to point out this problem, see his book *Zhongguo gudai minzushi yanjiu*, 317.

¹⁵ Tan, comp., *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji*, vol. 4, 15–16.

¹⁶ *Jin shu*, 129.3195.

transfer of hegemony was completed in Hexi Corridor with Lushui hu launching offensive over Xianbei from then on.¹⁷

After the Battle of Qiongquan, afraid of being exterminated, Tufa Nutan pulled out from Guzang 姑臧, moving the capital to Ledu 樂都.¹⁸ One year later, Juqu Mengxun sent troops to occupy Guzang, the capital of Southern Liang Tufa clan.¹⁹ Guzang was a city representing royal power in the Liangzhou area, and was especially important for nomads. All five Liang regimes established by Hu people used to occupy Guzang, with only one exception: Western Liang, a regime established by Han people excluded by Tang from the Sixteen States, and the early construction of Guzang, also bound closely with Hun people.

On the position of Guzang for the Hu people, we quote this line from Lushui hu's archenemy, Xianbei's Tufa Nutan, to illuminate:

Although now Guzang has declined, with superior position, it is still an essential city in Hexi area.

姑臧今雖虛弊，地居形勝，河西一都之會。²⁰

Soon after entering the Guzang, Juqu Mengxun became the King of Hexi 河西王, decreed general amnesty, exchanged his reign title to Xuanshi 玄始, and set up official positions, just as Lü Guang 呂光 (337–399, r. 386–399) did when he was King of Sanhe 三河王.²¹

¹⁷ Tufa Nutan was defeated by Helian Bobo in the third year of Yixi 義熙 era in Eastern Jin, also the seventh year of Yong'an era in Northern Liang (407 CE). Wang Zhongluo 王仲羣 supposed that this attack made by Helian Bobo took a heavy toll on Southern Liang. On this, see his book, *Weijin nanbeichao shi*, 309.

¹⁸ Qi, et al., *Wuliang shilüe*, 130, said: 'Southern Liang entering Gu Zang made it a target of attack. Fighting endlessly with its neighbors makes its national strength continuously depleted'.

¹⁹ On the Guzang city, see Jia, *Weijin shilinguo hexi shehui shenghuoshi*, 100–16. Chen Li, *From the Border Cities to the Capital*, 226–36.

²⁰ *Jin shu*, 126.3147.

²¹ *Jin shu*, 129.3195. On the significance of Northern Liang's reign title, see Wang Su, 'Juqu shi beiliang jianzhi nianhao guilü xintan'.

There must be some major events or auspicious signs if ancients changed reign titles. It seemed natural for the unified regimes like Qin, Han, Sui, Tang, and more important, for the Sixteen States, to change or establish titles to declare legitimacy.²² For Northern Liang's Juqu Mengxun, changing reign title to Xuanshi once he owned Guzang, the ancient city in Hun age and a symbol of kingship among the Hexi's Hu nationalities, was no doubt evidence of his ambition. The calendar made by Northern Liang's *taishi* 太史 (Grand scribe), Zhao Fei 趙敗, even influenced Northern Wei 北魏 and Liu Song 劉宋.²³

Therefore, the Northern Liang regime was transformed in the last two years of Yong'an era. Yong'an 10 (411 CE) to Yong'an 11 (411 CE) was a time of power relay among Hu nationalities in Hexi Corridor from Xianbei to Lushui hu.

After that, in terms of Northern Liang's territory, the *Shiliu guo jiangyu zhi* 十六國疆域志 [Territories of the Sixteen Kingdoms] by Hong Liangji 洪亮吉 (1746–1809) in Qing dynasty, states that there were sixteen proven prefectures and forty counties in the Juqu Mengxun's heyday.²⁴ *Zhongguo xingzhengqubhua tongshi - Shiliuguo beichao juan* 中國行政區劃通史•十六國北朝卷 [General History of Administrative Regions in China, Sixteen States and Northern Dynasties] says that Northern Liang's territory reached its heyday from Chengxuan 承玄 2 (429 CE) to Yonghe 永和 7 (439 CE).²⁵ See Figure 1 for map of Chengxuan 3 (430 CE).

Considering that the size is only one of the important indicators of a regime's strength, personally, I think the seven years of the Yonghe era (433–439 CE, i.e. Yuanjia 元嘉 7–16 of Emperor Wen of the Song 宋文帝) might not be the prime time in Northern Liang.

The years of Xuanshi witnessed the rise of Northern Liang, with Xuanshi 3 (414 CE) and Xuanshi 10 (421 CE) as two turning points.

²² Tong, 'Goko Jūrokkoku zenki "rekkoku gannen" kinen kenkyū josetu'.

²³ Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513) wrote the *Xuanshi li* 玄始曆 as *Jiayin yuan li* 甲寅元曆 in the *Song shu*. *Song shu*, 98.2416.

²⁴ *Shiliuguo jiangyu zhi*, 9.562.

²⁵ Mou, Wu, and Wei, *Zhongguo xingzhengqubhua tongshi*, 427. Wei Junjie, *Shiliuguo jiangyu yu zhengqu yanjiu*, 424–35.



FIG. 1 Territory of the Northern Liang.

Before this time, the declining Southern Liang lost Guzang, the symbol of kingship among the Hexi's Hu nationalities, and was repeatedly defeated by the rising Northern Liang. As a result, leaving his son Tufa Hutai 秃髮虎台 to defend Ledu, the last central city of Southern Liang, Tufa Nutan led his only 7,000 Xianbei troops to sneak attack Xianbei's Yifu 乙弗 tribe, while Western Qin's Qifu Chipan 乞伏熾磐 (?–428) took the opportunity to occupy Ledu, hence Tufa Nutan's surrender and Southern Liang's destruction by this time. The direct event leading to Southern Liang's destruction seems to be unconcerned with Northern Liang. However, as the minister Meng Kai 孟愷 (fl. 414) said before Tufa Nutan started his march to take Yifu tribe, his country was in lack of food, suffering

from famine, and threatened by Chipan from the south and Mengxun from the north.²⁶ After occupying Guzang, Juqu Mengxun accelerated the occupation of Tufa Xianbei 秃髮鮮卑,²⁷ ultimately leading to the demise of Southern Liang.²⁸

Losing Southern Liang as a buffer zone, Northern Liang had to face Western Qin, another regime established by Xianbei directly. There were wars of more than a thousand people between these two countries from 414 CE to 416 CE. Weighing the pros and cons, Juqu Mengxun used a political marriage with Qifu Chipan to relieve pressure from the southeast, and transferred the main force to the west against Western Liang in Xuanshi 5 (416 CE; Yixi 義熙 12 in Eastern Jin).

In Yongchu 1 of Emperor Wudi of Song (420 CE; Xuanshi 9 of Northern Liang), claiming to attack Western Qin, Juqu Mengxun led armies to southeast of Guzang, but turned back secretly to Chuanyan 川岩 as an ambush. Having heard of Juqu Mengxun's attack on Western Qin, Western Liang's last monarch, Li Xin 李歆 (?–420, r. 417–420), dismissed his ministers and attacked Zhangye. He was finally defeated by Northern Liang's army, led by Juqu Mengxun, who personally fought in the heavy battle in Dujian's 渡澗 part.²⁹ The enraged Li Xin not only did not retreat, but also forfeited his life and Western Liang's crack force in the showdown with Juqu Mengxun in Liaquan 蓼泉. Owning Jiuquan 酒泉, Juqu Mengxun pushed the remnants in Dunhuang, besieging the city from three directions, occupying the whole Liangzhou in one stroke in Xuanshi 10 (421 CE), and reached its height on the territory. Li Xin's son fled to southern Liu Song. Since then, Northern Liang was the only country of the five Liang holding hegemony in Hexi.

²⁶ *Jin shu*, 126.3155.

²⁷ It was also Meng Kai who said Mengxun had just occupied Guzang, full of confidence. See *Jin shu*, 126.3156.

²⁸ Tufa Poqiang 秃髮破羌 (403–479), the son of Tufa Nutan, escaping to Northern Wei after Southern Liang was destroyed, was named Yuan He 源賀. Northern Wei took him as a guide when it attacked Northern Liang in 439 CE.

²⁹ *Zizhi tongjian*, 118.3728.

That is to say, after Xuanshi 10, Northern Liang had long controlled Hexi Corridor, over 100,000 square meters of land. Besides, Gaochang area was also under limits of Northern Liang Juqu clan's power. According to the 'Tulufan Halahezhua gumuqun fajue jianbao' 吐魯番哈喇和卓古墓群發掘簡報 [Brief Excavation Report on the ancient tomb group of Turpan Karakhoja], published by the Xinjiang Archaeological Team in 1978 (the excavation of this ancient tomb group began in 1975), the date of the earliest documents of Northern Liang unearthed from this ancient tomb group in Gaochang is Xuanshi 11, which was named *Bei Liang Xuanshi shiyinian Ma Shou tiaocheng wei chujin shi* 北涼玄始十一年馬受條呈為出酒事 [Document Submitted by Ma Shou for Providing Wine in Xuanshi 11 of Northern Liang] (75TKM91:18<a>).³⁰ Less than one year after Western Liang was destroyed, Northern Liang had taken efficient document administration for Gaochang, and the thirty-six countries from Western regions also sent ambassadors to pay tribute.³¹ So far, Northern Liang's territory achieved or even exceeded that of today's Bulgaria, or half the size of the Korean Peninsula. Although Northern Liang was not as legitimate as Northern Wei, Eastern Jin, or Liu Song, it was by no means a local regime as a sovereign state in the categories of ancient political history.

3. Between the Eastern Jin and Northern Wei: Around Two Memorials 上表文

Before Juqu Mengxun was faced with diplomatic relations with the emperor of Eastern Jin (as well as the emperor of Song 宋, Liu Yu 劉裕 [363–422, r. 420–422], later on), the biggest nominal suzerain of Northern Liang was Later Qin:

³⁰ Mu, 'Tulufan Halahezhua gumuqun fajue jianbao', 3.

³¹ Shen Yue said Bilong 比龍, King of Shanshan 鄯善王 came to pay tribute to the court, and the thirty-six countries the from Western regions also sent envoys to pay tribute. See *Song shu*, 98.2414.

Yao Xing 姚興 sent his envoys including Liang Fei 梁斐 and Zhang Gou 張構 to award Juqu Mengxun with the title of *Zhenxi da jiangjun* 鎮西大將軍 (Defender-general of the West), Shazhou *cishi* 沙州刺史 (Regional Inspector of Shazhou), Marquis of Xihai 西海侯. At the same time, Yao Xing appointed Tufa Nutan to be *Cheji jiangjun* 車騎將軍 (Chariot and Horse General) and offered him the title of Duke Guangwu 廣武公. Hearing about this, Mengxun was displeased and asked the envoys, 'Why does Tufa Nutan get a higher place as Duke while I am only offered Marquis?' [Zhang] Gou answered, 'Tufa Nutan is cunning, heartless and lacks fidelity to the court. The reward is to encourage his allegiance. But you are such an excellent general who hold high loyalty and honor at this time that you ought to join and help the royalty with administration of nation. How can the court treat you with distrust?' Mengxun asked, 'Why does the court grant me the far away Xihai 西海, rather than Zhangye right here?' [Zhang] Gou answered, 'The land of Zhangye is within the planning, you already own it. It is to extend your fief that we enfeoff you Xihai, which is distant.' Mengxun was pleased with those words and accepted the award.

姚興遣使人梁斐、張構等拜蒙遜鎮西大將軍、沙州刺史、西海侯。時興亦拜髡髮僭檀為車騎將軍，封廣武公。蒙遜聞之，不悅，謂斐等曰：‘僭檀上公之位，而身為侯者何也！’構對曰：‘僭檀輕狡不仁，款誠未著，聖朝所以加其重爵者，褒其歸善即敘之義耳。將軍忠貫白日，勳高一時，當入諸鼎味，匡贊帝室，安可以不信待也。（中略）’蒙遜曰：‘朝廷何不即以張掖見封，乃更遠封西海邪？’構曰：‘張掖，規畫之內，將軍已自有之。所以遠授西海者，蓋欲廣大將軍之國耳。’蒙遜大悅，乃受拜。³²

Previous historians usually paid attention to the keen answer of Zhang Gou in this piece of historical material. However, I prefer to enhance that, firstly, the titles of *Zhenxi da jiangjun*, Shazhou *cishi*, and Marquis of Xihai are the most important ones he gained from the central regime before he crowned himself king. Secondly, his

³² *Jin shu*, 129.3193–3194.

concern about the higher position of Tufa Nutan, actually reflects the competition between Hun and Xianbei for the supremacy of the Hu nationality in Gansu corridor, just as the analysis in the second part of this essay.

However, the most vital question after the middle of the period when Juqu Mengxun came in power, is not how to deal with the Later Qin, but rather how to deal with the two regimes, Northern Wei and Jin (Song) in the south, who were contending for hegemony.

First of all, the end of the old reign title 'Yong'an', as well as the start of the new one 'Xuanshi', came immediately after Northern Liang beat Southern Liang and gained the city of Guzang. In 412, a key year, Juqu Mengxun, who had crowned himself King of Hexi, sent emissary to Northern Wei. The *Wei shu* is recorded as below:

In the era of Yongxing, Mengxun captured Guzang and moved there. With the change of the reign title to 'Xuanshi', he claimed himself King of Hexi, appointed ministers and lower officials, and started sending envoys to pay tribute frequently.

永興中，蒙遜克姑臧，遷居之。改號玄始元年，自稱河西王，置百官丞郎以下，頻遣使朝貢。³³

This is the Northern Liang's earliest tributary to Northern Wei that is written in Northern Wei's history. Based on the word 'frequently' (*pin* 頻), this must start at 412 CE.

On the other side, Juqu Mengxun also showed nominal courtesy to the legitimate Eastern Jin regime 'reimagining China'³⁴ in the south. First, the biography of Juqu Mengxun in *Jin shu* said that the Yizhou *cishi* 益州刺史 (Regional Inspector of Yizhou) of Eastern Jin, Zhu Linshi 朱齡石 (379–418), sent an envoy to appoint him to an official position, and the next year Juqu Mengxun sent a servant to respond, with a memorial saying:

³³ *Wei shu*, 99.2204.

³⁴ The phrase, 'reimagining China' refers to Charles Holcombe's theory. See Holcombe, *In the Shadow of the Han*, 1–3.

Heaven brings disaster and the whole country disintegrates. Heaven helps the southern people. People are killed by enemies. Your Majesty has good character just like His Majesty of past dynasties. Your character surpassed His Majesty of Zhou and Han dynasties. Your pure and beautiful enlightenment is known. Even people far away from the country all put it in mind. Although I am sent to the border areas, my talent does not match the contemporary intellectuals and I don't deserve to be elected as the alliance leader by the refugees on the right side of the river. My ancestors got grace for generations. Though they once experienced the danger, they kept doing the right things and never looked back, surrendering to the sun and missing the royal family. Last winter, Zhu Linshi, Yizhou *cishi*, sent a messenger to visit me and what he said is all the good news from Imperial Court. Thanks to Liu Yu, the *Cheqi jiangjun* 車騎將軍 (Chariot and Horse General), he led troops to battle, working for the Central Plains. It could be considered that heaven helped Jin dynasty, making it born with the assistance of intellectuals. I hear that Shaokang 少康 restored Xia dynasty and Guangwu 光武 restored Han dynasty both by fighting with a sword. Even without five hundred soldiers, they still could get achievement as high as heaven and wrote a chant, 'Che Gong'. Your Majesty possesses all the land of Chu 楚 and all the elite soldiers in Jing 荊 and Yang 揚 areas. So you can ignore the government affairs happily, giving up the chance to kill and bury the northern ethnic minorities as enemies. If the army of Your Majesty is dispatched to the north, we can expect to get back our lost land. So I request to lead the western army as the right-wing pioneer of Jin.

上天降禍，四海分崩，靈耀擁於南裔，蒼生沒於醜虜。陛下累聖重光，道邁周漢，純風所被，八表宅心。臣雖被發邊徼，才非時雋，謬為河右遺黎推為盟主。臣之先人，世荷恩寵，雖曆夷險，執義不回，傾首朝陽，乃心王室。去冬益州刺史朱齡石遣使詣臣，始具朝廷休問。承車騎將軍劉裕秣馬揮戈，以中原為事，可謂天贊大晉，篤生英輔。臣聞少康之興大夏，光武之複漢業，皆奮劍而起，眾無一旅，猶能成配天之功，著《車攻》之詠。陛下據全楚之地，擁荊揚之銳，而可垂拱晏然，棄二京以資戎虜！若六軍北軫，克復有期，臣請率河西戎為晉右翼前驅。³⁵

Jin shu did not record the timestamp when the memorial was submitted, neither did *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 [Comprehensive Mirror in Aid of Governance] nor *Song shu*. But, we can speculate about it (for a rough time interval) based on the information in the text. ‘I don’t deserve to be elected as the alliance leader by the refugees on the right side of the river (Heyou 河右),’ suggests that Juqu Mengxun was already King of Hexi, which happened in 412. Further, the punctuated quotation, ‘Thanks to Liu Yu, the *Cheji jiangjun*, he led troops to battle, working for the Central Plains’, was related to Liu Yu’s waging a crusade against Later Qin during the years of Yixi (405–418). I also reported this in an essay—the ‘Yixi nianjian Liu Yu beifa de tianming yu wenxue’ 義熙年間劉裕北伐的天命與文學 [Fatality and Literature of the Northern Expedition of Liu Yu in The Years of Yixi]—in Academia Sinica in Taipei (October 2018), pointing out the threads of Liu Yu’s northern expedition.³⁶ If we estimate based on this text of Juqu Mengxun, things must have happened sometime after Liu Yu became ‘*Zhongwai da dudu*’ 中外大都督 (Commander-in-chief of the State) and prepared for the northern expedition (the third month of Yixi 12, 416 CE), but before he reoccupied Luoyang 洛陽 (the tenth month of Yixi 12). So, it can be considered that the time of Northern Liang’s first memorial to Eastern Jin is 416 CE, four years later than their first tribute paid to Northern Wei (412 CE).

What hides behind this representation of putting Northern Wei in the first place rather than Jin, is the influence of geopolitics. Northern Liang first visited Northern Wei during the reign of Mingyuan Emperor of Wei (Tuoba Si 拓跋嗣). Undoubtedly, his external strategies are more conservative than those in the time of (the earlier emperor) Emperor Daowu 道武帝 (Tuoba Gui 拓跋珪, 371–409, r. 386–409) before him, and Taiwu Emperor 太武帝 (Tuoba Tao 拓跋焘, 408–452, r. 423–452) after him. Even then, the thriving and prosperous national power of Northern Wei made Juqu Mengxun choose to put the diplomatic relations with Northern Wei in the first place.

³⁵ *Jin shu*, 129.3196–3197.

³⁶ Tong, ‘Yixi nianjian Liu Yu beifa de tianming yu wenxue’, 73–98.

Moreover, the collision between Eastern Jin and Northern Wei in Eastern Jin Dynasty's last few years is far weaker than that between Northern Wei and Song for multiple reasons, such as Mingyuan Emperor's fear of Liu Yu, and the existence of buffer states like Southern Yan and Later Qin in between. That is why Juqu Mengxun can heuristically say to the emperor of Eastern Jin (actually to Liu Yu): 'I request to lead the western army as the right-wing pioneer of Jin', while he in the meantime sent his messengers to Northern Wei.

Actually, when Liu Yu's northern expedition towards Later Qin succeeded, Juqu Mengxun took intense actions. He killed the official, Liu Xiang 劉祥, who deliver the news, and said in a violent rage:

It's a tradition from the past that no attack to where the [stars of] *sui* 歲 and *zhen* 鎮 cover. The Yaos [i.e., Later Qin] are the progenies of Shun 舜 and the posterity of Xuanyuan 軒轅. Now the star of *zhen* is at Xuanyuan, whereas Liu Yu annihilated the Yaos. Therefore, he wouldn't hold Guanzhong 關中 for a long time as well.³⁷

古之行師，不犯歲鎮所在。姚氏舜後，軒轅之苗裔也。今鎮星在軒轅，而裕滅之，亦不能久守關中。

From the Southern Dynasty's perspective, if the submission of the memorial to the emperor of Eastern Jin can be considered as '*zheng*' 正 (obedience 順), his words and actions listed in the quotation can be considered as '*fan*' 反 (rebellion 逆). Then, faced with the great change of times from the Eastern Jin to the Song, again, Juqu Mengxun showed respect and obedience to the Southern dynasty in the attitude of '*zheng*' (obedience), which won him a series of titles in succession from Emperor Wu, Emperor Shaodi 宋少帝 (406–424, r. 422–424), and Emperor Wen of the Song 宋文帝 (407–453, r. 424–453). That can be listed as below:

A: Emperor Wu → *Shi chijie* 使持節 (Commissioned with Extraordinary Powers), *Sanqi changshi* 散騎常侍 (Cavalier

³⁷ *Jin shu*, 129.3198.

Attendant-in-ordinary), *Dudu Liangzhou zhu junshi* 都督涼州諸軍事 (Commander-in-chief of Liangzhou), *Zhenjun da jiangjun* 鎮軍大將軍 (Defender-general of the Army), *Kaifu yitong sansi* 開府儀同三司 (Commander Unequalled in Honor), *Liangzhou cishi* 涼州刺史 (Regional Inspector of Liangzhou), Duke of Zhangye 張掖公

- B: Emperor Shaodi → *Shizhong* 侍中 (Palace Attendant), *Dudu Liang Qin He Sha sizhou zhu junshi* 都督涼秦河沙四州諸軍事 (Commander-in-chief of Liangzhou, Qinzhou Hezhou and Shazhou), *Piaoqi da jiangjun* 驃騎大將軍 (Cavalry General-in-chief), *Linghu Xiongnu zhonglangjiang* 領護匈奴中郎將 (Chief Defender of Huns and Leader of Court Gentlemen), *Xiyi xiaowei* 西夷校尉 (Commandant of Western Barbarians), *Liangzhou mu* 涼州牧 (Regional Governor of Liangzhou), King of Hexi 河西王, *Kaifu* 開府 (Area Commander), *Chijie rugu* 持節如故 (Commissioned with Special Powers as previously)
- C: Emperor Wen → In the third year of Yuanjia 元嘉 (426 CE), ‘*Piaoqi*’ 驃騎 is replaced with ‘*Cheqi*’ 車騎.³⁸

Let us now concentrate on the times when these three emperors in the early Song offered Juqu Mengxun titles. In which year of Yongchu era titles of group A were given remains inconclusive,³⁹ but it lays approximately between 420 and 422, equivalent to the ninth to eleventh year in the reign of Xuanshi in Northern Liang. I speculate that Juqu Mengxun sent an ambassador (envoy-dispatching) to the city of Jiankang 建康 for the pacification of Western Liang, founded by the Li, in the eleventh year of Xuanshi (the third year of Yongchu of Emperor Wu of Song). As for titles of group B and C, the dates are recorded clearly in *Song shu*, as 423 CE (the first year of Jingping 景平, during the reign of Emperor Shaodi, the twelfth year of Xuanshi in Northern

³⁸ *Song shu*, 98.2414–2415.

³⁹ Scholars including Qi Chenjun 齊陳駿 limit it to the second year of Yongchu (421); see the appendix ‘Wu Liang dashi nianbiao’ 五涼大事年表 [Chronologies of events of Five Liang] in Qi, et al., *Wu Liang shilüe*, 191.

Liang) and 426 CE (the third year of Yuanjia, during the reign of Emperor Wen, the fifteenth year of Xuanshi in Northern Liang).

Next, I address the question of why Emperor Shaodi intensely raised the position of Juqu Mengxun (from Duke 公 to King 王) in his short reign. The reason perhaps lays in the strong attack to Henan 河南 area (Huatai 滑台, Hulao 虎牢 and Qiaobao 碛磾, etc.),⁴⁰ garrisoned by Song, which was conducted by Northern Wei Emperor Mingyuan, ignoring the dissuasion from Cui Hao 崔浩 (381–450), after Emperor Wu of Song died. Particularly worth mentioning is that the famous Song general, Mao Zude 毛祖德 (364–429), who guarded Hulao, died of illness in Daibei 代北 after being captured for lack of support in the war and brought to the north. The stone coffin of his wife, Zhang 張氏, in Daibei, was put on display in the special exhibition of ‘Langya Wang: Cong Dong Jin dao Bei Wei 琅琊王:從東晉到北魏’ [Langya Wang Clan: From Eastern Jin to Northern Wei] in Nanjing Museum. I took my students from Nanjing University to the exhibition on January 8, 2019, accompanied and interpreted by the curator, Zuo Jun 左駿. We stopped for a long time in front of this stone coffin, praising the great work of art which combined different styles of Hu and Han 漢, as well as thinking back to the war zone in Henan area after Emperor Wu of Song’s death. All in all, being faced with the great pressure from Northern Wei, Song was badly in need of an ally in the north to pin down Northern Wei in the early years of the reign of Emperor Shaodi and Emperor Wen of Song.

From the late years of Xuanshi to the years of Chengxuan, the actual pressure still came from Northern Wei. It is still put in the first place among Northern Liang’s diplomatic issues. In the words of Qifu Chipan, the monarch of Western Qin:

Although the Song has occupied all the area of Jiangnan while the Xia holds Guanzhong, neither of them are worthy to rely on. Only the king of Northern Wei is the mightiest in the world, who appoints all the talents. Besides, as the augury goes, there must be an immortal in the north of Heng 恆 and Dai 代 area. I’ll serve Wei with all my state.

⁴⁰ For more details, see *Zizhi tongjian*, 119.3747–3754.

今宋虽奄有江南，夏人雄踞關中，皆不足與也。獨魏主奕世英武，賢能為用，且讖云，‘恒代之北當有真人’，吾將舉國而事之。⁴¹

This is not only what the Western Qin said, but also what they actually did. When Western Qin was threatened by Northern Liang, Qifu Mumu 乞伏暮末 (?–431, r. 428–431) did plan a formal surrender to Northern Wei with all the state, but ended up dying with the whole nation because of the block which Xia’s Heliang Ding 赫连定 (?–432, r. 428–432) made.

Similarly, Juqu Mengxun also submitted Northern Liang to the rule of Northern Wei. In the years of Shenjia 神嘉 (428–431) in Northern Wei, Juqu Mengxun sent envoys to the southern city of Jiankang to pay tribute to Emperor Wen of Song, and did the same to Emperor Taiwu of Northern Wei in the city of Pin 平城, almost at the same time. The memorial to Emperor Taiwu went as:

Your Majesty was born as a wise monarch, whose character surpasses hundreds of His Majesty. You are cultivated according to Two Court Rite, and carry it forward in the third generation. However, Your Majesty was also born with multiple difficulties. The area outside the capital is always in turmoil. The country is just temporarily supported by the commander-in-chief and its national cultural relics system has not yet been unified. God bless Your Majesty, and you can get the throne by a proper way. Once you develop pure and beautiful enlightenment, distant regions would repent thoroughly. All the people in the country are fortunate and pleased. I am truly a mediocre man, having no achievement to record. Luckily, I see the light and think hard about the contradictory relation between destiny and manpower.

I see all the signs of fray, and observe your destiny. There is no one surpassing Your Majesty excluding Emperor Wei. Additionally, God created your appearance and you ascend the throne at a young age. Your beauty is equal to Cheng 成 (i.e. King Cheng of Zhou) and Kang’s 康 (i.e. King Kang of Zhou) and your morality is better than

⁴¹ *Zizhi tongjian*, 119.3757.

Wen 文 (i.e. Emperor Wen of Han) and Jing's 景 (i.e. Emperor Jing of Han). Therefore, you will raise the magical net to cover the world and sprinkle the mysterious water to moisten the world. What's more, in the redundant Qin 秦 and Long 隴, where there are so many hardships, there is a direct opportunity for me to do my duty.

伏惟陛下天縱睿聖，德超百王，陶育齊於二儀，洪其隆於三代。然鐘運多難，九服紛擾，神旗暫擁，車書未同。上靈降祐，祚歸有道，純風一鼓，殊方革面。群生幸甚，率土齊欣。臣誠弱才，效無可錄，幸遇重光，思竭力命。(中略) 臣歷觀符瑞，候察天時，未有過於皇魏，逾于陛下。加以靈啟聖姿，幼登天位，美詠侔于成康，道化逾于文景。方將振神網以掩六合，灑玄澤以潤八荒。況在秦隴荼炭之餘，直有老臣盡效之會。⁴²

Putting this memorial together with the one Juqu Mengxun submitted to Eastern Jin, both of them had the same intent to earn more political freedom and living space for Northern Liang. It is because Tuoba Tao was busy dealing with the two stricter enemies, Northern Yan and Xia, as well as because Juqu Mengxun sent his son Juqu Anzhou to serve in the court in the city of Ping 平城 in 413, that Northern Wei sent *Taichang* 太常 (Chamberlain for Ceremonials) Li Shun 李順 (?-442) to award Juqu Mengxun with the title:

Jiajie 假節 (Commissioned with Special Powers), added with *shizhong* 侍中 (Palace Attendant), *Dudu Liangzhou Xiyu Qiang Rong zhu junshi* 都督涼州、西域羌戎諸軍事 (Commander-in-chief of Liangzhou, Western Regions, Qiang and Rong), *taifu* 太傅 (Grand Mentor), and conferred with *Zhengxi da jiangjun* 征西大將軍 (General-in-chief of the West March), *Liangzhou mu* 涼州牧 (Regional Governor of Liangzhou), King of Liang

涼王。假節，加侍中，都督涼州、西域羌戎諸軍事，太傅，行征西大將軍，涼州牧，涼王。⁴³

⁴² *Wei shu*, 99.2204-2205.

⁴³ *Wei shu*, 99.2205.

These titles Juqu Mengxun received from Northern Wei in the years of Yihe 義和 (431–433) match those he got from Eastern Jin in the years of Xuanshi. In the meantime, the imperial edict from the emperor of Northern Wei, which Li Shun brought, include: ‘Put up the flag of the emperor, guard around the court as princes did in the early Han Dynasty’ 建天子旌旗, 出入警蹕, 如漢初諸侯王故事. It can be considered that until the years of Yihe (that is before Juqu Mengxun died), this Lushui hu regime in Gansu 甘肅 corridor gained great political interests by seeking refuge with two emperors in the north and south.

Liu Xie’s 劉勰 (465?–521?) *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 [The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons] says:

The original use of *Zhangbiao* 章表 (presentation and memorial), was to respond to and praise the court, as well as to express the aspirations of officials. They are splendor to oneself and also to the whole nation. *Zhang* 章 (presentation) sent to the court should be clear in the function of humanization. *Biao* 表 (memorial) submitted to the palace should be brilliant in moral integrity and language... *Biao* includes various meanings, so the reality is often changing. One should increase its force of wind with elegant meaning, with fresh words to show its gorgeous characteristic.

原夫章表之為用也, 所以對揚王庭, 昭明心曲. 既其身文, 且亦國華. 章以造闕, 風矩應明; 表以致禁, 骨采宜耀. (中略) 表體多包, 情偽屢遷, 必雅義以扇其風, 清文以馳其麗.⁴⁴

Therefore, it is from the perspective of people of the Six Dynasties, because of its *duobao* 多包 (various content) system, which can cover many meanings, the authenticity of content is uncertain (*qingwei lüqian* 情偽屢遷) instead. Investigating each of the two memorials Juqu Mengxun submitted to the emperors of Jin and Wei, they reach the standard that ‘*Hua* 華 and *shi* 實 are commensurate, smooth and fluent 華實相勝, 唇吻不滯’, which Liu Xie claimed.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Fan, annot., *Wenxin diaolong zhu*, 408. One can also refer to Zhou Xunchu’s *Wenxin diaolong jixi*, 350–62.

4. The Time Limit of Juqu Mengxun's 'Construction of a Sixteen-foot High Statue for His Mother' 為母造丈六石像 on Mount Tianti 天梯山

On October 9, 2018, *Guangming Daily* 光明日報 published a report in the Culture News Pane 文化新聞版, which claimed that: "The newly discovered Buddha statue in Mountain Tianti of Wuwei coincide with the 'Construction of a Sixteen-foot High Statue for His Mother' of the king of Northern Liang".⁴⁶ Exactly one day later, I also visited Mountain Tianti with the delegates of 'International Symposium on Liangzhou Culture and Silk Road'. The core of the report is as follows:

The statue was discovered by Ning Qiang on September 22, while he was investigating the grotto temples on Mountain Tianti, in the south of Wuwei City, Gansu Province. Located in the center of the main wall of a square hall, the Buddha is slightly forward, plump and heavy, with a badly damaged head but a relatively intact body. The Buddha stands with his legs side by side, his right arm slanting down, his left arm raised (damaged), and the left side of his body has remnants of the kasaya robe's long sleeves. The particular note is the prominent breast of the Buddha statue, which is clearly a physical feature of an adult woman. Wuwei, named Liangzhou in ancient times, was one of the Four Counties on Western side of the Yellow River, China's tourism symbol 'copper galloping horse' out of the land. According to ancient records, the king of Northern Liang, Juqu Mengxun (r. 401–433) was in this cliff to 'construct a sixteen-foot high statue for his mother'. Therefore, Ning Qiang thought that the Buddha found on Mountain Tianti, with obvious characteristics of the female body, was precisely the 'sixteen-foot high statue', which was made by King Juqu Mengxun in order to pray for his mother.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ See Song, 'Wuwei Tiantishan xinfaxian fozaoxiang yu Bei Liang wang "wei mu zao zhangliu shixiang" qihe', in the Culture News Pane of *Guangming Daily* on October 9, 2018.

9月22日，寧強在甘肅武威市南邊的天梯山石窟寺考察研究時發現了這尊佛像，該佛像位於一個方形殿堂窟內正壁中央，身體略微前傾，體型飽滿厚重，頭部已經嚴重毀損，但身軀保存較為完整。佛像雙腿並立，右臂斜下垂，左臂抬起（已殘），身體兩側有袈裟長袖殘痕。特別值得注意的是，該佛像的乳房突出，明顯是成年婦女的形體特徵。武威古稱涼州，河西四郡之一，中國旅遊標誌‘銅奔馬’出土地。據古文獻記載，北涼王沮渠蒙遜（401–433年在位）曾在此山崖‘為母造丈六石像’，因此，寧強認為，天梯山石窟寺發現的這尊帶有明顯女性身體特徵的佛像正是北涼王沮渠蒙遜為其母祈福所造的‘丈六石像’。

The above words of *Guangming Daily* received different critiques among medievalists and there is no need to repeat them here. By courtesy of Lu Xiushan's 盧秀善 display, who was the director of Mountain Tianti grotto temples' management office, I was able to see the picture of the statue in Cave 15 related to the report in *Guangming Daily*. Meanwhile, Lu pointed out that as early as 2000, Zhang Xuerong 張學榮 in his book, *Wuwei Tiantishan shiku* 武威天梯山石窟 [Mountain Tianti's Grotto Temples in Wuwei], thought that this statue was concerned with Juqu Mengxun's 'Construction of a Sixteen-foot High Statue for his Mother'.⁴⁷ I have little research about Buddhist statues, thus in the last section of this article I want to instead discuss the time limit of Juqu Mengxun's 'Construction of a Sixteen-foot High Statue for His Mother'.

Firstly, Juqu Mengxu's mother, Che 車氏, might be the Hu in the Western Regions 西域胡⁴⁸; his wife Peng 彭氏, might be from Qiang.⁴⁹ Regardless of whether Hu or Qiang, they were mostly people who believed in Buddhism in the medieval ages.

Jin shu has the records of his mother's death, which says,

⁴⁷ The description of Cave 15 can also refer to Wang Kui, *Shiku zhi zu: Wuwei Tiantishan shiku*, 86.

⁴⁸ See Zhou Weizhou, 'Shilun Tulufan Asitana Juqu Fengdai mu chutu wenwu'.

⁴⁹ See Wang Su, 'Bei Liang Juqu Mengxun furen Pengshi zushu chutan', 43–47.

Mengxun's mother Che was seriously ill. Mengxun went up to Nanjing Gate and distributed money to the people. Then he issued an edict saying that: 'Relying on the ancestral spirit, the blessing of the heaven and the earth, I relieve the hard times and rescue the struggling people. Upward I hope can clear the country's filthy air, downward I hope to keep peace and happiness at home. But now my mother is in poor health, her condition has become more and more serious with the years going by. Is it because the penalties are too many that people have resentment? Are the labor and the taxes are too heavy that people cannot endure them? Or is it because I didn't satisfy the people's hopes so that I am condemned by the gods? I reflect on myself, but I don't know where my sin is. So, I decide to remit criminals as long as his guilt doesn't deserve to be sentenced to death.' But soon, mother Che died.

蒙遜母車氏疾篤，蒙遜升南景門，散錢以賜百姓。下書曰：‘孤庶憑宗廟之靈，乾坤之祐，濟否剝之運會，拯遺黎之荼蓼，上望掃清氣穢，下冀保寧家福。而太后不豫，涉歲彌增，將刑獄枉濫，眾有怨乎？賦役繁重，時不堪乎？群望不絜，神所譴乎？內省諸身，未知罪之攸在。可大赦殊死已下。’俄而車氏死。⁵⁰

This story was attached to 413 (the second year of Xuanshi) in Tang Qiu's 湯球 (1804–1881) *Shiliuguo chunqiu jibu* 十六國春秋輯補 [Supplemented Compilation of Spring and Autumn of the Sixteen Kingdoms].⁵¹ That was very important because it meant that if Juqu Mengxun built the 'Sixteen-foot High Statue' before this time, he was praying for his mother's earthly happy life; otherwise, he was impetrating the afterlife happiness for his deceased mother.

Next, let us discuss some questions concerning Mountain Tianti's grotto temples. Before the formation of Buddhist grottoes, Mountain Tianti seemed to be a famous retreat in the south of Guzang. Duan Ye 段業 (?–401, r. 397–401), the first monarch of Northern Liang, when he was a courtier of Lü Guang, was discontented with

⁵⁰ *Jin shu*, 129.3196.

⁵¹ *Shiliuguo chunqiu jibu*, 96.662.

Lü's misgovernment and lived there as a hermit, writing *Jiutan* 九歎 [Nine sighs] and *Qifeng* 七諷 [Seven satires] to indicate his thoughts. Zhang Shaomei 張昭美 (fl. 1723–1744) of Qing Dynasty said in his book, *Wu Liang quanzhi* 五涼全志 [The Annals of Five Liang], that: 'Wuwei, Mountain Tianti crossing its north, has overlapping and sheer peaks around to defend from all barbarians.' It also said: 'Mountain Tianti, located eighty *li* 里 due south of the county now and was in the south of the old city during ancient times.'⁵²

Mount Tianti grotto temples 天梯山石窟, also named 'Liangzhou grotto temples' 涼州石窟, was regarded as a typical grotto site called 'Liangzhou model' 涼州模式 by Su Bai 宿白 (1922–2018).⁵³ The grottoes lay in the Qilian range 祁連山, fifty kilometers south of Wuwei city. It is about a two-hour drive from downtown. There is no doubt that Juqu Mengxun and his successor, Juqu Mujian 沮渠牧犍 (?–447, r. 433–439), were both devout Buddhists.⁵⁴ The five Liang regimes had many monarchs who venerated Buddhism.⁵⁵

In the Tang dynasty, in the second *juan* of Daoxuan's 道宣 (596–667) *Ji Shenzhou Sanbao gantong lu* 集神州三寶感通錄 [Record of the Miraculous Responses of the Three Treasures in China] item 'Bei Liang Hexiwang Nanya suxiang yuan' 北涼河西王南崖素像緣 [the South cliff Statues by King Hexi, Northern Liang] said as follows, which was seen in Daoshi's 道世 (?–683) *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林 [A Grove of Pearls in a Dharma Garden] as well:

Constructing auspicious statues in Liangzhou grotto temples was on account of Juqu Mengxun's occupation of Liang land from 397 (the first year of Long'an 隆安, during the reign of Emperor An of Eastern Jin 晉安帝) in former days, lasting more than thirty years. Northern Liang became the most prosperous regime for long among

⁵² Zhang, et al. coll. and annot, *Wu Liang quanzhi jiaozhu*, 21.

⁵³ See Su, 'Liangzhou shiku yiji yu "Liangzhou moshi"'.
⁵⁴ Kamada Shigeo 鎌田茂雄 talked about Juqu Mengxun's attitude towards religion: 'one is to use, the other is to support'. See Kamada, *Zhongguo Fojiao tongshi*, vol. 3, 48.

⁵⁵ Feng, 'Wu Liang de Rujiao yu Fojiao', 50–54.

the Five Liang in Longxi 隴西. Mengxun was in the worship of Buddhism, and he thought that the construction of temples and pagodas in the country was not permanent. From ancient times, the palaces of the emperors had finally been burned and turned into ashes. If the statues were built according to the previous customs, it would be done following the bad way. Gold and jewelry were also used in construction in the past, and they were eventually destroyed and stolen. Mengxun then looked back at the mountains and thought that those could be permanent. The mountains located in the south of the state. The cliffs there were endless and unmeasurable, which could not be measured from the east to the west side. So Mengxun made the caves carved and built the statues in the different way. Some of the statues were carved from stone, and some were shaped by mud. People who believed in Buddhism went there to visit would feel shocked with their eyes dizzy.

涼州石崖塑瑞像者，昔沮渠蒙遜以晉安帝隆安元年據有涼土，三十餘載，隴西五涼，斯最久盛。專崇福業，以國城寺塔，終非久固。古來帝宮，終逢煨燼，若依立之，效尤斯及。又用金寶，終被毀盜，乃顧眄山宇，可以終天。于州南百里，連崖綿互，東西不測，就而斲窟，安設尊儀，或石或塑，千變萬化。有禮敬者，驚眩心目。⁵⁶

According to Huiyuan's 慧遠 (523–592) reply to Emperor Wu of Northern Zhou 北周武帝 (543–578, r. 560–578), recorded in *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳 [Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks], the promotion of early medieval Buddhism depended on the 'translation of Buddhist sutra' 賴經聞佛, and the 'construction of statues' 藉像表真.⁵⁷ In light of the study of Du Doucheng 杜鬥城 in his *Bei Liang yijing lun* 北涼譯經論 [Discussions about the Translation of Buddhist Sutra in Northern Liang] Du holds the view that Northern Liang was the country with the largest number of translations among the sixteen states, except Later Qin.⁵⁸ The latter was

⁵⁶ *Ji Shenzhou Sanbao gantong lu*, T no. 2106, 52: 2.417c27–418a5. Also see Zhou and Su, *Fayuan zhulin jiaozhu*, 467.

⁵⁷ *Xu Gaoseng zhuan*, 282.

mainly reflected in the construction of Buddha statues. From Mr. Su Bai's perspective, what Daoxuan called 'constructing auspicious statues in Liangzhou grotto temples' was just the 'Sixteen-foot High Statue' mentioned below.⁵⁹

However, the records above cannot reflect a precise time for the construction of the Northern Liang Buddha statue. Moreover, there were also some problems with this sentence: 'Juqu Mengxun's occupation of Liang land from 397 (the first year of Long'an, during the reign of Emperor An of Eastern Jin) in former days', because Northern Liang's first monarch, Duan Ye, was in power at that time (397 is the first year of Shenxi 神璽 under Duan's reign), while Juqu Mengxun was not yet to gain the highest leadership.

The next item in the above mentioned *Fayuan zhulin*, named 'Bei Liang Juqu zhangliu shixiang xianxiang yuan' 北涼沮渠丈六石像現相緣 [the present situation of the Sixteen-foot High Statue of Bei Liang Juqu], said:

Mengxun, the king of Hexi, Northern Liang, constructed a sixteen-foot high Buddha statue for his mother in the temple on the mountain and respected it as long. In the sixth year of Yuanjia in Song Dynasty, Mengxun sent his son Xingguo to fight [with Western Qin] at Baohan. Xingguo was defeated and then died by Qifu's hand]. Mengxun held the mind that he served the Buddha statue, but had nothing in return. He was so angry that he gave an order to destroy all the pagodas and temples and expel the monks as well. Later one time when Mengxun passed by the Mount Yangshu 陽述, seeing some monks waiting on the side of the road, he got angry again and killed several of them right away. At that time, there were soldiers entering into the temple to pray, and they found that the Buddha statue was in tears. They were so surprised and went back, propagating that strange thing. Mengxun heard and went back but felt thrilled with his body trembling as a sinful man when he came

⁵⁸ See Du, *Bei Liang yijing lun*, 175; this book is the same as chapter 1 of his book *Bei Liang Fojiao yanjiu*.

⁵⁹ Su, 'Liangzhou shiku yiji yu "Liangzhou moshi"', 437.

to the entrance of the temple. Thus, he asked people around him to help into the temple and he saw the statue crying like a flowing spring. Mengxun kowtowed with full apology and guilty. He climbed to set up a Buddhist conference, and his faith was more refined. He then summoned the monks to return...Now there was a Mount Sanwei 三危 in the southeast of Shazhou, thirty *li* away. The cliff was two *li* high and there were two hundred and eighty Buddha statues in the place which were sparkling together.

北涼河西王蒙遜，為母造丈六石像於山寺，素所敬重。以宋元嘉六年遣世子興國攻枹罕，大敗，興國遂死於佛氏。遜恚恨以事佛無靈，下令毀塔寺，斥逐道人。遜後行至陽述山，諸僧候于路側，望見發怒，立斬數人。爾時將士入寺禮拜，此像涕淚橫流，驚還說之。遜聞往視，至寺門，舉體戰悸，如有犯持之者，因喚左右扶翼而進，見像淚下若泉。即稽首禮謝，深自尤責。登設大會，信更精到，招集諸僧，還復本業焉。（中略）今沙州東南三十里三危山，崖高二里，佛像二百八十龕，光相亟發。⁶⁰

The year of the material above was before 429 (the sixth year of Yuanjia, during the reign of Emperor Wen of Song), which was also the second year of Shenjia in Northern Wei, the second year of Chengxuan in Northern Liang, and the second year of Yonghong 永弘 in Western Qin as well. In the fifth month of this year, Juqu Mengxun failed in his crusade against Western Qin and his son Juqu Xingguo was captured by Qifu Mumu. He wanted to redeem his son with three hundred thousand *bu* 斛 of grain but was not allowed, so he could only choose another son, Juqu Puti 沮渠菩提 (d.u.)—still a Buddhist name—as the crown prince. The sentence in that material, ‘[Xingguo] died by Qifu[’s hand]’, must be interpreted in connection with the following material.

If we trace the source of historical materials, the record of ‘Construction of a Sixteen-foot High Statue for his Mother’ in the Tang Dynasty should come from the documents of the Six Dynasties. What we can still find now is *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 [Biographies

⁶⁰ Zhou and Su, *Fayuan zhulin jiaozhu*, 467–68.

of Eminent Monks] written by Huijiao 慧皎 (497–554) in Liang Dynasty. The second *juan* of the text, ‘Jin Hexi Tanwuchen’ 晉河西曇無讖 [Tanwuchen from Hexi in the Jin dynasty], also told the story of Juqu Mengxun’s construction for his mother:

The King of Hexi Juqu Mengxun arrogated and occupied the Liang land, claiming to be the King. Once heard of the name of [Tanwu] chen, he then called him to meet and treated him kindly and generously. Mengxun believed in Buddhism consistently and had broad and sensible ambitions...

In the second year of Chenxuan in [Meng]xun’s puppet regime, Mengxun crossed the river to crusade Qifu Mumu at Baohan, with his son Xingguo as the vanguard, but he failed and Xingguo was captured. Later, with the fall of Qifu, both Mumu and Xingguo were caught by Helian Ding. However, Helian was then defeated by Tuyuhun 吐谷渾, and as a result, Xingguo was killed in melee. [Meng]xun was so furious saying that there was no reward for serving the Buddha that he rebuked and dismissed the monks. Monks under fifty years old were all commanded to apostatize. Once, Mengxun constructed a sixteen-foot high statue for his mother and then the statue burst into tears. With [Tanwu]chen’s remonstrance, [Meng]xun finally changed his mind and began to regret.⁶¹

河西王沮渠蒙遜僭據涼土，自稱為王，聞讖名，呼與相見，接待甚厚。蒙遜素奉大法，志在弘通。(中略)至遜偽承玄二年，蒙遜濟河伐乞伏暮末於抱罕，以世子興國為前驅，為末軍所敗，興國擒焉。後乞伏失守，暮末與興國俱獲于赫連定，後為吐谷渾所破，興國遂為亂兵所殺。遜大怒，謂事佛無應，即遣斥沙門，五十已下皆令罷道。蒙遜先為母造丈六石像，像遂泣涕流淚，讖又格言致諫，遜乃改心而悔焉。

Tanwuchen 曇無讖 (385–433), the master of that biography in *Gaoseng zhuan*, was from Zhong Tianzhu 中天竺, who first learned Hinayana and then changed to learn Mahayana. He was the translator of two Mahayana Buddhist scriptures, *Da niepan jing* 大涅槃經

⁶¹ *Gaoseng zhuan*, 77–78.

[*Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*] and *Da fangdeng daji jing* 大方等大集經 [*Mahāvaiṣṭhī mahāsamghāta sūtra*]. According to *Wei shu*, he was also proficient at spells, so he won the trust of Juqu Mengxun, who then required all his daughters and daughters-in-law to learn the ‘art of intercourse between men and women’ 男女交接之術⁶² from Tanwuchen. According to the materials recorded in *Gaoseng zhuan*, the reason for Qifu Mumo’s defeat against Tuyuhun was exactly because of being attacked by Helian Ding (which can be seen in Part Three). Qifu Mumo hoped that if the Western Qin was incorporated into the Northern Wei, the two great forces in the west, Tuyuhun and Northern Liang, would both ‘adopt an ingratiating attitude towards the Northern Wei’.⁶³ In the melee among the Great Xia, Northern Liang, Western Qin, and Tuyuhun, Juqu Mengxun’s son Juqu Xingguo ‘was wounded, and died a few days later’.⁶⁴

In *Gaoseng zhuan* in the sixth century and *Fayuan zhulin* in the seventh century, one mentioned that ‘Mengxun constructed a sixteen-foot high Buddha statue for his mother in the temple on the mountain’, while the other said that ‘once, Mengxun constructed a sixteen-foot high statue for his mother’. If the statue was constructed after his mother Che’s death, in terms of the grammar of the inscriptions of the Buddhist statue,⁶⁵ it should be written as ‘wangmu’ 亡母 (deceased mother) or ‘jishi fumu’ 几世父母 (XX generations parents), not the ‘mu’ 母 (mother) directly. Therefore, the lower time limit of Juqu Mengxun’s ‘Construction of a Sixteen-foot High Statue for his Mother’ was the year following Che’s death, namely, the year of 413 (the second year of Xuanshi).

Next, let us try to deduce the upper time limit of ‘Construction of a Sixteen-foot High Statue for his Mother’. The discussion in the second and third sections of this article can be summarized into three points, as follows:

⁶² *Wei shu*, 99.2208.

⁶³ Maeda, *Pingcheng lishi dilixue yanjiu*, 142.

⁶⁴ *Song shu*, 98.2415.

⁶⁵ For the study on inscriptions of the Buddhistic statue, please refer to Hou, *Wu liu shiji beifang minzhong Fojiao xinyang*.

- i. The fall of Southern Liang caused Juqu Mengxun to occupy Guzang (the first year of Xuanshi in Northern Liang).
- ii. The fall of Western Liang caused Juqu Mengxun to take possession of the whole land of Liangzhou, which greatly enhanced the transportation with the Western Regions.
- iii. From the fall of Western Liang to the period of Yihe, Juqu Mengxun took the two-way tribute to the Northern Wei and Liu Song, so that Northern Liang earned greater political stability.

Considering the location of Mountain Tianti grotto temples, it was only after the acquisition of absolute control over Guzang city that Juqu Mengxun could 'construct a sixteen-foot high statue for his mother'. Thus, the upper limit time was 412 (the first year of Xuanshi), which meant that the time limit of the construction of the Buddha statue was within one year (from the first year to the second year of Xuanshi). Because Juqu Mengxun and his Lushui hu tribe had already been worshiping Buddhism⁶⁶ for a long time,⁶⁷ they could construct a sixteen-foot statue for the 'Queen Dowager of Hexi' 河西王太后 after they moved into Guzang for only one year.

The report of *Guangming Daily* added:

Constructing a statue to pray for mothers was a way of filial piety, as well as a way to worship Buddha. This Buddha statue that was with female characteristics built by Juqu Mengxun for his mother reflected an important concept that people in that

⁶⁶ For the whole Lushui hu tribe's faith of Buddhism, Liu Shufen 劉淑芬 also paid special attention to the relationship between the Revolt of Gaiwu 蓋吳起義 of Lushui hu in Northern Wei and Buddhism, referring to her book, *Zhonggu de Fojiao yu shehui*, 25–36.

⁶⁷ In 439, after the Northern Liang regime in Guzang was defeated by Northern Wei, Juqu Mujian's brothers resisted in the west of Hexi Corridor, especially in Gaochang where they established a new Northern Liang regime in Turpan. Although in the crack of survival, they still venerated Buddhism. See Rong, 'Juqu Anzhou bei yu Gaochang da Liang zhengquan', 65–92.

old time would equate the rulers with the Buddha...Therefore, the King of Northern Liang, Juqu Mengxun, corresponding a 'female Buddha' with his respected mother (empress dowager 皇太后), what he did should also be a reflection of this popular idea in grotto statues.

為母親祈福造像，既是行孝，也是崇佛。沮渠蒙遜為母親造的這尊帶有女性特徵的佛像，反映了彼時佛教信仰的一個重要觀念，即把統治者與佛陀等同起來。（中略）因此，北涼王沮渠蒙遜用‘女身佛像’來對應他尊敬的母親（皇太后），也應該是這種流行觀念在石窟造像上的反映。

Was it true that 'constructing a sixteen-foot high statue for his mother' certainly meant creating a female Buddha statue of 'queen dowager' (not what *Guangming Daily* called 'empress dowager' because Juqu Mengxun never proclaimed himself emperor)? I believe that was an over interpretation because the reporter did not really understand such typical sentence patterns, such as, 'wei 為 (for)... zao 造 (construct)...', of the inscriptions of Buddhist statues in the Northern Dynasties. We briefly list a few from the large number of inscriptions in the Northern Dynasties:

Construct this stone Buddha and one Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra for father, the former magistrate of County Xing(?), and deceased mother Wang. (Inscription by Bao Zuan on the 18th day of the 4th month of the 3rd year of Taiping zhenjun [442])
為父前邢邢 (?) 令、亡母王造茲石浮圖、大涅槃經一部。（太平真君三年四月十八日鮑纂造像記）

Respectfully construct one Maitreya Buddha for parents of seven generations, who gave birth to me, and family members. (Inscription by the nun Faqing on the 4th day of the 9th month of the 3rd year of Yongping [510]).
為七世父母、所生、因緣敬造彌勒佛一軀。（永平三年九月四日尼法慶造像記）

Respectfully construct one stone statue up for the royal, right for the deceased parents, dead brother, right for me, and the family members. (Inscription by Liu Gui'an on the 9th day of the 7th month of the 3rd year of Yanchang [514]).

上為皇家，右為亡父母、亡兄，右為身，並及居家眷屬，敬造石像一軀。(延昌三年七月九日劉歸安造像記)

Construct one stone statue for the family. (Inscription by Hu Tun on the 2nd day of the 7th month of the 2nd year of Zhengguang [521]).

為家口造石像一區。(正光二年七月二日扈豚造像記)⁶⁸

The famous *Yang Dayan zaoxiang ji* 楊大眼造像記 [Inscription of the Buddhist statue by Yang Dayan] also said:

Construct one stone statue for Emperor Xiaowen, extending to all living beings.⁶⁹

遂為孝文皇帝造石像一區，凡及眾形，罔不備列。

Another example was the special exhibition, 'King Langya: from Eastern Jin to Northern Wei', held in Nanjing Museum at the end of 2018, which showed the *Yizhu Lü Shuang zaoxiang bei* 邑主呂雙造像碑 (Inscription of the Buddhist statue by the society head Lü Shuang) from Northern Wei Dynasty. On one side of the tablet was the Buddha, below which, there were seven lines of the standing images of the donors. Inscriptions on the right side of the statue said:

The *yizhu* 邑主 (society head) Lü Shuang, the *duweina* 都唯那

⁶⁸ These inscriptions can be seen in Shao, *Beichao jinian zaoxiangji huibian*, 2, 47, 54, 74.

⁶⁹ In May 2017, 'ChuMo Stay True: the Exhibition of Stone and Bronze Rubbings collected in Nanjing University' 楮墨留真：南京大學藏金石拓片展 was held in Nanjing University Museum, and the rubbing of *Yang Dayan zaoxiang ji* was on display. There was something defective about the two characters, 'yi qu 一區', but the sentence pattern, 'construct...for...', can be seen clearly.

(capital rector), constructed one stone statue, upward for the King, downward for the leaders of the states and prefectures, family members of the *yizi* 邑子 (society sons) and the old to gain blessing and pursue for the Way.

神龜元年歲在戊戌，九月癸未朔三日乙酉，□邑主呂雙都唯那造石像一區，上為國主，下為州郡令長、察土人民、邑子家眷老[者]承福求道。⁷⁰

From this sentence pattern, ‘*wei* 為 (for)...*zao* 造 (construct)...’ (or ‘*zao*...*wei*...’), if we followed the idea of *Guangming Daily*, could the appearance of those statues correspond with that of those figures whom the statues were constructed for? Although in the Northern Dynasties, Sui and Tang Dynasties, there were very few practices that corresponded the face of an emperor to that of a Buddha, such as the relationship between the face of the Vairocana Buddha 盧舍那大佛 of Fengxian Temple 奉先寺 in Longmen 龍門 and the face of Wu Zetian 武則天 (624–705, r. 690–705),⁷¹ it was limited to the face. However, as described by *Guangming Daily*, the practice of turning figures prayed for (gender identity, body image, clothing, etc.) into Buddha statues was undoubtedly inconceivable.

According to scholars studying statues, those statues with inscriptions of ‘*wei*... *zao*...’ sentence patterns were statues of certain types, such as statues of Śākyamuni, statues of Maitreya, statues of Avalokiteśvara, statues of Amitayus, statues of Vairocana and so on.⁷² It was not to be taken for granted that Buddha statues were built according to the ‘personal image’ of the person prayed for. Although the date of the above-mentioned inscriptions was slightly later than the Northern Liang, the ‘one stone statue’ mentioned in these inscriptions mostly referred to statues of Śākyamuni and other conventional ones.

⁷⁰ Nanjing Bowuyuan, comp., *Langya Wang*, 144–45.

⁷¹ Tong, *Yanfeng sulong ji*, 124.

⁷² See Hou, *Wu liu shiji beifang minzhong Fojiao xinyang*, 87–247. Refer to the new research, Kuramoto, *Hōchō bukkyō zōzōmei kenkyū*.

Moreover, I once saw a wonderful Gilt-bronze statue of seated Śākyamuni Buddha in the Taipei Palace Museum in 2011, and the inscription on the pedestal read:

On the 10th day of the 9th month, the first year of Taihe (477), Anxi County Diyang □□ was willing to take the body to construct one Śākyamuni Buddha for mother □□.

太和元年九月十日, 安熹縣堤陽□□願己身為□□母造釋加闍佛.⁷³

Here also was a statue ‘constructed for the mother’, which was clearly pointed out to be Śākyamuni. Although there were no materials in history indicating which Buddha statue Juqu Mengxun built for his mother, he was a person who was so sincere in his worship of Buddhism, with top-ranking monks like Tanwuchen around, that he was unlikely to construct a Buddha statue ‘with obvious characteristics of the female body’ as *Guangming Daily* described.

Meanwhile, this sentence pattern, ‘wei...zao...’, was not only seen in the Buddhist Kingdom of Northern Liang,⁷⁴ but also in the southern Buddhist kingdom—Liang 梁.⁷⁵ *Jiankang shilu* 建康實錄 [Veritable Records from Jiankang] said as follows:

This year was the first year of Zhengguang 正光 (520), during the reign of Emperor Ming of Northern Wei 魏明帝 (510–528, r. 515–528). Emperor Wu [of Liang] (464–549, r. 502–549) constructed the Great Aijing Temple for Emperor Wen (430–490), which was eighteen li away from the county. In the fourth year of Datong 大統 (529), another Buddha statue of Chandana was built, which was sixteen-foot high originally, but in fact exceeded two *chi* 尺 when being measured. Thus, it was eighteen-foot high. The clothes lines and limbs were also measured again, and they exceeded one and a half *chi*.

⁷³ The text can be seen in Cai, ed., *Jingcai yibai*, 82.

⁷⁴ Tang Yongtong (Tang, *Han Wei Liang Jin Nanbeichao Fojiaoshi*, 348) said, ‘Juqu’s Northern Liang, can be regarded as a Buddhist kingdom.’

⁷⁵ Chen, ‘Liang Wudi neidaochang zhong de wuzhe dahui’.

是歲，魏明帝正光元年也。置大愛敬寺，西南去縣十八里，武帝為太祖文皇帝造。大通四年，又造一丈六尺旃檀像，量之剩二尺，成丈八形，次衣文及手足，更重量，又剩一尺五分。⁷⁶

‘This year’, the paragraph mentioned, was the nineteenth year of Tianjian, the first lunar month in spring 天監十九年春正月,⁷⁷ and then the reign title was changed into ‘the first year of Putong 普通 (520)’. In July of that year, Emperor Ming of Beiwei changed his reign title as ‘the first year of Zhengguang 正光’. This sentence pattern, ‘construct... for...’, clearly shows us that the action was aimed at constructing a Buddha statue of Chandana 旃檀佛像, not in imitation of the image of Emperor Wu’s father. Therefore, when we interpreted Juqu Mengxun’s ‘construction a sixteen-foot high statue for the mother’, we should not read it literally as a female Buddha statue for his mother.

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Abbreviations

T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. See Bibliography, Secondary Sources, Takakusu, Watanabe, et al.

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⁷⁶ *Jiankang shilu*, 17.476.

⁷⁷ Some scholars believe that ‘in history, there is no such year as the 19th year of Tianjian 天監’. See Mugitani, ‘Liang Tianjian shiba nian jinian’, 93. However, based on the historical materials of *Jiankang shilu* and the excavated tomb bricks, I found that ‘the 19th year of Tianjian’ did exist, but it did not exist for ‘one year’.

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A Virtuoso Nun in the North: Situating the Earliest-known Dated Biography of a Buddhist Nun in East Asia^{*}

STEPHANIE BALKWILL

University of Winnipeg

s.balkwill@uwinnipeg.ca

Abstract: This paper introduces and critically discusses the earliest dated biography of an East Asian Buddhist nun that is known to us, and also provides a complete annotated translation of said biography. The text in question is the entombed biography and eulogy (*muzhiming* 墓誌銘) of a Buddhist nun whose name was Shi Sengzhi 釋僧芝 (d. 516 CE). Sengzhi held high positions at the court of the Northern Wei 北魏 (386–534 CE) and on her death was given an imperial burial that included the commissioning of an entombed biography. That biography is the only source that attests to Sengzhi's life and it tells the rare story of how Sengzhi modelled a new form womanhood on the rise in her time: An elite Buddhist womanhood which was renunciatory but not eremitic. By analyzing Sengzhi's life and works, the paper argues that the study of entombed biography sufficiently challenges prior understandings of Buddhist renunciation for women by locating and historically contextualizing the precise moment of the earliest attestation of Buddhist nuns in China.

Keywords: Northern Wei, entombed biography, renunciation, Medieval China

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Introduction: Who was Sengzhi?

The entombed biography and eulogy (*muzhiming* 墓誌銘) of the late fifth/early sixth century Buddhist nun, Shi Sengzhi 釋僧芝 (d. 516 CE) contains the earliest-known dated biography of a Buddhist nun that we have for all of East Asia. Dated to 516 of the Common Era, the entombed biography is from China's Mount Mang 邙山, which, just outside of Luoyang 洛陽, has served as the site for the imperial mausoleums of a number of Chinese dynasties. The very location of Sengzhi's tomb, therefore, reveals an intriguing historical reality: Sengzhi was both a Buddhist nun and a courtier. In fact, Sengzhi may have been one of the Northern Wei's (386–534 CE) longest-serving court members. Appointed in 477 of the Common Era by Empress Dowager Wenming 文明 (d. 490 CE), Sengzhi attended the court's move from Datong 大同 to Luoyang, where she became Emperor Xuanwu's 宣武 (r. 499–515 CE) favourite teacher of the Buddhist law. From this position of influence, Sengzhi was able to have her own niece appointed at court. Rather infamously, that niece would also go on to become a favourite of Xuanwu, bearing him a son and ascending to her own regency government as Empress Dowager Ling 靈 (d. 528 CE) after the emperor's death. Sengzhi died in the very year of her niece's seizure of ultimate power. That year was 516 of the Common Era and, by that time, Sengzhi had served the court for thirty-nine years—an almost unheard-of career for a servant of a court so unstable as that of the Northern Wei. As we will see in this study, both her gender and her religion contributed to her ability to serve the court for as long as she did.

Though the earliest, Sengzhi's entombed biography is not the only sixth century entombed biography of a Buddhist nun from Mount Mang. So far, the site has revealed four entombed biographies of Buddhist nuns from the late Northern Wei, all of them buried during the reign of Sengzhi's niece, the Empress Dowager Ling. In chronological order by year of death, they are:

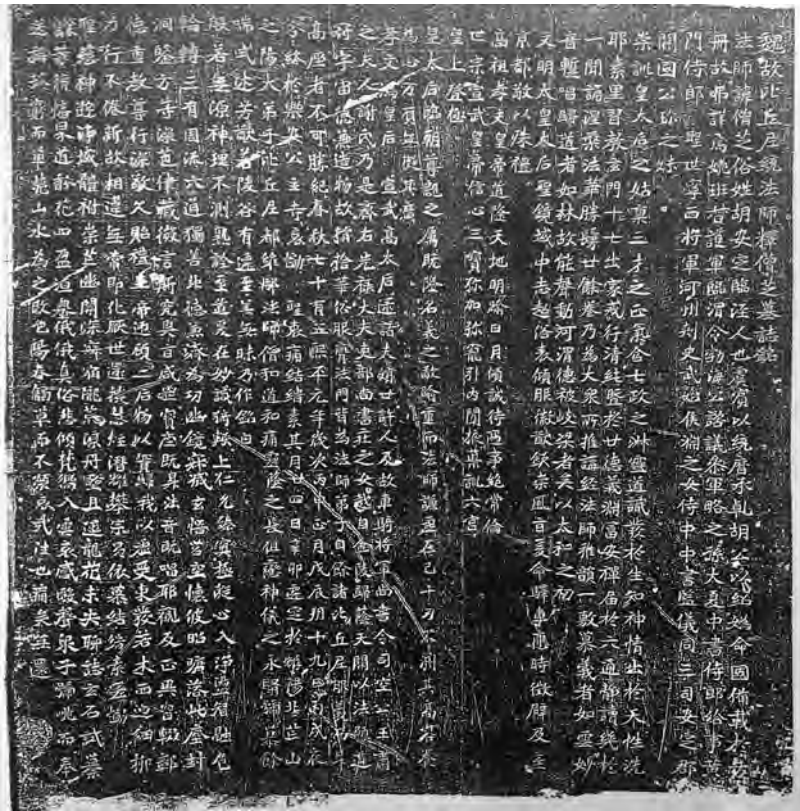


FIG. 1 The *muzhiming* of the Wei Superintendent of the *Bhiksuni*s, the Dharma Master, Shi Sengzhi 魏故比丘尼統法師釋僧芝墓誌銘. Zhao and Zhao, *Heluo muke shiling*, 20.

1. From 516, the entombed biography of Shi Sengzhi (Figure 1), who died in the Nunnery of the Le'an Princess (*le'an gongzhu si* 樂安公主寺);
2. From 518, the entombed biography for the Nun Ciyi 慈義 from the imperial nunnery of the Northern Wei, the Jeweled Radiance (*Yaoguang* 耀光),¹ otherwise known as Xuanwu's official empress, Empress Gao 高, whose death was likely at

¹ Tomb Memorial of Gao Ying, Empress to Shizong 世宗后高英墓誌, transcription from Zhao, *Han Wei Nanbeichao muzhi buibian*, 102.

the hands of Empress Dowager Ling and in retaliation for her own assassination attempt;

3. From 524, the entombed biography of the nun Ciqing 慈慶, likely also from the Jeweled Radiance Nunnery;²
4. From 529, the entombed biography of a princess from the Tuoba 拓拔 royal family who spent her life trying to cultivate the Buddhist path despite having to marry twice.³

These three other women who identified as Buddhist nuns (*bhikṣuṇī* 比丘尼) and were buried alongside Sengzhi at Mount Mang all partook of a certain form of religious monasticism for women of the period that has been studied: the widow turned nun.⁴ Remarkably, however, these three entombed biographies are the earliest dated attestations of such a phenomenon that have yet surfaced across the entirety of East Asia. As for Ciqing's status as a widow, her entombed biography tells us that she was the wife of a rebel leader who was brought into the menial service of the court after her husband's rebellion was quashed. From this low rank, she rose to take on roles of great responsibility in the women's chambers and 'left home' (*chujia* 出家) as part of her transition from rebel wife to female courtier—a transition to a form of Buddhist womanhood that enabled her rise to elite status. As for Ciyi's widowhood, her biography is largely void of language that might point to her strong Buddhist affiliation and simply tells us that she became a nun after becoming a widow. The text says: 'After the Emperor died, she determinedly aspired to the Gate of the Way, left normal custom, and became a nun'.⁵

² The *muzhiming* of the Northern Wei *bhikṣuṇī* Ciqing (Wang Zhong'er), dated the seventh day of the fifth month of the fifth year of the Reign of Gleaming Orthodoxy (June 23, 524 CE) 魏故比丘尼慈慶 (王鍾兒) 墓志銘 (正光五年五月七日), transcription from Zhao, *Han Wei Nanbeichao muzhi huibian*, 146.

³ The *muzhiming* of the *bhikṣuṇī* of the Yuan family from the Great Awakening Nunnery 大覺寺比丘元尼墓誌銘, transcription from Zhao, *Han Wei Nanbeichao muzhi huibian*, 261.

⁴ Chikusa, 'Formation', 3–20.

⁵ Zhao, *Han Wei Nanbeichao muzhi huibian*, 197.

Indeed, Ciyi was an empress who became a nun after the death of her husband, Emperor Xuanwu, and likely as a means of retaining social status and personal safety. Finally, as to the widowhood of the Tuoba Princess who carried the dharma name Zhishou 智首, her biography details her strong desire to lead the life of a Buddhist nun just as it chronicles how she was forced to marry twice. The biography further tells us that while married she lived the life of a nun at home by refusing luxuries and giving herself over to menial work such as cleaning and the care of her step children and that only after the death of her second husband was she able to adopt the rules of Buddhist discipline and take up residence in a small nunnery where she soon became sick and died.

Though Sengzhi shares the circumstances of her tomb and burial with these three other women who were of the imperial elite and who were recognized as Buddhist nuns, her life and her biography are markedly different than theirs. Unlike all of the others who were court women first and nuns second, Sengzhi came to court as a Buddhist nun. Her renunciation is not related to any misadventures in her marital life as she is never recorded to have been married. For Sengzhi, as we will see, it was her reputation as an eminent Buddhist nun that brought her to court and not the potential loss of courtly status through the death of a male partner that forced her into the imperial nunnery. Sengzhi was a Buddhist nun as her primary vocation and was given a number of honours in this role. It may also have been that her status as a Buddhist nun allowed her a degree of independent mobility that facilitated her move to court, of which we are unaccustomed to seeing in women of the medieval period. Her biography tells us that Sengzhi traveled far and wide in the service of the Buddha and enjoyed trans-regional connections with Buddhists in the southern dynasty of the Liu-Song 劉宋 (420–479 CE), perhaps even being ordained there. In sum, Sengzhi's story is the earliest we have that documents the rise of a new type of womanhood in East Asian society: virtuosi Buddhist womanhood. This form of womanhood is connected to the Buddhism of elite court widows because both types of women shared the same physical space, the court and its nunnery; however, it is also distinct from the Buddhism of court widows because it is the product of a quite different motivation for

monastic renunciation. Unmarried yet virtuous, prestigious at death but not at birth, Sengzhi is a case study in the types of social opportunities that the arrival of Buddhism in China brought to the lives of women. In her case, the longevity and prestige of her position at court was rooted in her own positionality as an unmarried woman appointed at court not through marriage, but through religion. The following translation and study will focus on just how Sengzhi came to hold this role in her life. In other words, by showing how Sengzhi came to be in possession of the ranks that she did, this study aims to draw attention to the rarity of her very existence. Arguing that Sengzhi was unique in her time, this study seeks to both situate Sengzhi as an example of early forms of renunciation for women in China while also showing that—far from leading eremitic lives—virtuosi Buddhist nuns were able to leverage their Buddhist identity into surprising places.

Translation: Sengzhi's Life Story

The Entombed Biography and Eulogy of the
Northern Wei Superintendent of the Nuns and Dharma Master,
Shi Sengzhi⁶ 魏故比丘尼統法師釋僧芝墓誌銘

The Dharma Master's honoured name was 'Zhi' and her secular family name was 'Hu' and she was from Lingjing in Anding.⁷ As the years went by, Yu Bin⁸ handed down his position and then Duke Hu,⁹ by continuing

⁶ In general, this translation follows the edited version of the epigraph published by Wang 'Beiwei Sengzhi muzhi kaoyi'. However, I have chosen to retain hard breaks in the lines of text as they appear on the epigraph itself as, I feel, there are semantic reasons for the breaks that should be retained in the translation.

⁷ Modern day Zhenyuan 鎮原 county in Gansu 甘肅 province.

⁸ Yu Bin 虞賓, or Dan Zhu 丹朱, is the supposed son mythical sage king Yao 堯 who was passed over for succession due to his incompetence and, instead, set up his territory in the state of Yu. The inclusion of this narrative in the lineage section of the biography should be read as an effort to embed the family clan within the ancient rulers of Chinese history and is reminiscent of the *Book of the*

the Gui¹⁰ lineage, governed the kingdom. A thorough account [of this] is in the classical writings and therefore is not detailed herein.¹¹ [Sengzhi] was the descendent of [Hu] Lüe, the Protector General Who Oversaw the Yao troops,¹² the Director of Linwei,¹³ Duke of Bohai, and Administrative Advisor. She was the daughter of [Hu] Yuan (d.u.), the Attendant Gentleman of the Secretariat for Great Xia 大夏 (417–431),¹⁴ the Palace Attendant,

Wei's (*Wei shu* 魏書) assertion that the Tuoba are themselves descendants of the Yellow Emperor (*Wei shu* 1.1).

⁹ Duke Hu, also known as Duke Hu of Chen 陳 (b. 1082 BCE), was the first ruler to govern the territory of Chen and may have introduced that family name to Chinese history. Duke Hu is said to be a descendent of Yao and Shun 舜.

¹⁰ Gui is both the family name of Duke Hu and, according to the Han-dynasty Dictionary, the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 [Investigating the Origins of Chinese Characters], is also the name of the traditional territory where Shun resided.

¹¹ Though the text here tells us that a thorough account of this is found in classical texts, the truth is not quite so clear. Wang Shan provides a discussion of this problematic lineage of the Hu Clan, see Wang, 'Beiwei Sengzhi muzhi kaoyi', 89. The point with this ancestral lineage is very clearly an attempt at writing the Hu Clan from Anding—the Hu Clan of the Empress Dowager and her father, Hu Guozhen—into legitimate forms of Han Chinese history. This is noteworthy for Sengzhi died in 516 CE, the very year that the Empress Dowager made her move to the throne to rule behind her son, the legitimate Tuoba male ancestor.

¹² According to Hucker, the title of 'Protector General' was given to an individual responsible for presiding over submitted alien peoples in Western China (Hucker, *Dictionary*, 539). That Hu Lüe was the Protector General of the Yao troops makes historical sense for it was the ethnically non-Chinese Yao clan who ruled over the Later Qin 後秦 (384–417 CE) dynasty—a short lived, northern dynasty toppled by the Xianbei Xia 夏 dynasty (407–431 CE), which, as we will see, Sengzhi's relatives also served.

¹³ Linwei 臨渭 is a district in modern-day Shaanxi 陝西.

¹⁴ The reference of the Great Xia, here, is a specific reference a short-lived, northern dynasty of the Sixteen Kingdoms, the Xia ruled by Xiongnü Helian 赫連 family. The Hu family evidently served that dynasty until its collapse and then, once the Empress Dowager came to court, was able to serve the new dynasty of the Northern Wei.

General who Thoroughly Understands the World and Pacified the Four Quarters, the Regional Inspector of Hezhou, and the Marquis of Wushi.¹⁵ She was the younger sister of [Hu Guo] Zhen¹⁶, Palace Attendant, Supervisor of the Secretariat with Authority Equal to that of the Three Offices, and the Dynasty-founding Duke of Anding Commandery. 法師諱芝, 俗姓胡, 安定臨經人也。虞賓以統曆承軋, 胡公以紹嫡命國, 備載於方/冊, 故弗詳焉。姚班督護軍, 臨渭令, 勃海公 諮議參軍略之孫, 大夏中書侍郎, 給事黃/門侍郎, 聖世寧四將軍, 河州刺史, 武始候淵之女, 侍中, 中書監, 儀同三司, 安定郡/開國公珣之妹。/

The aunt of the Venerating the Teachings Empress Dowager,¹⁷ [Sengzhi] was endowed with the true vitality of the three capabilities¹⁸ and embraced the refined energy of the seven governances.¹⁹ Her knowledge

¹⁵ Hu Yuan holds titles that confer on him regional authority in military and governance; however, his titles place him closer to his ancestral home. As Regional Inspector (*cishi* 刺史) of Hezhou 河州 (modern day Linxia 臨夏 city, Gansu), he would have been responsible for overseeing all administrative matters in the area. He held these posts under the Xiongnü Xia kingdom.

¹⁶ Hu Guozhen was the father of the Empress Dowager Ling and was brought to court by her to serve as an official. He has a biography in the *Book of the Wei* (*Wei shu* 92.1833-6).

¹⁷ The previously discussed Empress Dowager Ling. The reference to her being the 'Venerating the Teachings' Empress Dowager suggests an official title of some sort. The *Book of the Wei* records that she lived in the Palace of Venerating the Teachings (*Wei shu* 31.743) where there were also official guards of the place called 'Guards of Venerating the Teachings' (*Wei shu* 31.743) and, finally, that there was also a 'Venerating the Teachings Buddhist Monastery' where the puppet emperor, Emperor Jiemin 節閔 (r. 531–532 CE), was held at the end of the dynasty (*Wei shu* 21.278).

¹⁸ According to the *Book of Changes*' discussion of the trigrams, the 'Three Capabilities' (*sancal* 三才) are heaven, earth, and man, each of which possesses two qualities: for heaven, there is *yin* and *yang*; for earth, there is softness and hardness; for man, there is benevolence and righteousness. To be endowed with all such things, therefore, is akin to saying that Sengzhi is replete with every quality that founds and sustains the harmony in the world.

¹⁹ It is unclear what exactly the 'Seven Governances' or *qizheng* 七政 refers to.

of the Way grew forth from innate knowledge and her spiritual demeanor came forth from her Heaven-sent nature. Clean of all falsity and pure on the inside, she studied and taught the arcane gate. She left home at seventeen and her practice of the precepts was clear and pure. When she reached the age of twenty, her moral virtue was rich and profound. By abiding in concentration, she had arrived at the six supernormal powers²⁰ and so could serenely recite many [sūtras] after hearing them one time. She chanted more than twenty scrolls of sūtras, including the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*,²¹ the *Lotus Sūtra*,²² the *Śrīmālā Sūtra*,²³ and thus, the great assembly recommended her to lecture on the sūtras. With a single exposition in the Dharma-master's elegant prosody, those who admired her righteousness [amassed] like clouds; with a fleeting chant in her marvelous voice, those who took refuge in the Way were [thick] like a forest.²⁴ Thus, she could shake the Yellow and the Wei Rivers with her voice, and reach both the Qi and the Liang mountains with her virtue.²⁵ This was in the beginning of the Taihe era (477–499 CE). 崇訓皇太后之姑，稟三才之正氣，含七政之淑靈。道識發於生知，神情出於天性，洗/耶素里，習教玄門。十七出家，戒行清純，暨於廿，德義淵

The *Book of History* (*Shangshu* 尚書) identifies a group of astral constellations as the governances, and yet in the *Annals of the Historian*, the governances are given as heaven, earth, man, and the four seasons. In any case, the usage is the same as in the 'Three Capabilities' above in that the ascription of them to Sengzhi is for the purpose of showing the nun's virtue, a virtue endowed by the cosmos itself and acted out in society.

²⁰ This is a Buddhist term signifying the powers that a highly advanced being on the path to Buddhahood has attained through their practice and includes such capabilities as a divine eye. Sengzhi's advanced practice of meditation have been thought to have placed her on this path.

²¹ A reference to the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra* (T no. 374: *Da boniepan jing* 大般涅槃經).

²² A reference to the *Lotus Sūtra* (T no. 262: *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經).

²³ A reference to the *Shengman shizi hou yisheng da fangbian fangguang jing* 勝鬘師子吼一乘大方便方廣經 [Sūtra of Queen Śrīmālā of the Lion's Roar; Skt. **Śrīmālādevī-siṃha-nāda-sūtra*; T no. 353].

²⁴ Both 'like clouds' and 'like a forest' are poetic ways of saying that there were many of them.

²⁵ These are two mountains in modern-day Shaanxi province.

富。安禪屈於六通，靜讀幾於一聞。誦《涅槃》《法華》《勝鬘》廿餘卷，乃為大眾所推講經。法師雅韻一敷，慕義者如雲；妙音暫唱，歸道者如林。故能聲動河渭，德被岐梁者矣。以太和之初。

Empress Dowager Wenming was in the imperial city²⁶ determined to transcend worldly custom. Greatly admiring [Sengzhi's] mastery and venerating her manner and intent, she consequently commanded the postal carriage to immediately and officially summon Sengzhi. When [Sengzhi] arrived at the capital, she was venerated with extraordinary protocols. 文明太皇太后聖鏡城中，志超俗表，傾服徽猷，欽崇風旨，爰命驛車，應時徵辟。及至京都，敬以殊禮。 /

Gaozu, Emperor Xiaowen, whose path brought abundance to heaven and earth, and whose brilliance exceeded the sun and the moon, poured all of his sincerity into his receptions [with Sengzhi] [such that] the matter transcended the ordinary principle of human relationships. 高祖孝文皇帝道隆天地，明踰日月，傾誠待遇，事絕常倫。 /

Shizong, Emperor Xuanwu entrusted his heart to the three treasures, bestowed more and more favors on her, and lead her into the women's quarters to instruct the six palaces.²⁷ 世宗宣武皇帝信心三寶，彌加彌寵，引內闈掖，導訓六官。 /

The Emperor²⁸ ascended the throne. 皇上登極 /

²⁶ Here, I am following a reference in the *Book of the Wei* in translating 聖鏡 as a metaphorical reference to the Emperor: 祚對曰，‘陛下聖鏡照臨，論才授職，進退可否，黜陟幽明，品物既彰，人倫有序，豈容聖詔一行而有差異。’ (*Wei shu* 64:1422). As such, I am rendering 聖鏡城 as imperial city, which makes sense given Empress Dowager Feng's location as ruling monarch. The term also shows up in the eulogy of the *muzhiming* of Northern Wei general Wen Yuan 元文 (d. 532), who died as a nine-year old. Here it is again used metaphorically, though in reference to the child. The inscription can be found at: http://kanji.zinbun.kyoto-u.ac.jp/db-machine/imgv/takuhon/type_a/html/nan0358x.html (c.f., Zhao, comp., *Han Wei Nanbeichao muzhi huibian*, 297). Alternatively, 聖鏡 could potentially be understood for the homophone 聖境, but I do not think that that is the case here.

²⁷ The six palaces refer to the bedchambers of the King's principal wives (Hucker, *Dictionary*, 318). Hence, Sengzhi was put in charge of all the matters of the women's court.

When Empress Dowager Ling held court, she honoured her kinsfolk and favored them, and [so] respect for [Sengzhi's] name was more than doubled. And yet the Dharma Master's expanse of inborn humility was such that not even 1,000 *ren*²⁹ could measure its height and the capacity for cultivation in her heart was such that not even 10,000 *kui* could compare to its width.³⁰ 皇太后臨朝, 尊親屬既隆, 名義之敬踰重, 而法師謙虛在己, 千仞不測其高, 容養/為心, 萬頃無擬其廣. /

Empress Dowager Feng 馮 of Xiaowen 孝文³¹ and Empress Gao 高 of Xuanwu³² and more than twenty wives and concubines—even Madam Xie, the wife of the former General of the Carriages and Horses and the Minister of Works, Wang Su 王肅³³ who was herself the daughter of The Great minster of the Glowing Blessing of the Office of Fasting of the Right and

²⁸ This is a reference to the current reigning emperor at the time of Sengzhi's death, the then six-year-old Emperor Xiaoming 孝明 (r. 516–528 CE).

²⁹ *Ren* 仞 is a unit of measure equal to about eight feet.

³⁰ *Kui* 頃 is a unit of measure equal to 100 *mou* 畝, or 1.5 acres.

³¹ This is a reference to Emperor Xiaowu's first empress from the Feng clan, Feng Qing, who also would have been living at the nunnery of the Northern Wei court.

³² This is a reference to Emperor Xuanwu's official Empress Gao who, by this time, would have been a widow living at the imperial nunnery of the Northern Wei court.

³³ Wang Su is mentioned in many places in the *Book of the Wei*, with connections to Emperors Xiaowen and Xuanwu; however, he does not appear to have his own biography in the *Book of the Wei*. Originally from Shandong, he became a minister at the Northern Wei court. The *Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Luoyang* (*Luoyang qielan ji* 洛陽伽藍記) records that he built a nunnery for his first wife, Madam Xie. According to the text, Madam Xie was Wang Su's first wife who was replaced and dejected when Wang Su came north to take a position in the Northern Wei and marry a Tuoba Princess. Much to Wang Su's embarrassment, the text says, the two women engaged in a public poetry battle over their shared man, and this resulted in Wang Su building the nunnery for his first wife to live out her days in. The story of the nunnery and the poetry battle as well as a lengthy description of Wang Su's habits are all detailed in *Luoyang qielan ji*, T no. 2092: 1011b09–c20.

The Secretariat of the History Section, [Xie] Zhuang 莊 (d.u.) who came from Jinling³⁴—sought refuge in the seclusion of the imperial palace.³⁵ Considering the way of the Dharma Master to crown the universe, and her virtue to be commensurate with the creation of things, [the women] therefore cast aside their extravagant customs, clothed their bosoms in the gate of the teaching, and all became disciples of the Dharma Master. From all of these nuns so cloaked in their integrity, those who rose up in rank and those who took the high seat were too many to record. When [Sengzhi] had reached seventy-five years, in the first year of the Xiping era (516), which was a *bingjia* year, during the first month, on a *bingwu* day nineteen days after the new moon, which was a *wuchen* day (March 7, 516 CE), she came to the end of her life in the Nunnery of the Le'an Princess.³⁶ The Emperor was overcome with grief and the clergy and the laity were bound together in mourning. Then, on the twenty-fourth day of the month, a *xinmao* day (March 12, 516 CE), they buried her north of Luoyang on the south slope of Mount Mang. Her great disciples, the *bhikṣuṇīs*, *duweinas*,³⁷ and

³⁴ Jinling is a reference to modern day Nanjing 南京, which would have been the capital of the Southern dynasty, the Liang (502–557 CE), during the time in question. This region had long been important for the development of Buddhism in China, particularly for women, as it was the court of the Liu Song (420–479 CE), whose capital was also in Jiankang, which first sponsored full canonical ordination for Buddhist women. Madame Xie, the wife of Wang Su, was herself a southerner from Jinling who may have known of Sengzhi from the South prior to coming to the North. Wang Su's wife was a member of the southern elite and her father had held positions of influence at the court of the Liu Song.

³⁵ The only Buddhist building to be built inside the palace walls of the Northern Wei palace in Luoyang was the Yaoguang 瑤光 nunnery, which the *Luoyang qielan ji* states was for the express use of court widows (*T* no. 2092: 1003a01–a28). I suspect that it is to this nunnery that the women of the court frequented, doing so under the leadership of the nunneries most prestigious residents: the widowed Empress Gao and the widowed Empress Feng.

³⁶ We know little about the Le'an Princess other than that she was an orphaned daughter of Emperor Xianwen and sibling of the then child Emperor Xiaowen. It is likely that Sengzhi was her caregiver at court and that, if so, the Princess repaid Sengzhi's kindnesses by lodging her at her personally sponsored nunnery.

Dharma Masters, Senghe 僧和 and Daohe 道和, mourning the long-dimming of [her] numinous shadow and yearning for the eternal cover of [her] divine authority, wailed [for her] until they lost their voices, and ceremonially spoke about [her] fragrant merit. Though hills have changed to valleys, [her] great goodness will never dim. The eulogy said: 孝文馮皇后, 宣武高太后逮諸夫嬪廿許人, 及故車騎將軍, 尚書令, 司空公王肅/之夫人謝氏, 乃是齋右光祿大夫, 吏部尚書莊之女, 越自金陵, 歸蔭天闕. 以法師道/冠宇宙, 德兼造物, 故捐捨 (=捨) 華俗, 服胸法門, 皆為法師弟子. 自餘諸比丘尼服義而昇/高座者不可勝紀. 春秋七十有五, 熙平元年歲次丙申正月戊辰朔十九日丙戌夜/分, 終於樂安公主寺. 哀慟聖表, 痛結縈素, 其月廿四日辛卯, 遷窆於洛陽北芒山/之陽. 大弟子比丘尼都維那法師僧和, 道和, 痛靈蔭之長但, 戀神儀之永翳, 號慕餘/喘, 式述芳猷. 若陵谷有遷, 至善無昧. 乃作銘曰:

Her <i>prajña</i> was without origin,	般若無源	
The essence of her soul was without measure.	神理不測	[tɕʰik]
Her ripe discourses reached the Way,	熟詮至道	
From whence was her mastery.	爰在妙識	[ɕik]
Lo, that one of supreme benevolence,	猗歟上仁	
Filled with attainments to the utmost!	充臻寶極	[gik]
Wholeheartedly she entered into purity	凝心入淨	
Cleansing her wisdom, she melted all material forms.	澀智融色/°	[ɕik]

³⁷ According to Jonathan Silk, although the origin of the term *weina* is something of a mystery, the words are likely aligned with the Sanskrit *karmadāna*. In his study, Silk shows how the *weinuo* were involved in the intricate day-to-day running of the monastery, including locking the gates at night and keeping time. He also presents evidence that the appointment of a *weina* was to come from the monastic community and not from the laity (Silk, *Managing Monks*, 127ff). In her review of Silk, Kieffer-Pulz has also commented on the meaning of the word *karmadāna*, and though she understands it differently, she still relates it to the task of administering the monastery (Kieffer-Pulz, 'Review', 80). In reference to the women leading Sengzhi's funeral, they were *weinuo* of a metropolitan area, or *duweina*.

Turning the wheel of the three existences,	輪轉三有	
She completely manifested the six supernatural powers. ³⁸	周流六通	[tʰəwŋ]
Individual goodness is not virtue;	獨善非德	
[and so] she also made merit from saving [others].	兼濟為功	[kəwŋ]
The serene water-mirror [of her mind] quietly extinguished	幽鏡寂滅	
her arcane awakening was like emptiness.	玄悟若空	[kʰəwŋ]
Harbouring that bright expanse,	懷彼昭曠	
She fell into this dust-laden [world].	落此塵封/	[puawŋ]
With clear insight in all directions,	洞鑒方等	
She deeply embraced the Basket of the Conduct. ³⁹	深苞律藏	[dzaŋ]
Her subtle words have now ended	微言斯究	
but their profound meanings all flourish.	奧旨咸鬯	[tʰiaŋ]
As soon as she ascended the treasured seat,	寶座既昇	
Did her dharma voice sing,	法音既唱	[cʰiaŋ]
Converting heterodox views to orthodox ones,	邪 ⁴⁰ 觀反正	
And blocking the spread of spurious teachings.	異旨輟障 ⁴¹	[ciaŋ]
Her virtue was heavy, and her teachings were honoured,	德重教尊	
Her behaviour was profound, and her prestige was long lasting.	行深敬久	[kuw]
She bequeathed proper etiquette to three emperors, ⁴²	貽禮三帝	
And welcomed [the chance] to care for two empresses. ⁴³	迎順二后	[həw]

³⁸ My reading here disagrees with Wang's: whereas Wang has 道, I have 通. This emendation is based on three factors: 1) the rhyme; 2) a re-examination of the rubbing of the epigraph which does appear to read as 通 when compared to other examples of 道 on the epigraph; 3) popular Buddhist usage of the six supernatural powers (*liutong* 六通) from the time period.

³⁹ A reference to the *Vinaya-Piṭaka*, the canons of Buddhist law.

⁴⁰ Wang Shan's texts corrects 耶 to 邪.

⁴¹ Corrected from 鄣.

⁴² This is a reference to Emperors Xianwen, Xiaowen, and Xuanwu, whom Sengzhi would have had a direct hand in raising.

By means of truth, she returned to things,	物以實歸	
By means of emptiness, she approached the self.	我以虛受	[dzuw]
Just as the East gives rise to the <i>ruomu</i> tree,	東發若木	
And the West brings forth the delicate willow.	西迫細柳/	[luw]
Her strength and behavior never wearied	力行不倦	
Although new and old are mutually at odds.	新故相違	[huj]
Impermanence is nothing other than transformation,	無常即化	
And so, world-weary, she returned to the pivot.	厭世還機	[kij]
The lamp wick of her wisdom burns concealed:	慧炷潛耀	
What can we rely on to reach our Elder?	攀宗曷依	[?ij]
In yearning, monastic and lay are bound together,	慕結縈素	
Lamenting and mourning for her care.	嗟慟/聖慈	[dzi]
Her spirit travels to the pure city	神遊淨城	
While her body is interred on the lofty [Mount] Mang;	體附崇芒	[man]
With its dark passes, its deep serenity,	幽關深寂	
And its old mounds, wild and cool,	宿隴荒涼	[lian]
[There] cinnabar ravines are linked together	丹壑且連 ⁴⁴	
And the dragon flowers ⁴⁵ never end.	龍花未央	[?ian]
With these mere notices in this black stone,	聊誌玄石	
we sound out our yearning for her lingering fragrance,	試慕/餘芳	[p ^h uan]

⁴³ It is difficult to conjecture exactly which empresses these two would be, but I suspect that this is a reference to the two ruling empresses that bookended the life of Sengzhi: Empress Dowager Wenming who brought her to court, and Empress Dowager Ling who Sengzhi brought to court.

⁴⁴ My reading, here, disagrees with Wang's transcription, who records this as 遊; however, given the rhyme, a re-examination of this character was necessary and indeed the rubbing of the epigraph could appear to be read as 連, as I have it here.

⁴⁵ *Mesuna Ferrea*, the tree under which Maitreya will attain Buddhahood.

[In order to] cultivate and disseminate her Way in the world.	修播界道	
The fragrance of flowers fills all four directions,	翻花四盈	[jiaŋ]
and the Nirvana Carriage ⁴⁶ is high and lofty.	洄輦俄俄	
Both monastic and lay are overcome with melancholy:	真俗悲傾	[k ^h wiaŋ]
Brahma-sounds enter the clouds	梵嚮入雲	
As do mournful and sour dirges.	哀感酸聲	[ciaŋ]
Her disciples weep and wail as they take part in the procession,	眾子號咷而奉/送	
calling themselves poor orphans and lonely rejects.	稱孤窮而單輦	[gwiaŋ]
The mountains and rivers have lost their lustre for her,	山水為之改色	
Spring has stirred the grasses, yet there is no thriving.	陽春觸草而不	[hwiaŋ]
Oh! She is gone.	哀哉往也	[jia]
Such sadness! There is no return.	痛矣無還	[zwian]

⁴⁶ This translation is conjectural and based on both context and contemporaneous usage. The characters themselves (*huanyu* 洄輦) make little sense together except when we consider that 洄 is perhaps an abbreviation for *nihuan* 泥洄, an early transliteration of the Sanskrit ‘*nirvāṇa*’. If we can accept that this might be the case, then we can find further support for the translation of ‘Nirvana Carriage’ in the *Book of the Southern Qi*, or *Nanqi shu* 南齊書, which in the biography of Liu Biao 劉彪 (d.u.) tells of a *nihuan* 泥洄輦 (our *yu* 輦 and this *yu* 輦 are variants), which was used in funerary practice to transport one to their tomb. Furthermore, the *Biographies of the Tripiṭaka Masters from the Great C’ien Monastery in the Great Tang* (*Da Tang Da C’ien si sanzang fashi zhuan* 大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳; T no. 2053) tells of a similar funerary carriage, also a *nihuan*. Finally, though less closely related, the Tang dynasty, *A Record of Personal Memos on Textual Explanation of the Marvelous Scripture* (*Miaojing wenju sizhi ji* 妙經文句私志記; X no. 596) refers to a similar Nirvana Carriage as a *niepanche* 涅槃車.

Discussion: Situating Sengzhi as a Court Servant

From the translation and introduction above, we know that Sengzhi had a quite different life than that of her contemporaries in religion entombed at Mount Mang. Unmarried and virtuous, Sengzhi stands as the earliest dated example we have on record of a virtuoso Buddhist nun in East Asia. Disconnected from men of rank and not relying on the sexual politics of the harem for her own status at court, Sengzhi's life story shows us for certain that at least one real-life woman in early medieval China was able to signal social prestige through Buddhist markers of attainment and how, relatedly, she was able to live life as a virtuous woman disconnected from the patrilineal family, which was the basic unit of social organization in medieval times. Somewhat counter-intuitively, however, her disconnection from the patrilineal family allowed her to serve the imperial clan and its affines; not planning to marry any of them, she was trusted to manage their lives. This is not the case for the other Northern Wei nuns whom we have entombed biographies for, and it should therefore be no surprise that Sengzhi held rank over them even though they were royalty and she was not.

Though like her contemporaries, the verbal act of becoming a nun as described in her biography uses language of 'leaving home', the biography makes it clear that the circumstances of her renunciation were unlike theirs. The text tells us that her renunciation came as a natural inclination from her own inborn religious qualities and not—as in the other cases mentioned above—as a result of her widowhood. Moreover, further different from the other women entombed at Mount Mang, Sengzhi's biography gives ample discussion of what having left home meant for her. Not only does it state that she 'left home', but it follows this up by telling the reader, in Buddhist language, that her 'practice of the precepts was clear and pure' and that 'she deeply embraced the Basket of the Conduct'—language which might suggest that she was legally ordained. This is an important distinction because, as is well known, the project of establishing canonical precept ordination for women in China was not an easy one,⁴⁷ and we have clear evidence of women living as nuns without any mention to them practicing the precepts, such

as in the case of Ciqing and Ciyi above. Furthermore, in looking for differences between her status and that of her contemporary's, Sengzhi's own religious name is rare among those of other Buddhist women of her time from the North of China, where we in fact have no evidence whatsoever of legal ordinations for women being undertaken. Containing three characters and not two, and with the first character, *Shi* 釋, signifying a belonging to the family of the Buddha Śākyamuni, Sengzhi's very name suggests that, perhaps, her status as a nun reflected her belonging to a community outside of the confines of the imperial nuns of the Northern Wei court. The only other reference to *Shi* as a religious name that I have found among individuals at the Northern Wei court is from the entombed biography of a high-ranking male monastic and political figure. His biography clearly states that upon ordination, he 'deposited his heart in the clan of *Shi*'.⁴⁸ Like Sengzhi, this particular monk carried important titles that gave him influence both at court and in the monastery. Given the similarities between their status at the Northern Wei court, the time frame in which they served that court, their burials at Mount Mang, and their shared religious name, we might assume that these two individuals belonged to a religious community that signaled prestigious and virtuosi practice to Northern Wei courtiers and religious practitioners. Perhaps this community was one that underwent legal and canonical ordination. Indeed, we know from later sources that *Shi* was—and remains—a common dharma name for legally ordained monastics, male and female.

However, if Sengzhi acquired legal rank as a Buddhist nun which set her apart from the other imperial nuns of the Northern Wei and

⁴⁷ Heirman, 'Chinese Nuns', 275–304.

⁴⁸ This is from the entombed biography of the Northern Wei Dharma Master Sengling and Great Superintendent of the *Śramaṇas*, who Clarifies Profundities (*Wei gu Zhaoxuan shamen Datong Sengling fashi muzhiming* 魏故昭玄沙門大統僧令法師墓誌銘). The entombed biography is currently in the Shaanxi Provincial Museum and a transcription of the biography is available online from the Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association (CBETA) at: http://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/zh/I0032_001.

allowed her to be their superior, how did she acquire that rank? In Sengzhi's own lifetime, full, canonical, precept ordination for women was just starting to be practiced in China, though only in the South. The first legal and canonical ordinations for women in China happened in 433 of the Common Era and with the support of the court of the Liu-Song,⁴⁹ which both helped to bring a requisite quorum of already-ordained Sinhalese nuns to the region as well as supported the translation of the *Dharmaguptaka-vinaya* (*Sifen lü* 四分律) under which the new Chinese nuns were ordained. According to her biography, Sengzhi 'left home' at the age of seventeen, which would have been in 458 of the Common Era,⁵⁰ and she subsequently came into the employ of the Northern Wei court in 477 CE, already an eminent nun. It is doubtful that if Sengzhi was ordained, she was ordained in the North. What little evidence we have attesting to the practice of monastic ordination for women in the Northern Wei suggests a clear lack of understanding of the requisites for ordination. For example, if we return to the story of Zhishou above, the title by which she is known on her entombed biography reveals that she, or those who wrote about her, misunderstood the very title that she held. A princess from the Tuoba family, Zhishou's title retains the Tuoba's sinified family name, Yuan 元; however, it does so in quite an odd configuration, labeling her a *biquyuanni* 比丘元尼. Her title has therefore been constructed with the family name of the royal house implanted directly into the middle of a three-character singular semantic unit: the Chinese transliteration of the Sanskrit

⁴⁹ The story of this first full ordination in 433 is found in the *Lives of the Nuns* (*Biqiuni zhuan* 比丘尼傳) in the biography of the nun Huiguo 慧果 (364–433), who was a leading pioneer in the struggle (*T* no. 2063: 937b18–c7).

⁵⁰ This date has been approached because of internal evidence in the biography which states that she died in 516 CE at the age of seventy-five, which would put her birth in 441 CE and her ordination, then, in 458 CE as the biography says that she was seventeen when ordained. Though we have no way of verifying this date of birth, we do know that her elder brother, Hu Guozhen, is supposed to have been born in 438 CE, which would make sense with the dates in her own lifetime.

bhikṣuṇī. From such a strange placement of the family name, we might conclude that this princess of the Tuoba house—or those who knew her by this title—did not have a clear grasp of what the underlying Sanskrit term meant or how to use it. In understanding this bizarre rendering, it might make sense to consider the *ni* 尼 for its homophone, *nī* 妮, meaning ‘young lady’ or ‘maiden’. In this way, the *bīqiuyuanni* would not be translated as a broken up transliterated term interspersed with a family name, but, rather, as ‘The *bīqiu* lady of the Yuan family’, wherein *bīqiu* itself is retained as a complete semantic unit designating the foreign concept of monasticism in its foreign language. This interpretation of the title is conjectural; however, it finds resonance with similarly intriguing naming practices seen in contemporaneous inscriptions.⁵¹ Whatever the case may be,

⁵¹ For example, in the Northern Wei Yao Boduo 姚伯多 stele of 496, which Stephen Bokenkamp has studied for its syncretic Buddhο-Daoist imagery and text (Bokenkamp, ‘Yao Boduo Stele’, 55–67), we see the Buddhist-inflected names and titles of a number of women, who are all listed as being of ‘Pure Faith’ (*qingxin* 清信). The designation of ‘Pure Faith’ is generally seen as a translation of the Sanskrit, *upāsaka/upāsikā*, generally taken to designate a lay member of the Buddhist community. In donor inscriptions, the designation ‘Pure Faith’ is generally followed by a third character that would complete the gendered nature of the Sanskrit term, so in Chinese, this is normally *shi* 士 for a male and *nü* 女 for a woman, making the terms as such: *qingxinshi* 清信士 and *qingxinnü* 清信女. However, in the Yao Boduo stele the titles are differently given and provide context, perhaps, for the *bīqiuyuanni*. Listed among the donors of that stele are five women, given as such: two unmarried women from the Hu clan who contributed to the donation of an image as lay patrons, or ‘Women of Pure Faith’ (*qingxinnü*): 1) Hu Nüjin of Pure Faith who Gives Offerings (*qingxin Hu Nüjin gongyang* 清信胡女進供養); 2) Hu Mienü of Pure Faith who Gives Offerings (*qingxin Hu Mienü gongyang* 清信胡篋女供養); 3) Liang Dongji of Pure Faith who Gives Offerings (*qingxin Liang Dongji gongyang* 清信梁冬姬供養); 4) Niu Jiang of Pure Faith Who Gives Offerings (*qingxin Niu Jiang gongyang* 清信牛姜供養); 5) Wang Zangnü of Pure Faith Who Gives Offerings (*qingxin Wang Zangnü gongyang* 清信王藏女供養). These titles all drop the gender signifier that would complete the term translated from Sanskrit because the names of

it is clear that the title of *bhikṣuṇī* was misunderstood as applied to the Tuoba princess. Such a fact calls into question the veracity of her legal claim to the title for it is unlikely that a requisite quorum of already-ordained *bhikṣuṇīs* would support the ordination with a wrongly-applied monastic title. Furthermore, one additional shred of evidence suggesting that the North did not understand the complications of legal and canonical ordination for Buddhist women comes from the *Book of the Wei's* 'Annals on Buddhism and Daoism' where, on the topic of female renunciation, the text does not reference the differing levels of ordination that exist for female novices and simply records that nuns have 500 rules, some of which are in addition to those of men.⁵² Moreover, the *Book of the Wei's* brief description of female ordination does not include mention of the complicated process for their legal ordination, which includes quorums of both already-ordained men and women, the latter of which was a major problem for the Liu-Song and their ordinations because there were no already-ordained nuns in China.

All of the above is to suggest that if Sengzhi was ordained, she was not ordained in the North. But, can we place her in the South? The biography tells us that it was due to her reputation for chanting Buddhist *sūtras* that Sengzhi earned renown as a nun and was thereby summoned to court service by Empress Dowager Wenming. The North has never been a producer of Buddhist textual translations or writings in the way that the South has been, and, in fact, the very *sūtras* that Sengzhi was famed for chanting connect her with those famed translation bureaus of the South. Specifically, her biography provides the earliest epigraphic attestation to a *sūtra* that features

the women in question all have characters that signify their gender. What this shows is that, in the period, there was both flexibility in how to create a title and, perhaps, different understandings (and misunderstandings in the case of grammatical gender) of what such new and exotic titles mean in their medieval Chinese context. An image of the stele is available, see Beijing Tushuguan Jinshizu, *Taben*, 3.26-8.

⁵² *Wei shu* 114: 3026-7; on the topic, see: Balkwill, 'When Renunciation is Good Politics', 231-2.

court women as learned teachers of the dharma, the *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra*,⁵³ which is recorded to have been translated into Chinese during the Liu-Song by the monk Guṇabhadra 求那跋陀 in the year 436 of the Common Era—some twenty years prior to Sengzhi's own ordination. It is also elsewhere recorded that the text was preached hundreds of times during the Liu-Song to audiences of more than a thousand.⁵⁴ If Sengzhi journeyed to the Liu-Song to receive ordination from the only established community of legally ordained nuns in China in her life time, she would have been in those audiences at the Liu-Song court and learned of the *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra* there. Her ability to peerlessly chant this new and increasingly fashionable text—a text that highlights the Buddhist practice and expertise of powerful court women—would certainly have been of interest to her first benefactor at the Northern Wei court, the Empress Dowager Wenming, who, at least publicly, was a fervent Buddhist and who ruled the dynasty from behind a succession of two child emperors while pushing the court and the public toward increasing Buddhification and Sinification. Relatedly, the *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra* also became fashionable at the court of another East Asian female ruler, that of Empress Suiko 推古天皇 (r. 593–628 CE) of Japan who ruled about a century after the life of Sengzhi. Famously, the Empress's semi-mythical regent, Prince Shōtoku 聖德太子 (574–622 CE) is believed to have written a commentary on the *sūtra* and prided it as one of the three most important in circulation at his time.⁵⁵ Given the Northern Wei's connections to the late Yamato

⁵³ I have yet to see other mentions of this text in Northern materials outside of Sengzhi's entombed biography. Otherwise, the earliest attested inscriptional evidence for the *sūtra* seems to be from the Northern Qi 北齊 (550–577 CE) and, as far as I am aware, comes from the Xiao Nanhai 小南海 caves in Henan which were carved in the 550s (on which, see Kuramoto, 'Koku kyō kara mita gyō no bukkyō').

⁵⁴ Wayman, *Lion's Roar*, 12.

⁵⁵ Rather notably, the other two texts in this grouping, the *Sūtra of the Lotus of the Wonderful Dharma* (T no. 262: *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經) and the *Vimalakīrtinīrdeśa Sūtra* (T no. 425: *Weimojie suoshuo jing* 維摩詰所說經) also

court—both Buddhist and political—Sengzhi's entombed biography may be rare, dated evidence for the early transmission of the text from China to Japan via the northern route through Korea.

Sengzhi's biography is different enough from those of her contemporary's in the North that we can reasonably assume that she was a different sort of woman, a different sort of nun. Perhaps she was a legally ordained Buddhist woman who received canonical ordination in the South before traveling to the North and being called to the Northern Wei court. If we are to trust the historical information contained in the canonical biographies of early Buddhist monastic women, the *Lives of the Nuns* (*Biqiuni zhuan* 比丘尼傳), we see that a number of the early nuns are recorded to have been ordained in the Liu-Song were not women of the South. Without explanation, we are told many times in those biographies that the women in question came from far-away places across the empire, and so, it is not unreasonable to think that Sengzhi was one among them. Furthermore, the honours and titles that she was given while in the service of the Northern Wei court befit a woman of such anomalous prestige in her time. Other than being a nun, Sengzhi held important positions of influence at both the Northern Wei and in the Northern Wei's monastic institutions. First, from above we know that Emperor Xuanwu tasked her with the responsibility of leading the administration and management of the women's chambers of the court. Because the political statuses and the very lives of the women who filled the inner chambers was entirely dependent on their ability to maintain close connections with imperial men, this sector of the court was constantly plagued by competition and gendered forms of political violence. Sengzhi, a perhaps legally ordained nun who would have been thought to follow a set of rules that strictly forbade marriage and sexual activity, was not in sexual competition with the women around her. As such, she was the ideal candidate to be their leader. Similarly, her ability to lead the women of the court extended

contain stories of strong female protagonists which have has a lasting impact on the development of Buddhism in East Asia, particularly on the roles of women in the tradition.

to the nunnery where imperial women, as a result of either their widowhood or general loss of favor at court, spent large portions of their lives. In the nunnery, they would have been under the legal command of Sengzhi because she was the ‘Superintendent of the Nuns’—an important position at the Northern Wei court which allowed for the facilitation of the court’s policies on religion to be transmitted to and enforced in the Buddhist monastic institution.

In sum, what we see in Sengzhi’s biography is that she was arguably a legally ordained Buddhist nun who was brought to the Northern Wei court to act as a virtuoso Buddhist who held the ability to manage the ranks of women at court because she was trusted not to be in competition with them. In so doing, it appears that she oversaw something like a religious network for lost and/or deposed court women, whether they wanted to be in that network or not. The biography provides the names of three particularly noteworthy women in this network, all of whom suffered nuptial upheavals that forced them to the nunnery. As for the first two, Empresses Gao and Feng share a similar fate: as official partners of successive emperors, Xiaowen and Xuanwu, Gao and Feng had to have been the two most eminent women in Sengzhi’s care. As for Gao, otherwise known as the aforementioned nun, Ciyi, she relocated to the nunnery after the death of Emperor Xuanwu and after attempting to murder Empress Dowager Ling, who then eventually murdered her. As for Empress Feng, her own career at court was dramatically and negatively affected by her own aunt, the Empress Dowager Wenming. Fearing that she may lose control over Xiaowen because of his love for the young Feng, Empress Dowager Wenming banished her niece to the nunnery.⁵⁶ After Wenming’s death, the niece came back to court to resume her status at the side of the Emperor. Her arrival at court, however, caused the banishment of her own sister who was herself married to the Emperor in the other sister’s stead. That sister, Emperor Xiaowen’s first Empress, went to the nunnery in shame

⁵⁶ All of these details regarding the lives of the Feng sister-empresses can be found in their back-to-back biographies in the *Book of the Wei* (*Wei shu* 13: 332–5) and are the subject of Balkwill, ‘When Renunciation is Good Politics’.

when her sister returned to court and resumed her status as the Emperor's favourite. Though the Empress Feng mentioned in this text could in fact be either of the sister empresses, I suspect that the Empress in question is the favored sister as she is generally better treated in their biographies in the *Book of the Wei* and would have been the one to be mentioned alongside Empress Gao. Finally, as we have seen, the biography also makes mention of a certain Madam Xie, wife of Wang Su. Though not an empress, Xie shared a similar fate. Xie was a southerner whose father held important positions at the court of the Southern Liang 南梁 (502–557 CE). Xie was married to Wang when he served in the South; however, Wang was later persuaded by political position to relocate North and to work for the Northern Wei, a position that included marriage to a Tuoba princess. Xie, however, did not take her dejection and abandonment lightly.⁵⁷ Journeying to the North herself, Xie engaged in a public poetry battle with her husband's new wife over her status viz-a-viz their shared husband. This public shaming of Wang provoked him to do right by Xie by building her an opulent Buddhist nunnery where she could live out her days in luxury but, also, presumed sexual abstinence. Along with Empresses Gao and Feng, the biography tells us that Madam Xie became one of Sengzhi's most eminent disciples in the Buddhist network of Northern Wei women. Whether or not these three women believed in Buddhism and were actually inspired by Sengzhi's virtuous practice is irrelevant to their situation as eminent members of her congregation. What they gained from Sengzhi's care is not enlightenment or other-worldly salvation, but rather the opportunity to reestablish their connections in this world after having lost the primary means by which they first gained them—their men.

And so, it is in this realization of who filled Sengzhi's congregation and who benefitted by the existence of this imperial Buddhist women's network that we gain some insight into how Sengzhi managed to hold the role that she did. Sengzhi held a very difficult position. As assistant to the very powerful Empress Dowager Wenming, she

⁵⁷ This story can be found in the description of the Perfect Enlightenment Nunnery (Zhengjue si 正覺寺) in the *Luoyang qielan ji*, T no. 2092: 1011b9–c20.

would have been at her side during the struggle for Emperor Xiaowen's attentions that ensued between the Empress Dowager and the two Feng Empresses, her nieces. Similarly, she would have been deeply involved in the career and advancement of her own niece who she herself appointed at court and who then went on to birth a son by the Emperor and then ascend to her dowager regency by murdering her competition—Empress Gao, the nun Ciyi, who was in Sengzhi's care. Sengzhi died and her entombed biography was written between the commencement of Empress Dowager Ling's regency and the death of Empress Gao, which would have been the most dangerous two years in the latter's life. The fact that she is enumerated by name alongside Empress Feng is therefore intentionally political for neither of these women are likely to have been very close to Sengzhi. Sengzhi was the direct beneficiary of both of their enemies, even though these two women were likely the highest-ranking nuns in her care. Appointed by Empress Dowager Wenming, Sengzhi was probably not well liked by Empress Feng who was severely mistreated by the Empress Dowager as a result of her closeness to Emperor Xiaowen. Similarly, having herself appointed Empress Gao's competition and eventual murderer to court—the Empress Dowager Ling—Empress Gao had every reason to fear Sengzhi's political power and alliances. Sengzhi, therefore, was not a friend to these women; however, she was their superior. In a Buddhist network of both monastic and lay women of the imperial elite, Sengzhi was the highest-ranking officer and, in this role, served the highest women of the realm: Empress Dowagers Wenming and Ling. In a managerial position that both provided and administered community to deposed and discarded women of the imperial elite, Sengzhi was the head of an institution that had the ability to separate those women from the court and therefore keep them out of the path of her benefactors, the Empress Dowagers. This was an incredibly powerful position and it may even be possible that, at the height of her power as Emperor Xuanwu's favored teacher of the dharma, she was aware of a vacuum in female leadership created by the death of Wenming in 490 of the Common Era and thereupon seized the opportunity to promote her own niece to court who then birthed a son by Xuanwu in 510.

Conclusion: Why Sengzhi Matters

An appropriate concluding question to this study which sought to situate the nun Sengzhi in her own social and religious milieu might be: Why did she have the power that she had? Outside of the lowly ranks of the menial service, it is rare to see an unmarried woman serving the court. Indeed, a woman disconnected from imperial marriage, motherhood, or sexual relations is not normally regarded as a woman of virtue. This gender paradigm is no different in the Tuoba culture of the Northern Wei than it was in the Han Chinese culture of the South. Across both realms and before Sengzhi's time, we do not have evidence that such political office for unmarried women at court existed. And yet, in Sengzhi's entombed biography we see it to be the case. Why? What made her so rare? What made her so appropriate for the position that she held?

One answer, simply, is Buddhism. Unlike the other women of the court, Sengzhi did not turn to Buddhist monastic life as a result of court intrigues; rather, she was brought to court because of her Buddhist practice, rank, and reputation. A woman who marked her social prestige through Buddhist notions of virtuosi practice—meditation, chanting, teaching, obeying of the precepts—Sengzhi's public virtue was of a markedly different sort than that of any of the other women around her. Her virtue drew not from her relationship to the patrilineal family unit, but, in fact, from her distance from it. To be certain, the type of womanhood that Sengzhi manifested in her time was entirely new. China never knew of religious renunciation prior to the arrival of Buddhism and, in fact, never had a tradition of lone, female religious wanderers, as it did for men. Given that if Sengzhi was legally ordained into Buddhist monastic life, her ordination was undertaken only a mere few years after the initial establishment of such orders for women in China, then she is one of the very first women that we know of to have held such ranks. As such, we are incredibly fortunate to have her biography. Her biography, however, tells not of a Buddhist woman who cloistered herself in her temple, meditating and avoiding contact with men and political strife. Instead, her biography tells of a woman whose Buddhist affiliation allowed her to engage in

the highest echelons of social life in new and surprising ways—as a manager of them.

Her biography, therefore, both confirms and counters information we have about early female Buddhist monastics in China from the *Lives of the Nuns*. From that text, we learn the story of the establishment of female monastic orders in China and both Sengzhi's dates, as well as her Northern/Southern location, provide outside verification that the story could plausibly be true. Since we see in that text that women came from all over the empire to be ordained in the Liu-Song, and since we may be able to place Sengzhi there, her biography provides further evidence of the historical veracity of that story. However, as a model of virtuosi Buddhist womanhood, Sengzhi's entombed biography tells us a different story than do many of the biographies of women in the *Lives of the Nuns*. As the translator of that text, Katherine Tsai has made known to us that many of the women whose biographies are contained in the *Lives of the Nuns* were women of high rank who enjoyed 'an easy concourse with high government officials, nobility, and members of the royal family, including the emperors themselves'.⁵⁸ And yet, as Bret Hinsch argues, the biographies in the *Lives of the Nuns* were composed significantly later than the lives of the women they biographize and, more importantly, were written to appeal to a Confucian sense of decorum and social belonging.⁵⁹ Therefore, the women in the *Lives of the Nuns* are often praised for evading political life even as they belonged to the political elite. In that text, where nuns do journey out into the social worlds of medieval China, they are praised for resisting rape and capture by licentious men—a Confucian trope.⁶⁰ Sengzhi, on the other hand, lived a fully public life in the imperial realm where she was constantly interacting with the men of that court; however, her virtue in no way relied on her

⁵⁸ Tsai, *Lives of the Nuns*, 8.

⁵⁹ Hinsch, 'Confucian Filial Piety', especially 54ff.

⁶⁰ For example, there is the biography of Zhixian 智賢 (300–370 CE) who was stabbed more than twenty times for successfully resisting rape by the Prefect Du Ba 杜霸, of whom nothing else is known (*T* no. 2063: 935a26–935b13).

escaping their dangerous advances, though it did rely on her being trusted to hold celibate office among them.

In sum, though Sengzhi's entombed biography offers substantial and early detail regarding what the practice of a virtuoso Buddhist nun looked like in the late-fifth/early sixth-century, what is most noteworthy about her life is simply that she was able to live it in the way that she did. As a woman modeling a new form of womanhood on the rise in the worlds of her time—virtuosi Buddhist monastic womanhood—Sengzhi's story forces the reader to contend with an undeniable historical fact: gender paradigms are constantly shifting and Early Medieval China—with all its Northern-ness and all its Buddhism—is one such time where we see a significant change in the way that women became women, so to speak. With the option of Buddhist renunciation available to them, women were able to take up social roles that they were not able to before. Until now, scholarly worlds were only able to get a glimpse of these roles through the *Lives of the Nuns*; however, with the introduction of the study of entombed biography to the study of Buddhism, our scholarly understanding of what early East Asian nuns did with their status is one that stands to be radically re-envisioned.

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Abbreviations

- T* *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. See Bibliography, Secondary Sources, Takakusu and Watanabe, eds.
X *Shinsan Dai Nihon zoku zōkyō* 新纂大日本續藏經. See Bibliography, Secondary Sources, Kawamura, ed.

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Author Biographies

Stephanie BALKWILL

Stephanie Balkwill is an Assistant Professor of Religion and Culture and East Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of Winnipeg. Her work focuses on the social, literary, and political lives of Buddhist women who lived in China between the fourth and sixth centuries. She is currently working on a book-length study of the life and times of Northern Wei Empress Dowager Ling (d. 528), a number of smaller projects on the Buddhist idea of female-to-male sex change in Chinese Buddhist texts, and a co-edited volume entitled 'Buddhism and Statecraft in East Asia'.

Dr. Balkwill completed her Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies and Chinese Religions at McMaster University where she also earned a graduate diploma in Gender Studies and Feminist Research. She has been a fellow at the Center for Chinese Studies at the National Central Library of Taiwan, an advanced researcher in the Department of Philosophy at Peking University, a Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation in Buddhist Studies Doctoral Fellow, and a postdoctoral fellow in the Society of Fellows at the University of Southern California. Her research has also been supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the American Council of Learned Societies and the Chiang-ching Kuo Foundation for International Scholarly exchange.

T. H. BARRETT

Tim H. Barrett is Emeritus Professor of East Asian History at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He studied Chinese at Cambridge and Buddhist Studies at Yale, and spent much of his career publishing on the history of the religious traditions of East Asia, primarily with regard to China. His books include *Li Ao: Buddhist, Taoist, or Neo-Confucian?* (1992), *Taoism Under the Tang*

(1996), *The Woman Who Discovered Printing* (2008), and *From Religious Ideology to Political Expediency in Early Printing* (2012).

CHEN Jinhua 陳金華

Jinhua Chen is fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, and a professor of East Asian intellectual history (particularly religions) at the University of British Columbia, where he also served as the Canada Research Chair in East Asian Buddhism (2001–2011). He has received numerous grants and awards from major funding agencies for his work on East Asian state-church relationships, monastic (hagio-)biographical literature, Buddhist sacred sites, relic veneration, Buddhism and technological innovation in medieval China, and Buddhist translations. Dr. Chen is a prolific author, having published six monographs, and co-edited ten books, and written over seventy book chapters and journal articles.

FENG Guodong 馮國棟

FENG Guodong is a professor in the School of Humanities, vice director of Center for Buddhist Studies, and vice head of School of Humanities at the Zhejiang University. He received his Ph.D. from Fudan University (2004). His research interests include Buddhist philology, Buddhist geography and Buddhist literature. His current project is focused on Buddhist inscriptions in China. He is the author of *Fojiao wenxian yu Fojiao wenxue* 佛教文獻與佛教文學 [Buddhist Documents and Buddhist literature, 2010], and *Jingde chuandeng lu yanjiu* 《景德傳燈錄》研究 [Study on the *Jingde chuandeng lu*; 2014].

George A. KEYWORDH

Dr. George A. Keyworth is Associate Professor in the Department of History at the University of Saskatchewan in Canada. He received his Ph.D. in Chinese Buddhist Studies from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Dr. Keyworth has received grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

(SSHRC) of Canada to support research about and the publication of peer-reviewed articles on Northern Song dynasty (960–1127) Chinese Chan Buddhism and the figure of Juefan Huihong 覺範惠洪 (1071–1128); Japanese pilgrims to Song China (e.g., Jōjin 成尋 [1011–1081]); apocryphal Chinese Buddhist scriptures and the particular case of the *Shoulengyan jing* 首楞嚴經 (**Śūraṅgama-sūtra*) using sources from Dunhuang, Central Asia, and Japan; esoteric Buddhism in Tang (618–907) and Song China; Zen Buddhism in Edo Japan and the figure of Kakumon Kantetsu 覺門貫徹 (d. 1730); and old Japanese manuscript Buddhist canons, especially from Nanatsudera 七寺, Amanosan Kongōji 天野山金剛寺 and the Matsuo shrine 松尾大社 canon kept at Myōrenji 妙蓮寺. Dr. Keyworth is currently working on two books, tentatively titled: *A History of Matsuo Shrine* and *Copying for the Kami: A Study and Catalog of Three 12th century Manuscript Buddhist Canons*.

SUN Mingli 孫明利

Mingli Sun is currently a Ph.D. student at The University of British Columbia. Her research area is Buddhist material culture in Medieval China with a focus on the Western Pure Land images in Sichuan from the Tang and Five Dynasties, on which topic she has published over ten journal articles and book chapters, major ones including (1) 'An Analysis of the transformation tableaux of the Sutra of Visualizing Amitayus Buddha as Carved on the Cliffs in Sichuan Area from the Tang and Five Dynasties' (from the *Shikusi yanjiu* 石窟藝術研究 [Study on the Grotto Arts], 2016), (2) 'An Analysis on Factors of Light Circles and Treasure Ships of Transformation Tableaux of the Sutra of Visualizing Amitayus Buddha in Sichuan Area from the Tang and Five Dynasties' (*Gugong bowuyuan yuannkann* 故宮博物院院刊 [Palace Museum Journal], 2017); (3) 'An Analysis of the transformation tableaux of the Sutra of Visualizing Amitayus Buddha of Stone-carved in Dazu' (*Dazu shike quanji* 大足石刻全集 [A Full Collection of the Stone Carvings in Dazu], 2018); and (4) 'A Textual Examination on the Image of Amitābha with Fifty Bodhisattvas' (*Dazu xuekan* 大足學刊 [Journal of Dazu Studies], 2020).

TONG Ling 童嶺

Tong Ling, professor of Chinese literature at the Nanjing University. His main research interests are focused in Medieval Chinese academic circles, Thought and Literature, and Ancient East Asian History and Oversea Chinese texts. His major works include (1) *Liuchao Sui Tang Hanji jiu chaoben yanjiu* 六朝隋唐漢籍舊鈔本研究 [Research on Six Dynasties and Sui-T'ang Manuscripts], Beijing: Zhonghua book company, 2017; (2) *Huagdi, Shanyu, Shiren: Zhonggu Zhongguo yu zhoubian shijie* 皇帝·單于·士人：中古中國與周邊世界 [Emperor, Shanyü, and Literatus: Medieval China and its Neighboring World] (ed.), Shanghai: Zhongxi book company, 2014; (3) *Yanfeng shuolong ji: Da Tang diguo yu Dongya de zhongshi* 炎鳳朔龍記——大唐帝國與東亞的中世 [Fire Phoenix and Black Dragon: The T'ang Empire and the Medieval East Asia], Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2014; and (4) *Nan Qi shidai de wenxue yu sixiang* 南齊時代的文學與思想 [Literature and Thought of the Southern Qi Era], Beijing: Zhonghua book company, 2013.

WEI Zheng 韋正

WEI Zheng is a professor in the School of Archaeology at Peking University, where he also serves as a prestigious Changjiang scholar 長江學者 appointed by the government. His major publications include (1) *Liuchao muzang de kaogu xue yanjiu* 六朝墓葬的考古学研究 [Archaeological Studies on the Tomb-funerals of the Six Dynasties period; 2011] and (2) *Wei Jin Nanbei chao kaogu* 魏晉南北朝考古 [Archaeological Studies on Wei, Jin and the North and South Dynasties period; 2013].

Claudia WENZEL

Claudia Wenzel is a senior researcher in the research unit 'Buddhist Stone Inscriptions in China' hosted by the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities. She is the editor of two of a total of seven volumes so far published in the series Buddhist Stone Sutras in China: *Buddhist Stone Sutras in Shandong Province Volume 2*

(together with Wang Yongbo, edited by Lothar Ledderose), and *Buddhist Stone Sutras in Sichuan Province Volume 3* (together with Sun Hua). Apart from her numerous contributions to all volumes in this series, she has also published on related art-historical topics, such as 'The Image of the Buddha: Buddha Icons and Aniconic Tradition in India and China' (*Transcultural Studies* Vol. 2, no. 1, 2011). Her current research focus is on the interrelations between stone carvings and Buddhist topography, with publications such as 'Monumental Stone Sutra Carvings in China and Indian Pilgrim Sites' (*Journal of Chinese Buddhist Studies* Vol. 29, 2016).

Tones from the Stones: Production, Preservation and Perusal of Buddhist Epigraphy in Central and East Asia

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FRONT COVER IMAGE: A shale statue of the Buddha from second century Gandhāra, currently stored in the Asian Civilization, Singapore. Courtesy of Ji Yun.

BACK COVER IMAGE: Rubbing of the record for the pagoda constructed by Liu Huozhou 劉霍周 (otherwise unknown) ('Liu Huozhou zaoxiang ji' 劉霍周造像記), dated 537 (Tianping 天平 4 of the Eastern Wei). From Beijing Tushuguan Jinshizu 北京圖書館金石組 (ed.), *Beijing Tushuguan cang Zhongguo lidai shike taben huibian* 北京圖書館藏中國歷代石刻拓本彙編 [Collection of epigraphical rubbings of different dynasties stored in the National Library of China], vol. 6: 46 (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe 中州古籍出版社, 1989).

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 獨自慨彌淪生處凡俗竊聞
 經云惟福可恃昂竭家財遠
 名匠在四衢之內造均塔一
 軀奉佛六菩薩建初已就上
 皇陛下州郡
 生緣父母兄弟
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